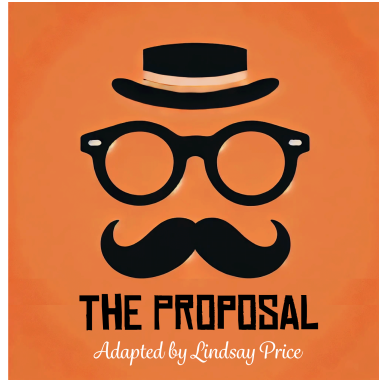




Sample Pages from The Proposal

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COMMEDIA CHEKHOV

THE ANNIVERSARY
THE PROPOSAL
THE BEAR

THREE SHORT COMEDIES ADAPTED BY
Lindsay Price
FROM THE ORIGINALS BY
Anton Chekhov



Commedia Chekhov

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Characters

The Anniversary

Andrey Andreyevitch Shipuchin: Chairman of the Norvik Joint Stock Bank.

Tatiana Alexeyevna: His wife.

Yelena Nicolaevna Khirin: The bank's bookkeeper.

Nastasya Fyodorovna Merchutkina: A persistent woman.

Deputation of Shareholders of the Bank: Extremely satisfied with the bank.

The Proposal

Svetlana Milailovna Chubukov: A landowning widow.

Natalya Stepanovna: Her daughter.

Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov: A nervous neighbour of Chubukov.

The Bear

Elena Ivanovna Popova: A landowning widow.

Grigory Stepanovitch Smirnov: A landowner.

Ludmilla: Popova's housekeeper.

Casting

It is the expectation of the author that this group of characters can and should be played by a diverse group of actors. Do not assume the characters are white or cisgendered. Cast the actor who connects to the character's intention. Period. Don't get bogged down in gender as presented in the source material. A wide variety of actors played all the roles in the original workshop and it worked just fine.

Sets

See the set description at the beginning of each play.

Costumes

It is the intention of the author that these plays are not necessarily set in the 19th century nor should they match the original source material. Costumes should be chosen to best reflect the characters and their personalities. The characters are physical and exaggerated, so use this as a foundation.

There are characters who mention specific costume pieces – Elena Ivanovna in *The Bear* is in mourning and wearing all-black, Natalya in *The Proposal* talks about wearing an apron and Ivan Vassilevitch is dressed as if going to a New Year's Eve party. A list of mentioned costume pieces is in the Appendix.

Name Pronunciations

See the Pronunciation guide in the Appendix.

Accents

It is neither required nor suggested that anyone speak with a Russian accent.

Timing

If doing all three plays, put your intermission after *The Proposal*.

Introduction

Why is this play called *Commedia Chekhov*?

This collection adapts three one-act plays by Anton Chekhov, a late 19th-century Russian playwright known for his realistic comedies and dramas, and blends them with the highly physical acting style of *Commedia dell'Arte*. These two styles might seem at odds with each other. Chekhov often explored themes of failed ideas, the breakdown of aristocratic society, class structure, and loss. In contrast, *Commedia dell'Arte* features exaggerated physical comedy, such as a Zanni character comically eating their shoe out of hunger.

As a writing challenge, I wanted to explore both worlds and discover how they fit together. Surprisingly, there is a lot of overlap. Where do they align? Can Chekhov be played through the lens of *Commedia*? It has been a great experience, and I hope you feel the same!

Do you need to have an extended knowledge of *Commedia* to stage these plays? No. Does it help? Sure!

Commedia dell'Arte is an improvised comedic theatre form that flourished in Italy in the 1500s. The exact origins of *Commedia dell'Arte* are hard to pin down, with little documentation prior to the 16th century. The term “*Commedia dell'Arte*” itself wasn’t commonly used until the 18th century. It is generally acknowledged that the form solidified in Italy in the 1550s and reached its peak in the 1650s. Despite its opaque history, the elements that define *Commedia* are clear: improvised performances based on scenarios, where actors work from a basic outline and make up their lines.

- **Stock Characters** – Character types in *Commedia dell'Arte* are divided into masters (*vecchi*), servants (*zanni*), and lovers. The characters remain consistent, with only the situations changing. They have the same attitude, appearance, drive, and physical actions throughout. Although the stories are improvised, the characters behave the same way in any situation.
- **Limited Themes** – Love, money, and food form the basis of almost every scenario in *Commedia dell'Arte*. These themes are closely tied to the characters’ needs and drives.
- **Use of Mask** – The mask defines the characters in *Commedia dell'Arte*. Each character is associated with a specific mask.
- **Use of Lazzi** – Lazzi are short comedic physical bits within the story, serving as moments that connect the character to the theme. Every *Commedia* actor had well-rehearsed lazzi for their character. For example, Arlecchino, a servant character, is always hungry. Lazzi for this character often revolved around food, or eating something not normally seen as food, such as a fly.
- **Use of Mime, Acrobatics, and Music** – All of these elements were used to enhance story and character.

