
DRAMA

0411/01/T/PRE

Paper 1

For Examination from 2015

SPECIMEN PRE-RELEASE MATERIAL

To be given to candidates on receipt by the Centre.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

The questions in Paper 1 will be based on the stimuli and on the extract from Nikolai Gogol's play *The Government Inspector* provided in this booklet.

You may do any preparatory work that is considered appropriate. It is recommended that you perform the extract, at least informally.

You will **not** be permitted to take this copy of the material **or** any other notes or preparation into the examination.

A clean copy of the pre-release material will be provided with the Question Paper.

This document consists of **31** printed pages and **1** blank page.

STIMULI

Choose **one** of the following three stimuli and devise a piece of drama based on it. You should perform in groups of between two and six performers. Your piece should last approximately 15 minutes.

In the Written examination, you will be asked questions about your piece that will cover both practical and theoretical issues.

Stimulus 1

Theme: The school bully.

Stimulus 2

Poem: *To a daughter* by Brian Chan

He never hoped for you, he never not:
it was you who gave birth to a father.

A baby, you wanted often to play
with the only friend you had all day long

but the drug of Work would pull him away
to a desk, piano, easel or stove.

If he felt you were keeping him from other
life like salt running out, he might bark

Leave me alone, in the anger of fear,
and he would feel his voice quiver your spine.

But you never stopped running to embrace
him, teaching how gratuitous is love.

Your father's love for you, shadowed by pain,
clouded by duty, was never as free.

Yet though you're now 'tall as a lantern-post',
you still sit on his knee and hug his neck;

but that he once frightened you still frightens him
should he snap Leave me alone, meaning now Don't.

Stimulus 3

Painting: *American Gothic* by Grant Wood



EXTRACT

Taken from *The Government Inspector* by Nikolai Gogol

These notes are intended to help you understand the context of the drama.

The Government Inspector is a satirical play that grows from a case of mistaken identity. It has been described as a 'satire on human vanity [and foolishness], based on a story of a penniless nobody from St Petersburg who is mistaken for a government inspector by the corrupt and self-seeking officials of a small town in Tsarist Russia'.

The play is in two Acts and the extract consists of the whole of Act 1. The play was originally written in 1836 but the translation provided here is from the 1985 London production by the National Theatre.

CHARACTERS

Governor, Anton Skvoznik-Dmucharovsky

Anna, the Governor's wife

Marya, the Governor's daughter

Schools Superintendent, Luka Khlopov

Judge, Ammos Lyapkin-Tyapkin

Postmaster, Ivan Shpekin

Petr Dobchinsky, a landowner

Petr Bobchinsky, a landowner

Charity Commissioner, Artemy Zemlyanika

Doctor Khristian Gibner, the District Doctor

Police Inspector

Svistunov, a Police Constable

Ivan Khlestakov, a Government clerk from St Petersburg

Osip, servant to Khlestakov

Mishka, the Governor's servant

Waiter at the Inn

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

*The meeting room in the **Governor's** house, a business-like room in which the Governor conducts his business. The **Schools Superintendent**, the **Judge**, **Doctor Gibner** and the **Charity Commissioner** sit, waiting, round a table. There is a large portrait of the Tsar, a slightly smaller portrait of the **Governor** and smaller portraits of groups sitting round the table in this same room. One chair, reserved for the **Governor**, and obviously more important than any of the other chairs, is empty at the head of the table. Not for long. The **Governor** strides in and stands at the head of the table. They all stand.*

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GOVERNOR: Good morning, gentlemen. I've got some news for you. Appalling news. We're to be visited by an inspector.

*A flash of lightning – half a second. The **Governor** sits down.*

JUDGE: An inspector? 15

CHARITY COMMISSIONER: An inspector?

GOVERNOR: A Government Inspector. With secret orders. Travelling incognito.

JUDGE: A Government Inspector!

CHARITY COMMISSIONER: With secret orders! 20

SUPERINTENDENT: Oh, God! He's incognito!

GOVERNOR: I had a feeling of impending bother. All last night I was dreaming about these weird rats. Two rats, giants both of 'em. Two giant black rats. And they came in. And they sniffed – everywhere, everything, everyone. They sniffed – and then they went away. Giants. And this morning, plonk on my mat, there's this letter from Andrey – you know him, don't you, Artemy? Anyway, here's what he says, 'My dear friend, godfather and benefactor...' *(He mumbles as he skips through the letter.)* 'So I rush to warn you that an official's arrived incognito with instructions to investigate the whole province, and especially our district. *(He raises his finger meaningfully.)* I've been tipped off by an unimpeachable source. I know you're human like the rest of us and we all have our little failings and you're not one to turn up your nose at the odd gift horse, wherever it drops from ...' All in this together, aren't we? ... 'So you'd best get cracking. He may manifest himself any moment. In fact, he may be in town already, incognito ... Last Friday night I ...' The rest is just family gossip ... 'My sister Anna came to stay with her gloomy husband who weighs eighteen stone and plays Austrian rubbish on the fiddle' ... etcetera and so on. And there you have it, gentlemen. 25

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JUDGE: And it's unusual, decidedly ... unusual. Yes, it's significant.

SUPERINTENDENT: But why investigate our little town? Why should St Petersburg care what we get up to – I mean, how we conduct ourselves? 45

GOVERNOR: Why indeed? So far, thank God, they've been using their fine-tooth combs on other towns. But now the finger of fate is pointing – at us. 50

- JUDGE: I think I perceive a subtle political motive. Russia is preparing to wage war, so an agent's been sent to root out any subversives.
- GOVERNOR: Don't be daft. This isn't a frontier town. You could gallop from here for three years and never reach a foreign country. Thank God.
- JUDGE: I'm not so sure. The authorities may be a long way off, but they've got eyes in the back of their heads. They've got dossiers on everyone. Everyone.
- GOVERNOR: Maybe they have and maybe they haven't. True, at this very moment this Inspector may be fingering our records. Behind our backs. As far as my department goes – law and order and general amenities – I've already sprung into action. And you'd better all follow suit. (*He swings round on the Charity Commissioner.*) And that goes double for you, Artemy! This Inspector's bound to go over your hospital with a magnifying glass. And gimlet eyes. Get those patients of yours looking half-decent. They look like blacksmiths and stink like fishmongers. 60
- CHARITY COMMISSIONER: I could have their nightcaps laundered. 70
- GOVERNOR: Right. And there should be some way of telling which patient is which and what they've got. Stick signs on the beds. In Latin or some foreign language – that's your line Doctor Gibner. Name of patient. When admitted. Name of disease. Likely to die or not ... Hey, and stop the patients smoking such strong tobacco – dark brown spittle everywhere. And chuck out the ones who aren't that ill. Two to a bed looks bad, even if it does keep 'em warm. The Inspector'll think we've got a useless doctor. 75
- CHARITY COMMISSIONER: Oh, as far as doctoring goes, don't worry about Doctor Gibner. He believes in nature cures – time is a great healer. We never use expensive drugs. Man's a simple creature: if he's going to die, he's going to die and vice versa. Anyway, Doctor Gibner doesn't waste his valuable time chattering to patients. They couldn't understand him if he did. Even for a German his Russian is worse than normal. 80
- DOCTOR GIBNER: Das habe ich schon gesagt –
- They all react blankly in a momentary freeze of incomprehension.*
- GOVERNOR: And you, Amos, take a look at that courthouse of yours. The porters are keeping geese in the vestibule, the geese are having goslings and the public keep tripping over the goslings. I know it's patriotic to keep poultry, but there's a time and a place ... 90
- JUDGE: Right. I'll have them shifted to the kitchen today. Would you care to drop round for dinner tonight? 95
- GOVERNOR: Another thing, that judge's office of yours. It's not exactly a shining example of the majesty of the law. Bearskins nailed up to dry on the oak panelling. Riding crops and saddles muddled up with the writs and summonses. I know you like hunting but can't you clear your equipment away till this Inspector's been and gone? 100
- JUDGE: Absolutely.

