

# **THE ANNIVERSARY**

*Anton Chekov*

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# THE ANNIVERSARY

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## CHARACTERS

- ANDREY ANDREYEVITCH SHIPUCHIN, Chairman of the N Joint Stock Bank, a middle-aged man, with a monocle
- TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA, his wife, aged 25
- KUSMA NICOLAIEVITCH KHIRIN, the bank's aged book-keeper
- NASTASYA FYODOROVNA MERCHUTKINA, an old woman wearing an old-fashioned cloak
- DIRECTORS OF THE BANK
- EMPLOYEES OF THE BANK

The action takes place at the Bank

The private office of the Chairman of Directors. On the left is a door, leading into the public department. There are two desks. The furniture aims at a deliberately luxurious effect, with armchairs covered in velvet, flowers, statues, carpets, and a telephone. It is midday. KHIRIN is alone; he wears long felt boots, and is shouting through the door.

**KHIRIN.** Send out to the chemist for 15 copecks' worth of valerian drops, and tell them to bring some drinking water into the Directors' office! This is the hundredth time I've asked! [Goes to a desk] I'm absolutely tired out. This is the fourth day I've been working, without a chance of shutting my eyes. From morning to evening I work here, from evening to morning at home. [Coughs] And I've got an inflammation all over me. I'm hot and cold, and I cough, and my legs ache, and there's something dancing before my eyes. [Sits] Our scoundrel of a Chairman, the brute, is going to read a report at a general meeting. "Our Bank, its Present and Future." You'd think he was a Gambetta. . . . [At work] Two . . . one . . . one . . . six . . . nought . . . seven. . . . Next, six . . . nought . . . one . . . six. . . . He just wants to throw dust into people's eyes, and so I sit here and work for him like a galley-slave! This report of his is poetic fiction and nothing more, and here I've got to sit day after day and add figures, devil take his soul! [Rattles on his counting-frame] I can't stand it! [Writing] That is, one . . . three . . . seven. . . two . . . one . . . nought. . . . He promised to reward me for my work. If everything goes well to-day and the public is properly put into blinkers, he's promised me a gold charm and 300 roubles bonus. . . . We'll see. [Works] Yes, but if my work all goes for nothing, then you'd better look out. . . . I'm very excitable. . . . If I lose my temper I'm capable of committing some crime, so look out! Yes!

Noise and applause behind the scenes. SHIPUCHIN'S voice: "Thank you! Thank you! I am extremely grateful." Enter SHIPUCHIN. He wears a frockcoat and white tie; he carries an album which has been just presented to him.

**SHIPUCHIN.** [At the door, addresses the outer office] This present, my dear colleagues, will be preserved to the day of my death, as a memory of the happiest days of my life! Yes, gentlemen! Once more, I thank you! [Throws a kiss into the air and turns to KHIRIN] My dear, my respected Kusma Nicolaievitch!

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All the time that SHIPUCHIN is on the stage, clerks intermittently come in with papers for his signature and go out.

**KHIRIN.** [Standing up] I have the honour to congratulate you, Andrey Andreyevitch, on the fiftieth anniversary of our Bank, and hope that . . .

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Warmly shakes hands] Thank you, my dear sir! Thank you! I think that in view of the unique character of the day, as it is an anniversary, we may kiss each other! . . . [They kiss] I am very, very glad! Thank you for your service . . . for everything! If, in the course of the time during which I have had the honour to be Chairman of this Bank anything useful has been done, the credit is due, more than to anybody else, to my colleagues. [Sighs] Yes, fifteen years! Fifteen years as my name's Shipuchin! [Changes his tone] Where's my report? Is it getting on?

**KHIRIN.** Yes; there's only five pages left.

**SHIPUCHIN.** Excellent. Then it will be ready by three?

**KHIRIN.** If nothing occurs to disturb me, I'll get it done. Nothing of any importance is now left.

**SHIPUCHIN.** Splendid. Splendid, as my name's Shipuchin! The general meeting will be at four. If you please, my dear fellow. Give me the first half, I'll peruse it. . . . Quick. . . . [Takes the report] I base enormous hopes on this report. It's my *profession de foi*, or, better still, my firework.\* My firework, as my name's Shipuchin! [Sits and reads the report to himself] I'm hellishly tired. . . . My gout kept on giving me trouble last night, all the morning I was running about, and then these excitements, ovations, agitations . . . I'm tired!

\* The actual word employed.