The interaction between characters in Commedia dell'Arte often centers on battles for status and control. The character types—masters, servants, and lovers—provide ample opportunity for such conflicts. Some characters have status, some don't, and some will do whatever it takes to get it.

Characters in Commedia work in extremes: they are not just hungry, they are so hungry they'll eat anything; they don't just like money, they are obsessed with it. Their decisions can swing from an energy level of 1 to 100 and back again in a moment.

Commedia is an improvised form. Does that mean we can improvise dialogue in these plays?

These plays are not Commedia scripts in that they are not improvised scenarios. They are adaptations. The purpose of an adaptation is to take a work and make it suitable for a new purpose. In this case, the new purpose is a hybrid of two distinct forms. For me, the Commedia aspect of these plays lies in the characters and their portrayal: the characters are fixed, each has a specific need, there are status battles, and there are numerous opportunities for physical action!

Use these scripts as an opportunity to explore the character aspects of Commedia and character physicalization with your students.

The Stage Directions

I encourage and strongly suggest that you and your students read the stage directions. Normally, I'm a strong advocate for writers ensuring that everything they want presented on stage is in the text. If it's in the text, then it's integral to the character and the story. However, rules are meant to be broken, and in this case, the stage directions will provide your students with inspiration on how to physicalize the characters within a Commedia context.

For example, there are a number of lazzi in the script, entirely written in the stage directions. The physicality of the characters is an important element and might not always be apparent in the text alone. Can and should your students find their own interpretations? Absolutely! But the stage directions will give you a good starting point.

THE PROPOSAL

Characters

Svetlana Milailovna Chubukov*: A landowning widow.

Natalya Stepanovna: Her daughter.

Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov: A nervous neighbour of Chubukov.

* In the original, Svetlana Milailovna is named Stepan Stepanovitch Chubukov and is male.

Setting

A formal living room in Chubukov's house. There is a couch and a pair of chairs. One of the chairs should clearly be "the good chair." Off to the side there is a small table with water and glasses. The furniture should be sturdy enough so that characters can leap on and off of it.

Note

While none of these characters are specific stock Commedia characters, they all explore a key factor in Commedia scenarios: status. There is a clear demarcation of status in this play, even though it doesn't follow the typical master/servant relationship. All characters in Commedia are either high status, middle status, or low status. In this play, Chubukov is high status, Natalya is middle status between her mother and Lomov, and Lomov, despite being a rich man, is low status.

Another aspect of status is control. All Commedia characters are either controlling the situation or lack control. Each of the characters in this play wants to control the situation—they want to be high status and they want to be right.

There are three main themes in Commedia: money, love, and hunger. In this play, we explore the idea of love within the context of getting married. Lomov wants to marry Natalya; Natalya, once she realizes Lomov wanted to propose, wants to marry Lomov; and Chubukov wants Natalya and Lomov to be married. But nothing about this marriage is about love; it's all about status and control.

When you create the physicalizations for these characters, think about how they visualize status. When do they feel in control of the situation, and how does that impact their body language? When are they out of control? And what is each character's physical status relationship with "the good chair"? Also, focus on ramping up and down the energies of the characters. They are calm one moment and jumping on the furniture the next.

Music plays.

CHUBUKOV sits in “the good chair” reading. She looks very comfortable and at ease in the good chair. At no time during the following does she look up or hear LOMOV. She is always focused on her book.

LOMOV enters, dressed formally. He faces downstage with confidence and smooths his hair with flair. He turns, sees CHUBUKOV, freezes in terror, and runs off. LOMOV enters again, his hair now a little disheveled and faces downstage. With much less confidence, he smooths his hair with a little less grace and brushes imaginary dirt off his shoulders. He turns toward CHUBUKOV, freezes in terror, and runs off. Once again, LOMOV enters and faces downstage. He is now a little more disheveled. He vigorously tries to smooth his hair, vigorously brushes imaginary dirt off his shoulders, his arms, and his legs, then takes a huge breath in and out. He does that again. He sticks his hand out powerfully as if greeting CHUBUKOV. He pretends to greet her, smiling, acting the master of small talk, miming a joke and giving a confident laugh. It’s all going well.

CHUBUKOV gives a small cough, which causes LOMOV to panic and run out. He now sneaks into the room. He sneakily smooths his hair and brushes dirt off his shoulders. This time though, before he can turn toward CHUBUKOV, his shoulder twitches slightly. He clamps a hand on his shoulder. He breathes in and out. Everything is fine. Then his other shoulder twitches, more than slightly. He clamps a hand on the other shoulder. He takes a breath in and out. Just when everything seems fine, both of his shoulders twitch uncontrollably no matter how hard a grip he has. The twitching sends him violently to the floor.

