

The Government Inspector

By Nikolai Gogol

Adapted by David Mackay

Audition Sample Only

Dramatis Personae

ANTON ANTONOVICH, The Governor
ANNA ANDREYEVNA, wife.
SIERRA SERANOVA, daughter.
MISHKA, servant of the Governor.

LUKA LUKAWICH, Director of Schools.
MIKAIL LYPKIN, Judge
DARIA SHELFISHOVICH, Hospital Commissioner
DOCTOR HUBNER, a Doctor from Norway.
POSTMASTER

BOBCHINSKY, Male, Middle class wannabee. Wants to be a politician
DOBCHINSKY, Male, Middle class wannabee. Wants to be a writer.

PUGO, Police Constable

IVAN ALEXANDROVICH KHLESTAKOV, a Government civil servant
OSIP, his servant.
WAITRESS at the inn.

ABDULIN, a shopkeeper
The Locksmith's Wife.
The Sergeant's Wife.

Scene 1 – A room in the Governor’s house

(The Governor’s office. There is an austerity to the house, but the paint is peeling. Cracks in the floor, etc.)

PUGO, stands guard at the door.

JUDGE, HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER, DR HUBNER, LUKA LUKAWICH are in a heated discussion, “Why are we called” “Urgent he said, Urgent” “Why so early?” Etc.

LUKKA LUKAWICH, DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS, takes a donut from a large platter of donuts. The GOVERNOR rushes in.)

GOVERNOR: Everyone, please, your attention. Luka Lukawich, put the pastry down. Urgent news. Terrible news. A government inspector is coming.

(LUKA LUKAWICH spits out her donut.)

JUDGE: A government inspector is coming?

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: To inspect our government?

GOVERNOR: Our government, our finances, everything.

LUKA: This can’t be happening.

GOVERNOR: They’re coming from the Capital, traveling incognito, with secret instructions.

LUKA LUKICH: Incognito?! (Producing a flask and drinking.) That’s very sneaky.

JUDGE: Nothing good comes from incognito and secret instructions. (Taking LUKA’s flask and drinking.)

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: Hold on, let’s not get ahead of ourselves. What are they looking for?

GOVERNOR: Transparency! Accountability!

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: My God, who can run a government like that?! (Producing a large flask.) We’re doomed. (She drinks.)

GOVERNOR. I knew something was coming. Last night I had a premonition – a horrible dream. Two huge rats appeared out of nowhere, sniffing around my house. Long whiskers sniffing all over, and when they got to my office, where I'm sitting right now – I had to force myself awake. Couldn't go back to sleep without re-dreaming those same rats. And this morning, this letter arrived. (produces a letter) Telling me a government inspector is coming. It's from Andrei Ivanovich Chimikov. (To DARIA the HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER). You know him, Daria Shelfishovich

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: A stand-up guy.

GOVERNOR. This is what he says: "My dear friend, my comrade, benefactor and... blah, blah, blah - Sorry, Daria, but man does this guy blow smoke.

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: Biggest ass-kisser I ever met.

GOVERNOR. (Back in letter.) Where is it? ... aha, "to let you know"—Here it is — "to let you know, an official has been sent with instructions to inspect the whole province, and specifically, your district. Make no mistake, I have heard from a reliable source that he is coming and that he pretends to be a private citizen.

LUKA: (Eating another donut) That's the incognito part.

GOVERNOR: But I want everyone listen to this, "So, as you know, Anton, we all have your little blemishes, let's say, our political indulgences that provide us with dot, dot, dot, extra financial assistance.

JUDGE: Dot, dot, dot? It that Morse Code?

GOVERNOR: Bribes! He's talking about bribes. Until this blows over, everyone keeps their sticky little hands out of the cookie jar. (Back to letter.) "Confidentially, I advise you to take immediate *precautions* because he may come at any hour if they're not here already ..." Then he goes on about his family...how his son was cut from the marching band because he keeps tripping over his cello. And so on and so on. Well, there it is. Plain as day.

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: We all felt so smug while other towns we're being audited.

GOVERNOR: And now the finger of fate is pointing at us.

LUKA: Feels more like the middle finger.

JUDGE: Hold on. Hold on. I don't think we can accept this on face value.

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: What do you mean?

JUDGE: This is coming from the Capital, right? We have to look for partisan motives.

GOVERNOR: Such as?

JUDGE: What if it's a test? The Czar wants to boost his numbers by taking Russia to war! But he needs to make sure everyone is on board, including all the little towns and villages. Mother Russia can't have deserters or dodgers.

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: Well if it's a war he wants, then as Hospital Commissioner, I can attest everyone in this room has bone spurs.

LUKA: This country can barely keep itself together, I don't think invading another one will solve anything.

GOVERNOR: There's no war coming! But we have to prepare like we're in one.

LUKA: So... we're not at war, but we are at war?

GOVERNOR: We're at war with the Capital.

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: That's treason.

GOVERNOR: Is it treason when they sneak someone in to catch us doing something wrong? And if they don't find anything? They'll make something up.

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: What could they make up that we couldn't flatly deny?

GOVERNOR: Misuse of office for self-financial gain.

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, we are at war!

JUDGE: I will fight tooth and nail, my brothers in arms, unless there's pain – I have a very low pain threshold, an illness since childhood– if hurt, even threatened, I will be forced to cooperate fully with the government inspector.

GOVERNOR: We can outsmart this guy if we're prepared. Okay, work with me. Imagine *I'm* the government inspector... what's the first thing I'd want to do?

JUDGE: So, we act like you're the government inspector?

GOVERNOR: Yes. What's the first thing I want to do?... I come to town and...

LUKA: You're not going to do any incognito?

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: A moustache?

GOVERNOR: *Pretend*. Think, what's the first thing I'd do?... If I'm the government inspector...doing my job correctly and by the book. What do I do?!

(Beat.)

JUDGE: (Quietly) Arrest the Governor?

GOVERNOR: No. I want to see that all civic operations are functioning at maximum capacity with minimal funding.

ALL THE POLITICANS: That's easy. I do that already. I'm good at this.

GOVERNOR: Now, I'm going to stop at every one of your offices and inspect your facility. And I don't want even a whiff of dirty money. Do you understand? (All nod) All right, let's begin. My first stop is the hospital.

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: Wonderful. Honored to have such a distinguished guest inspect our state-of-the-art hospital.

GOVERNOR: Nice! Hear how she speaks! This is a smart politician. If you can't beat them, distract them. And how are all your patients doing?

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: We have none.

GOVERNOR: What?

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: No one can afford a bed here.

LUKA: That's true. Peter Pipervich still walks around with a train spike in the back of his head.

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: That particular treatment is very expensive.

LUKA: He uses it as a coat hook.

GOVERNOR: If there are no patients at this state-of-the-art hospital, then why did we pay to bring in this Doctor from Germany?

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: Spain.

DOCTOR: (Slight accent) Norway.

CHARITY: I believe she's from the German part of Spain. She helps us in emergency.

DOCTOR: (Slight accent.) I'm from Norway. (ALL look at her puzzled.) Norway. Below Sweden?