**KHIRIN.** Two. . . nought. . . nought . . . three . . . nine . . . two . . . nought. I can't see straight after all these figures. . . . Three. . . one . . . six. . . four . . . one . . . five. . . . [Uses the counting-frame.]

**SHIPUCHIN.** Another unpleasantness. . . . This morning your wife came to see me and complained about you once again. Said that last night you threatened her and her sister with a knife. Kusma Nicolaievitch, what do you mean by that? Oh, oh!

**KHIRIN.** [Rudely] As it's an anniversary, Andrey Andreyevitch, I'll ask for a special favour. Please, even if it's only out of respect for my toil, don't interfere in my family life. Please!

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Sighs] Yours is an impossible character, Kusma Nicolaievitch! You're an excellent and respected man, but you behave to women like some scoundrel. Yes, really. I don't understand why you hate them so?

**KHIRIN.** I wish I could understand why you love them so! [Pause.]

**SHIPUCHIN.** The employees have just presented me with an album; and the Directors, as I've heard, are going to give me an address and a silver loving-cup. . . . [Playing with his monocle] Very nice, as my name's Shipuchin! It isn't excessive. A certain pomp is essential to the reputation of the Bank, devil take it! You know everything, of course. . . . I composed the address myself, and I bought the cup myself, too. . . . Well, then there was 45 roubles for the cover of the address, but you can't do without that. They'd never have thought of it for themselves. [Looks round] Look at the furniture! Just look at it! They say I'm stingy, that all I want is that the locks on the doors should be polished, that the employees should wear fashionable ties, and that a fat hall-porter should stand by the door. No, no, sirs. Polished locks and a fat porter mean a good deal. I can behave as I like at home, eat and sleep like a pig, get drunk. . . .

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**KHIRIN.** Please don't make hints.

**SHIPUCHIN.** Nobody's making hints! What an impossible character yours is. . . . As I was saying, at home I can live like a tradesman, a *parvenu*, and be up to any games I like, but here everything must be *en grand*. This is a Bank! Here every detail must *imponiren*, so to speak, and have a majestic appearance. [He picks up a paper from the floor and throws it into the fireplace] My service to the Bank has been just this I've raised its reputation. A thing of immense importance is tone! Immense, as my name's Shipuchin! [Looks over KHIRIN] My dear man, a deputation of shareholders may come here any moment, and there you are in felt boots, wearing a scarf . . . in some absurdly coloured jacket. . . . You might have put on a frock-coat, or at any rate a dark jacket. . . .

**KHIRIN.** My health matters more to me than your shareholders. I've an inflammation all over me.

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Excitedly] But you will admit that it's untidy! You spoil the *ensemble*!

**KHIRIN.** If the deputation comes I can go and hide myself. It won't matter if . . . seven . . . one . . . seven . . . two . . . one . . . five . . . nought. I don't like untidiness myself. . . . Seven. . . two. . . nine. . . [Uses the counting-frame] I can't stand untidiness! It would have been wiser of you not to have invited ladies to to-day's anniversary dinner. . . .

**SHIPUCHIN.** Oh, that's nothing.

**KHIRIN.** I know that you're going to have the hall filled with them to-night to make a good show, but you look out, or they'll spoil everything. They cause all sorts of mischief and disorder.

**SHIPUCHIN.** On the contrary, feminine society elevates!

**KHIRIN.** Yes. . . . Your wife seems intelligent, but on the Monday of last week she let something off that upset me for two days. In front of a lot of people she suddenly asks: "Is it true that at our Bank my husband bought up a lot of the shares of the Driazhsky-Priazhsky Bank, which have been falling on exchange? My husband is so annoyed about it!" This in front of people. Why do you tell them everything, I don't understand. Do you want them to get you into serious trouble?

**SHIPUCHIN.** Well, that's enough, enough! All that's too dull for an anniversary. Which reminds me, by the way. [Looks at the time] My wife ought to be here soon. I really ought to have gone to the station, to meet the poor little thing, but there's no time. . . . and I'm tired. I must say I'm not glad of her! That is to say, I am glad, but I'd be gladder if she only stayed another couple of days with her mother. She'll want me to spend the whole evening with her to-night, whereas we have arranged a little excursion for ourselves. . . . [Shivers] Oh, my nerves have already started dancing me about. They are so strained that I think the very smallest trifle would be enough to make me break into tears! No, I must be strong, as my name's Shipuchin!

**Enter TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA SHIPUCHIN in a waterproof, with a little travelling satchel slung across her shoulder.**

**SHIPUCHIN.** Ah! In the nick of time!

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** Darling!

