

# Illinois Wesleyan University

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Spring April, 2005

## Ward No. 6

Jared Brown, *Illinois Wesleyan University*



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**WARD NO. 6**

a play by Jared Brown  
adapted from the short story by Anton Chekhov  
and translated by Constance Garnett

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## WARD NO. 6

Adapted by Jared Brown  
from the story by Anton Chekhov

*All the roles in this play are played by five actors:*

ACTOR ONE (Male)  
ACTOR TWO (Female)  
ACTOR THREE (Male)  
ACTOR FOUR (Male or Female)  
ACTOR FIVE (Male)

*The characters they play are listed below, with the actor's number indicated in parentheses:*

DR. RAGIN (Actor One)  
MIHAIL AVERYANITCH (Three)  
NIKITA (Five)  
MOISEIKA (Two)  
GROMOV (Four)  
DARYUSHA (Two)  
NURSE (Two)  
HOBOTOV (Five)  
MILITARY COMMANDER (Three)  
MAYOR (Two)  
WAITER (Two)  
WAITRESS (Two)  
DARYUSHA'S DRUNKEN LOVER (Five)

*Five actors, dressed identically, are spaced evenly upstage.*

### ACTOR ONE

In the hospital yard there stands a small lodge surrounded by a perfect forest of burdocks, nettles, and wild hemp.

### ACTOR TWO

Its roof is rusty, the chimney is tumbling down, and steps at the front door are rotting away and overgrown with grass.

### ACTOR THREE

If you are not afraid of being stung by nettles, come by the narrow footpath that leads to the lodge and let us see what is going on inside.

### NIKITA

The porter, Nikita, an old soldier, likes discipline better than anything in the world and is convinced that it is his duty to beat people. *(He hits a patient on the face, then on the chest. The actor crumples to the floor)* Without discipline there would be no order.

### ACTOR FOUR

Five lunatics have been condemned to this place.

*(All actors become lunatics; one of them props his head on his hand, staring at the same point. He coughs, agonizingly. The next, Moiseika the Jew, walks aimlessly from stage right to stage left, laughing softly to himself.)*

### MOISEIKA

Of all the inhabitants of Ward No. 6, I, Moiseika the Jew, am the only one allowed to go out of the building and into the street. *(He goes up to another actor)* A kopeck, if you please. *(The actor, in the character of a shopkeeper, gives Moiseika a kopeck.)* May God bless you, sir. *(To another actor)* A piece of bread? I ask nothing more. *(The actor tears off a piece of bread, gives it to Moiseika)* Ah – *(holding up the kopeck)* rich! And – *(holding up the bread)* well fed. I shall share whatever I receive with my poor companions.

### NIKITA

*(approaching Moiseika)* What have you today, Jew? Money? Bread? Give them to me, at once. *(He beats Moiseika savagely, takes the items, and goes into a corner, stuffing the bread into his mouth)*

### GROMOV

Ivan Dimitrich Gromov, a gentleman by birth, has been a court usher and provincial secretary, but suffers from persecution mania. That explains why I am always excited, agitated, and overwrought. *(An actor coughs)* What's that? Is someone looking for me? Is someone coming to take me away? No, no, leave me alone, I beg of you. *(He begins walking rapidly from upstage left to upstage right, and back again, occasionally stopping as if he's going to say something, but then shakes his head impatiently and goes back to pacing)* Wait, no, I don't mean it, that is, I do but at the same time I don't, that is, I'm not sure – *(He almost bumps against Nikita)* The brute! The basest of all men. He beat me twice last night and three times the night before. But one day – one day, we shall all

overcome him and our fear will be replaced by glorious triumph. And yet, I hear voices coming through the windows . . . (*He begins mumbling to himself, continuing throughout the next speech*)

NIKITA

Quiet, Gromov. I'm warning you.

GROMOV

Why does no one like me? I have no friends, no one with whom I can exchange ideas. On the other hand, who would want to speak to the imbeciles of this town? Their ignorance and animal existence are loathsome and horrible to me. Life is dull and stifling here, meaningless. People are hypocritical. Scoundrels are well-fed while honest men live from hand to mouth. What we need are schools, a theatre, public lectures, a progressive newspaper. But it is useless, I see that. I have long since abandoned myself to despair and terror.

ACTOR ONE

Several years ago, in the spring, when the snow melted, there were found in the ravine near the cemetery two half-decomposed corpses – the bodies of an old woman and a boy, both beaten to death. The townspeople spoke of nothing else. Gromov, who was not yet at that time a patient in Ward No. 6, believed that people suspected him of having committed the murders.

GROMOV

Whoever is guilty should be given the severest punishment. (*One actor looks at him quizzically*) Surely you can't believe that I – no, no, of course not. Remember, I am a gentleman by birth!

ACTOR THREE

(*Knocks on an imaginary door. Gromov opens it*) Ivan Dimitrich Gromov? I have come to mend the stove in the kitchen.

GROMOV

The kitchen? Ah, yes, come in, come in. (*Actor Three goes "inside"*) Not a workman, not a workman at all. I can tell. He's a policeman disguised as a workman. He means to arrest me for the murder of the old lady and little boy. (*He begins to walk stealthily away*)

DR. RAGIN

*(Accompanied by the Nurse; Intercepting Ragin)* Ivan Dimitrich, you look feverish. Wouldn't you say so, Nurse? *(To Gromov)* You must take better care of yourself.

GROMOV

Care? What sort of care? And how, Doctor Ragin, can I afford medicine? I have no money, no resources, no employment. I am destitute.

DR. RAGIN

*(kindly)* There is nothing for it, Ivan Dimitrich, you must go to the hospital. Come, take my arm. *(They walk in a circle until they reach "the hospital")* Here we are. You will have to stay in the ward for venereal patients, I'm afraid. All the other beds are occupied.

GROMOV

Venereal patients? But – *(The nurse takes him by the arm. Dr. Ragin walks away. To the nurse)* I know, Nurse, you think I murdered those poor people, you are conspiring against me, just like everyone else in this town.

NURSE

*(Feeling Gromov's forehead)* You have a terrible fever.

GROMOV

No, no, no, no. I am in perfect health. There is nothing wrong with me at all. I – *(suddenly he collapses to the floor)*

*(The nurse approaches Dr. Ragin)*

NURSE

Doctor, Gromov is ill, very ill, but he does not belong with the venereal patients.

DR. RAGIN

Then, I suppose, we have no alternative. *(Sighs deeply)* Put him in Ward Number Six.

