



Arthur Reel

Adapted from the short story by Anton Chekhov

Norman Maine Publishing

Ward 6  
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“What am I?  
Oh, dear God,  
what am I?”

—Mihail

## Ward 6

**DRAMA.** This adaptation of one of Anton Chekhov's most influential short stories, "Ward Six" (1892) depicts the horrors of a Russian mental ward. An idealistic new doctor accepts a post at a hospital in a small town, where he hopes to dedicate himself to helping mental patients. But after witnessing patients being mercilessly beaten, Dr. Rabin seeks the help of the hospital administrator, but his requests are ignored. Disillusioned, Rabin befriends a patient, Ivan Gromov, but their discussions eventually lead Rabin to see the world anew, blurring the lines between sanity and insanity, reality and illusion.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 90 minutes.

## About the Story

In 1890, Chekhov visited a remote Siberian prison island, Sakhalin. There, he witnessed first hand the horrors of prison life for the 10,000 people incarcerated on the island. Chekhov was profoundly affected by his experiences there, which inspired him to write "Ward Six" and his famous travelogue *The Island: A Journey to Sakhalin*.

# Characters

(7 m, 1 w, extras)

**ANDREY YEFIMITCH RAGIN:** Mid-30s, doctor.

**DARYUSHA:** Young attractive landlady; a widow and mother of three young children.

**YEVGENI:** 30s, drunken Cossack.

**IVAN DMITRITCH GROMOV:** Patient in Ward Six.

**HOBOTOV:** Mid-30 to 40s, hospital administrator.

**NIKITA:** 40, guard at the hospital.

**MIHAIL AVERYANITCH:** 45, postmaster.

**MOISEIKA:** Patient in Ward Six.

**EXTRAS:** As hospital patients.

## Setting

The action of the play takes place in a small town near Moscow, 1892. Dr. Hobotov's office has a desk and two chairs. Andrey's room has a bed, a bookcase filled with books, two chairs, a small table, and a window. Ward Six has several cots or beds.

## Synopsis of Scenes

### Act I

**Scene 1:** Andrey's room at a rooming house.

**Scene 2:** Ward Six.

**Scene 3:** Dr. Hobotov's office, the next day.

**Scene 4:** Andrey's room, one month later.

**Scene 5:** Ward Six, later that night.

### Act II

**Scene 1:** Dr. Hobotov's office, several months later.

**Scene 2:** On a street; Andrey's room.

**Scene 3:** On a foggy street; Andrey's room.

**Scene 4:** Ward Six, later that night.

**Scene 5:** Ward Six, the next morning.

**Scene 6:** Ward Six, several days later.

# Props

Suitcase  
Books  
Beer glasses  
Candy  
Charts

Cane  
Handkerchief  
Large box  
Dressing gown, for Andrey

# Sound Effects

Crash  
Moaning  
Music to create feeling of  
strangeness

Knock  
Bells  
Chimes  
Chorus of voices

## Act I Scene 1

*(AT RISE: A rooming house in a small town near Moscow, 1892. Andrey Yefimich enters, carrying a suitcase, followed by Daryusha, the landlady. Andrey inspects the room.)*

ANDREY: So this is to be my room?

DARYUSHA: Yes. How do you find it?

ANDREY: Pleasant.

DARYUSHA: And the rest of the house?

ANDREY: Comfortable.

DARYUSHA: I keep everything very neat.

ANDREY: I can see that.

DARYUSHA: When Hobotov came by and said the new doctor was arriving, I immediately prepared the best room in the house.

A new doctor is just what we need, I told him. He promptly agreed. "Yes, a new doctor—you'll find him an exceptional human being." That's exactly what he said.

ANDREY: It makes me feel at ease...

DARYUSHA: You may call me Daryusha. I'm a widow, with three children. And I promise you, my children will not interfere with your privacy.

ANDREY: I like children...

*(A loud crash is heard.)*

DARYUSHA: My children are very quiet, in fact they hardly ever cry. *(Another crash.)* They are simply adorable children. They will give you no trouble whatsoever.

YEVGENI: *(Offstage.)* Dar-yushka!

DARYUSHA: Coming, Yevgeni!

YEVGENI: My vodka!

DARYUSHA: Now and then I have a visitor—the children's uncle.

YEVGENI: Where is my vodka!

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DARYUSHA: He makes a bit of a fuss...

ANDREY: (*Embarrassed.*) I am...inclined to understand.

DARYUSHA: You're an understanding man, doctor.

ANDREY: Thank you.

DARYUSHA: You shall be a great comfort to those at the hospital.

ANDREY: I'm looking forward to my work there.

DARYUSHA: There are so many ill ones. Why, they seem possessed of the devil. (*Makes sign of the cross.*)

ANDREY: I'm here to assist them...

DARYUSHA: Sometimes in the night I hear weird cries, as if they were being beaten.

ANDREY: Beaten?

DARYUSHA: Yet I know they are not. It's a fine hospital—they tell me so.

ANDREY: Yes, I've been told that, too.

DARYUSHA: You'll like it there. But those screams...

ANDREY: Sick people often scream.

DARYUSHA: But why?

YEVGENI: (*Offstage.*) Dar-yushka!

DARYUSHA: Coming, Yevgeni.

ANDREY: They have vast imaginations—too vast. And then there are always nightmares, even while awake.

DARYUSHA: Yes, so I've heard. (*Makes sign of the cross.*)

(*Yevgeni enters.*)

YEVGENI: (*To Daryusha.*) Ah, so there you are.

DARYUSHA: This is our new doctor, Andrey Yefimich.

(*Yevgeni clasps Andrey's hand.*)

YEVGENI: And what is your position?

ANDREY: My...position?

YEVGENI: How do you find our town? Estimable, eh?

ANDREY: I've just now arrived...

YEVGENI: Have you strolled through it?

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ANDREY: I haven't been to the hospital, where I am to work.

YEVGENI: Well, you'll find it quite interesting, doctor. Fine oaks. An excellent park. And the public buildings—what sturdy houses. Except for one thing.

ANDREY: Yes, and that?

YEVGENI: The people who work in them. The people who live here.

ANDREY: Well, people are people, wherever you go...

YEVGENI: They call themselves human beings, but they are worth as much as an old galosh.

ANDREY: Well, now...I wouldn't go quite that far. *(Chuckles.)*

YEVGENI: You look a fine sort, doctor. I'm a Cossack. We understand each other. So I'm letting you in on a little advice...as a friend. *(Draws closer.)* They are all pigs.

ANDREY: Pigs?

DARYUSHA: Yevgeni, please...

