

**A DOCTOR'S VISIT**

AN ADAPTATION OF A SHORT STORY BY CHEKHOV

By Guy Fredrick Glass

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## Cast of Characters

KOROLYOV: A doctor in his 30's-40's who is trying hard to get a practice off the ground. He is a good man, but can be impatient at times.

BORIS: The doctor's eager apprentice, barely twenty, but he looks younger.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA: A thin spinster of indeterminate age, with horn-rimmed glasses, and mannerisms such as wiping her lips as she talks. A bossy know-it-all. Comic role.

LIZA: Pronounced Leez-uh. A twenty-year old, rather childlike, heiress.

MADAME LYALIKOV: Liza's mother. A stout, timid woman in her 50's who helplessly flutters about.

## Time and Place

A street in Moscow, later a small factory town outside Moscow.

1890's

(The stage is dark. Dawn: lights gradually come up but remain dim. From afar we hear frogs croaking and birds singing. A young woman wanders, disoriented, across the stage in her nightgown. She trips and falls. There are buildings in the distance, but we cannot make them out. Suddenly, a burning furnace creates the effect of making two windows glow, and we hear factory noises. Frightened, the woman runs off. Lights fade to black. Lights come up on a street in Moscow. At one end of the stage, a window, elevated from the ground. The doctor's apprentice, BORIS, runs across the stage, stopping abruptly in front of the window.)

BORIS

(out of breath)

Doctor Korolyov! Doctor Korolyov!

(Pause.)

BORIS

Are you awake?

(We hear yawning off stage.)

BORIS

Come quickly!

KOROLYOV

(off stage, yawning)

Has Ekaterina's water broken?

BORIS

Not that.

KOROLYOV

Has Ivan Ivanovich's gouty great toe been acting up?

BORIS

Not that either.

KOROLYOV

Well, I've only got two patients.

BORIS

(loudly)

Please get up!

KOROLYOV

And one student. One very loud student. First thing in the morning.

Sorry doctor, but...

KOROLYOV

Do you not wish to become a doctor some day?

BORIS

Greatly!

KOROLYOV

Then memorize all the books on my bookcase, dissect all the rats and frogs you can find.

(yawning)

And come back at noon.

BORIS

But sir, you have been asked...asked...

KOROLYOV

More charity work? I can't pay my bills with rutabagas and turnips.

BORIS

No, you have...

KOROLYOV

Out with it, young man!

BORIS

That is, the professor has been asked. But he cannot. Did you not say I should...if he should...

KOROLYOV

(interrupting)

He has finally made a referral.

(KOROLYOV enters, in a sleeping gown.)

Why did you not just say so?

BORIS

(loudly)

I was trying...

(KOROLYOV covers BORIS's mouth.)

KOROLYOV

You will raise the dead with that voice.

BORIS

...you see why...

KOROLYOV

(suspiciously)

Why indeed. Why send me a patient all of a sudden?

BORIS

...the professor also said...

KOROLYOV

Said what? That I will be paid in radishes?

BORIS

That he cannot be bothered to see a new patient if it requires a long train ride.

KOROLYOV

Aha! He is just trying to dump...

BORIS

No matter how outrageously rich that patient might be.

KOROLYOV

Now I am wide awake.

(Beat.)

Fetch my bag, Boris. We depart directly.

BORIS

Yes, doctor!

KOROLYOV

Your first real case. At last I will have something to teach you.

(BORIS excitedly runs across the stage. Lights go off. We hear factory noises, then a door slam, then voices in the dark.)

MADAME LYALIKOV

Where have you been all night, Liza?

(Pause.)

Liza?

LIZA

Nowhere.

MADAME LYALIKOV

Your bed is not even slept in. If only your dear father were still here. I do not know what else to do. I have sent for another doctor.

LIZA

Yet another?

MADAME LYALIKOV

This one comes from the city.

LIZA

All the way from Moscow?

(She weeps.)

Am I that sick?

MADAME LYALIKOV

Do not cry, my daughter. Please do not.

(LIZA weeps louder.)

MADAME LYALIKOV

How can you have left me, Pyotr Nikanoritch? What shall we do? My God, what shall we do?

(Weeping, then factory noises fading to the sound of horses' hooves on the street. The stage remains dark. We hear the voices of KOROLYOV and BORIS, being driven in a horse-drawn carriage by a coachman.)

BORIS

Why are they bowing?

KOROLYOV

Who is?