*(Nikita picks Gromov up roughly and sets him down among the other patients)*

NIKITA

You are in my care now, you little rattlesnake. Remember this well: it is my task to enforce discipline, and I don't care how I do it. If you do anything to displease me, you will suffer as you've never suffered before. And just to give you an idea of what I mean – *(he kicks Gromov in the stomach. Gromov screams)* I hate the sound of screaming, you little worm. *(Kicks Gromov again. Gromov is breathless, but silent. All the inmates sit quietly and sullenly)*

ACTOR THREE

And so Gromov began his confinement in Ward No. 6. Probably in no other place on earth is life so monotonous. One mugful of tea in the morning, a bowl of soup made out of sour cabbage at midday, and supper in the evening consisting of boiled grain. Otherwise, we lie down, sleep, look out of windows, and walk from one corner of the ward to the other. Always the same. Every day.

MOISEIKA

But wait. They say the doctor will visit tomorrow.

GROMOV

*(contemptuously)* The doctor! I can't recall the last time I saw him in this place.

MOISEIKA

Wait. You'll see.

DR. RAGIN

Dr. Andrey Yefimitch Ragin is a strange man in his way. True, I have no natural bent for medicine and no love of science in general, but I do my best. I may modestly say that I have improved the hospital during my years in the town. When I first arrived, one could hardly breathe for the stench in the wards, in the passages and in the courtyards. The hospital servants, the nurses, and their children slept in the wards together with the patients. Beetles, bugs and mice were everywhere. There were only two scalpels and not a single thermometer in the whole hospital. I came to the conclusion that it was an immoral institution and required radical change. The best thing, I felt, was to let out the patients and close the hospital. Since that was impossible, I did what I could. I asked the attendants and nurses not to sleep in the wards; I had two cupboards of instruments put up. Yes, more needs to be done, but we do what we can.

NURSE

Dr. Ragin, I am ready for your instructions.

DR. RAGIN

Instructions? Well, I – well, you know best, nurse.

NURSE

*(Sighs; then, to the audience)* If only Dr. Ragin could bring himself to be decisive. But he seems absolutely unable to give orders, to insist. When Dr. Ragin wants a cup of tea, he never says, “Bring me a cup of tea.” Instead, he says:

DR. RAGIN

*(coughing hesitatingly)* How about tea?

NURSE

Whenever a patient complains to the doctor about Nikita’s brutality, he only says:

DR. RAGIN

Very well, very well, I will go into it later.

ACTOR FOUR

At first, Dr. Ragin saw patients every day, performed operations, worked daily from morning until dinnertime. But, over the years, he began to change.

DR. RAGIN

The work is so monotonous and, frankly, so useless. Today one sees thirty patients, tomorrow thirty-five, the next day forty, and so on. To be of any help to forty patients between morning and dinner is not physically possible. There is no room for them in the hospital, at any rate. Why hinder people dying if death is the normal and legitimate end of life? What is gained if some shopkeeper or clerk lives an extra five or ten years? And why alleviate suffering? They say that suffering leads man to perfection, and who am I to argue with God’s grand design?

ACTOR FOUR

So, as time passed, Dr. Ragin relaxed his efforts. He ceased performing operations, for the sight of blood upset him. When he had to open the mouth of a child in order to look at its throat, and the child cried and tried to defend itself with its little hands, the noise in the Doctor’s ears made his head go round and brought tears to his eyes. It was easier simply to motion to a nurse to take the child away.



DR. RAGIN

*(to his servant)* Perhaps I will visit the patients in the hospital today, Daryusha.

DARYUSHA

Your dinner will be ready when you return, Andrey Yefemitch.

DR. RAGIN

On the other hand, perhaps not. I know exactly what I'll see: gaunt-looking patients in dressing gowns, dead bodies, vessels full of filth, children crying. This must be torture to feverish and consumptive patients, I know, but what can be done? And the incoherence of the patients is upsetting. *(Sighs)* No, I shall read a book instead – a work on history and philosophy. Bring me a decanter of vodka and a pickle. *(He sits in a chair, reading a book)*

DARYUSHA

Mihail Averyanitch is here to see you.

DR. RAGIN

Ah, someone to whom I can speak of philosophy and the higher things. He may not be a deep thinker himself – he may even be a bit of a vulgarian – but at least he is a good listener. Send him in at once.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

*(as if entering Ragin's house; he holds a cigar in his hand)* Here I am. Good evening, my dear fellow. You aren't getting sick of me, are you?

DR. RAGIN

On the contrary, I am always glad to see you. Daryusha, do you think . . . that is, would you mind . . . I'm sure Mihail Averyanitch would like a glass of beer. And, one for me as well, if you don't object. *(Daryusha turns her back, as if leaving the room. Ragin speaks to Mihaeil Averyanitch, not looking him in the face)* What a pity, what a great pity it is that there are no people in our town who are capable of carrying on an intelligent and interesting conversation, or care to do so. It is an immense privation for us. Even the educated class do not rise above vulgarity.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Perfectly true. I agree.

DR. RAGIN

Everything in this world is insignificant and uninteresting except the higher spiritual manifestations of the human mind. Intellect is the only possible source of enjoyment. We see and hear no trace of intellect about us, so we are deprived of enjoyment.  
(*Daryusha returns, hands Dr. Ragin two glasses of beer. She stays to listen*)

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

We mustn't expect intelligence of this generation. It was different, of course, in the past. Can you recall how intelligent the educated class in Russia used to be, and what lofty ideas it had of honor and friendship? And what adventures we had, what skirmishes, what comrades, what women!

DARYUSHA

(*sighing*) Queen of heaven, Holy Mother.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

And how we drank! And how we ate! And what political creatures we were.

DR. RAGIN

I often dream of intellectual people and conversations with them. My father gave me an excellent education, but under the influence of the ideas of the sixties made me become a doctor. I believe if I had not obeyed him then, by now I should have been in the very center of the intellectual movement. Most likely I should have become a professor at some university, for I am certain that the intellect is the source of an enjoyment nothing can replace.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Perfectly true. But you do not believe in the immortality of the soul?

DR. RAGIN

No, honored Mihail Averyanitch, I do not believe it, and have no grounds for believing it.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

I must own I doubt it too. And yet I have a feeling as though I will never die. Oh, I think to myself, "Old fogey, it is time you were dead." But there is a little voice in my soul that says, "Don't believe it. You won't die."

