



Character Sketch

Natalya:

The dramatist portrays Natalya more as a character who with Lomov helps to develop the middle and comic scenes of the play than as a heroine of this one-act play. The ‘love-sick’ cat, Natalya does not even know Lomov’s reason of arrival to her house in the very beginning of the play, rather engages herself in a quarrel with Lomov over Oxen Meadows and Guess versus Squeezer. She is a lonely and sharp-minded woman who is not willing to give one inch of their land to others. But when she gets the wind of Lomov’s proposal of marriage, she desperately wants him back. Even though she is broached as an argumentative and quarrelsome woman, she at once accepts Lomov’s proposal to spend her rest of the life with him.

Chubukov:

Chubukov is delineated as Natalya’s father in the one-act play “The Proposal”. He wants her daughter to get married as early as possible and that’s why he accepts Lomov’s proposal for marriage for her daughter, though he doesn’t like Lomov to a great extent. Natalya seems to be burden to her father and he desperately wants to get rid of her. The dramatist’s portrayal of Chubukov considering her daughter a liability reflects the social life and mindset of the people encompassing marriage as a means to mitigate the burden on the part of a girl’s father. In spite of all these, he acts as a gulf between Natalya and Lomov and wishes that they get married soon.

Lomov:

Lomov can be considered as the pivotal character in the one-act play “The Proposal” since the play revolves round the proposal offered by Lomov for Chubukov’s daughter, Natalya. Being a typical landowner, Lomov considers marriage as to maintain social status and relationships rather than an emotion involving personal feelings. He is desperately in search of a wife in his mature age, and that’s why he is even prepared to marry Natalya who quarrels with him on petty matters. Although Lomov suffers from somewhat hypochondria and insomnia yet he, not unlike that of Natalya, argues over some petty matters like small area of land, Oxen Meadows and hunting dogs.

DETAILED SUMMARY

The scene opens in Chubukov’s drawing room. Lomov enters and Chubukov rises to welcome him. Chubukov asks him as to how he may be getting on. Lomov thanks him. Chubukov also tells that he and his daughter get along somehow. He asks him why he is so formal in his get - up. Lomov tells that he has come to see him. Chubukov suspects that he has come to borrow money and decides not to give him any money. On making further enquiry Lomov tells that he has come to ask the hand of Natalya in marriage. Chubukov gets joy on hearing it as Natalya has reached the marriageable age. He is off his balance with joy, absolutely off his balance. Lomov asks him if Natalya will consent for this marriage. Chubukov tells that Natalya is to consent for this as she is in love with him and she is like a lovesick at. Lomov trembles all over just as if he had got an examination before him. He

makes up his mind that it is right time for him to marry. He thinks Natalya is an excellent housekeeper, not bad looking, educated. What more does he want? He is already 35 - a critical age. He should not delay his marriage and lead a quiet and regular life. He suffers from palpitations and gets easily upset. Whenever he sleeps, he feels a pull in his left side shoulder and head. Then he jumps, walks and lies down but as soon as he is to get off to sleep another pull comes.

Natalya comes and surprises to see him because her father tells her that a merchant has come for his goods. Lomov asks how she is. She is in her apron and negligé as she is shelling peas for drying. She offers smoke and matches. She tells that the weather is splendid but the previous day it was so wet that the workman didn't do anything all day. She had a whole field cut and now she is afraid her hay may not. Lomov is unable to ask if she will accept his proposal. He mentions Oxen Meadows that touch Chubukov's birchwoods. He also tells that between their families there is a good mutual respect and affection. Now over the Oxen Meadows they quarrel. Lomov tells that he means those Oxen Meadows which are waged between their birchwoods and Burnt Marsh. Now Lomov tells her that Oxen Meadows belong to him. He tells that his aunt's grandmother gave the free use of Oxen Meadows to the farmers of her father's grandfather, in return for which they were to make bricks for his aunt's grandmother. The farmers of her father's grandfather had the free use of Oxen Meadows for 40 years and had got into the habit of regarding the Oxen Meadows as their own land. Natalya tells that her elders reckoned that their land extended to Brunt Marsh - which means that Oxen Meadows were theirs. Now Lomov disputes it and tells that he has legal documents of the Oxen Meadows. She tells that the meadows aren't worth much to her. They only cost 5 dessiatins and are worth perhaps 300 roubles, but she can't stand unfairness. They continue the dispute. Lomov is told that he is a mean person. He tells that he will make her a present of the meadows. She tells she can make a present of them herself because they are hers. She lets him know that the previous year they lent him their threshing - machine, although on that account they had to put off their own threshing till November. He is impudent in her opinion. Then Lomov gets angry and asks her if he is a land grabber. Now the quarrel has reached to a heated point. She says that she will send her mowers or grasscutters out to the meadows and he says that he will give it to them in the neck. He asks her if it wasn't for this awful, excruciating palpitation, he would talk to her in a different way.