CHUBUKOV, who has paid no attention at all to what has been happening, stands. Still reading. She moves to the side to get a drink of water. Her back is to LOMOV. LOMOV moves to standing as quietly as possible, which is quite the struggle.

CHUBUKOV finishes her water. LOMOV sees her start to turn and dives behind a piece of furniture. CHUBUKOV returns to sit in the good chair, all the while she hasn’t looked up from her book.

*LOMOV leaps up from behind the piece of furniture.
Music cuts off.*

LOMOV: *(as loud and bold as possible with gesture)* Greetings, Svetlana Milailova!

This causes CHUBUKOV to jump up and throw her book in the air.

CHUBUKOV: Ack!

LOMOV: Oh no! *(much quieter and smaller gesture)* Greetings, Svetlana Milailova.

CHUBUKOV: Why, Ivan Vassilevitch. I didn't see you there. What a surprise. How are you, my dear?

LOMOV: How am I? *(aside)* How am I, how am I? *(turns back)* Greetings, Svetlana Milailova.

CHUBUKOV: Yes, we've established that. Please come in. Will you sit down?

LOMOV: Sit down? *(aside)* Will I sit down? Will I sit down?

CHUBUKOV: Yes, you will. *(gesturing)* Take the good chair.

LOMOV: What?

CHUBUKOV: Take the good chair.

LOMOV: I can't.

CHUBUKOV: I insist.

LOMOV: But, it's the good chair.

CHUBUKOV: Yes. It's the best chair in the whole room. In the whole house, even.

LOMOV: I can't, I can't, I can't sit in the best chair. It's impossible.

CHUBUKOV: Impossible? To sit on a chair? *(gives a tinkling laugh)* I'm going to sit on the couch. Sit where you like. *(she does so)*

LOMOV freezes. He is conflicted. He doesn't think he's good enough to sit in the good chair but he doesn't want to insult his host. He looks off, as if thinking about running. He looks at the chair. He smooths his hair. He side steps awkwardly to approach the chair. He bows to the chair, which causes CHUBUKOV to roll her eyes. He brushes off his backside so nothing dirty

touches the chair. He turns around and slowly sits. But he doesn't sit comfortably and only sits on the very edge of the chair.

CHUBUKOV: Now! *(this causes LOMOV to spasm as he sits)* Why are you here? And I must know: why are you dressed so formally? Is there a party I don't know about?

LOMOV: *(standing up formally)* I've only come to see you, honoured Svetlana Milailovna.

CHUBUKOV: My goodness! How special am I? Sit down, sit down.

LOMOV: *(sitting on the very edge of the chair)* I've come to see you because I have a request. It's a small request. Well, perhaps not small at all, it depends on your point of view. In the past, I've had the privilege of asking for your help and you have always been so *(he stops talking and gives a little squeak as if his mouth has gone dry)* You have always been so... *(he squeaks again and pats the sweat off his forehead)* May I have a glass of water?

CHUBUKOV gestures to the side and LOMOV runs over to grab a glass and pours himself a glass of water. He drinks a second glass.

CHUBUKOV: *(aside)* He's come to borrow money. That's what this is about. Why should the richest man in the county get a single penny from me? Ludicrous! Not going to happen. Never! He can beg on his knees. He can hold his breath till he turns blue. He can say pretty, pretty, please with sugar on top. Never! Not a chance! Not on your life! *(Beat. Graciously, to LOMOV.)* Why, what is it, my beauty? What have you come to ask? I'm on pins and needles waiting to hear! Sit down, sit down.

LOMOV: *(moving back and sitting, just on the edge)* You see, Honour Milailovna, I beg your pardon, honoured Svetlana Honourovna, I mean, in short, you alone can help me, though I don't deserve it, of course...

CHUBUKOV: Spit it out!

LOMOV: *(standing and speaking quickly)* I've come to ask the hand of your daughter, Natalya Stepanovna, in marriage.

CHUBUKOV: Marriage? That's what you want? *(joyfully laughing, standing with a little dance)* How wonderful! *(grabbing LOMOV's hands with her hands)* I'm delighted! What joyous news! *(aside)* Finally, I can get her out of the house, and to one so rich. *(to*

LOMOV) I've always loved you as if you were my own son. Happy days! I'll go and get Natalya. *(she starts to dance off)* Happy days!

LOMOV: Honoured Svetlana Milailovna, do you think she will say yes?

CHUBUKOV: Of course, my darling. I'll make sure of it. Sit tight. *(exits with joy)*

LOMOV flings himself onto the good chair, realizes what he's done, and bounces back off, with a squeal, to stand stiffly.

