

### **CHARACTERS OF *THE PROPOSAL* BY ANTON CHEKHOV**

The main character, Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov, is a heavy-set man in his mid-thirties, prone to anxiety, stubbornness, and hypochondria. These flaws are further amplified because he becomes a nervous wreck when he tries to propose marriage.

Stepan Stephanovitch Chubukov owns land next to Ivan. A man in his early seventies, he gladly grants permission to Ivan, but soon calls off the engagement once an argument over property ensues. His chief concerns are maintaining his wealth and keeping his daughter happy.

Natalya Stepanovna is the female lead in this three person play. She can be jovial and welcoming, yet stubborn, proud and possessive, just like her male counterparts.

## **SUMMARY OF *THE PROPOSAL* BY ANTON CHEKHOV**

The Play, "A Marriage Proposal", shows how consideration of property and even our pride in property override other feelings and emotions like those generally associated with love and marriage. Even marriage is prompted by economic considerations, not by emotions.

Stepan Stepanovitch Tschubukov and Ivan Vassiliyitch Lomov were neighbours in a village. Natalia Stepanovna was the daughter of Tschubukov. Lomov a man of thirty five wanted to marry. He thought Natalia was good at farm work and she was not bad looking. So he came to the house of Tschubukov one evening to propose to Natalia. Naturally he was in his best clothes befitting the occasion of a marriage proposal. Tschubukov received him cordially in his reception room. Like every young man going to make a marriage proposal Lomov was also excited and nervous. After some nervous stammering, he told Tschubokov that he wanted Natalia's hand in marriage. Tschubokov was very excited and happy at the proposal. He went out and sent Natalia into the room to meet the suitor. Natalia was not told of the purpose of Lomov. Natalia and Lomov began to talk.

Lomov was more nervous as he was facing the bride. He made a strong preface before coming to the proposal. He told Natalia about how the Lomovs and the Tschubukovs had been good neighbours on good terms for many years. In this context, he mentioned that his meadow touched the birch woods of Tschubukov. Natalia was surprised to hear that the meadows belonged to Lomov. She claimed that the plot of land belonged to them, the Tschubukovs. A bitter quarrel ensued. Lomov claimed it belonged to him and Natalia too claimed it to be theirs. Lomov forgot his original purpose. They called each other names, even though a little while ago they were full of good neighbourly feelings. Tschubukov came in and heard their quarrel. He too claimed that the meadow belonged to him. The quarrel grew even bitterer. They called each other names and began to expose the scandals of each others' families. Lomov had a weak heart. He used to have palpitation in the heart. He was

## Appendix 1

excited and he fainted. He rose and left the house. At this juncture, Tschubukov remarked that such a fool had dared to come seeking the hand of Natalia.

The moment she heard that he had come to propose to her, Natalia changed her tone. She asked her father to bring back Lomov. Her self interest overruled all other considerations like her loyalty to her family. Lomov came back. Natalia was all politeness. She even conceded that the meadow belonged to Lomov. After all, if they were married, the meadow would come to be hers only. Lomov informed that he would go hunting after the harvest. He was sorry that his dog Ugadi limped and he began to praise his dog. He thought that a hundred and twenty five roubles that he had paid for it was very cheap for such a good dog. Natalia, however, thought that it was a very high price because her father had paid only eighty-five roubles for their dog Otkatai, which was a better dog than Ugadi.

Lomov disagreed and asserted that Otkatai had a lower jaw and Ugadi was a far better dog than Otkatai. Once again their pride in their dogs led to another quarrel. Tschubukov came in and joined the quarrel. Lomov once again got excited and he fainted. Tschubukov who knew the importance of getting his daughter married, at once joined the hands of Natalia and Lomov and declared that Natalia agreed to the match. Natalia too, declared that she was willing and Lomov declared that he too, was happy. Tschubukov shouted for champagne to celebrate the intended marriage.

**THE DATA TAKEN FROM SCRIPT OF *THE PROPOSAL***

**BY ANTON CHEKHOV**

1. NATALYA: *What non sense! The Meadows belong to us-not to you!* (Chekhov, 1914:501).
2. NATALYA: *... That's not at all nice. We have owned this property for nearly three hundreds years, and now all at once we hear that it doesn't belong to us. Ivan Vassilyitch, you will pardon me, but i can;t really believe my ears* (Chekhov, 1914:502).
3. NATALYA: *..... So far as I am concerned, the meadows are worth very little. In all they don't contain more than five acres, they are worth only a few hundred roubles, say three hundred* (Chekhov, 1914:502).
4. *are worth very little* (Chekhov, 1914:502).
5. NATALYA: *Why didn't you tell me that before?* (Chekhov, 1914:506).
6. NATALYA: *Proposal for me? [Falls into an armchair and groans] Bring him back! Bring him back!* (Chekhov, 1914:506).
7. NATALYA: *Pardon us, we were angry, Ivan Vassilyitch. I remember now- The Meadows really belong to you* (Chekhov, 1914:507).