

BORIS GODUNOV

To the memory, precious to Russians, of Nikolai
Mikhailovich Karamzin, this work, inspired by his
genius, with reverence and gratitude is dedicated.

*Alexander Pushkin**

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

I HAVE not wished to encumber the text of the play with a copious historical annotation, but a brief review of the background and setting will be useful. Somewhat more detailed explanations of specific references are given in the notes at the back of the book.

Pushkin's drama takes place during a period, at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, that Russians call 'The Time of Troubles', an era of dramatic and violent events. The seeds for these events had been sown in earlier years, in the time of the longest-reigning monarch in Russian history, Ivan IV ('the Dread' or 'the Terrible'). Infamous for his cruelty and debauchery, and the strange piety of his later years, Ivan had fathered three sons with claims to the throne. The eldest, also named Ivan, was his father's favourite and the heir apparent. The tsar, however, in a fit of rage one day, had struck and killed his eldest son with a poker; and so the next in line, Fyodor, a retiring and weak-minded figure, succeeded to the throne upon his father's death. During Fyodor's reign (1584–98), while Boris Godunov was the real power in the realm, Ivan's last living son, the boy prince, Dmitry, died under mysterious circumstances in the town of Uglich.

Although modern scholarship tends to exonerate Boris of any role in the prince's death (the boy actually may have died from a wound he inflicted on himself during an epileptic seizure), Pushkin follows his source, the historian Karamzin, in assuming Boris's guilt. And certainly there were plenty of accusatory rumours rife at the time. In any case, with the young tsarevich no longer alive, the death of Fyodor in 1598 brought to an end Russia's ancient dynasty and ushered in a kind of interregnum and a fifteen-year-long period of rebellion, war, and lawlessness.

The action of the play opens on the death of Fyodor in 1598 and goes on to cover the entire period of the Godunov dynasty. With no living heir to the throne, Boris Godunov, a lesser noble of Tatar descent who had been a close adviser to Ivan IV and the virtual ruler under the weak and reclusive Fyodor, was chosen as tsar by a

national council of boyars, church officials, and merchants. As the brother-in-law of the deceased Fyodor and thus a member of the royal family, he had a legitimate claim to the throne, but he had to deal with the resentment and intrigues of envious rivals among the higher nobility, who considered him an upstart. An able, well-meaning, and ambitious man, he had the misfortune to reign (1598–1605) during a period of growing unrest. His abolition of the peasants' right to move from one estate to another (which effectively established serfdom) was unpopular with both peasants and land-owners. Crop failures in the years 1601–3 resulted in widespread famine and led to peasant uprisings. Boris's suppression of his opponents and his brutal campaign against the south-western borderlands made his reign increasingly tyrannical and unpopular. All of this, coupled with the suspicions of his complicity in the young prince's death, gave rise to various plots and challenges to his authority, to which he responded with increasingly harsh and repressive measures. When an impostor appeared, claiming to be Ivan's youngest son Dmitry, miraculously escaped from the attempt on his life in Uglich, many dissaffected elements rallied to his cause, particularly disgruntled nobles and the Cossacks of the south-west. In 1604, with some Polish support and a ragtag army of Cossack insurgents and Russian exiles, this 'False Dmitry' crossed the border from Poland and moved against the tsar. After some initial success he was repulsed and forced to retreat; but with the struggle still unresolved, Boris, in April 1605, suddenly died, and his 16-year-old son Feodor succeeded him on the throne. Many of the Muscovite nobles and commanders, however, went over to the Pretender, who in June of 1605, with his Russian supporters and his Polish allies, entered Moscow. The young Feodor and his mother were murdered, and Dmitry was proclaimed tsar. Here, with the cataclysmic close of the short-lived Godunov dynasty, is where Pushkin's play ends, although it was hardly the final chapter in the 'Time of Troubles'.