DARYUSHA

*(to the audience)* And the hours would pass, the two old men speaking nonsense to one another. At last, after nine o'clock, Mihail Averyanitch would put on his fur coat in the entry.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

What a wilderness fate has carried us to, really. What's most vexatious of all is to have to die here in this barren outpost of civilization. *(turns and "leaves")*

DR. RAGIN

*(returning to his chair and drinking his beer)* Oh, why is man not immortal? What is the good of sight, speech, self-consciousness, genius, if it is all destined to depart into the soil, and in the end to grow cold together with the earth's crust, and then for millions of years to fly with the earth round the sun with no meaning and no object? Only the coward who has more fear of death than dignity can comfort himself with the fact that his body will in time live again in the grass, in the stones. To find one's immortality in the transmutation of substances is as strange as to prophesy a brilliant future for the case after a precious violin has been broken and become useless. *(He leans back and closes his eyes)*

DARYUSHA

Doctor, do you intend to visit the hospital tonight?

DR. RAGIN

No, Daryusha. People are undoubtedly suffering in sickness, moaning over too tight a bandage, in need of medical help. Nikita is undoubtedly knocking the patients about in Ward number six. But what can I do? What can any one man accomplish in this wasteland? If this were a more cosmopolitan city, if I had better equipment and more help, I would take advantage of the great advances in medicine at once. Just think, Daryusha. In recent years a radical cure for syphilis has been discovered. Of abdominal operations only one percent are fatal. And the theory of heredity, hypnotism, the discoveries of Pasteur and Koch, psychiatry with its modern classification of mental disease, methods of diagnosis, and treatment – they have revolutionized medical science.

DARYUSHA

Then, surely . . .

DR. RAGIN

No. Not here. In this little town, one hundred and fifty miles from the railway, the mayor and all the town council are half-illiterate tradesmen. And what, after all, is the point? Ill health and mortality will never change. It's all nonsense and vanity. *(Daryusha turns away, angrily: Ragin continue, speaking to himself)* I confess that I am not honest, I do not perform the work I have been hired to perform, but then, I of myself am nothing. I am only part of an inevitable social evil. The local officials are pernicious and receive their salary for doing nothing. And so, for my dishonesty it not I who am to blame, but the times. . . . If I had been born two hundred years later I should have been different. . . . *(he falls asleep. The lights dim out)*

*(Lights up to reveal Moiseika, hobbling toward Dr. Ragin, shivering with cold)*

MOISEIKA

Give me a kopeck, I beg of you.

DR. RAGIN

Of course, of course. You know I can never refuse anyone anything. *(He hands him a kopeck)* Why, Moiseika, you are shivering terribly. And you have no cap, no warm coat – and not even boots! Something must be done about this. Come with me.

*(They walk into Ward number six. Nikita is stuffing food into his mouth)*

Good day, Nikita. This Jew should be provided with boots or something. He will catch cold, or worse.

NIKITA

Certainly, your honor. I'll inform the superintendent.

DR. RAGIN

I suppose that will have to do. Tell me, how have the other patients been getting along?

NIKITA

See for yourself, your honor.

GROMOV

*(Lying on the floor. He jumps up, trembling with anger)* The doctor has come! At last! Gentlemen, I congratulate you. The doctor is honoring us with a visit. Cursed reptile! Kill the reptile! No, killing's too good. Drown him in the cesspool.

DR. RAGIN

What? What are you talking about? Why are you so angry?

GROMOV

Why? Why? Quack! Murderer! Thief!

DR. RAGIN

Calm yourself. I assure you I have never stolen anything. And as to the rest, you greatly exaggerate. I see you are angry with me. Calm yourself, I beg you, and tell me coolly why you are angry.

GROMOV

What are you keeping me here for?

DR. RAGIN

Because you are ill.

GROMOV

Yes, I am ill. But dozens, hundreds of madmen are walking about in freedom because your ignorance is incapable of distinguishing them from the sane. Why am I and these poor wretches to be shut up in this filth and degradation? You, the superintendent, the nurses and Nikita are immeasurably inferior to every one of us morally. Why then are we shut up and you not? Where's the logic of it?

DR. RAGIN

Logic doesn't come into it, it all depends on chance. If anyone is shut up he has to stay, and if anyone is not shut up he can walk about, that's all. There is neither morality nor logic in my being a doctor and your being a mental patient, there is nothing but idle chance.

GROMOV

That twaddle I don't understand. Let me out.

DR. RAGIN

I cannot.

GROMOV

But why, why?

DR. RAGIN

Because it is not in my power. What use will it be to you if I let you out? The townspeople or the police will detain you and bring you back.

GROMOV

*(Defeated, he lies back down)* Yes, yes, that's true. But what am I to do? What?

DR. RAGIN

*(Sits in a chair next to Gromov)* You ask me what to do. The very best thing in your position would be to run away. But, unhappily, that is useless. There is only one thing for you: to resign yourself to the thought that your presence here is inevitable. So long as prisons and madhouses exist someone must be shut up in them. If not you, I. If not I, some other person. Wait until, in the distant future, prisons and madhouses no longer exist. Perhaps such a time will come sooner or later.

GROMOV

You treat this as a cruel joke. Such people as you have nothing to do with the future, but you may be sure, sir, that better days will come. *(Feverishly)* The dawn of a new life is at hand. Truth and justice will triumph and – our turn will come! I shall not live to see it. I shall perish, but some person's great grandsons will see it. *(He rises, stretches his hands toward the window)* From behind these bars I bless you! Hurrah for truth and justice. I rejoice!

DR. RAGIN

I see no particular reason to rejoice. The reality of things, you know, will not change. The laws of nature will remain the same. People will suffer pain, grow old, and die just as they do now. Even if you were free to leave Ward number six, in the end you will be nailed up in a coffin and thrown into a hole.

GROMOV

And immortality?

DR. RAGIN

Oh, come now.

GROMOV

You don't believe in it, but I do. Somebody in Dostoyevsky or Voltaire said that if there had not been a God men would have invented him. And I firmly believe that if there is no immortality the great intellect of man will sooner or later invent it.

DR. RAGIN

Well, well, it's a good thing you have faith. With such a belief one may live happily, even shut up within walls. You are a thoughtful man. In any surroundings you can find tranquility in yourself. Diogenes lived in a tub, yet he was happier than all the kings of the earth.

