

ALEXANDER OSTROVSKY

WITHOUT A DOWRY

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■ RUSSIAN CLASSIC LITERATURE ■

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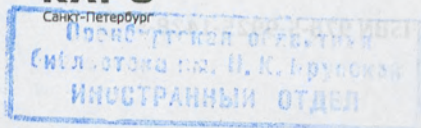
WITHOUT A DOWRY

Translated by Norman Henley



КАРО

Санкт-Петербург



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WITHOUT A DOWRY

A Drama in Four Acts
(1879)

CAST OF CHARACTERS*

Kharíta Ignátyevna Ogudálov (Mme Ogudalov), a middle-aged widow. Dressed elegantly but daringly, not in keeping with her age.

Larísa Dmítriyevna Ogudálov, mme Ogudalov's unmarried daughter. Dressed richly but modestly.

Móky Parméných Knúrov, one of the entrepreneurs of the time. Elderly, rich.

Vasíly Danílych Vozhevátov (Vásya), a very young man. One of the representatives of a rich trading firm. Dressed in Western European style.

Yúly Kapitóných Karandyshóv (pronounced Karandyshóff), young official of modest means.

Sergéy Sergéyich Parátov, an imposing gentleman shipowner. Over thirty.

Robinson.

Gavrílo, club bartender and owner of a coffee house on the boulevard.

Iván, waiter in the coffee house.

Ilyá, a gypsy.

Manservant of Mme Ogudalov.

Yefrosínya Potápovna, aunt of Karandyshov.

Gypsy men and women.

*Meanings which probably or possibly would be suggested to Ostrovsky's contemporaries: Ogudalov—swindler; Knurov—boar; Vozhevatov—pleasant, polite; Karandyshev—short stature; Paratov—strong and fast (in connection with dogs and horses).

Robinson would certainly suggest Robinson Crusoe, especially in the play's context. Near the end of Act One Paratov says that Robinson's real name is Arkády Shchastlívtsev and that he is an actor from the provinces. Ostrovsky's contemporaries would have recognized him immediately as a character in Ostrovsky's earlier play *The Forest* (1871), where he was a vagabond ex-actor who had played comic roles. Shchastlivtsev suggests "happy," and Arkady is derived from the Greek place name Arcadia, traditionally symbolizing rustic bliss. Neputóvy (Robinson's friend, who is merely mentioned) suggests "dissolute". Neputovy was also the name of a character in an earlier Ostrovsky play, namely *At the Jolly Spot* (1865).

Especially significant is the fact that Mme Ogudalov's first name Kharita as well as her father's first name Ignat (as is evident from her patronymic Ignatyevna) were often names of gypsies.

ACT ONE

The action takes place in the present [1878], in the large town of Bryakhimov¹ on the Volga.

A boulevard on the high bank of the Volga, with an open area in front of a coffee house. On the right of the actors is an entrance to the coffee house. On their left are trees. In the background is a low iron railing, beyond it a sweeping view of the Volga with its forests, villages, etc. In front of the coffee house are tables and chairs: one table on the right, close to the coffee house, another on the left.

Gavrilo is standing in the doorway of the coffee house. Ivan is tidying up the furniture.

Ivan. Not a soul on the boulevard.

Gavrilo. It's always like that on holidays. We keep to the old ways here. After late mass everybody puts away meat pie and cabbage soup, then they treat their guests with hospitality, and after that it's seven hours of rest.

Ivan. What do you mean, seven! More like three or four. Anyway, it's a good custom.

Gavrilo. And then about vesper time they wake up and drink tea till they're bored stiff.

Ivan. Bored stiff! What's there to be bored about?

¹ Name of a town on the Volga which existed in the seventeenth century.

Gavrilo. You just sit down by the samovar and drink boiling hot tea a couple of hours, then you'll find out. A man gets all covered over with sweat, and he starts to get bored... So that's when he says good-bye to his tea and drags himself out on the boulevard for some fresh air and a walk. This is the time when the high-class folk take their walk; look, over there you can see Moky Parmenych Knurov, stretching his legs.

Ivan. Every morning he paces back and forth on the boulevard, as if he'd made a vow. Why does he go to so much trouble?