GOVERNOR: Uh, huh... (Loudly and slowly.) Nice to meet you. (To COMMISHIONER) How do you understand her?

HOSPITAL COMMISIONER: There's a lot of screaming in emergency, it's tough to understand anyone. Besides, the good doctor and I have an agreement. "Let nature run its course." Isn't that what we say, Doctor?

DOCTOR: (Slight accent) If you improve your diet, you would live longer.

JUDGE: Did anyone make that out?

LUKA (Eating another donut.) No idea. Was that German?

GOVERNOR: We can't have the governor inspector inspect a hospital that has no patients!

HOSPITAL COMMISHIONER: Well, then he can inspect the books instead. Igor from accounting proved, with his math skills, that in an expensive hospital, the squeaky wheel shouldn't always get the oil. It's not good business to give your health care away for free. It's terrible that math told us this. But math is a science. And numbers are important to run my department smoothly. I would say they're as equally important as letters are in the alphabet.

ALL (But the DOCTOR) Yes. Very good. I wish the less fortunate could understand math.

HOSPITAL COMMISHIONER: Isn't this the same in your country, Doctor?

DOCTOR: (Slight accent.) We have universal health care.

LUKA: (Slowly and louder.) No comprende. You talk. We don't understand.

DOCTOR: (Clears throat, and with almost no accent.) We provide a health care system that offers equity in access to all health services Everyone who needs medical attention gets it, not just those who can afford for it. We believe that financial hardship should not be added to anyone's recovery from injury or long-term illness.

(Beat.)

LUKA (Slow and loudly.) Sprechen de English? Learn our language, so we can parle-vous.

HOSPITAL COMMISHIONER: An inspector governor walking into an empty hospital only proves how excellent our healthcare is.

GOVERNOR: Keep up the good work, ladies.

HOSPITAL COMMISONER: Thank you.

DOCTOR: You're not hearing me because you think it's socialism. It's not!

LUKA: (Slow and loud.) Okay, okay. Muchas gracias!

DOCTOR: It improves the quality of life / and well-being

LUKA: You quiet/now.

DOCTOR: Just listen—

LUKA: Enough! Gesundheit!

GOVERNOR: (To JUDGE) Next, I'm off to visit you, Judge.

JUDGE: Welcome, welcome. Hello, hello.

GOVERNOR: (Coaching him) Loosen up, Mikhail. Not so stiff.

JUDGE: (Awkwardly) Hi. Hi. Welcome. Hi. How are youuuu?

GOVERNOR You sound suspicious.

JUDGE:
I CONFESS, I DID IT—
IT WAS SHAMEFUL—

GOVERNOR
Stop it!
Shut up!

JUDGE: BUT I WAS PAID A LOT OF MONEY!!!

(GOVERNOR slaps the JUDGE.)

GOVERNOR: Now you listen to me - do you want to keep that money?

(JUDGE nods like a scolded child)

GOVERNOR You buy a lot of lavish things that other bumpkin judges can't afford, right?

JUDGE Mmhm. Samoyed puppies. They're so soft and wrinkle their noses when you rub their bellies.

GOVERNOR *And* that ostrich jacket I saw your wife wearing.

JUDGE It suits her, she's has a long neck.

GOVERNOR: And I'm sure she enjoys sitting with you in your *box seat* at the opera.

JUDGE She loves me for my money, but the dogs just love me for who I am.

GOVERNOR Well if you cave in front of the government inspector like you just did in front of me, he will take all your money, your wife will leave you and I will drown your puppies.

JUDGE (Rebounding) Welcome to my courtroom, and thanks for stopping by. Would you care for a cup of tea? I don't have anything harder to offer because I like to keep my head clear before all my cases.

GOVERNOR: Very good, now, Judge, why does your courtroom smell like horseshit?

JUDGE: Uhhh... That sounds like you, Anton, when you disagree with our country's laws. Are you still the governor inspector, or are you just being you?

GOVERNOR: I'm talking about the actual manure smell seeping into the courtroom.

JUDGE: Oh yes, my county clerk is raising a horse in the antechamber.

GOVERNOR: It's not a barn, it's a courtroom.

JUDGE: It's actually quite interesting. He's studying how larger mammals can live eating only plants. He hopes to promote human vegetarianism as a means to feed mass future populations—

GOVERNOR: I don't care about future science. Get rid of the horse!

JUDGE: Of course. You're all welcome to join me for dinner tonight. I'm having BBQ.

GOVERNOR: And now I'm walking over to the elementary school.

LUKA: Closed. Budget cuts made us combine it with the middle school.

GOVERNOR: Okay, I'm heading over to the middle school.

LUKA: Empty. Teacher's walked out.

GOVERNOR: For higher pay?

LUKA: Or a piece of chalk. As a gesture of goodwill.

GOVERNOR: Okay, I'm at the high school.

LUKA: It's on lock down.

GOVERNOR: Didn't we give the teachers pistols?

LUKA: (Nodding.) And they're threatening to use them on themselves unless their conditions improve.

PUGO: As Chief of Police, it's really tough to negotiate when everyone has a gun to their head.

JUDGE: Anton, you're assuming we know when we're dealing with the government inspector, but you're ignoring that he or she is incognito!

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: He's right, Anton.

JUDGE: We could be going about our daily ways, innocently accepting gifts, utterly unawares that someone's judging us.

GOVERNOR: What did I say? No bribes! Until we find out who this guy is ACCEPT NOTHING!

JUDGE: Anton, it's Christian nature to accept a gift when it's given.

GOVERNOR: You're not a Christian, you're a politician. Listen up, everyone! For the last time, no bribes. And this discussion stays in this room. No leaks.

POSTMASTER enters:

POSTMASTER: What's all this talk about a government inspector?

GOVERNOR: You've heard?

POSTMASTER: It was old news when I tried to spread it as juicy gossip.

GOVERNOR: Who else knows?

POSTMASTER: I went to tell Vlass the Innkeeper and he gives me his *I- already-know* face.

LUKKA: I know that face. Guy thinks he knows everything. What did you call him last week?

POSTMASTER: A Vlass-hole.

GOVERNOR: How did you know about a government inspector?

POSTMASTER: I read your letter.

GOVERNOR: Do you read everyone's mail?

POSTMASTER: Just yours. Sometimes what you write is completely different from what you say. It's hard to keep up.

JUDGE: What do you make of it?

POSTMASTER: The government inspector? Oh, I think we're going to war with the Ukraine.

JUDGE Aha!

LUKA: We already did that.

POSTMASTER: Oh, that's right. There's been so many, I lose track.

GOVERNOR: This feels like the Capital has it in for me. Anyone else have a gut reaction? What do you all feel?

ALL: A little lost... Anxious... Quick to knee jerk responses... My uncle's such a racist.

GOVERNOR: They just don't like the idea of me as governor and now we've got a nosey rat coming to snoop. (To POSTMASTER) I want to know what every piece of mail says about me. Steam open all the letters, read them and seal them back up when you're done.

POSTMASTER: Done. I already do that with kid's birthday cards.

