1059CH11

9 The Proposal

Anton Chekov

Before You Read

Activity

1. *The word 'proposal' has several meanings. Can you guess what sort of proposal the play is about?*
   (i) a suggestion, plan or scheme for doing something
   (ii) an offer for a possible plan or action
   (iii) the act of asking someone's hand in marriage

A Russian Wedding

Do you know anything about a Russian marriage ceremony? Read this article about a Russian wedding.

Preparations for a Russian Wedding: A Russian wedding is very simple. The planning only includes arranging for rings, brides' dress, cars, and a reception. Earlier, the bride's family paid for the reception, but now-a-days brides' and grooms' families usually share expenses. A Russian wedding lasts for two days; some weddings last as long as a week, and the occasion becomes something to remember for years. The necessary part of the wedding ceremony is a wedding procession of several cars. The best friends of the groom/bride meet before the wedding a few times, make posters, write speeches and organise contests. When the groom arrives to fetch the bride for the registration, he has to fight to get her! Russians usually live in apartments in tall buildings, and the groom has to climb several stairs to reach his bride. But at each landing he must answer a question to be allowed to go up. The bride's friends ask difficult questions (sometimes about the bride, sometimes just difficult riddles), and the groom must answer with the help of his friends. For example, he may be shown a few photos of baby girls and he must say which one his bride is. If he guesses wrong, he must pay cash to move ahead. After the

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marriage registration, the newly-married couple leaves the guests for a tour of the city sights. After two or three hours of the city tour the couple arrives at the reception. The couple sits at a specially arranged table with their family, friends and invited guests. The reception starts with toasts to the couple. A wedding toast is a custom where a close friend or relative of the groom or the bride says a few words to wish the couple, then everyone raises their glass of wine, and drink it up at the same moment. The groom is then asked to kiss the bride. After a few toasts, people start eating and drinking, and generally have fun. After some time, the bride gets 'stolen'! She disappears, and when the groom starts looking for her, he is asked to pay a fee. Usually it is his friends who 'steal' the bride. Then there are the bride's friends — they steal the bride's shoe. The groom must pay money for the shoe too. The guests enjoy watching these tussles, and continue partying.

2. *Do you think Indian and Russian weddings have any customs in common? With the help of a partner, fill in the table below.*

Wedding Ceremonies in Russia and India

Customs similar to Indian ones	*Customs different from Indian ones*

"The Proposal" (originally titled "A Marriage Proposal") is a one-act play, a farce, by the Russian short story writer and dramatist Anton Chekhov. It was written in 1888–89.

The play is about the tendency of wealthy families to seek ties with other wealthy families, to increase their estates by encouraging marriages that make good economic sense. Ivan Lomov, a long time wealthy neighbour of Stepan Chubukov, also wealthy, comes to seek the hand of Chubukov's twenty-five-year-old daughter, Natalya. All three are quarrelsome people, and they quarrel over petty issues. The proposal is in danger of being forgotten amidst all this quarrelling. But economic good sense ensures that the proposal is made, after all — although the quarrelling perhaps continues!

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Characters

Stepan Stepanovitch Chubukov	:	a landowner
Natalya Stepanovna	:	his daughter, twenty-five years old
Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov	:	a neighbour of Chubukov, a large and hearty, but very suspicious, landowner

A drawing-room in Chubukov's house.

Lomov enters, wearing a dress-jacket and white gloves. Chubukov rises to meet him.

Chubukov : My dear fellow, whom do I see! Ivan Vassilevitch! I am extremely glad! [*Squeezes his hand*] Now this is a surprise, my darling... How are you?

Lomov : Thank you. And how may you be getting on?

Chubukov : We just get along somehow, my angel, thanks to your prayers, and so on. Sit down, please do... Now, you know, you shouldn't forget all about your neighbours, my darling. My dear fellow, why are you so formal in your get-up! Evening dress, gloves, and so on. Can you be going anywhere, my treasure?

Lomov : No. I've come only to see you, honoured Stepan Stepanovitch.

Chubukov : Then why are you in evening dress, my precious? As if you're paying a New Year's Eve visit!

Lomov : Well, you see, it's like this. [*Takes his arm*] I've come to you, honoured Stepan Stepanovitch, to trouble you with a request. Not once or twice have I already had the privilege of applying to you for help, and you have always, so to speak... I must ask your pardon, I am getting excited. I shall drink some water, honoured Stepan Stepanovitch.
[*Drinks.*]

Chubukov : [*aside*] He's come to borrow money. Shan't give him any! [*aloud*] What is it, my beauty?

