

**Old Sinners**  
**(Old men & girls)**  
**by S. Belaia**

**Tragicomedy in 3 Acts**

**Lviv, 1929**  
**“Theatre Library” publishing house**

**Translated by Taisiia Cherkashyna**

## Characters:

**Bartenev Micola Vasilyovich**, a professor in his 50s, tall, respectable, strict, his hair is totally grey.

**Bartenev Yuriy Vasilyovich**, is his brother. Short, amiable, weak-willed, 2 years younger than his brother. His hair is grey as well.

**Fedir**, their servant. Grumpy old man, a typical old varlet.

**Marusya Vorontsova**, 17 years of age. A pretty and flirtatious thing. She's a gymnasium student in Act 1.

**Darina**, 16 years of age, is Fedir's niece. An ordinary girl from a village setting. She's pretty and trustful.

**Act 1**  
**“Unexpected situation”**

Living room at the Bartenevs' house. The door in the middle leads to Yuriy's room. In the background to the right there's the front door to the house. In the front ground to the left there is the door to the library. There's a couch by the wall and a piano to the left of it. The couch has a women's hat on it. There's a small vanity next to the couch with a woman's shoes on it. A round table stands in the middle of the room. Cushioned furniture is set with much taste around the room. The room is messy. Yuriy Vasilyovich is on the couch, sleeping without a coat. The curtains are drawn. There's a pause.

**Yuriy** (wakes up, yawning): Ughh! (Sits up). How strange! (Looks round). Hm! Why was I sleeping on the couch rather than in my own bed? My head (reaches for his head with both palms) seems... a little heavy... How strange! Brrr! I don't feel well! Maybe I went for a nap in the afternoon? Can't grasp a thing... Ugh! I'm feeling so sick! (The doorbell rings. Fedir enters the room).

**Fedir**: Thank God! You woke up at last!

**Yuriy**: What time is it?

**Fedir**: It's 11 o'clock.

**Yuriy**: In the morning or in the afternoon?

**Fedir**: In the morning of course.

**Yuriy**: That's strange! Hm... Very strange! (Pause. Fedir opens up the curtains on the windows). Is my brother awake yet?

**Fedir**: Yes, sir.

**Yuriy**: Is the coffee ready yet?

**Fedir**: Yes, sir.

**Yuriy** (sees a woman's shoes on the table, picks them up and takes a look): Women's shoes? How strange... (Turn to Fedir). Listen, Fedir, whose are these?

**Fedir:** These are mademoiselle's.

**Yuriy:** What "mademoiselle"?

**Fedir:** Your mademoiselle, who else's?!

**Yuriy:** It's so peculiar! Did I bring them with me or what?

**Fedir:** You don't remember anything, do you?

**Yuriy:** No, I don't... But... um... what was it... I forgot how the shoes got here. How strange!

**Fedir:** The way they ended up here is pretty obvious. That coquette took them off and threw them on the table and you poured wine into them. You told me that wine glasses weren't enough for you, so you started pouring wine in the shoes and drank straight out of them! You are doing all of this at your respectable age, Jesus Christ!

**Yuriy:** Wait, hold on... so there was a woman with me yesterday? Did I really... um... bring someone here?

**Fedir:** She's still here, just so you know!

**Yuriy:** Whaaaat? Here? Where?

**Fedir:** In your room, where.

**Yuriy** (sits down): Isn't it... by any chance... a joke?

**Fedir:** You have to be kidding me! I wish I were joking!

**Yuriy:** But who is she? Where did I find her?

**Fedir:** She's your fiancée.

**Yuriy:** Fia...n...cée?

**Fedir:** Indeed, she is. You were shouting at me yesterday to find Micola Vasilyovich. You were celebrating the engagement and promised to have a wedding the week after.

**Yuriy:** Oh God! Jesus Christ!

**Fedir:** You called for the horseman at night, sent a bunch of telegrams to her parents - so that they wouldn't worry... saying that their daughter is with her fiancé.

**Yuriy:** Jesus! So she has parents?

**Fedir:** Everyone has parents.

**Yuriy:** But who is she? How did she end up here?

**Fedir:** How would I know? She came with you.

**Yuriy:** Is she young?

**Fedir:** She's probably around 16 years of age. But she's so flirtatious that she seems possessed, God forgive! She was on the tables first, then on a chair... Where would you find such a thing?

**Yuriy:** This is nonsense! Who's she? So, she's young you say?

**Fedir:** Here's her hat on the couch! (Gives the hat to Yuriy Vasilyovich). Would an old woman wear something like this? Her dress reaches her knees and she wears two braids! Ugh, you have probably debauched some school girl - all at your age!

**Yuriy:** And what's her name exactly? Did you hear it by any chance?

**Fedir:** How would I know? It was impossible to make you out! You called her your baby, your honey bunny, your popper.

**Yuriy:** And my brother Micola... um... did he see all that?

**Fedir:** No, he didn't. He doesn't know yet.

**Yuriy:** Thank God he didn't! Fedir, listen... I'll just hide somewhere and... you... just get her out of the house, do you get what I'm saying?

**Fedir:** Huh, sure. She won't leave just like that! You promised to marry her, so there's no way she is leaving! The wedding is next week...

**Yuriy:** I dunno... think of something! Anything! Tell her that it's really awkward... but... tell her that I... um... that I'm going to come to her house later. Tell her that I will bring her a nice present.

**Fedir:** Micola Vasilyovich is going to come soon.

**Yuriy:** If he sees her... Tell him it's your niece.

**Fedir:** My niece, Darina, is sitting in the kitchen. He's already met her. This madwoman is nothing like my niece! I wish you'd seen what she was doing here

yesterday! I've never seen such things in my entire life. She's just like a monkey, running and jumping around the house as if there's a wasp in her arse, she was jumping and rolling all over the place. I swear - she's a devil in the flesh!

**Yuriy:** And I've been sleeping the whole time?

**Fedir:** Sleeping? You wish! You were running on your all fours, barking whilst she was whipping you with a belt.

**Yuriy:** How peculiar! Why would I be doing such things?

**Fedir:** She told you to play pretend as a crocodile. And you did, at your age! You'd been doing it for 3 hours at least, roaring and clattering your teeth. The worst server in the world wouldn't put up with such horror, but you... you, sir, are a respectable man...

**Yuriy:** It's peculiar! How strange! I can't seem to remember how any of that happened! I had lunch yesterday and then left home...