JUDGE: I love reading other people's birthday cards.

POSTMASTER: I pocket the five or ten rubles from every Grandma. At the end of each day, it's nice to be able to treat myself to a new pair of shoes.

GOVERNOR Every letter. I want to know everything.

POSTMASTER I'll keep you posted. (Looking at the others, approvingly) I don't get to say that a lot but when I do, I thoroughly enjoy it.

(BOBCHINSKY and DOBCHINKSKY enter. They may be different in physical appearance, but they are dressed identically.)

BOB Everyone. We have news!

DOB: Incredible news!

BOB: We agreed I'd tell it.

DOB: I disagree.

BOB: We did. We agreed you can't tell a story.

DOB: I'm a writer.

BOB: Who can't write.

DOB: People love the way/ I tell a story.

BOB: No./ They don't.

DOB: They do. They say, "Dobchinsky, you should put your stories in a book./ I'd buy it."

BOB. No. they don't/Nobody would buy—

DOB One guy says I'm as good as Tolstoy!

BOB Who?! The guy with the spike in his head.

DOB It makes him smarter/

BOB: He's an/ idiot.

DOB: He knows when it's going to rain!

GOVERNOR: Shut up and get to your /news!

BOB: I'm *trying* but EVERYONE keeps interrupting me!

(EVERYONE but the GOVERNOR and BOB do a small intake gasp.)

GOVERNOR: Did you just accuse me of interrupting you?

BOB: I didn't mean –

GOVERNOR: In my official office? You accuse me of interrupting you?

(BOB. Is silent.)

Now you don't talk? After all that interrupting, now you're quiet... Answer the question!

BOB: (Barely audible.) I didn't want to interrupt you.

GOVERNOR: Hmm! You're a bossy guy eh, Bobchinsky? Telling people what to do. (To the room) This guy's a bossy guy. Bossy Bobchinsky!

(Beat)

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: (Affirming the nickname.) Ha! Bossy Bobchinsky!

(ALL but BOB laugh.)

GOVERNOR: You tell the story, Dobchinsky. You tell the story that Bobchinsky was so excited to tell us. I don't want to hear it from Bossy Bob. I want to hear it from *you*, not Bossy Bobchinsky.

DOBCHINKSY: Well, we had breakfast at the Inn.

ALL THE POLITICIANS: (Understated but in unison) Ewwww.

DOBCHINKSKY: Today's a good day. It's two for one when you buy a Brunner. Which if you don't know is a whole day of meals served in one ginormous stack of food. Ribs stacked on a footlong sandwich stacked on sausages and eggs stacked on a stack of pancakes. Breakfast, lunch, dinner. Brunner!

GOVERNOR: What's your important news?

DOBCHINKSKY: So, the Postmaster comes into the Inn, and – (Seeing the POSTMASTER) You told them already?

POSTMASTER: You gotta be quick with gossip in this town.

DOB: I'm a Brunner not a runner.

POSTMASTER You've been saving that – well played.

GOVERNOR: So, you two idiots don't have any real news?

DOB: I can tell you what the other specials are at the Inn?

GOVERNOR: Officer Pugo, take these jerks out.

(PUGO grabs DOB and then BOB and manhandles them towards the door)

GOVERNOR: (To BOB and DOB) Don't ever waste my time again.

BOBCHINKSKY: (Blurting out) The government inspector is staying at the Inn!

(Everyone stops. Slight beat for all heads to turn towards BOBCHINSKY.)

BOB: He's already in town. Dobchinsky was too busy stuffing his face rather than watching what was truly going on.

GOVERNOR: You saw the government inspector?

BOB: Yes.

DOB: And you didn't?

DOBCHINKSKY: In fairness, you've got to focus and eat fast when you get to the sandwich of a Brunner, if you still want some to taste some warmth coming off those pancakes.

GOVERNOR: (To PUGO) Let him go. (He does. The GOVERNOR crosses to BOB) What makes you think it's him?

BOBCHINKSKY: He's odd. He has city airs. Wears clothes that look like he found them in a dumpster, but this fashion is très haute couture. We're talking the Houses of Sears and Roebuck, Wal and Mart.

DOB: You thought *that* guy was—

GOVERNOR: Don't interrupt him!!! Go on.

BOBCHINKSKY: He walked around to all the tables, asking everyone what they're eating. "What should I have?" He listened to everyone's order but didn't eat a thing. I thought that was odd.

HOSPITAL COMMISIONER: (To GOVERNOR) So what? He's just a smartass kid.

BOB: I asked Vlass the innkeeper, "Who's that young guy?" And he looks at me like I'm stupid for not knowing who this guy is.

POSTMASTER and LUKKA: Yeah... There it is.

BOB: "That's some know- it-all from the Capital", he says... And then he says... "he works for the government."

GOVERNOR: What else?

BOB: That the kid doesn't pay his bills. Keeps racking up his tab. Vlass says, "I'm not stupid, if this kid stiffes me, I'm going to sue the government and overcharge them."

GOVERNOR: Why didn't you tell me this before?

BOB: I had every intention, but I certainly didn't want to interrupt you in your office.

GOVERNOR: Thank you. Your respect is refreshing.

HOSPITAL: Anton, we know who the government inspector is!

GOVERNOR: And he doesn't know we know.

LUKA We just out-cognitoed his incognito.

GOVERNOR: What room is he in?

BOB The one above the stairs.

ALL THE POLITICIANS: Ewwww.

POSTMASTER: I think you guys are thinking that's the room where the American tycoon spent the night with the two... and they... yeah, no, that's the room *below* the stairs. And that's booked months in advance.

GOVERNOR: How long's he been in town?

BOB: That I don't know.

DOB: Twelve days!

(All heads to turn towards DOBCHINKSY who's still being held by PUGO)

I heard him say his first meal at the inn was the Chowder Surprise.

GOVERNOR: So?

DOB: I eat at the Inn every day. The Chowder Surprise was a one-off lunch special served on Monday the 3rd. This government inspector said - rather condescendingly - that the Chowder Surprise *did not* surprise him. I didn't know what frou-frou meals they serve in the Capital, but this was a chowder served in a sourdough bowl. Eating the bowl, that's

the surprise!

GOVERNOR: Twelve days?! He's been here twelve days. Pugovitsin!

(PUGO drops DOB and steps forward.)

I haven't done anything wrong in the past few days, have I?

PUGO: Let me see. (flips vigorously through a notebook. Pulls out another notebook and flips through that. Then:) Sorry, how far back are we talking?

GOVERNOR: Twelve days.

PUGOVITSIN: Twelve *DAYS*?!

GOVERNOR: Yes. What have I done- if anything- in that time.

PUGO: (Working it through in his head.) Okay, twelve days of me taking notes on what you've done... Yeah, I'm going to have to go to the warehouse and hire a mule to drag all those notebooks here. And I'm just worried that in the time it takes me to do all that, you may have done a few more notebooks worth of bad stuff.

GOVERNOR: Where are all the notebooks with all the good things I've done?! Go to that warehouse! Hire a bunch of mules to drag all that great stuff here. I want to hear praise. You got that?!

