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Ivan Kocherha
YAROSLAV THE WISE





Dedicated
to the 1500th anniversary
of the City of Kiev



Ivan Kocherha
YAROSLAV THE WISE
A DRAMA IN VERSE

Kiev
Dnipro Publishers
1982

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К75

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ЯРОСЛАВ МУДРИЙ
Драматична поема

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FOREWORD

A poet or playwright — and in essence the words are synonymous, for every real playwright is a poet — who tries to recreate the majestic image of Yaroslav the Wise [c. 978—1054], unavoidably comes up against not only the extraordinary complexity of that contradictory character, but also difficulties of a formal order: precisely which events from Yaroslav's long and stormy life to use as the foundation for the production? The problem is specially complicated for the poet who chooses the dramatic form of representation, because if one presupposes, of course, the tragic genre, and not a historical chronicle, it demands above all great condensation of external events. In other words, in a production on a historical theme, it is not possible to avoid certain anachronisms and other departures from the strict historical truth, a right which has long been acknowledged for dramatic poets.

In our drama such infringements are few. From Yaroslav's lengthy political life I have chosen a comparatively brief period — from 1030 to 1036 A. D., that means those years when Yaroslav, after a prolonged struggle with Svyatopolk,* Boleslaw,* Bryachislav* and Mstislav,* at last “wiped away the sweat of bloody battle-fields” and turned to “establishing new order” in the lands of Rus united under a single power. That period concluded with his brilliant victory over the Pechenegs' hordes, and their final destruction outside Kiev. From other external events, only Yaroslav's campaign against Chud* (1030 A. D.), the reconquering of the towns around Cherven* in Poland (1031 A. D.), and the unsuccessful campaign of Uleb (Ulf) against the Zyrian* lands towards the “Iron Gates” (1032 A. D.) belong to this period. All these remain in the drama without change or chronological breach, and in only one case did I transgress, when I brought forward the marriage of Yaroslav's daughter Elizabeth to the Norwegian Prince Harold to 1032 A. D.— which in reality took place later, in 1044 A. D. The breach was not a very substantial one, since in 1032 A. D. Ingegerd could very well have had a grown-up daughter, if we remember that in 1014 A. D. in Novgorod, and already Yaroslav's wife, she was on the side of the Varangians, killed at the famous “Poromon's House”. To put off Harold's wooing for 12 years, and to extend the period of the drama by that amount was inconvenient, just as inadmissible as it was to exclude that profitable episode.

The second, and quite insignificant, departure from historical, or rather documentary fact, concerns the circumstances of the famous battle with the Pechenegs outside Kiev, in 1036 A. D. According to the information given in chronicles, at the time when the enormous hordes of Pechenegs surrounded Kiev, Yaroslav was in Novgorod, where “he gathered together a host of warriors, marched towards Kiev, and entered his city”, and then later “sallied forth out of the city” to take up battle against the Pechenegs who were attacking him, and had “started the onslaught”. In my drama Yaroslav hears about the movement of the Pecheneg horde while he is in Kiev itself, and the help from the Novgorodians arrives in tense and dramatical circumstances, earlier conditioned by the preceding development of events. I consider that I had the right to make

such an unsubstantial change, the more so, seeing that the chronicle version is itself not lacking in a few contradictions: why did the Pechenegs not take advantage of the absence of the Prince and his men from Kiev, and destroy the city, having a vast superiority in numbers ("the Pechenegs held the innumerable majority") and afterwards why did they let Yaroslav pass through with his troops, exhausted after their long march to Kiev, instead of attacking them immediately?

Finally, the dramatic details of the defence of Kiev which I have concocted have the same right to artistic existence as other poetical inventions and images in the drama — such as the avenger of insults which Novgorod had suffered at Yaroslav's hands, Mikita (the son of the historical character Kosnyatin, the governor of Novgorod), the plot between Ulf and Ingegerd against Yaroslav, the adventures of Svichkogas, and so on, without which not a single historical drama or novel can manage — so long as they conform to the inner truth of the epoch portrayed. By the way, as far as the active role played by Ingegerd, Yaroslav's wife, is concerned, about whom the chronicles record only the year of her death, and give no other details, I had to recourse to Icelandic sagas, in particular to the famous Egmond Saga, in which Yaroslav and Ingegerd are accorded a fair amount of attention, and wherein, though in idealized fashion, the personality of the Scandinavian Princess, and ambitious wife of the Grand Prince of Rus, is portrayed with strong and clear-cut features.

Concerning Yaroslav himself, the central figure of the dramatic poem, there, in creating his image it was essential to aspire not only towards the historical and artistic truth, but also towards a certain philosophical generalization, and to a new treatment of this extraordinarily complicated character. In actual fact, the historical image of Yaroslav consists of such diverse features as ambition, unscrupulousness in choosing the means for attaining his ends, love of culture and enlightenment, magnanimity, and cunning. He showed knightly valour, and alongside with that a faint-hearted fear in the decisive moment (we recall the dramatic episode of 1017 A. D., when Yaroslav, defeated by Bolesław, was prepared to make his escape beyond the seas, but the Novgorodians forcibly compelled him to continue his struggle for the throne). He showed both

generosity and miserliness, and also a forgetfulness and ingratitude for services rendered to him, and other similar traits.

Taken as whole, these are the features of a monumental, tragic figure, majestic alike in his virtues and his vices, and an unusually active and impassioned character.

Very interesting data for the formation of an idea of this character are given in the results published not long ago (1940) of an anatomical and X-ray examination of Yaroslav's skeleton, made when his famous sarcophagus in St. Sophia Cathedral was opened. A whole string of original hypotheses and assumptions put forward on that occasion, create not only the physical image of a powerfully-built man, with considerable injuries to the right knee and thigh-joint (lameness), and with a heightened functioning of the thyroid glands, but also in good measure portray the moral and psychological characteristics of a man distinguished by his liveliness of mind, irascibility, inclination to outbursts of anger, and tempestuous reactions, a man of colossal energy and activity, which having appeared already in early youth, with the passing of years must have inevitably led on and inspired him towards peaceful constructive activity, as in fact they actually did.

However, such a portrayal of characteristics seemed to me too primitive, or rather, one-sided. Revealing that stormy character through his activities, I came to the conclusion that the matter was not simply one of the sublimation of energy, and not the channeling of it in mature years into a more peaceful bed. I wanted to see Yaroslav in his inner conflicts, in the struggle of two opposing tendencies of his creative energy — its militant and its peaceful constructive aspects.

But that conflict did not consist alone in the divided directions of his aspirations. Yaroslav understood that the glory-filled Varangian past had played its role, and that now

Enough of earls, and landless ones, to boot!

Who sailed their ships to Rus in search of loot.

and that the Varangians who, in Ingegerd's opinion, had won for him the throne, were merely mercenaries "who served the

enemy when they paid them more". When Ingegerd scornfully names him a Varangian himself, and reproaches him with mixing noble Varangian blood with that of a serf (an illusion to Vladimir's mother, Malusha), Yaroslav parries the thrust with wrath and with pride —

*Among the heavenly boons
I count that blood the highest of all blessings
Which with the people binds me in unity.
I do not need those fancy tales, and guessings,
Which seek my forebears somewhere o'er the sea.
My folk are here, on these wide steppes and pastures,
From Kiev up to Ladoga live, as of old...*

And finally there is one more, naturally bound up with this drama about Yaroslav the Wise — the theme of wisdom: what is human wisdom and how does one find it? Yaroslav and other personages give one answer to this question:

*...wisdom is not gained from laws, though needful,
But in long search, through many a sad mistake...*

In general, then, the idea of the poem may be defined as the difficult, and sometimes even painful search for truth and wisdom, along with the people, for the good of the motherland. In that search Yaroslav is aided not only by his friends, but also by those who, like Mikita, stood up against him for their own personal view of the truth, or like Zhureiko who was deeply offended by the Prince, but saved him in his hour of need, for they were all united and reconciled by love of the motherland and of Kiev, and were under the spell of the attractive personality of Yaroslav the Wise. Especially touching for us, in that light, is the unwavering faithfulness of Novgorod the Great towards Yaroslav — a historical fact which presented me with the precious possibility of creating a whole series of dramatical situations and scenes.

The author

ACTING CHARACTERS

Yaroslav,	Grand Prince of Kiev
Ingegerd,	his spouse
Elizabeth,	} their children
Anna,	
Vladimir,	
Harold,	a Norwegian knight
Mikita,	a monk artist-illustrator
Silvester,	a learned monk
Lyudomir,	an old villager
Milusha,	his daughter
Zhureiko,	a Kievan stone-mason
David,	} elected representatives from Novgorod
Ratibor,	
Ulf,	a Varangian, relative of Ingegerd
Miroslav,	} Kievan boyars
Slavyata,	
Yarun,	the Prince's steward
Foka,	a monk copyist
Gemma,	a slave-girl from Sicily
Roald,	chief of the Varangian bodyguard
Parthenios,	a Greek merchant
Thorvald,	a Varangian
Stemir,	a messenger

Boyars, Varangians, builders, populace,
foreign ambassadors, Prince's servants.

*The action takes place in Kiev, in the thirties of the
11th century.*

ACT ONE



The Falcon
1030 A. D.

A gallery in the Prince's palace in Kiev, leading from the inner chambers to the private chapel. Through the light Romanesque arches of the gallery, standing on double marble columns, the distant expanses of green meadows and the blue Dnieper can be seen. The quiet tolling of a bell is heard in the gentle calm of a summer morning.



SCENE I

Behind small writing-desks, bent over their manuscripts, are a few monk copyists. Nearer to the footlights, behind such a desk, sits a young and handsome monk Mikita, with a black beard, and a pale face; he is painting illuminated capitals and miniatures on a manuscript. Beyond him — also young, but fat and red-faced, sits the monk Foka Svichkogas, from beneath whose black skull-cap protrude profuse auburn curls. Their work is directed by a stately old man, the silver-haired monk-priest Silvester, with a staff in his hand, and a gold cross on his breast.*

Silvester

Bless, O Lord God, Kiev, this sovereign city,
Which on a hill above the Dnieper blue
Preserves the peace, and human toil befitting,
For which the soil pays back in fruits when due.
Bless, O Lord God, Thy people there below,
Forget them not in happiness, nor in woe:
The plougher, who furrows the field beside the water,
The builder, who raises stone on stone, and then
Securely binds them with the firmest mortar,
The copyist-monk, who with his fruitful pen
Great verbal treasures writes out in his book.
What space, what vistas, and what calm! Just look
How through the distant groves blue haze goes creeping,
And one lone bell tolls quietly 'neath clear skies.
The shepherdess lies by her cauldron sleeping.
The Prince stands firm, there is power in his eyes.
For he, Prince Yaroslav, with his iron troops,
Has barred the way to all his enemies' hopes.
And God's own peace, like the sun above his people,
Above Kiev and Rus begins to shine.
And therefore all must value very deeply
This peace on earth, this calm and quiet time.
We must haste on, my brothers, though it irks.
In order to copy out in time these books.
For soon the Prince will be from Chud returning,
Where he has fought a battle, and built towns,
And when he comes he certainly will be burning
To know how many books we have copied down,
For he is studious, often likes to read,
As from a precious bowl, like golden mead,
The wine of words he pours forth on the world.

Mikita

Bless, wise and holy father, this my word —
The merit lies not in what good books you know,
But from those books a grain of love and good
To plant within your heart, and make it grow.

Silvester

And with good deeds the people's hearts to enlighten,
Such is the work of wise Prince Yaroslav;
Not only he thirsts himself for the waters of wisdom,
A thirst such as a deer for a spring might have,
But to all of us that golden mead has given,
Which he has gathered since his early youth
From learned books, their wisdom blessed by heaven,
Until he opened up the gates of Truth,
Not having given his body any respite.
And with what burdens has he moiled and toiled,
And in what bloody battles never was bested;
Sedition and cunning he cast down and foiled,
Until the wind had scattered their mortal dust,
And on his father's throne, with brow sweat-soiled,
He had united all of ancient Rus.

Mikita

True words. But on his road the Prince's victory
Would not have been so easy to attain
Had God not helped him steer his course in history,
And Novgorod had not risen to help again.
How many times, her previous slights forgot,
Novgorod formed her troops up on the spot,
Gathered her gold and warriors bold together,
To Yaroslav's aid they sped, their swords to wield,
Near Lyubech,* and on Alta's* bankside heather,
Near Listven,* and on many a battle-field,
The blood of brother Novgorodians poured —
Which Yaroslav soon forgot, or quite ignored...

Silvester

(shaking his head)

O, brother mine, it seems you have forgotten
That God alone may judge principalities so.
He sees alone the road that must be trodden,
Where tsars and simple serfs are bound to go.
But we, as humble monks, are called today,
No ill remembering, for the Prince to pray.
Well, brothers, see to it, and in good time,
That pens with trembling do not spoil your line.
And with a prayer approach the parchment leaf,
So that the Devil steals not in, like a thief,
And that no errors must be scraped away.

Mikita

From parchment one may soon remove an error,
But from one's conscience it will never budge.

Silvester

Mikita, think on my advice, however —
You have forgotten, and once more princes judge!

Mikita

Forgive me, father! I recall again
That great mistake with which the parchment-skin
Of his young life Prince Yaroslav did stain,
When he his deputy, honest Kosnyatin,
Cast into gaol, without the slightest fault...

Silvester

We may not judge. It may be Kosnyatin
Rose up against the Prince.

Mikita

O holy God!

That Kosnyatin, the Novgorod city provost,
In Yaroslav's dark hour, the Prince once saved.
When from the Ugrian and Germanic rovers,
His warriors slain, defeated, disarrayed,
Prince Yaroslav prepared his ships for sailing —
That Kosnyatin those vessels then destroyed,
Brought Novgorod's stern warriors, never-failing,
With swords and gold, to Yaroslav, his lord.
'To save the honour and unity of Rus,
Lead us, O Prince, to yield to death alone!
They marched ahead, defeat their enemies suffered;
They won for Yaroslav a golden throne.
For all the efforts which Kosnyatin had made
His loyalty was with foul injustice paid.

Silvester

Enough, Mikita! You see but injustice,
Though you are still too young to judge aright.
Therefore this penance your rebel soul must punish —
Forty obeisances to make this night!

Steps are heard, and the silvery tinkling of a little bell. Into the gallery from the right comes a procession; in front walks a boy in a white surplice with a bell and a lighted candle. Behind him walks Ingegerd, in regal array, and wearing a golden diadem with heavy pendants hanging down over a white silk head-kerchief, closely confining her hair. Behind her come court ladies, all with their prayer-books in their hands. The monks rise and bow respectfully. The procession moves off to the left.

Silvester

Preserve, O Lord, the Princess tender-hearted,
And to her supplication lend Thine ear.
From Thy great church she never long is parted,
And prays for those who have gone off to war.

Mikita

It would not hurt her much to do some praying
For a thousand men of famous lords beside,
Who perished from the slanders she set playing,
In that same year when good Prince Vladimir died.
While Yaroslav...

Silvester

(raising his hands in horror)

Recall my warning, brother,
And curb your spirit. What need again and again
To fan the fire that your whole soul may smother,
Which left in peace might warm you without pain?
The Lord with marvellous knowledge has endowed you,
And taught your hand and eye a wondrous skill,
Your brush is able, any time you will,
To paint more clear than words the world around you:
Green fields, the emerald waters of the mill,
And purple robes, and sunsets gold and crimson,
The charm and beauty of the feminine form.
Why do you breathe with worldly spite, not wisdom,
Why then such serpents in your bosom warm,
If you may here, in blessed peace assured,
With your most masterful art thus praise the Lord?

Mikita

O, if each might choose, with freedom burning,
The one true road to take in future life!
For from that road there can be no returning,
And God Almighty in this world of strife
Gives man no peace, and no chance of forgetting...
How could I gather bunches of ripe grapes,
If as a lad from home I must be setting,
And ancient sorrows followed in my steps?...
How nurture in my soul white doves of peace,
When there its nest the blackest raven weaves?...

Silvester

O holy God! I wish to hear no further...
Come to the church today and all confess,
And there your mutinous soul will unburden.

(To another monk)

And where are you then off to, Svichkogas?



Foka

Why, bless me, worthy father, I must leave you —
The ink's gone stiff, and needs diluting now,
And I must fill again the dried-up inkwell.

Silvester

Now stop your nonsense, man, and sit you down.
It's not the inkwell's dry, your throat more likely,
And not for ink you thirst, but for some wine!

Foka

By God, not I! I'm not a one for drinking,
I haven't a groat with which to bless my name;
Besides, the Prince's butler's gone to the village,
And who would treat a penniless monk to wine?

Silvester

Well, rest content! You only wait the offer
From somebody to wet your whistle for you.
Come to your senses, lazy good-for-nothing,
Remember what you were, and what are now.
Or would you be again a candle-snuffer?

Foka

But I've done nothing yet!

Silvester

I sheltered you,
I made a monk of you, a skilful copier;
Though you're a fool, you stood in wise men's boots —
Now back you go!

Foka

Forgive me, learned father!