**Fedir:** You haven't had lunch at home in four days!

**Yuriy:** Nonsense! I remember having cranberry juice here like it was 5 minutes ago.

**Fedir:** You did, but it wasn't yesterday, it was on Thursday.

**Yuriy:** Yes, exactly. And it's Friday today.

**Fedir:** It's Wednesday, not Friday.

**Yuriy:** Are you messed up in the head or something?

**Fedir:** Am not, Thank God! The week has been going well for me, as per usual, but you, sir, have definitely been out of it. That's why everything is mixed up for you.

**Yuriy:** Hold on, don't interrupt! I'll recall everything on my own. Yes! I remember exactly how I was having cranberry juice around lunchtime yesterday...

**Fedir:** Listen, sir... You weren't having that cranberry juice yesterday, you had it on Thursday last week. After that, you went for a little walk and had been away

for 5 days. You came back home just yesterday - it was Tuesday. You came at midnight, completely out of it, drunk and with a girl. That's exactly how it was.

**Yuriy:** 5 days? Where had I been the whole time? (Marusya is singing in the background).

**Fedir:** Here we go, she woke up at last!

**Yuriy:** Oh God! Listen... let me... uh... hide in my cabinet. Think... just... think of the way to... get her home, I'm begging you! (Tiptoes to the right door in the foreground).

**Fedir:** Huh, sure! "Um... think of something" - she'll show you how to think of something! And when her parents come here, you'll see how the wasps sting! It will serve you well, old sinner! She's young enough to be your granddaughter and you play-pretend a crocodile with her! (Mocks his moves). "My baby, my honey bunny, my popper"! Just you wait and you'll get what you deserve!

**Marusya** (sings in the background): La-la-la!

**Fedir:** Look! She's singing like she's at home. Like spending the night at a stranger's house isn't enough trouble for her! Your luck you're not my niece, or else I would have put your dress up and taken a look at the place your legs grow from (Motions as if he's beating her. Knocks on her door).

**Marusya** (in the background): Hello?

**Fedir** (angrily): Get out of bed! And stop yelling, you're not alone here!

**Marusya** (in the background): Who dares to talk to me with such an attitude? (Props her head from behind the door). Who is this?

**Fedir:** It's me.

**Marusya:** And where is my little crocodile?

**Fedir:** There's no "little crocodile" for you here! It's the Bartenevs' house, not a zoo. They are respectable men!

**Marusya:** Is that so? What are *you* doing here then?

**Fedir:** I'm a servant.

**Marusya:** Great! Then first - send me a servant, second - tell your respectable man, sir Bartenev, that Marusiya has woken up and wants some cocoa. But first - send a servant to me immediately!

**Fedir:** There are no servants here beside me. We don't have them.

**Marusiya:** How come? And who's going to help me dress up then?

**Fedir:** You can get dressed yourself.

**Marusya:** No, I can't. Then go and tell my little crocodile to come to my room and help me get my stockings on. I can't do it myself, never learned to. Tell him just that. I'll not get out of bed unless somebody dresses me up. And tell him to hurry, I'm hungry. (Closes the door shut, you can hear her plop onto the bed). Phew! La-la-la!

**Fedir:** Here we go! (Comes up to the cabinet door and knocks on it).

**Yuriy** (sticks his head from behind the door): Has she left yet?

**Fedir:** Of course not! She's sent for you, she wants you to dress her up. Here's your "baby" - now go swaddle her, at *your age*!

**Yuriy:** I am not at home, do you get me? Tell her... that I'm... um... that I disappeared!

**Fedir:** She says she isn't going anywhere until dressed up by someone.

**Yuriy:** So dress her up then! Please, dress her up yourself.

**Fedir:** What the hell are you saying? I'm sorry, sir, but there's just no way I'm doing this! Me, helping a woman wear her stockings? I've never done that for my wife, let alone some questionable young girl! I'd rather die than suffer such embarrassment!

**Yuriy:** Nonsense! What's so embarrassing about it? I dunno... call for someone to get her dressed. You told me your niece is here... So tell her to do that... just... get this over with as soon as possible. (Fedir leaves). What a mess! This is such an unpleasant situation! It's all because of moonshine, damn moonshine! Where would I even find this girl? (Goes up to the door in the middle and looks through the keyhole). Oh! It's Marusya Vorontsova! You little devil! That's who was

rolling over her head! You little monkey! Ooh-la-la, look how pretty she is! (Bouncing on the spot). God, baby, whoa! (Bounces on the spot. Fedir enters, Darina is behind him).

**Darina** (in plain village clothes, hair in a thin braid. She bows and addresses Bartenev): Good morning, sir!

**Yuriy** (embarrassed, jumps away from the door): Oh, so this is your niece? Good morning, good morning! You... um... just keep it down a little ! (Tiptoes to his cabinet).

**Darina**: Uncle, why was he on his knees? He was peering through the keyhole, wasn't he?

**Fedir**: Yes, maybe he was. Even if so, mind your business! Go through that door and dress the girl in there up. Put her stockings on and everything.

**Darina**: Is it a little girl? Is it a baby or what?

**Fedir**: Huh, you wish she were a damn child! She's a Dummy, your height and all.

**Darina**: And she can't get dressed herself yet?

**Fedir**: She's just spoiled, that's all! There's no one to beat her arse. Come on, go! (Opens the door).

**Marusya** (in the background): Who's here?

**Fedir**: You called for a servant. (Shoves Darina through the door).

**Marusya** (practically singing): A-ma-zing! A-ma-zing! (Fedir goes to the cabinet, then opens the door).

**Yuriy**: So? How is it going?

**Fedir**: She's getting dressed. She'll probably ask for coffee once she's out of the room.

**Yuriy**: Maybe she'll leave just like that? In a pinch, just make her the damn coffee.

**Micola Vasilyovich** (in the background): Are you awake yet?

**Fedir**: Micola Vasilyovich is here.

**Yuriy:** Hell no! Don't let him in here! (Micola Vasilyovich enters the cabinet).

**Micola:** Are you awake, Yuriy?

**Yuriy:** Um... not fully. (Fedir comes up to the window and draws the curtain down).

**Micola** (sits down): So, Yuriy, where have you been these four days? Did you go to Hanna's sister's summer house?

**Yuriy:** Yeah... I was... you know what...um... yeah, I was at the summer house, the summer house.

**Micola** (looks him up and down): You look terrible! Are you sick or something?

**Yuriy:** Yes... I'm probably sick... My head... um... not the head, but... uh... I have shivers...

**Marusya** (in the background, singing): Whe-re is my hat! Whe-re is my hat? What do I do? What do I do?

**Fedir** (coughs loudly to muffle the singing). Cough-cough...

**Yuriy** (starts singing as well): La-la-la!

**Micola:** Yuriy... Are you... singing?

**Yuriy:** I am.. uh... um... yeah, singing.

**Marusya** (goes on singing): Let's we-ar cro-co-di-le's shirt! Cro-co-di-le's shirt! (Fedir starts coughing louder. Micola Vasilyovich listens carefully). Let's we-ar cro-co-di-le's shoes as well.