BORIS

All those people.

KOROLYOV

So they are. Not yet an hour outside Moscow, and what a different world we are in. These ghastly factory towns!

(loudly, to an unseen coachman)

Driver, how far to the house of Madame...Madame...

(Pause.)

(to BORIS)

It would be helpful, to be sure, if we knew the name of the family we are calling on.

(Pause.)

(to the coachman)

I see you are a man of many words.

BORIS

It is Lyalikov, sir. Says so on this paper.

KOROLYOV

(to the coachman)

And the factory? Driver, how many souls in there barely ever see the light of day?

(Pause.)

(to the coachman)

I do not bite you know. My grandfather was a serf.

(We hear the neighing of horses. The carriage comes to a halt. We hear the sound of passengers disembarking.)

BORIS

Watch your step getting off the coach, doctor.

KOROLYOV

I have gotten nowhere with this fellow.

BORIS

The people here are quiet.

KOROLYOV

Beaten down is more like it. This is your first lesson, Boris.

BORIS

It is?

KOROLYOV

It does not matter that we have not two kopecks to rub together. They will always hate us. And when we meet with the Lyalikovs you will see why.

(Lights come up on KOROLYOV and BORIS, carrying a medical bag, standing by the front door of an imposing mansion with bushes in front of it. To one end of the stage, the edge of a factory, smoke bellowing from the chimney.)

BORIS

(gasping)

What a big house!

KOROLYOV

Big indeed, and very very ugly. Do you know why we are here?

BORIS

To see a patient?

KOROLYOV

Of course.

BORIS

To make enough money to pay the rent?

KOROLYOV

That too.

BORIS

Is that not all?

KOROLYOV

We are here because I have been entrusted with your education. Let us use this as an opportunity to sharpen your skills. Your eyes were glued to the window. Tell me what you saw from the coach.

BORIS

People.

KOROLYOV

Anything else?

BORIS

Houses? Trees?

KOROLYOV

Saturday evening. The sun is setting. The little farmhouses, the birch trees...

BORIS

Oh!

KOROLYOV

As if fields, woods, and sun were all getting ready, together, on the eve of the Sabbath to rest, perhaps even to pray.

BORIS

I did not see any of that.

KOROLYOV

And once inside the factory gates, tiny houses of workmen, linens hanging on railings, five enormous blocks of buildings with tall chimneys, pitiful gardens, vermin, faces filled with nervous exhaustion, bewilderment, vodka...

BORIS

How can I not have seen those things!

KOROLYOV

And over it all a sort of grey powder.

(We hear women's voices coming from the house.)

KOROLYOV

All around us the effects of wearisome, of unhealthy toil. And what is the result? You see here, right by the front door, a beautiful lilac bush, coated with soot.



BORIS

Perhaps there is no gardener.

KOROLYOV

We have not been asked to tend to the plants, nor to the needs of the factory workers.

(The door to the mansion opens.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

(off stage)

Please come in, doctor. We are in real trouble.

KOROLYOV

The life expectancy here is probably thirty-five. But it is a pampered rich girl we have been asked to care for. End of lesson.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

Here, this way.

(We hear sighs and whisperings, then two hand claps.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

Prepare the mistress for the doctor. You! Olga! Go upstairs!

(The sound of footsteps running up the stairs. CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA pokes her head out the door. As KOROLYOV and BORIS enter the house, the scene changes to the foyer, which contains a staircase and a table with a lamp. MADAME LYALIKOV, a short, stout, timid lady anxiously flutters about. She is eclipsed by CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA, a very thin woman with short hair and horn-rimmed glasses. KOROLYOV holds out his hand.)

KOROLYOV

You must be Madame Lyalikov.

(MADAME LYALIKOV looks to CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA for approval, then takes his hand.)

MADAME LYALIKOV

(timidly)

Yes.

(She quickly drops his hand.)

KOROLYOV

I am sorry to hear your daughter is unwell.

MADAME LYALIKOV

She is unwell. So unwell.

(She wipes a tear from her cheek.  
CHRISTINA DMITRYENA walks in front of  
her.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

Decidedly unwell.

KOROLYOV

Then let us dispense with the usual formalities. I will go  
to her immediately.

MADAME LYALIKOV

I would be so very grateful.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

He will stay, if he pleases. There is much to tell him about  
the mistress.

MADAME LYALIKOV

Yes, Christina Dmitryevna.

(CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA speaks in a sing-  
song voice, continually wiping her lips  
with her hand.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

On the one hand it is all extremely urgent. On the other  
hand, she has been, one might say, ailing since she was a  
child.

KOROLYOV

May I examine her?

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

The doctors say it is all nerves. Well, doctors, at least in  
this district, are ignoramuses. Personally, I do not believe  
one single word that comes out of their mouth. Not one.

KOROLYOV

In my experience...

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

As a girl she was scrofulous, or at least it appeared that  
way. The doctors drove it inwards. Well, that is what I  
postulate. Of course, I am not a doctor.

(She snorts.)

And yet I do have opinions. Do I not, Madame Lyalikov?

MADAME LYALIKOV

You do, Christina Dmitryevna.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

To make a long story short, short indeed for the sake of brevity, for two nights no one has slept. How can one even entertain the possibility of doing so, when an heiress - and she is an heiress, make no mistake - suffers from morning till night with a most violent, fearsome palpitation.

MADAME LYALIKOV

She is unwell.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

Acutely unwell.

(We hear an off stage cry. MADAME LYALIKOV swoons.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

That will have to suffice. I shall direct you to the mistress.

KOROLYOV

(to BORIS)

Fetch my stethoscope.

(CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA notices BORIS for the first time.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

A young man! That is liable to drive the invalid into a state of apoplexy.

MADAME LYALIKOV

Would you like a cup of cocoa?

(CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA glares.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

I most assuredly do not admit young men into the mistress's bedchambers.

KOROLYOV

And I most assuredly do not make house calls without my junior doctor.

(BORIS takes the stethoscope from the bag and hands it to KOROLYOV.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

(icily)

We have expected the professor. And we have not had the pleasure of receiving him.

KOROLYOV

You have had the pleasure of receiving Doctor Korolyov. And his assistant.

(We hear another off stage cry.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

Hmph.

(She picks up the lamp, and KOROLYOV and BORIS follow her as she ascends a staircase. They enter the bedroom of LIZA, a young woman of about twenty, but more like a child, lying in bed with the covers over her. KOROLYOV approaches her.)

KOROLYOV

I am the doctor come to see you.

(LIZA slowly pulls the covers away.)

KOROLYOV

Good evening.

(He takes her hand. She sits up.)

LIZA

Who are you?

KOROLYOV

Doctor Korolyov. Do you mind if I examine you?

(She nods. He gently pulls down her nightgown to expose her shoulders, then palpates and knocks on her chest.)

LIZA

I have palpitations of the heart. They were very bad last night.

KOROLYOV

I see.

LIZA

Will you give me something?

KOROLYOV

Perhaps.

(He examines her with the stethoscope, then shrugs his shoulders.)

The heart is in good shape.

LIZA

Have I not had a heart attack?

KOROLYOV

Absolutely not. It is all satisfactory. As for your nerves, they seem to be better too.

(LIZA sees BORIS.)

LIZA

(surprised)

Who is that?

KOROLYOV

If you do not want him here, I will ask him to leave.

LIZA

Oh! No.

(She makes a gesture to BORIS to come closer to her. KOROLYOV lets him use the stethoscope.)

KOROLYOV

You should rest now.

LIZA

All right.

(CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA enters with a lamp, brightening the room uncomfortably. LIZA covers her eyes.)

LIZA

Now you will all see how unhappy I am!

(She begins to sob. MADAME LYALIKOV enters, weeping.)

MADAME LYALIKOV

My daughter! What have I done that you might suffer like this?

LIZA

Mother.

MADAME LYALIKOV

Have I not hired the best tutors money can buy? Have I not hired the best doctors?

LIZA

You have...given me everything.

MADAME LYALIKOV

Please tell me what it is!

LIZA

If I knew I should tell you.

MADAME LYALIKOV

I am a terrible mother.

LIZA

You are not.

MADAME LYALIKOV

Have I not devoted my whole life to you? Have pity on me.

(LIZA cries. MADAME LYALIKOV throws herself at her feet.)

KOROLYOV

There there. There is no use crying.

(quietly, to BORIS)

What is the diagnosis?

BORIS

I can see nothing wrong with her.

KOROLYOV

(He chuckles.)

Can one imagine the extravagance of bringing a doctor all the way from the city for this. But at least from such a house a doctor will not come home with rutabagas.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

The factory doctor gave her a bromide. I told the fool it would make her worse, but he would not listen. I am no doctor, and yet I know if she is given anything for the heart it should be drops. Am I not correct in thinking that Convallaria is the thing that is used?