LOMOV: I did it! Whoo! What a relief! *(fanning himself)* So hot... *(shivering)* So cold... All the time I've thought about this moment, worried myself sick... It's going to happen! Natalya Stepanovna and I are to be married! *(shivers)* Why is it so cold in here? Do they never pay their bills? *(twitches an eyebrow)* Oh no. *(twitches a shoulder)* Oh no, oh no. *(twitches both shoulders)* Not now. *(Twitches an arm and a leg. Talking to his body.)* Stop it! Stop it this instant! *(exaggeratedly twitches all over)* Stoooooooooooooppppppp!

LOMOV flings himself on the good chair and holds himself tight to try and stop the twitching. NATALYA enters. She has no idea what's to come.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Hello!... *(seeing LOMOV twitching)* Are you all right?

LOMOV: *(leaping to his feet, standing stiffly)* Ack! *(takes a breath and bows)* I am well, Natalya Stepanovna.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: How do you do, Ivan Vassilevitch?

LOMOV: How do you do, Natalya Stepanovna?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: I am well, thank you. *(beat)* It's been ages since I've seen you.

LOMOV: Yes. It's been forever.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Yes. Forever.

LOMOV: Yes.

They stand there and stare at each other. NATALYA finally can't stand it.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Should we sit down?

LOMOV: Yes. Let us sit down.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Please, take the good chair.

LOMOV: No. I can't.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: I insist.

LOMOV: You take it. It's your chair. It's the best chair in the whole room. The whole house.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: You're the guest.

LOMOV: You take it.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: You.

LOMOV: You.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: I'm going to sit on the couch.

LOMOV: If you wish.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: I do.

LOMOV and NATALYA stand and stare at each other.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Are you going to sit?

LOMOV: You should sit first.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Why?

LOMOV: Because?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Because why?

LOMOV: Because you should.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: You should.

LOMOV: You.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: You.

LOMOV: You.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Why does it matter who sits first?

LOMOV: It doesn't.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: So sit down.

LOMOV: You sit down.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: We'll sit at the same time. All right?

LOMOV: If you wish.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: I do.

There is a bit of a staredown as NATALYA slowly sits. LOMOV matches her speed. Suddenly NATALYA stands straight up. LOMOV matches her. NATALYA goes to sit and then doesn't. LOMOV falls over. NATALYA finally sits and LOMOV crawls into the good chair. There is a pause.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Will you stay for lunch?

LOMOV: No, thank you. Oh! Thank you for the invitation. It is very kind of you. It's just that I am not hungry. I appreciate the offer. If you really want me to eat. I will eat. I wouldn't want to upset you – oh, I have, haven't I. I have insulted your kind invitation! How could I be so stupid! Stupid, stupid –

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: It's fine! It's fine. You don't have to eat. Forget I even asked. Ok?

LOMOV: Oh. Ok.

There is a pause.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: The weather is lovely, isn't it? Sun today. Better than yesterday. Rain, yesterday. (beat) Can I ask you something?

LOMOV: Of course, Natalya Stepanovna.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Why are you dressed like that? In the afternoon? Is there a party I don't know about?

LOMOV: (Leaps to his feet, twitches his shoulder, and stands stiffly. Speaks loudly.) Natalya Stepanovna! (talks quietly) Natalya Stepanovna, I've made up my mind. Please hear me out. (twitches an eyebrow, clamps a hand over one eye) Of course you'll be surprised and perhaps even angry, but, but, but, (does an all-over twitch) Ack!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: What's the matter? Are you ok? Sit down, sit down!

LOMOV: (gets under control, sits on the edge of the chair, formally) I will be brief. As you know, Natalya Stepanovna, we have known each other since we were children. My late aunt and her husband, from whom, as you know, I inherited my land, always had the greatest respect for your late father and your mother. The Lomovs and the Chubukovs have always been friendly with the greatest regard

for each other. And, as you know, my land is beside yours. My Oxen Meadows touch your birchwoods. And as you know-

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*standing up*) What did you say?

LOMOV: (*a little derailed*) What?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: What did you say? That last thing.

LOMOV: Uh, let me think... you kind of derailed my – Oh! This was it. (*formally*) My Oxen Meadows touch your birchwoods. And as you know –

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*moving away*) When you say “my Oxen Meadows...” are they really yours?

LOMOV: Yes.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: No.

LOMOV: What?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: No, they’re not.

LOMOV: What what?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: The Oxen Meadows are ours, not yours.

LOMOV: No.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Yes.

LOMOV: They’re mine.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: How do you figure that?

LOMOV: (*sitting back, in the good chair*) How? We’re talking about the Oxen Meadows which are wedged in between your birchwoods and the Burnt Marsh.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Exactly! They’re ours.

LOMOV: That’s wrong.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: And how long do you think they’ve been yours?

