

# THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR

A NEW MUSICAL COMEDY

Adapted from Nikolai Gogol's 1836 play *Revizor*.

Written by Andy Mangin and Jeff Takacs.

Music and lyrics by Jeff Takacs.

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To hear musical samples, go to [The Government Inspector website](#).

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# THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR

## Characters

Anton Antonovich Skvoznik-Dmukhanovsky — the Mayor of a provincial Russian town

Anna — the Mayor's Wife

Maria — the teenage daughter of Anton and Maria

John Khlestakov — a traveler from Petersburg

Osip/Sofiya — John's servant, disguised as a man

Larisa — Director of Schools & the Board of Education

Amos — Judge and Director of Courts & the Department of Corrections

Irina — Director of Hospitals

Dennis — Director of Parks & Recreation

Dobchinsky — a gopher to the mayor

Eliza — a servant to the mayor's household

Valet — an employee at the inn

Tailor — a merchant in the town

Barber — a barber, cosmetologist, and money launderer

Various servants and valets.

*Casting Note: no restrictions on gender, race, or other casting considerations!*

## Setting

The Great Room of a mayoral residence and a room at a dingy roadside inn. Provincial Russia in the time of the Tsars. Roughly 1830s.

## **Audio Guide & Instructions**

To enhance your reading experience of **The Government Inspector**, this script includes interactive links to musical recordings for each song. Please use the following instructions to access the audio:

### **How to Access the Music**

- Every song title in this script (e.g., "A Little Off the Top") is a clickable hyperlink.
- Playback: Click the song title to open your web browser and play the corresponding .mp3 recording.
- Note: recordings are from the Wheaton College production of the show—November 2025.

Not for performance

## Act I

### Scene 1. Mayor's House

*The overture plays as DOBCHINSKY enters and opens the window to a fair morning. He gives the room a twice-over as ELIZA enters with a samovar of tea. The BARBER, a personal stylist to the Mayor's wife and launderer of spoils, wheels in a spinning barber's chair. One by one, the four heads of the governmental offices arrive and prepare for the usual end-of-week meeting with the mayor. The overture gives way to a song.*

**Formatting note:** for clarity, song lyrics are centered, spoken dialogue is left-justified.

**Song: "A Little Off the Top"**

**Dennis**

I love the sun

**All**

Do you?

**Dennis**

I do!

**All**

Why do you love the sun?

**Dennis**

I'll tell you

**All**

Tell us true!

**Dennis**

I'm the Director of Parks and Recreation  
And when the sun comes out the kids do too  
And they play all day on the jungle gym  
And they skin their knee and they bruise their shin  
And they pop a tooth and they lose an eye

And they rip their pants and they start to cry  
And then it's time for a fundraising drive...  
...to comply with the latest safety standards of the jungle gym...

**All**

And half the proceeds go to him

**Irina**

I like influenza

**All**

Do ya?

**Irina**

I da!

**All**

Why do you like the flu?

**Irina**

I'll tell you

**All**

Tell us true!

**Irina**

I am the director of hospitals and clinics  
And when the flu arrives the bodies ache  
Fatigue and fever, nighttime shakes  
And that's what I get out my rake  
Cause the worse it gets and the more it hurts  
The rubles fall from every purse  
And if it happens to get even worse...

**All**

She's the one who owns the hearse!

*Mayor enters as the music plays.*

**All**

Good morning, Mayor! Good morning!

**Mayor**

Good morning.

**Dobchinsky**

Cup of tea, Mayor?

**Mayor**

Yes, please.

**Larisa**

I run the schools and the Board of Education

**Amos**

I run the courts and the Department of Corrections

**Larisa**

I have the children up through graduation

**Amos**

Then I get the children for rehabilitation

**Larisa and Amos**

And we both need urgent enrichment funding for...Administration.

**Mayor**

Looks to be a beautiful day  
Feels like something good is on the way  
Hey...there's a blue jay.

**Barber**

I love a haircut

**All**

Do you?

**Barber**

I do!

**All**

Why do you love a haircut?

**Barber**

I'll tell you

**All**

Tell us true!

**Barber**

I am the barber, I cut the hair  
If you need a friend or a shave, I've got the chair  
Take a load off sit yourself right down  
If you're in the mood, I'll spin you around

And then I'll take a  
Little off the top, and a little off the side  
A little off the bottom, and I take you for a ride

*(He spins one of the officials in a chair and coins fall out of the official's pocket. Somebody sweeps up the money and gives it to the Mayor, who counts.)*

I take a little off the top and a little off the bottom  
A little off the back and then you know you got 'em  
Oh...

**All**

*(singing and exchanging money)*

A little off the top, a little off the sides  
A little off the bottom

**Barber**

Leave it wet or blow it dry?

You want a flat top, Popovich?

Everybody does it  
You want the shears, Vladimir  
Or should I just go ahead and buzz it?

**All**

A little off the top  
A little off the sides

**Barber**

It's a living  
It's larceny  
It's the fine print, the hidden fees  
It's the cost of doing business, and it costs just what I please!

Get in the chair, chump, it's a haircut

We can do it for the gents  
We can do it for the hers  
All the way from Vladivostok to Petersburg...

**All**

And all the proceeds go to us!

*ANNA, the Mayor's wife, enters the shop wearing an elegant nightgown. She plops into the barber's chair.*

**All**

Good morning, Anna!

**Mayor**

Good morning, my sweet wife.

**Anna**

Husband. Crooks. Barber, gimme a face.

**Barber**

What kind of day will this day be?

**Anna**

Long. Full. Dramatic.

**Barber**

What kind of face does a day like today need?

**Anna**

Long. Full. Dramatic.

**Barber**

Hair. Red, blonde, or *brun*?

**Anna**

Whatever says, "Give her room."

**Barber**

What's on the docket for the Mayor's wife?

**Anna**

A ribbon-cutting shindig then a Walk For Life.  
They'll bring the scissors, I'll bring a knife.  
I'll make a plea for charity and I'll extend my hand  
The trick is to expect them to fulfill what you demand.

**Barber**

Your energy is boundless!

**Anna**

Because I am bound! To know that Petersburg is just a five-day ride away, and there the ladies have French silk, Belgian danishes, and Danish melancholy...every day I dig another inch through the wall of my cell.

**Dennis**

I'll sell you a shovel.

**Mayor**

Larissa, what's on your docket?

**Larisa**

Two of my teachers are suing...

**Amos**

Suit denied.

**Larisa**

You're the best, Amos.

**Mayor**

Dennis?

**Dennis**

Told the ref to call the fight if Amos's boy is on the ropes.

**Amos**

You're the best, Dennis.

**Mayor**

Irina?

**Irina**

Five deaths. Six or seven if we're lucky. Need the beds.

*MARIA, the daughter of the Mayor and Anna, enters.*

**Mayor**

Good morning, my little blemish.

**Maria**

Good morning, father.

**All**

Good morning, Maria!

**Maria**

Good morning, everybody.

**Dobchinsky**

The sun has returned to the steppe! Good morning, Maria!

**Maria**

And the night to his bedchamber goes! Good morning, Dobchinsky!

**Anna**

Raise the cheekbones, Barber.

**Maria**

Father, Mother, I want to go to the ball.

**Anna**

Oh, you'll never get a date with a face like that.

**Maria**

But that's the thing. I have been asked.

**Anna**

By whom?

**Maria**

Well, by fifteen of them.

**Dobchinsky**

And the ones who didn't ask are cowards!

**Anna**

Every generation declines in taste.

**Mayor**

If it is true that one did ask you, my ugly little liar goose, he is one who seeks the favor of association with the mayor.

**Dobchinsky**

But her beauty, her wit!

**Mayor**

It is the fate of every cod-faced mayoral daughter: none is worthy of her, and she is worthy of none.

**Maria**

Then I will never go to a ball.

**Mayor**

Well, that's fine then, my little babushka-before-her-time.

**Maria**

Then I'll never find a husband!

**Mayor**

And I will never have to pay your dowry!

**Maria**

Then I will never leave the house!

**Mayor**

And that's just how your mother wants it.

**Anna**

Now hold on just a second. I want it both ways.

**Irina**

Mayor, let's think this over.

**Dennis**

Yes, I think we should.

**Irina**

Why would you not let her go to the ball?

**Mayor**

Well, for one: I'd have to buy her a dress: 100 rubles! Then just imagine they were to fall in love! Then I owe his father a dowry! Who invented this practice?

**Larisa**

A father of boys.

**Irina**

You're not thinking about this right. Irina owns the dress shop and the tux shop. They can dine at Dennis's restaurant. Security contract goes to Amos's brother. You're paying us our fees, but since you, the Mayor, are responsible for the law and order that ensures the safety of the proceedings of businesses and balls, you are due referral fees of, oh let's call it 20% more than whatever you paid.

**Dennis**

And we can write off the taxes on the transactions because...

**All**

...it's all for the children.

**Dennis:**

You've turned a profit in the snap of a finger.

**Maria**

May I go, father?

*Anna snaps her fingers.*

**Maria**

Thank you, mother.

**Anna**

*(to Maria)*

Fifteen have asked you. Ha! When I was your age, fifteen *thousand* asked me. Who do you think you are?

**Song:** *"Maria's Song"*

**Maria**

So who am I now?  
What am I supposed to be?  
Am I a thunderstorm  
Or just the passing breeze?

I think I turn the plot  
But does the plot turn me?  
Will I ever know?  
I guess I'll have to wait and see

I think I'm made for spring  
I'm made to take the wing  
...that's not right at all  
Just the opposite  
I'm the one who makes the sky to fall

Drifting down and floating, floating, floating, falling  
What is that I...I only wish I knew, I only wish I knew, I only wish I knew, I wish I knew

I'm wanting something  
I think it's the whole world...  
What I'm needing now  
I don't think it's a...

**Mayor**

*(interrupting the song and extending a muffin to Maria)*

Chocolate swirl?

**Maria**

No, thank you.

*(reconsiders)*

Actually, I will have that.

*(takes chocolate swirl, offers some to Dobchinsky.)*

Would you like to share my chocolate swirl, my liege?

**Dobchinsky**

Thank you very much, Cleopatra!

**Maria**

The pleasure is all mine, Antony!

**Dennis**

Let's take care of this business right now.

**Mayor**

Skip to the end. We just paid you 2,000 rubles apiece. The four of you each owe us 700 rubles.

*The cronies find their cash and hand it to the Mayor.*

**Barber**

*(to Anna, who holds a mirror to her face)*

How do we look?

**Anna**

My God, it's hideous.

**Barber**

What? No!

*(Anna turns the mirror around so the Barber can see his own face. She laughs.)*

**Mayor**

Dobchinsky!

**Dobchinsky**

Yes, sir!