The Aftermath

Within a year of his accession, Dmitry was assassinated and Prince Shuisky was named tsar. War with Poland ensued; and at the same

time, two more False Dimitrys appeared to claim the crown. Marina Mniszech, the ambitious Polish woman who had married the first 'False Dmitry', continued her effort to gain a crown by attaching herself to the second 'False Dmitry' and subsequently to a Cossack rebel chieftain. Various boyar families struggled for supremacy, and rebellious Cossacks as well as Sweden and Poland sought to take advantage of the general anarchy. Shuisky was soon deposed by a boyar faction that then elected Władysław, the son of Poland's King Sigismund, to the throne. Sigismund, however, desired the Russian crown for himself and war with Poland continued amid widespread lawlessness. Finally, a popular uprising drove an occupying Polish army from the Kremlin and, at last, in 1613, the 'Time of Troubles' came to an end with the election as tsar of Mikhail Romanov, who established the dynasty that was to survive for some 300 years, until the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY*

BORÍS GODUNÓV, a Russian boyar; Regent and later Tsar of Russia
IRÉNA, the Tsarina, widow of Tsar Fyódor (after his death, a nun),
sister of Borís

MARIA GODUNÓVA, Borís's wife; on his accession, Tsarina

FEÓDOR, Borís's son

KSENIA, Borís's daughter

KSENIA's nurse

Prince VASÍLY SHÚISKY, boyar of the royal dynasty of Rúrik

Prince VOROTÝNSKY, boyar of the royal dynasty of Rúrik

SHCHELKÁLOV, secretary of the state council

BASMÁNOV, general in Borís's army

Prince MOSÁLSKY, a boyar

AFANÁSY PÚSHKIN, a noble

GAVRÍLA PÚSHKIN, his nephew

SEMYÓN GODUNÓV, relative of Borís, head of his secret police

PATRIARCH, Head of the Russian Orthodox Church

ABBOT of the Chudov Monastery

FATHER PÍMEN, a monk

GRIGÓRY OTRÉPEV, a monk; later the Pretender Dimítry

MISAÍL and VARLÁM, itinerant monks

KHRUSHCHÓV, a Russian adherent of the Pretender in Poland

KARÉLA, a Cossack chieftain

NIKÓLKA, a simpleton

ROZHNÓV, a Russian nobleman captured by the Pretender

HOSTESS of an inn on the Polish border

CZERNIKÓWSKI, a Polish priest

Prince KÚRBSKY, Russian boyar exiled in Poland, son of a great adversary of Iván IV

SOBÁNSKI, a Polish nobleman

MNÍSZECH, Polish military governor

MARINA, his daughter

WISNIOWIÉCKI, Polish nobleman, friend of Mníszech
MARGERÉT and ROSEN, foreign officers in the tsar's service
A POET
Other boyars, servants, soldiers, guests, urchins, voices in the crowd

SCENE 1

*The Palace of the Kremlin
(20 February 1598)*

The Princes SHÚISKY and VOROTÝNSKY

VOROTÝNSKY

We've been assigned to keep the city calm,
But now, it seems, there's no one here to watch:
The Patriarch, and with him all the people,
Have hied them to the convent, seeking news.
How think you this uneasy time will end? 5

SHÚISKY

How will it end? It isn't hard to guess:
The crowd will shed a few more tears... and wail,
Borís will summon up a few more frowns,
Just like a drunk before a cup of wine,
And, in the end, he'll graciously consent, 10
With humbly lowered eyes, to take the crown;
And then he'll be our master as before,
And reign again.

VOROTÝNSKY But now a month has passed
Since, locked inside the convent with his sister,
He seems to have abandoned worldly cares; 15
And neither Patriarch nor Duma boyars*
Have managed to persuade him from his course;
He pays no heed to tearful exhortations,
To pleas and prayers, to all of Moscow's wails;
He even spurns the Grand Assembly's voice. 20
His sister, too, has been implored in vain
To bless his quick accession to the throne;
The widowed nun-Tsarina* is as staunch
As he himself and equally unbending.
Borís, it seems, has steeled her to his purpose; 25
Perhaps indeed the ruler has grown weary

And shuns the heavy burdens of the state,
Reluctant to ascend the vacant throne?
What say you then?

SHÚISKY I say it was a waste,
If this be so, to shed Dimítry's blood,
For then the prince might just as well have lived.

30

VOROTÝNSKY

How terrible a crime! But is it true,
Borís gave orders for the prince's death?

SHÚISKY

Who else? Who sought to bribe young Chepchugóv?
Who sent the Bityagóvskys and Kachálov
Upon a secret mission? I was charged
To look into the matter at the scene
And there I found fresh traces of the crime;
All Úglich* had been witness to the deed,
Its citizens all testified the same.
When I returned, I could have—with a word—
Exposed the hidden villain to the world.

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VOROTÝNSKY

Why didn't you destroy him then and there?

SHÚISKY

I must confess that he bewildered me
With unexpected shamelessness and calm;
He looked me in the eye and showed no guilt,
Then questioned me on every small detail—
And, face to face with him, I gave him back
The nonsense that he whispered me himself.