**[Runs to her husband: a prolonged kiss.**

**SHIPUCHIN.** We were only speaking of you just now! [Looks at his watch.]

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**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** [Panting] Were you very dull without me? Are you well? I haven't been home yet, I came here straight from the station. I've a lot, a lot to tell you. . . . I couldn't wait. . . . I shan't take off my clothes, I'll only stay a minute. [To KHIRIN] Good morning, Kusma Nicolaievitch! [To her husband] Is everything all right at home?

**SHIPUCHIN.** Yes, quite. And, you know, you've got to look plumper and better this week. . . . Well, what sort of a time did you have?

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** Splendid. Mamma and Katya send their regards. Vassili Andreitch sends you a kiss. [Kisses him] Aunt sends you a jar of jam, and is annoyed because you don't write. Zina sends you a kiss. [Kisses.] Oh, if you knew what's happened. If you only knew! I'm even frightened to tell you! Oh, if you only knew! But I see by your eyes that you're sorry I came!

**SHIPUCHIN.** On the contrary. . . . Darling. . . . [Kisses her. ]

**KHIRIN coughs angrily.**

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** Oh, poor Katya, poor Katya! I'm so sorry for her, so sorry for her.

**SHIPUCHIN.** This is the Bank's anniversary to-day, darling, we may get a deputation of the shareholders at any moment, and you're not dressed.

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** Oh, yes, the anniversary! I congratulate you, gentlemen. I wish you. . . . So it means that to-day's the day of the meeting, the dinner. . . . That's good. And do you remember that beautiful address which you spent such a long time composing for the shareholders? Will it be read to-day?

**KHIRIN coughs angrily.**

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Confused] My dear, we don't talk about these things. You'd really better go home.

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** In a minute, in a minute. I'll tell you everything in one minute and go. I'll tell you from the very beginning. Well. . . . When you were seeing me off, you remember I was sitting next to that stout lady, and I began to read. I don't like to talk in the train. I read for three stations and didn't say a word to anyone. . . . Well, then the evening set in, and I felt so mournful, you know, with such sad thoughts! A young man was sitting opposite me not a bad-looking fellow, a brunette. . . . Well, we fell into conversation. . . . A sailor came along then, then some student or other. . . . [Laughs] I told them that I wasn't married . . . and they did look after me! We chattered till midnight, the brunette kept on telling the most awfully funny stories, and the sailor kept on singing. My chest began to ache from laughing. And when the sailor oh, those sailors! when he got to know my name was TATIANA, you know what he sang? [Sings in a bass voice]" Onegin don't let me conceal it, I love Tatiana madly!"\* [Roars with laughter.]

\*From the opera *Evgeni Onegin* words by Pushkin.

**KHIRIN coughs angrily.**

**SHIPUCHIN.** Tania, dear, you're disturbing Kusma Nicolaievitch. Go home, dear. . . . Later on. . . .

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** No, no, let him hear if he wants to, it's awfully interesting. I'll end in a minute. Serezha came to meet me at the station. Some young man or other turns up, an inspector of taxes, I think . . . quite handsome, especially his eyes. . . . Serezha introduced me, and the three of us rode off together. . . . It was lovely weather. . . .

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Voices behind the stage: "You can't, you can't! What do you want?" Enter MERCHUTKINA, waving her arms about.

**MERCHUTKINA.** What are you dragging at me for. What else! I want him himself! [To SHIPUCHIN] I have the honour, your excellency . . . I am the wife of a civil servant, Nastasya Fyodorovna Merchutkina.

**SHIPUCHIN.** What do you want?

**MERCHUTKINA.** Well, you see, your excellency, my husband has been ill for five months, and while he was at home, getting better, he was suddenly dismissed for no reason, your excellency, and when I went to get his salary, they, you see, deducted 24 roubles 36 copecks from it. What for? I ask. They said, "Well, he drew it from the employees' account, and the others had to make it up." How can that be? How could he draw anything without my permission? No, your excellency! I'm a poor woman . . . my lodgers are all I have to live on. . . . I'm weak and defenceless. . . . Everybody does me some harm, and nobody has a kind word for me.

**SHIPUCHIN.** Excuse me. [Takes a petition from her and reads it standing.]

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** [To KHIRIN] Yes, but first we. . . . Last week I suddenly received a letter from my mother. She writes that a certain Grendilevsky has proposed to my sister Katya. A nice, modest, young man, but with no means of his own, and no assured position. And, unfortunately, just think of it, Katya is absolutely gone on him. What's to be done? Mamma writes telling me to come at once and influence Katya.