Lomov : You see, Honoured Stepanitch... I beg pardon Stepan Honouritch... I mean, I'm awfully excited, as you will please notice... In short, you alone can help me, though I don't deserve it, of course... and haven't any right to count on your assistance...

Chubukov : Oh, don't go round and round it, darling! Spit it out! Well?

Lomov : One moment... this very minute. The fact is I've come to ask the hand of your daughter, Natalya Stepanovna, in marriage.

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CHUBUKOV : [*joyfully*] By Jove! Ivan Vassilevitch! Say it again — I didn't hear it all!

LOMOV : I have the honour to ask...

CHUBUKOV : [*interrupting*] My dear fellow... I'm so glad, and so on... Yes, indeed, and all that sort of thing. [*Embraces and kisses Lomov*] I've been hoping for it for a long time. It's been my continual desire. [*Sheds a tear*] And I've always loved you, my angel, as if you were my own son. May God give you both — His help and His love and so on, and so much hope... What am I behaving in this idiotic way for? I'm off my balance with joy, absolutely off my balance! Oh, with all my soul... I'll go and call Natasha, and all that.

LOMOV : [*greatly moved*] Honoured Stepan Stepanovitch, do you think I may count on her consent?

CHUBUKOV : Why, of course, my darling, and... as if she won't consent! She's in love; egad, she's like a lovesick cat, and so on. Shan't be long!

[*Exit.*]

LOMOV : It's cold... I'm trembling all over, just as if I'd got an examination before me. The great thing is, I must have my mind made up. If I give myself time to think, to hesitate, to talk a lot, to look for an ideal, or for real love, then I'll never get married. Brr... It's cold! Natalya

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Stepanovna is an excellent housekeeper, not bad-looking, well-educated. What more do I want? But I'm getting a noise in my ears from excitement. [*Drinks*] And it's impossible for me not to marry. In the first place, I'm already 35 — a critical age, so to speak. In the second place, I ought to lead a quiet and regular life. I suffer from palpitations, I'm excitable and always getting awfully upset; at this very moment my lips are trembling, and there's a twitch in my right eyebrow. But the very worst of all is the way I sleep. I no sooner get into bed and begin to go off, when suddenly something in my left side gives a pull, and I can feel it in my shoulder and head... I jump up like a lunatic, walk about a bit and lie down again, but as soon as I begin to get off to sleep there's another pull! And this may happen twenty times... [*Natalya Stepanovna comes in.*]

NATLYA : Well, there! It's you, and papa said, "Go; there's a merchant come for his goods." How do you do, Ivan Vassilevitch?

LOMOV : How do you do, honoured Natalya Stepanovna?

NATALYA : You must excuse my apron and *neglige*. We're shelling peas for drying. Why haven't you been here for such a long time? Sit down... [*They seat themselves.*] Won't you have some lunch?

LOMOV : No, thank you, I've had some already.

NATALYA : Then smoke. Here are the matches. The weather is splendid now, but yesterday it was so wet that the workmen didn't do anything all day. How much hay have you stacked? Just think, I felt greedy and had a whole field cut, and now I'm not at all pleased about it because I'm afraid my hay may rot. I ought to have waited a bit. But what's this? Why, you're in evening dress! Well, I never! Are you going to a ball or what? Though I must say you look better... Tell me, why are you got up like that?

LOMOV : [*excited*] You see, honoured Natalya Stepanovna... the fact is, I've made up my mind to ask you to hear me out... Of course you'll be surprised and perhaps even angry, but a... [*aside*] It's awfully cold!

NATALYA : What's the matter? [*pause*] Well?

LOMOV : I shall try to be brief. You must know, honoured Natalya Stepanovna, that I have long, since my childhood, in fact,

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had the privilege of knowing your family. My late aunt and her husband, from whom, as you know, I inherited my land, always had the greatest respect for your father and your late mother. The Lomovs and the Chubukovs have always had the most friendly, and I might almost say the most affectionate, regard for each other. And, as you know, my land is a near neighbour of yours. You will remember that my Oxen Meadows touch your birchwoods.

NATALYA : Excuse my interrupting you. You say, "my Oxen Meadows". But are they yours?

LOMOV : Yes, mine.

NATALYA : What are you talking about? Oxen Meadows are ours, not yours!

LOMOV : No, mine, honoured Natalya Stepanovna.

NATALYA : Well, I never knew that before. How do you make that out?

LOMOV : How? I'm speaking of those Oxen Meadows which are wedged in between your birchwoods and the Burnt Marsh.

NATALYA : Yes, yes... they're ours.

LOMOV : No, you're mistaken, honoured Natalya Stepanovna, they're mine.

NATALYA : Just think, Ivan Vassilevitch! How long have they been yours?