PUGO: Yes, Sir. Right away. (Writing in notebook) Hire bunch of asses... to bring you praise.

HOSPITAL COMMISHIONER: What do you think, Anton— should we go as a group to the inn?

GOVERNOR: No, I'll go alone to handle this rat. How old is this guy?

BOBCHINSKI Twenty-three. But not a very good twenty-three. His looks will go with his hairline.

GOVERNOR: He's a pup. This should be easy. It's when they get older that you worry you're the one getting played. (Pointing at DOB.) I'll take Bobchinsky with me to identify him.

BOBCHINKSKY: I'm Bobchinsky.

DOB: He pointed at me.

GOVERNOR: I know who I meant. (Points at DOB.) Bobchinsky comes with me. Pugo!

PUGO: Yes sir.

GOVERNOR: We need to clean up this town. Pronto! Tear down all the statues of Napoleon.

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: THE WAR ISN'T OVER!

GOVERNOR: It's been over for years.

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: SAYS WHO?!

GOVERNOR: Napoleon's dead!

HOSPITAL COMMISSIONER: I can't be the only one who wanted the French to win? Have you tasted Russian wine? Like yak pee.

GOVERNOR: (Back to PUGO) Next, I want you to throw all the serfs protesting me into jail.

PUGO: The jail's already full.

GOVERNOR: Right, with the press?

PUGO: No. That's illegal.

GOVERNOR: Still?

PUGO: The jail's crammed with all the foreigners you're detaining.

GOVERNOR: Okay, dress them up as tourists and release them into the streets. And I want the streets patrolled vigorously.

PUGO: Right.

GOVERNOR: Put an honest cop on every corner. (Beat.) Pugo?

PUGO: ...Sorry, were you talking to me?

GOVERNOR: What's his name, the nice clean-cut fellow? Always friendly and polite.

PUGO: Svitsunov? He's an honest cop.

GOVERNOR: Get him.

PUGO: He's drunk.

GOVERNOR: I thought we just said he was one of the good ones.

PUGO: He is. Last night he went to break up a brawl at the pub and he came back drunk. He sympathized with the fighters. Does it all the time. The week before last, he went to the church to help Father Ivan padlock the doors and he came back celibate.

JUDGE: That's not been my experience with Father Ivan.

GOVERNOR: We're wasting time! Get my carriage! (PUGO exits.) Somebody get my ceremonial hat and pistol. (BOB and DOB exit.) What are you still doing here? Get your facilities in order. Go, go, go! (As THE POLITITICANS exit:)

JUDGE: We're going to have to be on our best behavior with this guy in town.

LUKA: I'm getting too old for this. I can only be honest for one – two hours top and then I need to lay down.

(PUGO re-enters)

PUGO: Your carriage is ready.

(DOBCHINKSY re-enters with a pistol in a holster.)

DOB: Your ceremonial pistol is ready.

(BOBCHINKSY re-enters)

BOB: Your hat... is in transit.

GOVERNOR: Where's my hat, you moron?

(ANNA enters with a hat box.)

GOVERNOR: Darling, you brought my hat.

ANNA: Where are you going?

GOVERNOR: Official business.

ANNA: Who is she?!

GOVERNOR: "He".

ANNA: With you it's anything that walks.

GOVERNOR: He's a government inspector from the Capital. It's all this morning's gossip.

ANNA: Not all. There's some about you and the ballerina troupe.

GOVERNOR: That's fake.

ANNA: Yeah, we know that word doesn't work with me.

GOVERNOR: Must we have this discussion in front of our child?

SIERRA: Poppa, I'd be shocked if you and mother had a pleasant conversation.

DOB: Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

SIERRA: That's very astute.

DOB: People say I sound like Tolstoy.

GOVERNOR:(Pointing at DOB.) Ask Bobchinsky? He can verify the government inspector.

ANNA: (To DOB.) And the ballerinas? Tell me the truth, Bobchinsky, or I *will* hurt you.

DOBCHINSKY: I'm Dobchinsky. (Pointing at BOB.) *He's* Bobchinsky.

(ANNA glares at BOB.)

BOBCHINSKY: Your husband is telling the truth. He's going to see a young government inspector by the name of Ivan Alexandrovich Khlestakov. He's been in town for twelve days and he's staying at the Inn. As for the rumors about the ballerina troupe, they're actually about me.

ANNA: Is that so?

BOB: Yes, your husband is covering for me by merely being silent.

ANNA: (Assessing) You... with the whole troupe?

BOB: They kept me on my toes.

GOVERNOR: There, you see? An honest fellow. May I have my hat now, please, Anna. I must be going.

ANNA: (Handing him hat box, but then pulling it away.) I still want that string of pearls.

GOVERNOR: (Financial hit.) Mmhmm. Absolutely.

SIERRA: And my allowance doubled.

GOVERNOR: You?! You have no say over your father's wallet.

SIERRA: Then you'll have no say when I want immunity.

GOVERNOR: All right. You get the pearls, your allowance is doubled, are we done?!

ANNA: I want the length of my pearls doubled.

GOVERNOR: Okay, enough! No more! The next person to speak, I swear!... (Taking hat box and pointing at DOBCHINKSKY) You, Bobchinsky, come with me.

BOB: But—

GOVERNOR: NOT A WORD!!!(He puts the hat box on head.) Is that clear?! (EVERYONE nods. GOVERNOR to DOB.) Let's go Bobchinsky. (He exits followed by DOBCHINKSY.)

ANNA: It's not you. He can't leave a room without screwing someone over. Now. Tell me something about this government inspector you didn't tell my husband.

BOB: He has a servant.

ANNA: Oh, that's a sign he has money. Is he young?

SIERRA: Momma, please.

BOB: Twenty-three, twenty-four.

ANNA A little older than you, Sierra, but a young man with money is a good sign Daddy's rich. (TO BOB.) Good looking? Or is that asking for too much?

SIERRA: Momma, they're all good looking but every one of them lacks a little something.

ANNA: Of course every man lacks something, it's why they're men. What do you want from them?

SIERRA: Full respect of me. Of who I am, who I'm figuring myself out to be, and whoever I become, or want to be, because I take myself as my responsibility to figure out. Not his. Until I meet that guy... all these rich guys are slightly off putting to me.

ANNA: Oh, hush.

(GOVERNOR, without the hat box on his head, and DOB re-enter.)

GOVERNOR: My colleague informs me I've made a terrible mistake.

BOB: (Relieved) Yes. Thank you. I can't tell you what this means to me!

GOVERNOR: No need to be overdramatic. (Crossing to ANNA) I just forgot my hat.

(ANNA produces his hat. GOVERNOR grabs hat. She kisses him on the cheek.)

GOVERNOR: (To DOB.) Thanks again, Bobchinsky. Let's go.

(The GOVERNOR, DOB and PUGO exit.)

ANNA: I want to know everything about this government inspector. Follow my husband and that bumpkin friend of yours to the inn.

BOB: I don't think he wants me. He barely looked at me.

ANNA: Well, you're no use to me here. Go. Be sneaky. Peek through the keyhole. You can do that, can't you?