YEVGENI: The whole kit'n caboodle. Barbarians.

ANDREY: Barbarians?

DARYUSHA: Yevgeni, I beg...

YEVGENI: Gangsters. Look out for them, doctor. Nowhere will you find a bigger pack of charlatans.

ANDREY: Well, surely, I'll...

*(Yevgeni extends his hand to Andrey.)*

YEVGENI: I'll be looking forward to conversations with you. *(They shake hands.)* In the meantime...watch yourself. Take it from a friendly Cossack.

ANDREY: Truly, I'll—

YEVGENI: Just don't put a knife in their hands. They'll slit your throat for a kopeck. Goodbye.

*(He pats Daryusha's behind, smiles at Andrey, and exits. Pause.)*

DARYUSHA: Forgive him, doctor. He's really such a gentle person.

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ANDREY: *(Smiles, embarrassed.)* Yes...I...see...

DARYUSHA: I promise, you will have a peaceful house. No one will annoy you. The children are absolute darlings, and when their uncle comes to visit them, I'll hide the vodka. Believe me, I will. *(Makes sign of the cross.)* And you'll have your evening meal served right here in your room. The only noise you'll have to put up with... Well, that you'll take care of yourself.

ANDREY: *(Smiles, embarrassed.)* Yes...I'll look into it...

ARYUSHA: Now that you have come—

YEVGENI: Dar-yushka!

DARYUSHA: Everything will be all right.

*(She touches the doctor's sleeve, makes the sign of the cross and exits. Andrey begins to unpack slowly as moaning noises are heard from a distance. Lights fade to black.)*

## scene 2

*(AT RISE: At the hospital, Ward Six. Andrey enters. Nikita is guarding two inmates, Ivan Dmitritch and Moiseika. Moiseika is wet and barefoot.)*

ANDREY: Good day, Nikita. Good day.

NIKITA: Good day, doctor.

ANDREY: I see that the Jew has been out again.

NIKITA: He always does that, your honor...

ANDREY: What?

NIKITA: Leaves the hospital...

ANDREY: Goes where?

NIKITA: Wanders about, begs for alms. Harmless.

ANDREY: But he is a patient, isn't he?

NIKITA: Never a filthy word, never strikes...

ANDREY: But look at him. His ankles are red. He's quite wet.

NIKITA: He gets by, honor. Never been ill, never speaks an unkind word.

ANDREY: It's disgusting. Simply disgusting. That Jew should be provided with boots or something.

NIKITA: If you wish, honor, I'll tell the superintendent.

ANDREY: Please do. Ask him in my name. Tell him that I asked.

NIKITA: Anything else, honor?

ANDREY: Not at the moment.

IVAN: *(Loudly.)* The doctor has come!

ANDREY: Yes, it is me, Ivan Dmitritch.

IVAN: At last! At last, gentlemen! I congratulate you all! His honor, the doctor is here!

NIKITA: Shall I strike him, honor?

ANDREY: No, wait. I'll confront him.

IVAN: *(Spits.)* The doctor is honoring us with a visit! How kind!

NIKITA: I'll crack him one, honor.

ANDREY: It's all right. I'll manage...

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IVAN: (*Jumping around.*) Cursed reptile! Hideous snake! Kill him! No, killing's too good!

(*Ivan starts toward Andrey. Nikita hits him. Ivan sinks to his knees.*)

ANDREY: What, for? Why do you wish—?

IVAN: Why do I wish? What for? Thief? Quack? Hangman?

ANDREY: Calm yourself. I assure you I've never stolen anything.

IVAN: You've stolen my life!

ANDREY: I beg, calm yourself. You're very angry.

IVAN: Yes, I'm angry.

ANDREY: Why are you angry? Tell me coolly, what are you angry about?

IVAN: What are you keeping me here for?

ANDREY: Because you are ill.

IVAN: (*Calm.*) Yes, I admit I'm ill. But we both know—we both know, doctor, there are hundreds of madmen walking about—right this minute.

ANDREY: Yes, unfortunately...

IVAN: And all because your ignorance makes you incapable of telling them apart from the sane.

ANDREY: It isn't as simple as that, Ivan Dmitritch...

IVAN: Oh, yes, it's simpler. Why am I and all the rest of these wretches to be shut up here as scapegoats for all the rest? Why are we to take the blame? Tell me that, if you can.

ANDREY: As I've said, it's not as simple—

IVAN: It's simple to me. Why isn't it simple to you?

ANDREY: There are many other factors—

IVAN: What factors! All I can see is that you and your whole staff, the superintendent included, are inferior to every one of us!

ANDREY: Inferior?

IVAN: Yes, inferior!

ANDREY: In what way inferior?

IVAN: Morally!

ANDREY: Morality does not come into this...

IVAN: What then? Tradition? Convention?

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ANDREY: Neither tradition nor convention.

IVAN: Then logic. Where is the logic to all this?

ANDREY: It does not depend upon logic.

IVAN: What would you say it depends upon? A kiss? The boots of a peasant? My blowing my nose. *(Blows nose.)* There! Is that logic?

ANDREY: We are not speaking of logic...

IVAN: What then?

NIKITA: Shall I crack him one, honor?

IVAN: Yes, crack me! That's all you're good for! Crack the Jew! Crack all of us! Crack-crack!

*(Ivan hits his head against the wall.)*

ANDREY: I beg you, please go away, Nikita.

NIKITA: I warn you, he'll throttle you.

ANDREY: I'll take my chances...

IVAN: *(To all.)* You hear that! The reptile will take his chances: Don't tempt us, doctor.

ANDREY: *(Pushing Nikita out.)* Go and tell the superintendent about the boots.

NIKITA: For the Jew?

ANDREY: Yes, for the Jew.

NIKITA: Look at him, honor. *(Moiseika has laid out his booty and is singing a song.)* No doubt thinks he's opened up a shop somewhere.

ANDREY: What's the difference, Nikita? Whatever he is imagining, he is still shivering. He has nothing on his feet.

NIKITA: I'll tell that to the superintendent.

ANDREY: Yes, tell him.

NIKITA: *(Not moving.)* I'll do that.

ANDREY: Go now.

NIKITA: You insist?

ANDREY: What else?

NIKITA: Surely, honor.

ANDREY: Well, then?

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NIKITA: Indeed, honor.

*(Pause. Nikita finally leaves.)*

ANDREY: Ivan Dmitritch. I say, Ivan Dmitritch.

IVAN: Leave me alone.

ANDREY: You'll hurt yourself.

IVAN: I have a strong head.