**Micola:** Fedir, hold on, shush! Why are you coughing all of a sudden? Listen, it's like someone is singing! It's a woman's voice!

**Fedir:** It's... neighbors' gramophone!

**Marusya** (goes on singing): Rea-dy! Open the door, I will have my solemn walk! (The door opens and she enters the stage wearing a short dress and a man's shirt over it. There are man's shoes on her feet. She looks hilarious, keeps on singing). He-re I am, my cro-co-di-le, good... morning... (Switches to just talking): Mama mia, not one, but 3 crocodiles! (There's a pause. Micola Vasilyovich stares at her

in shock. Fedir and Yuriy Vasilyovich are embarrassed). My sweet old men, why are you all so still? Ha-ha-ha! You're hilarious, standing here like wooden dolls!

**Micola:** Excuse me, let me ask you a question - who are you?

**Marusya:** Me? I'm this old man's fiancé. (Points at Yuriy Vasilyovich).

**Yuriy:** Oh, Jesus take the wheel! Shut your mouth!

**Marusya:** My little crocodile, why are you acting so stunned all of a sudden? Introduce me to the man! It must be your brother, isn't he? Let me introduce myself. Marusya Vorontsova. (Squats down). We wanted to invite you to the engagement celebration yesterday, but you already were fast asleep.

**Micola:** Yuriy, what the hell is all this? What does it even mean?

**Yuriy:** It's... um... that's... a joke! Marusya Vorontsova is my old friend... and I know her parents... she's a very sweet girl. I was at their summer house yesterday... took her to the theater... the play finished late, it was raining cats and dogs... it was too much of a long way to the summer house - and I offered her a stay at our place. What's so strange about it?

**Marusya:** My little crocodile, stop lying! What rain are you talking about, the sky was clear at night, the moon was shining brightly, what a scene! And we didn't go to no theater. You were at our summer house, you'd come there three days ago... We were drinking wine yesterday and then went for a walk along a dark pass...

**Yuriy:** Cough... cough... cough...

**Marusya:** There you pretended to be Ivan Tsarevich and I was the phoenix and you told me you'd steal me. We climbed a fence, you tripped over something and fell into a ditch, right where the weeds were. Do you remember? Ha-ha-ha!

**Yuriy:** Oh God!

**Marusya:** I had to call a wagon to get you out of there. We then went rowing and you proposed. I said "yes" and came back here to celebrate. You sent a telegram to my father right away, telling him and my mother not to worry and come here as well since I'm at my fiancée's house. They must be arriving today, because it

was already too late for them to come yesterday. You've even picked the wedding date! That's the way it was!

**Micola:** A wedding? I beg your pardon, young woman, but I don't understand what wedding you're talking about. A lady has the audacity to spend the night at a complete stranger's house wearing something so infamous, for God's sake! I'm sorry, but you don't marry a lady like that!

**Marusya:** How is that so? First of all, mind you, I'm a respectable lady - since I have a fiancée, second of all - why can't I spend the night at my fiancée's house? It used to be a taboo since Adam was a boy - "you can't do that, it's inappropriate", but now no one cares. Fiancée is basically your future husband, you are free to do anything you want! I shall declare that from today I will be living here. I like it better here than at home. And about us not being married - it's really not that big of a deal - the wedding is next week. Am I right, my little crocodile?

**Yuriy:** I have no idea what's going on, don't ask me nothing!

**Marusya** (goes on rattling without paying any attention to what he's saying): I like it here so much. And also - what you were saying about the way I'm dressed - I wanted to say that I'm innocent. My hat isn't here, so what am I supposed to wear then? I even have some... little crocodile's shoes on... lost mine somewhere yesterday.

**Micola:** All of that... is just wonderful, young lady, but I insist that you gather your things, go home and look for a better fit for a fiancée for yourself. Yuriy Vasilyovich can't marry you.

**Marusya:** Why is that so?

**Micola:** Because... he's too old for you.

**Yuriy:** Cough... cough...

**Marusya:** You know what, that's none of your business! I'm marrying him, not you, I fancy him a lot. I prefer older men.

**Yuriy:** You little smart thing!

**Marusya:** Oh wow, I'll have so many older men now! (Puts her fingers down, counting) My father is one, grandfather is two, my old husband is three, you are four, and that man over there (points at Fedir) is five! Five old men, how wonderful! And everyone is grey, too! And when I get sick and tired of you, I'll dye your hair black, all of you! Ha-ha-ha!

**Micola:** You'd better be thinking of what to tell your parents when they find you at a man's house instead of laughing.

**Marusya:** I'll say: "My parents, bless us without a word" and my mother will start working with her hands the same minute! (Motions that her mother is to cross them).

**Micola:** That's what the younger generation is like now?! Yuriy, I can see that you got in trouble because you're careless and I advise that you deal with the matter and make the lady go home as soon as possible, she's not staying here! I hope you understand that loud and clear, Yuriy! (Leaves the room.)

**Fedir:** (yells) Darina! (Opens the middle door.) What the hell is that? (Pulls Darina out of the door onto the stage, she's wearing a man shirt over her usual clothes.)

**Marusya:** Wow! That's wonderful.

**Fedir:** Not you too! You little monkey, I'll rip your hair out! Get out of here, you rascal! (Grabs her by the braid and walks her out of the door).

**Marusya:** Ah! He's going to tear her braid out!

**Fedir:** It will serve her right! (Leaves the room).

**Marusya:** He's a prick! And your brother as well, doesn't watch his mouth at all, does he? But these are little things, I'll teach them a lesson! (Walks up to Yuriy Vasilyovich). Only you, my little crocodile, only you are so kind, aren't you? (Hugs him and gives him a kiss).

**Yuriy:** Oh God! Marusya... um... maybe it's really better... if you go home.

**Marusya:** No, my little crocodile, I don't want to. I like it here, my house is cramped and doesn't feel welcoming at all. And I'll make you feel better by

staying here, too - entertaining you all day long: singing, dancing, caressing you. Like this... (Sits on his lap). I'll hug you, I will caress your chin, your grey hair...