**KHIRIN.** [Angrily] Excuse me, you've made me lose my place! You go talking about your mamma and Katya, and I understand nothing; and I've lost my place.

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** What does that matter? You listen when a lady is talking to you! Why are you so angry to-day? Are you in love? [Laughs.]

**SHIPUCHIN.** [To MERCHUTKINA] Excuse me, but what is this ? I can't make head or tail of it.

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** Are you in love? Aha! You're blushing!

**SHIPUCHIN.** [To his wife] Tanya, dear, do go out into the public office for a moment. I shan't be long.

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** All right. [Goes out.]

**SHIPUCHIN.** I don't understand anything of this. You've obviously come to the wrong place, madam. Your petition doesn't concern us at all. You should go to the department in which your husband was employed.

**MERCHUTKINA.** I've been there a good many times these five months, and they wouldn't even look at my petition. I'd given up all hopes, but, thanks to my son-in-law, Boris Matveyitch, I thought of coming to you. "You go, mother," he says, " and apply to Mr. Shipuchin, he's an influential man and can do anything." Help me, your excellency!

**SHIPUCHIN.** We can't do anything for you, Mrs. Merchutkina. You must understand that your husband, so far as I can gather, was in the employ of the Army Medical Department, while this is a private, commercial concern, a bank. Don't you understand that?

**MERCHUTKINA.** Your excellency, I can produce a doctor's certificate of my husband's illness. Here it is, just look at it. . . .

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**SHIPUCHIN.** [Irritated] That's all right; I quite believe you, but it's not our business. [Behind the scene, TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA'S laughter is heard, then a man's. SHIPUCHIN glances at the door] She's disturbing the employees. [To MERCHUTKINA] It's strange and it's even silly. Surely your husband knows where you ought to apply?

**MERCHUTKINA.** Your excellency, I don't let him know anything. He just cried out: "It isn't your business! Get out of this!" And . . .

**SHIPUCHIN.** Madam, I repeat, your husband was in the employ of the Army Medical Department, and this is a bank, a private, commercial concern.

**MERCHUTKINA.** Yes, yes, yes. . . . I understand, my dear. In that case, your excellency, just order them to pay me 15 roubles! I don't mind taking that to be going on with.

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Sighs] Ouf!

**KHIRIN.** Andrey Andreyevitch, I'll never finish the report at this rate

**SHIPUCHIN.** One moment. [To MERCHUTKINA] I can't get any sense out of you. But do understand that your taking this business here is as absurd as if you took a divorce petition to a chemist's or into a gold assay office. [Knock at the door. The voice of TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA is heard, "Can I come in, Andrey?" SHIPUCHIN shouts] Just wait one minute, dear! [To MERCHUTKINA] What has it got to do with us if you haven't been paid? As it happens, madam, this is an anniversary to-day, we're busy . . . and somebody may be coming here at any moment. . . . Excuse me. . . .

**MERCHUTKINA.** Your excellency, have pity on me, an orphan! I'm a weak, defenceless woman. . . . I'm tired to death . . . . I'm having trouble with my lodgers, and on account of my husband, and I've got the house to look after, and my son-in-law is out of work. . . .

**SHIPUCHIN.** Mrs. Merchutkina, I . . . No, excuse me, I can't talk to you! My head's even in a whirl. . . . You are disturbing us and making us waste our time. [Sighs, aside] What a business, as my name's Shipuchin! [To KHIRIN] Kusma Nicolaievitch, will you please explain to Mrs. Merchutkina. [Waves his hand and goes out into public department.

**KHIRIN.** [Approaching MERCHUTKINA, angrily] What do you want?

**MERCHUTKINA.** I'm a weak, defenceless woman. . . . I may look all right, but if you were to take me to pieces you wouldn't find a single healthy bit in me! I can hardly stand on my legs, and I've lost my appetite. I drank my coffee to-day and got no pleasure out of it.

**KHIRIN.** I ask you, what do you want?

**MERCHUTKINA.** Tell them, my dear, to give me 15 roubles, and a month later will do for the rest.

**KHIRIN.** But haven't you been told perfectly plainly that this is a bank!

**MERCHUTKINA.** Yes, yes. . . . And if you like I can show you the doctor's certificate.

**KHIRIN.** Have you got a head on your shoulders, or what?

**MERCHUTKINA.** My dear, I'm asking for what's mine by law. I don't want what isn't mine.

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**KHIRIN.** I ask you, madam, have you got a head on your shoulders, or what? Well, devil take me, I haven't any time to talk to you! I'm busy. . . . [Points to the door] That way, please!