LOMOV: As long as I can remember.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: No.

LOMOV: Yes! (*standing*) Everyone knows they are mine.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Oh no they don't!

LOMOV: Oh yes they do!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Our land extends to Burnt Marsh, which includes the Oxen Meadows! *(taking a breath)* Why are we arguing about this? It's silly. Oh, I see what you're doing. You're having me on. Playing a joke.

She laughs out loud and LOMOV joins in, not at all sure what the joke is. They both sit.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: As if to say that land we've had for nearly three hundred years suddenly isn't ours. Surprise! *(laughing long and then stopping with seriousness)* But seriously, don't joke. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's unfunny jokes about land that has always been ours.

LOMOV: This is ridiculous.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: What's ridiculous is suggesting that the Meadows are yours.

LOMOV: They are mine.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: They're ours! You can talk all you want and wear all the fancy clothes you want but they're ours, ours, ours! *(standing)* What do you think you're doing, sitting in our good chair?

LOMOV: You told me to sit here.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Get up!

LOMOV: What?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: *(pulling him out of the chair)* Get up, get up, get up!

There is a bit of a tug-of-war here as NATALYA is not strong enough to pull LOMOV out the chair and LOMOV doesn't understand what's going on. Finally, she launches him out of the chair and across the room.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Ah ha!

LOMOV stumbles across the room and tries to regain his composure.

LOMOV: Sit down! Get up! Sit down! Get up! Make up your mind!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*sitting in the good chair*) I can't believe you! Here we thought you were a good neighbour and now we find out you're nothing but a scoundrel.

LOMOV: Are you trying to tell me that I am a land grabber? Madam, never in my life have I grabbed anyone else's land or anything else, and I will not, I will not be accused of doing so now. The Oxen Meadows are mine!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*leaping up*) They're ours!

LOMOV: Mine!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*standing on the chair*) Ours, ours, ours!

LOMOV: Mine, mine, mine!

They two keep shouting at each other as CHUBUKOV runs in.

CHUBUKOV: What's the matter? What's all this shouting? Aren't we happy? Celebrating? Happy days...? Did things not... Natalya, why are you standing on the chair? My darling, please get down.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: But, Mama!

CHUBUKOV: Shall we sit? Yes. Clearly we need a little direction, hmmm? Ivan Vassilevitch, please take the good chair.

LOMOV: (*same time as below*) I will not!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*same time as above*) Mama, you can't!

The two start talking at CHUBUKOV at the same time about how LOMOV can't sit in the good chair.

CHUBUKOV: (*clapping her hands and making a verbal sound to shut them both up*) Buh, buh, buh! That's enough! Children! (*this shuts them up*) Take a breath. In and out. (*they do so*) Again. In and out. (*they do so*) Excellent. Shall we breathe and sit? Yes, we shall. (*They all breathe in together. They all slowly sit at exactly the same time. CHUBUKOV talks as they slowly sit.*) We're sitting and we're breathing. Sitting and breathing. And we're sitting. Well done. Now. What on earth is going on?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*calmly*) Mama, please tell this gentleman who owns Oxen Meadows.

CHUBUKOV: (*calmly*) Why darling, the Meadows are ours.

LOMOV: (*calmly*) But, please, Svetlana Milailovna, how can they be yours?

CHUBUKOV: (*calmly*) Because they are.

LOMOV: Be reasonable. My aunt's grandmother gave the Meadows for the temporary and free use of your grandfather's peasants and –

CHUBUKOV: (*on edge*) Everyone knows they're ours.

LOMOV: They do not. The fact is...

CHUBUKOV: The fact? Oh ho! The fact?

LOMOV: Everyone knows they belong to me and I can prove it!

CHUBUKOV: (*ramping up to 100*) Prove it? You think you can prove it?

LOMOV: (*ramping up to 100*) You bet I can! I'll prove it and rub your noses in it!

CHUBUKOV: (*all the way past 100, leaping up*) Young man, you will not speak to me in that tone of voice! Get out of our good chair!

LOMOV: I will not! Ha! The Meadows are mine and so is this chair! How about that!

CHUBUKOV: Get out!

LOMOV: Make me!

CHUBUKOV: How dare you!

She lunges to grab LOMOV. Another tug-of-war. This time LOMOV resists. NATALYA helps CHUBUKOV pull. Finally they launch LOMOV out of the chair and everyone goes flying.

CHUBUKOV: You are not a nice man!

LOMOV: I'll take this matter to court, that's what I'm going to do!

CHUBUKOV: Go ahead! Court away! You always want to go to court! All your family, court, court, court, court, court, court, court!

LOMOV: At least no one in my family has ever been tried for embezzlement, like your grandfather! (*eye starts twitching, he clamps a hand over the eye*)

CHUBUKOV: At least my aunt didn't run away with an architect!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*leaps on the furniture*) Take that!