Gavrilo. For the exercise.

Ivan. But what's the exercise for?

Gavrilo. To work up an appetite. He needs the appetite for dinner. You should see the dinners he has! Do you think he could eat dinners like that without exercise?

Ivan. Why is he so quiet all the time?

Gavrilo. "Quiet"! You're really something... How can you expect him to go on carrying conversations when he has all those millions! Who's he supposed to talk with? There's only two or three people in town he can talk with, so he keeps quiet. And that's why he doesn't stay here very long, wouldn't stay at all if he didn't have business. For talking he goes to Moscow, to St. Petersburg, and abroad too; he has more elbow room there.

Ivan. There comes Vasily Danilych from over the hill.
He's rich too, but he talks a lot.

Gavrilo. Vasily Danilych is still young, still on the timid side, but when he gets older he'll act like God too.

Knurov enters from the left and, not paying any attention to the bows of Gavrilov and Ivan, sits down at a table, takes out a French newspaper from his pocket, and reads it. Vozhevatov enters from the right.

Vozhevatov (*bowing respectfully*). Moky Parmenych,
I have the honor of greeting you!

Knurov. Ah, Vasily Danilych! (*He holds out a hand.*)
Where did you come from?

Vozhevatov. From the dock. (*He sits down.*)
Gavrilo comes closer.

Knurov. Were you meeting somebody?

Vozhevatov. I was supposed to but didn't. I had a telegram yesterday from Sergey Sergeyich Paratov.
I'm buying a steamboat from him.

Gavrilo. It's not the *Swallow*, Vasily Danilych?

Vozhevatov. Yes, it's the *Swallow*. What about it?

Gavrilo. It goes fast, it's a strong boat.

Vozhevatov. But Sergey Sergeyich let me down, he didn't come.

Gavrilo. You were expecting him to come on the *Flier*, but maybe he'll come on his own boat, the *Swallow*.

Ivan. Vasily Danilych, there's another boat coming down the river.

Vozhevatov. A lot of boats sail the Volga.

Ivan. That's Sergey Sergeyich coming.

Vozhevatov. You think so?

Ivan. It looks like him, sir... The paddle boxes on the *Swallow* stand out a lot.

Vozhevatov. That means you'd be making out paddle boxes at five miles.

Ivan. I can make them out at seven miles, sir... And it's coming fast, it's clear the owner's with it.

Vozhevatov. And how far is it?

Ivan. It's come out from behind the island. It's making a lot of headway, a lot.

Gavrilo. You say it's making a lot of headway?

Ivan. A lot. An awful lot! It runs faster than the *Flier*, they've timed it.

Gavrilo. It's him, sir.

Vozhevatov (*to Ivan*). You tell us when they start coming aside.

Ivan. Yes, sir... I suppose they'll shoot from the cannon.

Gavrilo. They're sure to.

Vozhevatov. What cannon?

Gavrilo. He has his own barges anchored in the middle of the Volga.

Vozhevatov. I know.

Gavrilo. One barge has a cannon. Whenever somebody meets Sergey Sergeyich or sees him off they always fire a salute. (*Looking beyond the coffee house.*) There's one of Chirkov's carriages going for him now, sir. They must have let Chirkov know he'd be coming, for Chirkov himself is on the box. That's him they're going for, sir.

Vozhevatov. But how do you know it's for him?

Gavrilo. They've got four pacers lined up, it's really for him. Who else would Chirkov make up four horses for? It's even scary to look at them... they're like lions... all four with snaffle bits! And the harness, the harness! They're going for him, sir.

Ivan. And there's a gypsy sitting on the box with Chirkov, he has a fancy Cossack coat on, and his belt's so tight he could snap in two.

Gavrilo. They're going after him, sir. It couldn't be anyone else with four horses like those. It's him, sir.

Knurov. Paratov lives in style.

Vozhevatov. Whatever else, he has plenty of style.

Knurov. Are you buying the boat cheap?

Vozhevatov. Cheap, Moky Parmenych.

Knurov. Yes, of course; otherwise, what's the advantage of buying? Why is he selling it?

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