ANDREY: But a human one. *(Touches him.)*

IVAN: *(Quickly.)* Let me out of here, why don't you?

ANDREY: You're an intelligent man.

IVAN: *(Loudly.)* Let me out!

ANDREY: I...cannot.

IVAN: But why not?

ANDREY: Because it is not in my power.

IVAN: Nonsense! All doctors have power.

ANDREY: Think. What use will it be to you if I do let you out?

IVAN: I'll go into the town and live like a human being.

ANDREY: Aren't you living like a human being here?

IVAN: I'm living like a pig! Look around you, doctor! Look!

*(Pause.)*

ANDREY: And so I'll let you go...what do you think will happen?

They'll come after you...

IVAN: Who?

ANDREY: The townspeople. The police.

IVAN: Why should they come after me if I behave?

ANDREY: Don't ask me why. They'll just come after you. They always come after someone. So long as prisons and madhouses exist, people must be shut up in them.

IVAN: But why me?

ANDREY: If not you, then someone else.

IVAN: That's true. Very true. *(Buries his head in his pillow.)*

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ANDREY: Perhaps in the distant future, prisons and madhouses will no longer exist. There will be neither bars on the windows nor attendants who beat you.

IVAN: You speak of the future, doctor, but I will not be there. What I am most concerned with is my life now. Today!

ANDREY: Today, unfortunately, you have to remain here...

IVAN: Enclosed! Behind bars! With these pigs! Beaten!

ANDREY: I'll see about the beatings...

IVAN: You'll see about the beatings! *(Laughs.)* Hurrah! A new life is at hand, gentlemen! Our turn will come! Truth and justice will triumph! *(Goes to window.)*

ANDREY: What are you doing?

IVAN: What do you think? I'm going to offer a blessing. *(Extends his arms.)* Our turn will come! We shall not live to see it, but some people's great grandchildren will! I greet them and rejoice for them! Onward! God be with you, friends! Hurrah! *(Applauds.)*

ANDREY: I really see no reason for this...

IVAN: There is one, doctor. A sense of immortality is springing up in me.

ANDREY: Oh, come now...

IVAN: You don't believe in it, but I do. Somebody in Voltaire or Dostoevsky said that if there had not been a God, men would have invented him. Well, that's what I say of immortality. If there is none, the great intellect of man will sooner or later invent it.

ANDREY: Yes, I do understand what you are saying. *(Sits with great interest.)* You've said it well. Interesting. Hmmm.

IVAN: I have faith now.

ANDREY: You're serious then?

IVAN: Quite serious, doctor.

ANDREY: You must be a student.

IVAN: I've been at the university.

ANDREY: You are a reflecting and thoughtful man.

IVAN: What does that mean, doctor?

ANDREY: It means that you can find tranquility in any sort of place, any surroundings.

IVAN: Free and deep thinking which strives for the comprehension of life...

ANDREY: And a complete contempt for the foolish bustle of the world...

IVAN: Even while living behind these bars?

ANDREY: Diogenes lived in a tub, yet he was happier than all the kings on this earth.

IVAN: Your Diogenes was a blockhead. *(Rising.)* Why do you talk to me this way, doctor? Do you think I am some fool?

ANDREY: Far from it.

IVAN: Then why bring up this Diogenes of yours?

ANDREY: I've merely wanted to discuss—

IVAN: You're a liar! You've trapped me into this absurd conversation! You and your foolish comprehension of life!

ANDREY: It was you who mentioned comprehension, Ivan Dmitritch.

IVAN: I was reading what was inside your skull. You're trying to confuse and destroy me.

ANDREY: Why should I want to do that?

IVAN: To lull me to sleep. It's your method. Out of here, serpent!

ANDREY: I want to be your friend...

IVAN: *(Sudden change.)* I love life, my friend. I love it with passion! I know others are attempting to destroy it. That's how I came here—fearing for my destruction. Wherever I went, wherever I turned—there! I could not live on the outside. *(Rising.)* Yet I want the outside! But on the outside— Oh, what an agonizing time! I've tried to live with it! Tried to understand. Call it a mania of persecution. Isn't that your term, doctor?

ANDREY: Allow me—

IVAN: *(Retreating quickly.)* No! You'll put a knife in my back!

ANDREY: I assure you...

IVAN: I have moments when I am overwhelmed by a craving, a thirst—for life. But then I'm afraid.

ANDREY: What is it you are afraid of?

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IVAN: How do I know? Do you understand the word? Afraid!

ANDREY: But you do want to live...?

IVAN: (*Reversed passion.*) Yes, I want dreadfully to live!

ANDREY: Then you shall live.

IVAN: How do you know?

ANDREY: I've seen many who don't want to live. They merely trudge through life, emptily. Their work is habit. Some even give up completely. (*Pause.*) Completely...then they die. (*Pause.*) Now, take this town, for instance...

IVAN: I don't want to hear about the town!

ANDREY: Just awhile ago you said—

IVAN: Never mind! That's of the past! Let me alone!

ANDREY: You've spoken of life...living. You want to live...

IVAN: I've changed my mind. Go away, get out! You're a reptile, no better than the others! (*Runs to door.*)

ANDREY: I don't quite...understand...

IVAN: Here! (*Begins to hit his head.*)

ANDREY: You'll kill yourself.

IVAN: (*Continues hitting head.*) And this! And this!

ANDREY: Stop! Please!

IVAN: You are my enemy! Get out!

ANDREY: Stop! I beg... (*Nikita rushes in. He begins to strike Ivan. To Nikita.*) Please, stop!

NIKITA: (*To Ivan.*) Brutes! Here's one! (*Nikita manages to quiet Ivan with a hard blow to the belly.*) It's not a good thing to stay too long, honor.

ANDREY: Ivan Dmitritch, you're a reasonable, intelligent man... (*Ivan spits.*) I look forward to other conversations with you... (*Ivan spits.*) Perhaps in the future... (*Ivan spits again. Andrey extends his hand. Ivan turns away. Andrey begins to leave.*) You might clean up here, Nikita. There's an awful stuffy smell.

NIKITA: Certainly, honor.

(*Blackout.*)

### Scene 3

*(AT RISE: Dr. Hobotov's office, the next day. Hobotov sits behind a desk. Andrey sits in chair facing Hobotov's desk.)*

HOBOTOV: What good is it to tell me that the hospital is old? I am fully aware of that fact, doctor. But an old hospital can be an efficient one.

ANDREY: I merely thought...I might inquire...

HOBOTOV: I've been here a little longer than you, doctor. Six years, in fact. And not once have I gone to the mayor or the town council.