BOB: How do you think I got through college?

ANNA: Then run. Chase after them.

BOB: Ma'am if I may, your daughter sounds like she could do a lot better than this government inspector.

ANNA: Who said anything about him for my daughter?

SIERRA: Momma, not again.

BOB: Oh.

ANNA: Now run.

BOB: Yes, I feel like leaving now.

ANNA: GO! And then come straight back here! Run! (BOBCHINKSY runs after them.) Run! Run! Run!

(Blackout.)

Scene Two – A run down Inn

(Vass' Inn – A Russian 18th Century scummy hotel. The room is small. There is a narrow staircase leading up into room with a small landing at the bottom of the stairs.

OSIP sits on the bed. He is smart. And young. And poor. As he speaks, he cuts out small pieces of paper from a large dictionary. He carefully arranges the small snippets into separate piles. He speaks directly to the audience:

OSIP: Old people tell me to “Enjoy your youth.” Like it’s really sage advice they’re imparting because it makes them feel weepy. “Enjoy your youth”, they say it again, and something catches in their throat as their eyes well up. And then, they break out singing an old song from when they were my age. And often the song has lewd content - I’m not a prude - I just don’t want to think about old people having sex to this really old song. And then they get angry at me for not knowing this really old song. “You don’t know this song!?” “No, I don’t know that old dirty song!” And then they judge me for it! Like I’m not enjoying my youth fully because my music isn’t as good as there’s. The nerve... I’d like to tell them, “Our generation has plenty of, very good, dirty songs, thank you very much - with metaphors that are fresh!” ... How little old people know about youth. It’s *nothing* like when they were young! And if all you remember is the music... then they got off easy. Just once, I’d just like to say, “I could really enjoy my youth, if I was making the kind of money you made when you were my age!” (Catching himself)... I’m sorry, my problems shouldn’t concern you. I’m hungry. And it makes me say angry things. When I’ve had something to eat I’m a nicer angry. I’m always angry because I’m poor which means I know I’m going to be hungry again soon enough. And don’t say I’m poor because I don’t try hard enough. Because that’s really old, too... I’m so hungry... I’m up to my knees in debt because I work for an idiot who’s up to his neck in debt. We’re talking multiple student-loan-size-debts. Except he didn’t go to school. With him, it’s stupid debt.

(IVAN enters)

IVAN: Let’s go have lunch.

OSIP: You have no money.

IVAN: Still?

OSIP: It doesn’t just appear.

IVAN: I'm starving. My father assured me he gave me enough money for my trip.

OSIP He did. More than enough.

IVAN How could I have spent all the money that was supposed to last me 4 months?

OSIP: Remember our first night away from home?

IVAN: Barely.

OSIP: We went to a bar.

IVAN: That sounds familiar.

OSIP: It should. We did that every night.

IVAN: And that's why we're poor?

OSIP: No. Remember when you said, "Hey Everyone! Vodka shots on me!"

IVAN: Yes, that was a great time!

OSIP: It must have been. You said that 8 to 10 times a night.

IVAN: Why didn't you stop me?

OSIP: I tried. But whenever I told you how much money you were pissing away, that's when you'd play poker to try and win it back.

IVAN: Aha. I'm a very good poker player! (OSIP gives him a look.) No, I know I am. I wear dark glasses and I put on a very solemn look. (He dons somewhat anachronistic mirrored sunglasses and exhibits his 'solemn look'.)

OSIP Yes, you've always had a strong resting bitch face.

IVAN: My parents paid good money for this face. My natural resting face is actually quite sad. I must have won some money back.

OSIP: No matter how good your poker face is, it all goes out the window when you wear mirrored dark glasses and keep looking down at your cards. They saw your hand.

IVAN: They were cheating?!? That's a relief! My God, I thought everyone was reading my mind. Good to know I wasn't going crazy.

OSIP: Nope, just going broke.

IVAN: I wish I could say I had a good time, but it all feels like a false sense of camaraderie now. Cheap expensive thrills. You can't buy friendship. I have nothing left. I'm a failure in my father's eyes. But more shamefully, a failure to the set of eyes facing me in mirror.

OSIP: Well... we can't dwell too long on our mistakes. What's done is done.

IVAN: Well said, Osip. Do you know, when I put on my mirrored glasses and look into the mirror, I can see myself, seeing myself, seeing myself, seeing myself, seeing myself, seeing myself. I see so many of myself, I start to wonder who I am?

OSIP: Mmhm. You could probably dwell on your mistakes a little longer.

IVAN: What's all this? (Indicating bits of cut-out paper.)

OSIP: I've cut out some words from a dictionary.

IVAN: What for?

OSIP: Lunch.

IVAN: (Picking up a piece of paper.) "Sandwich."

OSIP: We have to treat hunger like it's all in the mind.

IVAN: How will this fill my stomach?

OSIP: If we eat these slips and imagine them to be what's written, it will fill us up. So, you've got "sandwich." (Offering up other slips of paper.) Do you want "ham", "turkey," or "roast beef".

IVAN: Roast beef! Fancy. Yes, please.

OSIP: (Handing over a slip. IVAN looks to OSIP:) If you put it on top of "sandwich" you get a roast beef sandwich. (IVAN does.)

IVAN: Cheese?

OSIP: (Picking up more slips of paper.) What kind?

IVAN: Provolone.

OSIP: I can't spell that.

IVAN: Swiss?

(OSIP hands him a slip of paper. IVAN eats the three slips of paper.)

OSIP: How was it?

IVAN: A little dry.

OSIP: (Handing him another slip.) Mustard?

IVAN: Anything to wash it down?

OSIP: (Another slip) Milk.

IVAN: How about vodka?

OSIP: Really? Vodka's why we're eating paper for lunch.

IVAN: You know, I think I actually imagined I ate a roast beef sandwich.

OSIP: That's the spirit. Are you full?

IVAN: Not yet. I'll have another one.

OSIP: I can't. There's only one "sandwich" in the dictionary.

IVAN: I can only eat anything once?

OSIP: In a word, yes.

IVAN: Are there any other books in here?

OSIP: (Off the bedside table.) Just the Bible.

IVAN: I bet there's a lot of good food in there.

OSIP: I don't think we should cut up a Bible.

IVAN: Fishes. Loaves. Oxen.

OSIP: No. You can't eat a Bible. It's a sin.

IVAN: I don't care I'm starving! I'd eat a serpent! I'd eat goat! In Hell!! BBQ.

OSIP: Calm down. (Handing him a slip.) Have a vodka.

IVAN: (Eats it quickly.) Another.

OSIP: There's only one.

IVAN: (Picking up Bible) Give me the scissors.

OSIP: No.

IVAN: There's a lot of wine in the Bible.

OSIP: What you're thinking of doing is sacrilegious.

IVAN: I'll only cut from the New Testament. God's a little more forgiving in the second part.

OSIP: (Handing paper.) Have a "scotch."

(IVAN eats it. OSIP hands him another piece of paper.)

A "beer."

IVAN: (slightly tipsy.) I don't like beer.