GROMOV

Your Diogenes was a blockhead. Why do you talk to me about Diogenes? I love life! I love it passionately! I have persecution mania, I know that to be true; I suffer from a continual agonizing terror. But I have moments when I am overwhelmed by the beauty of life. I want dreadfully to live, dreadfully! I long so passionately for life, for interests. Come, tell me, what news is there? What is happening?

DR. RAGIN

Well, in this appallingly dull town, there is no one to say a word to, no one to listen to. *(Suddenly, Gromov clutches his head and sits on the floor with his back to the Doctor)* What's the matter?

GROMOV

You will not hear another word from me. Leave me alone.

DR. RAGIN

Suit yourself. But . . . I may tell you that I find you a highly agreeable young man. You are capable of reasoning. In all the years I have been living here I do believe you are the first person I have met with whom one can talk. *(As he begins walking out)* You might clean up here, Nikita. There's a dreadful stench.

NIKITA

Certainly, your honor.

DR. RAGIN

*(to the audience)* The next evening Dr. Andrey Yefimitch Ragin returned to Ward number six to continue his conversation with Ivan Dimitrich Gromov. *(To Gromov)* Good day, my friend. You are not asleep, are you?

GROMOV

In the first place, I am not your friend. And in the second place, your efforts are useless. You will not get one word out of me. You can go and spy and probe somewhere else. It's no use your doing it here. I knew yesterday what you had come for.

DR. RAGIN

A strange fancy. So you suppose me to be a spy?

GROMOV

Yes, a spy! Or else you've come to test me, somehow. It's all the same.

DR. RAGIN

Oh, really. What a strange fellow you are. But let us suppose you are right. Let us suppose that I am treacherously trying to trap you into saying something so as to betray you to the police. You would be arrested and then tried. But would you be any worse off in prison than you are here? If you are banished to a settlement or even sent to penal servitude, would it be worse than being shut up in this ward? I imagine it would be much the same. What, then, are you afraid of? *(Gromov sits down, his anger spent. After a moment, Dr. Ragin continues)* I came out for a walk after dinner, and here I have come, as you see. It is spring.

GROMOV

What month is it? March?

DR. RAGIN

Yes, the end of March.

GROMOV

Is it very muddy?

DR. RAGIN

No, not very. There are already paths in the garden.



GROMOV

It would be very nice now to drive in an open carriage somewhere into the country, then to come home to a warm, snug study, and (*a flash of anger*) to have a decent doctor to cure one's headache. It's so long since I have lived like a human being. It's disgusting here! Insufferably disgusting!

DR. RAGIN

Then do not dwell upon conditions that agitate you. One must strive for the comprehension of life, and in that is true happiness.

GROMOV

"Comprehension of life!" Excuse me, but I don't understand you. I only know that God has created me of warm blood and nerves. To pain I respond with tears and outcries, to baseness with indignation, to filth with loathing. To my mind, that is what is called life. How is you don't know that? A doctor, and not to know such things. To despise suffering as you do, to be always contented, or to harden yourself to suffering to such a point that you lose all sensibility to it – You must excuse me, I am not a sage or a philosopher, and I don't understand anything about it. I am not capable of reasoning.

DR. RAGIN

On the contrary, your reasoning is excellent.

GROMOV

Then let me tell you one thing. A doctrine which advocates indifference to the comforts of life, and a contempt for suffering and death, is despicable. (*Suddenly, he loses the thread of his thoughts and rubs his forehead*) I meant to say something important, but I have lost it. Here in this ward I forget everything. But on what grounds do you preach to me? Are *you* a sage? A philosopher? How do you consider yourself competent to judge of "comprehension of life"? Have you ever suffered? Have you any idea of suffering? Allow me to ask you: were you ever thrashed in your childhood?

DR. RAGIN

No, my parents had an aversion to corporal punishment.

GROMOV

My father used to flog me cruelly. But let us talk of you. No one has laid a finger on you all your life. You grew up under your father's wing and studied at his expense, then fell at once into a comfortable job. For more than twenty years you have lived rent free with heating, lighting, and service all provided, and had the right to work how you pleased and

as much as you pleased. But you are naturally a flabby, lazy man, so you have tried to arrange your life so that nothing should disturb you. You almost never make an appearance here at the hospital. Instead, while your patients are suffering, you sit in peace and warmth, save money, read, amuse yourself with reflections and all sorts of nonsense, and drink.

DR. RAGIN

*(Indignantly)* I beg your pardon. I never drink.

GROMOV

Your red nose gives you away! You have seen nothing of life, you know absolutely nothing of it. You are vain, fatuous, are contemptuous of those who suffer. You see a peasant beating his wife, for instance. Why interfere? Let him beat her, you say, they will both die sooner or later anyway. A peasant woman comes with a headache, and you say, "Well, what of it? There is no living in this world without pain and illness. Go away, woman, do not hinder me from thinking and from drinking vodka." A young man asks advice, what he is to do, how he is to live. Anyone else would think before answering, but you have got the answer ready: strive for "comprehension" or for true happiness. And what is that fantastic true happiness? There's no answer, of course. We are kept here behind barred windows, tortured, left to rot. But that is all very reasonable, because, to you, there is no difference between this ward and a warm, snug study. A convenient philosophy. You can do nothing, and your conscience is clear. You believe you are wise.

DR. RAGIN

That's original. I am agreeably struck by your inclination for drawing generalizations. I must confess that talking to you gives me great pleasure. Now, however, I must return to my "warm, snug study," as you put it. Still, I shall return, Ivan Dimitrich. We shall speak again.

ACTOR TWO

Soon it was all over the hospital that the doctor had taken to visiting Ward number six. And no one, not Nikita, not the nurses, could conceive of why he went there, why he stayed there for hours together, what he was talking about.

*(Yevgeny Fyodoritch Hobotov knocks at the door of the doctor's house, carrying a doctor's bag. Daryusha answers the door)*

HOBOTOV

Permit me to introduce myself. Dr. Yevgeny Fyodoritch Hobotov. I have been hired by the local council to assist Dr. Ragin with his work.

DARYUSHA

The doctor is not at home. This is the fourth time he has been late for dinner this week. And I never know when to have his beer ready. This has never happened before. You may find him at the hospital; he has taken to looking in on the mental patients. (*She shuts the imaginary door. Hobotov crosses to Ward No. 6, where Dr. Ragin and Gromov are engaged in conversation*)

GROMOV

We shall never agree, and you will not succeed in converting me to your faith. You are utterly ignorant of reality and you have never known suffering, but have only like a leech fed beside the sufferings of others, while I have been in continual suffering since the day of my birth. For that reason, I tell you frankly, I consider myself superior to you. You have nothing to teach me.

