

## **Stella Chester**

Adapted from the play by Leonid Andreyev  
Translated from Russian by Thomas Seltzer

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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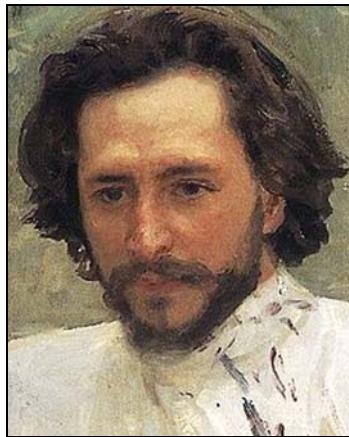
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**BIG DOG PUBLISHING  
P.O. Box 1401  
RAPID CITY, SD 57709**

## **Love of One's Neighbor**

**FARCE.** Adapted from the play by Leonid Andreyev. Tourists from all over the world have gathered at a popular mountain destination eager to witness a man fall from a rocky ledge. The man has been stranded for two days, but no one seems interested in rescuing him. Instead, the curious onlookers idle away the hours placing bets on when the man will fall and fighting over the best spots to view the event. In this circus-like setting, vendors hawk souvenirs and refreshments, a newspaper correspondent "interviews" the man, a Salvation Army band performs, and photographers ready their cameras for the perfect shot. The laughs never end in this ingenious, madcap play!

**Performance Time:** Approximately 45-60 minutes.



Leonid Andreyev (1871-1919)

## About the Story

Leonid Andreyev (1871-1919) was a Russian novelist, short story writer, and playwright who studied law and worked as a police and court reporter in Moscow. After Andreyev's first short story was published in 1898, Russian writer Maxim Gorky encouraged Andreyev to further pursue his writing career. Interested in psychology, Andreyev examined in depth the human psyche, which led him to create some of the most memorable characters in Russian literature. Some of Andreyev's most well-known works include his 1902 short story, "Thought," and his 1922 play, *He Who Gets Slapped*.

## **Characters**

**(9 M, 8 F, 25 flexible, opt. extras)**  
**(Flexible cast. Doubling possible.)**

**MAN:** Unknown man who has been stranded on a rock ledge for two days; male.

**POLICEMAN 1, 2:** Police officers who don't know how to rescue the Man; flexible.

**NELLIE:** Girl who is eagerly awaiting Man's fall; can be played by an adult dressed as a girl; female.

**LADY:** Nellie's mother who is worried that her husband will miss seeing the Man fall; female.

**BOY/GIRL:** wants to move a rock so that the Man doesn't hit it when he falls; can be played by an adult dressed as a child; flexible.

**Tourist 1, 2:** Place bets on when the Man will fall; flexible.

**Military Woman:** Aggressive, opinionated woman waiting to see Man fall so she can add him to her list of fallen men; tall, lanky, with a military appearance; female.