- GOVERNOR: And that clerk of yours ... Clever as they come, I grant you, but he smells like a distillery. I'd have mentioned it before, but it slipped my mind. Make him chew raw onions and garlic. Or maybe Doctor Gibner could give him something?
- DOCTOR GIBNER: Sein Sie ruhig!
- JUDGE: Can't do much about that clerk. He says his nurse dropped him on his head when he was a baby and ever since then he's had this slight aroma of vodka. 110
- GOVERNOR: Just thought I'd mention it. Now ... 'We all have our little failings', as my friend Andrey puts it. I know you can't change human nature but ...
- JUDGE: Well, there's human nature and human nature. 115
- GOVERNOR: Yes. And there's bribes.
- JUDGE: Well, there's bribes and bribes, aren't there? Everyone knows I only accept borzoi puppies.
- GOVERNOR: Puppies or roubles – a bribe's a bribe.
- JUDGE: That's a bit strong. If someone feels like giving you a five hundred rouble fur coat, or, say, an Oriental shawl for your wife ... 120
- GOVERNOR: What do I care if you take borzoi puppies? But you're an unbeliever. You're never in church. At least I'm a good Christian, church every Sunday. But you ... When you start questioning the Creation, my hair stands on end, it really does. 125
- JUDGE: I've come to certain conclusions about the creation of the world by using my own brain.
- GOVERNOR: There's such a thing as too much brain. Anyway, your borzoi puppies won't save you if the Inspector calls on your courthouse. Then it won't be borzois, it'll be bloodhounds. *(To the Superintendent.)* Right Luka, you're supposed to be Superintendent of Schools, so it's up to you to do something about these peculiar teachers of ours. I know they're a brainy bunch, educated in all sorts of places, but they're odd as sabre-toothed reindeers. There's that geography teacher. Three years at the school and he still has to ask his way home. And the maths master with the big fat face. Pulls horrible faces all the time, like this. *(He makes a face.)* Of course it's all right when he pulls faces at a pupil – it could be a new teaching method, I wouldn't know – but what if he goes like this *(he pulls a face)* at the Inspector? 130
- SUPERINTENDENT: Can't do much with him. When we had that royal visit he pulled a face like a walrus and seemed to get stuck with it. And I got told off for encouraging him to be a freethinker. 135
- GOVERNOR: Try and make him stay home. Hide his pony. And that history teacher. Knows his stuff, but he's mad as a meat-axe. I heard him once. He was all right when he was on about the Assyrians and the Babylonians, boring but good. But when he came to Alexander the Great he went berserk. You'd have thought there was a fire. He jumped up on his desk and smashed his chair on the floor and called for another chair and smashed it too and soon all the boys were passing him their chairs ... Well, of course Alexander the Great was a distinguished monarch, but why smash chairs? Municipal property. 140
- SUPERINTENDENT: He does get carried away. I gave him a little lecture about it, but he just said 'You must do what you imagine is your duty, 155

- Superintendent, but I would gladly die on the battlefield for education.'
- GOVERNOR: Yes, well, it's a queer world. Intellectuals are always a bit touched. They either get lost or pull faces or bust up the furniture.
- SUPERINTENDENT: God help anyone who goes in for teaching. 165
- GOVERNOR: It'd be all right, all right ... if he wasn't coming incognito. Any minute he may pop in and say 'Ah, there you all are. Who's the judge in this town?' 'Lyapkin-Tyapkin'. 'Come along with us, Lyapkin-Tyapkin. And who's in charge of the hospital?' 'Zemlyanika.' 'Zemlyanika, step this way.' It's really frightening. 170
- The door opens and they all jump guiltily, except **Doctor Gibner**. The **Postmaster** comes in.*
- POSTMASTER: What's up? What's all this stuff about an inspector?
- GOVERNOR: Haven't you heard? 175
- POSTMASTER: Bobchinsky mentioned it. He just dropped by the post office.
- GOVERNOR: What d'you make of it?
- POSTMASTER: What do I make of it? I think it means war with Turkey.
- JUDGE: Absolutely. Just what I said.
- POSTMASTER: War with Turkey! All due to those bloody frogs. 180
- GOVERNOR: *(scornfully)* War against Turkey? You're daft! War against us is more like it. We're going to be blown up, not the Turks. That's what this letter says.
- POSTMASTER: Oh, that's different. There'll be no war with Turkey!
- GOVERNOR: What does it all mean, Postmaster? How do you feel? 185
- POSTMASTER: Bewildered mostly. How about you?
- GOVERNOR: I face the future with confidence. But, I'm a bit bothered about the local merchants. They reckon I've been too demanding. Well, I may have encouraged them to make me little seasonal gifts, but I've been fair, for a Police Governor, I've been fair. *(Taking the **Postmaster** aside.)* Look, I fancy someone's put in a complaint about me. If not, why's this Petersburg snooper coming here? Listen, Ivan, this is for your own good as well as mine. Can't you take every letter that comes into your post office and well, just steam it open a little, you know, and skip through it. Then, if it's not denouncing anyone, you could seal it up and have it delivered. 190
- POSTMASTER: You don't have to tell me. Why d'you think I keep the samovar going all day? I've been steaming for ages. Not just for security, mind. It's more that I like to know about current affairs and that. And I am partial to a good read, aren't you? 195
- GOVERNOR: Anything in those letters about an inspector from St Petersburg?
- POSTMASTER: Nothing about inspectors from Petersburg. But plenty about officials from Kostroma and Saratov. It's a shame you haven't read those letters. Unputdownable, some of them. Other day an army lieutenant wrote to his friend, describing a ball – very playful style, very vivid. 'I am, dear friend,' he wrote – to his friend – 'wallowing in the Elysian fields, surrounded by young ladies, with music playing and flags wagging.' Oh, he described it with great feeling. That's one I kept. Would you like a read of it? 200
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- GOVERNOR: Not now, Ivan. But look, if you find a letter with any moan or accusations, don't hesitate – file it.
- POSTMASTER: My pleasure, your Excellency.
- JUDGE: You know, they could really break you for this.
- POSTMASTER: I wouldn't like that.
- GOVERNOR: Nonsense. This isn't a public matter. Just a private arrangement. 220
- JUDGE: Well remember, boiling water cools no chilblains. Actually, Anton, I was going to drop round with a little dog for you. Sister to that dog you know, you know. Have you heard that Cheptovich and Varchovinsky have started suing each other? Suits me. Now I can shoot hares on Cheptovich's land one day and Varchovinsky's land the next. 225
- GOVERNOR: I can't think about your hares. My head's full of that incognito devil. What really gets me is that all we can do is sit here. And wait. Wait for the door to burst open and ...
- The door bursts open. Everyone, except the **Doctor**, jumps. Enter, panting, **Bobchinsky** and **Dobchinsky**.* 230
- BOBCHINSKY: Amazing news!
- DOBCHINSKY: Incredible goings-on!
- ALL: What's up? What happened? What went on? (*Etc.*)
- DOBCHINSKY: The mind boggles! I pop into the inn ... 235
- BOBCHINSKY: And I pop into the inn with Dobchinsky ...
- DOBCHINSKY: Let me tell them the story, Bobchinsky.
- BOBCHINSKY: No, no, let me do it. You can't tell a story like I tell a story.
- DOBCHINSKY: You'll muddle it up. He muddles it up. You'll leave out the best bits. 240
- BOBCHINSKY: No. I'll put in the best bits. The worst bits as well. Leave it to me, Dobchinsky.
- DOBCHINSKY: But, Bobchinsky ...
- BOBCHINSKY: Oh, make him shut up!
- GOVERNOR: For Christ's sake, let's have it. Spare my blood pressure. Take a seat, Petr. 245
- Dobchinsky** and **Bobchinsky** both try to sit in it.*
- GOVERNOR: Now, what's all the fuss about?
- BOBCHINSKY: Right. I'll start at the beginning and then do the middle bit and finish up at the end. After you told me about your letter, after you were so upset, yes, I went and called on – let me finish, let me finish, Dobchinsky! I know everything, everything, everything! So I slipped in to see Korobkin, but he was out, so I nipped over to Rastovsky's, but he wasn't home, so I whipped into the post office to tell Ivan your news and coming out of there who should I bump into but Dobchinsky? 250
- DOBCHINSKY: Right by the hot pie stall.
- BOBCHINSKY: Right by the hot pie stall. So I met Dobchinsky and I said to him, I said, 'Have you heard about the Governor's letter?' and he had, from your housekeeper Avdotya down at the bottleshop, I don't know what she was doing there ... 255
- DOBCHINSKY: Fetching a keg to put French brandy in.
- BOBCHINSKY: Fetching a keg to put French brandy in – let me finish, let me finish. So we toddled over to Pochechuyev and on the way 260
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	Dobchinsky said to me – ‘Why don’t we drift into the inn? My stomach’s been rumbling all morning.’ My stomach – that’s Dobchinsky’s stomach. ‘They’ve got some fresh salmon in,’ he said, ‘We could have a little snack,’ he added. Right, so there we were, ensconced in the inn, when a young man –	275
DOBCHINSKY:	Very smart, but not in uniform	
BOBCHINSKY:	Very smart, but not in uniform, was pacing round the room. He was thinking, thinking very deeply, you could tell by his face. Yes, his face – it was a study – a brainy face, very brainy. I had this funny feeling, so I said to Dobchinsky ‘Something’s up, you know.’ And he did know, because he called Vlass, the landlord over. Vlass’s wife produced three weeks back – such a bright little chap! He’ll be like his father and run the bar some day. Well, we had a word with Vlass and Dobchinsky put it to him, very quietly ‘Who’s that young feller? Eh?’ and Vlass said – let me finish, let me finish – you’ll get it all wrong and anyway you lisp and whistle through that gap in your teeth. So Vlass said ‘That young man works for the government. In Petersburg. Says he’s off to Saratov. His name’s Ivan Khlestakov and he’s an odd customer. Been here two weeks, orders everything on tick and doesn’t pay a kopeck.’ And when he said that – I realised. And I said to Dobchinsky, I said ‘Funny.’	280
DOBCHINSKY:	No, Bobchinsky, I said it first. ‘Funny,’ I said.	
ALL:	Out with it. What was funny? You realised what?	285
BOBCHINSKY:	(<i>unruffled</i>) Well perhaps you said ‘funny’ first.	290
BOBCHINSKY:	} ‘Funny.’	
BOBCHINSKY:	And then we said ‘Why’s he sitting here if he’s off to Saratov?’ This is the one, all right.	
GOVERNOR:	What one?	295
BOBCHINSKY:	The one you had that letter about. The Government Inspector.	
GOVERNOR:	(<i>afraid</i>) Impossible. God help us. It can’t be.	
DOBCHINSKY:	He must be. Hangs around the town. Never pays cash. Who else could he be? And he’s got someone with him.	
GOVERNOR:	Who’s with him?	300
DOBCHINSKY:	His manservant. Allegedly.	
GOVERNOR:	Allegedly ...	
BOBCHINSKY:	But, this young Khlestakov ... Oh. He’s got eyes like gimlets. Nothing escapes him. He even noticed that we were eating salmon – because of Dobchinsky’s stomach, you know. And he came over to our table. And he scrutinised our plates. I was petrified.	305
GOVERNOR:	My God! Which room have they put him in?	
DOBCHINSKY:	Number five, under the stairs.	
BOBCHINSKY:	The one where those Cossacks had that fight last year.	310
GOVERNOR:	Two weeks! He’s been watching us for two weeks! Dear Christ! In the last two weeks the sergeant’s widow’s been flogged. And the prisoners haven’t been fed. And the streets are full of ice and rubbish and beggars. The whole town’s like a snowball full of turds. He’ll destroy me!	315
CHARITY COMMISSIONER:	Well ... Shall we go and see him as a group?	
GOVERNOR:	No, no! There are some ordeals that a man must face alone. I’ve had some rough times in the past, but I always survived. With God’s help, of course. Perhaps ... He’s a young chap is he?	320