CHUBUKOV: (*leaps on the furniture*) At least my family isn't crazy!

LOMOV: Your mother was a hump-back! (*shoulder starts twitching, clamps a hand on the shoulder*)

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: How dare you!

CHUBUKOV: Your father was a gambler!

LOMOV: Enough! Ah! This twitching! Look at what you've done to me!
(*exits as he tries to stop a twitch over his entire body*)

CHUBUKOV: (*following*) And don't set foot in my house again!

LOMOV: (*from offstage*) Ack!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Take it to court! Go ahead!

There is a pause. The two sit. There is a further pause.

CHUBUKOV: I can't believe he sat in our good chair. Like he owned it.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Like the Meadows.

CHUBUKOV: What an unpleasant man.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Dishonest.

CHUBUKOV: A villain.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: A monster.

CHUBUKOV: Ugh. And he had the audacity to tell me he wanted to propose. The nerve.

NATALYA goes white and turns slowly to CHUBUKOV.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*completely still*) Propose?

CHUBUKOV: That's why he was here. To propose to you.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*tightly*) A marriage... proposal?

CHUBUKOV: Granted, he's extremely wealthy and I'll be sad to see that walk out the door. Oh, and of course, I'm sad for you; it would have been a good match, but it looks like this is for the –

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Propose? To me?

CHUBUKOV: And the way he dressed up to impress you. Ridiculous moron.

NATALYA leaps up in frantic energy. All the way to 100.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Why didn't you say so!

She starts pulling CHUBUKOV toward the door.

CHUBUKOV: What?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Oh! Bring him back! Ah! Bring him back, now, now, now, now, now, now, now!

CHUBUKOV: Why?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: *(almost in hysterics)* Don't just stand here! Get him back so he can propose!

CHUBUKOV: What's the matter with you?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: If I get married I'll be so much better than Alina Ivanovna who has been flaunting a potential engagement for weeks and I'll be able to rip the rug out from under her. You have to get him back! *(pushing CHUBUKOV)* Out! Out! Out!

CHUBUKOV: All right, all right, stop pushing! *(exits)*

NATALYA STEPANOVNA runs around the room in a panic.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: *(as she runs)* Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! What has she done to me! *(calling out)* Get him back! Get him back! *(plumps up the cushions on the good chair)*

CHUBUKOV: *(reentering)* I caught him. He's coming back. He doesn't want to. I threatened him, which may not have been a good idea, but – *(NATALYA STEPANOVNA wails, throwing herself on the couch)* He's coming! Relax! *(beat)* You do realize, we yelled at him, insulted his family, and drove him out. He may not feel like proposing any more.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: That wasn't my fault. You started it.

CHUBUKOV: What?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: If he backs out, I will blame you for the rest of my life!

CHUBUKOV: That seems harsh.

LOMOV appears at the edge of the space, clearing his throat. There is silence. No one knows where to start. Pause as long as you can stand it before finally...

CHUBUKOV: (*clearing throat*) Welcome... Ivan Vassilevitch... It appears that my daughter would like... to talk to you. And... yeah. Good luck. (*exits*)

LOMOV: (*muttering in a daze*) My foot's gone to sleep... (*eye twitch*) My eye...

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*smiling and gesturing*) Forgive us, Ivan Vassilevitch, we were all a little... um... heated...

LOMOV: I see spots.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Let's start over. Wipe the slate clean. (*makes a wiping motion*) There. What's past is past. (*takes a breath*) Please. I beg of you. Sit in the good chair.

LOMOV: (*with horror*) No!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Please!

LOMOV: No!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: I insist.

LOMOV: Never!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Don't be stupid!

LOMOV: I will never sit in that chair again!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: If I say you're going to sit in that chair, you will sit in it!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA runs over and drags LOMOV to the good chair and pushes him into it. LOMOV resists the whole way. It is quite the battle. Finally she gets him in the chair.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: There! (*sits*) So! Let's start again. Clean slate. (*she makes a "wipe the slate clean" gesture*) I remember now: Oxen Meadows are yours.

LOMOV: The Meadows?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Yes, the Oxen Meadows. That's what we are talking about. The Meadows are yours. Of course they are. We were wrong. We admit it. Ok?

LOMOV: My aunt's grandmother gave the land to your father's grandfather's peasants...

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Yes, yes of course. *(makes a ready-for-the-proposal pose)* Now, what else could we talk about?