**Tourist 3:** Short, quiet, weak man; male.

**VENDOR:** Sells fake tortoise-shell combs to tourists; flexible.

**Tourist 4, 5:** Fight with each other for a good spot to see the Man fall; flexible.

**Photographer 1:** Wants to get a picture of the Man when he falls; flexible.

**Photographer 2:** Wants to get a picture of the Man falling; flexible.

**Little Lady:** Unknowingly sits on Photographer 1's camera; female.

**Fat Tourist:** Father who has brought his children to see the Man fall as part of their family vacation; male.

**Jimmie/Jennie:** Fat Tourist's son/daughter who hates family vacations; flexible.

**Mary:** Fat Tourist's daughter who keeps looking down and closing her eyes; wears glasses; female.

- ALECK:** Fat Tourist's son/daughter who likes to tattle on Mary; flexible.
- TENOR:** Member of a troop of singers; short, fat, and stupid-looking with a red beard; male.
- BARITONE:** Member of a troop of singers; skinny, humpbacked, and wears a jockey cap; male.
- BASS:** Member of a troop of singers who sings and plays the mandolin; looks like a bandit; male.
- VIOLIN GIRL:** Member of a troop of singers who plays the violin; female.
- TALL TOURIST:** Wants police to rescue Man and thinks the spectators are a bunch of scoundrels; has an upcurled mustache; male.
- CURIOS ONLOOKER 1:** Wants police to save the Man; flexible.
- CURIOS ONLOOKER 2:** Wants the government to save the Man; flexible.
- BARTENDER:** Tries to serve drinks to the large crowd of onlookers but is overwhelmed; flexible.
- CAFÉ MAN 1:** Lady's husband who is afraid Man will fall and the café will be closed; male.
- CAFÉ MAN 2:** Wants to drink to Man's health as a way of helping him; male.
- CORRESPONDENT:** Newspaper reporter who "interviews" Man; flexible.
- GROUPIE 1, 2:** Worships Correspondent and follows him around; flexible.
- PASTOR:** Wants Man to confess his sins before he falls; flexible.
- DRUM MAN/WOMAN:** Plays a drum in a Salvation Army band; wears a Salvation Army uniform; flexible.
- TRUMPET WOMAN:** Plays a piercingly shrill trumpet in a Salvation Army band; wears a Salvation Army uniform; female.
- ENGLISH LADY:** Rides a donkey; female.

**DONKEY:** An actor(s) in a donkey costume; non-speaking; flexible.

**SIR WILLIAM/LADY WILLEMINA:** Asks Man to fall and give the crowd what it wants; flexible.

**MAN/WOMAN IN A WHITE VEST:** Man's boss who is the owner of the hotel and café; flexible.

**MAN/WOMAN CARRYING A POLE:** Had once suffered from baldness but now has hair; flexible.

**EXTRAS (opt.):** As Tourists, Vendors, Peddlers, Onlookers, and Photographers, Children, etc.

**NOTE:** For flexible roles, change the script accordingly.

## Setting

A tourist destination in the mountains.

## Set

**A tourist destination in the mountains.** There is a backdrop of a mountain. A suspended “rock” ledge large enough for the Man to stand on projects out from the “mountain.” Short ladders, ropes, and sticks show that attempts have been made to access the rocky ledge to rescue the Man. Onstage is a small bar as well as two fake rocks large enough to sit on. There is a rope with short stakes to partition off an area under the rock ledge and a rock inside the partitioned area. Off to one side there is a backdrop of a café, optional.

## PROPS

Postcards, souvenirs, trinkets, for	Coat
Peddlers	Reporter's notebook
Tortoiseshell combs	Drum
Binoculars	Trumpet
Cameras	Mandolin (or toy guitar)
Coat	Violin
Glass of iced tea	Long pole with a huge
Small notebook	placard. On the placard is a
Bag or backpack, for Military	picture of a bald man with
Woman	"I was bald" printed
Handkerchief	underneath.
Peppermints	Serving tray and glasses
Medicine bottle	Camera battery
Gloves, for Military Woman	

## **SOUND EFFECTS**

Song for troop of singers (can be pre-recorded)

Sound of clinking glasses

Clatter of steins

German song

"YOU are SCOUNDRELS,  
WHO For your OWN Sordid personal eNds  
HAVE IMPIOUSLY eXploited  
the FINEST HUMAN SENTIMENT...  
LOVE OF ONE'S NEIGHBOR."

—TALL TOURIST

## **Love of One's Neighbor**

(AT RISE: A tourist destination in the mountains. A Man with an attitude of despair is standing on a tiny projection of a rock that rises almost sheer from the ground. Short ladders, ropes, and sticks show that attempts have been made to save him but without success. It seems that the unhappy Man has been in that desperate position a long time. A considerable Crowd has already gathered. The atmosphere is noisy and jolly. There are Venders of cold drinks. There is a small bar behind which the Bartender is busy serving customers. There are Peddlers selling picture postcards, souvenirs, and all sorts of trinkets. A Vendor is stubbornly trying to sell fake tortoiseshell combs to Tourists. Tourists from various countries including Germany, Russia, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom etc. are present with all their peculiar national traits of character, manner, and dress. Tourists pour in from all sides, attracted by the report that a catastrophe is impending. Nearly all carry binoculars and cameras. At the foot of the rock where the unknown Man is to fall, Policemen 1, 2 are chasing Nellie, Boy, and other Children away. Policeman 1, 2 partition off a space, drawing a rope around short stakes stuck in the ground.)

POLICEMAN 1: (To Boy.) Get away! The man'll fall on your head and then your mother and father will make a hullabaloo about it.

BOY: Will he fall there? (Points to partitioned area.)