DR. RAGIN

I have absolutely no ambition to convert you to my way of thinking. But that is not what matters, my friend. What matters is not that you have suffered, what matters is that you and I are capable of thinking and reasoning, and that is a common bond between us. If you knew, my friend, how sick I am of the universal senselessness, ineptitude, stupidity, and how delighted I am to have found you, an intelligent man, with whom to spend my time.

HOBOTOV

(*To Actor Two*) You cannot imagine what I have just heard. Dr. Ragin in conversation with a mental patient. I fancy that the time he spent in Ward number six has affected him so deeply that he has become as crazy as a bedbug.

ACTOR TWO

Lord have mercy upon us sinners! I must own, Yevgeny Fyodoritch, I have been expecting it for a long time.

DR. RAGIN

(*To the audience*) After this, Dr. Andrey Yefimitch Ragin began to notice everyone looking at him strangely. The attendants, the nurses, even the patients, began whispering together about his odd behavior. The superintendent's little daughter, Masha, ran away from him when he went up with a smile to stroke her on the head. (*to Hobotov*) Dr. Hobotov, I do not understand why, but everyone seems to be regarding me strangely.

HOBOTOV

Perhaps, Dr. Ragin, it would be wise if you gave up vodka and beer. And, if I might suggest, you might take bromide three times a day. Also, I have been asked to tell you that you are to attend a meeting on Friday with the Mayor, the military commander of the district, and myself.

MAYOR

*(to Dr. Ragin)* There's something that concerns you. The hospital is clearly deteriorating. It wants doing up.

DR. RAGIN

May I remind you that I told you ten years ago that the hospital is a luxury for the town beyond its means. The town spends too much money on unnecessary buildings and superfluous staff.

THE MILITARY COMMANDER

You have quite forgotten us, doctor. But of course you are a hermit. You don't play cards and don't like women. You should avail yourself of the opportunity to be in our company. We could provide you with some amusement.

MAYOR

As Mayor, it pains me to say it, but, aside from the people in this room, there is hardly a decent person living in the town.

HOBOTOV

And no music.

MILITARY COMMANDER

No theatre.

MAYOR

And only two gentlemen attended the last dance. All the rest said they were too busy playing cards.

DR. RAGIN

Yes, but what a pity it would be if the townspeople wasted their vital energy, hearts and minds on dancing *or* playing cards. They should spend their time in interesting

conversation and in reading. The mind alone is interesting and worthy of attention; all else is low and petty.

*(A momentary, awkward silence)*

HOBOTOV

Andrey Yefimitch, what day of the month is it?

DR. RAGIN

The twenty-fourth. Why do you ask?

HOBOTOV

And the day of the week?

DR. RAGIN

Um. Let me see. Friday, I believe.

HOBOTOV

How many days are there in a year?

DR. RAGIN

Three hundred and sixty five, of course.

MAYOR

How much money do you have in the bank?

DR. RAGIN

About a thousand rubles.

HOBOTOV

And is it true that you consider Gromov, the patient in Ward No. 6, to be a remarkable individual?

DR. RAGIN

Yes. No doubt he is mentally deranged, but he is an interesting young man. But, I – I don't understand the purpose of this meeting. Can it be that you are inquiring into my mental condition?

MAYOR

*(rising, along with other members of the committee)* No further questions, thank you very much. *(they exit)*

DR. RAGIN

My God. *(he shudders)* I am deeply insulted and feel myself burning with anger. *(he rises and goes to his house)*

DARYUSHA

Here is a glass of beer, Doctor. And Mihail Averyanitch is here to see you.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

My dear fellow, my dear friend, show me that you believe in my genuine affection and look on me as your friend. I love you for your culture and your nobility of soul. Listen to me, my dear fellow. The others conceal the truth from you, but I blurt out the plain truth like a soldier. You are not well. Excuse me, dear fellow, but it is the truth. Everyone about you has been noticing it for a long time. The Mayor of our town has just told me that it is essential for you to rest and distract your mind for the sake of your health. Perfectly true! Excellent! In a day or two I am taking a holiday and am going away for a sniff of a different atmosphere. Show that you are a friend to me, and let us go together.

DR. RAGIN

I feel perfectly well. I can't go away. I can't simply leave my books, Daryusha, my beer. I need routine in my life.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

My friend, allow me to say that an absence from the town of two or three months is precisely what you need. I cannot tell you specifically why this is so, but suffice it to say that the officials of the town agree with me – most emphatically. They believe that you need a rest.

DR. RAGIN

Why? Do they suspect that I am a madman?

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

I cannot answer that question directly, my dear friend, but, I beg of you, please take my advice.

DR. RAGIN

And where, precisely, do you intend to go?

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

To Moscow, to Petersburg, to Warsaw. I spent the five happiest years of my life in Warsaw. What a marvelous town. Let us go, my dear fellow. And, by the way, I think it would be best if you were to resign as director of the hospital.

DR. RAGIN

*(to the audience)* Within a week, we were on our way, driving one hundred and fifty miles to the railway station. When we were finally on the train, Mihail Averyanitch talked incessantly.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Have I told you recently about my campaign in the Caucasus? It was many years ago, but I believe you would be interested in my recollection . . .

DR. RAGIN

*(Mihail Averyanitch continues to speak in pantomime. To the audience)* Then he told me about his adventures in Poland, opening his eyes so wide in wonder that I could not help but imagine that he might be lying. Moreover, as he talked he breathed in my face and laughed into my ear. This bothered me, I must confess, and prevented me from thinking or concentrating my mind.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

*(to another passenger, in an agitated manner)* You know, the fare the railway charges is a regular swindle! A very different thing than riding on a good horse. One could ride on a horse seventy miles a day and feel fresh and well after it. But not in this stuffy railway car. *(to Dr. Ragin)* Bad harvests, I have come to believe, are due to the draining of the Pinsk marshes. The way these things are done is perfectly dreadful! But life, as a philosopher once said, is a path strewn with thorns. Now there is a philosophy for you. *(he laughs loudly)*

DR. RAGIN

*(to the audience)* Which of us is the madman? I, who try not to disturb my fellow passengers in any way, or this egotist who thinks that he is cleverer and more interesting than anyone here, and so will leave no one in peace?

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Come, dear fellow, we have arrived in Moscow. Where is my coat? The one with the epaulettes and red braid? I want everyone to know that I have served honorably in the army. *(speaking to a departing passenger)* You – stop! I demand that you salute me.