45

VOROTÝNSKY

How shameful, prince.

SHÚISKY But what was I to do?
Reveal it all to Fyódor?* But the Tsar
Saw matters through the eyes of Godunóv,

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And listened with the ears of Godunóv.
 And what if I'd convinced him of the facts?
 Borís would just have turned him round again,
 And off to some dank dungeon I'd have gone,
 Where, soon enough—as happened with my uncle—
 They would have had me strangled in the dark.
 I mean no boast, but should it come to that,
 I have no fear of torture or of death;
 I'm not a coward... but I'm not a fool
 To put my neck inside a noose for nothing.

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VOROTÝNSKY

How terrible a crime! But one would think
 The murderer must suffer from remorse;
 The guiltless infant's blood must be the cause
 That keeps him from ascending to the throne.

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SHÚISKY

He'll not be stopped by that; he's not so timid!
 And how he honours us and all of Russia!
 Just yesterday a slave and wretched Tatar,
 Malyúta's* son-in-law, that bloody butcher,
 And he himself a butcher in his soul.
 He'll grasp the crown and cape of Monomákh*...

70

VOROTÝNSKY

He's not of noble blood, as you and I.

SHÚISKY

Just so.

VOROTÝNSKY

The names of Shúisky, Vorotýnsky,
 Are those of princes nobly born and bred.

75

SHÚISKY

We're royal by our birth... of Rúrik's* blood.

VOROTÝNSKY

But tell me, prince: do we not have the right
 To claim the throne as Fyódor's heirs?

SHÚISKY Far more
Than Godunóv.

VOROTÝNSKY So all would say!

SHÚISKY Well then,
Should Godunóv not cease his crafty ways, 80
We might incite the people to rebel,
To quit Borís and throw their lot with us;
They've princes of their own from which to choose,
So let them pick a Tsar among our ranks.

VOROTÝNSKY We heirs of Rúrik's line are many still, 85
But vying with Borís will be a struggle:
No longer do the people see in us
An ancient line of warrior potentates.
We long ago were shorn of our domains,
And long have served as vassals of the Tsars; 90
While he, through fear and love, and by his glory,
Has managed to bewitch the people's hearts.

SHÚISKY (*glancing out of the window*)
He's had the nerve, that's all; while we... but look:
The crowd has scattered and returns this way.
So let's be off, to see if it's decided. 95

SCENE 4

The Kremlin Palace

BORÍS, *the PATRIARCH, and BOYARS*

BORÍS

My holy Patriarch and boyars all,
Before you I have bared my very soul:
You've seen how I assumed the highest power
With humble heart, and with a sense of dread.
How heavy is the burden I must bear! 5
I follow great Iván upon the throne,
I follow our lamented Angel-Tsar!...
O Righteous One! O my almighty Father!
Look down from Heaven on Your servants' tears,
And grant the one to whom You gave Your love, 10
The one whom You have raised so high on earth,
Your sacred benediction on his reign.
May I in truth and glory rule my people,
May I be just and bountiful, like You...
I look to you, my boyars, for assistance; 15
Serve unto me as you have served Tsar Fyódor,
Those days when I as well did share your labours,
Before the people's will had made me Tsar.

BOYARS

We will not contravene our solemn oath.

BORÍS

Come with me now—to kneel before the tombs
Where Russia's great deceasèd rulers rest.* 20
And then... we'll call our people to a feast;
And all shall be received as welcome guests,
From mighty lords to blind and wretched beggars.

(*He leaves; the BOYARS follow.*)

SHÚISKY (*softly, pointing at FEÓDOR*)

But, majesty...

TSAR Our son and heir may stay,
To hear Prince Shúisky's information. Speak! 65

SHÚISKY

From Poland, Tsar, comes troubling news...

TSAR You mean,
The word received by Púshkin out of Cracow.

SHÚISKY

He knows of everything!... My mighty lord,
I thought this secret still unknown to you. 70

TSAR

No matter, prince: I need all sorts of tales,
To weigh them in my mind; for otherwise—
We'll never learn the truth.

SHÚISKY I only know,
That some impostor has appeared in Cracow;
The king and Polish lords support his cause. 75

TSAR

What say they there? Who is this brash pretender?

SHÚISKY

I've no idea.

TSAR What danger does he pose?