(OSIP hands him another.)

A "Mai-tai. "

IVAN: What's in it?

OSIP: I'm not sure. (Handing him another slip.) But it comes with an "umbrella."

(IVAN eats it and chokes.)

It's meant for decoration.

IVAN: The room is spinning.

OSIP: You shouldn't mix drinks.

IVAN: I need real food! I'm starving to death. (Crosses to mirror. Look at me! (Stretching his face with his hands) One look at me and I can't disguise, I've got hungry eyes. (Sticking

out tongue and keeping it out.) MY TONGUE IS BLACK!

OSIP: Because you just ate a dictionary. Okay, you need food. But you have no money. This is your first time to feel like this. I live what this feels like. It's not easy. I wouldn't wish it upon anyone, but I hope you're here long enough to understand what it's like not to have a penny in your pocket. Or a crumb on the table.

IVAN: Well said, Osip. So. Much of my life has been served on a silver platter. It's time I take a walk in your shoes.

(WAITRESS climbs upstairs and knocks on door)

WAITRESS: (Behind door.) Lunch.

IVAN: Wow. That was a short walk. (Going to door.) Thanks for that lesson in poverty, Osip. I'll admit it was tough, but I still think you're exaggerating what it means to be poor, don't you?

(IVAN opens door as THE WAITRESS appears.)

WAITRESS: (Thrusting an "Eviction Notice" in IVAN's gut.) No lunch. You're evicted.

(WAITRESS slams door in IVAN's face. She goes down the stairs as IVAN opens door and calls out.)

IVAN: Excuse me!

WAITRESS (As she's leaving.) Don't shoot the messenger. It comes from my boss.

IVAN: No, listen, please, I understand, we haven't paid off a portion of our bill –

WAITRESS: You haven't paid any of your bill.

IVAN: Let's not quibble. We just need some food.

WAITRESS: Yeah, we're all out of free food.

IVAN: Oh, come on. I saw the chef this morning standing over plates of food that looked like a whole day's worth of meals on it. Are there any of those left?

WAITRESS: Sorry those are reserved for special customers.

IVAN: Oh, so you only serve certain customers. That's a kind of racism.

WAITRESS: We only serve customers that pay. That's a kind of capitalism.

IVAN: Is there anything left over from breakfast? Please. Anything you have access to?

WAITRESS: I'm sorry I'm not the boss. I've gotta go or I'll be late for my other job.

IVAN: You have another job?

WAITRESS: I have three, and I still can't make ends meet.

IVAN: Can you bring us any food from one of your other jobs.

WAITRESS: I gotta go.

IVAN: Wait! Have you ever been hungry?

WAITRESS: Yes.

IVAN: I mean, really hungry.

WAITRESS: Many times.

IVAN: No, I'm talking really, really, like ridiculously—

WAITRESS: Yes. Yes. Yes. No matter how many 'reallys' you add, I know I have been more hungry than you have ever been.

IVAN: Really? I'm eating words from a dictionary.

WAITRESS: I ate my shoes once.

IVAN: I can't eat my shoes. Do you know how much I paid for these?

OSIP: (Interrupting.) Hey, excuse me, if you could take me to your boss, I'll talk to him.

WAITRESS: I don't know if it'll do any good. He told me to call the cops if you raised a fuss about the eviction notice.

IVAN: The cops?! I've never had the cops called on me in my life?!

OSIP: This isn't a fuss. Look at him. (Pointing at IVAN.) Do you know how much of a fuss this guy would need to make for the cops to even look at him?

WAITRESS: That might be how it works in the Capital, but our Governor doesn't take kindly to strangers... foreigners, drifters, outsiders, transients, refugees, beggars, newcomers, exiles, deportees, outcasts, brown people, women with opinions –

IVAN: I am none of these! And I have no opinions.

OSIP: Please, a word with your boss. And we won't take any more of your time.

WAITRESS: Alright. But, my boss has heard it all before.

(WAITRESS nods. They exit.)

IVAN: The cops called on Ivan Alexandrovich Khlestakov?! How did it come to this? (Strings come in, dramatically and plays under IVAN's text.) If this was a musical, I'd sing a very sad song here. Full of self-deprecation. But I can't sing. So now I hate myself even more! Thanks a lot! (Strings cut out sharply.) What will Poppa think?! His own son, arrested. My poor father, Dimitry Eugene Uladzislaŭ Víktor Khlestakov, a successful businessman, respected family man; current world record holder of the longest business cards - how will he handle such shame brought upon his family? This is not the triumphant return I had imagined. I left the Capital a nobody. A pencil pushing clerk. I set forth with dreams and aspirations to become a somebody. To live my best life, dance like no one's watching, oh how I hoped to live... laugh... love. Outwardly I appear like someone who can keep calm and carry on, but really, I'm just a cliché –another nobody who tried and failed... Well, starting today, I am going to be grateful. For everything I have. Starting right now. I am grateful for this flea-infested hotel in a town that smells like rotten cabbage.

(OSIP reappears with the WAITRESS following him carrying a tray of covered food.)

Mmm, rotten cabbage?

(Door flings open.)

OSIP: Lunch

IVAN: You're kidding? Real food?

WAITRESS: Let's not get ahead of ourselves.

IVAN: What do you have?

WAITRESS: Soup.

IVAN: For that I am grateful.

WAITRESS: There's also Beef.

IVAN: Wow. This amazing. I've been grateful for like ten seconds and already my spiritual suffering is alleviated.

WAITRESS: My boss says this is the last meal you're going to get until you pay the bill.

IVAN: Tell him, I'm grateful. (Lifting cover of soup.) Gray soup. Interesting. (He stirs it with a spoon and tastes it and lets it dribble out of his mouth.) I'm grateful. Let me try again. (He tries but again, he cannot contain it in his mouth.) As grateful as I am for the soup, I'm having trouble not retching.

OSIP: Plug your nose. It might help.

IVAN: Alright. (He plugs his nose, and goes for another mouthful, when he drops the spoon:) Oh my God, something moved. (Looking at bowl) Look. Did you see that? Two eyes just looked up at me. It looked amphibious.

WAITRESS: Nah, more likely a baby rat. Those things are tough to drown.

IVAN: This isn't soup, it's puddle.

WAITRESS: (Going to take away the dishes.) If you're not hungry –

IVAN: No, no, no. Osip, you can have the soup, I'll try the beef. (He lifts cover to reveal a black piece of beef with a metal ring and a smaller piece beside it) What is this?

WAITRESS: Beef.

(IVAN picks up a knife and fork and attempts to cut it. He can't)

IVAN: It won't cut.

WAITRESS: Hold onto the ring for traction.

(IVAN does with vigor. He shows a bent knife.)

WAITRESS: Try the smaller piece.

(Using his fork, IVAN stabs a piece of meat and puts it in his mouth.)

IVAN: Mmm. Beefy. (More chewing.) Sinewy. (More chewing.) It's loosening my teeth.

WAITRESS: Swallow.

IVAN: (Does so with some difficulty.) Not bad. I am grateful to finally have food in my belly.
What cut was that?