Now Chubukov enters the scene and asks them what the matter is and what they are shouting for. Both Natalya and Lomov ask his opinion about the Oxen Meadows. Chubukov tells them that they belong to him. Lomov tells Chubukov that he will have the matter taken to the court and then he will show him. Chubukov says that he is on the lookout for a chance to go to court and abuses him. Now Lomov also abuses his grandfather. Then the three use bad words. Chubukov tells that Lomov's have had lunacy in his family. His grandfather was a drunkard and his younger aunt eloped with an architect. Lomov too says that Chubukov's mother was hump - backed. Now Lomov is upset and wants water but father and daughter continue to say malicious words like double faced intriguer, backbiter, dishonest, mean, rascal, scarecrow, villain, blind hen and turnip - ghost. Now Lomov gets out of their house. Now Chubukov tells that Lomov came to make a proposal to her.

Natalya is saddened by hearing this and requests her father to recall Lomov. Chubukov becomes unhappy over this request made by Natalya. He thinks that he should shoot himself or hang himself. But he goes to Lomov's house and returns very soon. Lomov appears at their door. Now once more Natalya and Lomov talk and they get into quarrel once more about their dogs - Guess and Squeezer. Lomov tells that he has got his dog Guess from Minorova for 125 roubles which she thinks too high cost. He thinks that it is very cheap as his dog is a first-rate dog. She thinks her dog Squeezer whose cost is 85 roubles is heaps better than his dog, even better than Volchantsky's dog on points and pedigree. There is no getting at the pedigree of his dog at all. It is old and as ugly as a worn - out cab - horse. She says that his dog is half - dead already! Chubukov tells that Guess is purebred, firm on his feet, well - sprung ribs and all that. But it is old and short in muzzle. Lomov tells that their dog Squeezer is like any dog under every bush. She has paid 85 roubles for him but 25 roubles would be a handsome price to pay for him. It is overshot so a bad hunter. Its lower jaw is shorter than the

upper one. It is a thoroughbred dog, son of Harness and Chisel. He says that he wouldn't take 5 Squeezers for his Guess. Both try to prove that their dog is better than the other Natalya says that Squeezer is 100 times better than his silly Guess. Now Chubukov tells that his dog is the best dog in the district. Lomov comments that they think him either blind or a fool. This way their discord over their dogs continues.

Lomov is again upset. He says that Squeezer is 100 times worse than his Guess. Chubukov asks them to stop their discord. He also tells him to talk in a cool way. When Lomov says that on the Marusinsky hunt Guess ran neck - and - neck with the Count's dog, while Squeezer was left far behind. Chubukov replies that it was because that the Count's whipper - in hit Squeezer with a whip. Lomov says that other dogs run after a fox but Squeezer runs after a sheep. Hearing it Chubukov gets angry and asks Lomov to be quiet. Now both use bad words for each other like intriguer, pup, rat, milksop, fool and Lomov falls into an armchair and faints. Natalya thinks Lomov is dead and shouts for a doctor. Her father lifts a tumbler of water to Lomov's mouth but he doesn't drink. Chubukov once more becomes unhappy over being a father of a grown-up daughter. Meanwhile Lomov comes to his sense and Chubukov puts Lomov's hand into Natalya's hand to complete the proposal. The father gives his blessings and requests them to leave him in peace but once more Natalya asks Lomov to admit that Guess is worse than Squeezer. Again, there starts a quarrel over the dogs.