ANDREY: You see, Doctor Hobotov, it's not the town council...

HOBOTOV: You're eager to complain, but you've just been here...how many days now?

ANDREY: Four.

HOBOTOV: I ask you, doctor, is that fair?

ANDREY: I merely wanted to state...

HOBOTOV: I respect your opinions, doctor. But, please, respect mine.

ANDREY: I have the utmost respect...

HOBOTOV: So what is it you have seen in four days? Potatoes that are not peeled properly...?

ANDREY: They're kept in baths.

HOBOTOV: So what's wrong with baths?

ANDREY: Well, I believed potatoes should be kept elsewhere.

HOBOTOV: Where else might it be cleaner than in a bath?

ANDREY: Well, I suppose...

HOBOTOV: Then what's this about thermometers? You say there is only one. I know for a fact there are three.

ANDREY: But even three?

HOBOTOV: What would you have me do? Go to the town council and demand more thermometers?

ANDREY: Perhaps you might inquire...

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HOBOTOV: But you've also complained about the scalpels. And about the ceilings being too sooty. And the floors too splintery. Surely, you do not expect them to appropriate funds for a new hospital.

ANDREY: You misunderstand me, Dr. Hobotov...

HOBOTOV: We're not an altogether wealthy town, doctor.

ANDREY: No town in Russia these days is wealthy.

HOBOTOV: Perhaps in a large city. Even there...

ANDREY: Yes, I must agree. I've just come from a city.

HOBOTOV: And how did you find things there?

ANDREY: Run rather shabbily.

HOBOTOV: So you see.

ANDREY: It discouraged me. I left for that reason.

HOBOTOV: Expecting to find it better in a town this size?

ANDREY: I suppose I hoped...

HOBOTOV: What does one hope for, doctor?

ANDREY: Concern.

HOBOTOV: Yes, I'm very concerned. But when there is nothing to work with, you do your best. I've spoken to the Council and I've spoken to the Mayor, and they've promised me. But I am only one man, doctor, and I do have other concerns. Do you have a family?

ANDREY: If you mean a wife and children—no.

HOBOTOV: I have four children.

ANDREY: That so? I should like to meet them.

HOBOTOV: Perhaps you'll drop over for supper one day?

ANDREY: That would be an honor, Dr. Hobotov.

HOBOTOV: My wife is a very fine woman. A true companion.

ANDREY: That's a very difficult thing.

HOBOTOV: What?

ANDREY: To find a true companion.

HOBOTOV: *(Smiles.)* You've been a bit of a loner, have you?

ANDREY: I read a great deal.

HOBOTOV: You also take a great interest in your patients.

ANDREY: Yes, that too.

HOBOTOV: I've noticed...you've become rather familiar with one...Ivan Dmitritch Gromov.

ANDREY: I find him rather stimulating.

HOBOTOV: Stimulating?

ANDREY: Ah...what I mean is...interesting.

HOBOTOV: In what way?

ANDREY: He seems to be a very intelligent man.

HOBOTOV: An ex-university student. In fact, he had graduated with great honors.

ANDREY: Yes, he seems extraordinary.

HOBOTOV: Beware of men with superior intelligence, doctor. *(Smiles.)* Our patient suffers from a persecution complex.

ANDREY: It seems such a waste.

HOBOTOV: Well, it isn't only our Ivan Dmitritch Gromov...

ANDREY: Yes, that's true. There is such a waste of human life. If one could only... *(Stops himself, unable to find words for expression.)*

HOBOTOV: We all try, doctor. But one must be a realist...

ANDREY: I've tried. For eight years, I worked in another hospital, and the wards, the very corridors...it was impossible to breathe owing to the stench. *(A man in a postmaster's uniform enters as Andrey is speaking. He remains near the door, observing in silence.)* The nurses and their children slept together in the dormitories with the patients. Everything was in a constant state of disorder. The stench was unbearable. There was a doctor in a higher position than I, quite intelligent. He would often say—as we sat close together examining those who'd come to the clinic with colds and infections—"Men become ill and suffer deprivation only because he neglects praying to God." And I would wonder...as I watched the attendants carry out the corpses...what more might be accomplished if only...if only...

*(Andrey struggles for words. Postmaster comes forth to where Andrey is seated.)*

MIHAIL: If only what, good friend?

*(Startled, Andrey rises.)*

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HOBOTOV: Mihail Averyanitch. This is our new doctor, Andrey Yefimich Ragin.

MIHAIL: Pleased to make your acquaintance. *(They shake hands.)*  
It's always an honor to know an intelligent man.

HOBOTOV: Mihail Averyanitch is our postmaster.

MIHAIL: Only in recent years. I come from a far better class, you see.

HOBOTOV: We lunch together often. *(He rises.)*

MIHAIL: Would you join us, doctor?

ANDREY: *(Bows.)* An honor.

MIHAIL: Then you might elaborate.

ANDREY: Elaborate?

MIHAIL: What you were speaking of when I so rudely interrupted.

ANDREY: Oh, yes, that...

MIHAIL: It's not often that I meet someone of the intelligent class.

HOBOTOV: *(Joking.)* You hear that? He doesn't consider me of the intelligent class.

MIHAIL: On the contrary. I can say now that I have found two men—

ANDREY: *(Enjoying.)* Just two, eh?

*(Lights are fading as they begin to exit.)*

HOBOTOV: There may be a few others if you look hard enough...

MIHAIL: Ah, perhaps one other...hiding somewhere...beneath...

*(They exit, chuckling as the stage goes black.)*

## Scene 4

*(AT RISE: Andrey's room, one month later. Daryusha is straightening his room up as Andrey enters.)*

DARYUSHA: Ah, doctor, I was wondering where you were. We haven't seen much of you lately. I know that you sleep here, but the evenings...I've brought you your beer more than once this past week...

ANDREY: I should like my beer presently, Daryusha.

*(He sits down and picks up a book. Daryusha starts out and then stops.)*

DARYUSHA: Oh, doctor...ah...we haven't kept you awake at night, have we? I mean the children and I?

ANDREY: I haven't heard much...

DARYUSHA: *(Closer, worried.)* Oh, but you've heard something?

ANDREY: Nothing. Very little...

DARYUSHA: Very little? Yes, I can explain that...

ANDREY: No need to explain...

DARYUSHA: But I must. You see, their uncle comes—quite often, in fact. Too often. Time and again he's here. Never lets up...

ANDREY: He must enjoy the children.

DARYUSHA: No, that's just it—he beats them. And they cry out. Just three nights ago, he took the strap to little Lena.

ANDREY: Yes, it seems I did hear something.