**MERCHUTKINA.** [Surprised] And where's the money?

**KHIRIN.** You haven't a head, but this [Taps the table and then points to his forehead.]

**MERCHUTKINA.** [Offended] What? Well, never mind, never mind. . . . You can do that to your own wife, but I'm the wife of a civil servant. . . . You can't do that to me!

**KHIRIN.** [Losing his temper] Get out of this!

**MERCHUTKINA.** No, no, no . . . none of that!

**KHIRIN.** If you don't get out this second, I'll call for the hall-porter! Get out! [Stamping.]

**MERCHUTKINA.** Never mind, never mind! I'm not afraid! I've seen the like of you before! Miser!

**KHIRIN.** I don't think I've ever seen a more awful woman in my life. . . . Ouf! It's given me a headache. . . . [Breathing heavily] I tell you once more . . . do you hear me? If you don't get out of this, you old devil, I'll grind you into powder! I've got such a character that I'm perfectly capable of laming you for life! I can commit a crime!

**MERCHUTKINA.** I've heard barking dogs before. I'm not afraid. I've seen the like of you before.

**KHIRIN.** [In despair] I can't stand it! I'm ill! I can't! [Sits down at his desk] They've let the Bank get filled with women, and I can't finish my report! I can't.

**MERCHUTKINA.** I don't want anybody else's money, but my own, according to law. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! Sitting in a government office in felt boots. . . .

**Enter SHIPUCHIN and TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.**

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** [Following her husband] We spent the evening at the Berezhnitskys. Katya was wearing a sky-blue frock of foulard silk, cut low at the neck. . . . She looks very well with her hair done over her head, and I did her hair myself. . . . She was perfectly fascinating. . . .

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Who has had enough of it already] Yes, yes . . . fascinating. . . . They may be here any moment. . . .

**MERCHUTKINA.** Your excellency!

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Dully] What else? What do you want?

**MERCHUTKINA.** Your excellency! [Points to KHIRIN] This man . . . this man tapped the table with his finger, and then his head. . . . You told him to look after my affair, but he insults me and says all sorts of things. I'm a weak, defenceless woman. . . .

**SHIPUCHIN.** All right, madam, I'll see to it . . . and take the necessary steps. . . . Go away now . . . later on! [Aside] My gout's coming on!

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**KHIRIN.** [In a low tone to SHIPUCHIN] Andrey Andreyevitch, send for the hall-porter and have her turned out neck and crop! What else can we do?

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Frightened] No, no! She'll kick up a row and we aren't the only people in the building.

**MERCHUTKINA.** Your excellency.

**KHIRIN.** [In a tearful voice] But I've got to finish my report! I won't have time! I won't!

**MERCHUTKINA.** Your excellency, when shall I have the money? I want it now.

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Aside, in dismay] A re-mark-ab-ly beastly woman! [Politely] Madam, I've already told you, this is a bank, a private, commercial concern.

**MERCHUTKINA.** Be a father to me, your excellency. . . . If the doctor's certificate isn't enough, I can get you another from the police. Tell them to give me the money!

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Panting] Ouf!

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** [To MERCHUTKINA] Mother, haven't you already been told that you're disturbing them? What right have you?

**MERCHUTKINA.** Mother, beautiful one, nobody will help me. All I do is to eat and drink, and just now I didn't enjoy my coffee at all.

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Exhausted] How much do you want?

**MERCHUTKINA.** 24 roubles 36 copecks.

**SHIPUCHIN.** All right! [Takes a 25-rouble note out of his pocket-book and gives it to her] Here are 25 roubles. Take it and. . . go!

**KHIRIN coughs angrily.**

**MERCHUTKINA.** I thank you very humbly, your excellency. [Hides the money.]

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** [Sits by her husband] It's time I went home. . . . [Looks at watch] But I haven't done yet. . . . I'll finish in one minute and go away. . . . What a time we had! Yes, what a time! We went to spend the evening at the Berezhnitskys. . . . It was all right, quite fun, but nothing in particular. . . . Katya's devoted Grendilevsky was there, of course. . . . Well, I talked to Katya, cried, and induced her to talk to Grendilevsky and refuse him. Well, I thought, everything's, settled the best possible way; I've quieted mamma down, saved Katya, and can be quiet myself. . . . What do you think? Katya and I were going along the avenue, just before supper, and suddenly . . . [Excitedly] And suddenly we heard a shot. . . . No, I can't talk about it calmly! [Waves her handkerchief] No, I can't!