WAITRESS: Sphincter.

(IVAN begins to gag ask for water. There is none. OSIP offers him the soup again, IVAN takes a big swig and swallows. He stops gagging and freezes with a morbid expression.)

OSIP: You okay?

IVAN: I just ate a cow's asshole and drank a baby rat. (Near tears.) And I'm still hungry.

WAITRESS: There's more on your plate.

IVAN: (Picking it up by the ring.) This is a cow's nose! (Throwing it back down.) I'm hungry for something between the nose and butt hole.

WAITRESS: It's all I had access to!

IVAN: A garbage pail?!

WAITRESS: (Taking plates and dishes away.) Fine. If you're going to be ungrateful.

IVAN: I refuse to be grateful for slop.

WAITRESS: This slop is what goes into making our chef's famous sausages.

(She exits with dishes.)

OSIP: They say, once you've seen how sausages are made, you'll never eat another animal's ass again.

IVAN: I'm soooo hungry. Quick, run after her, bring me back that nose.

(OSIP runs out after him, and almost as quickly, returns shutting the door behind him.)

OSIP: They're here.

IVAN: Who's here?

OSIP: The Governor, the Chief of Police and the guy who was eating two of those whole-meal-on-one-plate specials.

IVAN: Oh my God, they've come to arrest me.

(The GOVERNOR, PUGO and DOB nervously convene on the stairs. Beat. The following is played like a split screen:)

GOVERNOR: Pugo, you knock, be very polite and introduce me. We're friendly, "Hello, hi, all smiles." We play this like we're always friendly with visitors who come to our town. Bobchinsky, you give me a sign, if this is the guy you saw this morning.

(PUGO, GOVERNOR and DOB. head towards the door.)

OSIP: What are you going to do?

IVAN: I can't think...I'm sorry, all I can think about is that guy eating two of those whole-meal-on-one plate things. How did he do that?!

(PUGO about to knock.)

DOBCHINKSKY: Like what kind of sign?

GOVERNOR: I don't know... cough, if it's him.

DOBCHINKSKY: I'm just getting over a cold, I don't want to *really* cough and you think it's him when it's me really coughing.

IVAN: I can't expect my father to bail me out every time I screw up.

GOVERNOR: Okay, tug your ear if it's him.

DOBCHINKSKY: Alright. (He tugs his ear as a practice.) Let's hope I don't get a real itchy ear.

IVAN: I have to pay for my stupid debt.

OSIP: But you have no money.

IVAN: Then, I've got to put my big pants on and deal with this like an adult.

DOBCHINKSKY: What if it's not him?

GOVERNOR: Then just say, "It's not him." Can we do this, please!

(GOVERNOR cues PUGO to knock. PUGO knocks.)

IVAN: (High pitched fear.) Just a second!

ALL THREE: (Unison.) No worries take your time!

PUGO: He's probably got to put on his incognito.

OSIP: The way you said, "Just a second", did not sound like an adult. More like a little shrieking monkey.

PUGO: Did you hear that voice?

GOVERNOR: He sounds like a gorilla.

DOB: I think I peed a little.

IVAN: I think I peed a little.

OSIP: As soon as you tell them who your father is –

IVAN: I can't bring my father down here to bail me out.

OSIP: You have no visible income, awful b.o. - they could misinterpret who you really are - they could arrest you. Tell them who your father is.

IVAN: It would break him. No. I must face this on my own.

GOVERNOR: (To PUGO) Clear your throat. Let him know we're still here.

(PUGO does.)

IVAN; (To behind door.) "Sorry. One more second." Whatever happens... I have to speak the truth.

GOVERNOR: (Calling out.) Take your time. No rush.

IVAN: Watch. (Calling back.) Thank you. That's very kind, considering that I know what you're here for.

GOVERNOR: Is he being sarcastic?

DOB: Yes. I'm a writer, and that was sarcasm.

IVAN: (Crossing to coat rack and grabbing a fur coat.) Here. (Handing coat to OSIP.)

OSIP: What's this for?

IVAN: If I get arrested, pawn it to get back to the Capital, inform my father of my crime and punishment.... Tell him I refuse this name or money to get me out of this mess. Okay, from now on I'm only going to live in the truth.

(OSIP opens the door.)

PUGO: Hi, I'm Officer Pugo. I'm here with our esteemed/Governor

DOB: It's not him. (OSIP steps aside revealing IVAN) Wait, that's him! No, sorry, I mean – (DOB tugs his ear.)

GOVERNOR: Is this a bad time? We can leave and come back later?

IVAN: Wow. That is very courteous of you. (To OSIP.) This town is friendly.

PUGO GOVERNOR DOB: Very friendly. Super friendly. Rated "Most Friendliest".

IVAN: Well be that as it may, I know why you're here...and I'm ready for you. (He lowers his head and offers his hands, palms down, to be handcuffed. Beat. PUGO looks to the GOVERNOR.) Am I doing this wrong? Should it be this way? (He turns his palms up.)

(Beat. GOVERNOR reaches out and shoves a rouble note into IVAN's hand.)

IVAN: Did you just stuff money in my hand?

GOVERNOR: Isn't that what you–No. Why would I do that?

IVAN: Somebody stuffed a rouble- with many zeros on it - in my hand.

GOVERNOR: (Aside to DOB.) He asks for money, and then doesn't take it. Is he playing dumb?

DOB: (Aside.) Yes, and he's *very* good at it.

GOVERNOR: (Aside.) Two can play at that game. (Snatching rouble back and showing it.) This! This was part of a magic trick... that I messed up. I was going to ask you for a lower rouble note and, you know, do this trick, and surprise you, by turning it into this big bill.

IVAN: I love magic. But unfortunately, I don't even have a single rouble to give you. But, that's why you're here. (He lowers his head and presents his hands again to be arrested.)

DOB: (Aside.) He wants a bigger bill.

(GOVERNOR puts a new ruble bill into IVAN's hand.)

IVAN: (Seeing bill.) Are we doing the trick again because I think you made the same mistake as the first time.

GOVERNOR: Look closer.

IVAN: Oh, there's more zeros now.

GOVERNOR: Ta da!

IVAN: Very good. You pretend to make a mistake and then the bill gets bigger. (Offering to hand bill back. GOVERNOR refuses. They go back and forth until IVAN shoves the bill back to the GOVERNOR.)

GOVERNOR: Am I doing something wrong?

IVAN: No... Actually, that's a lie. Honestly, the magic trick wasn't... really magical.

(GOVERNOR opens his wallet, asks DOB to do the same. GOVERNOR stuffs a large wad of bills in his hand.)

IVAN: Truth. This is a terrible magic trick.

GOVERNOR: May we come in and discuss this?

IVAN: If that's procedure, by all means. Please come in.

(GOVERNOR, PUGO and DOBCHINSKY enter. As the door is closing, BOBCHINKSKY rushes in towards the door and peers through the keyhole.)

This is my assistant, Osip.

OSIP: Hi.

GOVERNOR: (Aside to DOB.) Look at the coat his assistant wears. Five -six hundred rubles, easy.