**Mayor**

Has any mail arrived this morning?

**Dobchinsky**

Yes, sir, I have picked up the mail!

**Mayor**

Did you bring it here?

**Dobchinsky**

Yes, sir!

**Mayor**

Summarize.

**Dobchinsky**

Dennis's bakery is offering fifty percent off all double-priced goods with the purchase of one normal priced good...

**Dennis**

It's a steal.

**Mayor**

Next!

**Dobchinsky**

New civic group forming: Fathers Against Skipping Stones on the Lake.

**Irina**

Oh! Did somebody get hit?

**Larisa**

No, some fathers just aren't good at it.

**Anna**

A hundred ruble filing fee and they're in. Collect it, Barber.

**Mayor**

Next!

**Dobchinsky**

Mrs. Bloc wants help paying for her husband's funeral.

**Anna**

Did she think her husband would never die?

**Irina**

She shoulda thought about that when she married him.

**Dobchinsky**

She claims he received poor care from the hospital. He was only 48.

**Irina**

He had severe complications. Ran out of credit halfway through the surgery.

**Mayor**

Next!

**Dobchinsky**

A letter from your sister.

**Mayor**

Read it.

**Dobchinsky**

Yes, sir! First class postage paid.

**Mayor**

Skip that section.

**Dobchinsky**

*(opens it and reads)*

Oh, yes sir! You want me to start where it says, "Dear Brother..."?

**Mayor**

Yes, Dobchinsky.

**Dobchinsky**

Okay! "Dear Brother, Greetings from the dascha! Included in this package is the hemorrhoidal cream..."

**Mayor**

Skip this part!

**Dobchinsky**

"Also included is the emetic your lovely wife requested for her bowel obstruction..."

**Mayor**

Skip it, skip it!

**Dobchinsky**

"Please give Maria my very best. She's my favorite niece. I pray every night that some poor man will look past that graceless face..."

*(Dobchinsky takes issue with the letter)*

Now hold on just a second! Maria's face could launch a thousand ships!

**Anna**

Away from her.

**Mayor**

Keep going, Dobchinsky.

**Dobchinsky**

Yes, sir. "...Filip and I got a new cow. We've named it after the tsar, should his highness ever venture out this way." That's the end of the letter.

**Mayor**

Fine. Moving along, then. Irina, what's the status on the...

**Dobchinsky**

Oh, there's a post-script. She must have thought of it after writing and signing the main body of the letter.

**Mayor**

What does it say?

**Dobchinsky**

Oh, it's just a public service announcement.

**Mayor**

Read it, Dobchinsky.

**Dobchinsky**

"...be aware, brother, that an incognito Government Inspector is visiting towns like yours to make sure the public offices are operating efficiently and without graft, extortion, or other abuses of power. Hope all is well. Miss you! Kisses."

**Mayor**

Repeat that last part.

**Dobchinsky**

"Kisses."

**Mayor**

Before that.

**Dobchinsky**

“Miss you!”

**Mayor**

About the Government Inspector.

**Dobchinsky**

“...an incognito Government Inspector is visiting towns like yours to make sure the public offices are operating efficiently and without graft, extortion, or other abuses of power...”

**Mayor**

That’s enough.

**Eliza**

Graft! Mmm, sautee it with butter, a little garlic. Delicious.

**Dennis**

*(hands full of cash)*

Yellow-bellied G-man won’t find any graft here.

**Mayor**

In-cog-nito. He’ll answer, no doubt, to the Tsar himself. You ever seen the inside of the Tsar’s prison? Are our affairs in order?

**Larisa**

Mine are. Now I don’t know about Irina here.

**Irina**

What? You point the finger at me? The hospitals are in fine shape! And profitable! Everybody uses them when they need to. Now the courts...

**Amos**

The courts? The courts are perfect! We have the fastest time-to-conviction in the realm!

**Irina**

What is the realm?

**Amos**

You fools! Look at the Parks. Dennis Denisovich, were the Government Inspector to take one look at your parks he'd throw you in jail!

**Dennis**

The parks are beautiful! Especially when no one is there. Insofar as the parks are less than perfect it's because of these illiterate hooligans the schools send our way!

**Larisa**

Now just a moment! Our pass rate is one hundred percent! We haven't been a classroom brawl since last Tuesday!

**Anna**

None of you seem to understand that the Tsar's prison has more than one cell.

*A DELIVERY PERSON enters from the street.*

**Delivery Person**

Book delivery: *How to Spot Suckers and Intimidate People.*

**Anna**

Here.

**Delivery Person**

Hey, you're the Mayor's wife. And you're the Mayor.

**Mayor**

Dobchinsky!

*Dobchinsky goes to escort the Commoner out.*

**Delivery Person**

My landlord raised my rent thirty percent! How could you let him do that? There's still mercury in our well...

**Dennis**

And water!

**Delivery Person**

You said you would fix it!

*Dobchinsky and the Barber force him out. Dobchinsky returns.*

**Dobchinsky**

Poor guy.

**Dennis**

He's the one who moved by the wrong well.

**Mayor**

Make no mistake. Our very way of life is at stake. And my sweet wife is right. We all hang together, or we all fall apart.

**Dobchinsky**

I will hang with you, Antoinette!

**Maria**

And I with you, Robespierre!

**Mayor**

I have a couple questions. Irina Nikolaevna...you run the hospitals and clinics.

**Irina**

Very well. Yes?

**Mayor**

Well, that's just the thing now. I got a letter the other day complaining that the floor of the hospital was streaked with blood.

**Irina**

Oh, Meyer Mikhaelovich refused a bandage again.

**Mayor**

Or did he refuse the 2000% upcharge on in-house bandage purchases?

**Irina**

Am I supposed to know what's in his head?

**Mayor**

It was a brain surgery! Listen! Complaints against our administration are mounting every day. I'm afraid we can't keep cutting services then offering restitution of said services to only those who purchase membership in a platinum club.

**Eliza**

I love a nice club. Cut it into little triangles, some potato salad and dill on the side...

**Mayor**

A few of the complaints: "Why does the Director of Parks close the park for a private family event?" "How come my kids teacher works three jobs?" "Why are all the floors filthy?"

**Irina**

What's that?

**Mayor**

The floors. Everybody complains about the floors.

**Eliza**

I set a mousetrap last night and caught a whole family.

**Irina**

I can commit to cleaning the floors.

**Larisa**

So can I. I will step up our floor-cleaning protocols immediately.

**Amos**

Me too. They say justice is blind. Well our floors are gonna shine so bright you'll go blind if you look at them!

**Mayor**

About that, Amos. I keep hearing Justice went to the ophthalmologist.

**Irina**

We haven't had any payment from Justice.

**Eliza**

I like a little justice with pork.

**Mayor**

(to Amos)

You run the courts and are also a judge.

**Amos**

Yes, and virtuous. Well-dressed.

**Mayor**

What makes a man innocent?

**Amos**

Well, he has not been arrested.

**Mayor**

And what makes a man guilty?

**Amos**

Well, he *has* been arrested!

**Mayor**

Is that all?

**Amos**

There are mitigating factors. If he was arrested on the accusation of his brother-in-law, then he is innocent.

**Irina**

Unless he was arrested on the accusation of his brother-in-law but his brother-in-law contributed more to your reelection campaign...

**Amos**

Then he is guilty.

**Dennis**

Unless...

**Mayor**

Oh, confound it! What happens when the opposing parties are presumed by the court to be completely equal under the law? What happens then?

**Amos**

Completely equal...?

**Mayor**

Yes.

**Amos**

Well...it's...it's...it's never happened.

*Song: "The Thing That Has Never Happened"*

**Cronies**

The thing that has never happened  
Is the thing that hasn't happened yet  
Who knows if it will ever happen  
Since it hasn't ever happened yet  
Happened yet  
Happened yet  
It hasn't ever happened yet

The thing that has never happened  
Is the thing that hasn't happened still  
Who knows if it will ever happen  
Who knows if it ever will  
Ever will  
Ever will  
Who knows if it ever will?

Like a carriage that runs without horses  
Like a boat that can sail to the stars  
Like the total abolition of serfdom  
Like the end of the reign of the Tsars  
God, protect our Tsar, protect our Tsar, protect our Tsar!

Like a trading route that cuts through the Americas

Or nuclear bombs launched from subs  
Or the full eradication of polio  
Or a world series win for the Cubs

No, the thing that has never happened  
Is the thing that is unlikely to  
To bet on what has never happened  
Seems like a foolish thing to do  
Thing to do  
Foolish thing  
A foolish thing to do

**Maria**

The thing that has never happened  
Is the reason that you knock on wood  
But everything that's ever happened  
Was once just a thing that could  
Thing that could  
Thing that could

**Maria and Dobchinsky**

The thing that has never happened  
Is still a thing that could.

**Mayor**

All right, you dirty little premillennialists. Then we are agreed. You will operate above board, charge fair prices, and keep your floors clean.

**Irina**

But, Mayor.

**Mayor**

Yes?

**Irina**

And wife of mayor...

**Anna**

Yes?

**Irina**

Respectfully, upon whose desk does the ruble stop?

**Larisa**

That's fair.

**Dennis**

Fair.

**Amos**

Quite fair.

**Dobchinsky**

Wait wait...I know this one. It's the Mayor's desk, right?

**Anna**

Misdirection denied. Spare me your bolshevik. Oh, the irony when poor Amos here is imprisoned in his own jail.

**Eliza**

Irony? Dress it up with a little cream of mushroom sauce and dill...sounds delicious.

**Larisa**

Wasn't irony banned by the tsar?

**Maria**

I thought he made it the house style.

**Anna**

What's that, pale imitation of me?

**Maria**

Never mind, Mother.

**Eliza**

Your biscuits are ready. Or, as they say, "here's your thanksgiving feast in prison!"

**Dennis**

Gimme some of that.

**Anna**

You don't have time for biscuits, Dennis. A Government Inspector is on his way. Your house is in disorder and your solyanka stinks. And that goes for the rest of you too.

**Irina**

My solyanka? My solyanka?

**Larisa**

You note the borscht in my eye but you don't see the blini in yours!

**Amos**

You disrespect my wife's cooking you disrespect me!

**Mayor**

Stop it! Stop it! Friends. Colleagues.

**Dobchinsky**

Partners in crime!

**Mayor**

Dobchinsky! Never say that phrase again.

**Maria**

He meant it metaphorically.

**Mayor**

He said it formulaically. Never again. We know neither the day nor the hour when this Government Inspector will arrive. All those dirty floors must get clean and now!

**Dennis**

You do realize the floor of the parks are grass and sand.

**Mayor**

I meant it imagistically!

**Dennis**

You said it egotistically!

**Mayor**

Hyperbole!

**Eliza**

Hyperbole....oooh, with a side of crepes and sour cream...it waters your mouth.