Silvester

Have you not heard the holy fathers' words —
That drunkenness turns sober monks to cattle,
That the lion the third cup pours, the fourth a boar,
That the fifth is poured out by the very Devil?

Foka

Great God above! I thought but of the first —
How should I guess about the fifth and last?

SCENE II

Into the gallery, from the right, enters the young Princess Elizabeth, a seventeen-year-old maiden with a prayer-book in her hands.

Silvester

God's blessing on your head, my young Princess!

The monks bow respectfully, while Elizabeth nods her head and stands before Silvester, who raises his hand in blessing.

Elizabeth

Pray tell me, father, has my dearest mama
Passed long ago to church?

Silvester

But not long since,
So hasten, child, and may the Lord forgive.

(He strokes her head.)

For your sweet soul is pure as any angel's.

Elizabeth

Oh no, my father... Now, indeed, I've sinned —
I listened to the psaltery of our bard,
And now am late for prayers.

Silvester

God will forgive!

Elizabeth

How pleasant all is here, and interesting,
And what enormous books!...

(Stops near Mikita's desk.)

And how they shine
With rich and brilliant colours! Clear and glistening
Like emeralds, or like flowers in summer-time...
My father has an old and precious goblet
As clear as golden honey, and sparkling bright,
And as a child I used to take and hold it,
Look through it on God's world, as from the night,
And everything then was wonderful delight,
As if in heaven, or in some happy dream,
And so your colours, too, enchanting gleam.

Silvester

Mikita as a craftsman is very cunning,
In subtle art the finest we have here.

Elizabeth

(admiring a miniature in the book)

What beauty! And with what harmonious colours
Into one wreath on gold are woven there!
And such a world, so distant and so lovely,
I saw once through the goblet crystal-clear.

Mikita

Yes, wondrous is the world seen through that crystal,
And wondrous, too, Princess, the world of art.
It elevates the soul, for goodness wishful,
The unfading law of beauty in one's heart.
But in a sullen soul, severe and restless,
The road to sacred beauty you'll seek for long.
And blessed is he who escapes life's raging tempest,
Who on the road is tempted not by wrong...

Foka

· That's just like me — when I look in a beaker
I feel much lighter, brighter in my soul...
My sorrows pass....

Silvester

(angrily)

Whom have we here as speaker!
Be off with you! As wise man prates the fool!
Out of my sight!

Foka

(to himself)

Well, that comes very handy —
Most likely now the butler has returned...

(Goes out.)

Elizabeth

Well, I must fly!

(Sighs.)

My mother will be angry.
Goodbye, dear father...

Silvester

God keep you unharmed,
Our bright-winged dove, our precious pretty pigeon!

Elizabeth

Goodbye to you, skilled master of the brush.
From what far borders have you come to us?

Mikita

(rising)

I wandered very long, in many a region,
My native land I quitted long ago...

Elizabeth

And where was that?

Mikita

· Great Novgorod me engendered.

Elizabeth

Inclement land...

(Shudders.)

And I was born there too.

But I must tremble when I just remember...

The alarm bell rings... great fires... loud shrieks of woe...
Slaughter... and blood...

Mikita

(sullenly)

The people's blood is sacred
Which others, and not we ourselves have spilled.

Elizabeth

Then I was nothing but a little baby,
But that same joy which earlier was instilled
Today, just like the sun, my soul is filling
As when we came here in the month of May,
With nightingales above the Dnieper trilling,
Which in the sun, like burnished silver, lay...
And Kiev suddenly stood there before us
With golden cupolas gleaming through the green.
Since then I'm one of Kiev's great adorers,
Since then this land my motherland has been.
Forgive me, for I've caused you pain, I fear?

Mikita

Oh, that is nought, if you are happy here...

The beating of horses' hooves is heard, and after a moment into the gallery runs Anna, Elizabeth's sister, slightly older than she, very excited and agitated. Upon her left wrist she bears a hunting falcon. Paying no attention to the bowing monks, she rushes up to her sister.

Anna

How glad I am that I have found you, sister!
Where's mama? In the church?

Elizabeth
(nods her head)

Anna

I knew 'twas so!
Again I'm late! She will be mad I missed her.

Elizabeth

How could you? With your falcon?



Anna

Yes, I know!
You see, I've had a strange adventure rather,
I'm not myself, I can't forget the affront!

Elizabeth

Well, what has happened?

Anna

Near Vishgorod *, no farther,
I went this morning after swans to hunt.
I suddenly looked, and from the forest border
A group of knights at a dashing gallop sped,
With a handsome gallant champion to the fore there.
I saw at once, they were Varangian guests.
Their kind round here before I have not met.

Whoever they were, I set spurs to my hunter
And sped away, a-trembling like a leaf...
I glanced back once, and he comes galloping after!

Elizabeth

Who's after you?

Anna

Well, that Varangian chief...
I rode full speed — he still came nearer, nearer,



Not till our Castle Hill, I dared to stop,
And still the menacing hoof-beats, ever clearer,
Behind me all the time I heard — clop-clop!

Elizabeth

You reckless one!

Anna

Well, then the castle guardsmen
Most probably delayed him at the gate
So I escaped, and ran in here unharmed then.
I scarce can breathe!

Silvester

Say, who's that cursed knave?
He must be caught!

Anna

Nay, therein lies no matter,
But mother's angry eye I must eschew.
Let's go straightway to church...

Elizabeth

What words you utter!

You have your falcon!

Anna

Ah, yes! What can I do?
Take him, my dove, at least for a minute or two...
Gives the falcon to Elizabeth.

SCENE III

The trampling of horses is heard, and straightway into the gallery runs Harold, a young, stately, handsome Norwegian, with a bold countenance, and reddish-golden hair. In fright Elizabeth takes a step backwards, and shrinks up against Silvester, as Harold goes up to Anna. Behind him enter a few Varangians.

Harold

And so, Princess, at last you're overtaken!
In vain you fled, for fate has led me here,
Through all my wild adventures on the ocean
While I was sailing to your land 'tis clear...
What do I see? Great Baldur! * Who's that maiden,
The one beyond us, with the yellow hair!...
Beside the monk in black, half-hidden there?

(Seizes Anna by the arm. But Elizabeth has already concealed herself behind a turning in the gallery.)

Anna

That maiden? You must ask it straight of her,
But let me be.

Harold

O, what a wondrous beauty!...
Now see what fate has brought to me — such grace!...
(Stands dumbstruck.)

From the left appears Ingegerd's train. At its head walks Ingegerd herself, alongside of Elizabeth, who in confusion and with hanging head listens to her mother's reproaches.

Ingegerd

For shame! You thus neglect your holy duty,
And at the hour of prayer fly off to the chase!
Where are your senses? And how dared you enter
With such an unclean fowl, that holy place,
Like some young, thoughtless lad, so empty-headed?
You, a princess, a maiden. What disgrace!
And how before the monks will you show your face?

Elizabeth

(speaking through tears)

Forgive me... I forgot....

Harold

(swiftly steps up to Ingegerd, and kneels before her on one knee)

•Your Royal Highness!

Ingegerd

(in amazement)

Why, it is Harold! Say, from whence do you come
As guest to southern Kiev, to surprise us,
You northern knight, and knightly warrior's son?

Harold

(kissing the hem of her robe)

I roved afar, and fought in many a slaughter,
In Sicily, and for the Grecian King,
Since I took ship and sailed the salt sea water,
Forgetting my quarrels with spiteful kith and kin.
I turned my vessel's prow to southward firmly
To seek my fortune here in ancient Rus,
And swear to serve you honestly and sternly,
If you will shelter me, as an exile thus.

Ingegerd

O welcome guest, right glad am I to see you,
O Harold, Sigurd's son, courageous prince,
And Yaroslav, I'm sure, with joy will greet you,
When he returns will give you such a chance.

Harold

(rising)

My sword, my life are always yours when needed!

Elizabeth

(with a cry)

Good God! But how he scratches, how he pecks!
Take him, for I can bear no more attacks!

Harold

Allow me, fair one, pray!

(Carefully takes the falcon from her.)

Your hand is bleeding!
Poor little thing! How could you take the wretch
Without a gauntlet? Ho, there, Rulaf, take him...

(Gives the falcon to his henchman.)

But wait awhile! It was not you I was chasing.
You're not the maid who rode near by the grove —

Why then the falcon?...

Ah! If I'm not mistaken,

(looks round and sees that Anna is smiling)

You handed her the falcon, but not the glove!...
Your Highness! I praise your name in every quarter
For two such daughters, whose beauty takes my breath,
As lovely as yourself, great Olaf's daughter!

Ingegerd

This one is Anna — that one, Elizabeth.

Harold

(ardently)

Elizabeth! Eliza! Elspeth! Bess!
How beautiful she is! My fate benign
Has led me here to find such happiness.
Oh maiden Graces of Fortune and of Time,
Verdandi *, virgin goddess of flying days,
You led me here through ancient woodland ways
So that the beauty of life I here should find.
I've ridden o'er hill and dale, throughout the land
And like a hunter hawking I have gone,
But then the falcon which had lured me on
Suddenly settled upon another hand.
To gain that maiden's hand, that prize so grand,
I'll tramp the earth, and go through battle gory,
And with my vessel will plough the ocean wave,
I'll win the world, a crown, and pearls, and glory
I'll gain for you, fair daughter of Yaroslav,
If you, my star, will grant me but your love!

(Takes Elizabeth by the hand and gazes into her eyes.)

SCENE IV

Suddenly the pealing of bells re-echoes around, the sound of trumpets is heard, and welcoming cries. All turn toward the archway.

Ingegerd

The Prince! 'Tis he! Bring horses here at once!
We'll ride to meet him. Come, Harold! My daughters, come!

All quickly go to the exit. Only Mikita remains alone in the gallery. He meddtatively gazes through the archway..

Mikita

My hour has struck!... Revenge, thine hour's at hand
For all the injustices Novgorod has known...
But still I wish to see and understand
How all the people he could make his own,
This ruler of Rus, this Yaroslav the Wise...
But why in this decisive, solemn hour
Has my rebellious spirit left me free?..
Because your guardian angel, pure as a flower,
Has hidden you, O Yaroslav, from me!...

Curtain



ACT TWO



The Law and Blessing 1030 A. D.

A meadow in front of the Prince's castle. Its walls which are pierced here and there with narrow double windows in Romanesque-Byzantine style, with rounded arches and a column between them, rise in the background. Below, under the wide-spreading branches of a mighty oak-tree, stands the arched gateway, leading into the castle. Through a low barrier of two or three beams, a precipice and a ravine are seen, and far beyond them, on a neighbouring hill, rises the majestic tithe-church of our Lady the Mother of God, with its golden cupolas, surrounded by other buildings. On the left side of the meadow, in the foreground, on a massive granite plinth lies a huge sculptured statue of a recumbent lion. Round the plinth stand marble benches with carved back-pieces. A summer morning.



SCENE I

Far behind the scene maidens are singing. Behind the gates of the castle the sound of trumpets is heard, and then from the archway a detachment of the Prince's guard comes out and stands by the entrance. A minute later Yaroslav, accompanied by Silvester and Mikita, the latter walking behind them, emerge from the gates. Yaroslav limps slightly with his right leg. Behind them follow two boyars, Miroslav and Slavyata.

Yaroslav

(to Silvester)

How many books are finished then already,
And have you started copying many more?

Silvester

Five books already, noble Prince, are finished:
*The Golden Chain,** the Holy Fathers' laws,
The wanderings of Cosmos Indicopleustes,*
A tome that's rich and rare, to say the least,
The life and deeds of Diogenes Akrites,*
And *The Creation* by a Bulgarian priest.*

Yaroslav

A weighty work! I thank you, learned father.
Not many useful books we have today,
And a good book rejoices me much rather
Than gold in chests. Although one needs must say
That books contain not few fantastic tales,
To find the like of which in life one fails.

Mikita

And yet in life the truth sometimes is lacking
And stories haste to set that lack aright,
For only in a story they send knaves packing,
And righteous men for honest deeds requite.

Yaroslav

(sternly)

God the Creator for good and ill will pay,
And each from Him receives justice in every way.

(To Silvester)

Whom have we here?

Silvester

You ordered me to find you
A capable and sensible honest man,
Who as your serving scribe might stand behind you.
He's named Mikita. Acquaint with book and pen.
An excellent artist. Though a monk in black,
It seems he earlier used with sword to hack,
For when he starts on logs his axe to ply,
Great oaken boughs in splinters start to fly.

Yaroslav

Are you from Kiev?

Mikita

(sullenly)

No, my lord and master.

Not from this city.

Yaroslav

(mockingly)

A heavenly one you're after?

Well, then, henceforth as private scribe you'll serve
And write herein

(gives him a small book)

wise words which I have learned.

"First comes the law, and then the blessing of peace."

A priest from Berestove * once told me that —

Ilarion,* a very wise old man.

"First comes the law, and then the blessing of peace."

And write this too: "Take all the Cherven Towns,

And raise more towns upon the river Ros,*

To halt the progress of the steppe-land horde."

And now it's time to think of Yuryev * too,

Which I have founded in the Land of Chud...

But where's Slavyata?

Slavyata

(approaches)

I'm here, my Lord!

Yaroslav

And have you found for me a builder yet
To send to Yuryev? Some good sensible man,
A skilful craftsman, who can build a town?

Slavyata

There is one Greek, a master I have marked.

Yaroslav

I do not want a Greek, they are too sly,
You cannot really trust them from your sight.
Seek someone else, Slavyata. for the task.



Slavyata

I'll find another.

Yaroslav

Search on, and do not cease.

With a wave of his hand he dismisses the guard, who return to the castle, and himself with noticeable effort sits on a marble bench near the lion, and offers S i l v e s t e r a seat beside him. The others remain standing.

"First comes the law, and then the blessing of peace."
A well-said word...

(To Mikita)

Well you, friend monk, I'd say,
Are seeking for a city on holy ground,
Since on this earth no justice can be found,
And even princes do not find the way...
O, if I could myself but find the highway
To wisdom's blessing, and calm and quiet days,
And lay aside my sword and helmet heavy,
And marble mansions and white-walled churches raise,
And in the golden cupola'd shrine of Truth
Enter and open the door for all, forsooth,
The burden on Prince's shoulders lies very weighty,
And do you think it easy for me once more
To thrust my lame leg in the stirrup, maybe,
And turn myself, an old man, back to war?
From leading warriors I've known no release...
"First comes the law, and then the blessing of peace."

(Rises.)

Come, let us go and see how is progressing
The building we began last year, this time.
Young monk, a life-time one must fight unceasing
In order to erect one lovely shrine.

(All exit right.)

SCENE II

Suddenly laughter and girls' voices are heard, and onto the meadow runs Elizabeth accompanied by a few village girls. Elizabeth hurries forward to her father, while the girls stand in confusion near the marble lion, looking at it.

Elizabeth

Good day, dear father!

(Nestles up to him.)

Yaroslav

Little star of mine!

Where have you been, child, how did you pass your time?

Elizabeth

I went with the girls to Ugrian Hill, and the glade,
Picked flowers, and then with them in the Dnieper bathed.

Yaroslav

(caressing her)

Enjoy yourself, enjoy life, while you may,
Your maiden days, dear daughter, short may prove.
One thing I'll promise you: in your wedding gown
Though you may stoop your husband's boots to unloose *
Still you will rise from your knees to take a crown.

Silvester

Your daughter is more lovely than any crown!
With knowledge and wisdom gleaned from books she shines.
While you were fighting in the Land of Chud,
She learned to read the Greek philosophers' lines,
And now translates from many a learned book.

Yaroslav

Can this be true? Oh, what a clever daughter!
But what attracted you to Greek, I wonder?

Elizabeth

Because the Greeks — you said yourself, dear father —
Had gathered all the wisdom on the earth.
And so among them I was seeking after
Some wise philosopher who had laws set forth
So that on earth the people should dwell in peace
As if in paradise, and that wars should cease.

Silvester

Such wise behests we find in Christ's own teaching.

Yaroslav

Christ also said, "I bring not peace, but the sword!"
No, no, my friend, there are no laws, no preaching,
Mankind from ancient sins release to afford,
By which the peace of Eden might be restored.
For wisdom is not gained from laws, though needful,
But in long search, through many a sad mistake;
To teach the people to be good and peaceful
The Prince must no few evil heads first take.
Without spilt blood, no gentleness can increase,
"First comes the law, and then the blessing of peace!"
I teach the people both by books and terror,
And, listening to the people, I learn thus,
For simple folk are wise, will live for ever
In toil and battle to create our Rus.

*At that moment from the lion's statue there resounds a roar,
and afterward girls' laughter and screams.*

Yaroslav

- Why are the maidens screaming? What's befallen?
And why are they all crowding round about?
What has appeared?

The girls

(scattering with laughter and cries)

*From behind the plinth emerge first the boots, then the legs,
then the whole black figure of a bearded monk, who then flops
on the bench, rubbing his eyes. The girls all laugh.*

Girls

How fat and tawny!
Just look. Just look. His beard like a mane sticks out!
Just like a lion's! And roars just like a lion!

Foka

Away, you wet-tailed hens! What would you here?
(Attempts to rise, but falls back on the seat.)