SHÚISKY

Your power, majesty, is great indeed:
Your graciousness, your bounty and your zeal
Have won the hearts of all your loyal subjects. 80
But you yourself must know: the mindless rabble
Is fickle, mutinous and superstitious,
An easy prey to vain and idle hopes,
A slave to every momentary impulse;
Indifferent and deaf-eared to actual truth, 85

It feeds on fables and on fabrications,
 And, in its soul, delights in shameless daring.
 So if this unknown vagabond decides
 To cross the Polish border into Russia,
 The foolish mob will flock to him in droves,
 Attracted by Dimítry's risen name.

90

TSAR

Dimítry! Can it be? That boy again!
 Dimítry! Aah! Tsarévich... leave us, son.

SHÚISKY

His face is flushed: the storm has come!...

FEÓDOR

Will you permit me...

But sire,

TSAR

No, my son, withdraw.

95

(FEÓDOR *leaves.*)

Dimítry!...

SHÚISKY So... he didn't know the rest.

TSAR

Attend me, prince: take measures even now
 To seal our borders from the Polish state;
 Have barricades put up, that not a soul
 May pass, that not a raven or a hare
 Dare cross from Poland into Russia. Go!

100

SHÚISKY

At once.

TSAR But wait. This news from Cracow, prince—
 Far-fetched, don't you agree? Who's ever heard
 Of dead men rising from their sepulchres
 To question Tsars, legitimate and rightful Tsars,
 Anointed and elected by the people,
 And crowned in Moscow by the Patriarch?
 It's too absurd. But why are you not laughing?

105

SHÚISKY

I, sire...

TSAR But hear me out, Vasíly Shúisky:
 When I first learned the youngster had been...
 That this young boy had somehow lost his life,
 You were dispatched to make inquiries; Now
 I charge you by the Cross and in God's name,
 And by your conscience, that you tell the truth:
 You recognized, for sure, the murdered boy?
 There'd been no substitution? Answer me.

110

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SHÚISKY

I swear to you...

TSAR No, Shúisky, do not swear,
 But tell me plain: Was it the prince?

SHÚISKY It was.

TSAR

Attend me well. I offer you forgiveness.
 To punish you for any former lies
 Would serve no good. But if you lie today,
 If you dissemble now, on my son's head,
 I swear, that you shall suffer such a death,
 So foul a death, that dread Iván himself
 Will shudder in his grave to see such horror.

120

125

SHÚISKY

It isn't death I fear, but your disfavour;
 I wouldn't dare dissemble in your eyes;
 Could I have been so blindly self-deceived,
 As not to recognize Dimitry's person?
 Three days I viewed his corpse in the Cathedral,
 In company each time with all of Úglich.
 Around him lay another thirteen bodies,
 The victims torn to pieces by the mob;
 And these already had begun to rot,
 Whereas the prince's boyish face was bright,

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As fresh and calm as if he merely slept;
 And though the gaping wound had not congealed,
 His features hadn't altered in the least.
 No, majesty, there is no doubt: Dimítry
 Sleeps in his grave.

TSAR (*calmly*) Enough now, you may go. 140

(SHÚISKÝ *leaves.*)

What anguish in my soul! Let me draw breath...
 I felt my very blood, all of an instant,
 Rush to my face... and sluggishly recede...
 So this is why, for all these thirteen years,
 I've kept on dreaming of the murdered child! 145
 Yes... yes, that's it! I understand it now.
 Who is he, though, my frightful adversary?
 Who comes at me? An empty name, a shadow?
 And will a shadow wrest from me the purple?
 A name—deprive my children of their birthright? 150
 I've turned a fool! What's made me tremble so?
 Blow at this apparition—and it's gone.
 The thing's resolved: I'll show no hint of fear,
 But nothing must be taken lightly now...
 Oh, heavy lies the crown of Monomákh!

155

SCENE 12

*Governor MNÍSZECH's castle in Sambór
A suite of lighted rooms. Music*

MNÍSZECH

He speaks with no one else but my Marina;
There's nothing on his mind except Marina.
And now, it seems, a wedding's in the offing;
But tell me, friend, could you have even dreamed,
My daughter would be Muscovy's Tsarina? 5

WISNIOWIĘCKI

A miracle... And, Mníszech, did you think,
My former page would mount the Russian throne?

MNÍSZECH

She's something, my Marina, is she not?
I gave the merest hint, and said: beware,
Don't let Dimítry get away. And look:
It's all wrapped up. He's caught within her web. 10

(The musicians play a polonaise. The PRETENDER and MARINA step forward as leading pair.)