DR. RAGIN

*(to the audience)* It seemed that my companion had flung away all that was good and kept only what was bad of the characteristics of a country gentleman.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

*(seated at a table, holding a cigar in his hand, shouting at a waiter)* Waiter. Come here at once and give me a match to light my cigar.

WAITER

But there are matches on the table.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Insolence! *(stands)* Andrey Yefimitch, let us leave this place. Accompany me, I beg you, to the church where the Iversky Madonna can be found. *(they move into the church. Mihail Averyanitch drops to his knees)* Forgive me, my old friend, but I cannot stop the tears from flowing. Even though one does not believe it makes one somehow easier when one prays a little. Kiss the ikon, my dear fellow.

DR. RAGIN

But it would be a meaningless gesture. I am not a believer, as you know.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Kiss the ikon, I said! *(Dr. Ragin does so as Mihail Averyanitch offers up a silent prayer, tears in his eyes)* Let us go now to the Kremlin. *(they walk a few steps)* Now to the Rumyantsev museum. *(they walk a few steps)* Ah. Look at the magnificent view across



the river. *(they stop for a moment, then walk on)* I suggest we dine at Tyestov's. *(the two of them take seats in the restaurant)*

WAITRESS

Your orders, gentlemen?

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

*(leering)* We shall see what you give us to eat today, my angel.

DR. RAGIN

*(to the audience)* I walked about, looked at things, ate and drank, but was oppressed with feelings of annoyance with Mihail Averyanitch. *(to Mihail Averyanitch)* I think, perhaps, I will spend today on my own.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

*(alarmed)* No, my dear fellow, not a bit of it. You are not to move a step away from me. It is my duty.

DR. RAGIN

Your duty?

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

I mean my pleasure. If we run out of things to look at I will entertain you with conversation.

DR. RAGIN

Forgive me, but I am ill. I want to stay in the hotel today.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Ah. In that case, I wish to stay in as well. I really need some rest, you know.

DR. RAGIN

*(lying down)* At last. I shall try to get some sleep.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Sooner or later, France will certainly thrash Germany. And, on another subject, I find that there are a great many scoundrels here in Moscow. Moreover, it is impossible to judge a horse's quality by its outward appearance.

DR. RAGIN

Please, I beg of you. I am developing a buzzing in my ears and palpitations of the heart. Could you simply stop talking for a time? (*Mihail Averyanitch abruptly stops, but immediately becomes impatient*)

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Ach, I grow weary of sitting in this stuffy hotel room. I shall go for a walk. (*he leaves*)

DR. RAGIN

I should not be perturbed. I know that he has brought me out of friendship and generosity. But nothing could be worse than this friendly supervision. I suppose he is good-natured and generous and a lively fellow, but he is a bore. An insufferable bore. It is of no consequence, though. I shall go home, and everything will go on as before.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

(*returning to the room*) I have decided that we should press on to Petersburg. The lively atmosphere there will cure your illness in a moment.

DR. RAGIN

My dear man, what should I go there for? You go alone and let me get home! I entreat you!

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

On no account. (*helps Dr. Ragin to his feet*) Come along, my dear fellow, we shall leave Moscow immediately.

DR. RAGIN

(*to the audience*) But in Petersburg I stayed in the hotel room for whole days together, lying on the sofa and only getting up to drink beer. I did the same in Warsaw, while Mihail Averyanitch went about the town from morning to night, looking for his old acquaintances. Several times he did not return home at night. But one morning . . .

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

*(in a violently excited condition, walking up and down the room)* Pardon my red face and my tousled hair, but I have been through a terrible night. Honor before everything! Yes, honor before everything! Accursed be the moment when the idea first entered my head to visit this Babylon! My dear friend, you may despise me, but I have played and lost. Lend me five hundred rubles.

DR. RAGIN

Five hundred? A great sum, but of course, I shall be glad to lend it to you. *(he takes out the money)*

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

My honor is saved. Let us go, my friend. I do not care to remain another hour in this accursed town. Scoundrels! Austrian spies!

DR. RAGIN

*(to the audience)* By the time we returned home it was November, and deep snow was lying in the streets. Rather than go to my house, I headed at once to the hospital.

HOBOTOV

Ah, doctor, I have not seen you for a very long time.

DR. RAGIN

I have been abroad, Dr. Hobotov, but I am now ready to resume my duties.

HOBOTOV

Uh – Doctor Ragin. This is awkward, but I must tell you: I have been appointed as director of the hospital. My cook and I have already moved into the lodge you occupied. I must ask you to remove your belongings as soon as possible.

DR. RAGIN

But – on whose authority has this step been taken?

HOBOTOV

The mayor, the town council, the military commander. Everything was done properly, I assure you.

DR. RAGIN

Why – why, then, I must look for lodgings immediately. (*Hobotov walks off. Mihail Averyanitch approaches Ragin*)

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

(*holding his cigar*) My friend, excuse an indiscreet question: what means have you at your disposal?

DR. RAGIN

(*counting out his money*) Eighty-six rubles.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

No, no, I mean, what have you to live on?

DR. RAGIN

I tell you, eighty-six rubles. I have nothing else.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

I am astonished. I thought that you had accumulated a fortune – of at least twenty thousand. (*he breaks into tears and embraces Dr. Ragin*)

DR. RAGIN

(*to the audience*) My circumstances allowed me only to take two rooms in a little house – one room for my servant, Daryusha, and another for me.

DARYUSHA'S DRUNKEN LOVER

Where have you hidden the vodka, you cursed woman? I want a drink and I want it now! (*he hits Daryusha, who falls to the floor*)

DR. RAGIN

This is intolerable, intolerable. Get out of here at once! (*he leaves*) Daryusha, can you get up?

DARYUSHA

(*weeping*) I think he has broken my jaw.

DR. RAGIN

Promise me, Daryusha, that you will never allow that lout into our rooms again.

DARYUSHA

But I love him. I cannot live without him.

DR. RAGIN

You can and you will. Now let me look at your jaw.

DARYUSHA

*(to the audience)* Dr. Ragin spent every day reading his old books and magazines. He had no money to buy new ones. So that he would not spend his time in idleness, he made a detailed catalogue of the books and gummed little labels on their backs.

DR. RAGIN

*(to the audience)* This mechanical, tedious work somehow seems more interesting than reading. It also lulls my thoughts to sleep in some unaccountable way, and the time seems to pass quickly. I think of the old days: my father and mother, the university. I think about the religions of the world.