- DOBCHINSKY: About twenty-three, twenty-four at most.
GOVERNOR: So much the better. Young men are easier to manipulate. The older they get, the tougher. Gentlemen, get your own affairs in order. I will go alone, or perhaps with Petr ... Yes, we'll wander round to inspect the inn and make sure they treat their guests properly. Svistunov! 32
- Enter Svistunov, a police constable. (The name means whistler.)*
- SVISTUNOV: Sir!
GOVERNOR: Go and fetch the Police Inspector – no, I'll be needing you – go and fetch someone else to go and fetch the Police Inspector and then get yourself back here. 330
- Exit Svistunov.*
- CHARITY COMMISSIONER: Let's be off. We've all got a few things to tidy up, I suppose.
JUDGE: Not so bad for you. A few clean nightcaps for your patients, and you're sledding on greased runners. 335
- CHARITY COMMISSIONER: Nightcaps are easy. But, the whole hospital reeks of cabbage soup.
JUDGE: Well, I don't suppose he'll deign to poke his nose into my courthouse. Too bad if he does, of course. There's a cupboard marked 'Official Court Reports,' but it's full of trophies of the chase. 340
- CHARITY COMMISSIONER: Stuffed animals?
JUDGE: Well, yes ...
- The Governor, Charity Commissioner, Schools Superintendent, Doctor Gibner and Postmaster start to go out but collide in the doorway with Constable Svistunov, who is returning. The Governor remains with Bobchinsky, Dobchinsky and Svistunov.* 345
- GOVERNOR: Right. Where's Constable Prokhorov?
SVISTUNOV: Laid up, sir. Unfit for duty. 350
GOVERNOR: What do you mean?
SVISTUNOV: Staggered back this morning dead drunk, your Excellency.
GOVERNOR: My God! Get out in the street and – no, run upstairs and fetch my sword and my new hat. 355
- Svistunov goes into the house.*
- GOVERNOR: Right, Dobchinsky, let's be off.
BOBCHINSKY: Me too, me too. Let me come too.
GOVERNOR: No, it'd begin to look like a deputation.
BOBCHINSKY: I wouldn't come in. I'd use the keyhole. 360
- Svistunov comes back with the sword and hat-box.*
- GOVERNOR: Run along and get some women with snowshovels to scoop a road between here and the inn. Look – my grand sword of office, all tarnished. That wily old merchant, Abdulin – he was meant to polish it up. Probably forgot by mistake on purpose. Tradesmen! Expect they're getting a list of 365

complaints about me written out for the Inspector at this moment. Get them to clear that bloody snow. And you watch out, Constable Svistunov. I know you. Not above slipping a little cutlery into our jackboots, are we? And your little game with Chernyayev the draper, eh? He gives you two yards of cloth for a coat and you nick the whole roll. Watch out. Off you go!

Enter the Police Inspector.

POLICE INSPECTOR:	Ah, there you are, Stepan. Where have you been hiding?	375
GOVERNOR:	At the gates, watching out for trouble. The trouble's been inside the gates for the last two weeks. There's an inspector here from Petersburg. What have you done about it?	
POLICE INSPECTOR:	Like you told me. I've sent Constable Pugovitzyn to form a street-sweeping party.	380
GOVERNOR:	And where's Constable Derzhimorda?	
POLICE INSPECTOR:	Out with the fire pumps clearing the beggars.	
GOVERNOR:	But Prokhorov's dead drunk. How did that happen?	
POLICE INSPECTOR:	God knows. Yesterday there was a fight at the monastery. He went to sort it out and he came back pissed.	385
GOVERNOR:	Listen. Stick that tall constable, Pugovitzyn, on the bridge. He'll make a good impression, being so tall. Pull down that shabby old fence by the cobbler's and stick some poles in the ground. Give him the idea something's being planned. The more you pull down the more it'll look like enlightened civic government. Oh, God, I forgot! Everyone's been tipping rubbish over that fence for months. There's forty cartloads of stinking garbage there. What a horrible little town. Put up an elegant monument, a park, even a fence and they'll turn it into a dump. <i>(He sighs.)</i> Well, cover it with snow or something. And if this Inspector asks any of our constables 'Any complaints?' the right answer is 'No complaints at all, your Excellency.' And if anyone's got a complaint, I'll give 'em a complaint that's incurable. Oh, God. I have done those things that I ought not to have done and I have left undone a few things that I ought to have done and I have left undone a few things that I ought not to have done, too. <i>(He picks up the hatbox.)</i> See me through this, O God, and I'll light you the biggest candle the world has ever seen. Every merchant will contribute half a ton of wax. Oh, my God. Let's go, Dobchinsky. <i>(He puts on the hatbox instead of the hat.)</i>	390 395
POLICE INSPECTOR:	That's the hatbox, your Excellency, not the hat.	
GOVERNOR:	<i>(throwing the box away)</i> To hell with hatboxes! And if the Inspector asks why we haven't built that hospital chapel, the one we raised funds for a few years back – say we started building it, but it burnt itself down. I sent in a report about it. Some sort of report. I think. And tell Constable Derzhimorda to go easy with his fists. He seems to imagine that justice consists of giving black eyes to everyone. Let's go, Dobchinsky, and you, Bobchinsky. <i>(He starts to leave but returns.)</i> And don't let the soldiers roam around the streets half-naked. Underneath those great-coats all they wear is their nightshirts. Don't ask me, for God's sake, how I know.	400 405 410 415

They leave. Enter, running, Anna Andreyeva and daughter Marya.

- ANNA: Where've they all got to? Where've they gone? *(She opens the door to the hall.)* Anton! Anton! *(To Marya.)* It's all your fault, Marya Antonovna, with your fussing around and your 'whoops, there goes a hairpin' and your 'can't find my scarf.' *(She runs to the window and calls.)* Anton! Where are you off to? Has he come then? The Government Inspector of course! Has he got a moustache? What sort of moustache? 425
- GOVERNOR: *(off)* Later, my dear, later!
- ANNA: Later! That's a revealing bit of news, isn't it? He's gone! 430
I'll not forget this, my girl. All your fault with your 'Mother, Mother, wait a minute. Help me fasten myself up, Mother.' And so I waited a minute, and we know nothing. Just because you heard the Postmaster clumping around downstairs, you started preening in front of the mirror. You think he's after you, but you should see the faces he makes when your back's turned. 435
- MARYA: Doesn't matter much, mother. We'll know all about everything in a couple of hours.
- ANNA: A couple of hours! Thank you very much. I am much obliged. 440
And in a couple of months, perhaps, we'll hear even more. Hey, Dobchinsky! Come back here. *(Dobchinsky rushes back.)* What's he like? This inspector?
- DOBCHINSKY: The Governor didn't say. He's in an awful hurry.
- Dobchinsky rushes off.* 445
- ANNA: Come back here at once! *(Dobchinsky rushes back.)* You should have grabbed him and stopped him and forced him to describe the man. Well, don't just stand there – listen! Run after that carriage! Hang on! Get after them, pick up a builder's ladder on the way, climb up it, look through the window and find out the lot! 450
- DOBCHINSKY: Find out what?
- ANNA: What colour eyes he's got, black or otherwise. Complexion – red, white or blue – and a full description of his moustache. Then back here and report to me. Hurry, hurry, hurry! 455

Exit Dobchinsky.

SCENE TWO

A small room at the top of the inn, underneath the stairs. In it is a rickety bed, so placed that if you sit up suddenly you are certain to hit your head against the underside of the stairs. There is a chair set upon a card-table with one broken leg, and an expiring armchair. 460

On the walls are a few pictures – a long engraving of a battle scene with soldiers in three-cornered hats carrying huge drums and slender lances; besides that a huge, grimy oil painting of some flowers and fruit, half a water melon, a boar's head and a hanging, dead wild duck. There is a mirror 465

which is broken so that you get four eyes instead of two.