DARYUSHA: And then just last night...well, he beat her so badly she moaned and moaned.

ANDREY: Yes, that I hear, too.

DARYUSHA: I'm so sorry, doctor. *(Touches him.)* If it were up to me, if it were in my power, I would throw him out of this house.

ANDREY: Why don't you then?

DARYUSHA: A defenseless widow. Why, I'd need a strong hand. Some man who might...

ANDREY: Perhaps you will marry again, Daryusha...?

Ward 6  
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*(Daryusha sits.)*

DARYUSHA: Ah, yes, marrying...that's a fine idea. But who? Do you think it's so easy to find a man who would take my children? Why, most men...in this town anyway... *(Smiles.)* It's not that simple, doctor. Sensitive men like...ah...yourself do not exist, especially in our class.

ANDREY: It doesn't matter what class one is from...there seems to be a lack of sensitivity all around.

DARYUSHA: But you are a gentleman...

ANDREY: *(Chuckles.)* Ah, you've never seen me at my worst.

DARYUSHA: They say you're the kindest soul at the hospital.

ANDREY: Indeed? Who...says that?

DARYUSHA: Everybody you meet. Why, there is so much talk, so much gossip...even at the marketplace. It seems all one can do in this town is gossip.

ANDREY: And they gossip...about me?

DARYUSHA: What is gossip? Idle words.

ANDREY: Well...not always...

DARYUSHA: Forgive me, doctor, but I think if you...ah...had a wife... *(Rises.)* No offense. *(Pause.)* I hope I have not offended...

ANDREY: Not in the least.

DARYUSHA: You see...it's the dinner, the supper, the comfort, and...yes...the care. One needs comfort and care. One needs to have...ah...a companion...

YEVGENI: *(Offstage.)* Dar-yushka!

DARYUSHA: He's back. *(Shouts.)* Coming, Yevgeni! *(To Andrey.)* Oh, doctor, I hope I did not offend you. I only meant—

*(Yevgeni enters, pushing Daryusha out of his way.)*

YEVGENI: Well, doctor. *(Takes Andrey's hand.)* How do you stand today?

ANDREY: I am...fine...

Ward 6  
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YEVGENI: *(To Daryusha.)* Isn't it time for the doctor's beer? *(Slaps her in rear.)*

DARYUSHA: Yes, instantly. *(Exits.)*

*(Pause, Yevgeni sits.)*

YEVGENI: She's been talking about me?

ANDREY: On the contrary...

YEVGENI: Don't fool me—I'm not one of your patients.

ANDREY: I was...about to do some reading...

YEVGENI: You're not trying to avoid me, are you, doctor?

ANDREY: No, I'd never...

YEVGENI: Good! Then you'll have some beer with me.

ANDREY: Well, I really must...

YEVGENI: Be a good fellow. We're alive today. Tomorrow—death! *(Daryusha returns with a glass of beer. Yevgeni slaps her on the rear.)* Would you believe that I love her?

DARYUSHA: *(To Andrey. Quickly.)* As one does a sister.

YEVGENI: Ah, yes, some sister you are. *(Another smack.)* Go!

DARYUSHA: *(Closer, to Yevgeni.)* Stop drinking, Yevgeni. It's still quite early.

YEVGENI: It's only beer. I'll start on the vodka after I've eaten.

DARYUSHA: You'll not be able to stand by midnight.

YEVGENI: *(Laughs.)* So I'll roll. *(Slaps her rear. She exits. To Andrey.)* Would you believe, doctor, I feel very tenderly toward her. *(Pause.)* You don't doubt me, do you?

ANDREY: Why should I doubt you?

YEVGENI: Do I look like a brute to you?

ANDREY: Well...no...

YEVGENI: Are you lying to me?

ANDREY: Why should I lie?

YEVGENI: Who knows why people lie? To hide their feelings? To fool themselves into accepting things? We are all liars, doctor.

ANDREY: I try...to be truthful.

YEVGENI: Are you truthful to your patients?

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ANDREY: Well, with patients I am dealing with different sorts...  
YEVGENI: And you find a difference between inside and out?  
ANDREY: If there are no differences, wouldn't we all have to be inside?  
YEVGENI: An interesting question, doctor.

*(Pause. They both stare at one another. Mihail Averyanitch appears at the door.)*

ANDREY: *(Glad.)* Mihail Averyanitch!  
MIHAIL: Ah, good friend! Dear friend! How fine it is to visit again. Since we met a little over a month ago, my life has been enriched. *(Sees Yevgeni.)* Pardon me, have I interrupted anything?  
YEVGENI: Nothing. I was leaving. *(To Andrey.)* Ponder the question, doctor.  
ANDREY: I shall.  
YEVGENI: Who is ill, and who is healthy?  
ANDREY: Yes...it is a question...  
YEVGENI: What is gossip and what is fact?  
ANDREY: Mmmm, yes. Gossip...fact...

*(Pause, Yevgeni turns.)*

YEVGENI: Dar-yushka... *(Exits.)* ...my vodka!  
DARYUSHA: *(Offstage.)* Early—too early  
YEVGENI: *(Offstage.)* I'll give you too early!  
MIHAIL: A brute.  
ANDREY: Yes, he is rather...indelicate.  
MIHAIL: I despise brutes. *(Takes out candies and beer.)* Too many in this town. My entire past rebels against this sort of behavior. The harshness of people. *(Pours beer.)* Fagh! I come from a better class. The fact that we lost our money forces me to live in such company.  
ANDREY: Yes, I've found myself withdrawing from such as he.

Ward 6  
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MIHAIL: And there are so many of his kind—so many. You, in fact, are the only man in town who does not insult my intelligence nor bore me. How glad I am to have made your acquaintance. Why, if we had not run into each other, I should have become one of them. Either that or just faded away. Yes, glad...very glad, Andrey Yefimich.

*(Mihail toasts Andrey. They sit and drink.)*

ANDREY: I've looked forward to your coming here, Mihail Averyanitch. At times I am so bored, I do nothing but walk up and down in this little room. I keep putting off drinking my beer or eating my dinner. I read a great deal and that prevents me from becoming utterly bored. Sometimes I pace about in the middle of the night, and the housekeeper comes up to see what is the matter. My work at the hospital the very next morning is equally as tiresome and boring.

MIHAIL: It's no better at the post office.

ANDREY: But you are the postmaster...there must be much to do.

MIHAIL: And I say the same of you. Why, he is a doctor, and there are patients to be treated—what a lot to do.

ANDREY: If it were only that way, Mihail Averyanitch. If you recall my conversation with Dr. Hobotov the very first day I met you...

