

The Proposal

X By Anton Chekhov

‘The Proposal’ (originally titled ‘A Marriage Proposal’) is a one act play, a farce by the Russian short storywriter and dramatist Anton Chekhov (1860 - 1904). It was written in 1888 - 89.

This one act play is about the tendency of wealthy Russian families or people to seek marriage ties with other wealthy families or people to increase their estates by encouraging marriages that make good economic sense. Ivan Lomov comes to seek the hand of Chubukov’s 25 year old daughter Natalya. All three are quarrelsome. They quarrel over petty issues. The proposal is in danger of being forgotten amidst all this quarreling. But economic good sense ensures that the proposal is made successful, after all - although the quarreling perhaps continues.

Characters

Stepan Stepanovitch Chubukov	-	Natalya’s father
Natalya Stepanovna	-	Chubukov’s daughter
Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov	-	Chubukov’s neighbour

Summary

The scene opens in Chubukov’s drawing room. Lomov enters and Chubukov rises to welcome him. Chubukov asks him as to how he may be getting on. Lomov thanks him. Chubukov also tells that he and his daughter get along somehow. He asks him why he is so formal in his get - up. Lomov tells that he has come to see him. Chubukov suspects that he has come to borrow money and decides not to give him any money. On making further enquiry Lomov tells that he has come to ask the hand of Natalya in marriage. Chubukov gets joy on hearing it as Natalya has reached the marriageable age. He is off his balance with joy, absolutely

off his balance. Lomov asks him if Natalya will consent for this marriage. Chubukov tells that Natalya is to consent for this as she is in love with him and she is like a lovesick at. Lomov trembles all over just as if he had got an examination before him. He makes up his mind that it is right time for him to marry. He thinks Natalya is an excellent housekeeper, not bad looking, educated. What more does he want? He is already 35 - a critical age. He should not delay his marriage and lead a quiet and regular life. He suffers from palpitations and gets easily upset. Whenever he sleeps, he feels a pull in his left side shoulder and head. Then he jumps, walks and lies down but as soon as he is to get off to sleep another pull comes. Natalya comes and surprises to see him because her father tells her that a merchant has come for his goods. Lomov asks how she is. She is in her apron and negligee as she is shelling peas for drying. She offers smoke and matches. She tells that the weather is splendid but the previous day it was so wet that the workman didn't do anything all day. She had a whole field cut and now she is afraid her hay may not. Lomov is unable to ask if she will accept his proposal. He mentions Oxen Meadows that touch Chubukov's birchwoods. He also tells that between their families there is a good mutual respect and affection. Now over the Oxen Meadows they quarrel. Lomov tells that he means those Oxen Meadows which are waged between their birchwoods and Burnt Marsh. Now Lomov tells her that Oxen Meadows belong to him. He tells that his aunt's grandmother gave the free use of Oxen Meadows to the farmers of her father's grandfather, in return for which they were to make bricks for his aunt's grandmother. The farmers of her father's grandfather had the free use of Oxen Meadows for 40 years and had got into the habit of regarding the Oxen Meadows as their own land. Natalya tells that her elders reckoned that their land extended to Brunt Marsh - which means that Oxen Meadows were theirs. Now Lomov disputes it and tells that he has legal documents of the Oxen Meadows. She tells that the meadows aren't worth much to her. They only cost 5 dessiatins and are worth perhaps 300 roubles, but she can't stand unfairness. They continue the dispute. Lomov is told that he is a mean person. He tells that he will make her a present of the meadows. She tells she can make a present of them herself because they are hers. She lets him know that the previous year they lent him their