Hanging from the ceiling is a chandelier in a holland covering, much too big for the room and covered in rust. A skylight is beside it.

On the floor, in one corner, is an abominable collection of objects, heaped up and mostly obscured by the dust of ages. Protruding from the pile is the shaft of a wooden spade, also a few shoes. More recent and thus recognisable additions to the pile include horsecollars, rope, a couple of sheepskins and a clock with four hands and a bent pendulum. **Osip** is lying on the bed.

475

OSIP:

Hunger's a terrible thing, you know. My belly's rumbling like a bleeding volcano. And the way things are going, we'll never get home. More than two months since we left St Pete's. He's frittered and squandered for hundreds of miles and now all he can do is go to ground in the capital city of Nowhere. And he had plenty of cash, more than plenty, but everywhere we stayed he had to come on like a millionaire. (He mimics **Khlestakov**.) 'Hey, Osip, run along and book a room, the best in town. And order me a six- or seven-course meal. I can't digest cheap food.' Be different if he was somebody. But, he's just a jumped-up little clerk, hasn't jumped up very far and now he's fallen flat on his face. He meets a stranger – out comes a pack of cards – and he's done it again! That's the pattern, and I'm sick of it. Really, I'd do better to settle down in the country. There's not much excitement but there's not much trouble. You just find a woman, lie down by the stove and spend your life eating hot pies. Hot pies!

480

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Ah, well, tell you the truth, you can't beat life in Petersburg. So long as you've got the cash, it's the height of civilisation. Theatre! Opera! Dancing dogs! They've got the lot. You saunter round the market stalls, everyone calls you 'honourable sir'. Cross on a ferry and you find you're rubbing shoulders with a government official. Or an army officer wearing a golden medal will tell you anecdotes of life under canvas or explain the meaning of every star in the sky. Or you may find yourself kissing the hand of an officer's wife, or a pretty young parlour maid may smile at you and serve you with salted cod. (He smiles and shakes his head.) And there's never a cross word, never a dirty look in Petersburg. And if your feet are getting frayed, jump in a cab and sit back like a lord, and if you've got no money, that's all right, every house has a side gate, you nip through and you've done the vanishing trick.

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But this is different. Six- or seven-course meals one week. Fasting unto bursting the next – like now. It's all his bloody fault. His dad sends him money. But does he save it? No. He's out on the razzle: cab rides, theatre tickets, rings on his fingers and bells on his – and next week he sends you down to Uncle's to pop his new tail-coat. Worth a hundred and fifty, but he'll pawn it to raise twenty. And why? Because he's skiving off work, that's why. Because he

515

520

should be in the office totting up government accounts. He's swanning down the boulevard, down a back-street and into a card game with the devil, a couple of vultures and an octopus. Ah, if only your old dad could see you now. You may be a civil servant, but he'd civil servant your bum for you till you couldn't ... but, knowing you, you'd play cards standing up.

Just now the landlord told me he wouldn't give me any more food till the bill's paid. (*Sighing.*) Oh God, if you would only grant me some cabbage soup. I think I could eat the whole of Russia. With Japan for afters.

*There is a sudden earthquake in the bed. **Khlestakov** has been down in the bed, asleep. He sits up indignantly. He wears an overcoat.*

- KHLESTAKOV: Get out of my bed. 535
 OSIP: Thought it was our bed.
 KHLESTAKOV: It's my shift.
 OSIP: I'm only taking up the edge.
 KHLESTAKOV: It's not your shift. You're absorbing the warmth of the bed. You're dishevelling the sheets. 540
 OSIP: (*standing*) I can take a hint. I'll walk up and down. Lovely walking up and down. Warms the blood.
 KHLESTAKOV: Look in the bag. Maybe there's some tobacco left.
 OSIP: (*looking in the bag*) You smoked the last of it four days ago. Before you tried smoking the carpet. 545
- Khlestakov** leaps out of bed. He paces up and down, then confronts **Osip**.*
- KHLESTAKOV: (*loudly*) Hey! Listen to me, Osip.
 OSIP: What is it?
 KHLESTAKOV: (*still loud, but not so determined*) Osip, I want you to go there. 550
 OSIP: Go where?
 KHLESTAKOV: (*wheedling*) To the kitchen. Tell them that the gentleman in room five requires his lunch.
 OSIP: No. I'm not that keen on going. 555
 KHLESTAKOV: But you're my servant. You're responsible for my welfare.
 OSIP: Look, even if I do go, it won't do any good. Landlord told me: no more lunches.
 KHLESTAKOV: That must be illegal. I'm a traveller.
 OSIP: Well, you haven't been travelling for the past two weeks. Anyway, the landlord says he'll tell the Police Governor that you won't pay up. You and your master, he said to me, are a couple of swindlers and your master's a right villain. 560
 KHLESTAKOV: You're enjoying this, aren't you?
 OSIP: He said to me, 'You're a pair of crooks. You move in here, live it up, run up a bill you can't pay and then think you can sit tight and call for the bloody menu. I'm off to see the Governor,' he said to me, 'and you'll end up in a hostelry in Siberia on black bread and dirty water.' 565
 KHLESTAKOV: That's enough of that. You go and teach him manners, Osip.
 OSIP: I could ask him to come and have a natter with you.
 KHLESTAKOV: No, I don't really hit it off with him for some reason. You go. 570

- OSIP:
KHLESTAKOV: Anything you say.
The hell with it! Fetch the landlord! (*Osip goes out.*
Khlestakov takes off his overcoat to reveal rather fashionable clothes.) Hunger's a terrible thing, you know. I thought maybe I could walk off my hunger, but it's worse than ever. You can't run away from your stomach, as the old people say. If I hadn't gone on the booze in Penza, I'd have had the cash to get home. It was that infantry captain finished me off. Must've been a conjurer before he joined up. Talk about a shifty shuffler! Fifteen minutes, and he cleaned me out. Wish I could've got my own back, but I didn't have the capital. What a nasty little town this is! Bloody shopkeepers won't put an onion on the slate. The mean-mindedness of the provinces! 580
- Khlestakov walks up and down whistling. Enter Osip and the Waiter in tow. The Waiter has a red face and a permanent, forgiving smile.*
- WAITER: Lovely day, sir. Landlord sent me. 590
KHLESTAKOV: Lovely day if you like skeletons. How's business?
WAITER: Thriving, thriving, thank the Lord.
KHLESTAKOV: Plenty of customers?
WAITER: Very nice crowd, sir, yes, very nice.
KHLESTAKOV: Waiter. Waiter – listen. I've had no meal today. Let's have a bite of dinner, eh? I've got an important after-dinner engagement. So, I've got to have some dinner first, haven't I? The landlord says 'No more dinners for number five.' He's going to talk to the Governor about you. 595
- WAITER: Talk to the Governor? What for? Look, waiter, I need food!
KHLESTAKOV: Take a good look at me. Emaciation can go no further. I need a good, big hot meal. And that's nothing to grin about. 600
- WAITER: I'm sorry, sir. I smile because I'm happy. I'm happy because I'm saved. Because Jesus died for my sins. But the landlord says, 'No more meals till number five pays his bill.' 605
- KHLESTAKOV: Explain to him. Appeal to him. Money is not the issue. Or does he want to find my bones gathering dust upon his carpet?
WAITER: Very well, sir. God bless you.
- Exit the Waiter. Also Osip.* 610
- KHLESTAKOV: God bless – Oh, if I don't get a meal. It's terrible. Genuine hunger pangs! I suppose I could sell my trousers. Or eat them? No, it's better to starve and arrive home wearing a suit cut in Petersburg. What a pity they wouldn't let me rent a carriage without a deposit. It would have been wonderful to arrive home in a troika, to go thundering over the landscape to visit one of those grand houses where the gentry live, with Osip wearing my gilded livery. The driveway crowded with barouches, their lanterns gleaming, a couple of gendarmes posted beside the great white doors, a babel of postillions' cries as footmen with flaring torches in their hands leap forward to greet the slim and distinguished figure of the mysterious stranger. At the upper windows, the feminine excitement is unbounded. 'Who can he be? An 615
- 620

ambassador? A prince?' And then the voice of the master of the house booms out through the great hall: 'Ivan from Petersburg.' The whole family pull on their tiaras and hurry down to greet me. And there I stand in the light of the chandeliers. Poised. Suave. An inclination of the head, the slightest of smiles as I raise the hand of a young princess to my lips. 'May I be permitted ...' Ooh! It's a terrible thing to starve!

630

Osip comes in, followed by the **Waiter** carrying a tray of food.

KHLESTAKOV:
OSIP:

Well?
Dinner is served.

635

Khlestakov pulls the chair off the table and sits on it.

KHLESTAKOV:
WAITER:
KHLESTAKOV:
WAITER:
KHLESTAKOV:
WAITER:
KHLESTAKOV:
WAITER:
KHLESTAKOV:

Dinner! Dinner!
This is your last lunch. The landlord said so.
Landlord! May he rot in ...
Sir!
What's for dinner?
Turnip soup and cold veal.
Only a two-course dinner?
That's all, sir.

640

Ridiculous! I'll cancel my order! Go and tell him I need three courses at least! Four!