LOMOV : How long? As long as I can remember.

NATALYA : Really, you won't get me to believe that!

LOMOV : But you can see from the documents, honoured Natalya Stepanovna. Oxen Meadows, it's true, were once the subject of dispute, but now everybody knows that they are mine. There's nothing to argue about. You see my aunt's grandmother gave the free use of these Meadows in perpetuity to the peasants of your father's grandfather, in return for which they were to make bricks for her. The peasants belonging to your father's grandfather had the free use of the Meadows for forty years, and had got into the habit of regarding them as their own, when it happened that...

NATALYA : No, it isn't at all like that! Both grandfather and great-grandfather reckoned that their land extended to Burnt Marsh — which means that Oxen Meadows were ours. I don't see what there is to argue about. It's simply silly!

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LOMOV : I'll show you the documents, Natalya Stepanovna!

NATALYA : No, you're simply joking, or making fun of me. What a surprise! We've had the land for nearly three hundred years, and then we're suddenly told that it isn't ours! Ivan Vassilevitch, I can hardly believe my own ears. These Meadows aren't worth much to me. They only come to five dessiatins, and are worth perhaps 300 roubles, but I can't stand unfairness. Say what you will, I can't stand unfairness.

LOMOV : Hear me out, I implore you! The peasants of your father's grandfather, as I have already had the honour of explaining to you, used to bake bricks for my aunt's grandmother. Now my aunt's grandmother, wishing to make them a pleasant...

NATALYA : I can't make head or tail of all this about aunts and grandfathers and grandmothers. The Meadows are ours, that's all.

LOMOV : Mine.

NATALYA : Ours! You can go on proving it for two days on end, you can go and put on fifteen dress jackets, but I tell you they're ours, ours, ours! I don't want anything of yours and I don't want to give anything of mine. So there!

LOMOV : Natalya Stepanovna, I don't want the Meadows, but I am acting on principle. If you like, I'll make you a present of them.

NATALYA : I can make you a present of them myself, because they're mine! Your behaviour, Ivan Vassilevitch, is strange, to say the least! Up to this we have always thought of you as a good neighbour, a friend; last year we lent you our threshing-machine, although on that account we had to put off our own threshing till November, but you behave to us as if we were gypsies. Giving me my own land, indeed! No, really, that's not at all neighbourly! In my opinion, it's even impudent, if you want to know.

LOMOV : Then you make out that I'm a landgrabber? Madam, never in my life have I grabbed anybody else's land and I shan't allow anybody to accuse me of having done so. [*Quickly steps to the carafe and drinks more water*] Oxen Meadows are mine!

NATALYA : It's not true, they're ours!

LOMOV : Mine!

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NATALYA : It's not true! I'll prove it! I'll send my mowers out to the Meadows this very day!

LOMOV : What?

NATALYA : My mowers will be there this very day!

LOMOV : I'll give it to them in the neck!

NATALYA : You dare!

LOMOV : [*Clutches at his heart*] Oxen Meadows are mine! You understand? Mine!

NATALYA : Please don't shout! You can shout yourself hoarse in your own house but here I must ask you to restrain yourself!

LOMOV : If it wasn't, madam, for this awful, excruciating palpitation, if my whole inside wasn't upset, I'd talk to you in a different way! [*Yells*] Oxen Meadows are mine!

NATALYA : Ours!

LOMOV : Mine!

NATALYA : Ours!

LOMOV : Mine!

[*Enter Chubukov*]

CHUBUKOV : What's the matter? What are you shouting for?

NATALYA : Papa, please tell this gentleman who owns Oxen Meadows, we or he?

CHUBUKOV : [*to Lomov*] Darling, the Meadows are ours!

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LOMOV : But, please, Stepan Stepanovitch, how can they be yours? Do be a reasonable man! My aunt's grandmother gave the Meadows for the temporary and free use of your grandfather's peasants. The peasants used the land for forty years and got accustomed to it as if it was their own, when it happened that...

CHUBUKOV : Excuse me, my precious. You forget just this, that the peasants didn't pay your grandmother and all that, because the Meadows were in dispute, and so on. And now everybody knows that they're ours. It means that you haven't seen the plan.

LOMOV : I'll prove to you that they're mine!

CHUBUKOV : You won't prove it, my darling —

LOMOV : I shall

CHUBUKOV : Dear one, why yell like that? You won't prove anything just by yelling. I don't want anything of yours, and don't intend to give up what I have. Why should I? And you know, my beloved, that if you propose to go on arguing about it, I'd much sooner give up the Meadows to the peasants than to you. There!

LOMOV : I don't understand! How have you the right to give away somebody else's property?