I'll wring your necks for you... I'll send you flying...

Y a r o s l a v and the others approach.

Yaroslav

(sternly)

What monk is this?

Silvester

Why, Svichkogas, it's clear!
A copyist-monk.

Yaroslav

What were you doing here?

Girls

He slept beneath the lion. With this as a pillow!

(They show a flat earthenware flask of generous proportions.)

Silvester

Again been bibbing, shameless, drunken fellow!
O fragile vessel! Did I not warn you so:
Don't drink to the fifth cup, poured out by the Devil.
Stop when you get to the third.

Foka

(piteously)

O God! I know!
But how could I count my cups, O holy father,
When here there are no cups, but just a flask?...

Silvester

Now pull yourself together, senseless blatherer,
And stand before the Prince! No lies, I ask!

Foka

(scared and suddenly starting up)

I crave your pardon, gracious Lord and master —
It's not from wine, but wisdom I am weak...

Yaroslav

What grist do you grind?

Foka

Wait, wait, great Prince, and after
Just judge yourself: if when of wine they speak
That say that one must drink in moderate measure;
To keep one's reason, one should draw the line,
But what about book-learning's heady treasure,
Which is much stronger than any kind of wine?
I copied out a volume of such wisdom
And suddenly felt my head was spinning round.
O holy God! A sip of wine, just listen,
To drive that darkness from my head I found.
The flask was all too small — and so instead
The cursed wisdom whirled out in my head,
And so I wept, and slept indeed like dead.

Yaroslav

You speak the truth, for in good sooth 'tis written
That one should not cast pearls before the swine,
And so this honour falls on you unbidden —

If your weak head is turned by the written line,
So that you lose no hair, and stand straight on your legs,
Go to the nearby farm and feed the pigs!

Foka

Feed pigs! But I'm a monk in holy orders!
I have no wish....

Silvester

You would not take my advice,
So now, go feed the sows and swine and porkers,
Since you're no use in wisdom's paradise.

SCENE III

The noise of horses' hooves is heard, and on to the meadow from the left rides Harold, accompanied by his henchmen. Having caught sight of the Prince, he swiftly leaps down from his horse, and walks up to him.

Harold

(with a respectful bow)

Greetings to you, my noble Prince and ruler,
Bold leader, city-founder, builder wise!
Greetings to you, Princess!

Yaroslav

(pressing his daughter to him)

Welcome, brave Harold, known where sword-blades rise,
Courageous conqueror of the billowy ocean!
You see, my daughter, everywhere he's been,
He's lived in Greece, and must have some good notion
If there real wisdom's found, and love serene,
If all are gentle, as in paradise,
Or the reverse — and all is blood and lies.
He's seen it all and can the truth unravel —
Just ask, and do not fear.

Harold

(ardently)

All that I've seen,
All I have gained in battle and in travel,
The gold and silver, silks, and emeralds green,
And diamonds, pearls, and incense, cups of amber,
Chiossan wine, confections, sherbet, ships,
All are not worth one single smile, remember,
Elizabeth, from your most lovely lips.
And all for you, for one of your caresses,
For just one look of love I'd gladly give
The whole sea-shore, from Smyrna to Damascus,
And Tsarigrad,* the pride of all who live!

Yaroslav

(mockingly)

Meanwhile you do not yet possess these wonders,
And as for Tsarigrad, so I'm led to believe,
You had to make your escape from Caesar's thunders!

Elizabeth

Do not offend an exile, my dear father,
The balance of war lies under God's right hand,

And what a knight may lose today, soon after,
Tomorrow, say, may yet become his land.
Harold has lost the dear land of his birth —
There is no sadder loss in all the earth!

Yaroslav
(*amazed*)

God has my infant's tongue with great truth laden.
My clever child, your common sense I praise!
Forgive me, Harold!

Harold
(*kissing the hem of Elizabeth's robe*)

O most holy maiden,
I am prepared to serve you all my days!

Just then a distant but ever-increasing commotion is heard.

Yaroslav

What's happening here? Why all these cries to boot?
Step forward, pray, find out what is afoot!

At that moment Yarun runs in, all excited and panting. His clothes and face are bedaubed with clay and lime, which he vainly tries to wipe away, only smearing them further.

Yaroslav
(*amazed*)

Why, it's Yarun! Well, tell us what has happened,
And why you are all splashed with lime and clay?

Yarun

O mighty Lord! The workers are all maddened.
Have lost their wits....

Yaroslav

And you the same, I'd say!
What is amiss?

Yarun

The masons there, great master,
Who on the hill your new church build for you,
The timber-hewers, the carpenters, joiners too,
The plasterers as well drove off the guards there,
Then trowels and hammers on the ground they threw:
"We'll work no more this day!" they all were yelling,
The clay-wash and the mortar poured away.
And when I grabbed a few most fierce rebelling,
They started pelting me with lime and clay!

Yaroslav
(*amazed*)

But why this stupid, self-willed, lawless action?
Perhaps their pay was late, or not correct?
Or did you make some underhand subtraction?
If that be so, no mercy from me expect!

Yarun

By God, not so! I paid to the very last farthing,
Just as you bid. This is Varangians' work —
They've broken into homes, no law regarding,
And an innocent maiden's honour then they took,
And her defender killed...

Yaroslav
(*wrathfully*)

Again Varangians!
Go, good Slavyata, quickly take a look.
You too, Mikita.

Yarun, Slavyata and Mikita leave.

Enough! By all that's holy
I will not forth to see the church today.
But let us go, Silvester, and you shall show me
Those books which you have ready, as you say.
Well then, friend Harold, I see that you are waiting
A word from me about your future fate,
And I've a feeling, if I'm not mistaken,
Your love for Elizabeth is true and great.
There's much to speak of ere you twain are married
And first comes your proposal for her hand!

Harold
(*joyfully*)

O, gracious Prince!

Yaroslav

Be in no hurry, Harold.
For surely you yourself must understand
That ere you come a-wooing of my daughter
You must regain your family name and land,
And first your native realm across the water.
No Prince of Rus would find it to his liking
To wed his daughter to a landless viking,
Although he were the terror of seven seas.
So go now, win your crown, your land, and glory,
And bring back to my daughter a worthy story,
And then, I swear, my words your ears will please!

Harold

I thank you, Prince, and I accept your challenge.
A true Varangian I myself shall prove.
Tomorrow I set sail — no further dalliance,
My sword shall shine out like a star above.
On land or sea, with battles in the balance,
To you alone, my dear Elizabeth,
My thoughts shall fly o'er waves and lands beneath!

Yaroslav and Silvester go out through the gate. Elizabeth slowly follows them, bowing her head to Harold.

Elizabeth

Farewell, then, Harold! May God's Almighty hand
Preserve you on your way, and I shall pray
That He'll restore you to your native land.

Harold.

(holds her back, taking her by the hand)

I beg you stay! If only for a moment,
And let me look, in this our parting hour,
Into those lovely eyes, in my last torment,
To give my spirits, my sorrowful hopes more power.
I pray you sit, Princess. And if I may,
Before your feet, with your consent, I'll stay.

(Makes her sit down upon the bench, and seats himself at her feet.)

You, like the North Star on the midnight heavens
Will shine for me upon my lonely way.
Just give your order now, my maiden-empress,
Which I must in your honour fulfil, and say
What treasures from some ruler's fabulous palace
Must I in battle gain and bring you home.
You love rich churches — say, a golden chalice
From underneath St. Sophia's sacred dome
In Tsarigrad, shall I bring you c'er the foam?

Elizabeth

St. Sophia's beauty not in gold abides,
But wondrous hymns which 'neath her cupolas ring,
And rise re-echoing to the shining heights.
Such songs and hymns to me you cannot bring,
For there with angels' lips the choristers sing.

Harold

(confused)

No, no, the domes I cannot move, 'tis clear,
And songs in these two hands I cannot bear.
But if in truth there are angels in St. Sophia,

Or even in the Caesar's palace there,
Why, then I swear at least one such to capture
And send it back as herald, for your rapture!

Elizabeth

(laughing)

Well, God be with you, Prince! Who ever heard
That a man could catch an angel like a bird?

Harold

(disappointed)

What can I do then? 'Tis a terrible pity
That nought, it seems, your fancy gratifies.
Well, if you wish, from old Damascus city
I'll bring a turquoise of such wondrous size
Which in your bower will shine like morning skies.

Elizabeth

(rising)

Farewell, then, Harold! May the Lord protect you.
Believe me, no such treasures do I need.
But, if you wish that I should well respect you,
From that Damascus, with sunny skies o'erhead,
Where great Johann * the bard's remains repose,
Bring from his tomb a tulip or a rose.

SCENE IV

The conversation is interrupted by uproar and cries, and on to the meadow bursts a whole crowd of agitated people: carpenters with axes and saws, stone-masons with hammers and trowels, and others. The crowd is led by Zhureiko, a handsome, stately, black-bearded man. He leads by the arm Lydomir, a grey-headed old man, behind whom follows Milusha, a beautiful girl in a simple peasant dress — a white smock with a black and red zapaska. Two peasants hold a young Varangian Thorvald, whose arms are bound. Further still behind follow Slavyata and Mikita.*

Voices from the crowd

Justice and punishment. Sentence him to death!
Death to the murderer! We have borne too much!
Away with violators!

Miroslav and the guards, who have come out of the castle, vainly strive to press the crowd back.

Miroslav

Back, I say!
Go! Get you hence! How dared you gather here
Before the Prince's chambers with such noise!
And why these cries?

Zhureiko

Justice and punishment from the Prince's hand!
Justice and punishment all of us demand!

A few Varangians rush in, and having unsheathed their swords, push forward in an attempt to release Thorvald.

Varangians

Hold fast there, Thorvald! Hey, unloose his arms,
Or worse will you befall...

Harold

(vigorously thrusting forward to meet the Varangians.)
Stand back! Stand back!

The Varangians, muttering and grumbling, retreat. Elizabeth makes her way towards the gates.

Voices

Justice and punishment! Criminals to death!
Justice and punishment! Sentence must be passed!
Down with Varangians! To the scaffold!

*Yaroslav enters from the gateway. Behind him come
Ingegerd, Anna, and a few guards.*

Yaroslav

(raising his hand)

Silence!

The hubbub immediately subsides.

Yaroslav

(wrathfully)

Who dares to perpetrate sedition here,
And with their quarrels all the folk infect?
What's your petition?

Zhureiko

(stepping forward)

Justice and punishment!

(He leads Milusha and Lyudomir forward.)

The murderer has slain his son, her brother.
The felon is this Varangian here...

Yaroslav

Who's witness?

Zhureiko

Those present here. All saw him try to force her,
And, witnessing this brutal scene, her brother
Came to her aid, and then he cut him down,
Before those near had chance to stay his arm.

Lyudomir

My only son, in whom lay all my hopes.
My sole supporter in my aging years.
I had two others... but they both were killed
At the river Sudomir, in bitter fight.
They fought and died, my Prince, defending you
At the river Sudomir, in dangerous days
When you with Bryachislav then were at war.
Now he, my youngest... Where is justice now?
For what, then, did he die? He was so kind,
And gentle too — and force he could not bear...
He died for justice...

Zhureiko

Do you hear him, Prince?

Yaroslav

All I have heard. But why do you appear?
I know your face. A master-mason there,
One of the craftsmen building my new shrine.
What brings you here?



Zhureiko

The girl is my beloved,
And for her honour, Prince, I'm bound to stand.

Yaroslav

(wrathfully)

You're bound to be more zealous about your work,
But you have torn these people from their toil.

Zhureiko

(sullenly)

Before you bring new holy shrines to birth
'Twere better to bring some justice on this earth!

Yaroslav
(*wrathfully*)

Your stiff unbending necks, you may thank the Lord,
I bend before His altar, as I bend mine,
And not upon the square before my sword,
So learn the holy commandments in good time!
What would you now of me?

Zhureiko

We seek revenge.
Behold the slayer. You spoke about your sword.



Yaroslav

And why did you not take revenge yourself,
For sure you had the right?

Zhureiko

I was not there,
And once they'd taken him and tied his arms,
A bound, defenceless man I could not strike.

Lyudomir

All these Varangians you should drive away.
They bring us wrong and shame...

Yaroslav
(*to himself*)

O God of truth,
How hard it is to judge aright, forsooth!
What price for life? It cannot be returned
By gold nor blood. Yet justice can't be spurned
The evil-doers before the sword must quake,
And peace and quiet on earth the law must make.

Ingegerd
(*noticing Yaroslav's indecision*)

Allow me, Prince, a word or two of advice:
Now Harold leaves us, it would not be nice
To burden his ship with blood upon the brine,
So punish the murderer with a heavy fine.
Let gold redeem the crime.

Yaroslav
(*with an outburst of wrath*)

Again you're trying
Those wild Varangian vagrants to protect,
As then in Novgorod, when my men were dying,
Deceived by them, and by their cunning tricked!
That cannot be! Great Vladimir, my father
When he decided how to maintain the peace,
Sent criminals to the scaffold without palaver.
Yarun, Slayyata! Bring the block and axe!
I once did justice with gold as penal tax.
Now I'll do justice with steel upon their necks!

Elizabeth
(*flying to her father*)

No, no! No need for blood, my father dear.
Remember, Vladimir later on revised
The sentence of death. Show mercy, father, here.
Let Yaroslav for ever be called "the Wise",
For so you stand now in the people's eyes!

(*Turning to Lyudomir*)

You too forgive the offender, dear old man!
Why spill more blood? The lost won't reappear,
And nought can resurrect your son again!

Lyudomir
(*deeply touched*)

Then be it so, my tender-hearted child.
Like the bright sun, you shine upon the world...
May fortune bring you happiness deep and true,
And good god Sol send love and peace to you!

Yaroslav

So be it then. You may unbind his arms.
And eight-score golden grivnas * let him pay
As double fine.

A rumble of discontent is heard in the crowd.

Zhureiko

(sullenly)

That verdict is unjust!

Yaroslav

You, mason, when you are working on the church,
See but your line and square, but I see all,
From the very vaults, up to the topmost cross.

The guards unbind Thorvald.

Harold

(throwing him a large purse of gold)

You are not worth such mercy, stupid fool,
And you may thank the Princess for your life.
Here, pay your fine!

*Slavyata and Yarun count out the money and hand
it to Lyudomir.*

Thorvald

(straightening up, with a wild laugh)

Now I am free, ha-ha.

The gold is paid, and now the wench is mine!

(Seizes Milusha in his arms.)

Yea, mine!

Zhureiko

(rushing up to him)

To hell with you, accursed swine!

(Stabs Thorvald with his knife. He falls.)

Yaroslav

(in terrible wrath)

Seize him at once!

*But Zhureiko disappears among the crowd. Harold's
Varangians with naked swords rush at Lyudomir and Mi-
lusha.*

Varangians

Hey, warrior-knights, to arms!
Strike one and all!

*But Mikita with great strength hurls the first two
Varangians back.*

Mikita

Accursed vagrants, hence!

*The guards and the crowd of builders swiftly suppress the
Varangians and disarm them. The noise dies down. Elizabeth,
weeping, leans against her father.*

Yaroslav

You see, my daughter dear, a prudent pardon
One cannot plant with tender, gentle hands,
Like lilies or roses in some quiet garden,
But must with mattock and axe, like forest lands,
The field of government root out long and slow,
So that the blessing of peace therein should grow.
Long live the peace! I swear by God Almighty
All those disturbing Kiev and ancient Rus
Shall taste the axe's edge, and only rightly,
And likewise those who break the peace with us,
Like that stone-mason, who unsheathed his knife,
When I gave judgement, and would spare a life.
And now, to work! Long live for ever thus
Our mighty Kiev, and our sovereign Rus!

Cheers, shouts, the sound of trumpets.

Curtain



ACT THREE



April Snow
1032 A. D.

The same meadow in front of the Prince's castle in Kiev, as in the previous act. But now everything — the meadow, the trees, the embrasures of the walls, the doors and windows of the castle — are covered in unexpected April snow, which has fallen during the night, and had no time to turn yellow, or start to thaw.

A wonderful sunny morning, with a light frost. On the right side of the meadow a wooden platform has been constructed, which a few apprentices and master-craftsmen are covering with red cloth, while others are preparing chairs.

At the gates, leaning on his halberd, stands a sullen soldier.



SCENE I

From the gates comes Lyudomir. He halts in the gateway and looks with screwed-up eyes from beneath his outstretched palm at the snow, and discontentedly shakes his head.

Lyudomir

(to the guard)

Just look! It's April — and suddenly snow is coming,
Though spring already has wakened up the trees,
Already down the gulleys streams are running,
And great god Hors has changed the soiled white sheets
On all the fields, and decked them out in green —
And suddenly snow. Ill-timed. And ill-forboding,
For long we have not heard of such things here,
That fresh snow fell in April — an evil token.
'Twas so in that year when Grand Prince Vladimir
Threw all the ancient gods into the Dnieper...

(Shakes his head.)