The theme of the Story

'The Proposal' is a one-act play. Actually, it is a farce written by Anton Chekhov in 1888-89. The play is about the tendency of wealthy families to seek matrimonial ties. The real purpose is to increase their estates and landed properties. Ivan Lomov was a wealthy neighbor of another wealthy farmer Stepan Chubukov. Lomov comes to seek the hand of Chubukov's twenty-five-year-old daughter, Natalya. Lomov, Chubukov and Natalya'-all three are quarrelsome people. They quarrel over petty or small issues. Each one of them has a claim over a particular piece of land. They also quarrel over their dogs. Amidst this quarrelling, they completely forget the real issue — the marriage proposal. But good sense prevails in the end. Economic good sense ensures that the proposal is made. Chubukov doesn't want to miss the opportunity. He puts his daughter's hand into Lomov's hands. He doesn't waste any time and blesses them. However, old habits die hard. The newly married couple starts their married life with a fresh quarrel.

REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

1. *Chubukov: (aside) He's come to borrow money. Shan't give him any (aloud) What is it, my beauty?*

Lomov : You see, Honoured Stepanitch... I beg pardon Stepan Honouritch ... I mean, I am awfully excited, as you will please notice... in short, you alone can help me, though don't deserve it, of course... and haven't any right to count on your assistance.

(a) Why does Chubukov suspect Lomov of coming to borrow money?

He came in a formal dress and sometimes borrowed money from him.

(b) Why is Lomov not able to answer properly?

He was hesitating to express his desire to marry his daughter if he thought in the negative.

(c) What purpose has he come for?

He has come for asking the hand of Chubukov's daughter Natalya.

(d) Which word in the passage means the same as 'very much'?

Awfully.

2. *Lomov: (greatly moved) Honoured Stepan Stepanovitch, do you think I may count on her consent?*

Chubukov: why, of course, my darling, and ... as if she won't consent! She's in love; egad, she's like a lovesick cat, and so on. Shan't be long!

(a) What does Lomov want to be assured of?

Natalya's consent

(b) Why does he want this assurance?

For marriage to Natalya

(c) Why is Chubukov sure of Natalya's consent?

She is in love/ a love sick cat

(d) Which word in the passage means the same as 'agree'?

consent

3. *"But, please, Stepan Stepanovitch, how can they be yours? Do be a reasonable man! My aunt's grandmother gave the Meadows for the temporary and free use of your grandfather's peasants. The peasants used the land for forty years and got accustomed to it as if it was their own, when it happened..."*

(a) Who is the speaker of the above lines?

Lomov.

(b) Why did his aunt's grandmother give the meadows?

In return for making bricks for her/ for temporary and free use

(c) Why did the peasants treat the land as their own?

Used it for forty years and got accustomed to it as their own

(d) What light do these lines throw on the speaker's character?

Logical/rational/polite/ any other relevant adjective

Q1. Justify the title 'The Proposal'.

The title of the play 'The Proposal' is very appropriate. A young man, Lomov wants to propose Natalya for marriage. He goes to her house for the same. Being confused, he doesn't propose at once. He beats about the bush. He speaks irrelevantly. As Natalya doesn't know that he has come to propose her, she thinks that he has come to claim oxen meadows as his own, she starts quarrelling. This results in one after another quarrel. After her father Chubukov reconciles; Natalya comes to know that he has come to propose her. Then at once she forgets the issue of fighting. Then the proposal is made and accepted. Finally, they get engaged.

Q2. The principle 'forgive and forget', helps a lot in maintaining cordial relations with our neighbors. Do you think Anton Chekov conveys this message in the play 'The Proposal' ?

Anton Chekov does convey the message that the principle of 'forgive and forget' helps a lot in - maintaining cordial relationship with one's neighbours. Initially, the neighbours in the play, Lomov, Natalya and Chubukov were fighting over petty issues. They were putting important issues behind them and wasting their time by arguing over small things. These arguments slowly developed into fights and they started hurling abuses at one another. This damaged their relationship with each other.