MIHAIL: And I said to myself, "There is a man of intelligence."

ANDREY: But what good is intelligence? All I can do is stand by...helpless.

MIHAIL: But don't we all, good friend?

ANDREY: Yes, unfortunately.

MIHAIL: That's life. I myself come from a very wealthy home. My father was an aristocrat, and I became an officer in the cavalry. Then sudden ruin forced me here, into this town.

ANDREY: I understand. You've become bored too then.

MIHAIL: Well, I have found the company of a gentleman. *(He raises his glass and toasts.)* And then occasionally there are...ah...ladies.

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ANDREY: I respect you for your culture and your loftiness of soul.

*(Andrey toasts. They smile and drink.)*

MIHAIL: There is something I must tell you, Andrey Yefimich. I speak to you as a friend.

ANDREY: There's a look of grave concern on your brow.

MIHAIL: Well, you see...they are gossiping.

ANDREY: Gossiping? About me?

MIHAIL: They are saying that you are a strange person, that you seldom step out of your room, except to go to the hospital.

ANDREY: I can't help myself...I am caught, you see. One side of me is pulling in one direction, the other is saying, stop. What's the use? They'll not listen.

MIHAIL: One goes about doing his work, and then when the time is up...well, look at me. I visit. I go out with...ah...ladies.

*(Mihail smiles, sips, but Andrey remains serious.)*

ANDREY: There is a sort of opposite in me. Two sides. One is saying: Give up. Don't care. *(Intense.)* You see, I left the other hospital because I couldn't stand the lethargy. There was no concern. Human beings were being treated like swine. That's why I came here. I'd hoped, in another town...

MIHAIL: But they are all alike, dear friend.

ANDREY: I'd hoped, really hoped. That's why I entered the medical profession.

MIHAIL: Unfortunately intelligence is not the foremost character trait in man.

ANDREY: You're making light of it, Mihail Averyanitch.

MIHAIL: *(Compassionately.)* Not so. I'm truly concerned, good friend.

ANDREY: Then you'll understand, I came here in desperation. It was if... it were a last chance.

MIHAIL: Fagh! Nonsense! Last chance. You're a young man.

Ward 6  
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ANDREY: I feel I have aged.

MIHAIL: Age is only in the mind.

ANDREY: And it's not that I haven't tried. Why, just last week I came to Hobotov with...here, let me show you. *(Takes out a chart.)* The dispensary, for instance. It's simply a closet now. And what would it cost the town? Five hundred rubles. A minor expenditure. But where does all the expenditure go to? Can you tell me that?

MIHAIL: I'm not...sure...

ANDREY: The town spends so much on unnecessary buildings, on superfluous staffs. Some of these people who are working for the hospital at large salaries should be in the hospital themselves.

MIHAIL: I suppose...I agree...

*(Andrey shows Mihail charts.)*

ANDREY: I submitted that we have two model hospitals because the old one was built in the '30s and is breaking down. The filth and decay is terrible. Money is being spent foolishly and some of the staff are behaving rather like thieves!

MIHAIL: Well, I wouldn't go so far...

ANDREY: Yes, thieves.

MIHAIL: What am I to say...? I mean...

*(Andrey puts the charts away.)*

ANDREY: And Hobotov...what does he do? He merely nods. Like this. *(Demonstrates.)* And then he stares at me as if I am insane.

MIHAIL: Well, I wouldn't go that far...

ANDREY: "I give you my word," he says, "that I and the town council will look into everything." And everything remains as it was when I first arrived.

MIHAIL: Things cannot be changed overnight.

Ward 6  
30

ANDREY: So you see why I become bored. I struggled to overcome boredom in the other town until I couldn't stand it any longer and left. *(Andrey sinks into his chair. Pause.)* In my desperation, Mihail Averyanitch, I walk about in my room at night, unable to sleep. If not for my books, if not for you...there are simply no intelligent people to carry on conversations with. *(Andrey smiles, relaxes.)*

MIHAIL: There. You feel better already.

ANDREY: You are the only one I can talk to.

MIHAIL: Yes, there is so much vulgarity.

ANDREY: I respect you for your loftiness of soul.

MIHAIL: And I respect you.

*(They drink.)*

ANDREY: It seems to me sometimes that everything in this world is insignificant.

MIHAIL: Perfectly true...

ANDREY: Everything is uninteresting except the higher spiritual manifestations of the human mind. The intellect draws a sharp line between the animal and man.

MIHAIL: Exactly my own sentiments.

ANDREY: It brings out the divinity in the latter, and takes the place of immortality, which does not exist. It is in this that I find comfort. Do you understand?

MIHAIL: Not really...

ANDREY: There is the hope, you see. In what I have just said. The intellect seems to do the only possible source of enjoyment. Do you grasp?

MIHAIL: Not in the least.

ANDREY: Then it doesn't make any sense to you?

MIHAIL: Well...in part...it does.

ANDREY: Which part?

MIHAIL: Well, there are certain other ways to enjoy oneself.

ANDREY: Yes, we have books. *(Goes to his bookcase.)*

MIHAIL: We cannot retreat into books entirely.

ANDREY: Exactly. They cannot suffice for intellectual discussion.

MIHAIL: (*Losing interest. Sips beer.*) I am...a little confused...

ANDREY: (*Carried away with revelation.*) Allow me to draw this comparison: Books are the printed score, while talk is the singing. (*Mihail begins to nod off. Andrey wanders about, speaking with more and more enthusiasm.*) I am searching for a meaning, a reason for life. It surely does not exist in the hospital, nor does it exist...well, the way I see it, from the very beginning of life one is told nothing. He is fed inconsistent absurdities. Yes, I have been here a little less than two months. But so what? In another town I stayed eight years. But everything has remained the same. Life goes on—the same. When a man reaches maturity he cannot help feeling that he is in a trap...from which there is no escape. He searches. He knocks on the door of human evaluation, knowledge, but the door seldom opens. He feels severely trapped. (*Pause. Stares out of his window.*) He goes on searching. He seeks reasons. He longs for enjoyment on a higher plane...the intellect. (*Andrey turns and stares at Mihail and sees that he has fallen asleep.*) Mihail Averyanitch...you've fallen asleep. (*Blackout.*)

## Scene 5

*(AT RISE: Ward Six, later that night. Andrey enters and walks slowly toward Ivan's bed.)*

ANDREY: You're not asleep, are you?  
IVAN: Does it matter? You barge in anyway.  
ANDREY: I wanted to speak with you...