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Sighs] Ouf!

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** [Weeps] We ran to the summer-house, and there . . . there poor Grendilevsky was lying . . . with a pistol in his hand. . . .

**SHIPUCHIN.** No, I can't stand this! I can't stand it! [To MERCHUTKINA] What else do you want?

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**MERCHUTKINA.** Your excellency, can't my husband go back to his job?

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** [Weeping] He'd shot himself right in the heart . . . here. . . . And the poor man had fallen down senseless. . . . And he was awfully frightened, as he lay there . . . and asked for a doctor. A doctor came soon . . . and saved the unhappy man. . . .

**MERCHUTKINA.** Your excellency, can't my husband go back to his job?

**SHIPUCHIN.** No, I can't stand this! [Weeps] I can't stand it! [Stretches out both his hands in despair to KHIRIN] Drive her away! Drive her away, I implore you!

**KHIRIN.** [Goes up to TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA] Get out of this!

**SHIPUCHIN.** Not her, but this one . . . this awful woman. . . . [Points] That one!

**KHIRIN.** [Not understanding, to TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA] Get out of this! [Stamps] Get out!

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** What? What are you doing? Have you taken leave of your senses?

**SHIPUCHIN.** It's awful? I'm a miserable man! Drive her out! Out with her!

**KHIRIN.** [To TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA] Out of it! I'll cripple you! I'll knock you out of shape! I'll break the law!

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** [Running from him; he chases her] How dare you! You impudent fellow! [Shouts] Andrey! Help! Andrey! [Screams. ]

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Chasing them] Stop! I implore you! Not such a noise? Have pity on me!

**KHIRIN.** [Chasing MERCHUTKINA] Out of this! Catch her! Hit her! Cut her into pieces!

**SHIPUCHIN.** [Shouts] Stop! I ask you! I implore you!

**MERCHUTKINA.** Little fathers . . little fathers! [Screams] Little fathers! . . .

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** [Shouts] Help! Help! . . . Oh, oh . . . I'm sick, I'm sick! [Jumps on to a chair, then falls on to the sofa and groans as if in a faint.]

**KHIRIN.** [Chasing MERCHUTKINA] Hit her! Beat her! Cut her to pieces!

**MERCHUTKINA.** Oh, oh . . . little fathers, it's all dark before me! Ah! [Falls senseless into SHIPUCHIN'S arms. There is a knock at the door; a VOICE announces THE DEPUTATION] The deputation . . . reputation . . . occupation . . .

**KHIRIN.** [Stamps] Get out of it, devil take me! [Turns up his sleeves] Give her to me: I may break the law!

A deputation of five men enters; they all wear frockcoats. One carries the velvet-covered address, another, the loving-cup. Employees look in at the door, from the public department. TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA on the sofa, and MERCHUTKINA in SHIPUCHIN'S arms are both groaning.

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**ONE OF THE DEPUTATION.** [Reads aloud] "Deeply respected and dear Andrey Andreyevitch! Throwing a retrospective glance at the past history of our financial administration, and reviewing in our minds its gradual development, we receive an extremely satisfactory impression. It is true that in the first period of its existence, the inconsiderable amount of its capital, and the absence of serious operations of any description, and also the indefinite aims of this bank, made us attach an extreme importance to the question raised by Hamlet, 'To be or not to be,' and at one time there were even voices to be heard demanding our liquidation. But at that moment you become the head of our concern. Your knowledge, energies, and your native tact were the causes of extraordinary success and widespread extension. The reputation of the bank . . . [Coughs] reputation of the bank . . .

**MERCHUTKINA.** [Groans] Oh! Oh!

**TATIANA ALEXEYEVNA.** [Groans] Water! Water!

**THE MEMBER OF THE DEPUTATION.** [Continues] The reputation [Coughs] . . . the reputation of the bank has been raised by you to such a height that we are now the rivals of the best foreign concerns.

**SHIPUCHIN.** Deputation . . . reputation . . . occupation. . . . Two friends that had a walk at night, held converse by the pale moonlight. . . . Oh tell me not, that youth is vain, that jealousy has turned my brain.

**THE MEMBER OF THE DEPUTATION.** [Continues in confusion] Then, throwing an objective glance at the present condition of things, we, deeply respected and dear Andrey Andreyevitch . . . [Lowering his voice] In that case, we'll do it later on. . . . Yes, later on. . . ." [DEPUTATION goes out in confusion.]

**Curtain.**