**Anna**

Obediently, listen to me! Floors, windows, ceilings, balance sheets and souls...all clean, all spotless. If the Government Inspector sees beds in hallways and blood on the floor...if he sees brawls in the classroom and bottles in the park...he will shut down our operations quicker than you can say "the Volga only flows in one direction and that direction is prison." And we must all do our part. No weak links. Are we agreed?

*Song: "Cronies Theme"*

**Cronies**

We are agreed, we are agreed  
And we will rally round the point  
There is room enough for all of us  
In a cold Siberian joint

We must improve, we must improve  
Till the Inspector's work is through  
Then we'll improve all our improvements  
And our business may resume.  
And our business may resume.

**Maria**

But for how long? How long can you keep your proverbial floors to clean? A day or two? What if he doesn't arrive for another week?

**Mayor**

What we need to do is find this Government Inspector, show him a sparkling town, and send him on his way.

**Larisa**

It could be anyone. We don't know everyone who comes and goes.

**Dobchinsky**

(Having an epiphany)

I know who it is...oh, dear. I know who it is! I saw him this morning.

**Mayor**

He's here now?

**Dobchinsky**

This very morning I was out gathering flowers for a garland for Maria, just in case she was to find a husband or something. I got some tiger lilies, rhododendron...

**Anna**

We'll need to work on your time management strategy...What about the Government Inspector, Dobchinsky?

**Dobchinsky**

Just down the road from here, near the...the...the...Potempkin Inn! Yes! Just outside the inn. At the first light of dawn, I saw a carriage arrive. Thick with dust, it had been traveling all night. Out of it stepped a figure...he had the look and bearing of a Petersburg courtier! He removed his cap, smoothed back his hair, looked up and down the street, scanning with his little Petersburgian eyes. Oh, he was looking for something. Then a servant stepped out. He was about yea high. Had a huge bag, larger than the bags of most men. A mustachioed little fellow. Remember when that troupe of Petersburgian players toured through here with their production of *Tartuffe*?

**Maria**

Yes! That was a wonderful play!

**Anna**

I didn't care for it. I just didn't *believe* them, you know? Seemed like they were acting.

**Dobchinsky**

The servant had just the kind of mustache the actors wore in the play. It must be the Petersburg style. They whispered to each other, as if they didn't want to be heard, but I do believe I heard the rustling of chains and cuffs in their bags.

**Mayor**

Chains and cuffs?

**Dobchinsky**

Either that or paper clips and staplers. What's the difference, really?

**Mayor**

A traveler with a servant, indicating he is of a class above servants.

**Dobchinsky**

The very thing.

**Mayor**

This is the man who will decide our fate. Good work, Dobchinsky. Colleagues! Clear your schedules and leave here now. Today you've one job to do.

**Amos**

Clean our floors.

**Larisa**

From top to bottom.

**Anna**

I'll kill the Walk for Life. Bring him here. We'll have him as a guest. Home field advantage. Let's go get him, team.

**Song: "Cronies Theme II"**

**All**

*(singing to the Cronies theme)*

Where we go one, we go all!  
And that's where we're gonna be.  
In a twinkling sparkling town  
Where *complimentary* means *free*

Where we go one we go all!  
And that's where we're gonna be  
From the flatlands to the plains,  
From the ocean to the sea.  
We'll avert calamity!

**Mayor**

Dobchinsky. Maria. To the Potempkin Inn we must go.

*End Scene 1.*

## Scene 2. The Potempkin Inn

*A dingy room with one bed and a filthy window. Enter VALET.*

**Song: "Weak Tea"**

**Valet**

Welcome to the Potempkin Inn, for travelers with no other option.  
We hope you endure your stay.

I've got your tea  
It's compliment'ry  
But it won't be getting any compliments  
It is not hot it is not strong it has no flavor  
It is weak tea but it is wet

It is weak tea but it is wet!  
It is the tea at the Potempkin Inn.

I've got your crumpet  
It's hard as stone  
It might break your tooth but it will fill your mouth  
There is no butter, no berries, no jam nohow  
If you want it you can pay in cash right now

It is stale but it's on sale  
It is the crumpet at the Potempkin Inn.

Don't like it?  
Don't take it up with me  
I just work here and I do not do my best  
Beware, beware of the lice in the bed  
If you are already infested get some rest

If I were you I'd  
Go to bed fully dressed with a hat

It is the bed at the Potempkin Inn

Wanna complain  
You may do that  
You can take it right to the kitchen  
Not to me, not to me, not to me  
My right ear doesn't hear and my left one doesn't listen

Welcome to the Potempkin Inn  
Welcome to the Potempkin Inn

Valet  
(to guests)  
Right this way.

*Enter JOHN KHLESTAKOV, a low-level clerk from Petersburg, and SOFIYA, disguised as OSIP, John's servant. They have just checked in after traveling a long way. They are very tired. Osip pushes back the curtain from a window. Valet exits.*

**John**  
What a view.

**Osip**  
Indeed.

**Osip**  
Now this streak here. See it? That's a sunset on a terrace at a wedding.

**John**  
And that little booger right there...

**Osip**  
I see it.

**John**

A ruble hanging from a ruble tree.

**Osip**

That's the spirit.

*Valet reenters with a samovar of tea.*

**Valet**

Here's your tea and here's your bill. This is a prepay kinda deal.

**Osip**

We need to pay on credit. We've been traveling.

**Valet**

The surcharge for credit purchases is fifty percent.

**Osip**

Fifty percent?

**Valet**

This town runs on extortion. Sign here.

*John signs it.*

**Valet**

Should you need anything, anything at all, feel free to pray. That's the way at the Potempkin Inn.

*Valet exits.*

**John**

How much do we have left?

**Osip**

Nothing, John. Nothing. Less than nothing, actually. We owe fifteen thousand rubles in sum. To an innkeeper, a cardshark...

**John**

Fifteen thousand?

**Osip**

...another cardshark...

**John**

Where did it all go?

**Osip**

...a bartender, another innkeeper...

**John**

I'm sorry.

**Osip**

It's time to write a letter to your father. You need cash, and fast.

**John**

He drew the ace.

**Osip**

And you bet the table.

**John**

I had a good hand.

**Osip**

Not compared to his, which is how the game works.

**John**

I looked into his eyes.

**Osip**

And didn't see the full house.

**Osip**

What do you see when you look into my eyes?

**John**

Oh, Osip, what a silly game.

**Osip**

Play it. Humor me.

**John**

I see a player of silly games.

**Osip**

And?

**John**

“And?” I see someone who always wants something else.

**Osip**

And?

**John**

Oh, Osip. A friend. A best friend.

**Osip**

Is that all you see when you look at me?

**John**

Oh, Osip! You're as impossible as a woman.

**Osip**

We're broke. Dead broke. Creditors may be on your tail right now. They can throw you in jail. Write a letter.

**John**

Will you write it? Your words are better than mine.

**Osip**

The same words are available to us all.

**John**

Semantic dissembling does debase you, Osip. The words are the same, but you have the better

usage. Here's the form: bow, bow, scrape, scrape, plead for money, kisses...

**Osip**

"Dear Father, it is John, your wretched scoundrel of a son. A raccoon in boots, a pig in pants..."

**John**

Tell him we were robbed by Cossacks! My father hates Cossacks.

**Osip**

Your father is your savior, and to him you would lie?

**John**

Oh, Osip! I am nothing! I am beyond redemption. Of all the Volga's vulgar I am the verified villain! Why do you stay with me?

**Osip**

*(aside, to the audience)*

Here he hits upon the central question. Why? *Why?! Why* would I stay and serve a roustabout, a lout? *Why?* Well, on the one hand, maybe I am both of those things and worse.

This mustache is not real. Did we fool you? Of course not. No, you saw it clear. Cause you're not in the play. But he is in the play, and in his play he is the title character, and if he wasn't the title character, he'd think he was. Is he? We'll see. He is vulnerable to being fooled. Fooled by a gambler with a good hand. Fooled by a roast mutton. Fooled by a mustache. A mustache I stole from a traveling production of *Tartuffe*.

Some of us have a desire *to see*, and some *not to see*. Some of us have a desire *to be seen*, and some *to not be seen*. Now we have a multi-factorial problem with exponential permutations. When the ones who want *not* to be seen meet the ones who do not want *to see*, everyone gets what they think they want, and they live in darkness. When the ones who *want to be seen* meet those who *do not want to see*, no one is seen and only *one* gets what they think they want. And the other is sad.

Or perhaps it's reversed: one wants to see but the other wants not to be seen...same result. You see? It's difficult. It only works when *both* want to see and be seen, and that's why it's so rare... I looked into *his* eyes, and I saw something good. I love him. That is why. I do, but I can't, but I do, and I will not show my face. But why?

*(Aside ends.)*

**Osip**

Because I like you, John.

**John**

Thank you, Osip. I like you too. I am so tired. We've been traveling all night. Can we sleep, please?

**Osip**

Of course.

**John**

Take the bed. I don't deserve it.

*Osip closes the curtains.*

**Song: "Don't We Dream?"**

**John**

Oh don't we dream, don't we dream...  
Every night when Sandman comes around  
...Don't we dream that this might be our town  
Our town... Our town?

**John and Osip**

Dreams come between each waking day  
If we're lucky and it's soft whereon we lay  
Don't we dream that we may ever dream  
Dreams of you...and me

**Osip**

Don't we dream of a life without disguises  
Costumes, fake mustaches, and all  
*(removes mustache)*  
Don't we dream that we might have a partner  
At the ball...the ball?

**John**

*(speaking)*

Osip, you shaved your mustache.

**Osip**

*(speaking)*

Yes.

**John**

*(speaking)*

It looks good.

**Osip**

*(speaking)*

Take to the bed, master.

**John**

Yes, Osip.

*John takes the bed.*

**Osip**

*(singing)*

Oh don't we dream, don't we dream  
Each night when our eyeballs start to dance...  
Don't we dream that we might have a chance...  
A chance...A chance...

**John**

Oh don't we dream of beef and sausage  
Creamy, with potatoes on the side  
Don't we dream of ice cream sundaes  
With a chocolate glaze every night

*(Osip puts mustache back on.)*

**John**

*(speaking)*

Osip, you grew your mustache back.

**Osip**

Go to sleep, John.

**John**

Okay.

*John sleeps.*

*Suddenly, a knock on the door. John and Osip spring up.*

**John**

I just had a nightmare...the police had come to take me away!

*Another knock, then the Valet enters.*

**Valet**

Sir, you have a visitor.

**John**

A visitor?

**Valet**

The city officials would like a word with you.

**Osip**

May my master and I have a moment alone?

**Valet**

No.

*(calls offstage)*

Sir? He's ready for you.