645

WAITER:
KHLESTAKOV:
WAITER:
KHLESTAKOV:

The landlord says two's more than you deserve, sir.
All right, why is there no gravy on the cold veal?
Because there is no gravy.

650

You deny the existence of gravy? But this morning, passing the kitchen, I saw a great big bowl of gravy under a cloud of gravy-steam and I took a sniff and ... and then I took a short cut through the dining room and there were two little fellers feeding their faces with salmon. Do you claim that there is no such thing as salmon?

655

WAITER:
KHLESTAKOV:

Well, sir, yes and no.
Are there no chops? No caviar? No mountain ashberry tart soaked in corn brandy?

WAITER:
KHLESTAKOV:
WAITER:
KHLESTAKOV:

They would be for special customers.
You're an evil man.
I am sir, but Jesus loves me.

660

Jesus. Look, what's so special about these special customers?

WAITER:
KHLESTAKOV:

They pay for their food, sir.
It's wicked. I'll ignore you. *(He ladles out soup and eats.)*
Turnip soup? It's washing-up soup! It doesn't taste of anything except earth. Waiter! This soup is not to my liking. There are lumps in it.

665

WAITER:
KHLESTAKOV:

I'll take it away, sir. The landlord says if you don't like it, you can lump it.

670

(protecting his soup from being taken away) Don't touch it, you soup-thief! This may be how you treat your ordinary customers, but I'm not ordinary. *(He drinks more soup.)*
Good grief! I'm the only man in the world who could swallow this stuff. There's a little yellow beak in it. And some

675

- newspaper. (*He tries to read it.*) 'Cotton yarn, jute yarn, alpaca, mohair and woollen flannel were in demand, but ... You may finish the soup, Osip. (*He cuts the veal.*) Waiter, this substance is not veal.
- WAITER: (*interested*) What is it, then, sir?
- KHLESTAKOV: Embalmed blubber? It should be a criminal offence. Wonder what the special customers are eating? If you try to chew it, it sort of sucks your teeth out of your gums. Isn't there anything else? 685
- WAITER: No, sir.
- KHLESTAKOV: It's highway robbery! No gravy. No mountain ashberry tart. It's an insult to the human stomach!
- The Waiter and Osip clear away the food and leave.*
- (*Clutching his stomach.*) The void! I ate just enough to make me really hungry. If I had the money I'd send out to the market to buy a humble little roll. 690
- Osip comes back.*
- OSIP: The Police Governor's turned up. He's with the landlord asking about the gentlemen in number five. 695
- KHLESTAKOV: (*scared*) What? That bloody landlord's called in the law already? What if he sticks me in jail? Well, if they feed me like a gentleman I might ... No, no. I won't go. The whole town'd talk. And they think of me as rather ... distinguished. Especially that pretty redhead in the baker's shop. No, I'll not be arrested. What does he think I am – a shopkeeper? A plumber? (*He screws up his courage and straightens up.*) I'll tell him to his face. 'What the hell do you think you're doing? How dare you?' 700
- The Governor comes in, sees Khlestakov and stops. Both men are scared stiff. They stare at each other in silence, without moving. The Governor recovers first, and stands to attention.* 705
- GOVERNOR: May I present my compliments to you?
- Dobchinsky creeps in.* 710
- KHLESTAKOV: And mine to you, too.
- GOVERNOR: I hope I'm not butting in ...
- KHLESTAKOV: Not in the slightest.
- GOVERNOR: As governor of this town it's my privilege to ensure that everything goes smoothly for important people. 715
- KHLESTAKOV: (*stammering at first, but loud towards the end of his speech*) But what can I do? I haven't done anything. I'm going to pay, of course I'm going to pay.
- Bobchinsky peeps round the door.*
- KHLESTAKOV: You can blame it on the landlord. His veal's like India rubber. The soup's like mud. Thin mud! The tea tastes of smoked mackerel. The whole inn's a national disgrace! Why should I

- be forced to ...
- GOVERNOR: (*intimidated*) Please forgive me. It really isn't my fault. Our town's famous for good meat. I can't think where the landlord buys such rubbish. But, since you're unhappy here, perhaps I can offer you more appropriate accommodation. 730
- KHLESTAKOV: Never. I'm not leaving. Appropriate accommodation! You mean the jail, don't you? I know my rights. How dare you? I'll ... I'm employed by the government in Petersburg. I, I, I ...
- GOVERNOR: (*aside*) Oh, Lord! He's furious. He knows everything. Those damned shopkeepers must have spilled the beans. 735
- KHLESTAKOV: (*getting bolder*) Bring in the Cossacks, but I won't go! The only place I'll go is to the ministry! To the minister! (*He bangs his fist on the table.*) What do you think of that?
- GOVERNOR: (*very scared*) Sir. Please. I must throw myself on your mercy. Please don't ruin my career. I have a wife. Little children. Don't destroy me!
- KHLESTAKOV: And because you've got a wife and children, I have to go to jail? Wonderful! 740
- Bobchinsky** looks in, then draws back, terrified.
- KHLESTAKOV: No, thank you very much! You'll not take me there.
- GOVERNOR: (*trembling*) I'm not a worldly man, your Excellency. God knows it was just my inexperience and unworldliness! And my pathetic salary. Work it out for yourself – my official salary wouldn't even keep us in tea and sugar. So, if I have accepted the odd bribe, it was only an innocent little one – to buy a couple of pork chops or some dresses for my daughter. As for the story that I had the sergeant's widow flogged – it's a filthy lie! My enemies invent these stories. Yes, I've got enemies. And I've reason to believe they're plotting to assassinate me. 745
- KHLESTAKOV: Well, that's your problem. (*Thinking.*) Why are you telling me all this, about your enemies and the sergeant's widow? A sergeant's widow is one thing, but you'd better not try flogging me. I wouldn't try it! I'll pay my bill and move on when my money comes through, but till it does I'm staying here. To be honest, I've got no cash whatsoever. 750
- GOVERNOR: (*aside*) Oh, he's crafty! Hinting, hinting. Well, a shout's as good as a whisper to a deaf Kulak, as the old folk say. So long as it was a shout. Better make sure. (*Aloud.*) If you are at all financially embarrassed, you'll find me at your service. Part of my job, you understand. Helping a visitor to enjoy his stay in our little community. 760
- KHLESTAKOV: A loan, that's very civil! Then I can pay that landlord straight away. Two hundred roubles would take care of it, or even less. 765
- GOVERNOR: (*handing over the money*) Two hundred exactly. Don't bother to count it, please.
- KHLESTAKOV: (*accepting the money*) Very kind of you. I'll pay you back as soon as I get home to my place in the country ... Unexpected circumstances ... You're a real gentleman, I can tell. 770
- GOVERNOR: (*aside*) Thank God! He took it! We'll pull through! And I managed to slip him four hundred roubles instead of two hundred. 775
- KHLESTAKOV: Hey, Osip!

Osip enters.

KHLESTAKOV:

Fetch that waiter!

Exit Osip. Khlestakov turns to the Governor and Dobchinsky.

780

GOVERNOR:
KHLESTAKOV:

But why are you standing up? Please take a seat. (*To Dobchinsky.*) Sit yourself down.

It doesn't matter, we've been sitting down a lot.

Do me a favour, sir, and sit down. Now I can see how straightforward and generous you are. I must admit I thought you'd come to ... (*To Dobchinsky.*) Sit down!

785

The Governor and Dobchinsky sit down on the bed, which sags dangerously. Bobchinsky peeps through a skylight and listens.

GOVERNOR:

(*aside*) I'd better take the initiative. He obviously wants to preserve his incognito. All right, we'll do some double-talking too and pretend we don't know who he is. (*Aloud.*) I came round here on business you see, with Petr, one of our leading landowners, to find out how the inn treats visitors to our town. I'm not one of your governors who doesn't bother with things like that. I don't have to do it, of course, but I like to do it, and it's my duty as a Christian to see that every traveller who comes this way is treated like St Christopher treated Our Lord.

790

795

Dobchinsky works this out, doing a little seated mime of St Christopher taking Jesus for a ride on his shoulders.

800

GOVERNOR:

And, like St Christopher, I have my reward – the honour of meeting you, sir.

KHLESTAKOV:

It's rewarding for me, too. If it wasn't for you I'd have been stuck here for ages. Didn't know how I was going to pay my bill!

805

GOVERNOR:

(*aside*) A likely story! He's on government expenses. (*Aloud.*) May I ask where you're travelling to?

KHLESTAKOV:

On my way to the family estate in Saratov Province.

GOVERNOR:

(*aside*) Saratov! And he says it with a straight face! You've got to keep on your toes with this one! (*Aloud.*) How delightful! They can talk about potholes and delays with horses, but the scenery's amusing. And I assume you're travelling for pleasure?

810

KHLESTAKOV:

No, my father told me to come home. He's angry because I haven't been promoted yet. He thinks that as soon as you arrive in St Petersburg they pin the Order of Vladimir on you. He ought to try a week in my office. It's very boring.

815

GOVERNOR:

(*aside*) What a wonderful smokescreen! Nice touch, the old father! (*Aloud.*) Do you expect to be staying with us long?