**Yuriy:** You're my little kitten! Sweet little kitten!

**Marusya:** I'll kiss you hard, just like this!

**Yuriy:** You little chick, my sweet little devil!

**Marusya:** You're lonely all the time, but why continue? Just think how depressing that is! You will come home and it's empty and silent. And now you have a pretty wife. You want to go for a walk and she will just grab you by your hand, just like this... (Meanwhile Micola Vasilyovich enters the scene, but stops at the door frame). She will be singing like a bird, all the time so welcoming and sweet! (Yuriy Vasilyovich closes his eyes in pleasure). You want to have a rest in the afternoon and she will right away bring you a pillow, close your eyes, like this... (Closes his eyes.) She will kiss one eye first, then the other... "Go to sleep, my sweet little crocodile! There you go! May you dream of heaven!" (Micola Vasilyovich lets out a sigh).

**Yuriy:** My sweet little doll! I'll be so happy together with you!

**Marusya:** We can have a wedding anytime we want...

**Yuriy:** We will make it as soon as possible! But my brother! He doesn't understand me! How nice it is... when you hug me like this, my baby doll!

**Marusya:** And when I kiss you like this! (Kisses him).

**Yuriy:** Ah! I want to have the wedding tomorrow! Tomorrow it is! (Marusya kisses him again. Micola Vasilyovich sighs heavily and leaves the stage).

**CURTAINS DOWN**

**Act 2**  
**“Old men fool around”**

Micola Vasilyovich’s living room. It’s very well-furnished. Middle door is the front door, the left door leads to Yuriy Vasilyovich’s room, the right one - to the kitchen. Darina and Micola Vasilyovich are on the stage. Darina is wearing the same clothes and hair as in Act 1. She’s wearing galoshes and it’s obvious they are brand-new.

**Micola** (to Darina): So, say something!

**Darina**: I don’t know what to say.

**Micola**: I dunno... something nice, something sweet!

**Darina** (hiding her face in her palms): It’s so embarrassing!

**Micola**: You silly thing! Embarrassing... and do you like your new galoshes?

**Darina**: I do.

**Micola**: Do you want me to buy you a dress?

**Darina** (looking down): I... don’t know.

**Micola**: How so? Tell me what dress would you like to have?

**Darina**: I want a blue one.

**Micola**: That’s wonderful! I’ll buy you a pretty dress, but you’ll have to give me a kiss in return, do you hear me?

**Darina**: I do.

**Micola**: Come on then! Give me a kiss, hurry up!

**Darina** (hiding her face in her palms again): I’m embarrassed.

**Micola**: You’re so strange, you’re embarrassed of everything! You silly thing, come here, take a seat! (Puts her onto a chair). You’re one little kitten!

**Darina**: Ghm... no!

**Micola**: Yes! Sing for me, just like a bird! Sing me a sweet little song!

**Darina**: Ha... ha...

**Micola:** What's wrong?

**Darina:** You're a very strange man!

**Micola:** Who, me?

**Darina:** Yes, you... ha-ha...

**Micola:** And you're one silly girl, very silly! You must be amiable with me, not embarrassed! Why would you even be embarrassed of me? You can't even kiss me... or give me a hug... (Takes her hands into his and hugs his neck with them). Give me a kiss... (Kisses her). You need to learn how to talk - so that it's gentle and loving. You can call me "my sweet crocodile"... you know what, no - no crocodiles. It's better to choose something else. Come on, what name are you going to give me?

**Darina:** I dunno.

**Micola:** Then think of something!

**Darina:** Erm...

**Micola:** So...?

**Darina:** I will call you Dean!

**Micola:** Dean? What ?

**Darina:** We have a shepherd in the village and he's very tall... just like you are. So we mock him as "Dean the Long Bean".

**Micola:** That's not funny at all! Why of all nicknames would you call me Dean? You should come up with something sweet, something adorable and cute.

**Darina:** I don't know any other names...

**Micola:** Can't be true! Is there a name your mother calls your father?

**Darina:** Yes, there is.

**Micola:** And what exactly does she call him?

**Darina:** Motherfucker... bow-legged asshole... Old Nick...

**Micola:** These nicknames are far from adorable...

**Darina:** There are no other names she calls him.

**Micola:** Then... You could take something useful from Marusya.

**Darina:** You mean the girl who lives upstairs? (Points)

**Micola:** Yes, her. Just look at how gentle and gracious she is, like a little kitten. You have to be just like her and I'll fancy you very much. Is that clear?

**Darina:** Okay.

**Micola:** Great! That's good. Good girl. I'll buy you pretty dresses and lots of sweet things if you're good. Okay, give me the beautiful face of yours, I'll kiss you and I'm off to the university. (Gives her a kiss, she's embarrassed again.) Why are you shy? My silly little thing, are you embarrassed?

**Darina:** Yes, I am.

**Micola:** That's little things, you'll get used to it. (Leaves)

**Darina** (alone, props her leg on a chair and looks at her shoes. Takes them off, wipes them with the bottom of her dress and puts them on again, looks at them, appreciatively). They are so shiny! He promised to buy me a blue dress... I'll get it tailored, that's for sure. I want the white trim and shiny buttons, with gems on them! They shall shine so bright. (Pause). When seeing me off, my father told me: "Darina, listen... Watch out and be careful, one wrong step and you'll be deceived and people will talk". And sir Vasilyovich did deceive me! Oh God, when uncle Fedir shall come back and find out about it, he'll telegram my father right away! He'll yell at me, he will say that I failed to keep an eye out for evil! He'll grab me by my braid and drag me on the floor, he'll beat me up... (Cries and screams). Oh he shall kill me! He's way stronger than me, heavy is his hand. He's so short-tempered. He will lose it, he'll kill me! There's nobody to stand up for me! Oh Lord, what have I done? I'm the one to blame for all this! (Marusya peeks from and stops at the left door, all pretty and dressed up).

**Marusya:** Darina, are you... crying?

**Darina:** I'm dead, I'm already dead! What have I done?

**Marusya:** What have you done exactly? Did you break anything?

**Darina:** Noooo! (Cries even louder).

**Marusya:** What happened then? Why are you crying?

**Darina:** I've been deceived! I'm so stupid, I trusted a liar!

**Marusya:** Who is that exactly?

**Darina:** Our sir, Micola Vasilyovich!

**Marusya:** A-a-a! My little crocodile's brother that is? What happened? How did he deceive you?

**Darina:** With such ease! He was talking all sweet and adorable and bought me all these nice things and I was stupid enough to trust him!

**Marusya:** Oh honey, I get you! So you're not a 'girl' anymore...

**Darina:** I'm not a 'girl', nor am I married... I'm doomed, so doomed!

**Marusya:** And I thought you were a shy and timid girl! You were saying all those things about Yuriy and now look at you! Okay, hold on... why are you crying so much?