**John**

I'm going to jail.

**Osip**

Follow my lead.

**John**

Always.

*The valet enters, followed by Mayor, Dobchinsky, and Maria.*

**Mayor and John**

*(talking over each other)*

Good morning...

**Mayor**

Sorry.

**John**

Sorry.

**Mayor**

Apologies.

**John**

Apologies.

**Mayor**

Top of the day.

**John**

Good morning.

**Mayor**

How do you do?

**Osip**

How do you do?

**Mayor**

You're in your shirtsleeves.

**John**

I wasn't expecting guests.

**Mayor**

I should have rung before.

**John**

It's okay.

**Mayor**

What is?

**John**

Shall I change?

**Mayor**

You are perfect.

**John**

I'm not perfect, you're perfect. I'm terrified.

**Mayor**

I've never been so scared in my life.

**John**

What are you afraid of?

**Mayor**

Come again?

*John walks toward the door.*

**Mayor**

Where are you going?

**John**

I'm going to leave and return. You said "come again."

**Osip and Maria**

Gentlemen...

**Maria**

Please, you first.

**Osip**

Introductions. I am Osip, servant to John Khlestakov of St. Petersburg.

*(John bows)*

**Maria**

I am Maria, daughter of the Mayor. This is the Mayor. *(The mayor bows)* His name is Anton Antonovich Skvoznik-Dmukhanovsky. And this is Dobchinsky. He's always around.

**Mayor**

She's right.

**Dobchinsky**

She's always right.

**John and Mayor**

*(to the ladies)*

What should we do now?

**Maria**

Have some tea. Your mouths are very dry.

*Osip gives them each a cup of tea. They drink and stare at each other.*

**Osip**

So, what brings you to our room?

**Maria**

We just wanted to meet the new visitors, maybe show you around. We are known as the Friendliest Town on the Volga and the Sausage Capital of the Realm.

**Osip**

What is the Realm?

**Maria**

It's like a circle on a map. So what brings you here?

**Osip**

My master is traveling through, en route to his father's house.

**Maria**

And how are you enjoying your stay so far?

**Osip**

Well, all we've seen so far is this rat trap of an inn.

**John**

Osip!

**Osip**

Shhh.

**Mayor**

I can fix that! I can fix that! Valet, refund them their money...

**Valet**

They're on credit.

**Mayor**

Charge it to the Mayor!

**John**

That is so generous of you.

**Mayor**

Why don't you stay with us at the Mayor's residence tonight? We have the room. And why don't you let us take you to lunch and show you around?

**John**

That would be...

**Osip**

Just say yes.

**John**

I accept.

**Mayor**

Wonderful! Dobchinsky, will you run their suitcases over to the house and tell Anna we will be back this afternoon after lunch?

**Dobchinsky**

I will. Until later, my new friends.

*(to Maria)*

Fräulein, auf wiedersehen.

**Maria**

Mögen die Stunden schnell vergehen.

*Dobchinsky exits.*

**Mayor**

Shall we head out?

**John**

Yes, sir.

**Mayor**

Well, that's very good, then. Isn't that good, Maria?

**Maria**

You're doing great, Papa.

**John**

Is this is a good plan, Osip?

**Osip**

So much better than no plan.

**John**

I'm ready if you are.

**Mayor**

Wonderful. Right this way!

*(walking confidently in the wrong direction)*

Our town was founded during the reign of Ivan. Some say he was terrible...

*(Mayor and John go offstage.)*

**Osip**

Shouldn't we be following them?

**Maria**

They went the wrong way, they'll come this way again.

*(Mayor and John re-enter and walk proudly across the stage.)*

**Mayor**

...Andouille, bratwurst, liverwurst, kielbasa, chorizo, Jimmy Dean, Pepperidge Farm....

*(Mayor and John exit.)*

**Maria**

We can go now.

*Osip and Maria follow them off.*

**Song: "Weak Tea Coda"**

**Valet**

There is a Mayor  
Thinks he's a player  
But he might be in a bit over his head

There is a kid  
He's on the skids  
His accounts are absolutely in the red

And the servant and the daughter seem to be the master plotters  
Like the otters in the water they can spring up anytime they smell distress  
I can see that servant in a dress  
It's a win-lose situation

Depending on your station

And life goes on outside the Potempkin Inn.

*End of Scene 2.*

### **SCENE 3. The Mayor's House.**

*The great room of the Mayor's House. ANNA paces. Eliza enters with a samovar of tea and places it next to Anna's chair.*

**Eliza**

Your tea is served.

**Anna**

Now let's look at this, darling. What would you say is missing?

**Eliza**

Missing?

**Anna**

Yes, what looks missing to you?

**Eliza**

Well if it's missing I wouldn't see it, would I?

**Anna**

The sugar, dear. The sugar. It is true we are of different stations, but are we not both flesh and blood and does not flesh and blood want sugar with its tea?

**Eliza**

Oh, I stopped using sugar a year ago. The tax went up eighty percent! Where does it go? Where exactly does it go?

**Anna**

In the twelfth cupboard. Glass jar.

**Eliza**

At your service.

**Anna**

Yes. Yes, you are.

*Eliza exits. Dobchinsky enters.*

**Dobchinsky**

The guest rooms are all set. It's curious. The servant's bags are much bigger than the master's.

*Eliza enters.*

**Eliza**

Your sugar, Ma'm. *(looks out the window)* Who's that?

**Anna**

What?

**Eliza**

Coming up the drive.

**Dobchinsky**

That's the servant!

**Anna**

At attention!

*Dobchinsky and Anna straighten up. They wait awhile.*

**Anna**

Is he alone?

**Dobchinsky**

Yes.

**Anna**

What's taking so long?

**Dobchinsky**

The servant is tying his shoe. Now he's examining the rhododendron. He's picking a flower and putting it behind his ear. Looking around as if to see if anyone has seen him. He's put the flowers down...

**Anna**

Oh, go get him!

**Dobchinsky**

Yes, Ma'm.

*Dobchinsky exits.*

**Anna**

Eliza, how do I look?

**Eliza**

Like you'd shatter a block of ice if they dropped it on your head.

**Anna**

Thank you.

*Dobchinsky and Osip enter.*

**Dobchinsky**

Madame, I present to you...Osip! Servant of our guest and a natural tenor.

**Anna**

Pleased to meet you. Where are the rest?

**Osip**

They stopped at yet another shop on Main Street, and I was tired of shopping, so I ran along ahead.

**Anna**

Please, have a seat. Have some tea. There's plenty of sugar.

**Osip**

All right.

**Anna**

Would you like a crumpet? Eliza, get this gentleman a crumpet.

*Eliza exits, Osip sits.*

**Anna**

Has your master had a nice tour of our fine town?

**Osip**

I think he's enjoying himself.

**Anna**

What has been his favorite part?

**Osip**

He loved the swings at the park.

**Dobchinsky**

Maria loves the swings, too!

**Osip**

Yes, they swung together.

**Dobchinsky**

Did they?

**Anna**

Tell me, Osip. How does your master like to be addressed?

**Osip**

Well, let's see. One might address him proudly. But I would not. One might address him performatively. But I would not. One might address him familiarly. But I would not. One might wait to be addressed by him. This I would do. "What is his rank?" you seem to want to know. Perhaps you know the official rankings. Perhaps you have them memorized. Perhaps these rankings are but fantasies to give common people a place to perch their dreams.

**Eliza**

I like a good perch. Fry it up in buttermilk and flour.

**Osip**

Perhaps the mind that cannot imagine the rank beyond rank ranks among the rank.”

**Anna**

Once I was rank. Now I can see...

**Osip**

Did you not know?

**Anna**

He must have wonderful taste.

**Osip**

Very refined. He’s an expert in the great families marked by envy and ultimate tragedy. The Karenins, the Karamazovs, the Kardashians.

**Anna**

Does he know the Tsar himself?

**Osip**

Old Nicky? They are very tight. Very very tight.

**Anna**

The Tsar has become known for ruling with an unsubtle hand, yes?

**Osip**

A fist of iron.

**Anna**

What’s the secret?

**Osip**

Fashion.

**Anna**

Fashion?

**Osip**  
Fashion.

**Song: "Fashion"**

**Osip**

Epaulets and hanging swords  
That's the new way in the court  
You want to look like you're heading out to war

Ribbons and medals, shoulder sashes  
Waxed and trimmed upcurled moustaches  
That's the way to favor with our lord

Ladies want a petticoat  
Roughly the size of a navy boat  
The silhouette by the corset is defined

Lots of sparkles, lots of pearls  
That's the way for the women and girls  
The tsar will not object to a low neckline

"What's it like?"

You ask me

"To serve in the court of the Tsar..."

It's startin' again in a garden again  
Sure as a barking dog

No sooner did we know we were naked in the bog  
Dolce & Gabbana launched its new spring catalog

**Anna**

(speaking)

And this is the secret to the Tsar's authority?

**Osip**

(speaking)

One day his sash became unclasped...the next day everyone came in with an unclasped

sash...the Tsar didn't know why...

**Anna**

What did he do?

**Osip**

He had them all killed.

**Anna**

Wise. Decisive.

**Osip**

Indeed.

**Anna**

I see...

*(singing)*

Threats to power are neutralized  
When everyone is stylized  
In the fashion of the Tsar's particular whim  
Roles of high importance  
Do not require competence  
When fashion proves your bonafides to him

**Anna**

*(speaking)*

It sounds like a lot of work

**Osip**

*(speaking)*

You don't want idle hands

**Anna**

Eliza, bring the boa

*(to Osip)*

Tell the Tsar I have complied

**Osip**

It's startin' anew, in a living room  
Like a buzz from a new beehive

No sooner did we know we were nude behind the vines

**Anna:** Victims of a crime

**Eliza:** Plainly serpentine

**Osip:** Subjected to time

**All:** Nowhere else to hide

**All**

...cut and dried!

No sooner did we know we were strange to the divine  
Coco went and mixed us up some Chanel No 5.

**Anna**

*(speaking)*

What a great great man is the Tsar. He's returned to noble Russia a perfect panacea.

**Osip**

*(speaking)*

Well, it might not last.

**Anna**

*(speaking)*

Why?

**Osip**

*(speaking)*

The war in Crimea.

**Anna**

*(singing)*

Gold and silk and diamonds and lace  
A diadem to frame the face  
A train of velvet gathered in a pool

How elegant it all must be

The uniform of liberty  
Like swimming fish fantastic in a school

That's the way  
It must be  
In a pure mayoralty

**Osip**  
It's startin' again  
We'll beg your pardon again  
When we re-invent Tom Ford

When you serve at the pleasure of an unbecoming lord  
Fashion is the cost of doing business and it's businesses' reward

Fashion.