POLICEMAN 1: Yes.

BOY: Suppose he drops farther?

POLICEMAN 2: (To Policeman 1.) The boy is right. He may get desperate and jump, land beyond the rope, and hit some people in the crowd. (Looks up at Man.) I would guess he weighs at least [200] pounds... [Or insert another number.]

POLICEMAN 1: (To Nellie.) Move on! Move on, you! (To Lady, indicating Nellie.) Is that your daughter, lady? Please take her away! The young man will soon fall.

LADY: (*Surprised.*) Soon? Did you say he is going to fall *soon*?  
(*Panics.*) Oh, heavens! My husband's not here!

NELLIE: He's in the café, Mama.

LADY: (*Annoyed.*) Yes, of course. He's always in the café.  
(*Urgently.*) Go get him, Nellie! Tell him the Man will soon  
drop! Hurry! Hurry!

(*Nellie hurriedly exits. Tourists 1, 2 enter.*)

TOURIST 1: (*Shouts.*) Bartender! Two drinks over here!

(*Annoyed, Bartender shouts back something unintelligible.*)

TOURIST 2: What? No drinks?

(*Annoyed, Bartender shouts back something unintelligible.*)

TOURIST 1: What? (*To Tourist 2, annoyed.*) Say, that's a fine  
bar.

TOURIST 2: (*Hopefully.*) We'll have some in a moment.

TOURIST 1: (*Shouts.*) Bartender!

TOURIST 2: (*Shouts.*) Bartender!

(*Boy approaches spot where Man will fall.*)

POLICEMAN 1: (*Annoyed.*) Boy, you're here again?

BOY: (*Pointing to a large rock in the portioned area.*) I wanted to  
take the stone away.

POLICEMAN 1: What for?

BOY: So he won't get hurt so badly when he falls.

POLICEMAN 2: (*To Policeman 1.*) The boy is right. We ought  
to remove the stone. We ought to clear the place altogether.  
Isn't there any sawdust or sand about?

(*Tourists 1, 2 look at the Man through their binoculars during the  
following exchange.*)

TOURIST 1: (*Indicating Man.*) He's young.

TOURIST 2: How old?

TOURIST 1: Twenty-eight.

TOURIST 2: Twenty-six. Fright has made him look older.

TOURIST 1: How much are you going to bet?

TOURIST 2: Ten to a hundred. Put it down.

(*Tourist 1 writes it down in a notebook.*)

TOURIST 1: (*To Policeman 1.*) How did he get up there? Why don't they rescue him?

POLICEMAN 1: They tried, but they couldn't. Our ladders are too short.

TOURIST 2: Has he been here long?

POLICEMAN 1: Two days.

TOURIST 1: Aha! He'll fall tonight!

TOURIST 2: In two hours. A hundred to a hundred.

TOURIST 1: Write it down. (*To Man, shouts.*) How are you feeling?! (*Man says something.*) What?! I can't hear you!

MAN: (*Scarcely audible.*) Bad...very bad...

LADY: (*Panics.*) Oh, heavens! My husband isn't here!

(*Nellie runs on.*)

NELLIE: Papa said he'll get here in plenty of time. He's playing chess.

LADY: Oh, heavens! Nellie, tell him he must come! I insist!

(*Slight pause.*) But perhaps I had rather— (*To Policeman 2.*) Will he fall soon, Mr. Policeman? (*Policeman 2 shakes his head no.*) No? Nellie, you go. I'll stay here and save a place for Papa.

(*Military Woman and Tourist 3 argue over the same spot. Tourist 3 feebly tries to defend his rights, but Military Woman is resolute and aggressive.*)

TOURIST 3: (*To Military Woman, feebly.*) But, lady, this is my spot. I have been standing here for two hours.

MILITARY WOMAN: What do I care how long you have been standing here? I want this spot. Do you understand? It offers a good view, and that's just what I want. Do you understand?

TOURIST 3: (*Weakly.*) It's what I want, too.

MILITARY WOMAN: I beg your pardon...what do you know about these things, anyway?

TOURIST 3: What knowledge is required? A man will fall. That's all.

MILITARY WOMAN: (*Mimicking him.*) "A man will fall. That's all." Don't you have the goodness to tell me whether you have ever seen a man fall? (*Tourist 3 doesn't answer.*) No? (*Proudly.*) Well, I did. Not one...but three: two acrobats, one tightrope walker, and three astronauts.