**Darina:** My father... He'll kill me!

**Marusya:** Stupid girl you are! Nobody is going to beat you up, you're too old for that! And Micola Vasilyovich won't even let him! He loves you, doesn't he? Tell me, does he give you nice presents? My little crocodile bought me diamond earrings yesterday! Take a look! (Shows them off).

**Darina** (stops crying, speaks proudly and with delight): My Micola bought me new shoes. (Puts her leg out for show). He promised to buy a nice blue cotton dress as well!

**Marusya:** See! Nothing to cry over. Tell him to buy you a fur jacket, just like the one *I* have.

**Darina:** I want the earrings! Just like yours.

**Marusya:** He'll buy you earrings as well. He has loads of money. He's even more rich than Yuriy.

**Marusya:** Your husband you mean?

**Marusya:** Yes. He's an alcoholic, and has already put half of his savings down the drain. But Micola doesn't drink, nor does he go out a lot. He handles his money well, you see. You're crying over nothing!

**Darina:** Nobody will marry me back in my village now that I'm...

**Marusya:** Are you out of your mind? Forget about the village. Micola Vasilyovich shall marry you, he has to!

**Darina:** Don't be ridiculous! Why would **he** marry me? I'm nobody. I'm no fit for him, just some province girl... He's a respectable man, and I can't even speak properly...

**Marusya:** Nonsense! You can learn to! I'll teach you everything! (Respectfully). Just take my advice! First of all, you should... (Promptly jumps and sit down on the table).

**Darina:** Ghm...

**Marusya:** What's the matter?

**Darina:** You're so... gracious.

**Marusya** (already forgot what she was about to say): Come on, jump on the table, too! (Darina climbs on the table, very ungraciously). Oh Lord, you're so gauche! Getting on all fourth. Here, look: just jump! (Gets off the table and jumps on it with ease again).

**Darina:** I can't...

**Marusya:** Then you should learn how to. Can you dance?

**Darina:** No.

**Marusya:** I'll teach you that, too. And how to do your hair. Look at your braid, what even is that? And take off that awful thing, you need a fashionable dress! And some nice shoes to suit. Look at mine... (Shows off her shoes, pulling up the dress a little).

**Darina:** They are so beautiful!

**Marusya:** And it's easy to dance with them on. Look: - La-la-la! La-la-la! (Dances graciously). Hold on, I have this nice hat that I used to wear before I got married. Take it, it's a gift. Put it on, now! (Runs out the door upstairs).

**Darina** (alone, tries to dance): La-la-la! La-la-la! (The dance is awkward. Marusya enters the room, Darina goes on dancing).

**Marusya** (snickers): Your dancing is funny! You look like a goat! Or a donkey!

**Darina** (embarrassed ): I... um... I can't dance.

**Marusya**: It's nothing, I'll teach you.

**Darina**: That's what sir told me - to learn from you.

**Marusya**: Why are you calling him "sir"?

**Darina**: But what should I call him? That's how servants shall address their masters...

**Marusya**: You're indeed stupid! You're not a servant. You're his common-law wife now, got it? You're not serving him, he's now serving *you*! Make him put your stockings on, get you coffee in bed, kiss your hand. And if something is not the way you want - stomp your foot, shout at him as much as you can, slap him with your stocking on his face if needed. I do that to my little lovely crocodile. Once something is wrong - snap! With a stocking! Snap! Snap! That's why he's so obedient, like Mary! (Darina listens with her mouth ajar). From now on you shall not sleep in the kitchen. You ought to have your own room. Give me a minute, I'll tell my crocodile everything and he'll sort it all out in a snap. You'll learn to dance, we'll go to balls together. You're pretty, just like me - we'll have a lot of young admirers after us. We will teach our old men a lesson...

**Darina**: What lesson?

**Marusya**: We will have them wrapped around our fingers.

**Darina**: But how do we do that?

**Marusya**: We will think of something. I don't know myself yet. I'll ask my mother, she shall know.

**Yuriy** (in the background): Marusya, sweetheart, where are you?

**Marusya**: Here is my crocodile coming. Listen... here, take this hat and put it on and I'll tell Yuriy everything. (Darina goes to the kitchen. Yuriy enters the room through the left door).

**Yuriy**: Marusya, who have you been talking to?

**Marusya:** To Darina. You know what, my little crocodile? Your giraffe of a brother...

**Yuriy:** Marusya! Don't call him that, you're a woman of manners now!

**Marusya:** Shush! Don't interrupt me, please. So, he and Darina...

**Yuriy:** Who? Micola?

**Marusya:** Yes, him! I came into the room and there she was, crying and saying that he'd deceived her! She's scared of her father, he'll kill her. Listen, he shall marry her, as soon as possible!

**Yuriy:** Marusya, do you hear yourself? He's a respectable professor and you expect him to marry a peasant girl, a servant, for God's sake!

**Marusya:** And what about it? So you're saying he can't marry her, but can freely make her a "woman", right? That's not how you do that! I'm a woman, too and I'll do everything to protect her. Doesn't he dare not marry her... I'll scratch your eyeballs out!

**Yuriy:** Lord have mercy! Marusya, what did *I* do to deserve that... I...

**Marusya:** Enough! She has no one to stand up for her, then I will. Look at you two, smart coffin-dodgers!

**Yuriy:** Marusya! What are you saying? You're a respectable woman!

**Marusya:** So be it! You thought you could make a girl a "woman" and then throw her into a ditch! No way in hell, only over my dead body! You, my little crocodile, shall tell him that he is to marry Darina - and I will not take a "no" for an answer. Otherwise her father will decapitate her! Fedir is coming back any day and once he finds it out - it's over.

**Yuriy:** Marusya, think about it... I have no right to intervene...

**Marusya:** He had all the rights to tell me to go home and look for a better fit for a fiancée! Do you remember his words? That you're old enough to be my grandfather and all. Look at him now! Darina is only 17 and he's in his 50s! I'll show him, just you wait!

**Yuriy:** Marusya, my little dove, don't intervene, let them sort it out on their own. It's really none of your business.

**Marusya:** How is that none of my business? I'm lonely, I don't have a friend. You don't let me see my old friends, saying they all are 'wretched'. She's not! She's decent, I'll teach her and I won't be so lonely. I am saying this with all due respect, my little crocodile, I'll leave you out of boredom or I'll beat you on a daily basis just because I'm sad and lonely.

**Yuriy:** Marusya, I spend all of my time with you!

**Marusya:** That's not enough! I want a friend. Everyone has friends but me. (Doorbell rings). Here comes the knight!

**Yuriy:** Marusya, I'm begging you, keep it to yourself for the meantime!

**Marusya:** No you shut up, crocodile! You're not the one to tell me what to do!

**Yuriy:** God help me! (Micola Vasilyovich enters the room).

**Micola:** Ah, good morning! (Kisses Marusya's hand). What are you talking about, my lovebirds? My brother, you're one lucky man!