**Anna**  
I love it.

**Eliza**  
So do I.

**Osip**  
Women.

**Dobchinsky**  
They're here!

*Dobchinsky runs to the door.*

*Enter the Mayor, Maria, John, and the Cronies. John carries things the Mayor bought him at the shops. An extravagant hat, a toy sword, some epaulettes, a pinwheel candy cane on a stick. He is dressed ridiculously in costumes he found at stores—epaulettes, a toy sword, a tricorn hat.*

**John**

*(finishing a story)*

...and then she said, "Well-behaved women seldom make history." And I replied, "Simply being contrary doesn't make one a *historian*!"

*All laugh. Anna, following Osip's instructions, waits to be addressed. Perhaps there is an awkward silence.*

**Mayor**

John, please come in. I would like to introduce you to the lady of the house.

*Anna rises.*

**John**

Pleased to meet you, madame.

**Anna**

Anna. Vice-mayor. But what is rank anyway? Pleased to meet you. Won't you sit down.

**John**

Oh, yes. Need to take a load off.

*John sits where Anna sat, next to Osip, who did not rise.*

**John**

How's it hangin', Osip?

**Osip**

Very good, Master.

**Eliza**

May I take your things?

*Eliza takes some of John's props. He has trouble letting go of the candy cane, but he relents. Eliza exits with his stuff.*

*Anna and the Cronies either find a place to sit or arrange themselves around the room.*

**Mayor**

John here was just regaling us of some of his Petersburg tales. It sounds as fantastical as we'd imagined!

**John**

But, you know, every place is fine when you have friends!

**Mayor**

And you must consider yourself our friend.

**John**

Oh, I do! You see, Osip? New friends!

**Osip**

Very nice.

**Mayor**

John, we would like to ask you a question. An informal one, but an important one, if you understand my meaning...

**John**

Boy, am I tired.

**Mayor**

You've toured the town...

**Dennis**

The parks...

**Irina**

The hospital...

**Amos**

The courts...

**Larisa**

The schools...

**Mayor**

We believe our town lives up to its founding motto: "PLENTY, PEOPLE, PLACE". But we always keep an eye on our blindspot, so if you saw any room for improvement...

*John has fallen asleep.*

**Anna**

You really can bore anyone, can't you?

**Mayor**

We must find out his assessment of the town.

**Cronies**

Yes, we must, we must.

*John begins mumbling in his sleep.*

**Osip**

Shhh...he's talking. He does his best thinking when he sleeps.

*(Osip translates his mumbles.)*

“Schools...for fools...

Hospitals...sick...

The department of justice...more like the department of *injustice*...

Tell Nicky...tell Nicky...”

He means the Tsar. Wait!

*(Osip listens for more.)*

My soul sings “Hark”

For the swings in the park.

**Dennis**

Yes!

**Anna**

Eliza, help the man to his room. *(to Osip)* Why don't you and your master get some rest? Then, when you are ready, we can regroup for a heavy supper and light entertainment.

**Osip**

Thank you.

*Eliza and Osip carry John offstage. The Cronies stare at each other.*

**Dennis**

He loves the swings!

**Anna**

His judgment could not have been any worse

And you are all Achilles in reverse.

So totally exposed you ought to kneel

“But look,” you say, “at this unblemished heel.”

For the government inspector to tell us how it is... it was something like a kindness...

**Mayor**

We need a plan. We need a plan to get our man.

*Song: [“We’ll Get Our Man”](#)*

**All**

We’ll get our man

We’ll get our man

We’ll get our man

**Dobinsky**

Are you worried?

**Mayor**

No. I’ve seen chaps like him before.

**Mayor**

He’s no threat whatsoever.

He’s a yes-man, he’s a toady, he’s a bureaucrat, a fool

He’s the kind of kid the kids all kick at school

He’s a zero, he’s a nothing, he’s an imbecile, a jerk

He’s the very picture of the government at work

What a blockhead, what a dullard, what a lollard, what a dope

**Maria and Dobchinsky**

Ain’t we got this tiger by the toe?

**Mayor**

He’s a laughing stock

**Larisa**

*You laughing?*

**Mayor**

Yes I am, and so are you  
He is no match for the minds in this room.

**Mayor**

He's a baby he's a lackey  
He's a dunce

**Dobchinsky and Maria**

*He's everything and nothing all at once*

**All**

HE IS A DUNCE  
HE IS A DUNCE

**Maria**

I think you've got it wrong  
I don't think that he knows what he's doing  
I think he's just a guy  
The only trouble's the trouble you're brewing  
I think he just wandered to this town.

**Anna**

*(laughing at Maria)*

Ha ha ha ha ha ha...  
Aren't you very funny, you damaged little bunny  
Someday you will understand  
And then I will be thanked  
I happen to know for certain  
He's the rank beyond all rank

**Mayor**

[He will] ruin us forever, everything we all hold dear  
He crusades against our families and careers

He's a special operative, he's a rising star  
He might just be the godson of the Tsar

He's got our names and our games on a list  
Oh Lord, he's a master strategist

He's a cipher, he's unknowable  
He's probably unsnowable

**Cronies**

I think they've got this bear up in the tree

**All**

A tree

A tree

A tree

**Mayor**

We can change how we administrate...

**Irina**

You mean we should accommodate?

**Mayor**

It's not too late, the state...

**Dennis**

*The state?*

**Dobchinsky**

Humpty Dumpty, come down from that wall!

**Mayor**

The state is the fate of us all

**Amos**

We should run!

Take the treasure, leave the chest

**Irina**

We might as well confess

**Mayor**

Confess? You jest!

**Irina**

I jest.

**Mayor**

You jest?

**Irina**

I said it only as a test

**Mayor**

Friends, a house divided will not appreciate in value!

**All**

Where we go one we go all!  
And we'll go there all the way  
Like the lemmings on the hillside  
We will plunge into the bay

And when we do, when we do  
We will try to swim to shore  
Then we'll climb back up the hillside  
And we'll try to sin no more  
Or at least we'll shut the door

**Mayor**

Yep, I can hear it! That's the spirit.

Besides, just remember...

He's a fool

He's a fool

He's a foolish little fool

**Eliza**

What about the servant?

**Mayor**

What about him?

He too is a fool

He's a servant just like you

Now, not a one of us should fear

The Government Inspector

Besides it's so much worse...

**Irina**

Where?

**Eliza**

Where?

**Mayor**

In the private sector.

Alrighty everybody, good work, good work.

**Anna**

Have we got a plan?

**Mayor**

What?

**Anna**

Have we...have we.. do we have a plan?

**All**

HAVE WE A PLAN?

HAVE WE A PLAN?

HAVE WE A PLAN?

**Anna**

We must do what we know  
Give a bribe

**Irina**

A bribe?

**Anna**

A bribe.

**Dennis**

A bribe.

**Mayor**

No bribes!  
That's exactly what he thinks that we will do.  
You must swear you will not bribe.

**Irina**

I swear!

**Amos**

I swear!

**Larisa**

I swear!

**Dennis**

I swear!

**Anna**

If not a bribe then a bride.

**Mayor**

A bride?

**Anna**

A bride.

A girl all in white.

With a mother by her side  
A mother by her side  
She will outshine the bride  
She will outshine the light

**Mayor**

Maria dear, now's your chance  
Here's your shot at romance  
You will marry Khlestekov  
And tonight we all will dance

**MARIA**

Have I got this right?

**MAYOR**

Yes, you have, you're the bride.

**ANNA**

Maria, if it be compulsory...  
You are the Helen of the sea  
Guinevere in agony  
Overcome you are become  
Nota bene  
Now you are Francesca di Rimini!

**Anna and Mayor**

Put on your dress put on your lace  
Put on your veil put on your face  
Become the heroine of love  
And show us what you're made of

*Osip reenters.*

**Osip**

Pardon me. Forgot my hat.

*Osip takes his hat and leaves.*

**ALL**

We have our plan to get our man

We have our plan!

We have our plan!

***End of Act I.***

Not for performance

## Act II

### Scene 1. Mayor's House

*A couple hours later. Afternoon. The great room is empty. Enter Osip and John, post-nap.*

**John**

I could get used to a place like this.

**Osip**

It's very nice.

**John**

I'd change the shutters.

**Osip**

I'd change the people.

**John**

Osip. They're very kind. Generous. And if they were the cops they'd have arrested me already.

**Osip**

We need to be on the road first thing in the morning. Your creditors are sniffing out your trail.

**John**

How do you think a small-town mayor affords a joint like this? Enterprising? Prospecting?

**Osip**

De-frauding, perhaps.

**John**

A good player! He looks into your eyes, he doesn't bet the ace.

**Osip**

John Ivanovich.

**John**

Osip Osipsky, I don't want any of your negativity now.

**Osip**

I don't think these people know who you are.

**John**

I don't know who I am half the time.

**Osip**

Rather, I don't think these people know who you're not.

**John**

And who is that?

*Larisa appears at the doorway.*

**Larisa**

Excuse me... I just happened to notice that you are alone. May I come in?

**John**

Larisa! Please, come in.

**Larisa**

Did you have a nice nap?

**John**

Splendid.

**Larisa**

Can we sit, quietly, with our hands folded like so?

**John**

Of course, of course.

*They sit.*

**Larisa**

Yes, well, straight to the point, then. As Director of Schools, my first allegiance is to the children. I believe the children are our future. We must teach them well and let them lead the

way. We must show them all the beauty they possess inside. Give them a sense of pride. We must let the children's laughter remind us...

**John**

Yes, yes. Are we getting straight to the point here?

**Larisa**

The point is: I am prepared to offer a donation to ensure the schools may keep running under my supervision in the event of possible cuts to budget or personnel. Here is five hundred rubles. May I have your assurance that we will be safe?

*Osip takes the money and places it in his satchel. He seals his satchel.*

**Osip**

On behalf of my master, I accept. Thank you.

**Larisa**

Oh, thank you! Thank you!

*Larisa exits. A beat as Osip and John look at each other.*

*Irina appears at the doorway.*

**Irina**

Um, pardones-moi?

**John**

Irina! Do come in.

**Irina**

Merci! Merci!

**John**

To what do we owe the pleasure?

**Irina**

Could I have just a moment of your time?

**John**

Of course!

**Irina**

Can you stand by the window and give me a few deep breaths?

**John**

Okay.

*They go to the window.*

**Irina**

As Director of Hospitals, I see many kinds of patients. Some are more diseased than others, but they are all in the same hospital. Well, so it is with the directors of our government offices. Some of my colleagues are sick. Very sick indeed. Inflammation of the moral fiber. Acute pathology of the ethical lobe. Were the the director of hospitals to suffer an amputation because of her affiliation with her so-called colleagues, how many needful patients would be left to die on the barren hill naked in the mouths of he-goats? Oh my responsibility is to the patients. *Tout à fait!*

Therefore, I would like to offer you a good faith contribution to ensure that the director of hospitals will be counted among the sane in the asylum, do you understand?