MARINA (*softly, to Dimítry*)

Tomorrow evening, at eleven then,
Beside the fountain in the linden walk.

(They part. Another couple steps forward.)

A CAVALIER

I wonder what Dimítry sees in her?

A LADY

Why, she's a beauty!

CAVALIER Yes, a marble nymph; 15
Her lips are lifeless, and she never smiles...

(*Another couple comes forward.*)

LADY

He isn't handsome, but his looks are pleasing;
And one can see, he comes of royal blood.

(*A new couple*)

LADY

But when will the campaign begin?

CAVALIER

Whenever
Dimítry wills. We're ready even now,
But he and Lady Mníszech keep us captive.

20

LADY

A pleasant bondage.

CAVALIER

Yes, of course... if you...

(*They separate. The hall empties.*)

MNÍSZECH

Ah... we old men no longer dance these days;
The music's thunder stirs our hearts no more;
Nor do we press or kiss a charming hand...
Ah, yes, I still recall those jesting days!
But now it's changed, old times have gone for good:
The young today are not so bold, I think;
And beauty, too, seems far less lively now—
Confess it, friend: it's all gone stale and weary.
We'll leave them to it, brother. You and I
Will fetch a flask of wine, good Magyar wine,
An ancient vintage, overgrown with moss;
And in a quiet corner, just we two
Will drain the fragrant draught, as thick as oil;
And in our cups, we'll ponder many things.
Let's have a drink.

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WISNIOWIÉCKI

You're right, old friend, let's go.

SCENE 13

Night, a garden and fountain

PRETENDER (*entering*)

And here's the fountain, where she said we'd meet.
I seem to have been born a fearless man;
I've looked at death a dozen times or more
And never did I quake at death's approach.
At times I've faced imprisonment for life,
I've been pursued—my spirits never faltered,
And through my boldness I've eluded capture.
What is it now that so constricts my breath?
And why these constant tremors in my heart?
Is this the rush of mad, intense desire? 5
Oh, no—it's fear. All day in agitation
I've waited for this meeting with Marina.
I've thought of all the things that I could say,
How best I might seduce her haughty mind,
How I'd embrace her with the name 'Tsarina'. 15
But now it's time—and I remember nothing,
No word of all the speeches I've rehearsed,
For love unhinges my imagination...
What's that... a sudden gleam... a rustle... hush.
But, no... it was the moon's deceptive light,
The flutter of a vagrant breeze. 20

MARINA (*entering*)

Tsarévich!

PRETENDER

She's here!... O God!... My beating heart has stopped.

MARINA

Dimítry, is it you?

PRETENDER

Sweet, magic voice!

(*He approaches her.*)

You're here at last. Or is it all a dream,
 That we're alone, amid this silent night?
 How slowly did the dreary day roll by!
 How slowly did the evening sun go down!
 How long I've waited in the gloom of night!

25

MARINA

Time races by too quick and time is precious.
 I didn't make this secret assignation
 To hear sweet speeches from a lover's lips.
 No tender words are needed. I believe
 You love me, but I'd rather hear more substance.
 You know, Dimítry, that I've now resolved
 To join my fate with yours, to share with you
 The stormy, dark, uncertain days ahead,
 But I must know above all else one thing;
 And I demand, by right, that you unveil
 Your secret hopes and highest aspirations,
 And even your most fearful apprehensions,
 That I might boldly, hand in hand with you,
 Set out in life—not blindly, like a child,
 Not as the servant of my husband's whims,
 A speechless concubine—but as your spouse,
 A worthy helpmate of the Russian Tsar.

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PRETENDER

Let me forget, I plead, for just one hour,
 The cares and troubles of that life to come!
 And you, yourself, Marina, please forget,
 That at your feet is Russia's future Tsar.
 Take me, Marina, as your chosen lover,
 As one whose bliss your glance alone inspires.
 Oh, listen to the pleading of my love,
 And let me tell you all my heart contains.

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MARINA

It's not the time, my Prince. You tarry here,
 While your adherents' ardour cools and fades;

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Each passing day, the hazards and vexations
 Grow yet more hazardous and more vexatious.
 Already doubting rumours are abroad,
 And novelty gives way to novelty,
 While Godunóv takes measures of his own.

60

PRETENDER

Why speak of Godunóv? Has he the power
 To rule your love, my only joy and bliss?
 I now regard his throne and royal might
 With passionless indifference and contempt.
 What matters glory or the Russian crown,
 Or life itself—if I'm denied your love?
 The poorest hut in distant steppes... and you,
 Yes, you alone, would constitute my kingdom;
 Your love...