*(Ivan rises. He is angry.)*

IVAN: Barge in, go ahead! You're the privileged sort!  
ANDREY: I merely wanted to discuss—  
IVAN: Why always with me, doctor? I'm a patient, you're a doctor. This one week alone you've come, how many times?  
ANDREY: I find you very intelligent...  
IVAN: No! I don't believe you! You're here for another reason! What is it?  
ANDREY: Stop shouting, please...  
IVAN: I'll shout all I want! Aaahh!  
ANDREY: Ssssh! You'll wake the others.  
IVAN: Then tell me, why are you here?  
ANDREY: I wish to be your friend.  
IVAN: Prove it to me!  
ANDREY: How shall I prove it?  
IVAN: Who cares how you prove it? Prove it! *(No answer.)* Well, go on! All you doctors are geniuses!  
ANDREY: I'm certainly no genius...

*(Ivan moves away.)*

IVAN: What are you then, a quack?  
ANDREY: Strange...just yesterday we talked so peacefully.  
IVAN: And the day before that, and before that—so what!  
ANDREY: And now for some reason you take offense...

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IVAN: You come around to bother me in the night, too! Like some horse.

ANDREY: Yes...for that I'm sorry...

IVAN: Your breath smells!

ANDREY: My breath?

IVAN: Your feet reek!

ANDREY: My feet?

IVAN: You're ideas are stupid! *(Andrey is silent again.)* I understand it now! You're here to spy on me, that's what!

ANDREY: No, I'm not here to spy...I promise you.

IVAN: Your promises are no better than the promises of a whore !

ANDREY: What good would spying do me? Who would I be spying for?

IVAN: How should I know? You can trap me into saying I tried to kill the Czar.

ANDREY: That isn't likely.

IVAN: Or that I'm trying to begin a revolution, like some of those university students.

ANDREY: Also unlikely.

*(Pause.)*

IVAN: So you're not here to spy? *(Pause.)* Then why?

ANDREY: I was lonely. I came out for a walk and—

IVAN: *(Quickly.)* A walk, you say? *(Goes to window.)* It must be nice out there. Summer. Things begin to stir...

ANDREY: The crickets are out—

IVAN: *(Quickly.)* Crickets...what a lovely sound.

ANDREY: Life. *(Deep breath.)* It isn't stifled after all.

IVAN: I wouldn't say that, doctor. *(Pause. Both men look at each other.)* Is it very muddy now?

ANDREY: No, not very...

IVAN: It would be nice to drive about in an open carriage right now. Then to come home to a warm, snug study...eat a fine meal, drink a little beer...or kvass...or find yourself together with a...woman.

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*(Pause.)*

ANDREY: Yes...a woman...

IVAN: *(Quickly.)* It's been so long since I've lived a decent life! A regular human being!

ANDREY: *(Consoling.)* You are a human being.

IVAN: It's disgusting here!

ANDREY: *(Worried.)* Have faith.

IVAN: What faith? It's insufferably disgusting, doctor!

ANDREY: See it this way: *(Carefully.)* There is no real difference between a warm, snug study and this ward.

IVAN: *(Laughs wildly.)* What?! Whaaat did you say?!

ANDREY: I said—

IVAN: I heard you!

ANDREY: But you did not understand...

IVAN: *(Howling.)* You hear that! I didn't understand!

ANDREY: What I meant was that a man's peace and contentment lies within, not without.

IVAN: You're a fool, doctor!

ANDREY: The ordinary man sees good and evil in the material. Carriages, horses, studies, parlors. The thinking man looks in here. *(Points to his head.)*

IVAN: Horseshit!

ANDREY: No, common sense. Think.

IVAN: You ought to go out and preach all that stuff to a whore. Better yet, go to Greece.

ANDREY: Greece?

IVAN: Yes, there it is warm, and the air smells with flowers. Here in Russia, the climate is not suited for it.

ANDREY: Why shouldn't it be?

IVAN: Well, take Diogenes for example. Was it not to you I was speaking of Diogenes the other day?

ANDREY: This morning.

IVAN: *(Alarmed.)* This morning? Has time crawled that slowly?

ANDREY: Yes, it seems quite some time ago...

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IVAN: Well, about Diogenes, doctor. In Greece you can lie in your tub and eat oranges or olives. But bring the poor sap to Russia and see what happens. He'd be begging to be let indoors in May. In December, he'd be laying under a pile of blankets doing you know what.

ANDREY: I disagree with you, Ivan Dmitritch. A man can be immune to cold, as to every other pain. Cold is a pain. It was the Roman general and philosopher who said—

IVAN: Wait! Who was that? Marcus Aurelius?

ANDREY: Then you do know of him?

IVAN: Yes, I've read his work.

ANDREY: I look up to him...

IVAN: He endured a lot...

ANDREY: Exactly. Suffered...

IVAN: Pain...misery...

ANDREY: Sitting about, near the battlements...

IVAN: Waiting for the barbarians...

ANDREY: Trying to keep his mind occupied...

IVAN: Without losing his sanity...

*(Pause.)*

ANDREY: Well, it was he who said: "A pain is a vivid idea of pain. Make an effort of will to change that idea, dismiss it, cease to complain, and the pain will disappear."

IVAN: And what has that to do with it?

ANDREY: I am sure that you can understand that a thoughtful man, an intelligent man, is distinguished wholly by his contempt for suffering.

IVAN: Then I am an idiot!

ANDREY: Why do you say that?

IVAN: I suffer. I feel pain, misery, anger.

ANDREY: Let us dissect it. What are you angry at?

IVAN: The baseness of mankind. The inhumanities.

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ANDREY: But inhumanity is all a part of the external world, that which exists around us, not within us. One must strive to understand life...

IVAN: What is there to understand? Brutality is brutality.

ANDREY: Brutality is a physical thing. I am speaking of the internal, the deeper meaning.

IVAN: Internal, external. What is all that? All I know is that God created me with warm blood, with nerves. I see, I touch, I feel. If organic tissue is created, it is done so for the sake of life, and it must react to every stimulus. I am of human life, therefore I must react. That is God's law. Otherwise he would not have created me. He might have made me a monster, without feelings. I have feelings, doctor! Do you understand what I am saying? I respond to pain with tears. I cry out. The brutalities around me make me angry. I hate filth. I despise sloth. Perhaps a lower organism is less sensitive to all that. An animal takes pain better. A fish has no feelings. A tree or a bush has no indignation. There is no anger in a flower. There is no hate in a cockroach. The higher the organism, the more responsive it is to reality. How is it you don't know that, doctor?

ANDREY: I see it in a different light...

