



By Anton Chekhov

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Thinking about the Play

1. What does Chubukov at first suspect that Lomov has come for? Is he sincere when he later says "And I've always loved you, my angel, as if you were my own son"? Find reasons for your answer from the play.

Answer:

At first, Chubukov suspected that Lomov had come to borrow money. He was not sincere when he told Lomov that he had always loved him and that he was like his own son. He had decided that he would not give Lomov any money if he tried borrowing from him. If he truly meant what he had said, then he would not have thought of not giving him money. He said so only because Lomov had come with the proposal to marry his daughter.

2. Chubukov says of Natalya: "... as if she won't consent! She's in love; egad, she's like a lovesick cat..." Would you agree? Find reasons for your answer.

Answer:

Chubukov thought that Lomov was a good marriage prospect for his daughter. He had been waiting for this proposal. When Lomov expressed his doubt regarding Natalya's consent to the proposal, Chubukov immediately told him that she was in love with him. However, this was not true. Natalya did not seem to be in love with Lomov at any point in the play. It seemed like she was more attached to her land, meadows and dogs than to Lomov. In fact, the way they kept getting into arguments about trivial matters suggests that neither Lomov nor Natalya was in love with the other.

3. (i) Find all the words and expressions in the play that the characters use to speak about each other, and the accusations and insults they hurl at each other. (For example, Lomov in the end calls Chubukov an intriguer; but earlier, Chubukov has himself called Lomov a "malicious, double faced intriguer." Again, Lomov begins by describing Natalya as "an excellent housekeeper, not bad-looking, well-educated.")

Answer:

(i) Several words and expressions have been used by the characters to describe each other. Some of them are as follows:

Chubukov: grabber; intriguer; old rat; Jesuit

Natalya: a lovesick cat; an excellent housekeeper; not bad-looking, well-educated

Lomov: a good neighbour; a friend; impudent; pettifogger; a malicious, double-faced intriguer; rascal; blind hen; turnip-ghost; a villain; a scarecrow; monster; the stuffed sausage; the wizen-faced frump; boy; pup; milksop; fool

Thinking about the Language

1. This play has been translated into English from the Russian original. Are there any expressions or ways of speaking that strike you as more Russian than English? For example, would an adult

man be addressed by an older man as my darling or my treasure in an English play?

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

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

(i) You may take it that

(ii) He seems to be coming round

(iii) My foot's gone to sleep

Answer:

1. Expressions not used in contemporary English

1. "my darling", "my beauty", "my precious", "my angel", "my beloved" (here, an older man is addressing an adult man)

2. "...and so on..." (here, it is used after a sentence in order to complete it)

3. "...and all that sort of thing." (not explaining what it is, just leaving it as it is)

4. "...and all that." (again leaving the sentence as it is)

5. "the scarecrow", "the stuffed sausage", "the wizen-faced frump" (In this way, they hurled insults at each other)

6. "And how may you be getting on?" (Here, Lomov is asking Chubukov about his well-being)

Modern English expressions

1. "Madam", "my heart", "honoured Natalya Stepanovna" (used by Lomov for Natalya)

2. "Honoured Stepan Stepanovitch" (used by Lomov for Chubukov)

3. "I beg your pardon..."

4. "My dear fellow" (Chubukov addressing Lomov)

5. "malicious, double-faced intriguer", "fool" (Chubukov insulting Lomov)

3.

(i) You may take it that I am lying, but in fact it will help you in the long run.

(ii) He seems to be coming round after the trauma of his father's death.

(iii) After the three hour long yoga session, my foot's gone to sleep.

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