LOMOV: Thank you, Natalya Stepanovna. I only came on so strong on principle. It's the principle of the thing when someone accuses you of something and –

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: *(getting annoyed)* Yes, yes. I got it. You were right and we were wrong. It's water under the bridge. We wiped the slate clean, remember? *(makes the wiping motion again)* Now. *(leaning in a little too hard)* What else could we talk about? *(LOMOV shrieks a little and cowers in the chair. NATALYA STEPANOVNA reigns it back.)* What else could we talk about? Hmmmmmm? *(She floats her left hand toward him and hums a little of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March." He does not respond. She slumps and changes the subject.)* Are you going to start hunting soon?

LOMOV: *(taking a breath and everything is back to normal)* Why yes, although have you heard? My dog, Guess, has gone lame.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Oh how sad! What happened?

LOMOV: I don't know... must have got twisted, or bitten by some other dog... *(sighing)* Guess is my very best dog.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: So sad.

LOMOV: A first-rate dog.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: *(not sincerely)* Yes...

LOMOV: The best dog in the county.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Oh.....

There is a pause. They sit. LOMOV twitches slightly a couple of times. NATALYA is trying to contain something. She tries and tries. Finally she can't.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Well, he's not as good as our Squeezer.

LOMOV: What?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Squeezer is a much better dog than Guess.

LOMOV: Squeezer better than Guess? You're kidding.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: You can't deny it.

LOMOV: I can and I do. (*laughing*) Squeezer better than Guess.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Of course he's better. Squeezer is a young dog.

LOMOV: He's overshot. That means he's a bad hunter.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Overshot?

LOMOV: His lower jaw is shorter than the upper.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: I know what overshot means. I don't recall you ever being close enough to Squeezer to have measured his jaw.

LOMOV: He'll be all right at following, but not if you want him to get hold of anything.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*Standing. All the way to 100.*) Our Squeezer is a thoroughbred. He has an impeccable pedigree. Guess is old and ugly and completely worn-out!

LOMOV: He may be old but I wouldn't take five Squeezers for him. Squeezers are ordinary. And cheap. Everyone has a Squeezer!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Stop saying Squeezer!

LOMOV: (*leaning forward*) I'll bet you can find a Squeezer under every bush!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Get out of that chair!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA goes to yank LOMOV, who leaps up before she can grab him.

LOMOV: Ha! I wouldn't sit in that chair if you paid me! Ha ha! (*he blows a raspberry at her*)

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Squeezer is a hundred times better than your silly Guess.

LOMOV: You must think I'm blind.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: (*leaping on the furniture*) Squeezer is better!

LOMOV: (*leaping on the furniture*) Guess!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Squeezer!

LOMOV: Shut up!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: You shut up!

LOMOV: You!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: You!

They continue to argue. CHUBUKOV wanders in, sees the fighting, and gives a big sigh. Finally, she steps in.

CHUBUKOV: HEY! *(the two stop fighting)* Are you getting married or not?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: *(leaping off the chair and running over)* Mama, you have to set him straight!

CHUBUKOV: *(trying to get away)* Ack!

LOMOV: *(leaping off the chair and running over)* Svetlana Milailovna, you cannot deny it! You can't!

CHUBUKOV: *(trying to get away)* Get away from me!

They both chase CHUBUKOV around the room.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: *(speaking at the same time as LOMOV)* Who is the better dog, our Squeezer or his Guess?

LOMOV: *(speaking at the same time as NATALYA)* Svetlana Milailovna, you can't deny it! You can't deny Guess is better than Squeezer!

CHUBUKOV: ENOUGH! *(the two freeze)* Sit! *(the two sit)* Breathe! *(They both breathe. This time she speaks with much more annoyance.)* In and out. In and out. Sitting and breathing. Ok? Now. What are we yelling about?

LOMOV: *(leaping up)* Your Squeezer is overshot.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Ha!

CHUBUKOV: Overshot? And what if he is? He's the best dog in the district.

LOMOV: *(trying to advance on CHUBUKOV)* My Guess is the better dog.

CHUBUKOV: *(meets him face-to-face)* That dog is old and short in the muzzle.

LOMOV: *(scurrying away and now keeping as much distance as possible between him and CHUBUKOV)* You know on the Marusinsky hunt my Guess ran neck-and-neck with the Count's dog, while your Squeezer was left behind.

CHUBUKOV: (*pursuing LOMOV*) He got left behind because the Count hit him with his whip.

LOMOV: With good reason! The dogs were supposed to be chasing the fox and Squeezer went after a sheep!

CHUBUKOV: That's not true and you know it!

LOMOV: (*starts twitching*) My eye! Oh no! (*clamps a hand on his eye*) I can't! (*shoulders and arms twitch*) Stop it, stop it, Stoooooooooop it!

LOMOV starts stumbling around the room. Both NATALYA and CHUBUKOV chase him around the space.

CHUBUKOV: What are you doing?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: What sort of a hunter are you with all that twitching?

LOMOV: (*twitching*) Oh shut up!

CHUBUKOV: How dare you speak to my daughter that way!