820

KHLESTAKOV:

I'm not sure yet. You see my dad is a stupid man, stupid. Thick as a tree stump. I'm going to tell him, 'Babble on,' I shall say, 'Babble on, but I tell you, father, I cannot live except in St Pete's. Why should I throw away my life among

- peasants? My heart starves for enlightenment and culture and all that!
- GOVERNOR: *(aside)* What a performance! Cover story after cover story and they all match! But he's a scrawny, sneaky-looking chap. I could crack him like a flea. I'd better put in a word for myself. *(Aloud.)* You're right, there's not much for a man to do in these outlandish places. I mean, look at me. Can't sleep for worrying about municipal problems, wearing myself to a frazzle for the national benefit, leaving no stone unturned for the general good. A slave to duty, you might say, but the Order of Vladimir doesn't grow on trees, not round these parts. Oh no, I'm hidden under a bushel. *(Looking around the room.)* Your room seems rather chilly.
- KHLESTAKOV: It's a filthy, fungussy slum of a room. The only good thing I'll say for it is that the damp patches on the mattress have frozen over so you can have fun watching the bedbugs skating.
- GOVERNOR: It's not good enough! A distinguished guest having to put up with fungus and bugs ... I didn't know there were any bugs in this part of town. Black bugs, are they?
- KHLESTAKOV: Yes. And spotty yellow ones, too.
- GOVERNOR: And it's pretty dark in here, too.
- KHLESTAKOV: Cold and dark. The landlord charges for every candle. So if I want to read a little, or if I'm inspired and feel like writing – well, I can't. Because it's dark, dark, dark.
- GOVERNOR: I wonder if I could ask you ... but, I couldn't. It's not my place.
- KHLESTAKOV: Ask me what?
- GOVERNOR: No! No! I could hardly hope ...
- KHLESTAKOV: What is it? Ask me.
- GOVERNOR: Well, there's a rather tasteful room in my house ... full of light ... very dry ... But, it would be too great an honour! Please don't be angry, I'm a simple man. I just happen to believe in hospitality.
- KHLESTAKOV: Don't worry about it. It would give me the greatest pleasure. How much nicer to reside in a private house, than to be trapped in this flea circus.
- GOVERNOR: I'm overwhelmed – and my wife will be delighted. Even as a child I enjoyed entertaining guests. And such a distinguished guest! But don't think I say that to butter you up! I'm just a blunt countryman. When a thought comes into my head, I just say it. Like the wolf in the butter churn.
- KHLESTAKOV: Me, too. I'm like that. I hate hypocrites. You're a straightforward chap and a warm host, and I like you for it. I don't ask much from people, I don't expect much, frankly, but there are two things I like to see in a man – understanding and consideration for others.
- Enter Osip and the Waiter.*
- WAITER: *(respectfully)* Is there anything I can bring you, sir?
- KHLESTAKOV: The bill, my man!
- WAITER: I gave you the latest one this morning, sir.
- KHLESTAKOV: I can't be expected to keep track of all your daft bills. What's the damage?
- WAITER: Well, the first day you had beef, sir, the second day you had

- salmon and after that you had credit.
 KHLESTAKOV: He's crazy as a bee-keeper. Give us the total.
 GOVERNOR: Please don't trouble yourself with that. The landlord can wait. (*To the Waiter.*) Get out. I'll settle up later.
 KHLESTAKOV: That's right, later, waiter.
- Khlestakov** puts away his money. **Bobchinsky** peeps in through the skylight, leaning a little further this time.* 885
- WAITER: (*leaving*) God bless you both, sirs.
 GOVERNOR: Perhaps you'd like to inspect some of our institutions while you're here?
 KHLESTAKOV: What've you got?
 GOVERNOR: The usual ... It's just a town ... show you round. 890
 KHLESTAKOV: A tour of the town? That sounds fine.
 GOVERNOR: You'd like to study our teaching methods? We could visit the school.
 KHLESTAKOV: Excellent.
 GOVERNOR: Then there's crime prevention. We could have an informal chat with the Inspector at the police station. 895
 KHLESTAKOV: (*suspicious*) The police station? I'm really more interested in your charity work.
 GOVERNOR: Of course. And your assistant?
 OSIP: I'll come too. I'm very interested in charity work. 900
 GOVERNOR: (*to **Dobchinsky***) Listen, you deliver a couple of notes for me, quick as you can: one to Zemlyanika at the hospital and one to my wife. (*To **Khlestakov**.*) D'you mind if I scribble a note to my wife? Tell her to get the room ready for you.
 KHLESTAKOV: Of course. I've got ink, but no paper. Here, use this bill. (*He produces a bill from his pocket.*) 905
 GOVERNOR: That'll do nicely. (*To himself while writing.*) We'll see how things go after a bumper of port and a good dinner. There's a local custom of improving Madeira with vodka. It'll knock out an elephant. 910
- The **Governor** finishes the note and gives it to **Dobchinsky**, but at the same moment **Bobchinsky** falls through the skylight and clings on to the chandelier, which gradually sags down on to the bed, which finally collapses. General exclamations. **Bobchinsky** gets up.* 915
- KHLESTAKOV: Are you all right, there?
 BOBCHINSKY: Quite all right, quite all right. Please don't worry. Just a slight bang on the nose, you know. I'll run over to Doctor Gibner. He has a wonderful nose plaster. You just plop it on your nose and – abracadabra – you feel fit to get married. 920
 GOVERNOR: (*to **Khlestakov***) Take no notice. Shall we go?
- Osip** picks up **Khlestakov's** trunk, which he has been packing.*
- GOVERNOR: After you.
- Khlestakov** goes out. The **Governor** turns on **Bobchinsky**.* 925
- GOVERNOR: If you want to practise falling out of windows, try the bell

tower!

The **Governor** leaves, followed by **Osip** and **Bobchinsky**.

Blackout.

SCENE THREE

930

The drawing room of the **Governor's** house. A warm, plush room, somewhat overdecorated with oil paintings, screens, busts, etc. The furniture should seem slightly too small for the people who sit on it, except for one vast, comfortable leather armchair which is usually reserved for the **Governor**. But in this act, at least, it is only occupied by **Khlestakov** so that he can make himself super-comfortable, even curling up in it like a cat, while the others have to perch and shift. A clock. And a sideboard with bottles. There is a double french window, or period equivalent, at the near centre upstage, but this is covered, through most of Acts One and Two, by velvet curtains. There should be thick rugs, a steaming samovar, a fire blazing – total contrast to the chilly little hutch in the inn scene. There is another window, at which **Marya** and **Anna** are standing.

935

940

945

ANNA:

You see, we've been waiting a whole hour, and all because of your fussing. You were perfectly decently dressed, but you weren't satisfied, were you? You had to keep dawdling and primping. Nobody's coming! They're not coming on purpose to annoy me. It looks like the whole world's dead.

950

MARYA:

Honestly Mother, we'll know all about it in two ticks!

ANNA:

(*disgusted*) Two ticks!

MARYA:

Dobchinsky must be back soon. Ooh, look, Mama, someone's coming. Look, right down at the end of the street.

ANNA:

Where? You're over-imaginative! Oh! There is somebody. Who is it? Little fat feller. Who is it? You know I'm short-sighted.

955

MARYA:

It's Dobchinsky, Mama.

ANNA:

Dobchinsky, indeed! Rubbish! Dobchinsky can't move that fast, I mean quickly. (*She waves her handkerchief.*) Hey, you! get a move on.

960

MARYA:

Honestly, Mama, it's Dobchinsky.

ANNA:

You're just saying that to fluster me. 'Course it's not Dobchinsky.

MARYA:

There you are! It is Dobchinsky. Told you so.

965

ANNA:

All right, it's Dobchinsky. What are you arguing about? (*She shouts out of the window.*) Hurry up then! Stop loitering. Where are they? You what? No, tell me from where you are, I can hear you. What? Very stern is he? And how's my husband? (*She moves back from the window.*) He's hopeless, won't tell me anything till he comes in.

970

Enter **Dobchinsky** sprinting and panting.