KOROLYOV

Quite correct. However, she does not have a heart condition.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

What?

KOROLYOV

I find no evidence of it whatsoever on my examination.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

When was your equipment calibrated?

KOROLYOV

Excuse me?

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

I have read extensively about Convallaria.

KOROLYOV

Perhaps I might speak with the patient's mother.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

Alone?

(KOROLYOV leads BORIS and MADAME LYALIKOV back into the foyer.)

KOROLYOV

Dear lady, I am afraid I find nothing to be seriously wrong.

MADAME LYALIKOV

You did not see her last night.

KOROLYOV

I did not say nothing was the matter.

MADAME LYALIKOV

But the crying, the sounds.

KOROLYOV

It is my opinion that if your daughter is being attended by the factory doctor, he should go on treating her.

MADAME LYALIKOV

But...

KOROLYOV

This is not a life or death situation.

(He looks at his watch.)

Boris, we can still catch the ten o'clock train.

(BORIS hands him his gloves.)

MADAME LYALIKOV

Doctor, my husband died a year and a half ago.

KOROLYOV

I am sorry.

(He puts on his gloves.)

MADAME LYALIKOV

I feel ashamed to trouble you. But...

KOROLYOV

I do not think I should prescribe if the factory doctor is already doing so.

MADAME LYALIKOV

You do not understand.

KOROLYOV

That is my final decision.

MADAME LYALIKOV

I wished to ask you to stay the night.

KOROLYOV

That is out of the question.

MADAME LYALIKOV

You will see what happens if you stay.

KOROLYOV

We do not even have a change of clothing.

MADAME LYALIKOV

She is all I have. Do not leave us, for God's sake.

(KOROLYOV sighs, takes off his gloves  
and hands them to BORIS. MADAME  
LYALIKOV bows and exits.)

KOROLYOV

Another lesson for you.

BORIS

Which one?

KOROLYOV

Money talks.

(CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA suddenly enters.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

So you will be our guests.

KOROLYOV

You overheard us.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

As well as something about a lesson. I did not realize we  
were running a medical school.

BORIS

May we have something to eat, ma'am?

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

We feed our guests exceedingly well. The dining room is this  
way.



(She points BORIS and KOROLYOV towards the dining room, then she disappears.)

BORIS

Where did she go?

KOROLYOV

Having her dinner in some back room. She is a servant, after all.

(KOROLYOV and BORIS enter a lavishly decorated dining room.)

BORIS

Look at these paintings, doctor.

KOROLYOV

One cannot help but look. They are everywhere.

BORIS

You do not approve.

KOROLYOV

They are expensive and garish, like everything.

BORIS

What is "garish"?

KOROLYOV

It means this is new money.

BORIS

How can money be old or new?

KOROLYOV

Some day you will understand.

BORIS

I think I do. Ha!

(He points to the wall.)

A monk with a wineglass!

KOROLYOV

Someone must have thought such a thing impressive. Oh excuse me.

(He adopts an elegant accent.)

How elegant.

BORIS

(He adopts the same accent.)

The floors are so polished you can see the chandeliers in them.

KOROLYOV

Quite an understated effect, that.

(They both laugh. Suddenly we hear harsh metallic sounds. For a moment they are distracted. The sounds stop.)

KOROLYOV

What was that?

BORIS

I don't know, but if you stand over here the snores of the servants drown it out.

KOROLYOV

You are starting to get the hang of this.

(They laugh.)

BORIS

Nothing would make me want to live in a place like this. I cannot believe we have to stay for even one night.

KOROLYOV

It is an experience.

BORIS

I am dying of hunger.

(CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA enters out of nowhere, ringing a dinner bell.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

Dinner! Dinner time!

KOROLYOV

At last! Well, I hope you have enjoyed yours.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

I will be joining you, of course.

KOROLYOV

Just leave us some bread and cheese.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

No one accuses us of being parsimonious. In your honor: sturgeon, chicken rissoles, and stewed fruit.

KOROLYOV

All my favorites.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

Mine as well.

(She claps her hands twice.)  
And the most expensive Madeira money can buy.

(They all sit at the table.)

KOROLYOV  
At least it will put us to sleep.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
One can barely sleep when one is surrounded by such splendor.  
This is such a fine place to work, doctor. Eleven years and  
counting.