**Marusya:** What about you?

**Micola:** What about me? I'm just watching him be happy and envy him a little.

**Marusya:** What's the problem then? Get married and be happy, too. You have a fiancée.

**Yuriy:** Marusya!

**Micola:** Fiancée? What fiancée?

**Marusya:** Darina, for example.

**Micola:** Darina! Ha-ha-ha! That's off limits!

**Marusya:** Did I say something funny? Why don't you marry her?

**Micola:** She's a peasant girl.

**Marusya:** So what? Only makes you love her stronger! Being a village girl doesn't make her bad! She's so beautiful, like a daisy flower! You ought to marry her. My little crocodile, did you swallow your tongue? Do you want me to leave you?

**Yuriy:** I... um... I wanted to say that... uh... She's right, Micola, you should marry... Darina... she's just... uh... yeah, like a flower... think about it, Micola...

**Micola:** What's got into you two? Why did you all of a sudden decide to get me married? I never intended and I'm never going to.

**Marusya:** And I'm saying that you are! Fedir shall come back soon with Darina's father, he will rip her hair out. You know what comes next. She's innocent, you're the guilty one.

**Micola:** Am I? How is that so, enlighten me...

**Marusya:** Oh come on, don't play stupid!

**Yuriy:** Marusya, stop it! You're a... um... what's that... uh, a respectable woman!

**Marusya:** Get off of my back with your 'respectable woman' this, 'respectable woman' that! I'm always honest and I'll tell you, Micola Vasilyovich, that it's cowardly of you to do that. Darina is a young lady and you made her a 'woman' and now can't own up to what you have done!

**Micola:** You have no right to speak on the matter, that's none of your business.

**Marusya:** But it was your business when you told my little crocodile not to marry me, huh? But you've picked the wrong one to play games with! I'd drag him to the altar on a leash, like a goat, if I had to. And you'll face the same thing if you decide to leave the matter be. You'll thank me for that later. Do you think my little crocodile isn't grateful for marrying me? Look at him, doesn't he look unhappy?

**Yuriy:** I'm so happy, Marusya, very much so!

**Marusya:** See?! He used to be all by himself, too - lonely and hungry! You should be grateful for the slightest chance of marrying her, not trying to sneak away! Look at her carefully, she's so young, so beautiful! I'll bring her right away!  
(Runs to the kitchen).

**Micola:** Don't, I'm begging you! (Marusya has already left). She has no right to intervene... It's tactless... It's...

**Yuriy:** Young people, Micola! She's so hot-tempered! She knows everything and, so to put it, can't let you deceive her friend, her sister...

**Micola:** How did she find out?

**Yuriy:** Women have the seventh sense, you know - once they are onto something - they won't let it slide. Micola... you know... why don't you really get married? It's going to be nice for you... to have a young wife... she's not 'wretched'... Marusya will teach her all the things... a couple of months and she'll be no worse than Marusya, dancing and jumping and all! You won't even remember she's a peasant. Lonely life is not where it is, think about it!

**Micola** (mockingly): Yeah, sure! There's no one to stomp their feet at me!

**Yuriy:** Forget about the feet... It's not that it happens daily. She's so tender, so timid, and her hands are so gracious. Once she hugs me with these hands of hers I'm melting! (Closes his eyes). Marry Darina, take my advice and do, you'll thank me later! You ought to do so, because you... made her a 'woman'... it's your duty to marry her now... Don't mind her being a village girl. It's for the better - she's not spoiled, still new to life and all... She will stick to you for life, looking at you as if you're her God. She won't need no balls, no parties. Her and Marusya will be here for us, at home, singing songs and taking care of us. We can bring them to the manor in summer...

**Micola:** It just feels safer... to be alone... but it's lonely...

**Yuriy:** It is indeed! You spend your days with your nose up in a book and there's nobody to love and cherish you. Imagine this little devil running up to you from behind and kissing you... and hugging you... This girl, Darina... She's nice. If I didn't have Marusya, I'd lay my eyes on her! (Marusya enters, dragging Darina in with her, wearing the hat).

**Marusya:** Look how adorable she looks in this hat!

**Darina** (bowing): Good afternoon!

**Yuriy:** Good afternoon, Darina! You look amazing indeed!

**Marusya:** We need to untie the hair. (Undoes Darina's braid). Huh! Just look at this! Micola Vasilyovich, you have to propose to her, now!

**Micola:** Marusya, I'm saying this from my heart, stop sticking your nose up my business. Let me deal with this myself... (Fedir enters the room).

**Fedir:** Good afternoon! (Everyone freezes).

**Yuriy:** Oh, is that you, Fedir? You... came back...

**Fedir:** Indeed. Darina, go to the kitchen, your father is here... we've found you a fiancé from the village.

**Darina:** What?!

**Marusya:** Oh God...!

**Micola:** What fiancé? This is nonsense. Fedir, you are telling nonsense!

**Fedir:** I'm telling the truth! She's old enough and it's time for her to get married.

**Micola:** That's not up for you to decide! (Screams). Get out!

**Fedir:** What's gotten into you, sir? I'll leave... I just came to get Darina... Don't be cross with me... I'll leave now... Darina, let's go. Why are you standing like a statuette, come on, go and see your father! Move! (Leaves, Darina heads to the kitchen).

**Marusya:** Darina don't go!

**Micola:** Yuriy! Marusya... (Nervous). Please just talk to... just tell them that... that Darina... I mean... just say... (Shouts): Oh to Hell them all! I'll marry Darina! (Runs away).

**Marusya:** Look at this, the old prick got scared!

**Yuriy:** Marusya! You're... forgot what it was... uh...

**Marusya:** A respectable woman, yes, I know! And Darina will become one next week! That's great! Dance, my little crocodile! Darina, dance too, come on!

**Darina:** Ugh.. I hope my father gives us his blessing once he finds out.

**Marusya:** You silly goose, of course he will! Micola is a university professor! Fedir came just in time with the fiancé thing! Darina, my dear, I'm so happy for

you! That's just a-ama-zing! La-la-la! La-la-la! You'll be a professor's wife!  
Great! La-la-la! La-la-la! La-la-la! (Dances with Darina, spinning her around).

**Yuriy:** You silly little girls! Just look at you two! (Starts dancing with them). La-la-la! La-la-la!

## CURTAINS DOWN

### Act 3

#### “If you pledge, don’t hedge”

The same room from Act 1. Marusya is lying on the couch, reading a book. Darina is sitting by the window. Both of them are wearing white dresses and beautiful hair. Pause.

