

Side #1: Natasha/Andrei

ACT II

Same setting. Eight o'clock. No lights.

The sound of an accordian, from far off.

Natasha enters with a candle and stops in front of Andrei's room.

NATASHA. What are you doing, Andryusha – reading? Oh, it's nothing... (*Goes to another door, opens it, looks in.*) No lamps lit –

ANDREI. (*Entering with a book in his hand.*) Natasha? What is it?

NATASHA. Just wanted to make sure no lamps are burning. During the holidays, the help forgets absolutely everything. You have to watch them like a hawk or the house will simply fall to pieces. Last night at twelve o'clock I saw a candle burning in the living room! I still don't know who left it burning. (*Puts candle down.*) What time is it?

ANDREI. After eight.

NATASHA. And Olga and Irina still working. Always working, poor things. Olga's at some teacher's meeting, Irina's at the telegraph office. (*sighs*) This morning I said to your sister, I said, "You really must save your strength, Irina, my dove." But she didn't listen. Eight fifteen, you said? I'm worried our little Bobik is sick. Why is he so cold? Yesterday he was so hot, now he's so cold, I'm worried sick.

ANDREI. He's fine, Natasha, he's healthy.

NATASHA. Maybe. But I think I'll start him on a new diet. I'm afraid! And the carolers are descending on us tonight – it's better if they don't come, Andrusha.

ANDREI. I don't know. They were invited.

NATASHA. This morning the baby woke up and looked at me, and he smiled this beautiful smile. And I knew that he recognized me! "Bobik!" I said, "Bobilicious! Hello, my little boy." And he laughed! Babies are so smart, they understand absolutely everything. So – Andrusha – I'll tell the servants not to let the carolers in tonight.

ANDREI. (*unsure*) But it's up to my sisters. They're in charge.

NATASHA. Of course, they're in charge, too. I'll tell them what I decided. They're so sweet. (*leaving*) I've ordered yogurt for dinner. The doctor says you need to eat yogurt, and only yogurt, or you won't lose any weight. (*stops*) Bobik's cold, I'm afraid he's cold in that room. He *must* be cold. We should move him to another room, at least until it's warmer. Irina's room, for instance, would be perfect for a baby! It's dry and gets sun all day. I'll tell her she can share a room with Olga. She won't care, she's hardly home. She only sleeps here.

Pause.

Sweetie, sweetie-pie. Why are you so quiet?

ANDREI. Just lost in thought. What is there to say?

NATASHA. True enough. Now there was something else I wanted to tell you. Oh, right, Ferapont is here from the council. He wants to talk to you.

ANDREI. (*yawning*) Send him in.

Natasha exits. Andrei reads a book, leaning in towards the candle Natasha forgot.

Ferapont enters, wearing an old coat and a scarf around his ears.

Hello, old friend. What can you tell me?

FERAPONT. The Chairman sent you a book and some papers. Here.

Gives him the books and papers.