KOROLYOV  
I am glad someone here has a pleasant life.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
I do!  
(Hastily)  
And the workers too, of course.

KOROLYOV  
Sturgeon and madeira for them as well?

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
They act in their own show at the factory every winter. They  
have lectures with a magic lantern. They have a splendid tea  
room.

KOROLYOV  
Splendid like this dining room?

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
I detect a note of disbelief, doctor. The workers may have  
no education, but they have got feelings.

KOROLYOV  
Real feelings?

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
Do not seem so surprised.

BORIS  
Ma'am, I have a question about one of the pictures.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
Paintings, young man.

(She looks up.)  
You may put that over there. You! Olga!  
(She smiles greedily.)  
And that one. Next to me.

(She loudly clears her throat and spits  
into a napkin.)  
Since you have a question, and since you are here for  
instruction, I shall instruct you on the objets d'art.

BORIS  
Did they cost a pretty penny?

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
(chuckling)  
More than a penny. This - at a thousand roubles- is "A boat  
on a stormy sea." Lifelike, no?

BORIS  
(to KOROLYOV)  
I feel I am in a shipwreck.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
If you like that one, you will like the ones behind you.

(BORIS turns around.)

BORIS  
There must be a hundred of them!

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
Eighty-nine. We begin with the upper right hand corner and  
move clockwise. This very beautiful, very costly, landscape  
depicts the...

(Lights dim. CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
babbles on, although her voice is  
distorted so that we do not hear what  
she is saying. We also hear servants  
serving, and the eating of food. Time  
passes, the lights come up, and  
CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA continues to  
babble. From time to time, she wipes  
her mouth with her fist. BORIS dozes  
off, and eventually his head sinks onto  
his plate.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
...and last, but not least, the portrait of the gentleman,  
that is our own Pyotr Nikanoritch. Gone forever.

(She wipes a tear away.)  
But this fine -not to mention costly- frame, will never die.  
More stewed prunes?

(BORIS groans.)

KOROLYOV  
Are more courses coming?

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
Still hungry, doctor? Do not stand on ceremony.

(She belches.)

KOROLYOV  
I am quite through. As for my assistant...

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
I did not think I could tolerate a child, but this one is not half bad.

KOROLYOV  
He does not look half good.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA  
Overcome. Happens more than you might think.

(She claps her hands twice.)  
I will have him carried upstairs.

(KOROLYOV rises.)

KOROLYOV  
A walk in the yard will do us both a world of good.

(He rouses BORIS and they exit. We are outside. Frogs are croaking. The factory is dark. KOROLYOV and BORIS enter the scene.)

KOROLYOV  
Are you all right?

BORIS  
Fresh air feels good.

KOROLYOV  
Fresh when the factory is not belching out fumes.

BORIS  
I hear frogs. They are the only ones awake at this hour.

(The windows on the factory begin to glow red.)

KOROLYOV  
(sarcastically)  
Do not speak so soon. It is only midnight. The workers may put on shows. They may have a tea room. But the sad faces are the same faces I saw in such towns when I was your age. Thousands of workers work like slaves night and day to make poor quality cotton goods.

Dozens of overseers impose fines all day. A handful of owners enjoy themselves. What lesson do you derive from that?

BORIS

They do not look as if they are enjoying a thing.

KOROLYOV

It makes one wretched merely to look at them. With the exception of Christina Dmitryevna, a ridiculous middle-aged spinster. And so thousands of workers slave away so that Christina Dmitryevna may eat sturgeon and drink Madeira.

BORIS

It gave me a stomach ache.

(Suddenly we hear the sound of striking on a sheet of metal. Then stillness. Then, from another direction, a watchman striking the hour twelve times. From yet another direction, another repetitive, unpleasant metallic sound, accompanied by the glowing of two windows created by the burning of a furnace.)

BORIS

It looks like a devil with red eyes.

KOROLYOV

It sounds like a devil. A devil that controls the Lyalikovs and the workers. And deceives both.

(He approaches the factory. A whistle blows. He quickly moves away.)

KOROLYOV

It is like being in prison.

(From far away we hear frogs croaking.)

KOROLYOV

Christina Dmitryevna. All work for her benefit. But the real one, for whom everything is done, is the devil.

(The glow in the windows intensifies.)

KOROLYOV

And he is watching us.

(KOROLYOV sits, BORIS dozes off, time passes, and dawn approaches.)