Alas, alas! That was a year of weeping...
And now again, ill-timed, it bodes us ill,
And pleases only crows, who caw at will
At new-found snow... They say a kite is flitting
From o'er the sea. And now here is the nub:
That kite is called King Harold, and for our pigeon,
For our white dove, his claws are sharpened up.

From the left enter David and Ratibor, two sullen Novgorod men, solidly clad in thick cloth coats. They make their way to the gates, but the guard halts them.

Guard

Stand back! What men are you?

Ratibor

(sternly, in a bass voice)

Pray, let us pass!

We're representatives from Novgorod.
David and Ratibor.

David

(cajolingly, in a tenor voice)

We seek a monk,
By name Mikita. He lives, so we are told,
Within the castle, and illuminates books.

Guard

Pass on!

Lyudomir

I little like such babbling brooks!

David and Ratibor enter the gates. From the city, from the right side of the ravine, climbs Milusha, excited and breathing heavily. Having seen her father, she runs up to him.

Milusha

Oh, Father dear! What news I've heard! Just harken.
Come over here.

(Leads him a little way from the gates.)

I don't know what to do!

Lyudomir

Well, what is wrong? What's happened?

Milusha

On the market

I met a carpenter whom once we knew,
One who worked then on the church beside Zhureiko.
Have you at last returned, my beloved man,
And shall I really see you once again?

Lyudomir

Has who returned?

Milusha

Oh, my beloved, my darling!
The carpenter swears he has seen him round about.
He lives out near the city, in the caverns,
Hides there by day, and only at night comes out.
Come, let us go!

Lyudomir

So that's what snow betokened.
Upon your head there falls misfortune grim.
What, go to him!... And have you then forgotten
That Yaroslav has sworn to punish him?

Milusha

(wringing her hands)

Ah, woe is me! And will they really seize him?...
What now, then? Beg the Princess for aid? Oh, no!
At the Prince's feet I'll implore that he'll release him...
He will prepare for Harold a wedding feast,
And grant a pardon then, if it should please him...

Lyudomir

(shaking his head)

Milusha, he, will not be very pleased
That his beloved daughter leaves his castle
And from our dear Kiev for ever flies.
Now if she would but in his palace nestle...
But princes always see things otherwise...
He'll miss his daughter, but stately cares are calling,
And not for nought this April snow appears,
And on our heads, and Yaroslav's has fallen...
Such, daughter, is the state of our affairs.

SCENE II

*From behind the gates are heard the high notes of a trumpet.
From the gates march the relief guardsmen.*

Milusha

(frightened)

The Prince!

(She leads her father to the right towards the ravine.)

A moment's silence, after which happy girlish laughter is heard on the air. From the gateway out onto the meadow runs Anna, pulling Elizabeth by the hand behind her. They are both in sable coats, their faces are flushed and refreshed by the frost.

Anna

For shame, for shame! Then why are you so gloomy?
Just look how lovely — sun on snow-clad trees!
And what pure snow, untouched and virgin truly!
And what a heady and refreshing breeze!
A merry scene! More lovely than the blossom
This springtime April snow has, likely so,
Been brought by Harold from Norway's icy bosom,
Where all the year the icy blizzards blow.
You lucky one! With such a handsome husband,
Whose name re-echoes all around the earth!
And all the seas to his control accustomed.
The King of Norway! And the whole world henceforth
Will speak your name with his, as one of worth.

Elizabeth

That thought dismays and plagues me every moment!
Just think, from land to land, from bad to worse,
From his far-famed campaigns stream blood and torment!
How many innocent victims there have cursed
My name and his... that is an enormous crime
Which penitence can't wash out, nor tears, nor time!

Anna

Why speak of that? Sure, men are always fighting,
Just give them chance of spoil, and far campaign,
And then the thought that women are somewhere waiting
Will leave them quite unmoved, though they explain
That for our beauty worlds they are defeating!
But be not sad. He will be more sedate
Now he is King, and not a bird migrating,

And you will live in Norway, across the waves,
And weave your tapestries, and rock your babes!

Elizabeth

O Lord above... Dear Kiev to forsake...
And my dear land... My very heart must break!

Anna

(sighing)

In sooth 'tis sad. But by a maiden hand
The husband always leads us where he will.
Ah! I am fated, too, for another land!
The King of France, should he his wish fulfil,
And if our sire agrees, then I must part
With Kiev, and to Paris I must fare.
The thought is like a dagger in my heart!
No good shopkeepers, no good tailors there.
Cold chambers, and the streets all mire, 'tis said,
And wolves which howl at night in nearby grove,
No pancakes, and no honey, and no good bread,
Not even to mention the melons which I love!

Elizabeth

(sighing)

Oh, dainty sweet-tooth! What then can I answer?
Where should I find so many marvellous books,
So many songs, as here in Kiev, with Father,
A sovereign wise, to whom the whole world looks.
And Kiev city, so green, and so translucent...
The Dnieper wide... the curly hills to roam...
The white-walled palace, and the golden dome...
Where can one find then such entrancing beauty?
Must I leave all — my father and his home?

Anna

Well now, enough! Enough of such distresses.
Just wait, we'll think of something yet, I know...
'Tis time, it seems, to go and don our dresses,
For we must meet your Harold. Come, let's go!

They go slowly through the gateway. Milusha hurries after them.

SCENE III

At the same time from the gateway come David and Ratibor, accompanied by a gloomy-faced Mikita, who on drawing level with the princesses, gives them a respectful bow.

Anna

(glancing at Mikita)

Why does he walk in a cassock, this Mikita,
Not ride astride a steed to find his fate
Like many a strong and glorious fortune-seeker?
Is he not so in love with you of late
That he hides his face from fate, and would avoid you,
With burning heart beneath his monk's black garb?
Now you beware! Why does he turn toward you
And cast such glances, bitter as wormwood herb?

They go off.

Ratibor

(glancing after the princesses)

Who were those maidens? Rehoboam's offshoots,
The daughters of this godless Prince of ours?

David

(looking around)

Here are too many undesirable ears.
Come, we had better go towards the outskirts
Where we are dwelling, and there we'll further speak.

Mikita

I am not free at present. I have an order
From Yaroslav, the which I needs must keep.

David

Then here will do.

Wipes the snow from the bench by the statue and sits down.

Ratibor

(sits beside him)

We're horrified, dear brother,
To hear you feel yourself as prisoner held,
Which means you serve the enemy, and none other,
And his impious will must be fulfilled.
I did not think 'twas so, for they informed us
That you were seen in Kiev, in these parts,



In monk's black gown, beneath the Prince's orders,
And that good news with gladness filled our hearts.
We reasoned that you'd pierced the foe's position,
Your father's shame and suffering to requite,
And Novgorod to revenge, our holy city,
Whose freedom this Rehoboam did sorely slight.

Mikita

I know, I know! You need not keep repeating!
But should we strike at Yaroslav just now
When he a powerful kingdom is creating,
And Novgorod's might well with that kingdom grow?

Ratibor

(outraged)

And how then will it grow? Like storm-clouds raining
Upon our city again has fallen woe:
Unlucky Ulf, Prince Ragnvald's son, campaigning
In the unknown Ural Mountains met the foe,
And thousands of our men, the world's end gaining,
Near by the Iron Gates have fallen low.

David

(sighing)

My own two sons have perished mid mountain boulders,
And thousands more of Novgorod's warriors true!

Ratibor

But Ulf still lives. And Yaroslav on our shoulders
Again will sit him!

Mikita

No! He's deprived him now
Of all his Novgorod warden's lands, forsooth!
And on Ulf's head there fell his fearful wrath!

Ratibor

That changes nought! Too many old offences
For remedy to the highest heavens cry.
Rise and avenge! Mikita, your name remember
The son of glorious Kosnyatin forby!
That pattern of loyalty deep, that true defender,
Who smashed the fleeing Prince's ships and thus
Forced Yaroslav to fight to be Prince of Rus!
And for that faithfulness he imprisoned him!
Rise and avenge! Your wrathful sword must smite
In righteous vengeance, as a Kosnyatin,
Dobrinia's son, and heir of a prince's right!

Mikita

(straightening up, aroused)

Yes, I'm Dobrinia's son! And three years nearly
I have endured here, in this hostile camp,

Where I was led by holy anger clearly,
And thirst for vengeance. Closely, step by step,
I track the Prince, and still conceal my dagger —
O God! — beneath this peaceful monk's black smock...
But dare I now resolve to strike in anger,
At such a time! Now I have taken stock,
And I have come to know the wondrous prudence
Of this, the wisest prince of all the earth.
I've seen that he, not only in his goodness,
But e'en in ill and errors, still holds worth,
As if, indeed, the hand of the Almighty
Directed him to truth through his mistakes!
Whate'er he does, though rightly, or not rightly,
Yet Yaroslav to his goal still progress makes!

David and Ratibor rise.

Ratibor

Farewell, Mikita! Only yet remember
That Novgorod's estranged from you for ever!

*They leave, raising their hands. But Mikita, incensed, grabs
Ratibor by the arm and compels him to return.*

Mikita

Estranged from me! And who gave you permission
In the name of all great Novgorod to speak?
What men are you? On the sly, in isolation,
You weave your web, forgotten, rotten, weak,
But have not power to hinder life's progression,
For Novgorod stands for Yaroslav, and thus
For one united sovereign power — Rus.

Ratibor

What madman's words! You once your hate proclaimed!
With thirsting for his blood your brain's inflamed!

Mikita

That may be so! Fate sets my soul in foment.
I have the right to revenge my father's name,
Although I know that in the decisive moment
I shall not take that vengeance, all the same...
So get you gone! And not against me, but you
The gates of Novgorod will be closed, it's true!

*He goes slowly towards the gates. David and Ratibor
leave. From the castle emerge Ulf, and Ingegerd in a
sumptuous robe, continuing a conversation already begun.*

Ingegerd

...I can't believe my ears! That Yaroslav
Has taken Novgorod and the land I have
Inherited from my forebears from your hands!

Ulf

(sullenly)

Not only that. I stand as if snowed under
Since yesterday, by bad token, the Prince decreed
That now from Ladoga too I needs must sunder.

Ingegerd

(outraged)

From Ladoga! This is strangest news indeed!
From Aldeiguborg, my family possession
Where Ragnvald was himself the governor once!
He shames the memory of my predecessors
And shames me too! He is crazy for the nonce!
This is a deadly insult to my relations,
And this is at the time when Harold returns
Blown by the winds of all the seven salt oceans,
Where world-wide glory for himself he earned!
No! I myself will speak to the Prince on this matter.
He is too quick to offend old friends of his
Who helped him find his star in the past in battle.
Stay! I will pay him out somewhat in this!
Order the guards to blow the welcoming trumpets.

Ulf

But Harold is not yet here, and cannot be,
Since our patrol has signalled not his coming...

Ingegerd

Let the trumpets sound, I say!

*Ulf, shrugging his shoulders, disappears through the gates.
From the castle sounds the ceremonial fanfare of trumpets.*

Now we shall see!

SCENE IV

From the gateway marches a detachment of the Prince's body-guard, which lines up on both sides of the gateway, and after a minute Yaroslav appears. He is in full princely array but is sullen and disturbed. With a gesture he halts his retinue following him, made up of boyars, church dignitaries, and his daughters, and leaves only Silvester in his close company, with whom he advances to the front of the scene.

Ingegerd

(to herself)

Now let him wait for Harold's coming a little,
Mayhap 'twill help to cool his haughtiness.
I fear that I have gone beyond the limit,
And can't avoid bad quarrels over this.

A pause. A strained period of waiting.

Yaroslav

(to Silvester)

From every side the ghosts of the past are rising.
My troops there in the Zyrian land lie dead.
Again Mstislav with sword in hand defying,
Upon my towns and royal rights would tread.
Well then, let's fight. That is no fright, Silvester,
And not the first time shall I lead my troops.
More frightening are the cross-road puzzles which pester,
When one knows not which one of them to choose.
Again bad fortune. Like this April snowfall
Has Harold descended untimely upon my head.
What must I do? To lose my daughter is awful,
In a distant land. She might as well be dead!...
Then leave her here with Harold? Out of the question,
For so a weapon in Ingegerd's hands I'd place,
Especially in this decisive hour of testing,
When I have challenged fortune face to face...

Silvester

The fate of earthly kings is in God's keeping,
And snow in April is no terrible thing,
For 'tis not Christmas which draws near, but Easter,
And soon it's days will resurrection bring.
The snow will melt, and with it all your woes,
And not for ever away your daughter goes.

Yaroslav
(*impatently*)

And there comes spring, and there.. My God, how boring
These empty, worthless words, like twittering birds,
Which life pronounces as prudence's out-pouring!
Be silent, monk! Don't irritate me with words...
But where is Harold? Must a Prince of Rus
Be kept a-waiting at the gateway thus?
Hey, who's on duty there?

Slavyata approaches.

Who gave the order
To blow the trumpets, if Harold is not yet come?

Slavyata
(*surprised*)

The Princess did, my Lord, through Ragnvald's son.

Yaroslav
(*wrathfully*)

This is a plot to undermine my honour!
Where's Ingegerd?

She approaches.

Again these evil tricks!
As wise King David has so truly said
"He went against me who did eat my bread."
Who takes sour wine no wry-drawn lips then licks.

Ingegerd
(*proudly*)

The quarrel not Ulf began. You took a fancy
With Aldeiguborg town to make him part,
And leave the town that was my wedding dowry!
How can you now deprive him of Holmgard?

Yaroslav
(*furiously*)

Holmgard I do not know about, my Lady!
But Novgorod, yes! A Russian princess, God's truth,
Should know these well-loved native names of places!
I took back what's my own, not his for sooth.
He was my proxy, governor of my city,
And governed it badly, and brought no fame to me.
The battle he lost, my troops too, more's the pity,
And he may thank my patience too that he
And his soft head have not parted company.
And you, that send you not to a nunnery finally!

Ingegerd

(going white with anger)

You would not dare! He's an earl, and ranks too highly,
And I'm King Olaf's daughter!

Yaroslav

Enough of angriness!
Enough of earls, and landless ones, to boot!
The time has passed of Egmond and his Varangians
Who sailed their ships to Rus in search of loot.

Ingegerd

You also then had neither land nor tribute,
And Egmond won for you both Rus and throne.

Trumpets and music.

Yaroslav

What lying words! A mercenary was Egmond,
A Varangian and a traitor to the bone,
Who served the enemy when they paid him more there.
Such are Varangians!

Ingegerd

(flaring up)

But their son are you!

Yaroslav

Varangian? Nay! I've other blood and forebears.

Ingegerd

A serf-girl's blood...

Yaroslav

Among the heavenly boons
I count that blood the highest of all blessings
Which with the people binds me in unity.
I do not need those fancy tales, and guessings,
Which seek my forebears somewhere o'er the sea.
My folk are here, on these wide steppes and pastures,
From Kiev up to Ladoga live, as of old,
And they will name me their ancestral father,
And not some rough rude rover from Iceland cold.

*He turns to go towards the platform, but at that moment
Miroslav hastens up to him, clearly very agitated.*

Miroslav

Forgive me this intrusion, noble master!

Yaroslav

What is it now? You see my time is short.

Miroslav

Good news flies fast, but bad news travels faster —
Again of Kosnyatin, of grave import.
Look what we intercepted in a tavern —
Some secret agent bore this dangerous screeed,
A plot against you...

Yaroslav

(quickly scanning the parchment)

So, once more you haven't
Accomplished your intended shameful deed!
You deem it little to shake the state's foundation,
To strike me down, as though a common thief.
You had, O Kosnyatin, the cunning notion
To place in another's hand the blood-thirsty knife.
Against your relative Prince you raised your factions,
Though I have pardoned many a foul misdeed
Out of respect for all your virtuous actions,
And for your help in my stormy hour of need.
And now once more against my life and person
This mutinous activity is bent.
Yes, this is his own hand and seal for certain...
But say, to whom then was this missive sent?

Miroslav

I cannot answer that, since, I declare
The tavern crowd had killed the messenger there.

Yaroslav

What terrible deeds! When the strict law and justice
Have I at last in the lands of Rus confirmed,
They only thirst for quarrels, wars, and bloodshed,
And wish to civil warfare to return.
No, no! Enough of mercy, and all this flummery,
The long detested hydra I must strike:
I shall send Ingegerd into a nunnery,
And Kosnyatin's proud head I needs must take!

With dignified upraised head he mounts the platform, and seats himself upon his throne. Ingegerd, Anna, Elizabeth, and his 12-year-old son Vladimir follow him and take their places. Boyars and bodyguards surround the platform. People fill the meadow.

SCENE V

Harold's return commences to the accompaniment of music. From the left, where the crowd steps back to make way, comes Harold's bodyguard, then Harold himself in a rich tunic over gilded chain-mail, and wearing a helmet topped with a crown. Behind him come a few henchmen, one of them carrying a small gilded harp. Among these stern-faced Varangians Foka's bearded, good-hearted Slavonic face makes a sharp contrast with all the Varangian weaponry and war-dress. Harold, with head held high, quickly steps up to the platform, kneels on one knee, and immediately rises.