threshing - machine, although on that account they had to put off their own threshing till November. He is impudent in her opinion. Then Lomov gets angry and asks her if he is a land grabber. Now the quarrel has reached to a heated point. She says that she will send her mowers or grasscutters out to the meadows and he says that he will give it to them in the neck. He asks her if it wasn't for this awful, excruciating palpitation, he would talk to her in a different way. Now Chubukov enters the scene and asks them what the matter is and what they are shouting for. Both Natalya and Lomov ask his opinion about the Oxen Meadows. Chubukov tells them that they belong to him. Lomov tells Chubukov that he will have the matter taken to the court and then he will show him. Chubukov says that he is on the lookout for a chance to go to court and abuses him. Now Lomov also abuses his grandfather. Then the three use bad words. Chubukov tells that Lomov's have had lunacy in his family. His grandfather was a drunkard and his younger aunt eloped with an architect. Lomov too says that Chubukov's mother was hump - backed. Now Lomov is upset and wants water but father and daughter continue to say malicious words like double faced intriguer, backbiter, dishonest, mean, rascal, scarecrow, villain, blind hen and turnip - ghost. Now Lomov gets out of their house. Now Chubukov tells that Lomov came to make a proposal to her. Natalya is saddened by hearing this and requests her father to recall Lomov. Chubukov becomes unhappy over this request made by Natalya. He thinks that he should shoot himself or hang himself. But he goes to Lomov's house and returns very soon. Lomov appears at their door. Now once more Natalya and Lomov talk and they get into quarrel once more about their dogs - Guess and Squeezer. Lomov tells that he has got his dog Guess from Minorova for 125 roubles which she thinks too high cost. He thinks that it is very cheap as his dog is a first rate dog. She thinks her dog Squeezer whose cost is 85 roubles is heaps better than his dog, even better than Volchantsky's dog on points and pedigree. There is no getting at the pedigree of his dog at all. It is old and as ugly as a worn - out cab - horse. She says that his dog is half - dead already! Chubukov tells that Guess is purebred, firm on his feet, well - sprung ribs and all that. But it is old and short in muzzle. Lomov tells that their dog Squeezer is like any dog under every bush. She has paid 85 roubles for

him but 25 rouble would be a handsome price to pay for him. It is overshot so a bad hunter. Its lower jaw is shorter than the upper one. It is a throughbred dog, son of Harness and Chisel. He says that he wouldn't take 5 Squeezers for his Guess. Both try to prove that their dog is better than the other Natalya says that Squeezer is a 100 times better than his silly Guess. Now Chubukov tells that his dog is the best dog in the district. Lomov comments that they think him either blind or a fool. This way their discord over their dogs continues. Lomov is again upset. He says that Squeezer is a 100 times worse than his Guess. Chubukov asks them to stop their discord. He also tells him to talk in a cool way. When Lomov says that on the Marusinsky hunt Guess ran neck - and - neck with the Count's dog, while Squeezer was left far behind. Chubukov replies that it was because that the Count's whipper - in hit Squeezer with a whip. Lomov says that other dogs run after a fox but Squeezer runs after a sheep. Hearing it Chubukov gets angry and asks Lomov to be quiet. Now both use bad words for each other like intriguer, pup, rat, milksop, fool and Lomov falls into an armchair and faints. Natalya thinks Lomov is dead and shouts for a doctor. Her father lifts a tumbler of water to Lomov's mouth but he doesn't drink. Chubukov once more becomes unhappy over being a father of a grown up daughter. Meanwhile Lomov comes to his sense and Chubukov puts Lomov's hand into Natalya's hand to complete the proposal. The father gives his blessings and requests them to leave him in peace but once more Natalya asks Lomov to admit that Guess is worse than Squeezer. Again there starts a quarrel over the dogs.

Glossary

Darling	-	child or son
How may you be getting on?	-	how are you getting on?
My angel or my treasure	-	my child or son
Spit it out	-	speak out

To seek the hand of a girl in marriage	-	to propose
By Jov	-	by god
Twitch	-	a sudden quick moment or feeling
To get off to sleep	-	to go to bed
Neglige	-	a women's dressing gown
To stand unfairness	-	to bear dishonesty
Carafe	-	a glass container
Pettifogger	-	paying too much attention to unimportant things
Embezzlement	-	stealing money belonging to your employer

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