**Osip**

Oh, we understand.

*Irina hands Osip an envelope.*

**Irina**

Merci, merci. To health!

*Irina bows and leaves. Osip opens the envelope and counts the money.*

**Osip**

It's two thousand rubles.

**John**

What's going on here?

**Osip**

What's going on here is our debt has been cut in half. More than half!

**John**

You see? These are good people! I love them!

*Dennis enters singing to the tune of the Oh! Susanna.*

**Dennis**

*(pretending not to notice them)*

Well I come from Vladivostok with a bailailaka on my knee

I'm going to the Ural Mountains my true love for to see

Oh! Ekaterina! Oh don't you cry for me!

*(pretending to just now notice Osip and John)*

Oh! Hello John!

**John**

Hello, Dennis.

**Dennis**

Hey, got a minute?

**John**

Of course.

**Dennis**

Great! Let's walk vigorously back and forth for a bit.

*They do.*

**Dennis**

I am the Director of Parks and Recreation and my colleagues in the government offices are a bunch of pink-cheeked morons. Turn!

If we had the game of baseball and I was a pitcher I'd hit 'em straight between the eyes. Turn!

If we were pickin' teams on a playground, I'd play by myself. Stop. Start again. And losing would not be an option. Stop.

Here are three thousand rubles. And when the Tsar fires his foppish little pencil necks but keeps Parks and Rec running I'll have three thousand more for ya. Deal?

**John**

Deal.

*Osip takes the money.*

**Dennis**

Touchdown.

*Dennis leaves. Amos enters.*

**Amos**

Excuse me.

**John**

Amos, Your Honor. Please, come in.

**Amos**

A moment of your...

**John**

Yes, you may have a moment of our time.

**Amos**

Thank you. May I request we all kneel close together as if before a firing squad?

**John**

Sure.

*They do it.*

**Amos**

I am a judge. I run the courts.

**John**

Yes.

**Amos**

I must weigh the scales of justice soberly and without prejudice.

**John**

Of course.

**Amos**

I'm so unbelievably scared! I have a wife! A child! A very expensive recreational vehicle! Were I to be thrown behind the iron bars, the irony I could not bear!

**John**

Whatcha got?

**Amos**

Eight thousand five hundred rubles. Please, please, please! Take it and spare me.

*Osip takes it.*

**John**

Received.

**Amos**

Oh! Thank you!

*Amos leaves.*

*Osip checks to see the coast is clear.*

**Osip**

We're in the black. John, we're in the black!

**John**

Osip, we're in the black! We can hold our heads high!

**Osip**

We gotta get outta here right now. Come on, let's go.

**John**

But I like this place.

**Osip**

Someday a song will be written: "You gotta know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em,

know when to walk away, know when to run.” Now is the time to run. Get up and let’s go or they really will throw us in jail.

*Osip goes for the door. John follows, but in protest.*

**John**

But Osip...

*Osip runs smack into the Mayor entering with his entourage of Anna, Dobchinsky, Eliza, the Cronies, and servants. Except for Eliza and the servants, everyone is dressed in extravagant military uniforms. Osip backs up as they all enter the room.*

**Mayor**

I thought I heard stirring! Did you two sleepy birds have a nice rest?

**John**

Very nice.

**Mayor**

Very good. Please, have a seat. I would like to discuss something with you. I hope you have enjoyed your stay in our town. And I hope you will always feel welcome here. In fact, I wonder if you would not grow roots in our soil. It’s a fertile soil and it nourishes its seed. Our lovely daughter, Maria, has recently come of age. When I saw the two of you together on the swingset, something clicked.

**Dennis**

I will have that oiled.

**Mayor**

I saw...how do you say it?...a bloom upon your faces.

**Irina**

That’s rosacea, there’s an ointment for that.

**Mayor**

No, no. No, no. It was the bloom of love. John Ivanov Khlestekov, I am prepared to offer my daughter’s hand in marriage to you. *(calls out)* Maria?

*Maria enters. She is done up ridiculously - big hair, lots of makeup, etc.*

**Mayor**

Isn't she lovely?

**Anna**

Of course she isn't. But I can assure you, she takes after me, and I was a late bloomer. I wasn't beautiful until my early thirties.

**Mayor**

Ours is not a wealthy village, but we have made do. As a dowry, I can offer twenty-five thousand rubles. I can place it in your care to deliver to your father.

**John**

I...I...I am overcome...

**Mayor**

All I ask is that you sign this simple letter to the Tsar. Just a formality. It attests to the efficient and ethical workings of our local bureaucracy and wishes him long life and happiness.

**John**

I just...I...don't know what to say...

**Mayor**

And furthermore, we can have the wedding tonight! This very night. This very beautiful night!

**Anna**

And if you'd like to have another ceremony in Petersburg maybe at the Winter's Palace or something we can do that later.

**Osip**

Master.

**John**

Osip.

**Mayor**

So what do you say?

**Osip**

May I have a word with you?

**John**

*(to Osip)*

No.

**Mayor and Anna**

No?

**John**

No.

**Osip**

Now.

**John**

Yes.

**Mayor**

Yes?

**Osip**

Privately.

**John**

No.

**Anna and Mayor**

No?

**John**

No. Yes, yes to you. No to you.

**Anna**

Yes.

**Osip**

No.

**Mayor**

Here is the letter.

**Dobchinsky**

Oh it's the happiest day of my life! It's the happiest day of all our lives! It's the happiest day in the history of time! Oh ho ho ho ho my sweet Maria! My sweet sweet Maria!

**Osip**

John!

**John**

I've always dreamed of getting married!

**Maria**

Me too!

**Mayor**

And now you shall! Here's that little letter.

**John**

Mr. Mayor, may I propose?

**Mayor**

Sure! Just sign this...

**John**

I'd like to get down on one knee. Usually I'm on all fours groveling like a pig, but tonight...

**Mayor**

Of course you may, but first...

*John kneels before Maria and takes her hand.*

**John**

Maria, Maria...what is your middle name and patronymic?

**Maria**

Andrea Antonovna.

**John**

Maria Andrea Antonovna, would you be my wife?

**Maria**

Oh, my goodness. Look, Dobchinsky, it's like we always practiced it!

**Dobchinsky**

You're doing perfect! Oh you look so beautiful and good! Doesn't she look so beautiful and good?

**John**

Well? Is that a yes?

**Maria**

Yes! Yes I will marry you!

**Osip**

Wait, wait, wait, wait. Isn't this a little quick? Tonight?

**John**

Osip, when the cards turn your way, you gotta play 'em. I don't think it's too quick at all. And you know what?

**Osip**

What.

**John**

*(Goes to Osip)*

I have my best man right here!

**Maria**

*(Goes to Dobchinsky)*

And I have my maid of honor!

**Mayor**

Dobchinsky, Osip, servants...prepare the wedding.

**Dobchinsky**

Hit it, Sammy!

*Music cue: The band starts playing “Wedding Song / Kalinka.”*

**Mayor**

Now, master John...

**Dobchinsky**

Servants? Servants!

**Song: “Wedding Song (Kalinka)”**

*Dobchinsky leads the wedding preparation, and Osip—playing the role of servant—helps. Dobchinsky and Osip try to keep it together while they each do the last thing on earth they want to do: prep a wedding for their beloveds to marry someone else.*

***Dobchinsky***

(We’ll need a) tailor, a dresser, a florist and a baker,  
A portraitist, a cook, champagne and a cake  
(We’ll need a) flower girl, an uncle  
Someone to stop the uncle  
We will need a crying sister  
And a sunset on the lake.

***Osip***

We’ll need streamers and can--dles  
We’ll need a carpet for the ai--sle  
We’ll need some lavender balloons and  
We will need all of this quite soon

**Dobchinsky:** *Where are my bridesmaids? Where are my bridesmaids?*

***Dialogue over music:***

**Maria**

Dobchinsky, my liege, may I have the pleasure of an escort to see the sunset on the terrace?

**Dobchinsky**

Maria, I have a wedding to prepare.

**Dobchinsky**

(We'll need something) old, something new  
Something borrowed, something blue  
Someone should get a ruble  
And shove it in a shoe...  
We will need some invitations...

**Eliza:** *Everyone's already here...*

**Dobchinsky:**

Go get those invitations  
And make it snappy, dear!

**Osip**

We'll need a speech and we'll need a toast  
Steak tar-tar and caviar  
And a hundred sides of roast  
Vegetarian options, some mac and cheese at least  
A quote from Deepak Chopra  
And don't we need a priest?

**Dobchinsky:** *Go find us a priest!*

**Maria**

My sweet bumbling lord, I'd really like to talk with you. Come take a walk with me.

**Dobchinsky**

Maria, I am trying to create the wedding of our dreams.

**Osip**

*(to Mayor and cronies)*  
(I must have) you step aside  
Take a hike, fly a kite  
I don't care where you hide  
Just get yourself outside

**Dobchinsky:** *Take the bride! Take the bride, she can't see this! Amateur hour!*

**Music switches to the Blues.**

**Dobchinsky**

(Oh well I'm) losing my mind  
I'm losing it bad  
Gotta stay movin' or I'm gonna get sad  
I'm losing my baby to another man  
I think I'll head out tomorrow to Uzbekistan

**Osip**

Oh I'm losing it too  
I've had enough  
Can't take no more of this stuff  
I'm losing my buddy, my number one pal  
And it hurts, Jack, cause he just met this gal

**Dobchinsky and Osip**

Blue blue blue blue blue blue  
Just when you think it can't happen to you  
You got the blue blue blue blue blues  
Bang, pop, zap, wham  
There goes the other shoe

**Osip**

Lookit here now

**Dobchinsky**

Hit me

**Osip**

You minded your manners, boy

**Dobchinsky**

You know I did

**Osip**

You played it straight  
You walked her home  
When it was gettin' late

**Dobchinsky**

Every time

You told her how you feel  
You said what's on your heart...

**Dobchinsky**

Well, I didn't do that part.

**Osip**

Oh, you didn't?

*Music stops.*

**Dobchinsky**

What are you crazy?

**Osip**

You didn't tell her how you feel at all?

**Dobchinsky**

Absolutely not. That's insane.

**Osip**

Yeah, you can't...I wouldn't...I didn't do that either.

**Dobchinsky**

That's insane. My heart would shatter into a million pieces.

**Osip**

I would rather spend the rest of my life just wondering what could've happened...

*Blues interlude ends. Wedding Song (Kalinka) resumes and intensifies in tempo and panic. Servants shout at each other about the stuff they need for the wedding. It becomes mayhem.*

**Servants**

*(calling out)*

I need a rolling pin!