DARYUSHA

*(to the audience)* Twice, Dr. Ragin went to the hospital to speak to Ivan Dimitrich Gromov. But on both occasions the meetings did not go well.

GROMOV

Leave me in peace, why don't you. I am sick of empty chatter. I intend to ask Dr. Hobotov to place me in solitary confinement. Surely he cannot refuse me that one request.

DR. RAGIN

I am sorry to hear you speak like this, my young friend. I will take my leave of you. Good night. I must speak to the Mayor.

GROMOV

Go to hell! *(Ragin leaves)*

MAYOR

Sit down, Andrey Yefimitch, I beg you. (*Ragin sits*) What can I do for you?

DR. RAGIN

I confess, sir, to being mortified that, after more than twenty years of service to the hospital I have been given neither a pension nor any form of financial assistance.

MAYOR

It pains me to say it, but pensions are reserved for those who perform honest work.

DR. RAGIN

It is true that I have not been entirely honest. I admit to having neglected my duties. But all who are in the civil service are entitled to a pension whether they have been honest or not. Justice lies precisely in the bestowal of grades, orders and pensions, not for moral qualities. Why should I be an exception? I have no money at all. I am ashamed to pass by the liquor store, for I owe thirty-two rubles for beer already. My servant, Daryusha, is selling my books behind my back, and telling lies to the landlady, saying that I am soon to receive a large sum of money.

MAYOR

I cannot help you. But what of the thousand rubles you had only a few months ago?

DR. RAGIN

Gone, all gone. I gave five hundred to Mihail Averyanitch, and the rest I spent on our trip to Moscow, Petersburg, and Warsaw.

MAYOR

You should have spent more wisely. And I must tell you that you are not looking well. I will ask Dr. Hobotov to see you – at no charge, of course.

DR. RAGIN

Very well. Please tell him that I will be in my room. (*he rises and leaves, returning to his room*)

HOBOTOV

Ah, my dear colleague. The mayor tells me you are not well. I have brought you a bottle of bromide and some rhubarb pills. Three pills every day, without fail. (*he leaves*)

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

*(entering Ragin's room)* Andrey Yefimitch, you are looking well, thank God. I am sure you are on the high road to recovery.

DR. RAGIN

Mihail Averyanitch, I hesitate to ask, but would it be possible for you to pay back some portion of the five hundred rubles I lent to you in Warsaw?

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Nothing would give me greater pleasure, my friend, but, you see, I happen to be in severe financial straits at the moment. This is only temporary, of course, and I shall repay you to the last kopeck, as I am sure you understand. Meanwhile, let me tell you of the time I served in the Imperial army. I particularly want to tell you about -- *(he continues to speak in pantomime)*

DR. RAGIN

*(to the audience)* His anecdotes and descriptions are unbearable. My soul is oppressed with disgust, and after every visit from Mihail Averyanitch I feel as though this disgust has risen higher and is mounting into my throat.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

I must leave you now, old friend, but don't despair. I shall return tomorrow with more tales from the past. And as to the Warsaw debt, I will repay it in a day or two, my dear fellow, without fail. *(as he leaves the room, to the audience)* His condition is hopeless.

HOBOTOV

Ah, Mihail Averyanitch. Have you seen my colleague Dr. Ragin today?

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Yesterday, Dr. Hobotov. He was not looking well.

HOBOTOV

I am on my way now to look in on him. Come with me please. *(At Ragin's room)*  
You have a much better color today than you had yesterday, my dear man. Yes, you look jolly. Upon my soul, you do. It's high time you were well, colleague.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

And you shall recover! You will live another hundred years. To be sure! And so will I.  
*(laughs heartily)*

HOBOTOV

Not another hundred, but another twenty. *(to Ragin)* It's all right, all right, colleague.  
Don't lose heart.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

*(slapping Dr. Ragin on the knee)* We'll show him, won't we? A hundred years at least.  
And next summer, please God, we will be off to the Caucasus, and ride all over it on  
horseback – trot, trot, trot. And when are back from the Caucasus, I shouldn't wonder if  
we will find you a bride and we'll all dance at the wedding. *(laughs heartily)*

DR. RAGIN

*(rising and walking away)* That's vulgar. Don't you understand that you are talking  
vulgar nonsense? Leave me alone! Go away, both of you! Foolish people! I don't want  
either your friendship or your medicines, stupid man.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

*(to Hobotov)* What can he be saying? Is he delirious?

HOBOTOV

It certainly seems so. Let us take our leave before he becomes violent. *(they leave)*

DR. RAGIN

Go to the devil! To the devil! *(he sits)* Foolish people! *(he buries his head in his hands)*  
Ach, what have I done? Nothing like this has ever happened to me before. Where was  
my intelligence, my tact? I must apologize to Mihail Averyanitch in the morning. *(he  
gets up and goes to Mihail Averyanitch)* I am so sorry, old friend. Please forgive me.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

We won't think again of what has happened. Let bygones be bygones. We will not  
remember the past. I took no offense. Illness is no joke, I understand. Your attack  
frightened the doctor and me, and we had a long talk about you afterwards. My dear  
friend, you can't go on like this. Excuse me speaking openly, but you live in the most  
unfavorable surroundings, no one to look after you, no money for proper treatment. My



dear friend, the doctor and I implore you with all our hearts, listen to our advice: go into the hospital! There you will have wholesome food and attendance and treatment.

DR. RAGIN

*(deeply touched)* My friend, I am perfectly well. My illness is only that in twenty years I have only found one intelligent man in the whole town: the patient Gromov, and he is mad. I am not ill at all, it is simply that I have gotten into an enchanted circle I cannot get out of.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

Go into the hospital, my dear fellow. Give me your word that you will obey Dr. Hobotov in everything.

DR. RAGIN

Certainly I give you my word, but, I repeat, honored friend, I have only gotten into an enchanted circle. Now, it seems, everything leads to the same thing: to my ruin. I am going to my ruin.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

My dear fellow, you will recover.

DR. RAGIN

What's the use of saying that? When you begin to be told that you are mad, you may be sure you have gotten into an enchanted circle from which you cannot escape. Should I try to escape it will only make things worse.

MIHAIL AVERYANITCH

*(sees Hobotov approaching)* Ah! Doctor Hobotov.

HOBOTOV *(accompanied by the Nurse)*

Here you both are. I have come, Dr. Ragin, to ask whether you would join me in a consultation. Eh?