CHUBUKOV : You may take it that I know whether I have the right or not. Because, young man, I'm not used to being spoken to in that tone of voice, and so on. I, young man, am twice your age, and ask you to speak to me without agitating yourself, and all that.

LOMOV : No, you just think I'm a fool and want to have me on! You call my land yours, and then you want me to talk to you calmly and politely! Good neighbours don't behave like that, Stepan Stepanovitch! You're not a neighbour, you're a grabber!

CHUBUKOV : What's that? What did you say?

NATALYA : Papa, send the mowers out to the Meadows at once!

CHUBUKOV : What did you say, sir?

NATALYA : Oxen Meadows are ours, and I shan't give them up, shan't give them up, shan't give them up!

LOMOV : We'll see! I'll have the matter taken to court, and then I'll show you!

CHUBUKOV : To court? You can take it to court, and all that! You can! I know you; you're just on the look-out for a chance to go

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to court, and all that. You pettifogger! All your people were like that! All of them!

LOMOV : Never mind about my people! The Lomovs have all been honourable people, and not one has ever been tried for embezzlement, like your grandfather!

CHUBUKOV : You Lomovs have had lunacy in your family, all of you!

NATALYA : All, all, all!

CHUBUKOV : Your grandfather was a drunkard, and your younger aunt, Nastasya Mihailovna, ran away with an architect, and so on...

LOMOV : And your mother was hump-backed. [*Clutches at his heart*] Something pulling in my side... My head.... Help! Water!

CHUBUKOV : Your father was a guzzling gambler!

NATALYA : And there haven't been many backbiters to equal your aunt!

CHUBUKOV : My left foot has gone to sleep... You're an intriguer....Oh, my heart! And it's an open secret that before the last elections you bri... I can see stars... Where's my hat?

NATALYA : It's low! It's dishonest! It's mean!

CHUBUKOV : And you're just a malicious, doublefaced intriguer! Yes!

LOMOV : Here's my hat. My heart! Which way? Where's the door? Oh I think I'm dying! My foot's quite numb...
[*Goes to the door.*]

CHUBUKOV : [*following him*] And don't set foot in my house again!

NATALYA : Take it to court! We'll see!
[*Lomov staggers out.*]

CHUBUKOV : Devil take him!
[*Walks about in excitement.*]

NATALYA : What a rascal! What trust can one have in one's neighbours after that!

CHUBUKOV : The villain! The scarecrow!

NATALYA : The monster! First he takes our land and then he has the impudence to abuse us.

CHUBUKOV : And that blind hen, yes, that turnip-ghost has the confounded cheek to make a proposal, and so on! What? A proposal!

NATALYA : What proposal?

CHUBUKOV : Why, he came here to propose to you.

NATALYA : To propose? To me? Why didn't you tell me so before?

CHUBUKOV : So he dresses up in evening clothes. The stuffed sausage! The wizen-faced frump!

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NATALYA : To propose to me? Ah! [*Falls into an easy-chair and wails*] Bring him back! Back! Ah! Bring him here.

CHUBUKOV : Bring whom here?

NATALYA : Quick, quick! I'm ill! Fetch him!
[*Hysterics.*]

CHUBUKOV : What's that? What's the matter with you? [*Clutches at his head*] Oh, unhappy man that I am! I'll shoot myself! I'll hang myself! We've done for her!

NATALYA : I'm dying! Fetch him!

CHUBUKOV : Tfoo! At once. Don't yell!
[*Runs out. A pause.*]

NATALYA : [*Natalya Stepanovna wails.*] What have they done to me? Fetch him back! Fetch him!
[*A pause. Chubukov runs in.*]

CHUBUKOV : He's coming, and so on, devil take him! Ouf! Talk to him yourself; I don't want to...

NATALYA : [*wails*] Fetch him!

CHUBUKOV : [*yells*] He's coming, I tell you. Oh, what a burden, Lord, to be the father of a grown-up daughter! I'll cut my throat I will, indeed! We cursed him, abused him, drove him out; and it's all you... you!

NATALYA : No, it was you!

CHUBUKOV : I tell you it's not my fault. [*Lomov appears at the door*] Now you talk to him yourself.
[*Exit.*]

LOMOV : [*Lomov enters, exhausted.*] My heart's palpitating awfully. My foot's gone to sleep. There's something that keeps pulling in my side....

NATALYA : Forgive us, Ivan Vassilevitch, we were all a little heated. I remember now: Oxen Meadows... really are yours.

LOMOV : My heart's beating awfully. My Meadows... My eyebrows are both twitching....

NATALYA : The Meadows are yours, yes, yours. Do sit down. [*They sit*] We were wrong.