We again hear the sound of striking on a sheet of metal, a watchman striking the hour four times, then another repetitive metallic sound, then silence.)

KOROLYOV

It is all horribly disagreeable.

(We hear a different kind of noise. KOROLYOV covers the sleeping BORIS with his coat and goes into the house. He runs up the stairs. The door to LIZA's bedroom is open, and he enters. It is barely dawn and some light filters in through the window. We hear birds singing. LIZA sits in a chair beside the bed, wrapped in a shawl.)

KOROLYOV

I thought I heard something. How do you feel?

LIZA

I am all right.

(KOROLYOV checks her pulse.)

KOROLYOV

It is spring. The birds are singing, yet you sit in the dark. Why do you sit in the dark?

LIZA

I sit in the dark all the time.

(The watchman strikes five.)

KOROLYOV

Do the sounds bother you?

LIZA

Everything bothers me. But I knew from the first time I saw you I could tell you all about it.

(KOROLYOV nods.)

LIZA

I am never asked what I think, but my opinion is that I have no illness. That I am like this because I am bound to be like this. I am constantly seen by doctors. What I should like is to talk with a friend.

KOROLYOV

Have you no friend?

LIZA

I have a mother. I am lonely. I worry. Have you ever read Lermontov's Demon? Tamara was lonely. Then she saw the devil.

KOROLYOV

You read in your free time.

LIZA

All my time is free, from morning till night. I read by day, and by night I see shadows.

(Beat.)

I am crazy, am I not?

KOROLYOV

You are not crazy. No, not at all. But...I'm sorry, this is rather awkward...

LIZA

You are a doctor. You must say whatever you wish.

KOROLYOV

You have everything, yet you are unhappy. You do not believe you deserve it, and you can't sleep. Well, has anyone ever told you your sleeplessness does you credit?

LIZA

No one ever gives me credit for anything.

KOROLYOV

This kind of conversation would have been unthinkable for your parents. For mine. At night, they did not talk, but they slept soundly. Your generation do not sleep. But they talk.

LIZA

It feels good to talk.

KOROLYOV

For your grandchildren these questions will have been settled. Life will be good in fifty years time. Of course, you and I will not be around to see it.

LIZA

What will they do, our grandchildren?

KOROLYOV

I suppose they will give it all up and go away.

LIZA

Go where?



KOROLYOV

(He laughs.)

That will be the least of their problems. There are lots of places a good, intelligent person can go.

(He looks at his watch.)

Look at where the time has gone. I hope you sleep soundly from now on.

(He presses her hand.)

You are a very interesting woman.

(He exits. Blackout. Later that day, outside the house. It is sunny, birds are singing, and church bells are pealing. KOROLYOV and BORIS enter the scene through the door to the house. BORIS is holding the medical bag.)

KOROLYOV

Do you have everything?

BORIS

I did not bring anything.

KOROLYOV

Nothing but your doctorly powers of observation.

(CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA enters.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

The coach will be here presently.

(She claps her hands twice. LIZA enters, smiling, in a white dress, with a flower in her hair, followed by MADAME LYALIKOV.)

KOROLYOV

Have you slept well?

LIZA

For the first time in many weeks.

KOROLYOV

I am glad.

LIZA

Thanks to you.

(KOROLYOV bows.)

MADAME LYALIKOV

Thank you, doctor, for bringing my daughter back to me.

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

(interrupting)

On the one hand I would have given the patient Convallaria,  
but on the other hand...

KOROLYOV

(sharply)

Thank you for your consultation.

(He turns away.)

BORIS

(whispering)

What did you do to her?

(KOROLYOV shrugs.)

KOROLYOV

You will learn, if you are to be a doctor, you do not always  
have to do a thing.

(We hear the coach arriving.)

BORIS

(to LIZA)

Do you see the devil today?

(LIZA shakes her head no.)

BORIS

Neither do I.

LIZA

Good luck.

(KOROLYOV and BORIS step forward as if  
boarding the coach.)

CHRISTINA DMITRYEVNA

Wstch your step.

(Lights go off, and we hear the sound  
of horses hooves.)

KOROLYOV

Let us think of the time, perhaps sooner than we think, when  
life itself will be as bright as on this Sunday morning. How  
pleasant it is on a day like this to bask in the sunshine.  
How marvelous it is on a day like this to drive with three  
horses in a good carriage.

(Sound of the carriage pulling away.)

(END OF PLAY)