Harold

Allow me to present to you my greeting,
Great Sovereign Prince of Rus, that boundless land!
I, Harold, to my sworn oath faithfully keeping
And having crushed all obstacles, sword in hand,
Return to you not as a homeless roamer,
But now as Norway's crowned and lawful King,
Lord of her lands, of many vessels the owner.

Yaroslav

My greetings and good favour too I bring,
O noble Harold, king of lands and vassals!
Long since your swift-winged glory, without a rest,
Flew on to us, ahead of all your vessels.
Come in, our welcome, long-awaited guest!

Harold

Allow me to repay what I'm indebted
With heart-felt gratitude and deep respect,
And to present some spoils on the ocean netted,
And some which from rich shores I did collect
Where I have been, ne'er parting with my sword,
From the Bosphorus to Palermo's harbour broad.

He gives a sign, and a few slaves carry up gold and silver goblets, silks, fruits, etc., and lay them at the feet of the Prince and Princess.

Yaroslav

Your gifts, O Harold, I accept with pleasure,
But human honour and loyalty play their part,
And shine more bright in life than any treasure —
Say, do you come to us with an honest heart?

Harold
O, noble Prince!

Yaroslav

I see no words are needed
Forgive my question. I believe in you,
Doubts in my soul involuntarily I heeded
When just a moment since bad news came through
Of frightful crime about to be committed
By a man who once stood very near to me.



And then one asks what man for trust is fitted,
What diamonds, pearls and emeralds can there be
More dear to us than faithfulness and truth,
Which I have sought to establish since my youth!

Harold

Throughout the centuries will your name shine bright,
That fair, wise judgement and man's civil right
You have enscribed in the book of Yaroslav
And *Russian Justice* * to the people gave,
That peace and toil should rule, not evil lies.

Shouts from the crowd

Long live and prosper Yaroslav the Wise!

Yaroslav

Yes, peace and toil. Warm welcome to you Harold!
You've entered in my thoughts, and understood
So that our folk grow strong in toil and justice
I can't forgive my foes, e'en if I would,
And each disturber of the law and order,
The infringer of Russian justice and the peace,
Will perish underneath the merciless chopper,
For only with peace and toil will good increase.
And therefore, Harold, I welcome you sincerely



As a relative, and peaceful envoy too.
He who respects our Russian justice dearly
Will meet here with full praise and honour due.

Harold

O Prince, all honour and glory may you have!
All Norway respects the name of Yaroslav.

Music. Harold's bodyguard parades before the platform.

Silvester

O holy God! 'Tis Svichkogas! Our Foka!
Then when did he a Varangian become?
What is this vision I see then? Hey, come over!

(Beckons him with his finger.)

F o k a approaches.

Silvester

Have you gone mad? What gear have you got on?
What pigs have you been feeding?

Foka

None, of course.

I fed no pigs, but fought in many wars.
For us, Varangians, oceans are but lakes,
And we, Varangians, are as wild as hawks.
Seize where you will gold goblets, and wine in kegs,
And do not count the cups, but drink to the dregs!

Silvester

(outraged)

A fine Varangian you, on Russian legs!

Foka

(sings)

But if a monk goes sailing the seven seas
Then he becomes a Varangian if he please!

One of the slave-girls, a very beautiful Italian, only lightly clad, but wearing the golden trinkets of girlhood, and carrying a golden tray laden with oranges, trembles from cold.

Elizabeth

(stands)

O Father, do you see that lovely maiden,
The one who does the golden oranges bring?
She's but half-dressed, with orphan sorrow laden,
And in the cold she's trembling so, poor thing...
Most likely she's Italian... Girl, come hither!

The girl timidly approaches.

Here, warm yourself, poor dear, and do not shiver.

She takes a fur mantle from her shoulders, and throws it round the girl, and then returns to her seat.

Slave-girl

O grazie, O grazie, regina!

(Kisses the hem of Elizabeth's robe and her hands.)

Harold

(overcome, to himself)

O maiden, purer than crystal, I'm at a loss!
Have I been granted a wife of such demeanour
By the Almighty God of the wondrous Cross?

(Aloud)

Take her as servant-maid, Princess kind-hearted.
And to your feet my service too I bring,
To me too wondrous warmth you have imparted,
As when you cast o'er her your sheltering wing.
Forgive me, though! Upon my world-wide journey
I found not anywhere such gifts so far
Which I might bring and offer you as worthy,
My dear Princess, my unattainable star!
'Tis true, I have done all in human power,
Not having forgotten your divine behest,
To bring from bard Johann's far grave a flower,
A tulip, a lily, a rose from all the rest...
But though it may be sad for you to know it,
Still let it not o'ercloud your sunny heart:
There are no flowers upon the grave of the poet,
But only a blackthorn bush which stands apart.

Elizabeth

Such is the fate of poets, all the greatest —
Their lives are crowned with but a wreath of thorn...

Harold

But yet that wreath of thorn is never fading.
Here are some twigs from that same thorn-tree shorn,
Mounted in gold, and set with rubies fine.

(He takes a chaplet of mounted gold from a henchman and presents it with a deep bow to Elizabeth.)

And on the grave a briar-rose I planted,
So that its flowers should with the thorns entwine.

Elizabeth

(rising, deeply touched)

And may the Lord above for that reward you,—
A deed more worthy than all the battle-fame
Which these past years campaigning now afford you!
But even if every country feared your name,
And you broke through all boundaries and borders
You'd not have found your way into my heart.
But thus to honour a poet's last resting quarters —
Why, only another poet could find the art!
The secret of my soul you have unravelled,
For sacred inspiration is my delight,
And so I now believe that my dear Harold
Is also a skald, no mere victorious knight!

Harold

(takes the harp from a henchman, sweeps his hand across the strings, and sings:)

My love, my only love, I sang your glory
Throughout the many countries of the world,

And on the ocean waves I spread your story,
Upon the silvery foam, with sail unfurled.
And when we passed twixt cliffs and whirlpool's vortex,
To you, to you alone my thoughts then flew;
And later we lay becalmed in azure waters,
Where, like great sapphires, blazed the islands blue.
But even there, and there I knew no respite,
I sought your wondrous image clear and sharp
In ocean waves, and breakers lacework-crested,
And on the singing strings of my gilded harp.
And here, through raging tempests, and blizzards fiercest,
With all my heart and soul, undying verse
I bring to you, my Elizabeth, my dearest,
With all the ardour of my unspoken words.

Yaroslav

(rises)

We praise you, world-wide victor, in full measure.
With ringing strings, e'en better than in war,
You have attained the highest, priceless treasure —
A maiden's heart, your turtle-dove. What's more
As soon as she to accept you has consented,
Then my approval shall not be denied.
All hail! And may your glory be never ended!

Shouts from the crowd

Long live and prosper Yaroslav the Wise!

Music.

Curtain



ACT FOUR



Stone-mason and Prince 1032 A. D.

The garden in Prince Yaroslav's castle. Across the whole centre of the stage, from the foreground on the left to the back of the garden, an open gallery runs obliquely. In the foreground on the right is a marble basin with fountains, and a marble bench.

A May evening, rapidly fading into night.



SCENE I

In the garden, and behind the arches of the gallery there is a commotion—today is Harold and Elizabeth's wedding-day. The servants are preoccupied with many preparations. Serving maids are running to and fro. Foka is chasing one of them, and eventually catches her. He is wearing the luxurious dress of the Varangian guards, and at his waist hangs a flask of fair dimensions.

Maid

(trying to break from his embrace)

Unhand me, wretch! A fine time this, I say,
To pester maidens. Have you no shame, no pride?
Do you not know we have a wedding today,
And for the service must prepare the bride?
And you, a monk...

Foka

I'm nothing of the sort,
And that particularly I well can prove.
I've travelled about the world, and not for nought,
And know how girls are made, and how to love.
For we, Varangians, everywhere have one rule:
When we're at sea — raise the sail again,
When we're on land — then the barrel drain,
And then grab hold of some attractive girl.

(Again embraces the maid.)

Maid

Let go, you goat. This is no time to revel,
See, people are coming...

Silvester

(entering and watching the scene)

Again that Svichkogas!
What are you doing here, you cunning devil?

The maid runs off.

Already chasing, you dirty dog, that lass!
You hellish vessel! You accursed demon,
You heretic, you fox, I'll settle your score.
I'll have you cast into the deepest dungeon,
By the seven sacred shrines, whose laws you ignore.

Foka

(insolently)

Now you, old father, had better close your jaws.
You see, you're frightening all the sleeping crows.
You will not scare me, though, with monastery laws,
For our Varangian law the whole world knows:
Take what you want, and hold fast what you've taken!
That's all, old father!

Sits on the bench, and calmly takes a swing from his flask.

Silvester

(outraged)

Ah, you son of Satan!
You heretic, Svyatopolk, Judas, snake-in-the-grass!
How dare you wag your tongue in such a pass,
And on the church disgorge such words malign?
A fine "Varangian" you, a feeder of swine!

Foka

(not rising, good-temperedly)

Enough of reading me your prayers divine,
From all this shouting you'll get hoarse, I think.
Far better quaff a goblet in good time —
When there's a wedding, that's the time to drink!

(Pours out some wine in a silver goblet and offers it to Silvester.)

Silvester

(angrily)

How do you dare to think, you curséd devil,
That I, a monk, the Prince's confessor too,
Could share a festive cup with one so evil,
As if a godless heretic, like you?

Foka

Oh, God above! Why gibe and jeer and quarrel?
Well, then, I'll drink alone.

(Drinks.)

Ah, father, say
Am I a heretic just because of the bottle?
So is my fate predestined, anyway...
I was a candle-snuffer, monk, and scribe,
I took some drink — was sent to feed the swine.
I was offended... could not stand the gibe,
And so became a Varangian on the brine.
Then I was rich... and free... and travelled wide.
But still a restless soul, no peace inside.

(Sobs.)

I've had enough! I'll sail the seas no more!
Dressed up in silks — but no Varangian I.
I yearned to smell the mint and thyme ashore,
I yearned to see dear Kiev, the waving rye...
I'm ready to feed the swine upon the sward,
I'm ready to snuff the candles in the choir,
Rather than like some rich and noble lord
To travel to foreign lands, and there expire.

Silvester

(touched)

Well said, my son! Just wait, no foreign borders,
And we shall think of something for you yet.
The one who once has tasted the Dnieper's waters
Can never Kiev afterwards forget,
Though he may roam from her however far.
So, may our Father in heaven bless you, then,
Yea, now and ever — although a fool you are,
And drunkard too — for ever and ever. Amen.

*He blesses F o k a, who rises and respectfully kisses his hand.
S i l v e s t e r leaves.*

Foka

(left alone, sits down on the bench)

O God of mine! How hard the right road to see
Among the tangled web with many a line.
All are extremes — a robber, or monk to be,
To copy holy books, or feed the swine.
Well, one road or other, still it must be mine...

(Sits pondering.)

SCENE II

From behind the trees Zhureiko appears. He is clad in fisherman's clothes. The one and only sign of his wanderings is his sunburnt face and shaven head, bound with a silken kerchief. Over his fisherman's clothes he wears a long black woolen cape, with a hood.

Zhureiko

(quietly, turning towards Foka)

Hey, Foka!

Foka

Eh? Who's that? My God, Zhureiko!

Why stick your neck in the noose, are you insane?

In April you somehow managed to run away, though,

And now you return, to sit in irons again?

Away! Escape!

Zhureiko

Nay, hasten not, my brother,

I cannot leave Milusha, that is clear.

Go, monk, and call her from her dwelling hither,

While I will hide among these bushes here.

Foka

Beware! The Prince has sworn, alive or dead,

To hunt you down at last.

Zhureiko

Death comes but once.

Go now, I say!

Foka

Then hide your stubborn head.

Leaves through the gallery.

Zhureiko

(left alone)

My life or death belong not to the Prince,

And a stone-mason may serve him well indeed,

If not at once, then in his hour of need.

Yaroslav enters, morose and meditative. Zhureiko steps back into the shadow.

Yaroslav

(to himself)

All night have evil dreams my mind tormented,
All day has sorrow pressed my soul within,
As if by fate I finally were sentenced
For all my goodness, and for every sin...

Zhureiko

(to himself)

The Prince is powerless to foresee all ways.
And where and what they'll bring him to one day.
But if he faithful to the people stays
Then he may find at last the one true way.

Yaroslav

(to himself)

What do such signs foretell on roads untrod?
What evil spirit, and whose hateful hand
Has raised 'gainst me again the goad of God?...
The ghost of Svyatopolk this night did stand
Before my eyes, with hellish laughter said:
"What if in fatal battle between two men
Not you but I had conquered there instead;
How would the people all have judged us then?
As two wolves from one den, with ravenous eyes,
And both with hands stained by our brothers' blood?
They might have named me Svyatopolk the Wise,
And Yaroslav might then accursed have stood..."
But is that true?

No! Nonsense! I have fought
And conquered foes not for the sake of fame,
But to unite all lands of Rus I've sought,
And to confirm the peace, and her good name.
But he had foreign kings his allies made
And was prepared to tear from Rus her heart
If only the princely crown fell to his part.
And therefore all the folk came to my aid
And not to his, in that fatal fight we made.

(Exit.)

Zhureiko

(to himself)

His soul is deep distressed, and full of dread,
But never mind, if he but strides ahead.

*Milusha, all excited, rushes in and throws herself into
Zhureiko's arms.*

Zhureiko

My Milusha! My darling!

Milusha

My beloved!

Zhureiko

My turtle-dove! My bright and shining star!
How oft my heart with yearning for you was moved,
My poor deserted one, who was then so far!

Milusha

And how I missed you too! I was disturbed
By day and night. Tormented, full of grief,
I wandered to and fro, and when I heard
That you'd been here I suffered without relief,
Went seeking you in each ravine and cave!
Escape, my darling!

Zhureiko

Yes, no time to stay!
My boat rides ready on the Dnieper's wave.
They wait us, so prepare you. Ere the day,
This very night, we must be on our way.

Milusha

How then, ere day? 'Tis hard to think, you see,
Of leaving Kiev, my father, and my home
And mother's grave!...

Zhureiko

The choice is all your own:
Our star shines there, and life anew with me,
While here there waits the prison and the tomb.
In generous Tmutarakan * I've found my wish —
I have some land, and I have built a home,
I have a boat in which I go to fish
And look for luck upon the open sea...
So why do you not wish free life with me,
With your beloved, and loving one to share?

Milusha

Ah, woe is me! 'Tis more than I can bear
To part with Kiev... Do not haste...

Zhureiko

Our fate
This minute decides. Or else 'twill be too late!

Milusha

Pray wait one day! The Prince's heart I'll move,
I'll crave your pardon. I cannot bear to leave
My land, my father...

(Weeps.)

Zhureiko

Such, then, is your love!

Milusha

(suddenly thinking)

Wait, I beseech you, leastways just this eve!

Zhureiko

So be it. I'll wait. I shall be hiding here
Till you come back and tell me of your choice.
And as a sign to call you out, my dear,
I'll give a night owl's cry, repeated thrice.

Milusha

Good bye, my love, and do you well beware,
For all around are guards... and they may hear.

*Kisses him and runs off. Zhureiko conceals himself in the
bushes.*

SCENE III

It has grown dark. Behind the arches lights appear. Along the gallery goes the wedding procession: maids in white dresses ornamented with gold, carrying lighted candles in their hands, followed by Elizabeth and Harold, and bridesmaids.

Mikita comes out into the garden. He seats himself on the marble bench, and rests his head on his hand.

Maids

(singing)

The hops we have brought from the orchard today,
O lassie, O laddie, true lovers, hallay!
The incense is burning, the hops we have spread,
O sweet bride and bridegroom, may Lel * bless your bed!
Two lovers we crown with a coronet gay,
O lassie, O laddie, true lovers, hallay!

Mikita

(sadly gazing at the procession)

This marvellous song of life and love we've heard
Sounds like a dismal funeral dirge for me
O'er senseless dreams, which I have now interred
For ever in this moment of misery.
Farewell, my star!... Ne'er once did I encroach
Upon your path, no shadow of reproach.
Go on your way, and may your days be bright,
May nothing darken them, no woes increase.
I swear that I renounce revenge and spite,
That you should live in quietude and peace.

(The procession moves off, the song gradually fades away.)

The candles fade, the songs in darkness cease.
And on my road has faded too the light,
And who can ever make my pathway bright?...

Gemma approaches unheard to the bench — that same Italian girl who carried the oranges. Now she is wearing the customary dress. She bows at Mikita's feet, and kisses his hand.

Mikita

(shuddering)

Gemma!

Gemma

(tenderly)

Ah, do not look so sorrowful, caro mio...
I know that you still love the sweet Princess...
Forget her now, to sadness say "addio,"...
With her you will not find your happiness...

Mikita

Rise, maiden! We are set apart by birth,
So go your way.

Gemma

O, do not drive me forth,
Nay, do not send away poor lonely Gemma,
Nor break her greatest happiness on earth,
To love you passionately — her hidden dilemma.

Mikita

(amazed)

But I'm a monk! See, senseless one. Now go!