I need a ladder!

Binder clip! Some tape!

Anybody have a cheeseboard?

We need a hockey mask!

Anybody have a screwdriver?  
Where's the rolling pin?  
Philips!  
I need a cheeseboard!  
Band-Aids, need some band-aids!  
I need a groom to the front, I need a bride...  
Get out of here!  
Do we have a tablecloth?  
Where's my cheeseboard  
Do you know the way to San Jose?  
Toilet paper! Right now. Right now!  
Anybody got a cake slicer!

**Osip**

It's going to be a beautiful wedding.

**Dobchinsky**

You really think so?

**Osip**

They're gonna love it.

**Dobchinsky**

And the guests?

*Music turns slow and stately.*

**Osip & Dobchinsky**

Some will laugh  
And some will weep  
Some will fall in love  
And some will fall asleep  
Some will go melancholy  
Some will have a ball

*(Maria and John join in)*

And some won't feel anything  
Some won't feel anything

Some won't feel any...thing...at all.

**Dobchinsky**

We need a verse from Lamentations

**Osip**

And Jeremiah too.

*Song ends.*

*The Tailor takes charge.*

**Tailor**

*(to John)*

You! Measurements. Now.

**John**

I don't wanna!

**Tailor**

You don't have a choice.

**Dobchinsky**

You must be measured for your coat.

**Tailor**

I'll need a hand.

*Dobchinsky and Osip join the measuring party. Tailor puts three chairs next to each other.*

**Tailor**

*(to John, indicating a chair)*

Get up here.

**John**

I don't want to. I want to go back to the party.

**Tailor**

Do as I say right this very instant.

*John obeys and gets up on the chair.*

**Mayor**

Uh, son, son! Just go ahead and sign this and we'll be all set.

**Tailor**

Lift his arms!

*Osip and Dobchinsky lift John's arms just before John can take the letter.*

**Tailor**

*(to Mayor)*

We don't have time for that! You want this wedding to happen or not?

**Maria**

Let them do their work, Papa.

**Mayor**

Carry on, then.

*Mayor exits with letter. Maria starts to exit with him, but stays back, unseen by the rest of the actors. Tailor takes out his tape and moves behind John to measure his shirt size.*

**John**

*(arms outstretched)*

Sometimes I feel like the savior Himself.

**Tailor**

Well you're not. Hold still.

*Tailor measures.*

**Tailor**

What do you want - ruffles? Cuffs? High collar? Low? Belt? Suspenders? What do you want?

**John**

I don't know. Isn't that your job?

**Tailor**

It's your wedding, chump.

**Osip**

He looks best with pointed collars, a simple tie half-windsor, a vest, a single-buttoned coat with tails, suspenders, trim-cut trousers. A splash of blue brings out his eyes.\* (*\*productions should feel free to change the line about the eyes based on the actor*)

**Tailor**

There we go.

*(to John)*

Hold still! Eliza, bring in the coat rack.

*Eliza exits.*

**John**

My arms are tired.

**Tailor**

Let him go.

*Dobchinsky and Osip let his arms fall. Eliza wheels out a rack of coats.*

**John**

I'm missing my own engagement party.

**Tailor**

*(chooses a jacket and hands it to John)*

Try this one.

*John takes the jacket to try it on in front of the mirror. Tailor goes straight to Osip with the measuring tape.*

**Tailor**

Now you. Arms up.

**Osip**

No!

**Tailor**

Right now!

**Osip**

No no no! Don't touch me!

**Tailor**

The Best Man dresses like a servant?

**John**

Osip, get measured.

**Tailor**

Get back to the mirror and try on that coat! We gotta keep this moving!

**John**

I am the groom and you are rude!

**Tailor**

Buddy, you think I want to be doing this? It's Friday night. I'm missing another dinner with my family. And some dinner it is. Weak soup. I've been working like a dog all week. What's in it for me? Another week of working like a dog.

**Servant 1**

That's right!

**Eliza**

Tell it like it is!

**Servant 2**

Hear hear!

**Servant 3**

Absolyutno tochno!

**John**

Is that my fault?

**Tailor**

You marry into this family? Then yes it is! Once I had my own shop, huh? My own family shop! Fabrics, upholstery, clothing. These scoundrels raise the tax on imports on the merchants, yes? My costs go up.

**Servant 1**

That's right! I ran a grocery! "We need your grain." Why? "Sending troops to the east." Why? They like men in uniform.

**Servant 3**

Amin brat!

**Tailor**

Those bureaucrats purchase the building. Raise my rent. My costs go up! They ask me for a roll of linen. I give them my fee, they say "No, it's for official business." They steal my inventory. They give themselves a raise. Oh, a fat raise. My costs go up! "Need a loan?" they say. What choice do I have?

**Eliza**

No choice!

**Tailor**

None! The loan? Twenty-five percent interest!

**Eliza**

My husband was a soldier. Got hurt. Needed care. "Oh, he was off duty," they say. "Pay out of pocket." The poorhouse. They're liars, all of them! And the mayor's the worst.

**Servant 2**

You want to be eaten by a lion or a tiger? That's your choice.

**Tailor**

That's right!

**Servant 3**

Da pomozhet mne Bog.

**Tailor**

So I don't care if you're the groom or the government inspector or the tsar himself. If you're on their side, you're not on mine!

**John**

The what?

**Tailor**

The groom, the government inspector, the tsar, who cares? Put on your coat!

**Dobchinsky**

Hey, this is Maria's wedding night! This is supposed to be a wonderful night!

**Tailor**

Shove it up your cowardice.

**John**

What's the government inspector?

**Tailor**

"What's the government inspector?" Look at this schmuck.

**Eliza**

They're all liars.

**Servant 2**

Corrupt.

**Servant 3**

Povrezhdenyy.

**Servant 2**

*(to Servant 3)*

Hey, was your role not translated or what?

*Servant 3 takes out the script and starts looking through it.*

**John**

I don't understand.

**Osip**

They think you are a government inspector, John. They think you're reporting to the Tsar. The mayor and his pals want a good grade. Why else would they be doing this?

**John**

Because they like me?

**Tailor**

"Because they like me." Hahaha. Hahaha! The schmuck outschmucks his schmuckness. Put on your jacket, I don't want to be here all night, Mr. Inspector.

**Osip**

Let's get outta here, John.

**John**

Who do you think you are, Osip? Somewhere between a buddy and a mother.

**Tailor**

Sounds like a wife.

**John**

A wife... You know what? I don't care. I don't care. They want to use me? They can use me! I want to be of use. All I want is to be of use. They're using me by giving their daughter to marry me? I want to be married! In my heart there is love! Where else can it go?

They're lying to me? They can lie to me, everybody else does! Even you, Osip. Even you. I look into your eyes. I've looked many times. And I see goodness. I see kindness. I see a brother. But I see something else, and I don't know what it is.

But you know what I do know? You know what I have finally discerned? I have finally discerned that I am no good at discerning. In business, in poker, in life. So if they want to lie when they say they like me, if they want to lie when they say they *love* me, if they want to lie when they say "Come join our family," that's the lie I'll fall for. I'll fall for it all day long.

Osip, you are dismissed from my service. Send me the bill.

*John walks to the mirror and tries on his jacket.*

**John**

Hey, tailor, look at that. It's a beautiful jacket. I love it. As for the pants and shirt and tie and all that? Whatever you think is best. I'll wear it. Never been one for fashion anyway. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'd like to go out and join my new family on the terrace.

*John exits. He does not see Maria. The actors watch him go.*

**Dobchinsky**

He was more than a master to you.

**Osip**

Yes. Well. All gigs come to an end. Can anyone give me directions to the carriage depot?

**Dobchinsky**

Eliza, could you take the gentleman to the depot? You can use my carriage.

**Eliza**

Friend. Take some of these crumpets and nuts.

**Osip**

Thank you.

**Tailor**

Take an overcoat. The nights are getting cold.

*Osip chooses a feminine coat.*

**Dobchinsky**

Maybe your master can be reasoned with...

**Osip**

No, no. This is just the way with servants and masters.

**Maria**

I will take her...him...to the depot.

**Tailor**

You need to be fitted for a dress.

**Maria**

I have plenty to choose from. My mother's a shopper. Come with me. It's a short ride.

**Osip**

*(to the servants)*

Thank you all. I hope...I don't know. I hope things improve for you.

**Dobchinsky**

Sir. May I ask you for something?

**Osip**

What is it?

**Dobchinsky**

When you are back in the court of the Tsar, will you tell him, will just tell him, will you let him know, that here, right here in this town, well, Dobchinsky lived here?

**Osip**

I will let him know.

**Dobinchsky**

Thank you. Thank you and good luck.

*Osip and Maria exit.*

**Dobchinsky**

Well, let's see.

*(to the servants)*

We won't be needing those jackets. You can remove them. The altar looks good. Um. The carpet looks fine. I like what you've done with streamers. Food is ready?

**Servant 1**

Food is ready.

**Dobchinsky**

Champagne?

**Servant 1**

Chilled.

**Dobchinsky**  
Sugar cubes?

**Servant 1**  
I will place them.

**Dobchinsky**  
Rings?

**Servant 2**  
Yes, sir.

**Dobchinsky**  
May I see Maria's ring before she puts it on?

**Servant 2**  
Here it is, sir.

**Dobchinsky**  
*(stares at it)*  
Lovely.  
*(recovers)*  
Um...band?

*Band plays a rimshot or something.*

**Dobchinsky**  
Good! Well, I suppose it's time to get the wedding party for one last look. And then it'll be time for somebody to get married.

**Servant 2**  
Yes, sir.

**Dobchinsky**  
Alright, then.

*Dobchinsky exits.*

**Tailor**

I can't wait till this is over.

**Servant**

Till what's over?

**Tailor**

This sham of a wedding.

**Servant**

Oh, I thought you meant the bribery, the extortion, the shamelessness.

**Tailor**

That'll never be over.

*Dobchinsky enters with the Mayor, Anna, John, and the Cronies.*

**Mayor**

Alright! What have we got here for the big night? Let's see...

*Mayor and Anna inspect the room, but cursorily. They've got bigger fish to fry.*

**Mayor**

Looks terrific to me! What do you think, my dear wife?

**Anna**

Good enough.

**Mayor**

Excellent! Then what do you say, five minutes and we get this show on the road?

**Anna**

Very good.

**Mayor**

Dobchinsky, capital job with the preparations.

**Dobchinsky**

Thank you, your honor.

**Mayor**

Who's ready? Larisa?

**Larisa**

Ready, sir!

**Mayor**

Amos?

**Amos**

Yes, sir.

**Mayor**

Dennis?

**Dennis**

Darn tootin!

**Mayor**

Irina Nikolaevna?