LOMOV : I did it on principle. My land is worth little to me, but the principle...

NATALYA : Yes, the principle, just so. Now let's talk of something else.

LOMOV : The more so as I have evidence. My aunt's grandmother gave the land to your father's grandfather's peasants...

NATALYA : Yes, yes, let that pass. [*aside*] I wish I knew how to get him started. [*aloud*] Are you going to start shooting soon?

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LOMOV : I'm thinking of having a go at the blackcock, honoured Natalya Stepanovna, after the harvest. Oh, have you heard? Just think, what a misfortune I've had! My dog Guess, who you know, has gone lame.

NATALYA : What a pity! Why?

LOMOV : I don't know. Must have got his leg twisted or bitten by some other dog. *[sighs]* My very best dog, to say nothing of the expense. I gave Mironov 125 roubles for him.

NATALYA : It was too much, Ivan Vassilevitch.

LOMOV : I think it was very cheap. He's a first-rate dog.

NATALYA : Papa gave 85 roubles for his Squeezer, and Squeezer is heaps better than Guess!

LOMOV : Squeezer better than Guess? What an idea! [*laughs*] Squeezer better than Guess!

NATALYA : Of course he's better! Of course, Squeezer is young, he may develop a bit, but on points and pedigree he's better than anything that even Volchanetsky has got.

LOMOV : Excuse me, Natalya Stepanovna, but you forget that he is overshot, and an overshot always means the dog is a bad hunter!

NATALYA : Overshot, is he? The first time I hear it!

LOMOV : I assure you that his lower jaw is shorter than the upper.

NATALYA : Have you measured?

LOMOV : Yes. He's all right at following, of course, but if you want to get hold of anything...

NATALYA : In the first place, our Squeezer is a thoroughbred animal, the son of Harness and Chisels while there's no getting at the pedigree of your dog at all. He's old and as ugly as a worn-out cab-horse.

LOMOV : He is old, but I wouldn't take five Squeezers for him. Why, how can you? Guess is a dog; as for Squeezer, well, it's too funny to argue. Anybody you like has a dog as good as Squeezer... you may find them under every bush almost. Twenty-five roubles would be a handsome price to pay for him.

NATALYA : There's some demon of contradition in you today, Ivan Vassilevitch. First you pretend that the Meadows are yours; now, that Guess is better than Squeezer. I don't like people who don't say what they mean, because you know perfectly well that Squeezer is a hundred times better than your silly Guess. Why do you want to say he isn't?

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LOMOV : I see, Natalya Stepanovna, that you consider me either blind or a fool. You must realise that Squeezer is overshot!

NATALYA : It's not true.

LOMOV : He is!

NATALYA : It's not true!

LOMOV : Why shout madam?

NATALYA : Why talk rot? It's awful! It's time your Guess was shot, and you compare him with Squeezer!

LOMOV : Excuse me, I cannot continue this discussion, my heart is palpitating.

NATALYA : I've noticed that those hunters argue most who know least.

LOMOV : Madam, please be silent. My heart is going to pieces. [*shouts*] Shut up!

NATALYA : I shan't shut up until you acknowledge that Squeezer is a hundred times better than your Guess!

LOMOV : A hundred times worse! Be hanged to your Squeezer! His head... eyes... shoulder...

NATALYA : There's no need to hang your silly Guess; he's half-dead already!

LOMOV : [*weeps*] Shut up! My heart's bursting!

NATALYA : I shan't shut up.

[*Enter Chubukov.*]

CHUBUKOV : What's the matter now?

NATALYA : Papa, tell us truly, which is the better dog, our Squeezer or his Guess.

LOMOV : Stepan Stepanovitch, I implore you to tell me just one thing: is your Squeezer overshot or not? Yes or no?

CHUBUKOV : And suppose he is? What does it matter? He's the best dog in the district for all that, and so on.

LOMOV : But isn't my Guess better? Really, now?

CHUBUKOV : Don't excite yourself, my precious one. Allow me. Your Guess certainly has his good points. He's purebred, firm on his feet, has well-sprung ribs, and all that. But, my dear man, if you want to know the truth, that dog has two defects: he's old and he's short in the muzzle.

LOMOV : Excuse me, my heart... Let's take the facts. You will remember that on the Marusinsky hunt my Guess ran neck-and-neck with the Count's dog, while your Squeezer was left a whole verst behind.

CHUBUKOV : He got left behind because the Count's whipper-in hit him with his whip.

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LOMOV : And with good reason. The dogs are running after a fox, when Squeezer goes and starts worrying a sheep!