Gemma

(not leaving hold of his hand)

That is not true! You are no monk... I know...
You are a noble signor, from some part,
But 'neath a cassock hide a burning heart...
My mother taught me, when I was a child,
The secret soul of people to unshroud.
In you I see revenge and anger wild,
And on your brow a signor's honour proud.
You are some lord...

Mikita

Enough! A heavy burden
The sternest duty on my shoulders lays.
Oh, could I but hide these ghosts behind a curtain —
They haunt me with reproaches all my days!
You see... again they come... again they grow...
Go now. Leave me alone.

Gemma

O, say not so!
I shall drive off those fearful frowning spectres,
I shall caress and kiss you, my tender dove.

Mikita

(gently)

Leave me, I say, this night my whole fate settles.
I bid you go. Farewell!

Gemma

(suddenly throwing her arms round his neck and kissing him)

My love! My love!

SCENE IV

Three black figures appear from the darkness and stop before Mikita. Gemma, with a little cry, runs off.

Ratibor

Mikita, hark! The hour is come. Arise,
For Novgorod for the last time on you calls.
Arise, revenge!

David

Injustice cries to the skies.

Ratibor

The trumpet sounds.

David

God's verdict on him falls.

Ratibor

Now let your sword smite through the iron chains
And Ahab overthrow.

Mikita

(wrathfully)

Go! Get you hence!
Enough of empty words from stupid brains!
I know myself, and told you so long since
That Yaroslav no foe to us remains.
So get you gone!

(He turns to leave.)

Ratibor

Nay, wait, you cunning slave,
Bethink you! If you did but only know
The latest ill, the latest outrage grave,
The latest victim bloodily laid low!
Then listen, witless one. The Prince has slain
Your noble father, honest Kosnyatin!

Mikita

(flinching, overcome)

You lie! No, no! My father is not dead!
The Prince despatched Slavyata not long since
To Murom, to release him, it was said!

Ratibor

He slew him. 'Tis God's truth I here evince.
Hark to this herald, witness of what was done.
What tidings then, Stemir, Zbislav's own son?

Stemir

I came from Murom. At the Prince's word
Dobrinich Kosnyatin was straightway slain
On James the Apostle's day. So help me God!
Receive his soul in heaven, O Lord. Amen!

*Mikita sinks onto the bench, covering his face in his hands.
In the gallery lights appear again, and singing is heard. The
wedding procession is returning from the church.*

Ratibor

Farewell, Mikita! The mills of God grind slow,
But they grind sure. Wait not the end, but go.

The three figures all disappear.

Maids

(singing)

The grapes we have brought from the orchard today,
O lassie, O laddie, true lovers, hallay!
We shall press the grapes into goblets of gold,
The rich red juice to the brim they will hold,
O lassie, O laddie, true lovers how fine
Is love on this earth, like a cup full of wine!

Mikita

(rising shakily)

"Wait not the end"... O most unworthy son,
How could I, having forgotten the Highest's call,
Live shamefully with the offender, as I have done...
Why has his bread not stuck in my throat, withal?
Why did his wine, like poison, not burn meanwhile?
Yea, he who wishes dark deceit, when known,
With highest goodness somehow to reconcile,
The mills of God will mercilessly grind down...
For only that moment may be wise, they say,
Which we in life have not the power to stay.

Slowly retreats into the depths of the garden.

SCENE V

Behind the arches bright lights, music, and the noise of the wedding feast. Ulf and Ingegerd come out into the garden, continuing a conversation already begun.

Ingegerd

Then Harold knows not?

Ulf

Nay. To tell him ought
Would mean to jeopardize the whole affair.
Too high he prizes Yaroslav, methought,
Especially now, as son-in-law, 'tis clear.

Ingegerd

Yea, now his knightly honour is too great,
Not given to plotting, and the flattering phrase,
Though... knew he but how the Prince has sealed my fate —
Confined within a nunnery all my days,
Then, maybe, as a knight he would be dismayed
And for my honour smirched would raise his blade?
Well, then... with him myself will I have word.
All know the sign?

Ulf

When the church bell is heard!

Ingegerd

(to herself)

At last the die is cast... Where will it take us?
As oft before, I seize the steering oar
To save the drifting vessel from the breakers.
E'en then, when first we went for Rus to war,
With Egmond then the argument I decided!
Then I was able all to hold in check
And equal then with kings and nobles knighted,
Did Ingegerd renowned to Rus come back.
But now, when he himself breaks all to pieces,
And has against me raised a vengeful hand,
Let Yaroslav reproach himself, if he pleases,
That Olaf's daughter compulsion would not stand,
And no unheard-of insult lightly bears.

(To Ulf)

Come, Ulf. The time for taking action nears.

They retreat to the back of the garden

SCENE VI

The cry of a night-owl re-echoes. The second, the third. Milusha runs out excitedly from the gallery, and carefully makes her way towards the fountain. From behind the dense trees appears the figure of Zhureiko. He runs up to the girl and takes her by the arm.

Milusha

I could not beg milady to intercede
With Yaroslav, my dear.

Zhureiko

(excitedly)

Now is no need!
For to the Prince myself I straight shall go.
Foul plans afoot! The sly Varangian foe
Have him betrayed. But yesterday I heard
Something of this from one Varangian guard.
Their tongue I know. Now here, and not long since,
I learned it all. A plot against the Prince.
They will imprison him...

Milusha

That cannot be!

Zhureiko

I heard it all. Lead me into his chamber.

Milusha

(horried)

Impossible! Nay, your very life's in danger!

Zhureiko

(hesitates)

Then what's to do? We may no more delay.
Somebody, maybe, saw me hiding there.
Well, I shall go to him, and come what may.
Lead on.

Decisively moves towards the gallery, but at that moment Ulf runs out from behind the trees, accompanied by two Varangians.

Ulf

Aha! So, then, 'twas you hid here!
Seize him, the scoundrel. Murderers meet no pardon!

(The Varangians seize Zhureiko, but he beats them off.)

He weilds a knife! And in the Prince's garden!
A knife against the Prince!

Zhureiko
(*shouts*)

'Tis you who planned
With the Princess his downfall!

Ulf

Take him away
And slay the monster.

Milusha
(*screams*)

Help! There's death at hand!
Where are the guards?...

(*Runs along the gallery.*)

Zhureiko

Milusha, dear!

Ulf

(*catching hold of Milusha*)

Stay!
Be quiet, you fiend!

Milusha

I'll not be quiet, nay, nay.
Bring back Zhureiko! 'Gainst the Prince you itch
To raise your treacherous hand!

Ulf

Then perish, you bitch!

Stabs her with his knife, and runs off. Milusha falls. The alarm is raised, lights begin to gleam. From the gallery and from all sides people come thronging in. Yaroslav, Ingegerd, Harold, Elizabeth, Mikita, boyars, and guards with torches in their hands.

Yaroslav

What's taken place here?... Murder!

Elizabeth
(*in horror*)

'Tis Milusha!

(*Bending over her.*)

Milusha, dear! Who struck the blow, poor girl?

Yaroslav

(*wrathfully*)

Such lawless deeds! How long must I in future
Endure such danger, even in my own hall?
Who struck her down?

Milusha

(opening her eyes)

Oh, hasten... save him yet...

Yaroslav

(bending over her)

Save whom?

Milusha

Why him... Zhureiko... Dost forget?

Yaroslav

(surprised)

Is he, then, here? He ran off long ago.

Milusha

He has returned. Their plot he came to know.
They captured him. Ulf stabbed me with his knife.
'Twas I who screamed.

Yaroslav

(straightening up)

Such threats against my life!
Against the Prince, such evil schemes, such strife!
Hey, sound the trumpets, let the alarm be raised!
Ulf must be captured!

At that moment Zhureiko runs in. He is bleeding, his clothes are torn, and broken fragments of straps in his hands.

Zhureiko

Prince! May God be praised!
I find you here in time. This very night
The sly Princess and Ulf had planned, God wot,
To place you in a dungeon out of sight.
And Kiev in Varangian hands!...

(Catching sight of Milusha).

My God!

(Throws himself on his knees before her.)

Milusha! Darling! Ah, what violence senseless!
My spotless dove, my swallow! What broken luck!
Who then has dared to strike a bird defenceless?

Milusha

I screamed for help... Then Ulf... that traitor... struck.
Such is my fate... And now I'll never build you
In Kiev... with your help... our little nest.

Zhureiko

(kisses her hands, weeps)

Nay, nay, to death I'll never, never yield you,
Or where can one seek justice, peace, and rest?

Elizabeth

(pressing close to Harold)

O God of mine!... Again spilt blood is flowing...
In truth, then, can no place on earth be found
Where peace may reign, where love in bloom be blowing,
Among the people in one brotherhood bound?

Yaroslav

(wrathfully seizing hold of Ingegerd's arm)

E'en on this night of love and peace withal
The long-past wrong you meant to wake once more!
You wished the Icelandic battle-axe to fall
On peaceful Rus, as then in days of yore.
Again deceits, sly snares, and passions fell
You wished to sow. Again the evil ghost
Of Egmond you would summon up from hell,
And those blood-thirsty earls of times long past.
But through the blood of the faithful God saved Rus
From wicked wiles, and the devil's tempting breath.
In sight of innocent blood spilt lightly thus
I might have rightly punished you with death,
But since this night the feast of love begins,
My hand shall flash no brand from out its sheath.
Go, get you to a nunnery for your sins!
You, Harold, I do not drive from my abode,
But birds of passage none can stay by force,
And you yourself, most like, will prepare for the road
To your beloved Scandinavian shores.

Harold

'Tis so, my Lord. But never, I assure you,
Was I once guilty of evil plans before you.

Yaroslav

You I believe. But fate I can't believe,
Which once again Varangians here has brought.
Though parting with my daughter makes me grieve,
Farewell, then Harold. Rus stands higher than ought.

(Turns away.)

Elizabeth

(clings to her father in tears)

And must I really for ever leave you all?...
What grief this night has given me, what gall!...

Zhureiko

(on his knees by Milusha)

Milusha, dear! My lovely one and only,
Forsake me not, as orphan to remain,
Oh, do not leave me miserable and lonely!

Who then will press me to her heart again,
And who will pity a wretched outcast, who?...
So I shall die, like a lonely dog indeed,
Who finds no kindly master in time of need.

Bends over her, weeping.

Milusha

(stroking his head with a feeble hand)

Weep not, my love... You loved me well and true,
And that will warm you life-long with its spark.
Farewell...

She dies.

Zhureiko

(tenderly kisses her)

Farewell... She's gone... Her eyes are dark.

Yaroslav removes his hat. All the others do likewise.

Zhureiko

(rises)

Farewell, my noble Prince... Prepare her grave,
And I shall carry my sorrowing heart elsewhere,
Upon the spreading steppe, or the azure wave,
Or in the silent groves my grief I'll bear...

Yaroslav

(takes Zhureiko by the arm)

Remain you here, stone-mason true and fearless.
I will provide you with a house and land,
And in my bodyguard be a captain peerless,
My own respected brother, and my good friend.
With princely presents I shall ensure your future...

Zhureiko

(sadly)

Nay, thank you, Prince. All's dead without Milusha...
I shall betake me to those distant lands
Where till this day are only wandering bands,
But will in time become a Rus dominion,
And there, maybe, I'll serve your goal of union.
But give me, pray, your Prince's signet stone
Which in the case of need may there be shown.

Yaroslav

(taking his signet-ring from his finger)

Here, take you this. And keep the south, stone-mason.
Should danger threaten, back to Kiev hasten.

*Zhureiko takes the ring and kisses it, then bows over
Milusha.*

SCENE VII

Yaroslav

Close all the castle gates. Bear her to church,
And in her honour sing a funeral dirge.

Turns, as if to go.

Mikita

(stepping forward)

One moment, Prince! Before this body stay!
Confess, at least this once, that you are sly,
That with deceit and death you always pay
All loyal services and toil forby.
And all desert you in misfortune's day,
Like the stone-mason, sentenced by your hand,
Like Harold, who after the wedding you drive away,
Like Ulf, Ragnvald's bold son, from a foreign land,
Whom you embittered in vain with princely power,
Like I, who now my leave from you will take,
And you will stand alone in the evil hour,
Like a wolf in the wood, or like a subtle snake.

Yaroslav

You lie, you mad-brained monk! The land, elate,
Stands up for me. The people, the hills and dales!

Mikita

What land? It maybe Novgorod the Great
Which saved you earlier thrice, and never fails,
And won for you your Prince's throne of gold!
And how did you repay her folk, in faith?
By killing honest Kosnyatin, I'm told,
Who saved you previously from shame and death,
Who steered your ship of fate securely through,
Although you wished to set sail o'er the sea,
Towards the princely crown of victory!

Yaroslav

(wrathfully)

How dare you so? Know, monk, 'tis not to you
That I must answer for every fault and sin!

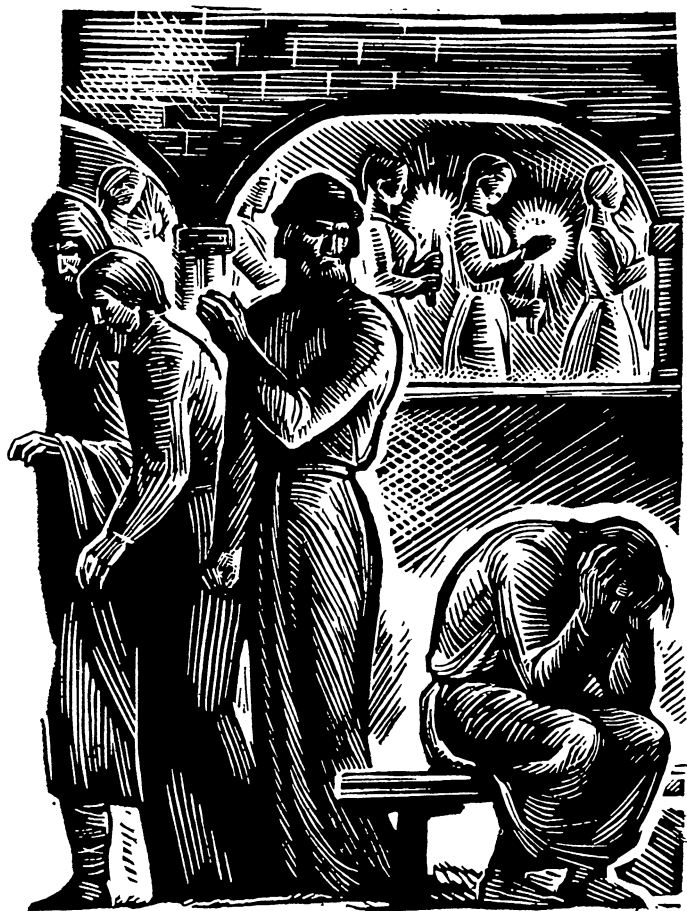
Mikita

Nay, not to me, the son of Kosnyatin —
The folk alone will judge what you have done.

Yaroslav

(stepping back in amazement)

I can't believe it! Kosnyatin's own son!



Mikita

You are surprised that I have not from hate
Yet struck? Because I would not visit shame
On Novgorod's faithfulness and honour great...
But God will strike the murderer in my name.

Yaroslav

(with great dignity)

In truth, to God and to the folk of Rus,
For all my deeds I shall make answer due.
And though at times my path was tangled much,
And I could only go on groping through,
'Mid fearful obstacles, oft my search was foiled
And then, inevitably, mistakes I made,
A hundred times from the precipice I recoiled,
And then my people always gave me aid.
Therefore I served my folk with conscience then,
And spared them, when I could, in difficult days.
Therefore I executed Kosnyatin,
Because he broke the peace in many ways.
That peaceful world, which through long years of woe
And strife, I strengthened for the folk once more,
He thoughtlessly wished with eager hands to throw
Upon the scales of internecine war.
Such action can I nobody forgive,
Because no greater treasures can I detect
Than peaceful toil, and happy at home to live,
Which honestly all my life did I protect.
And while I live and breathe, I swear to stand
For Russian justice, and one Russian land!

Curtain



ACT FIVE





Picture I

Psalter and Sword 1036 A. D.

A hall in Yaroslav's palace, decorated with marble, and gilded in the Byzantine-Romanesque style, with arched windows, looking out over the Dnieper.

SCENE I

Luxuriously dressed in all his Grand Prince's array, though looking rather morose, Yaroslav sits on his throne, concluding a speech to the Hungarian and Polish ambassadors, who are standing among the Prince's luxurious retinue and body-guard.

Beside Yaroslav stands Ingegerd in a rust-coloured nun's robe, and between them stands their elder son, the 16-year-old stripling Vladimir.

Yaroslav

A lengthy life the Lord to me has given
So that I might unite my Russian land.
If merely at the building I had striven —
But I dare not let go my sharpened brand,
And like to Israel, stone upon stone as neighbours
I set up firmly, but with sword unsheathed.
But not for nought, nor vain were all my labours,
For victory o'er my foes I have achieved.
And since Mstislav by death has been defeated
The sovereignty of Rus lies in my hands,
Again regathered, single, fast-united,

(stands proudly)

Just like a holy wall she firmly stands
In the defence of all good Christian folk,
And of all treasured teachings of the past
From Asiatic hordes ungodly yoke.
Of this give good account at home, I ask,
Ambassadors from our neighbouring countries sent,
Where Hungary and Poland borders have,
How here there stands, on watchful duty bent
The guard of Europe — Russian Yaroslav.