65

MARINA For shame! Oh, never, Prince, forget
 The high and sacred purpose of your cause:
 Your majesty and rank are far more precious
 Than all the joys and pleasures of this life;
 Beside your destiny, all else must pale.
 I make this solemn offer of my hand
 Not to some rash and love-besotted boy,
 Insanely captivated by my beauty,
 But only to the heir of Moscow's throne,
 The prince miraculously saved by fate!

70

75

PRETENDER

Don't torture me, my beautiful Marina;
 Don't tell me that you choose my majesty,
 And not myself. You cannot know, Marina,
 How painfully your words have stabbed my heart.
 But could it be?... How monstrous is the thought!
 Speak plain: Had not blind destiny assigned me
 The pedigree of Russia's royal house,
 And were I not the son of Tsar Iván,
 The wretched boy forgotten by the world,
 Oh, even so—would you still love me then?

80

85

MARINA

Dimítry you shall be, and no one else;
I could not love another.

PRETENDER

Stop! No more!

90

I have no wish to share with someone dead
The woman that by rights is his alone.
Enough dissembling; let me tell the truth:
Know then, that your Dimítry long ago
Did die... was buried... and will not return.
And would you like to know... who I might be?
I'll tell you then: I'm just a black-robed monk...
When I grew weary of monastic bonds,
Beneath my hood I hatched my daring plan,
Prepared a very wonder for the world—
And so at last I fled my dismal cell
And joined the Cossacks in their savage huts.
I learned to ride, and how to wield a sword.
I then came here and called myself Dimítry,
And easily deceived the witless Poles.
What say you now, my arrogant Marina?
Does my confession bring you satisfaction?
Why don't you speak?

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MARINA

Oh, what a fool I've been!

(Silence)

PRETENDER (*to himself*)

I've gone too far; I should have curbed my tongue.
The happiness I've built with so much labour
I may have now destroyed beyond repair.
What have I done? I'm mad!

110

(aloud)

I see... I see:
You feel ashamed of this unprincely love.
Pronounce me, if you will, your fateful word;

My future and my fortune lie with you.
I wait your verdict.

115

(He falls to his knees.)

MARINA Rise, you poor impostor.

You surely can't imagine that your plea
Will soften this unbending heart of mine,
As if I were a weak and trusting girl?
You're wrong, my friend: I've seen great noble lords,
And many famous knights, fall down before me,
But coldly I rejected their entreaties,
And not, I can assure you, for some monk.

120

PRETENDER (*rising*)

Do not despise a youthful, rash impostor;
He may have hidden virtues after all,
That make him worthy of the Russian throne,
And worthy of your precious hand as well...

125

MARINA

More worthy of the noose, you shameless rogue!

PRETENDER

I'm guilty, yes; with overweening pride
I sought to dupe both God and earthly kings;
I've lied to all the world; but you, Marina,
Have nothing to reproach me with, no cause
To punish me, for I have told you all.
I wouldn't have attempted to deceive you,
You were the only creature I adored,
Before whose eyes I didn't dare dissemble.
My love, my blind and jealous love of you,
This love alone, compelled me to the truth
And made me speak.

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MARINA

What sort of boast is this!

Who asked you, madman, for your grim confession?
If you, a nameless vagrant, could succeed
In fooling so completely two whole nations,

140

You should at least have honoured that success
 And kept your bold deception to yourself—
 A deep, eternal, closely guarded secret.
 And how could I commit myself to you,
 Forget my noble birth and maiden's pride
 To join my fate in confidence with yours?
 When you, like some poor simple-headed fool
 So mindlessly disclose your own disgrace?
 It's love, it's love! that makes him babble so!
 I marvel that in friendship for my father,
 You haven't yet revealed yourself to him;
 Or told the king from sheer excess of joy,
 Or even Wisniowiecki in your zeal
 As his most eagerly devoted servant.

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PRETENDER

I swear to you, that you, and you alone,
 Have drawn this frank confession from my heart.
 I swear to you that... never... nowhere else—
 Not in the drinking frenzy of a feast,
 Not with a friend in private conversation,
 Not under torture or beneath the knife,
 Will I this heavy secret ever tell.