**Marusya:** Dora, are you upset?

**Darina:** I am.

**Marusya:** Me too. (Pause). We both are respectable women now! I’m the General’s wife, and you are the professor’s wife! Aren’t we respectable?

**Darina:** We are indeed.

**Marusya:** Are you happy with that?

**Darina:** There’s nothing to be happy about! If only I had known... I’d rather have married a swineherd! I’d be so free! I feel trapped in this house! All dressed up in lace and locked from the whole world!

**Marusya:** You’re right. Our old men treat us like we’re birds sitting in a golden cage! (Pause).

**Darina** (sings a sad song, then starts crying): Everyone is happy, having fun, living their lives, and we have been buried alive! Can’t even see the light of the day!

**Marusya:** Stop crying, or I’ll cry too! (Starts crying).

**Darina:** You go into the garden and there’s only the sky and the soil, the soil and the sky around you. There’s no one but the cats.

**Marusya** (crying): And we can’t see anyone! When people come here, they are the same old men that our husbands are! There’s not a single young man among them! I’m so sick and tired of these old pricks! It’s my mother’s fault! She told me to marry my crocodile. “Come on, Marusya, he’s rich!” But what’s the use? “It’s easy to fool an old man!” Bullshit! He’s always after me!

**Darina:** The same thing with Micola.

**Marusya:** Just think about it! I can't even go home often, he gets cross with me. My brother has many friends, young students, so Yuriy doesn't let me go there.

**Darina:** And that's how we waste our youth - trapped inside the four walls! No fun, no celebrations! He doesn't let me bring any of my family here. "Why would you need them?" What does he even mean by that? It warms my heart when I get to talk about the village, about the farm and all! He's cross with me even when I just talk to uncle Fedir!

**Marusya:** To Hell them both! I can't keep living like this! That's enough! That's not how it should be, we're locked out like some Turkish wives! Even when we go to the theater, they lock us on the balcony. They won't let us take a step without them being behind us, like a tail! Jesus, I wish they died soon! We'd be left with so much money! We'd be so rich and young and free!

**Darina (angry):** I'd stay alone for the rest of my life! To Hell all men go!

**Marusya:** Don't say that, it's lonely to live like that! You'd find a young man to marry... Ah! (Sighs. There's a pause). You know what?! Let's poison them!

**Darina:** Poison who?

**Marusya:** Our old men!

**Darina:** We'll be hanged for that.

**Marusya:** And maybe not. We might find a good lawyer. We'll tell him everything, that they were cruel and wouldn't get off our backs - the lawyer will sympathize and let us free.

**Darina:** That's a big sin! They will die when the time comes.

**Marusya:** And what if it doesn't? What if they live till they are 100?

**Darina:** At least Yuriy is funny and kind! The only thing Micola does is complain and be grumpy like an old woman. Everything is always wrong and not the way he wants! I'm sick of him telling me about manners and all. Jesus! Everything I hear is that I can't sit right, I can't attend to him right, I can't hold a spoon right - just shut up!

**Marusya:** It's your fault, my dear! You let him treat you this way. He's drilling you all day everyday as if you're a child and you don't say anything! Just yell at him, stomp your foot, what kind of behavior even is that?

**Darina:** I feel like I can't do it anymore! I'm about to lose it! And his sister is here now as well, they both are drilling me twice as much.

**Marusya:** Yes, you're right indeed, there's no stopping for them.

**Fedir** (enters the room): Maria Grigorievna, someone is on the phone calling for you.

**Marusya:** Me? It must be my mother or brother. (Leaves the room. Fedir leaves after her).

**Darina:** Uncle, wait! Why don't you talk to me anymore?

**Fedir:** What's the use of talking to me, a peasant? You should talk to respectable people, to learn from them!

**Darina:** I'm sick of their pretentious speeches. I'll kill myself!

**Fedir:** Silly, silly girl! You have a dream life, you'll be stupid to hang yourself! You should be thankful for what you have, not saying something of that sort! You're a respectable person now, a rich woman! You're snug here as a bug in a rug!

**Darina:** You see, uncle, I'm so unhappy here!

**Fedir:** Pick up a book then! Go for a walk in the garden! No wonder you're unhappy - spending the whole day sitting by the window!

**Darina:** I'm uncut for reading books, they are boring. Once I start - I go sleepy. And there's nothing to look at in the garden. All you see is a fence and nothing behind it. There isn't even a swing...

**Fedir:** What are you, 5 or something?

**Marusya** (storms through the door): Darina! My brother just called, he told me there's an amateur play he has the day after tomorrow and there's a ball afterwards. We're both invited. We must go, my dear! We have new garments to wear and it's always so much there! I'll go and tell my little crocodile. If he gets

cross and doesn't want to let me go there, I'll make such a scene, he'll be begging for forgiveness! Fedir, do you by any chance know where he is?

**Fedir:** He's in the garden, watering the flowers.

**Marusya:** Aha! (Heads to the door and stops). Listen, Darina, talk to your old man, too. Tell him you need to be there, got it? (Runs out of the room).

**Fedir:** Don't listen to her! She's bad news. Solve the matter the polite and respectful way.

**Micola** (enters the room): What are you doing here, Fedir?

**Fedir:** Came to call Maria Grigorievna on the phone.

**Micola:** You can go now! (Fedir leaves). Dora, you are a strange woman. You can spend the whole day talking nonsense with Fedir, but can't even spend 5 minutes with me or Anna (his sister). Two sentences and you're out of the room. How do you not understand that you need to surround yourself with respectable people, not just some servants. We have been married for a couple of months and I've been putting so much effort into you, teaching, polishing you. However I can't say I've much success to boast about! I've been told you don't want to learn anything and I think the same thing! You don't want to! Because you're still so young and I can tell you - if you truly were passionate about it, you would have become a new person under my guidance! That's what I was hoping for when I married you. You still can't give your hand right, you don't know the difference between types of cutlery. And the thing is - when my sister or I point out your mistakes - you don't seem to pay them a second of mind. For instance, Anna was telling you about the right way of behaving in someone's company and you were yawning with your mouth open whilst it! Just admit the fact that it's offensive, I'm telling you, Dora, that it is not...

**Darina** (harshly): And I'm telling you: Go fuck yourself!

**Micola** (bewildered): WHAT?

**Darina:** You heard me! You and your constant drilling - I'm sick of it! Am I a dog for you to train or what? I can't sit right, I don't eat right, my leg is in the way. Fuck you, go to hell!

**Micola:** Dora!

**Darina:** Do I behave like a wild person? Do I eat funny? Do I sit under the table just for the fun of it? I eat just the way everyone does, and I sit like everyone else, what else do you freaking want from me?