(Sits.)

However, God has sent us another sorrow —
My young beloved daughter has passed away —

Elizabeth, who crossed the ocean's furrow
As wife of Harold, warrior bold as day.
And therefore pardon me that family passion
Does not permit us to regale our guests
And do you honour in the proper fashion.
To both your kings, who my good brothers rest,
Convey my warmest greetings, at my behest.

Y a r o s l a v stands.

*The ambassadors bow and leave, behind them the Prince's
retinue and Vladimir. Yaroslav again sits on his throne,
his head bent on his hand in sorrowful meditation.*

*Ingegerd, who remains in the hall, looks at the Prince
sadly, and with noticeable sympathy. She has changed very
much in these four years. Her proud and imperious features
have seemingly softened, and through the lines of previous
hardness and ambition, ever more clearly stand out the looks
of womanly solicitude and sorrow.*

Ingegerd

Enough now! Leave your sorry thoughts, my dear,
And your clear reason cloud not any more.
Well, such is life: for every happy year
In sorry loss it makes us pay thrice o'er.

Yaroslav

O, What a lie! Myself I made the decisions —
In payment my daughter gave to a far domain
In order to drive away those cursed visions
Which you desired to return to Rus again.
Rather stand dumb! It was not life, but you
Who took from me that godless bribe, alas,
Since Harold's victorious banner, which you flew,
To please your whim I did not then let pass.

Ingegerd

(sadly)

It was a bitter sorrow then that caught us,
And many a tear I too shed on that path...
But now that loss has in repayment taught us
To value love and the peace of the family hearth.
Forgive me, dearest Prince, my noble Lord,
If anguish to your soul I did afford.

Yaroslav

(touched, takes her by the hands and draws her to him)

My dear old friend! My queen of peace, Irina!
When for our happiness we pay to fate,
Then fate in turn makes all our woes serener
As it does now, returning me my mate.

And not the old one, but a new, unmarred,
Our gracious God presents me in her place,
Instead of proud and haughtily Ingegerd
A humble, meek Irina I embrace!

(Takes her in his arms.)

Irina-Inge, my poor wife and partner,
We two have passed together our whole lives.
For you, of course, at times, I made life harder,
And I've endured your whims and wiles at times.
However, I see not evil to be pardoned,
Though oft you nursed deep anger in your heart,
But that same heart was always warm and ardent,
With good and ill, for me you played your part.
Yea, we in youthful years select our consort,
But we can never really know her then,
And only in loss, and in misfortune's onslaught
In waning years we see in her a friend.

(Again drops his head on his hand in melancholy meditation.)

Ingegerd

Believe me, darling, my good friend and master,
Although not always submissive to you, 'tis true,
Natheless, in sunny hours, and in disaster,
I still believed alone your fate, and you.

Takes and kisses his hand, and then goes out.

SCENE II

Yaroslav

(rises)

Most like, she too is feeling life is trying,
Now she has come from the heights to the level sea,
The heart desires not sadness, tears and sighing,
And proud reason desires not simplicity.

(He goes to the window and gazes on the Dnieper.)

Borysthenes*, O Dnieper, friend and father!
In flowering meads, beside your fertile banks,
In roving days you gathered us together,
And your fresh wine the wanderers all drank.
O how your course, both stormy and quiet in places,
Reminds me of the life that I've lived through,
For, just like you, I hastened toward the spaces,
In lengthy wanderings, and in struggles too.

Silvester enters, followed by Foka carrying a few large tomes.

Silvester

Permit me, noble sovereign, the pleasure,
With these two tomes to waft away your rue,
The Princess sent us to you with this treasure,
The books are of great interest, and new.

Yaroslav

(deeply touched)

What kindness and solicitude she tenders!
For nothing better, truly, one could wish,
Well, let us see these literary wonders...

Silvester

(taking a volume from Foka and opening it)

All Greek, you see, but clear without words, ywis,
Because they have such wondrous illustrations.
For instance, here's *The Garland of the Saints*
By Simeon Metaphrastes. For all occasions
The life of another saint each day acquaints.
Presented by the artist with skill exceeding,
What man he was, his deeds, his sufferings too,
So that all's understood, not even reading...

Yaroslav

Oh, many books of saints have I read through,
And for these modern times some seem out-dated —
What else is there?

(*Silvester takes another volume from Foka.*)

Well, brother Svichkogas,
From copying books have you gone addle-pated,
And maybe wish again from us to dash
And, as a Varangian, sail the stormy ocean?
If so, then say.

Foka

Nay, Prince, I've no such notion!
Nowhere on earth are such great riches found
As I've discovered here, on my native ground,
In Kiev here, with you as benefactor,
Where I've been granted such wise good books to taste!

Yaroslav

And where the Prince's wine, too, has attractions!
Have you not, brother monk, a cup yet raised?

Foka

No sin to drink to the Prince, the Lord be praised!

Silvester

In truth, our Svichkogas has greatly changed.
He drinks in measure, and he wastes no time.
So not in vain was he tossed by the waves he ranged,
The harmful sediment sank to the bottom line.

Yaroslav

On many ships I've been tossed by salty water,
But of my old faults, woe's me, I was not stripped!
Well now, what more?

Silvester

A most exalted psalter
With wondrous patterns, a work of Grecian script,
A marvel of art...

Yaroslav

(*delighted*)

What beauty it does depict!
What happy and transparent hues are here,
What churches with their domes in azure skies
Resting on golden patterns woven clear,
In graceful fashion, on graceful columns rise!
If they but grant me yet one peaceful year
I swear that such a shrine I too shall rear
In Sophia's name — the virtue of wisdom rare.
Yea, this is wondrous work. Pray let it lie
Within my bed-chamber, on the table there,
It will divert my mind should grief draw nigh,
For I must still perform more than one affair...
I thank you, friend.

Silvester

(embarrassed)

Excuse me, Prince, I pray,
But for that book the price I yet must pay.

Yaroslav

You have not paid! What nonsense do you speak?
Whose book is this?

Silvester

From foreign parts a Greek
Has brought it here, but dear the price he said:
One hundred grivnas!

Yaroslav

(outraged)

What! Has he lost his head?
One hundred for a book! He does but jest.
One hundred golden grivnas! A village, at least,
With meadows and watermill one well might buy,
With all the cattle.

Silvester

Indeed, the price is high...

Yaroslav

Well, call him in, and let the rascal here
Have the temerity to repeat that price.

(F o k a quickly goes out.)

A hundred golden grivnas! Well, last year
For a whole Bible twelve did there suffice!
Well, where's the Greek, then?

S i l v e s t e r also goes out.

SCENE III

Vladimir enters carrying in his hand a small book in a costly cover.

Vladimir

Father, I just met
Some kind of wanderer, looking very queer,
Who handed me this prayer-book, jewel-set,

(gives it to Yaroslav)

And asked that you...

Yaroslav

(very agitated)

Great God above!... And where...
Who gave it you? It comes from Elizabeth's hand!
Her prayer-book! Let the stranger before me stand.

Mikita and Gemma enter. He is wearing the rust-coloured garb of a pilgrim, and sandals. The hood of his smock is thrown back, leaving his head uncovered. She is wearing a short skirt and sandals, and carries a zither in her hands.

Yaroslav

Mikita! You? And were you really there,
And saw her? Answer quickly!

Mikita

Prince, I swear,
I've travelled through the world both far and wide
Since then, when in great sorrow and despair
I quitted Kiev, on that unhappy night...
I was awhile in Rome, and beyond the sea,
And everywhere, like God's whip, there goaded me
The pestering memory of my father's death...
And in the third year, having gained my breath,
I moored my ship upon the Norwegian shore.

Yaroslav

(impatiently)

Well, what of her? You saw her, and what's more,
You spoke with her, you happy, happy man!

Mikita

Beside the window, lonely, looking wan,
She sat there in the castle of the King,
And gazed upon the strip of land and sky

Where, so it seemed to her, the south would lie,
And sadly by the window there she sang,
And in my heart sharp pity simply seethed.

Yaroslav

O God above! How painfully she grieved!

Mikita

She sang of Kiev, lost to her, but dear,
And like a holy taper she faded there,
And when her final hour on earth drew near
She handed me her Princess's book of prayer,
That in her memory I should give to you.

Yaroslav

(kissing the prayer-book)

Poor wretched darling!... If I only knew...

Mikita

And she moreover begged you, with open hand
To shelter in her household Gemma too,
Who all the time there in that foreign land
Remained with her, and shared her sorrows new,
Her yearning for her native land, and song,
Although to different countries they belong.

Yaroslav

(laying his hand on Gemma's shoulder)

For her sake I'll do that, and even more,
And gladly will I shelter you in my home,
And should you wish to return to your native shore
I will despatch you there when the hour shall come.
But tell me how you lived with her four springs,
And how you soothed her yearning on these strings...

Gemma

A thousand thanks to you, O generous sovereign!
Now let these strings resound upon the air,
Now let these songs of mine around you hovering,
Tell you about your precious daughter's care...
I love the dear Princess with all my being...
My signor, do not worry over me
For lengthy wanderings I am used to seeing,
And now to him, to him alone I'll flee,
Who on my way consoled my misery.
No mistress, but a slave with willing smile,
Now shall I serve the kindly-souled Mikita...
Permit me to awake my sleeping zither,
To summon the soul of Elsa for a while.

(Sits and plucks a few chords of the zither, then sings:)

And there she was a-sitting
By castle window wide,

And watching waves a-whipping,
The storm-grey waves a-whipping,
Alone at eventide.

And there she sat a-mourning
For somewhere far away,
Somewhere her land was calling,
Somewhere was Kiev calling
In sunshine's happy day.

And when fine ships went sailing,
A-sailing from the strand,
She sang of Kiev waiting,
Of golden Kiev waiting
In her own motherland.

And still she sang with feeling
Of Kiev and her home,
No more shall we be meeting,
No more shall we be meeting,
Farewell, from o'er the foam.

Yaroslav

(wiping his eyes)

Poor, wretched darling... my Elizabeth,
Forgive me that I came not to your aid.
And thanks to you, now I draw easier breath,
For healing tears have sorrow lighter made.

SCENE IV

*Silvester and Foka enter breathing heavily, and leading
the Greek merchant Parthenios.*

Silvester

Forgive us, Prince, was hard beyond all measure
To find this Greek down in the tavern nearby,
Where he was bibbing wine with greatest pleasure.

Foka

(wiping his lips with his hand)

By barest chance, he scarcely caught my eye.

Yaroslav

To the tavern, one sees, the familiar path you wended,
And not for nought are your whiskers wet with wine.

(To the Greek)

And you were rightly drinking, having demanded
Such a godless, shameless price, which I decline.

Parthenios

Believe me, mighty Lord, that here some sense is —
And if I take one hundred grivnas down
Then I shall barely cover my expenses,
And get my poor possessions out of pawn.
This psalter is the only one thus painted,
The like of which the richest kings have none.
The Hebrew craftsman who this book created
Went blind from colours. Kyrie eleison!

Silvester

But you told me he was a monk, this master,
And that with all his books he was drowned at sea!

Parthenios

And so he was. He had a strange life rather —
In Sophia cathedral christened was he,
Then later took his vows.

Yaroslav

Enough of lying!
I'll give you forty grivnas, if you choose.

Parthenios

O holy God! Is it from me you're buying?
An' honest merchant, as poor as a church mouse, too!
I must repay my debts to my creditors' coffers...

Yaroslav

Well, fifty then, and not another groat!

Silvester

Take it, you Judas! That's a magnificent offer!

Parthenios

I cannot, Prince. The book's not mine, pray note...

SCENE V

A sudden sound of alarm is heard behind the doors, as into the chamber comes M i r o s l a v, very agitated.

Miroslav

Misfortune, Prince! A herald galloping in
Brings news of Pechenegs in a countless horde
Who have invaded our land with battle-din,
And Zvenigorod and Ltava have destroyed.
And in five days their way to Kiev they'll force!

Silvester

God save us!

Vladimir

Forth to meet them! Come, to horse!

Foka

To horse and sword! Away with a cap and gown!

Mikita

Again prepare your warriors, Novgorod town!..

Parthenios

(horror struck)

Whole hordes of Pechenegs! Kyrie eleison!
I'm good as dead! Escape, or I'm undone!...

Yaroslav

Well, war is war! So summon the troops to go —
'Tis not the first time that we face the foe.

Miroslav

Only we have no ready warrior train,
Varangians — few. Their hordes — without an end.
We lack armed men. To Novgorod again
Someone at once for aid we needs must send.

Yaroslav

I'll ride myself. My horse and sword straightway!

Parthenios

(scared)

Great Prince! And what will now become of me?
I'll take your offer! Sixty, then, let it be!
Only give word to pay me that sum today.

F o k a gives the Prince his sword.

Yaroslav

(buckling it on)

On the castle walls at once send out the watch,
Inspect the ramparts, towers, and machicolations,
Carry in stones, and stoves for melting pitch,
And cauldrons for the boiling tar at their stations!

M i r o s l a v leaves.

Parthenios

(insistently)

Give orders, Prince, for them to pay me straight!

Yaroslav

(reaching for his sword)

Zounds! You've gone mad, you witless addle-pate!
This is no time to cling and clutch — just wait!

(P a r t h e n i o s jumps back.)

My friends, but seven days a siege withstand,
And I shall bring new troops to save our land!

Mikita

(sullenly)

You'll not succeed. Twelve days at least you'll need
To go, how many there, and to return?
And Novgorod may not be so willing, indeed,
To aid again, when bastions start to burn,
So that, for loyalty, later, as though 'twere treason,
Her finest sons you should sentence, against all reason!

Yaroslav

(in terrible rage)

Again you raise your head, you poisonous serpent!
I'll strike you down...

Draws his sword and rushes at Mikita. Everybody screams. At that moment Gemma throws her zither at the Prince's feet, where it falls with ringing strings. Yaroslav, startled, stands still, and slowly lowers his sword, breathing hard.

Gemma

(firmly, and with dignity)

Nay, stay your hand, my Lord.

Parthenios

(frightened, but solemnly)

Remember, Prince, King David, God's humble servant,
And his great gift of gentle thought and word.

Yaroslav

(passing his hand across his brow)

I lost myself... Mikita, pray, forgive...

Mikita

(sullenly)

I am no foe... although I always strive
To speak of Novgorod the bare-faced truth.
But for our Kiev I'll give my life, forsooth!

SCENE VI

Movement behind the doors, and Zhureiko enters. He is in eastern dress, with a red silk kerchief on his shaven head.

Zhureiko
(excitedly)

I bow to you, my mighty sovereign Lord.

Yaroslav
(amazed)

Stone-mason, you again! And from what parts?

Zhureiko

From Chernigov * and Novgorod I've word,
Whither I sped from the steppe where our border starts.
Some time ago I saw that beyond the Don
The hordes were gathering forces for the fight,
And when their vanguard started moving on,
And dire misfortune threatened, black as night,
I galloped then ahead to Novgorod
And showed your signet ring to the elders there.

Yaroslav
(touched)

You thus have done? That was the will of God!
Well, what said Novgorod?

Zhureiko

Warriors 'gan prepare!
Already her troops to Kiev are on their way,
I left them in Chernigov, but yesterday,
And sped ahead to you by the shortest road,
To bring you joy, and lighten your heavy load.

Yaroslav
(embracing Zhureiko)

Stone-mason mine! You've moved a stone from my heart,
And I shall ne'er forget it, for my part.

General commotion.

Silvester

Great is the Lord of hosts, who sends us aid!

Vladimir
(with delight)

That's Novgorod! Glorious folk it must be said!
O Father, in regal fashion reward them now!

Yaroslav

As regent there, my son, I'll send them you.
Well now, Mikita, at least you will allow
That Novgorod remained our brother true.

Outside the window is heard the blare of trumpets, and the noise of a military gathering.

Some pages and Foka bring Yaroslav his chain-mail hauberk, his helmet and shield. He removes his long fur cloak and his upper tunic, and begins to don his war-gear, with the aid of the pages and Foka, who at the same time bandages the Prince's right leg.

Yaroslav

Already sounds the trumpet call to war,
The steeds are neighing, smelling battle-smoke,
And I must bend my painful knee once more,
And raise my sword, as when old storms first broke.
Again with youthful energy now I seethe —
How often so! — within my troubled soul,
But always with despair and sadness leave
These books, and seek with sword and shield my goal...
Happy are you, wise Foka, and no fool,
That after days with sins and storm-clouds full,
You find your refuge in a cassock and cowl...
For in my life, as in a turbulent bull,
Hot blood has cast me here, and carried me there,
And now again, when with my seething power
I started to turn towards construction's toil,
Again the trumpets blow the alarming hour,
Again I lead to war, where battles boil!
Is't bound?

(Tries out his bandaged leg.)