160

MARINA

You swear! And I'm supposed to take your word.
 Oh, yes, I do—but may I ask you, sir,
 Upon what pledge? The name of God, perhaps,
 As fits the Jesuits' adopted son?
 Upon your honour as a noble knight?
 Or maybe on your kingly word alone,
 As royal son. Enlighten me, I pray.

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DIMÍTRY (*proudly*)

The shade of dread Iván adopted me,
 And christened me *Dimítry* from the tomb;
 Two nations has he brought to strife around me,
 And in my name pronounced Borís's doom.

I am his son, Crown Prince... and I am shamed
To stoop before a haughty Polish girl.
So now, goodbye. The bloody game of war,
The vast and heavy duties of my fate,
Will stifle, I can hope, the pangs of love.
And when this shameful passion fades away,
I'll loathe you with a passion just as great!
So now I go—to ruin or the crown,
Whichever Russia readies for my head.
And whether I should die, a knight in battle,
Or, like a villain, on the bloody block,
I'll not have you as partner and companion,
You'll have no share in what my fate portends.
But in the end, perhaps you may regret
The future you so arrogantly spurned.

MARINA

And what if I expose your bold deception
To all the world, before you even start?

PRETENDER

You think I tremble at your idle threat?
What man would heed an unknown Polish girl
Before a Tsar? I tell you, lady, this:
That neither king, nor pope, nor noble lord
Cares in the least if what I say is true.
If I'm the prince or not, it's all the same;
I serve as pretext for dissent and war;
That's all they need. And you, my little rebel,
Should understand: they'll crush you into silence.
Farewell.

MARINA But stay, Tsarévich. Now at last
I hear a man, and not a mewling boy.
This pleases me and brings us in accord.
Your frenzied outburst I can now forget
And look upon Dimítry once again.
But hear me, prince: It's time, it's time; awake!
Delay no more, make haste for Moscow now,

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Unseat Borís and seize your rightful throne.
Then send a nuptial envoy here, to me.
But now—I swear by God—until the day
You mount the dais of the Russian throne,
Till you have extirpated Godunóv,
I'll hear from you no honeyed words of love.

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(*She leaves.*)

PRETENDER

Far easier to battle with Borís,
Or plot at court with cunning Jesuits,
Than with a woman. Damn 'em, they're beyond me.
She twists and turns and slithers all about,
Eludes my grasp, and hisses threats... then stings.
A snake! a snake! No wonder I was trembling.
She almost did me in. But all's resolved:
Tomorrow in the dawn, we move our troops.

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SCENE 17

The square in front of one of Moscow's cathedrals

A crowd of people

A MAN IN THE CROWD Will the Tsar be leaving the cathedral soon?

A SECOND MAN The mass has ended; and now the public prayers are taking place.

FIRST MAN Well, did they put a curse on *what's his name*? 5

SECOND MAN I was standing on the porch and heard the deacon cry out: Gríshka Otrépev—anathema!

FIRST MAN Well, they can curse him if they like, but the Tsarévich has nothing to do with Otrépev.

SECOND MAN Now they're singing a requiem for the dead 10
Tsarévich.

FIRST MAN A requiem for someone who's still alive! They'll pay for this one day, these godless blasphemers.

A THIRD MAN Listen! There's some commotion... is it the 15
Tsar?

FOURTH MAN No, it's the simpleton.

(*A poor fool enters, wearing an iron cap and draped with chains,
surrounded by a band of urchins.*)

THE BOYS Nikólka, Nikólka the Iron-Cap! Boo...

AN OLD WOMAN Leave him alone, you little devils; he's touched by God, he's a holy fool. Pray for me, Nikólka; pray for a sinner. 20

SIMPLETON Gimme a copeck, please... gimme a coin... gimme a coin.

OLD WOMAN Here, old man, here's a copeck for you;
remember me in your prayers.

SIMPLETON (*sitting down on the ground and singing*)

The moon is bright,
The kitty cries,
O simpleton, arise,
And pray to God!

(*The boys surround him again.*)

ONE OF THE BOYS Hello, Nikólka, why don't you take off your cap?

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(*He bangs on Nikólka's iron cap.*)

Oh, how it rings!

SIMPLETON But now I've got a copeck...

BOY You're lying; show it to me.

(*He snatches the copeck and runs off.*)

SIMPLETON (*crying*) They took my copeck; they're mean to Nikólka...

35

THE CROWD The Tsar, the Tsar is coming!

(*The Tsar emerges from the cathedral. A BOYAR, preceding him, distributes alms to the beggars. Other BOYARS follow.*)

SIMPLETON Borís, Borís, the children are mean to Nikólka.