CHUBUKOV : It's not true! My dear fellow, I'm very liable to lose my temper, and so, just because of that, let's stop arguing. You started because everybody is always jealous of everybody else's dogs. Yes, we're all like that! You too, sir, aren't blameless! You no sooner begin with this, that and the other, and all that... I remember everything!

LOMOV : I remember too!

CHUBUKOV : [*teasing him*] I remember, too! What do you remember?

LOMOV : My heart... my foot's gone to sleep. I can't...

NATALYA : [*teasing*] My heart! What sort of a hunter are you? You ought to go and lie on the kitchen oven and catch black beetles, not go after foxes! My heart!

CHUBUKOV : Yes really, what sort of a hunter are you, anyway? You ought to sit at home with your palpitations, and not go tracking animals. You could go hunting, but you only go to argue with people and interfere with their dogs and so on. Let's change the subject in case I lose my temper. You're not a hunter at all, anyway!

LOMOV : And are you a hunter? You only go hunting to get in with the Count and to intrigue. Oh, my heart! You're an intriguer!

CHUBUKOV : What? I am an intriguer? [*shouts*] Shut up!

LOMOV : Intriguer!

CHUBUKOV : Boy! Pup!

LOMOV : Old rat! Jesuit!

CHUBUKOV : Shut up or I'll shoot you like a partridge! You fool!

LOMOV : Everybody knows that — oh, my heart! — your late wife used to beat you... My feet... temples... sparks... I fall, I fall!

CHUBUKOV : And you're under the slipper of your house-keeper!

LOMOV : There, there, there... my heart's burst! My shoulders come off! Where is my shoulder? I die. [*Falls into an armchair*] A doctor!

CHUBUKOV : Boy! Milksop! Fool! I'm sick! [*Drinks water*] Sick!

NATALYA : What sort of a hunter are you? You can't even sit on a horse! [*To her father*] Papa, what's the matter with him? Papa! Look, Papa! [*screams*] Ivan Vassilevitch! He's dead!

CHUBUKOV : I'm sick! I can't breathe! Air!

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NATALYA : He's dead. [*Pulls Lomov's sleeve*] Ivan Vassilevitch! Ivan Vassilevitch! What have you done to me? He's dead. [*Falls into an armchair*] A doctor, a doctor!
[*Hysterics.*]

CHUBUKOV : Oh! What is it? What's the matter?

NATALYA : [*wails*] He's dead... dead!

CHUBUKOV : Who's dead? [*Looks at Lomov*] So he is! My word! Water! A doctor! [*Lifts a tumbler to Lomov's mouth*] Drink this! No, he doesn't drink. It means he's dead, and all that. I'm the most unhappy of men! Why don't I put a bullet into my brain? Why haven't I cut my throat yet? What am I waiting for? Give me a knife! Give me a pistol! [*Lomov moves*] He seems to be coming round. Drink some water! That's right.

LOMOV : I see stars... mist... where am I?

CHUBUKOV : Hurry up and get married and — well, to the devil with you! She's willing! [*He puts Lomov's hand into his daughter's*] She's willing and all that. I give you my blessing and so on. Only leave me in peace!

LOMOV : [*getting up*] Eh? What? To whom?

CHUBUKOV : She's willing! Well? Kiss and be damned to you!

NATALYA : [*wails*] He's alive... Yes, yes, I'm willing.

CHUBUKOV : Kiss each other!

LOMOV : Eh? Kiss whom? [*They kiss*] Very nice, too. Excuse me, what's it all about? Oh, now I understand ... my heart... stars... I'm happy. Natalya Stepanovna... [*Kisses her hand*] My foot's gone to sleep.

NATALYA : I... I'm happy too...

CHUBUKOV : What a weight off my shoulders, ouf!

NATALYA : But, still you will admit now that Guess is worse than Squeezer.

LOMOV : Better!

NATALYA : Worse!

CHUBUKOV : Well, that's a way to start your family bliss! Have some champagne!

LOMOV : He's better!

NATALYA : Worse! Worse! Worse!

CHUBUKOV : [*trying to shout her down*] Champagne! Champagne!

CURTAIN

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Thinking about the Play

1. What does Chubukov at first suspect that Lomov has come for? Is he sincere when he later says "And I've always loved you, my angel, as if you were my own son"? Find reasons for your answer from the play.
2. Chubukov says of Natalya: "... as if she won't consent! She's in love; egad, she's like a lovesick cat..." Would you agree? Find reasons for your answer.
3. (i) Find all the words and expressions in the play that the characters use to speak about each other, and the accusations and insults they hurl at each other. (For example, Lomov in the end calls Chubukov an intriguer; but earlier, Chubukov has himself called Lomov a "malicious, doublefaced intriguer." Again, Lomov begins by describing Natalya as "an excellent housekeeper, not bad-looking, well-educated.")