Then forward my lame leg now hies!
O God of mine! How difficult to be wise
When in one's soul the power spurts forth like springs,
And when the must still unfermented lies,
And when I burn with thirst to be like two kings:
Like David, to whom the peaceful harp was dear,
And like Saul, to hurl at them my piercing spear.

Ingegerd hurriedly enters in alarm.

Ingegerd

O, my dear Prince! Again is't really was?

Trumpets sound outside the window.



Yaroslav

(with the sword in his hand, embracing her and Vladimir)

Yes, my Princess, 'tis holy war again!
The troops stand firm around like an iron wall,
And our dear Rus from robbers of the plain
They will defend, and slay our enemies all.
Before majestic Kiev, golden-headed,
May all the glory of distant forbears sound,
May red shields clash, may steel to steel be wedded,
We shall not yield our nest to insult's wound.
Forward to battle for this dear land of ours,
For holy Kiev's mighty sovereign towers!

Curtain

Picture II
The Golden Gates
1036 A. D.

The same hall as in the previous picture. A few days later.

SCENE I

Beyond the window-arches the remote but uninterrupted noise of battle. Ingegerd, Gemma, and a few court ladies press to the window, taking a cautious look outside. However, the battle is not visible from that side of the castle.

Ingegerd
(praying)

O God in heaven, omnipotent and gracious,
Let no foul foe beset our Russian land.
Give aid, O holy Ingegerd, in our dangers
And by Prince Yaroslav in battle stand.
And may Saint George, and Saint Irina, peaceful,
Protect our sacred Rus with powerful hand.
And we will build them each a fine cathedral!

(Sighs meditatively.)

How stealthily has age plucked all youth's flowers,
Although my eyes are bright, and lips still sweet,
Yet in my soul no longer burn those powers
Which once brought people kneeling at my feet.
And I myself was then a judge of leaders.
Could I but shed a score of years o'ernight,
Would I hide here behind walls with timorous creatures?
I would take up a sword and join the fight.
But all has passed which in my youth now distant
Once placed me on a level with heroes bold...
Where are those mighty earls — no more existent,
Where's Egmond too, whose flashing sword of old
The fate of kings once swayed upon the balance?...
All that has passed... and I myself, meek-willed,
Stand, like some woman of no especial talents,
By the window wondering if her husband's killed.

(The noise of battle grows nearer.)

O God Almighty!... Still the alarm is growing...
Where's Vladimir? That child's a constant care!
Go quickly now and call him! What is he doing?

Vladimir

(runs in excitedly. He is wearing chain-mail and a helmet)

O, mama, how exciting! I was there,
Up in the tower!

Ingegerd

Enough, you little torment!
Don't dare to go again, disobedient boy!
Sit here with us!

Vladimir

O, mama, just one moment!

Ingegerd

Sit here!

Vladimir

But here among your dames I have no joy!

Ingegerd

You're still too young.

Vladimir

(proudly)

I'm Novgorod's prince-regent!
My father told me plainly, and I was glad.
So I must go to our city's defence, it's urgent!
Please let me, mama!

(Cuddles up to his mother.)

Ingegerd

(stroking his head)

Poor unfortunate lad!
'Tis no light lot will fall upon your shoulders,
For Novgorod's not like Kiev, well-known to you.
There you will live in a hornet's nest of elders,
Among grown men severe and self-willed too.
Will you hold out?

Vladimir

Of course, I am not frightened.
Oh, mother, let me go! I can't sit here
While there for the fate of Rus the fight grows heightened,
The field's a sea of helmets and flashing spears,
The swords clash on the shields. The trumpet's blaring,
And there the arrows like clouds fly far and wide,
And father's sword like striking lightning flaring,
Cuts swathes of the falling foe on every side!

SCENE II

Parthenios enters, carefully making his way along the wall, and sighing.

Parthenios

O Lord of mercy! Listen to my plea!
I'm lost, and done for! 'Tis the end for me!

Foka enters in warrior's dress, with a battle-axe. The women rush towards him.

Ingegerd

What's happened? Why do you come? How goes the battle?
And where's the Prince?

Foka

I've galloped from him straight here.
He said you are not to fear, he's in fine fettle,
And all goes well. But one small group broke clear
Towards the castle, and to avoid mischances
The Prince sent me along upon their track.
Myself and Roald. To reinforce defences.

Ingegerd

And are they really ready to attack?

Parthenios

O God protect me! Where can I hide? 'Tis murder!

Foka

We'll drive them off, Princess, do not dismay!
You can sit calm, but from the windows further,
In case a straying arrow should fly this way.

Parthenios

I'm finished! Lost! And all my books, alack!

Vladimir

I'll go with them! For should there be a battle
What prince may hide behind a woman's kirtle?
And you will now not dare to hold me back!

SCENE III

Silvester enters, as calm as ever.

Silvester

(blessing F o k a)

Go forth, my son, and battle with the enemy.
May God with manly courage your soul inspire!

F o k a leaves.

Vladimir

Wise father, won't you tell my mama, anyway,
To let me go?

Silvester

My son, there's danger dire.
You're yet too young your honour to be earning
And doing great deeds in such a difficult hour.
Draw from good books more beneficial learning
Let wisdom fill your growing soul with power.

The cries and noise of the battle grow still nearer.

Women

(in dismay)

O heavenly Father, have mercy now upon us!
O give us not into the heathen's hand!
O do not let us suffer death dishonoured!

Silvester

Fear not, for God in your defence will stand.
The Prince's arm is strong, his spirit brave yet!

Parthenios

(seizing Silvester by the sleeve)

Remember, Lord above, the good King David...
Now listen, abba, I'll accept in a trice,
I will agree. Let it be fifty grivnas!
The psalter for fifty — you were there as witness —
The Prince's price. I'll accept the Prince's price!

Silvester

Why didn't you take it then, when first he offered?
Well, now,— take twenty?

Parthenios
(*horrified*)

Oh! I shiver and shake!
That's just a gift. A knock-down I have suffered!
That's just the price of the parchment...

Silvester

The offer I make.

Then don't take

A long arrow flies through the window and sticks, trembling, in the wall.

Parthenios

Lord save us! Done! I'll take it!
Agreed! But give the money straightway here!
Well, twenty grivnas! Golden grivnas make it!

Silvester

And not too soon!

(Quietly takes out the money, counts it, and hands it to Parthenios.)

Here, take it. The price is fair!

Parthenios

O God in heaven! All's lost! Ah, woe is me!
For twenty grivnas!

SCENE IV

M i r o s l a v runs in.

Miroslav
(excitedly)

Princess, 'tis victory!
The enemy in confusion has to yield,
And countless numbers perish on the field.
The rapacious enemy, beaten, has to flee!

Ingegerd
Glory to God! And glory to Yaroslav!

Vladimir
And thanks to you, small glory that I have!

Silvester
Great is our God! Give everlasting praise!
And praise to the Prince and his warriors all their days!

Parthenios
(in despair)
I sold too cheaply! Forty grivnas lost!
One minute more! Oh, what that minute cost!

Ingegerd
Welcome the Prince, and praise his wonderful deed,
And Yaroslav's victorious warriors greet!

Shouting. Trumpets. Music.

*Y a r o s l a v enters, his naked sword in his hand, accompanied
by his armed guard, his retinue, and boyars.*

Shouts
Hosannah! Praise! All glory to God on high!
Long live great Yaroslav, both brave and wise,
Who made the invading Pecheneg forces fly.
And hail to victory! Let your praises rise!

*V l a d i m i r and I n g e g e r d embrace the Prince. R o a l d,
F o k a and M i r o s l a v enter.*

Yaroslav
Well, then, the mowers return from the harvest now.
Meet, wife, the workers of our state emprise,
And wipe the sweat from off your husband's brow.

(He sits on the throne and hands his sword to a boyar.)

Ingegerd brings the Prince a silver dish, with a golden goblet of wine, and a silken scarf.

Ingegerd

All hail, my Prince, my darling handsome dear!
Drink then this wine, and live a hundred year!

Yaroslav

(removes his helmet, takes the scarf and wipes the sweat and blood-smears from his face)

Not for the first time do I wipe the sweat
After hard work on the blood-soaked battle-field.

(Stands and takes the goblet.)

Let us praise God, and holy Sophia yet,
Who gave us victory, making our enemies yield.
And thanks to you, dear brother men-at-arms,
That you so firmly Rus defended too,
And utterly routed heathen enemy swarms!
To you, the victorious, praise and honour due!
I drink your health, with all the heart I have!

(Drinks.)

All

All praise to you, O great Prince Yaroslav!

Yaroslav

And where are the Novgorod men, who their sword-arms
Where are the men whom Novgorod to me sent?
lent?

SCENE V

Enter David and Ratibor with two other Novgorod men, carrying on their shoulders a stretcher, covered with a black cloth, which they place on the floor. Yaroslav rises, disturbed.

Yaroslav

Whom have we here? Who fell for Rus in war?

Ratibor

(darkly and solemnly)

Mikita, son of honest Kosnyatin,
Who, as his sire Dobrinich did before,
Laid down his life for you, that Rus might win.

Gemma

(with a cry of despair throws herself upon Mikita's corpse)

Mikita dearest! One and only friend,
Why have you left me thus struck down by grief?
Poor wander, e'en as I, until the end,
About the world without a friend, or wife,
With burning pain at heart, nor house nor hold,
And nowhere to lay down your unhappy head,
Alone, like I, alone like I in this world,
An exile living, and an exile dead...

Yaroslav

(slowly descends from his throne and bows his head before Mikita)

Nay, Gemma, nay! He is no exile now,
Because he loyally died for Rus in the fray,
For Kiev bowed down his soul, his noble brow.
Farewell, Mikita, with ardent heart away,
My honest enemy, and my hidden friend!
Forgive me my offences, brother mine,
Which you, the innocent, suffered at my hand,
Because I wished no civil wars malign,
Which Kosnyatin engendered in his time.
Farewell, my friend... With honour beside your sire
Above the Dnieper your corpse we shall inter.

(At a sign from the Prince they bear Mikita out. Gemma follows them.)

To you, upon the holy cross, I swear,
O men of Novgorod, that from this glad day,
For your brave service, and your loyalty rare,
I free your city from tribute which you pay.
I'll grant a charter which all your freedom cites
And promise, upon the holy rood, that we
Will pay respect to all your ancient rights,
And let nobody ever dare to be
An infringer of Novgorod's sacred liberty.
And so that law and order there may dwell,
I'll send my son to you, as prince to rule
So that he'll serve your Novgorod true and well,
As your own son, no foreign sovereign's tool.

*(Calls up Vladimir, who stands beside his father before
the throne.)*

And now let all to God above give praise
And thank Him for this victory once more,
That Kiev from destruction He has saved...
And here I swear, that on the field of war
Where I struck down the foe, with sword in hand,
A wonderful shrine I'll raise from out the dust
In wise Saint Sophia's name, that it shall stand
As permanent witness to our times and us,
And as an indestructible shield to Rus!

All

All praise to you, great Yaroslav the Wise!

Zhureiko

(entering)

Full victory, Prince! Now praise the Lord on high!
The enemy are wiped out to the very last man.
They knew not in desperation where they ran
And in Sitoml river * did drown and die.

All

Long live our victorious warriors, bold of eye!

Yaroslav

We bless you for this final happy line!
And now, stone-mason, is it not high time
To lay down swords, on the scaffolding to climb
And to begin again to build a shrine?...
Remain with us! For wise Saint Sophia now
A wonderful new shrine I shall endow.

Zhureiko

Nay, Prince! For Kiev holds my love no more.
'Twas not my fortune happy here to be.
Forgive me... let me serve you as before
Out on the steppe, down south, beside the sea.
I have a band of dare-devil fellows there
With whom I may forget my grief and care.



Yaroslav

Well, go your way. Fates differ and set me pondering:
To one is given the fortunate lot to build,
To the other is given the battlefield and wandering,
And all my life unrest and care have filled,
In toil and battle I travel Rus on duty,
But should prefer to build a shrine or town,
To enjoy good books of wisdom and of beauty,
For higher happiness I have never known.
For me a book is still a wonder of wonders
And brings my soul more happiness and elation
Than when the glad salute of victory thunders.

Silvester

Permit me to present you this creation
Which from the cunning Greek I bought today,
And only twenty grivnas had to pay.

Parthenios

-(drawing nearer)

A gift it was! A dead loss! Lack-a-day!

Yaroslav

(kisses Silvester)

I thank you, Father! But it does not beseem us
Such literary treasures to prize so low,



So for the psalter let your monks redeem us,
And the full price upon the Greek bestow.

Parthenios

(delighted)

O wisest Prince! O ruler just and fair!
Magnificence of soul is a diamond rare!

Yaroslav

(continuing)

For half a score of villages, at the least,
Would scarce repay the wondrous gift of art.
Well now, I summon you all to a victory feast,
And there the golden goblets on high we'll raise
To sovereign Kiev, to Rus, dear to our heart,
To all the knights who battled in Sophia's name
And died with honour... Glory and peace their part!...

And we, whose lot it was to still survive,
Must serve with honest toil the while we live,
And all our strength to the fatherland must yield.
Immortal Rus! On the field where battle raged
A new and marvellous Kiev I shall build,
Majestic, splendid, the beauty of the age.
Among the trees, with golden domes a-gleam
Upon these hills shall it arise one day,
In massive walls, the golden gates I dream
To whole new epochs shall open the shining way!

Music. Rejoicing.

Curtain

T h e e n d

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NOTES

Page 6

* *Svyatopolk* (c. 980-1019), Prince of Turow and Pinsk. He killed his three brothers in the struggle for the throne of the Grand Prince of Kiev, and was called Svyatopolk the Damned.

* *Bolesław*, Polish Prince Bolesław the Brave (967-1025).

* *Bryachislav* (?-1044), Prince of Polotsk.

* *Mstislav* (?-1036), Prince of Tmutarakan and Chernigov.

* *Chud*, in old Kievan Rus chronicles, the name used for the Estonians and Finno-Ugrian tribes on the lands of Novgorod principality.

* *Cherven*, old town on the western border of Kiev Rus. With several other towns around it, it formed the Cherven Towns seized by Bolesław in 1018 and reconquered by Yaroslav and Mstislav in 1031.

* *Zyrian*, old name for Komi people in the Vichegda river area (west of the northern Urals).

Page 13

* *Svichkogas*, lit. candle-snuffer.

Page 14

* *Lyubech*, old Kievan Rus town on the Dnieper River (now in Chernigov Region, Ukrainian SSR).

* *Alta*, tributary of the Trubizh River flowing into the Dnieper.

* *Listven*, village near the town of Chernigov.

Page 22

* *Vishgorod*, in the 11th-12th centuries, residence of Kiev princes on the Dnieper. Now district centre in Kiev Region.

Page 25

* *Baldur* (also Balder, Baldr), in Norse mythology, god of light, peace, virtue and wisdom, son of Odin.

Page 27

* *Verdandi*, in Norse mythology, goddess personifying the present; one of the three Norns, goddesses of fate.

Page 31

- * *"The Golden Chain"*, old Russian collection of religious and moral precepts of an instructional kind.
- * *Cosmos Indicopleustes*, Greek traveller and geographer of the 6th century.
- * *Diogenes Akrites*, hero of a Byzantine epic of that name, from the 10th century.
- * *"The Creation" by a Bulgarian priest*, the book written by the Bulgarian high priest Johann of the 10th century, consisting of six treatises (in accordance with the six days of the creation of the world) which explain the Christian teaching of the formation of the Universe.

Page 32

- * *Berestove*, village to the south of Kiev, former site of the prince's out-of-town residence.
- * *Ilarion*, first metropolitan in Kiev Rus, author of the book *Of Law and Blessing* written between 1037 and 1050 with high skill and patriotic feeling and glorifying Rus and Prince Vladimir, who introduced Christianity and united the lands of Rus in one mighty state.
- * *Ros*, tributary of the Dnieper River.
- * *Yuryev*, old Russian name of Tartu in the Estonian SSR.

Page 35

- * *...your husband's boots to unloose*, according to old custom the wife took off her husband's boots on their wedding night.

Page 39

- * *Tsarigrad*, old Kievan Rus name for Constantinople.

Page 43

- * *Johann*, Johannes Damascenus (John of Damascus), of the 8th century, author of numerous church hymns.

Page 44

- * *zapaska*, apron (or aprons) worn by women over long shirts and which served in place of skirts.

Page 49

- * *grivna*, old Russian monetary unit.

Page 68

- * *Russian Justice — Russkaya Pravda*, a code of laws introduced by Yaroslav the Wise with the aim of protecting the feudal lords' property and limiting the property and personal rights of the various

categories of feudal dependents. Here and elsewhere in this work, the word "Russian" is used in reference to Kievan Rus.

Page 80

* *Tmutarakan*, old Kievan Rus principality on Taman peninsula on the Black Sea (10th-12th centuries).

Page 82

* *Lel*, old Slavonic god of love.

Page 100

* *Borysthenes*, ancient Greek name of the Dnieper.

Page 111

* *Chernigov*, old Russian town on the Desna River, capital of the Chernigov principality in 1024-1036 and 1054-1239. Now centre of Chernigov Region.

Page 123

* *Sitoml*, small river near Kiev.

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