

Excerpt from "Agafya"

SAVKA

I would have told her not to come if I had known you would arrive.

NIKOLAY

I am happy to lie over there (indicates the river bank) and look up at the sky. A good meal, good talk, and the sound of the night birds.

SAVKA

(Nods his head. Thinks.) No. You stay here. (To Agafya) You! Go home to your husband.

AGAFYA

(Sullen) You told me tonight. (Affirmative) I brought you food.

(Sound of the nightingale: two low contralto notes.)

SAVKA

Come next week. (Bragging) My friend from Moscow has arrived. Show a little respect. Even though you are a peasant. Go home and wait for your husband.

AGAFYA

(Sits on a rock near their blanket) I cooked all day.

NIKOLAY

Would you like some vodka? We have a little bread and cheese left.

SAVKA

You had better not get drunk.

AGAFYA

(Sullen) I want some vodka. (Conciliatory) I won't get drunk.

SAVKA

We only have one glass.

NIKOLAY

(Hands her a drink.) Why don't you sit down?

(Agafya looks at Savka and remains standing. She downs the vodka, fidgets from foot to foot. The sound of the nightingale again: a tiny high trill, then a song.)

SAVKA

(Savka jumps up.) It's the same one as yesterday.

NIKOLAY

How can you tell? (Beat) Do you still sell birds in the market?

SAVKA

(Looking at Agafya. Shrugs.) Sometimes. I like to catch them, then let them go.

NIKOLAY

That is no way to make a living, my friend.

SAVKA

(Turns to Agafya) He [Nikolay] is my friend. He is my good friend. (Meaning: you can sleep with him.) Do you understand? It's okay. (Pause) I don't mind. (He stand up.)

NIKOLAY

Savka! Think about what you are saying.

SAVKA

(Pause) This is unbearable. (Beat) I'm going to find the nightingale. (He exits.)