**Micola:** Watch your mouth!

**Darina:** You seem to enjoy drilling me day and night! I was trying to keep it down, not saying anything, but I can't do it anymore! I will curse and swear all you want, you and your goddamn sister, devil take her soul! Tell her to stop teaching me her stupid lessons, because otherwise I'm going to tell her everything I think about her and trust me - those won't be nice things! She has a dog, so let her train it, I wish to be left alone.

**Micola:** Please be polite and stop saying such things about my sister!

**Darina** (stomps her foot): And I'm asking you to stop yelling at me! Or else I'm going to start drilling *you*! And I won't give a damn about that you're a scientist, a professor! I'll take this umbrella (Grabs an umbrella. Micola takes a step back, scared)... and I'll beat you so hard you won't be able to get up from the bed the next day! Trust me, I'll beat the living shit out of you!

**Micola:** Are you out of your mind?

**Darina:** Am not! I want *you* to pay *me* some mind! Do you think if I'm a village girl, I'll keep silent? No way in hell, I'd rather die! From now on - you're not teaching me anything, fuck you and fuck your teachers! If you love me - love me the way I am! I am no worse than you or your damn sister! You old pricks! Don't you dare not let my family come here! You knew who you were taking as your wife - then don't be ashamed of my parents now! I will not be sitting here as if I'm a bird in a cage! I demand that my friends can come here! And if you don't like that - I'll go to their house myself! We're going to a student's party with

Marusya the day after tomorrow and I don't want to hear anything about it. I don't care if you don't have time for that - if you're busy, I'll go there alone.

**Micola:** Alone? God knows where?

**Darina:** Nonsense! It's not that we're going to the woods. Look at you, you think that if I'm your wife, you can keep me locked here as if it's a fortress. I can't see the light of the day! You're an intelligent person, a scientist, but can't wrap it around your mind that you can't make a young girl live like that. You've had your youth and it was probably so much fun that now you want nothing but your stupid books. But I'm not like that, I'm young and I want to have fun and you don't allow me to have any!

**Micola:** Lord have mercy! Do you hear yourself, Dora?

**Darina:** I mean everything I'm saying! I don't care, if you don't like it - I'm leaving for the village tomorrow. Just so you know! (Leaves the room).

**Micola** (alone): Great! Just great! (Sighs heavily, sits down in the corner of the room and puts his head into his hands. Long pause. Suddenly Marusya's loud voice can be heard).

**Marusya** (in the background): What? So you're not letting me go? I'll scrape your eyeballs out, just so you wait! (Yuriy Vasilyovich storms into the room, Marusya follows without noticing Micola there).

**Yuriy:** Marusya, get a grip! You're out of your mind! (Dodges her hands while she keeps coming at him).

**Marusya:** You old crocodile prick! I'll scratch you till you bleed!

**Yuriy:** Marusya, I...

**Marusya:** Shut up! (Stomps her foot). Useless coffin-dodger! You married a young woman and thought you could keep her locked out from the whole world just like that? I'm young, unlike you, you stank old coward! I want to have a life! And you won't let me! You want to keep me here like I'm a prisoner so one even dares to bat an eye at me! You selfish asshole! (Screams and cries).

**Yuriy:** Marusya, I...

**Marusya:** Shut up! I am not letting you do that anymore! Am I making myself clear? I'll poison your old ass if you don't let me live! I'll slash your throat open, I'll shoot you! I'll run away at night! Keep that in mind, goddamnit! (Runs away).

**Yuriy:** Lord have mercy! (Takes a seat beside Micola, about to burst into tears).

**Micola:** Look at us, my brother, what have we done!

**Yuriy:** Oh... Micola, is that you?

**Micola:** Yes, it's me.

**Yuriy:** Did you hear everything?

**Micola:** I did.

**Yuriy:** What do we do?

**Micola:** There's nothing we can do, nothing!

**Yuriy:** But do you hear what she's saying? "Old prick!", says she will shoot me, poison me! Just think about it, this is insane! (Cries).

**Micola:** It is, it is... (Pause).

**Yuriy:** Micola, what do we do? You're smart, you know everything about everything! Tell me what to do!

**Micola (angrily):** Leave me alone, for God's sake! I'm no smart man! We're both stupid old pricks, cowardly bastards! They served us right! They deserve to be angry at us, they will keep beating us as they should, just you wait!

**Yuriy:** Marusya has beaten me up before, not even once!

**Micola:** Dora almost broke an umbrella against my back today!

**Yuriy:** Darina?! Are you serious? She seems so shy and quiet...

**Micola:** You should have seen her!

**Yuriy:** That's crazy! What did you do?

**Micola:** The same thing you did!

**Yuriy:** It's because of the ball, isn't it?

**Micola:** That too. She demands that I don't control her every step or else she'll leave me.

**Yuriy:** What are you going to do? She *will* leave you, trust her word she will! Both of them! They will leave us and find someone younger!

**Micola:** The worst thing is that I love her. I truly love her with my whole heart!

**Yuriy:** Do you think I don't love Marusya? I'd rather die than live a day without her!

**Micola:** Then we should suffer! We will be beaten, called names and disrespected.

**Yuriy:** Then we will have to endure it, Micola, there's nothing we can do about it.

**Micola:** It's awful, Yuriy. It shouldn't be this way!

**Yuriy:** We can't really do anything about it. (Pause). And we have to let them go to the ball. (Pause). Marusya has a brother, he's a student and has many friends. Let them come here from time to time. We can invite our nephews, Yuriy and Olexa. Let them be and have some fun...

**Micola:** And we, two old losers, will be sitting in the corner, just watching them from afar. No way!

**Yuriy:** Do you have any better ideas? They are decent girls, they are honest. They are lonely, can't you see? They are still so young... and we are old... they want to have fun... to dance... to... um... have fun. We can't do that anymore, we will just watch them...

**Micola:** I won't let Darina go to that stupid ball alone!

**Yuriy:** You're right! We will make sure to go with them! I won't let Marusya go alone either!

**Micola:** That's funny... They didn't last that long, sitting all locked up...

**Yuriy** (sighs): We should have seen it coming. Let them be! We can yield a little. Otherwise they will leave us for good! (Pause, they both keep sitting there, sad).

**Marusya** (in the background): Hey you two old donkeys! Where are you? Come in here!

**Micola:** Is she... calling for us?

**Yuriy** (sighs): I think so!

**Micola:** Then, my brother, let's go! (Yuriy Vasilyovich stands up slowly. They leave the room, coming to their wives).

**CURTAINS DOWN**