   (ii) Then think of five adjectives or adjectival expressions of your own to describe each character in the play.

   (iii) Can you now imagine what these characters will quarrel about next?

Thinking about Language

I. 1. This play has been translated into English from the Russian original. Are there any expressions or ways of speaking that strike you as more Russian than English? For example, would an adult man be addressed by an older man as *my darling* or *my treasure* in an English play?

Read through the play carefully, and find expressions that you think are not used in contemporary English, and contrast these with idiomatic modern English expressions that also occur in the play.

2. Look up the following words in a dictionary and find out how to pronounce them. Pay attention to how many syllables there are in each word, and find out which syllable is stressed, or said more forcefully.

palpitations	interfere	implore	thoroughbred
pedigree	principle	evidence	misfortune
malicious	embezzlement	architect	neighbours
accustomed	temporary	behaviour	documents

3. Look up the following phrases in a dictionary to find out their meaning, and then use each in a sentence of your own.

   (i) You may take it that

   (ii) He seems to be coming round

   (iii) My foot's gone to sleep

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II. Reported Speech

A sentence in reported speech consists of two parts: a ***reporting clause***, which contains the ***reporting verb***, and the ***reported clause***. Look at the following sentences.

(a) "I went to visit my grandma last week," said Mamta.

(b) Mamta said that she had gone to visit her grandma the previous week.

In sentence (a), we have Mamta's exact words. This is an example of ***direct speech***. In sentence (b), someone is reporting what Mamta said. This is called ***indirect speech*** or ***reported speech***. A sentence in reported speech is made up of two parts — a ***reporting clause*** and a ***reported clause***.

In sentence (b), *Mamta said* is the ***reporting clause*** containing the ***reporting verb*** *said*. The other clause — *that she had gone to visit her grandma last week* — is the ***reported clause***.

Notice that in sentence (b) we put the reporting clause first. This is done to show that we are not speaking directly, but reporting someone else's words. The tense of the verb also changes; past tense (*went*) becomes past perfect (*had gone*).

Here are some pairs of sentences in direct and reported speech. Read them carefully, and do the task that follows:

1. (i) LOMOV : Honoured Stepan Stepanovitch, do you think I may count on her consent? (Direct Speech)
   (ii) Lomov asked Stepan Stepanovitch respectfully if he thought he might count on her consent. (Reported Speech)

2. (i) LOMOV : I'm getting a noise in my ears from excitement. (Direct Speech)
   (ii) Lomov said that he was getting a noise in his ears from excitement. (Reported Speech)

3. (i) NATALYA : Why haven't you been here for such a long time? (Direct Speech)
   (ii) Natalya Stepanovna asked why he hadn't been there for such a long time. (Reported Speech)

4. (i) CHUBUKOV : What's the matter? (Direct Speech)
   (ii) Chubukov asked him what the matter was. (Reported Speech)

5. (i) NATALYA : My mowers will be there this very day! (Direct Speech)
   (ii) Natalya Stepanovna declared that her mowers would be there that very day. (Reported Speech)

You must have noticed that when we report someone's exact words, we have to make some changes in the sentence structure. In the following sentences fill in the blanks to list the changes that have occurred in the above pairs of sentences. One has been done for you.

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1. To report a question, we use the reporting verb ___asked___ (as in Sentence Set 1).
2. To report a statement, we use the reporting verb _____.
3. The adverb of place *here* changes to _____.
4. When the verb in direct speech is in the present tense, the verb in reported speech is in the _____ tense (as in Sentence Set 3).
5. If the verb in direct speech is in the present continuous tense, the verb in reported speech changes to _____ tense. For example, _____ changes to *was getting*.
6. When the sentence in direct speech contains a word denoting respect, we add the adverb _____ in the reporting clause (as in Sentence Set 1).
7. The pronouns *I*, *me*, *our* and *mine*, which are used in the first person in direct speech, change according to the subject or object of the reporting verb such as _____, _____, _____ or _____ in reported speech.

III. **Here is an excerpt from an article from the *Times of India* dated 27 August 2006. Rewrite it, changing the sentences in direct speech into reported speech. Leave the other sentences unchanged.**

"Why do you want to know my age? If people know I am so old, I won't get work!" laughs 90-year-old A. K. Hangal, one of Hindi cinema's most famous character actors. For his age, he is rather energetic. "What's the secret?" we ask. "My intake of everything is in small quantities. And I walk a lot," he replies. "I joined the industry when people retire. I was in my 40s. So I don't miss being called a star. I am still respected and given work, when actors of my age are living in poverty and without work. I don't have any complaints," he says, adding, "but yes, I have always been underpaid." Recipient of the Padma Bhushan, Hangal never hankered after money or materialistic gains. "No doubt I am content today, but money is important. I was a fool not to understand the value of money earlier," he regrets.