Come on, out with it! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? I counted on you, Dobchinsky I counted on you. And you just

- dashed away with the rest of the pack! Like the snake in the haystack. And I'm stuck here for hours without knowing what's up. I was godmother to your Vanichka and Lizanka and this is all the thanks I get.
- DOBCHINSKY: Just a minute. I'm puffed out. How are you, (*Gulps.*) Marya?
- MARYA: Good afternoon, Petr. 980
- ANNA: Good afternoon, good night, good morning and what's up?
- DOBCHINSKY: Anton sent you a note.
- ANNA: But who's the stranger? A general?
- DOBCHINSKY: Not exactly a general, but as good as. Very educated. Very good manners. 985
- ANNA: So it's the one my husband had the letter about.
- DOBCHINSKY: Precisely. And it was me that found him. Me and Bobchinsky.
- ANNA: Tell us about it, then.
- DOBCHINSKY: Well, everything's all right, thank God. So far. At first he was a little brusque with Anton. Yes. He was very vexed and he said the inn was terrible and he wouldn't go to jail because of that. But, when he found out it wasn't the Governor's fault and got to know him better, he calmed down, and then, thank God, everything went like clockwork. They've gone for a tour of the town. I think the Governor reckoned at first that there'd been a confidential complaint about him. And I wasn't so happy myself. 990
- ANNA: Why should you be worried? You're not a government servant. 995
- DOBCHINSKY: Important people make me nervous.
- ANNA: Never mind about that. What's he like? Old or young?
- DOBCHINSKY: Young! A young man! About twenty-three. But he talks like an old man. 'There's an old head with a young face,' I said to myself. And he talks with natural dignity. (*Making dignified gestures as he demonstrates.*) 'Let this be done, and that. I will visit this place, and this place. How nice! How very nice! I like to read sometimes,' he said, 'and I write too, when the inspiration comes on. What a shame this room is so dark.' 1000
- ANNA: Is he dark? Or fair?
- DOBCHINSKY: Dark, very dark. And eyes like, what d'ye call 'em, gimlets. Dark gimlets. 1005
- ANNA: The note!
- Dobchinsky gives it to her. She reads.***
- 'Dear Anna, well it looked pretty black for us, but I trusted in God for two pickled cucumbers separately and half a portion of caviar one rouble twenty-five kopecks.' (*She stops.*) I don't quite understand. What's cucumbers and caviar got to do with anything? 1010
- DOBCHINSKY: He wrote it in a hurry. On some sort of bill. 1020
- ANNA: I see. 'But I trusted in God and it seems that it'll all work out. Get a room ready quick for our distinguished guest – the one with the yellow wallpaper – and build up all the fires. Don't worry about dinner. We'll be eating with Artemy at the hospital, but order plenty of wine. Tell Abdulin to send up a crate of his best burgundy or I'll turn his cellar upside down. I kiss your hand and remain yours Anton Skvoznik-Dmuchanovsky.' My God! We'd better get on with it! Hey, 1025

- DOBCHINSKY: who's there? Mishka!
(*runs and shouts through the door*) Mishka! Mishka! Mishka!
- Enter Mishka.*
- ANNA: Listen, scuttle down to Abdulin's ... Wait, I'll give you a little note. (*She sits at the table and writes while speaking.*) Give this note to Sidor the coachman, tell him to drive down to Abdulin's and pick up the burgundy. And brandy. And you go and tidy up the yellow room. He'll need a washstand and all that. 1035
- DOBCHINSKY: I'm off then, Anna. I'd better see him inspecting the hospital.
ANNA: Off you go then! I'm not stopping you. Right then, Marya, what're we going to wear? He's a Petersburg sophisticate – so we don't want to look like folk dancers. You'd better wear your pale blue dress with the little flounces. 1040
- MARYA: Oh, no, Mother. Flounces are out. And the Judge's wife wears pale blue and so does that Zemlyanika girl. Much better if I wore my one with the flowers of spring. 1045
- ANNA: Flowers of spring indeed! You're trying to spite me. Just because I want to wear my sallow ivory. My sallow ivory shows off my figure so nicely.
- MARYA: Oh, Mother! Your sallow ivory makes you look vulgar.
ANNA: Vulgar?
MARYA: Yes. You need dark googly eyes to get away with that neckline. 1050
- ANNA: What do you mean? I've got dark eyes. 'Course I have. Very dark. And googly. Of course they're dark. I always draw the Queen of Clubs when I'm having my fortune told. 1055
- MARYA: Queen of Hearts, more often.
ANNA: Rubbish! Absolute rubbish! I never get the Queen of Hearts.
MARYA: Well, I'm still torn between my flowers of spring and my flame-coloured velvet.
- ANNA: How about the frothy pink and white one ... 1060
MARYA: Well, perhaps ...
ANNA: That makes you look like a plate of meringues?
- Anna and Marya exchange glares and leave, unbuttoning for their next change. Mishka begins to clear up. Osip comes in with a suitcase.* 1065
- OSIP: Where can I dump this lot, mate?
MISHKA: Through that door, up the stairs, down the corridor, second on your left.
- OSIP: Hang on. Let's have a breather. Bust the icicles off my fingers. 1070
- MISHKA: Is the General coming soon?
OSIP: What general?
MISHKA: Your master, of course.
OSIP: He's not a general.
MISHKA: No? 1075
OSIP: Not exactly.
MISHKA: Well is he higher or lower than a general?
OSIP: Oh, higher. You can't get much higher.
MISHKA: I thought so. That's why everyone here's running round like loonies. 1080

- OSIP: Listen, lad. I can see you've got your head screwed on. I'm not
about a snack?
- MISHKA: Dinner isn't ready yet. But it won't be a snack when it comes.
When your boss eats, you'll get the same as him. And it'll be
a proper feast. 1098
- OSIP: All right, but I need some now. What've you got handy?
- MISHKA: Cabbage soup, porridge, meat pie.
- OSIP: All right, I'll have ... cabbage soup, porridge and meat pie.
Whatever you've got. Give us a hand with the clobber.
- Mishka and Osip carry the case out. Constables open the door. Enter Khlestakov, followed by the Governor, the Charity Commissioner, the Schools Superintendent, Dobchinsky and Bobchinsky with a plaster on his nose. The Governor points to a piece of paper on the floor. Dobchinsky and Bobchinsky compete to pick it up. Everyone is trying to put on a big show – except Khlestakov.*** 1090
- KHLESTAKOV: That was a nice hospital. And a nice courthouse. And the
school was ... *(He considers.)* ... nice. It's not every town
that gives you a grand tour. Some towns I've been through
they don't show me anything. 1100
- GOVERNOR: Ah. But in some towns, maybe, the governor's got nothing
much to be proud of, eh? But in this town everyone pulls
together and we've got one big ambition: to show the world
that we're up-to-date, efficient, honest folk! 1105
- KHLESTAKOV: That was a marvellous lunch. Big portions. Plenty to drink.

The Governor signs to Dobchinsky and Bobchinsky, who rush to fetch Khlestakov a drink. From now on he has two glasses which are constantly being replenished from bottles on the sideboard. 1110
- GOVERNOR: D'you throw a banquet like that every day?
Oh no, we're very economical. But for a special guest ...
- KHLESTAKOV: I love good food. But then, what is life all about?

They all ponder this furiously.
- CHARITY COMMISSIONER: I believe we are put on this earth ... to have a good time.
That fish we had, what was its name? 1115
- KHLESTAKOV: Hake, your Excellency. Baked hake.
Baked hake. Truly delicious. Hey, what was that big place
we had lunch at? Looked like a hospital. *(He laughs.)*
- CHARITY COMMISSIONER: It was the hospital. 1120
- KHLESTAKOV: Of course it was, there were many beds, many beds. And
not many patients.
- CHARITY COMMISSIONER: We've got about ten left, no more. Since I took over, with
Doctor Gibner and his German methods, they've been
recovering like flies. It's not so much that we're medical
wizards. I put it down to honesty, hygiene and strict
discipline in the wards. 1125
- GOVERNOR: But of course you don't have a heavy case-load, do you,
Artemy? I mean, the people round here aren't all that prone
to diseases, are they? But when you look at the picture as a 1130

- whole, like the governor has to – then you've got problems, real problems. So many things to be looked after, nothing must be neglected – sanitation, law and order, education, repair and maintenance, snow clearance. Running a town is a complex operation. But, thank God, this one runs pretty smoothly. I know some Mayors are only out for what they can get, but you know, every night when I blow out the light beside my bed at four in the morning, maybe, I say to myself 'Oh God, all I ask for in my work is just a little recognition. Perhaps I'll be granted official honours and perhaps I won't, but at least I'll have the satisfaction of a job well done! The town's developing, the streets are clean, the patients are all getting better and there are no drunks on our streets. What more could a governor ask? But I'm not after a decoration, mind! Very nice for the chosen few, I'm sure, but what's the Order of Vladimir compared with the satisfaction of a life well spent. Dust! Dust and ashes! That's all.'
- 1135
- 1140
- 1145
- CHARITY COMMISSIONER: You say all that to yourself every night?
- GOVERNOR: Well, most nights.
- KHLESTAKOV: Dust and ashes. Very true. I'm fond of philosophy myself. Sometimes I do it in prose. Sometimes I do it in a song. 1150
- BOBCHINSKY: (to **Dobchinsky**) There you are, Petr, he's an astonishing man. You can see that he's been to university and studied something ...
- KHLESTAKOV: But what do you do for a bit of fun round here? Don't you ever get down to a game of cards? (He reaches in his pocket for a pack of cards but he doesn't produce one.) 1155
- GOVERNOR: (aside) Oh yes, testing us out to see if we're gamblers. (Aloud.) God forbid, we never gamble here. Actually, I can honestly say I have never ever held a playing card in my hand in the entire course of my life. Just looking at cards makes me feel queer. Once I had to entertain the orphans and they made me build them a house of cards. You know, I had to go out and be sick. I'll never understand how some people fritter their time away with cards. 1160
- SUPERINTENDENT: (aside) Only three days ago he won a hundred roubles off me. 1165
- KHLESTAKOV: Oh, now look. If you've been losing at cards, don't get sour. Sometimes it works if you treble your stake. Win it back. A good game of cards is like ... (All lean forward for wisdom.) a battle. In miniature. With less blood. No blood. You know. 1170
- Enter Anna and Marya, who have changed, changed utterly.*
- GOVERNOR: May I introduce my family? My wife and daughter.
- KHLESTAKOV: (rising and bowing) I am extremely delighted to meet the both of you.
- ANNA: It's a great honour for us to meet such an important person. 1175
- KHLESTAKOV: (taking on airs) Not at all, not at all. My honour is greater. For me. In meeting you.
- ANNA: What a graceful compliment, sir. But please, sit down.
- KHLESTAKOV: But I feel very happy standing up beside you! But if you would like me to, I will sit down. I would feel very happy sitting down. Beside you. 1180

Khlestakov and Anna sit down.