LOMOV: (*twitching*) You shut up too!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: How dare you speak to my mother that way! What's wrong with you?

LOMOV: You! You're what's wrong with me! The two of you will be the death of – (*twitching all over*) There, there, there! My shoulder's come off! Where's my shoulder? Where is it? What have you done with it?! (*collapses into the good chair*) Doctor! (*faints*)

There is silence. NATALYA STEPANOVNA and CHUBUKOV stare at LOMOV, at each other, and back at LOMOV.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: What was that?

CHUBUKOV: Unbelievable. (*shaking LOMOV*) Ivan Vassilevitch. You can't sleep in our good chair!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA picks up one of LOMOV's arms and lets go. It flops down.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: Oh no. Mama!

CHUBUKOV: What?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA: He's dead!

Name Pronunciation Guide

This page is just a guide when it comes to pronunciation. It is neither required nor suggested that any one speaks with a Russian accent. Use your character's voice, and say the pronunciation with confidence within that voice.

Decide if your character says names correctly, incorrectly the same way all the time, or incorrectly and different each time. How your character respects another character should be directly connected to how you say their name.

The CAPS indicate a slight emphasis. Slide the syllables together. And speak with confidence.

The Anniversary

Andrey Andreyevitch Shipuchin: AHN-dreh an-DREY-e-vihch shee-POO-chin

Tatiana Alexeyevna: ta-ti-AH-nah a-lex-ee-EV-nuh

Yelena Nicolaevna Khirin: ye-LEN-a ni-col-a-EV-nuh KEE-rin

Nastasya Fyodorovna Merchutkina: nah-TASH-ye-a fee-or-dor-OV-nuh mer-chut-KEE-nah

The Proposal

Svetlana Milailovna Chubukov: suvet-LA-nuh mill-ail-OV-nuh CHEW-bu-koff

Natalya Stepanovna: nah-TAL-ya ste-pan-NEH-vah (yes that's neh rather than no)

Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov: E-van vas-SIL-e-vihch LOH-mof

The Bear

Elena Ivanovna Popova: e-LEN-a e-van-OHV-na pop-OH-va

Grigory Stepanovitch Smirnov: GREE-gor-ee ste-pan-OH-vihch SMEER-nof

Ludmilla: lud-MEE-la

The Anniversary - Technical Requirements

Mentioned Costume Pieces

Andrey Andreyevitch Shipuchin: while nothing specific is mentioned, Shipuchin does believe in being fashionable. This should be reflected in their costume.

Tatiana Alexeyevna: Tatiana is dressed in travel attire. Shipuchin mentions that she's not dressed for the Bank's anniversary dinner. Her outfit must have sleeves.

Yelena Nicolaevna Khirin: A worn jacket. Shipuchin mentions that she looks untidy.

Nastasya Fyodorovna Merchutkina: She pulls a doctor's certificate either out of her costume or from a purse.

Props

- Papers, pencil, eraser, calculator, bookkeeping ledger, a folder with a written report (Khirin)
- Achievement plaque (Shipuchin)
- A piece of paper, a written petition (Merchutkina)
- Money/Wallet (Shipuchin)
- A piece of paper, a doctor's certificate (Merchutkina)

Necessary Set Pieces

The goal is that the location looks lush and deliberately luxurious. Velvet, statues, flowers, carpet, pictures

Two desks that are each dressed to reflect the personality and job status of Khirin (the bookkeeper) and Shipuchin (Chairman of the Bank)

The Proposal - Technical Requirements

Mentioned Costume Pieces

Natalya Stepanovna: Wears an apron.

Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov: Formal dress, described as an New Year's Eve outfit, or a party outfit; handkerchief.

Props

- Book (Chubukov)
- Water jug and glasses

Necessary Set Pieces

A good chair that clearly looks better than the others in the room.

All the furniture should be solid enough so that the characters can leap up and off of it.

The Bear - Technical Requirements

Mentioned Costume Pieces

Elena Ivanovna Popova: Dressed in black to represent mourning. But not crepe.

Props

- Silverware, polishing cloth, polish (Ludmilla)
- Couch pillows (Ludmilla)
- A large framed photo of Elena's dead husband (Popova, Ludmilla)
- Tea towel (Ludmilla)
- A chicken leg (Ludmilla)
- Bowl of soup (Ludmilla)
- Sandwich (Ludmilla)
- Glass of water x2 (Ludmilla)
- Glass of "vodka" (Ludmilla)
- Small bell (Popova)
- Bag of chips (Ludmilla)
- Two rubber chickens (Smirnov, Popova)

Necessary Set Pieces

A small table with silverware and polishing accessories.

There should be side tables for Ludmilla to put glasses on.

The furniture should be solid enough so that Smirnov can leap up and off of it.



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