Speaking and Writing

1. *Anger Management*: As adults, one important thing to learn is how to manage our temper. Some of us tend to get angry quickly, while others remain calm.

   Can you think of three ill effects that result from anger? Note them down. Suggest ways to avoid losing your temper in such situations. Are there any benefits from anger?

2. In pairs, prepare a script based on the given excerpt from *The Home and the World* by Rabindranath Tagore. You may write five exchanges between the characters with other directions such as movements on stage and way of speaking, etc.

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One afternoon, when I happened to be specially busy, word came to my office room that Bimala had sent for me. I was startled.

"Who did you say had sent for me?" I asked the messenger.

"The *Rani* Mother".

"The *Bara Rani*?"

"No, sir, the *Chota Rani* Mother."

The *Chota Rani*! It seemed a century since I had been sent for by her. I kept them all waiting there, and went off into the inner apartments. When I stepped into our room I had another shock of surprise to find Bimala there with a distinct suggestion of being dressed up. The room, which from persistent neglect, had latterly acquired an air of having grown absent-minded, had regained something of its old order this afternoon. I stood there silently, looking enquiringly at Bimala.

She flushed a little and the fingers of her right hand toyed for a time with the bangles on her left arm. Then she abruptly broke the silence. "Look here! Is it right that ours should be the only market in all Bengal which allows foreign goods?"

"What, then, would be the right thing to do?" I asked.

"Order them to be cleared out!"

"But the goods are not mine."

"Is not the market yours?"

"It is much more theirs who use it for trade."

"Let them trade in Indian goods, then."

"Nothing would please me better. But suppose they do not?"

"Nonsense! How dare they be so insolent? Are you not..."

"I am very busy this afternoon and cannot stop to argue it out. But I must refuse to tyrannise."

"It would not be tyranny for selfish gain, but for the sake of the country."

"To tyrannise for the country is to tyrannise over the country. But that I am afraid you will never understand." With this I came away.

3. In groups, discuss the qualities one should look for in a marriage partner. You might consider the following points.

   - *Personal qualities*
     - Appearance or looks
     - Attitudes and beliefs
     - Sense of humour
   - *Value system*
     - Compassion and kindness
     - Tolerance, ambition
     - Attitude to money and wealth
   - *Education and professional background*

4. Are there parts of the play that remind you of film scenes from romantic comedies? Discuss this in groups, and recount to the rest of the class episodes similar to those in the play.

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In This Lesson

What We Have Done

Given you a play by the famous Russian writer, Anton Chekhov.

What You Can Do

Dictate the biographical information given below. Students should then guess the name of the playwright.

_____ (1564 –1616). He was born at Stratford-on-Avon in April 1564. His father was an important public figure in Stratford. People believe that he received a decent grammar-school education in literature, logic, and Latin (mathematics and natural science did not form part of the curriculum). When he was eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, who was eight years his senior. He seems to have prospered in the London theatre world. He probably began his career as an actor in London, and he earned enough as author to acquire landed property.

When he was forty-seven, he retired to a large house in Stratford. He died in 1616, leaving behind a body of work that still stands as a pinnacle in world literature.

Homophones

Can you find the words below that are spelt similarly, and sometimes even pronounced similarly, but have very different meanings? Check their pronunciation and meaning in a dictionary.

- They were too close to the door to close it.
- Since there is no time like the present, she thought it was time to present the present.

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CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Part III (Articles 12 – 35)
(Subject to certain conditions, some exceptions
and reasonable restrictions)

guarantees these

Fundamental Rights

Right to Equality

- before law and equal protection of laws;
- irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth;
- of opportunity in public employment;
- by abolition of untouchability and titles.

Right to Freedom

- of expression, assembly, association, movement, residence and profession;
- of certain protections in respect of conviction for offences;
- of protection of life and personal liberty;
- of free and compulsory education for children between the age of six and fourteen years;
- of protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.

Right against Exploitation

- for prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour;
- for prohibition of employment of children in hazardous jobs.

Right to Freedom of Religion

- freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion;
- freedom to manage religious affairs;
- freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion;
- freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in educational institutions wholly maintained by the State.

Cultural and Educational Rights

- for protection of interests of minorities to conserve their language, script and culture;
- for minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

Right to Constitutional Remedies

- by issuance of directions or orders or writs by the Supreme Court and High Courts for enforcement of these Fundamental Rights.

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