TOURIST 3: That makes six.

MILITARY WOMAN: (*Mimicking him.*) "That makes six." (*Sarcastically.*) Why, you are a mathematical prodigy. And did you ever see a tiger tear a woman to pieces at a zoo right before your eyes, eh? (*Tourist 3 doesn't respond.*) What? Yes, exactly! Well, I did! (*Forcefully.*) Step aside!

(*Tourist 3 steps aside, shrugging his shoulders. Military Woman triumphantly takes possession of the prized spot. She sits down on the large rock, spreading out around her a bag, a handkerchief, peppermints, and a medicine bottle. She takes off her gloves, wipes her binoculars, and pleasantly glances around. Finally, she turns to the Lady, who is still waiting for her husband in the café.*)

MILITARY WOMAN: (*To Lady, amiably.*) You will tire yourself out, dear. (*Indicating rock.*) Why don't you sit down?

LADY: Oh, my. Don't talk about it. My legs are as stiff as that rock there. (*Points to rock.*)

MILITARY WOMAN: Men are so rude nowadays. They will never give their place to a woman. (*Gives Tourist 3 a look.*) Have you brought peppermints with you?

LADY: (*Alarmed.*) No. Why? Is it necessary?

MILITARY WOMAN: When you look up a long time, you are bound to get sick. Sure thing. Have you any smelling salts? (*Lady shakes her head no.*) No? Good gracious, how thoughtless! How will they bring you back to consciousness when he falls? Have you anybody to take care of you, seeing that you are so helpless?

LADY: (*Frightened.*) I will tell my husband. He is in the café.

MILITARY WOMAN: Your husband is a brute.

(*Policeman 1 bends down and picks up a coat that has been laid out under the rock in the portioned area.*)

POLICEMAN 1: (*To Crowd, holding up coat.*) Whose coat is this?  
Who threw this rag here?

BOY: It's mine. I spread my coat there so that he doesn't hurt himself so badly when he falls.

POLICEMAN 1: (*To Policeman 2.*) Take it away.

(*Policeman 2 takes the coat and exits. Armed with cameras, Tourists 4, 5 enter and vie for the same spot.*)

TOURIST 4: (*To Tourist 5, annoyed.*) I wanted this spot.

TOURIST 5: You wanted it, but I got it.

TOURIST 4: (*Whining.*) You just got here. I've had this place for two days.

TOURIST 5: Then why did you leave?

TOURIST 4: I wasn't going to starve myself to death.

VENDOR: (*To Tourists 4, 5, indicating his combs.*) Tortoiseshell...

TOURIST 5: (*To Tourist 4, savagely.*) Well?

VENDOR: (*Proudly.*) Genuine tortoiseshell...

TOURIST 4/5: (*To Vendor, shout.*) Buzz off!

*(Vendor frowns and tries to sell his combs to others in the crowd.)*

PHOTOGRAPHER 1: *(To Little Lady, annoyed.)* For heaven's sake, lady, you're sitting on my camera!

LITTLE LADY: Oh! Where is it?

PHOTOGRAPHER 1: Under you! Under you, lady!

LITTLE LADY: I am so tired. What a wretched camera you have. I thought I felt uncomfortable and I was wondering why. Now I know. I am sitting on your camera.

PHOTOGRAPHER 1: *(Losing patience.)* Lady!

LITTLE LADY: I thought it was a stone. I saw something lying there and I thought, "An odd-looking stone...I wonder why it's so black." So that's what it was! It was your camera!

PHOTOGRAPHER 1: *(Losing it.)* Lady, for heaven's sake!

LITTLE LADY: *(Moving about uncomfortably.)* Tell me, why is it so large? Cameras are small, but this one is so large. I swear, I never had the faintest suspicion it was a camera. Can you take my picture? I would so much like to have my picture taken with the mountains here for a background in this wonderful setting.

PHOTOGRAPHER 1: *(Exasperated.)* How can I take your picture if you are sitting on my camera?

*(Little Lady jumps up.)*

LITTLE LADY: Why didn't you tell me so? Does it take pictures?

*(Photographer 1 rolls his eyes and doesn't respond.)*

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**