IVAN: And I am Ivan Alexandrovich Khlestakov. I'm from the Capital.

GOVERNOR, PUGO, DOB: Yes, we know.

GOVERNOR: I'm Anton Antonovich, the Governor. This is Pugovitsin, our Chief of Police. And

this is Bobchinsky.

BOBCHINKSKY: (From behind the door.) I'm Bobchinsky!

IVAN: Wow, a magician and a ventriloquist. (To DOB.) I did not see your lips move. You're making this fun, but it does little to console the complete turmoil I've been through in this town.

GOVERNOR: "Turmoil"?

IVAN: Dreadful. Absolutely shameful.

GOVERNOR: I'm new at this. I've only been doing this for two and a half years. If something went wrong, I'm sure we can find the right person to take the fall for me.

IVAN: No, there's only one person to blame. I have never felt worse in my life. But I've come to realize that one has to be responsible for their actions. And accept the consequences even if it means prison.

GOVERNOR: (On his knees.) No. Please. I have a beautiful, expensive wife and a teenage daughter who needs braces and a tattoo removed. They need me. We can work something out?

IVAN: You seem adamant in helping me.

GOVERNOR: Yes. Let me help you. If we can take jail off the table.

IVAN: I don't see how that's possible.

GOVERNOR: Please. I'm begging you.

IVAN: Your concern is touching, but I can't pay my bill.

GOVERNOR: (To DOB.) He doesn't take bribes directly, you have to present them as a service.) I can pay your bill. (Offering him a fan of bills.) It's what we do with all our visitors who need help. It's my town's policy. I insist.

IVAN: Well if you insist. (Taking them.) Thank you. But this is a loan, I am determined to pay you back. It's not as if I don't have a job. I work for the government in the Capital. Excuse me. Osip?!

(As OSIP crosses to IVAN.)

GOVERNOR: (Aside.) He pretends not to have clue and then rubs my nose in it with his job.

IVAN: Is he crazy?! He thrust this money on me.

DOB: (Aside.) He's a genius at manipulation.

OSIP: I think he'd hurt himself if you didn't take it.

IVAN: Alright. Run down and get the waitress with my bill.

(OSIP leaves and squishes BOB. against the wall with the door, knocking him out.)

GOVERNOR: Will you be in town long?

IVAN: I hope not. I don't know how much more I can take of this filthy hole of a place. The bed bugs are fed better than I am.

GOVERNOR: This is unacceptable.

IVAN: The truth be told, Governor, I've lived my life with... "someone" always footing the bill for my extravagant lifestyle.

GOVERNOR: "Someone"? Who's that?

IVAN: No, if I told you that, you'd treat me differently. Let's just say, without that support, I'm useless. I haven't had a decent meal in days.

GOVERNOR:(Aside to DOB.) He wants us to take care of him.

DOB: (Aside.) Pay for his extravagant life style.

GOVERNOR: Have they treated you poorly here?

IVAN: No, it was me, I was ungrateful when they served me cow's nose and ass.

GOVERNOR: They what?! I'll make them pay for this. They will rue the day!

(OSIP returns with the WAITRESS. They step over the knocked-out BOB and re-enter.)

WAITRESS: You wanted something?

IVAN: The bill.

GOVERNOR: Whatever you charge it's too much?! Do you have any idea who this man is?!

WAITRESS: A freeloader.

GOVERNOR: He is... a travelling visitor... who deserves our utmost respect. Whatever he owes, send the bill to my office.

WAITRESS: Alright, but just a head's up, Vlass always over charges the government.

GOVERNOR: I will shut his business down for the treatment of this guest.

IVAN: There's no need for/that.

WAITRESS: Please don't. I can't afford to lose this job.

GOVERNOR: I will leave it to our visitor to decide. (To IVAN.) How would you like this handled?

IVAN: The Inn can stay open. And I think she should get a raise.

GOVERNOR: You heard the man. Tell Vlass what we've discussed, and it comes from the Governor himself.

WAITRESS: Will do. (She leaves.)

GOVERNOR: You will not spend another night here.

IVAN: I have nowhere else to go.

GOVERNOR: As long as you're here, you will be a guest in my home. Or am I stepping out of bound? Do you think I'm being too presumptuous?

IVAN: (To OSIP.) Is he kissing my ass?

OSIP: I have no idea what he's doing.

GOVERNOR: It would please me to no end if you were our guest. My wife loves to host. It brings her such joy to order her servants around to take care of such a distinguished guest as yourself. This is not flattery or a bribe. But something we do with all visitors. I certainly don't mean to offend you.

IVAN: That would be wonderful. I can't say no.

GOVERNOR: Perhaps we could visit some of our institutions. Like the hospital.

IVAN: What for?

GOVERNOR: I think you'd be surprised how efficient we are.

IVAN: Okay, sure.

GOVERNOR: And then you could inspect our schools. Education means a lot to us.

IVAN: There's not a time-share seminar at the end of this tour is there?

GOVERNOR: No, no. We're very proud of our town.

IVAN: Okay, sure.

GOVERNOR: And if you'd like we could visit the jail.

IVAN: What for?

GOVERNOR: To see how we treat criminals.

IVAN: No need. From what I've seen, you're very progressive.

GOVERNOR: Alright. Would you like to take my carriage or yours?

IVAN: May as well take yours since I don't have one.

GOVERNOR: (To DOB.) He's going to make us pay for everything. (To IVAN.) Excellent. I just need a word with Bobchinsky, then we'll be on our way.

IVAN: Absolutely

DOB: (Aside.) You'll have to make your own way back. No room.

DOB: (Aside.) Fine, I may go downstairs and have lunch.

GOVERNOR: (Aside.) No, I need you to run as fast as possible to the hospital and tell Daria we're coming. And then run even faster back to my wife and tell her to prepare for the government inspector. We need to get him on our turf, and then ply him with alcohol and then get him to give us a glowing review. You got that.

DOB: It might be faster if I take your carriage and you two walk?

GOVERNOR: We'll stop for lunch to buy you some time. Go!

(DOBCHINKSKY runs out slamming BOB against the wall again. As the door closes BOB falls on the stairs.)

GOVERNOR: Are you hungry?

IVAN: Starving.

GOVERNOR: I'm going to take you to our finest buffet establishment. They make their own vodka. It's not refined, it's also used to tranquilize bears that make it into town, but it does the trick. Pugo will help your assistant bring your luggage.

IVAN: Wonderful. (Aside.) You see, Osip. The truth will set you free. After you.

GOVERNOR: No please, after you.

(PUGO opens the door for the IVAN and the GOVERNOR.)

IVAN: Oh, someone seems to have passed out on the stairs.

BOB: No, I'm awake.

IVAN: What happened to your face?

BOB: Nothing. Just a scratch on my nose. I should probably resist the overwhelming urge to take a nap right now.

GOVERNOR: Step over him and we'll be on our way.

(IVAN does so, followed by the GOVERNOR.)

GOVERNOR: I won't forget this, Bobchinsky.

(They exit.)

BOB: Now you remember my name?! (He passes out.)

(Blackout.)