**Irina**

Present and accounted for.

**Mayor**

John? Is our handsome new son ready?

**John**

I am, Papa.

**Mayor**

Well, that's everybody!

**Dobchinsky**

You might wonder about your daughter, the bride, sir.

**Mayor**

Where is that room temperature pickle? Doesn't matter. While we wait for her... John, I just would like to... I want to attend to...

**Anna**

We're just so delighted that you will be joining our family and if you would like to stay here in our town well that's just wonderful and if you'd like to go far away well that's just perfect, too. Isn't that right?

**Cronies**

Yes! Yes! Absolutely! Quite right!

**Mayor**

Well said, my dear. Words just cannot express how happy we are to have you as our son. Now, before we do this, I just want... if you don't terribly mind... we can just have this matter dispatched...

**John**

You want me to sign that paper.

**Mayor**

I do. I do. Just so we can clear our minds to enjoy the festivities.

**John**

Sure, where is it?

**Mayor**

It is here!

*John takes the letter.*

**Mayor**

Now, what you'll see here is simply that you are approving...

*John signs it.*

**John**

Done. No biggie.

**Mayor**

Wonderful!

**Song: "Oh Happy Day / Brahm's Hungarian Dance No. 5"**

*All cast should enter throughout the song. While they come in, so does Maria and Sofiya. Osip is no more, only Sofiya remains. The real thing. The mask is dropped. She is dressed as what she is: a plain, simple woman without rank or stature. She blends with the crowd. It's fine if even the audience doesn't notice her. Maria, however, should be seen by all. She carries Osip's satchel. At some point, the Priest arrives.*

**Amos**

We're free!

**Larisa**

We did it!

**Irina**

We won!

**Dobchinsky**

Everyone! Everyone! The wedding is about to begin.

**Mayor**

Happy day

Oh happy day!

Happy happy happy happy happy happy day

**Cronies**

Thanks to you!

Our leader true

What a coup

A genius - that's you!

**Anna**

Shocked and admittedly amazed

You did not fail

Always have believed there is a place for you in jail

Hey!

**Mayor**

Thank you all but this I can't  
Singularly own  
For you know I didn't  
I didn't act alone  
No no no no no no no no  
No! I didn't, didn't, I didn't act alone!

*Dobchinsky notices the Priest is at the doorway and leads him in.*

**Dobchinsky**

Mayor, the Priest has arrived.

**Mayor**

Ah. Good evening. I am Anton Antonovich Skvoznik-Dmukhanovsky. I am the Mayor of this town. The proverbial ruble stops with me.

**John**

Mother and father, I hate to intrude  
And I pray that you don't think me rude  
But I think there's something, there's something you forgot...

**Larisa**

Flowers?

**Amos**

Champagne?

**Dobchinsky**

The bride?

**John & Eliza**

The dowry.

**Mayor and Anna**

Oh, look at that  
We forgot to pay the kid

Oh, look at that  
We forgot to pay the kid  
Here are those rubles, you honor, your grace  
Good luck when every morning you must see that face.

**Dobchinsky**

I object for I am an empiricist  
I object because I love the truth  
Aphrodite made Maria heaven-kissed  
If you don't see it then you are the fool

**Maria**

Thank you, my liege...

**Dobchinsky**

Never mind, don't mention it

**Maria**

Thank you, Romeo

**Dobchinsky**

I can't call you Juliet

**Maria**

But you always have

**Dobchinsky**

Something went and changed all that

**Maria**

That hasn't happened yet

**Dobchinsky**

*Two minutes! Two minutes till the wedding!*

*Dobchinsky gets people into their places*

*Maria goes to John.*

**Maria**

*(hands John Osip's satchel)*

Just one moment. Your servant. He asked me to give this to you.

**John**

*(looks in the bag, then to the audience)*

It's the money. And a note. "Thank you for the time we had together. And good luck. Your servant, Osip."

**Priest**

All rise.

**Anna**

*(pushing John down the aisle)*

You gotta go now. You gotta walk. Go go go.

*Everybody looks at each other cause they're already standing.*

**Song: "Here Comes the Bride"**

**Servant Three**

Vot idet nevesta

vsya v belom

Sladko, bezmyatezhno

v myagkom siyayushchem svete

In Russian:

Вот идет невеста

Вся в белом

Сладко безмятежна

В мягком сияющем свете

*John and Anna, Mayor and Maria walk down the aisle and take their places. The Mayor and Maria now walk down the aisle and take their places.*

**Priest**

You may be seated. Now. May I have the rings?

*Servant 2 brings up the rings. Dobchinsky probably weeps.*

**Priest**

Alright, then. Tell me your name.

**John**

John Ivanov Khlestekov.

**Priest**

And yours?

**Maria**

Maria Antonovna Skvoznik-Dmukhanovsky.

**John**

*(John interrupts)*

I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I just need a moment. Just a moment. I have to note who is not with us right now. Galileo Galilei is one. Mary Queen of Scots is another. Desdemona is also absent.

**Maria**

She is a fictional character, my dear.

**John**

Aren't we all? But the one I am thinking of is the one I have wronged. My servant, my friend. My best friend. Wherever you are, Osip, I'm sorry.

**Song: ["Don't We Dream Reprise"](#)**

**Sofiya**

Oh don't we dream, don't we dream  
When the waking truth is just too much to bear?  
Don't we dream that we'd not be so scared  
Of what is there...is there...?

*John approaches the strange woman singing.*

Dreams find the truth the eyes can't see  
Dreams find the truth the lips can't speak

Don't we dream that we may ever dream  
Dreams of you...and me.

**John**

Osip?

**Sofiya**

Sofiya, John. My name is Sofiya.

**John**

So you were lying to me. You, too, were lying to me.

**Sofiya**

And for that I beg your forgiveness. Everything else you know of me is true.

**John**

I dreamed once that I saw you without your mustache.

**Sofiya**

I know.

**John**

You look so different.

**Sofiya**

It was a prop from the set of *Tartuffe*.

**All**

Oh.

*(A beat.)*

**John**

Is everyone a liar?

**Sofiya**

Until they are not. I am sorry. I didn't want to ruin your night.

**John**

But you did ruin my night. You ruined it by leaving. Why didn't you tell me before?

**Sofiya**

Fear. Plain and simple. You hired me disguised, so disguised I stayed.

*(Points to Maria)*

It was she who told me you'd forgive me.

**John**

She was right.

**Maria**

I always try to understand the men I might marry.

**John**

Sofiya... a most beautiful name.

**Servant 3**

Krasivyy!

**John**

And those eyes. So beautiful, and now unclouded by the lie.

**Dobchinsky**

Maria, I think your intended is in love with someone else.

**Maria**

And that is just as well. Because, my liege, I am not in love with my intended. I am in love with you. I have always been in love with you. Here we have ourselves an altar and a priest, and you have created the wedding of our dreams. Will you marry me?

**Dobchinsky**

Here? Now?

**Maria**

Here. Now.

**Mayor**

Now wait just a minute...

**Maria**

You shut your big ugly mouth.

**Anna**

Now, precious daughter...

**Maria**

You too. Ten pounds of pancake makeup but all I see on your face is egg. Dobchinsky, do you need to think about it?

**Dobchinsky**

Not for a minute, my love.

**Maria**

Priest! Marry us.

**Priest**

Maria Antonovna...is that right?

**Maria**

Right! And this is Dobchinsky Bobchinskeyovich Comiskey Park.

**John**

Korean?

**Dobchinsky**

On my father's side.

**Priest**

Do you two agree to be wed before the eyes of all present and God?

**Dobchinsky and Maria**

We do!

**Priest**

I pronounce you wed!

**Tailor**

Are we dismissed?

**Maria**

Is the wedding over?

**Sofiya**

John Khlestekov, we've got an altar and a priest...

**John**

Yes! Yes yes yes!

**Sofiya**

Let's do it.

*Maria and Dobchinsky step aside and John and Sofiya take their places.*

**Priest**

Why not? Do you, John and Sofiya, agree to be wed before the eyes of all present and God?

**John and Sofiya**

We do.

**Priest**

I pronounce you wed.

**Tailor**

Can we go now?

**John**

One moment, Tailor. Before we go, there is one tradition I would like to uphold. One moment.  
*(Whispers to Sofiya. She nods.)*

We would like most of you to share in our great joy.

*(John opens his satchel, gives half the money to Sofiya, and together they give the money to the servants.)*

**John and Sofiya**

Two thousand rubles for you.  
Two thousand rubles for you.  
Two thousand rubles for you...

*And so on until it's all given away.*

**John**

We know it's only a pittance of what you're owed, but we hope it brings you some relief. And maybe, somehow, things will change.

**Servant 3**

Blagodaryu vas, ser.

**John**

I'm through with gambling for coins. Now I'm betting on us.

**Song: "Maria's Song Reprise"**

**Maria**

Sometimes the truth hides  
Sometimes it seems to fly

**Sofiya**

Like a little joke  
Across the endless sky

**John**

Sometimes you stop and stare  
Cause it never went anywhere

**Dobchinsky**

And you realize

**John and Dobchinsky**

You're the one who hid your eyes

**John and Dobchinsky**

I think I'm made for love

**Maria and Osip**

I think that love is made for YOU

**John and Dobchinsky**

Let's not quibble, dear  
We've got the rest of our lives for that—

**Maria**

May I in closing say  
I know the part I play  
And I say it true  
I love to give my love to...

**Mayor**

*(interrupting, straight to Maria)*

You! You! You filthy little hamster dropping. Your mother and I gave you an education...

**Anna**

A roof over your head!

**Mayor**

Food on your plate!

**Anna**

Clothes!

**Mayor**

And what have you done? Squandered it! Squandered it on this servile dope! And for what?

**Maria**

For what? Well, father, mother, when you were young, why did you two marry?

**Mayor and Anna**

Strategic alignment.

**Mayor**

Never mind! The letter still stands. He still signed the letter. Worth its weight in gold.

**John**

I'm afraid it's not. I'm not who you think I am.

**Mayor**

You're the Government Inspector.

**Anna**

The rank beyond all rank!

**John**

I have never really known who I am. But I know who I'm not. And I am no government inspector.

**Priest**

But I am!

**Mayor**

You are? How about a donation?

**Priest**

Sorry, I'm not for sale.

**Anna**

May we take you on a tour of the town?

**Priest**

That won't be necessary. I'll be taking *you* to jail.

**Song: *"The Thing That Has Never Happened Reprise"***

**Maria, John, Osip/Sofiya, Dobchinsky**

*(singing)*

That thing that has never happened  
Is still a thing that could.

***Finis.***

**Thank you for reading. To bring *The Government Inspector* to your theater or school, email [takacsjeff@gmail.com](mailto:takacsjeff@gmail.com).**

Not for performance