DR. RAGIN

Certainly. I am honored that you should ask. Where is your patient?

HOBOTOV

In the hospital. I have long wanted to show him to you. A very interesting case. (*Hobotov and Ragin walk to the hospital and into Ward No. 6. Gromov and Moiseika are sleeping on the floor.*) One of the patients here has a lung complication. You wait here. I'll be back directly. I am going for a stethoscope. Excuse me, Nurse. (*He leaves*)

NURSE

(*to Dr. Ragin*) I have a dressing gown for you and a pair of slippers. Change your things, at once. There is your bed.

DR. RAGIN

I understand. I am to remain here, eh? (*agitated*) That is to be my fate?

NURSE

Nikita, teach this man a lesson! (*Nikita hits him. Ragin falls on to his bed. Nikita and the Nurse leave and Ragin begins taking off his clothes and putting on the hospital clothes*)

DR. RAGIN

It's no matter. It does not matter whether it's a dress coat or a uniform or this dressing gown. (*He sits on the bed quietly as a long moment goes by*) I have been here less than an hour, and I am already miserably sick of it. Is it really possible to live here a day, a week, or even years? No, it is scarcely possible.

MOISEIKA

May I have a kopeck, your honor?

DR. RAGIN

(*looks in his pocket*) Ah. I thought for a moment I still had on my own clothes. I have nothing, Moiseika, I'm sorry.

MOISEIKA

But are you one of us now? I thought you were the doctor.

DR. RAGIN

It is only a misunderstanding. It will be cleared up. There is a misunderstanding.

GROMOV

*(waking up)* What's this? Ah, so they have put you in here, too, old fellow. Very glad to see you. You sucked the blood of others, and now they will suck yours. Excellent!

DR. RAGIN

It's a misunderstanding. It's some misunderstanding.

GROMOV

Cursed life! This life will not end in compensation for our sufferings, it will not end with apotheosis as it would in an opera, but with death. Peasants will come and drag one's dead body by the arms and legs to the cellar. Well, it does not matter. We shall have our good time in the other world. I shall come here as a ghost from the other world and frighten these reptiles. I'll turn their hair grey.

MOISEIKA

*(to Dr. Ragin)* Give me one little kopeck.

DR. RAGIN

*(quietly, to himself)* So this is real life. *(he rushes to the "bars" that enclose him in Ward No. 6, grabs them and shouts)* Let me out! Let me out! This is all a mistake. *(goes to Gromov)* I have lost heart, my dear fellow. I have lost heart.

GROMOV

*(ironically)* You should be philosophical.

DR. RAGIN

Philosophical? I have no philosophy to deal with this. All my adult life I have spent in a filthy, stupid, wretched little town, among bottles, leeches, mustard plasters! Oh, my God.

GROMOV

You are talking nonsense. If you don't like being a doctor, you should have gone in for being a statesman.

DR. RAGIN

I could not, I could not do anything. I have lost heart. I am weak. I can't put up with this. *(he rushes to the bars. Nikita jumps up and pushes Ragin to the floor)*

NIKITA

Where do you think you're going?

DR. RAGIN

I want only to go out for a minute to walk about the yard.

NIKITA

You can't. It's forbidden. You made that rule yourself.

DR. RAGIN

But what difference will it make to anyone if I do go out?

NIKITA

Sit down or I'll knock you down.

GROMOV

*(jumping to his feet)* This is beyond everything! What right have you not to let him out?  
*(to Ragin)* How dare they keep us here? It is clearly laid down in the law that no one can be deprived of freedom without trial! It's an outrage! It's tyranny!

DR. RAGIN

Of course it's tyranny. *(to Nikita)* I must go out, I want to. You have no right! Open, I tell you.

GROMOV

Do you hear, you dull-witted brute? Torturer!

DR. RAGIN

Open the door. I insist!

NIKITA

All right. You've asked for it. *(He hits Dr. Ragin fiercely in the stomach. Ragin crumples to the floor)*

DR. RAGIN

They will never let us out. They will leave us to rot here. Oh, Lord, where is justice? Open the door, Nikita, I am choking! *(he tries to rise, but Nikita hits Ragin savagely on the back)*

ACTOR TWO

*(after a moment)* Then all was still. The faint moonlight came through the window and a shadow like a net lay on the floor. Dr. Andrey Yefimitich Ragin lay and held his breath. He was expecting with horror to be struck again. He felt as though someone had taken a sickle, thrust it into him, and turned it round several times in his breast and bowels. Then all at once through the chaos in his brain there flashed the terrible, unbearable thought that these people, who seemed now like black shadows in the moonlight, had to endure such pain day by day for years because of the edicts he had issued. His conscience made him turn cold from the crown of his head to his heels.

ACTOR THREE

Next day his head ached, there was a droning in his ears and a feeling of utter weakness all over. Now, nothing mattered to him. He ate nothing, he drank nothing, he lay motionless and silent.

DR. RAGIN

*(to himself, in a delirium)* It is all the same to me. It's all the same to me.

HOBOTOV

Nikita, it is Dr. Hobotov. Let me in. *(Nikita opens the gate and steps aside. To Dr. Ragin)* I have brought you bottle of bromide. *(Ragin stands)* Mihail Averyanitch wishes me to tell you that he will soon bring a pound of tea and some fruit pastilles. And Daryusha will visit you tomorrow morning. Well, I must be off. This ward really should be fumigated. *(he leaves)*

*(Ragin begins to shiver uncontrollably)*

GROMOV

What is it?

DR. RAGIN

I feel ill. Something revolting has penetrated my body, even to my finger tips. Ach! It is flooding my eyes and ears. There is a greenness before my eyes. *(he collapses)*

## ACTOR TWO

Dr. Ragin suffered an apoplectic stroke. As he lay dying, he remembered that Gromov, Mihail Averyanitch and millions of people believed in immortality. What if it really existed? But he did not want immortality, and he thought of it only for one instant.

## ACTOR FOUR

A herd of deer, extraordinarily beautiful and graceful, seemed to run by him. Then a peasant woman stretched out her hand to him with a registered letter.

## ACTOR THREE

Then it all vanished, and Dr. Andrey Yefimitch Ragin sank into oblivion for ever.

## ACTOR FIVE

The next day Andrey Yefimitch was buried. (*Mihail Averyanitch and Daryusha raise umbrellas as they stand at the "grave"*) Mihail Averyanitch and Daryusha were the only people to attend his funeral.

*(Lights fade slowly)*