- ANNA: Travelling must be very trying compared with life in Petersburg.
- KHLESTAKOV: Yes, it's awful. You're accustomed, comprenez-vous, to high society and suddenly you find yourself on the road: grubby inns, crooked landlords, stupid people of all kinds. But sometimes (*Making up to Anna.*) you do meet a warm sympathetic, real human being – like you – and that makes up for everything. 1190
- ANNA: Still, it must be almost degrading for such an important ...
- KHLESTAKOV: Not at the moment. I don't feel degraded at all. Everything is wonderful.
- ANNA: You're just being polite. We don't deserve it.
- KHLESTAKOV: You'll never get – anything in the world that's good enough for you. 1195
- ANNA: I'm just a simple countrywoman.
- KHLESTAKOV: The country! Ah! The country, with its little streams and little flowers and little sheep and stuff. But you can't compare it with Petersburg. Ah. Petersburg. Perhaps you think I'm just a copying clerk? Oh no, I'm on very good terms with the head of my department. Many's the time he pops into my office, slaps me on the back and says, 'Come on, Ivan Alexandrovich, feeding time on Nevsky Prospekt.' So I tell my department what to be getting on with and the copying clerk, little rat-like fellow he is, begins scratching away with his pen – tr, tr. They wanted to promote me, but I've got enough responsibility as it is. And then the porter runs after me on the staircase with a brush, 'Mr Khlestakov, please let me polish your boots.' But why are you all standing up? 1200
- ALL: Out of respect for your rank. We want to hear you better. We like standing up. We're quite happy. 1205
- KHLESTAKOV: Gentlemen, please be seated. 1210
- They all sit.*
- I don't stand on ceremony. No. I try to be inconspicuous. Don't like to be noticed. Ah, but it's not possible. As soon as I step into the street the cry goes up, 'Look there goes the famous Khlestakov!' Once I was even taken for the Commander-in-Chief. The Imperial Guard turned out and presented arms to me. Of course, at the time I wondered why, but a colonel who's an old friend of mine told me afterwards, 'You know, old man, they were absolutely convinced it was the C-in-C.' 1215
- ANNA: Good heavens!
- KHLESTAKOV: Well, they know me everywhere. Some of my best friends are pretty actresses. I've written a few bits and pieces for the stage, you see. Another thing about Petersburg, I keep bumping into famous writers I know. Alexander Pushkin and I are like that. (*He indicates with his fingers.*) Whenever I see him in the street I say, 'How are you doing, Pushkin?' And he gives me a friendly punch, you know, and he says, 'I'm muddling through, Ivan, muddling through!' (*Suddenly pugnacious.*) You can say what you like, but he's a good sort, Pushkin. 1220
- ANNA: You're a writer too? How nice! Do you write for magazines, too? 1225
- ANNA: You're a writer too? How nice! Do you write for magazines, too? 1230
- ANNA: You're a writer too? How nice! Do you write for magazines, too? 1235

- KHLESTAKOV: Oh yes, magazines too! And I've done some plays: *Marriage of Figaro*, *Robert le Diable*, *Norma* – I can't remember them all. It's not my fault. Theatre managers won't leave me alone. 'Write us another play, old boy, we need another hit.' So I think to myself, 'Why not?' And I go scribble, scribble, scribble, and before dawn – another masterpiece! And everyone's astounded – except me. Seems to me the most natural thing in the world, I've got a mind like a jumping frog, as they say in St Pete's. All the Baron Brambeus stuff, and *Pride and Prejudice* and the *Moscow Daily Telegraph* – samples of my work. 1245
- ANNA: So you are the great Baron Brambeus?
- KHLESTAKOV: Of course. And I rewrite verses for all the best poets, correct their rhymes and so on. They club together and pay me 40,000 a year for that. 1250
- ANNA: It wouldn't surprise me if you wrote *Childe Harold*, you sly thing.
- KHLESTAKOV: You found out my secret!
- MARYA: But Mama, it says on my copy that it was written by Lord Byron. 1255
- ANNA: You think your mother's illiterate, don't you?
- KHLESTAKOV: Oh, that's Byron's *Childe Harold*. My *Childe Harold* is rather more – ambitious?
- ANNA: Well, it must've been yours I read about. I read a wonderful review of it. 1260
- KHLESTAKOV: Did go down rather well. But I'm the first to admit it. I live for art. Everyone in Petersburg knows my house. The police point it out to foreigners. 'That – the house – of Khlestakov.' If you're ever up in Petersburg, drop in on me, please. I hold rather exceptional parties. 1265
- ANNA: I can just imagine.
- KHLESTAKOV: You cannot. The buffet, for example. On the sideboard, for instance, a ... a seven-hundred-rouble watermelon. (*Gasps from the others.*) And a tureen of special soup, shipped straight from Paris. One lifts the lid, one bathes one's nostrils in the perfumed steam. Pushkin couldn't describe it. If I'm not giving a party, I'm out at some elegant ball. There's a little group of us like to play whist together in a corner: the Foreign Minister, the French Ambassador, British Ambassador, German Ambassador and me. (*He realises that he's counted wrong, on his fingers.*) That's five, so we chuck out the German. Ah, whist! So exhausting! So home I go and I dash up the stairs to the fourth floor and say to the cook, 'Hang up my coat, Mavrusha!' (*He stops and laughs.*) – that'd make a good opening for a story wouldn't it, but of course I live on the ground floor, and the second floor, third floor, fourth floor and so on – a whole great house and my marble staircase alone is worth ... And I wish you could see my hall, in the morning, before I even wake up – there are counts and princes swarming and buzzing around like bees round a hive and all you can hear is zh ... zh ... zh. Even sometimes a Government Minister, buzzing like the rest ... zh ... zh. 1270
- The Governor and others stand up, nervously. Khlestakov is drunk and highly excited, becoming more and more* 1275
- 1280
- 1285
- 1290

cheerful but not slurring his words.

Even my letters come addressed 'Your Excellency.' Yes, once I was put in charge of the whole department. It was very weird. Our boss had gone off. Vanished. Nobody knew where. And then of course there were the same old arguments – who's going to take over? Some of the generals wanted the job and they tried it, one after another. But they hadn't got it, they hadn't got it – here. (*He taps his head.*) Say what you like about the men at the top, but oh, when you get up there ... it's not so simple. No! They found out. Yes. And so they asked me. They sent urgent messages every minute. The streets were thronging with messengers. Can you imagine a street? Right. Now imagine it filled with thirty-five thousand messengers. And I come out on my balcony and I say, 'What can I do for you, my friends?' And thirty-five thousand messengers shout with a single voice, 'Your Excellency, Ivan Khlestakov, go and take charge of the Department!' It was a bit embarrassing, I was still in my dressing-gown – which is embroidered with golden foxes – so I went and changed and when I was ready I found ministers of state and princes and elders of the church kneeling in silent prayer at the foot of my marble staircase which is worth ... And I looked at them and I said, 'Gentlemen, what do I want with power?' And they set up such a piteous whimpering sound, ah, it would crack your heart. And I thought – I thought of the Tsar, and how he'd feel if I refused. So I said, 'Get up off your knees – I accept. But gentlemen, but, I – I – I have eyes in my head. So you'd better watch out and if any of you try to ...' And you know I marched through that department like some great elephant, like an enormous elephant. And everything and everyone in that building trembled, trembled, trembled.

*They all are now trembling like mad. **Khlestakov** is very worked up, his speech more violent, but still clear.* 1325

No, I don't fool about! I flogged them with my tongue! I even put the fear of God into the state council. That's it! That's how I am! Nobody stops me! I told them, 'I know everything! I see everything! I know you! And you! And you!' I call round at the palace every day! Tomorrow I'm going to be a field marshal. (*Staggering during the last sentences he now slips but is caught and respectfully supported by officials.*)

GOVERNOR: (*shaking with fright, he can hardly speak*) Your ... your ... you ...

KHLESTAKOV: (*abruptly*) What's up? 1335

GOVERNOR: Your ... your llency, excellency. Would you like to lie down? Your room is all prepared. You'll find everything you need.

KHLESTAKOV: (*standing, swaying slightly*) Lie down? Never!

Nobody contradicts him.

Of course. Lying down is good. Hey, gentlemen! 1340

They all tense themselves for denunciation.

That was a good meal. Very good! I am extremely happy.

***Khlestakov** totters to the door towards his room; suddenly he veers round and opens a cupboard door instead, mistaking it for his door. A mass of old papers and documents fall all over him. All crowd round and help him to his feet. The **Governor** gently guides him to the right door. At the door, **Khlestakov** turns round.* 134

Baked hake! Baked hake!

***Khlestakov** turns and goes, supported by the **Governor**. The audience is given time to see the expression of those left on stage.* 1350

End of Act One.

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