IVAN: You're a doctor, not a philosopher. Is your name Marcus Aurelius? No! Am I a beetle? No! I am human, and I cannot stop living as a human.

ANDREY: I am merely trying to reason...

IVAN: I am not capable of reasoning! (*Storming about.*) Not on your terms, doctor! I am not an animal, nor am I a philosopher.

ANDREY: You're a thinker. You reason excellently.

*(Ivan stops. Pause.)*

IVAN: Even if I do not agree with you?

ANDREY: Even if you despise what I say.

IVAN: Then you believe I'll come around to your way of thinking?

ANDREY: If you reason it out carefully...

IVAN: Twaddle! You're a fanatic, doctor!

ANDREY: I have great hope.

IVAN: What—to make me into a stoic?

ANDREY: Something may be said of the stoics...

IVAN: That doctrine is several thousand years old, has very little reality and no practicality.

ANDREY: Not entirely...

IVAN: A doctrine which advocates indifference to wealth, which has no use for the comforts of life, and which shows contempt for suffering and death, in my opinion is ridiculous.

ANDREY: Is it ridiculous when it searches for another way?

IVAN: Another way for what?

ANDREY: To relieve the pains...

IVAN: I have no patience with you, doctor!

ANDREY: I am merely discussing...

IVAN: You're trying to fill me with a philosophy which is positively absurd!

ANDREY: It is absurd, Ivan Dmitritch, because you fail to comprehend the true meaning...

IVAN: I've just now given you my opinions of that "true meaning!" And if you still fail to grasp, let me explain in still another way: There was once a Stoic who sold himself into slavery in order to redeem his neighbor. Simple as that—he did it for another. But wasn't there feeling involved? Didn't it prove that he had a soul which was alive with pity? Didn't he experience indignation? The act itself is proof of that. *(Laughs.)* Take our own lord, in fact. Take Christ. Christ responded to reality by crying, by feeling sorrow for others, by lashing out with anger at those who infuriated him. How do you explain that, doctor? Surely you cannot call Christ a stoic.

ANDREY: Christ's peace and contentment, however, lay within him...

IVAN: And again I say, Twaddle! Horseshit! How can you even dare to comprehend such matters? Have you ever suffered? Allow me to ask you, were you ever beaten while still a child?

ANDREY: My parents did not believe in corporal punishment.

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IVAN: My father used to flog me cruelly. He was a crude, sickly government clerk, with a long nose and a yellow neck. Cruelty was his name. He even looked cruel.

ANDREY: For that I am sorry...

IVAN: Sure, it's simple to say that to someone else, and then to forget about it. Many people do just that. There is cruelty in that alone—lip service. Pretense: "Oh, I'm terribly sorry, you've been beaten. Accept my apologies. I feel for your carcass." Again let me say: Horseshit!

ANDREY: I've said it with true feeling...

IVAN: (*Laughs.*) How could you? You're strong as a bull, you live on the outside, a free man. No one beat you nor scared you. You grew up under your father's wing and studied at his expense. You've been turned into a lazy, flabby man. You've arranged your life neatly, like a dressed-up package, tied round just the proper way, with the proper string. Look at you—you even booze—your nose tells me that. Why? So that you needn't have to experience the pain and misery that we who are imprisoned here experience? Nothing must disturb your neat life.

ANDREY: That isn't true. I've seen the terrible conditions here at the hospital and I've responded.

IVAN: Responded! (*Laughs.*) How? You've seen nothing of life. And that which you've seen, you've bypassed. Sure, you may theorize about it, but what is theory? A way of making your own self comfortable.

ANDREY: You accuse me of making my own self comfortable, yet just several hours ago—

IVAN: Whatever you tell me, however you try to justify your-self, it's still a pile of lofty nonsense. You're still a lazy, flabby man, capable only of vanity. The philosophy you preach simply makes it easy for you to go about your sluggish life, caring for no one, seeing and feeling little. If you see a peasant beating his wife or a brute beating a child—why interfere? Let them get beat—they will all die sooner or later. You have contempt for what is really the truth. Here is the truth! This prison, a pile of

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human manure. Men who are beaten, men who rot. But that is all very good and reasonable, because there is no difference at all between this ward and a warm, snug study. A very convenient philosophy, doctor. You do nothing about it and your conscience is clear. As long as you keep telling yourself that there is an internal and an external. No, my friend, it is not philosophy, it is not vision, but laziness, drowsy stupefaction. Yes! You say you deny suffering, but let us see what would happen if you pinched your finger in the iron door there. You would howl at the top of your voice.

ANDREY: Perhaps...not.

IVAN: Try it out then!

*(Ivan Dmitritch grabs Andrey by the arm and begins to pull him toward the iron door. Andrey tries to withdraw. The tussle brings Nikita to the other side of the door. Nikita opens the door and begins to punch Ivan.)*

NIKITA: *(To Ivan as he punches him.)* Take this! And this!

ANDREY: Stop!

NIKITA: The brutes!

*(Nikita continues to punch Ivan. Ivan falls onto the bed and buries his head.)*

ANDREY: Stop, I tell you!

NIKITA: Oh, these ugly brutes!

*(Nikita hits Ivan again.)*

ANDREY: Why do you beat him so?

NIKITA: It's the thing to do, honor.

ANDREY: It's deplorable.

NIKITA: Nothing's deplorable. It's the wisest thing with these brutes. Beating's good. Stops 'em cold before they can take over.

*(Nikita hits Ivan again.)*

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ANDREY: What are they going to take over?

NIKITA: The hospital. The whole world.

*(Nikita strikes Ivan again and then hits Moiseika, who has wandered too close. Hobotov enters.)*

ANDREY: *(To Nikita.)* The man was merely hitting his head, a momentary fit...

NIKITA: Momentary? Why, if I'd leave this place alone for one hour...do you know what would happen?

ANDREY: Reason...that's all one has to do...

NIKITA: Reason, you say? Good, I'll do some reasoning with 'em next time, while they put your hands in the grinder. Maybe I'll even give 'em a piece of candy too, or maybe a drink. Here's vodka—go on about your business—take over the place! It's for your sake, honor. I'm here to protect you. *(He hits Ivan again.)* That'll keep you! *(Turns back to Andrey.)* You best come now, sir, before he gets up and takes it out on your hide.

*(Pause.)*

ANDREY: I'm going...to stay.

HOBOTOV: Stay?

ANDREY: Yes.

*(Pause. Nikita looks at Hobotov. Hobotov turns and starts to leave. Nikita follow. Andrey leans toward Ivan as the stage goes black. Intermission.)*

**[End of Freeview]**