TSAR Give him some alms. What's he wailing about?

SIMPLETON The children are mean to Nikólka. Cut their throats!... the way you did the young Tsarévich.

40

BOYARS Be off, you fool! Seize the simpleton!

TSAR Let him be. Pray for me, poor Nikólka.

(*He leaves.*)

SIMPLETON (*calling after him*) Oh, no! No prayers for the Herod-Tsar... Our Lady won't allow it.

SCENE 22

*Moscow. The Place of Proclamations**

(PÚSHKIN enters, surrounded by a crowd.)

A VOICE FROM THE CROWD

Dimítry's sent a boyar with a message.
Let's hear what the Tsarévich has to say.
This way! Up here!

PÚSHKIN (*from the platform*)

You citizens of Moscow,
I bring you greetings from your own Tsarévich.

(*He bows to them.*)

You know that through the providence of God
Our Prince survived the foul assassin's blade. 5
He came to bring an evil man to justice,
But now Borís lies stricken by the Lord;
All Russia has submitted to Dimítry.
Basmánov, too, with deep and vast repentance,
Has brought the troops to swear him their allegiance. 10
Dimítry comes to you in love and peace;
Would you, to please the house of Godunóv,
Upraise you hand against your lawful Tsar,
The progeny and heir of Monomákh? 15

THE PEOPLE

We wouldn't, no.

PÚSHKIN You citizens of Moscow!
The world knows well the burdens you have borne
Beneath the yoke of that malign usurper:
Dishonour, death, imprisonment, taxation,
Harsh labour, hunger—all of these you've suffered. 20
Dimítry is disposed to show his favour—
To boyars, nobles, men-at-arms, officials;

To merchants, foreign guests—to all good people.
Are you so madly obdurate and proud
That you would flee these kindnesses he offers? 25
But now he comes—and with a mighty force—
To claim his seat on his ancestral throne.
Be feared of God, and anger not the Tsar!
Swear your allegiance to your lawful master;
Be humbled now, and send with no delay 30
An embassy to pay Dimítry homage:
Archbishop, boyars, delegates and scribes
Will bow in their obeisance to the Tsar.

(*He leaves.*)

(*A murmur runs through the crowd.*)

A VOICE FROM THE CROWD

What can we say? The boyar spoke the truth.
Long live Dimítry, Moscow's rightful Tsar. 35

A PEASANT (*on the platform*)

Let's go! The Kremlin palace, brothers, quick!
Come on! We'll put Borís's whelp in chains!

THE PEOPLE

Let's take him! Drown the pup! Long live Dimítry!
And death to all the house of Godunóv!

SCENE 23

The Kremlin. The apartments of Borís

(*A guard on the porch; FEÓDOR at a window.*)

A BEGGAR Alms for the poor... for the love of Christ!

GUARD Get out of here. No one can speak with the prisoners.

FEÓDOR Go along, old man; I'm poorer than you; you're free.

(*KSENNIA, in a veil, also appears at the window.*)

ONE OF THE PEOPLE Brother and sister! Poor children, like
birds in a cage. 5

ANOTHER Don't waste your pity on them—accursèd brood!

FIRST MAN The father was the villain; the young ones aren't to
blame.

ANOTHER The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

KSENNIA My brother, I hear the boyars coming. 10

FEÓDOR I see Golítsyn and Mosálsky. The others I don't
know.

KSENNIA Oh, brother, I'm so full of fear!

(*GOLÍTSYN, MOSÁLSKY, MOLCHÁNOV and SHEREFEDÍNOV
move through the crowd, three of the Tsar's guard behind them.*)

THE CROWD Make way, make way. Here come the boyars.

(*They enter the building.*)

ONE OF THE PEOPLE What have they come for? 15

ANOTHER No doubt to take Feódor Godunov to swear the
oath.

A THIRD You think so?... You hear that noise inside! That
uproar... they're struggling...

THE PEOPLE Hear that? A scream! That's a woman's voice... 20
Let's go in!... The doors are locked... The shrieking stopped.

(*The doors open. MOSÁLSKY steps out on the landing.*)

MOSÁLSKY People! Maria Godunóva and her son Feódor have taken poison. We have seen their dead corpses. (*The people fall mute in horror.*) Why don't you speak? Let's hear your cry: Long live the Tsar, Dimítry Ivánovich! 25

The PEOPLE are silent.