It was when Natalya came to know that Lomov had come to propose her that she left the topic of argument (Oxen Meadows) behind. She also asked for forgiveness from Lomov and requested him to come to the point. Hence it is mandatory to 'forgive and forget' if one wants to have cordial relationship with others.

Q3. Arguments and disputes seldom solve a problem'. 'Describe the dispute between Natalya and Lomov over the dogs and their superiority.

Value Points:

- Natalya and Lomov fought over superiority of their Dogs-Squeezer and Guess –
- Guess -lame, good hunter
- Squeezer -high pedigree, over shot, bad hunter silly argument should never come in the way of matrimony
- Tolerance, acceptance paves the way to good relationship.

Detailed

Natalya and Lomov fought over the superiority of their dogs-Squeezer and Guess. Lomov was pained to hear that despite many qualities, Guess had two major defects, i.e., the dog was old as well as short in the muzzle. Lomov was proud of his dog's pure breed, its well sprung ribs. It was also a

Answer:

good hunter. On the other hand, Natalya's high pedigree-squeezer was a bad hunter. She pointed out that her dog, Squeezer was better than Guess. She remarked that Guess was old, ugly and a worn-out cab horse. She also called Guess a lame dog. Then Lomov stated that his dog had become lame since its leg had been bitten by some other dog. Though Lomov had come there to propose Natalya as he wanted to marry her, they involved themselves in silly arguments— that also over petty issues. Their main purpose was sidelined in the dispute. But such silly argument should never come in the way of matrimony. Rather it is the attribute of tolerance and acceptance that paves the way to good relationship.

Q4. Neighbours must have a cordial relationship which Lomov and Natalya do not have. Describe the first fight between them.

Value Points:

- Lomov and Natalya are next-door neighbours.
- Moreover, the former came to Natalya to propose to her.
- The very first meeting had in itself seeds of things to be expected in their married life.
- In spite of being very rich landlords they quarrel over a very tiny piece of land Called, "Oxen Meadows"
- Lomov said that they were given to the peasants of Natalya's great grandfather in return for making bricks. So, it happened to be considered to be Natalya's property.
- Natalya does not buy the explanation. Instead offers to make a present of it to Lomov who in turn rejects the suggestion.
- The quarrel continues endlessly.
- The would-be couple were very materialistic. Their mask of hypocrisy fell off sooner than expected.
- They did not have qualities which go to make a successful marriage: tolerance, compassion and consideration for the other person's feelings.

Detailed Answer:

Lomov and Natalya were next-door neighbours. One day, Lomov came to Natalya to propose her. Natalya, who didn't know that he had come to propose her, thought that he had come to claim Oxen Meadows as his own. When Chubukov, Natalya's father, interfered with them and also pleaded that the Oxen Meadows were the properties of Chubukov, the fight aggravated. For a few moments, Lomov's real purpose was overshadowed by that issue and he continued the bias that meadows belonged to his aunt's grandmother who gave them to the peasants of Chubukov's grandfather on the condition that they would prepare bricks for her. So how it would be considered as Natalya's property.

Though both Lomov and Chubukov, Natalya's father, were very rich landlords, they quarreled over a tiny piece of land, called, 'Oxen Meadows'. But that was not the end of quarrel.

Natalya didn't agree with Lomov's explanation. Instead, she offered to make a present of it to Lomov who, in turn, rejected the suggestion. And the quarrel continued endlessly. Such first meeting of Lomov and Natalya had in itself seeds of things (quarrels over petty issues) to be expected in their married life.

Q5. What are the main points of pleading between Chubukov and Lomov over Oxen Meadows?

On hearing the uproar between Natalya and Lomov, Chubukov appears at the scene. Immediately Natalya asks her father to let Lomov know about the ownership of Oxen Meadows. Chubukov too pleaded that these were the properties of Chubukov's. But Lomov denied their ownership. He

pointed out that it was his aunt's grandmother who gave the meadows to the peasants of Chubukov's grandfather on the condition that they would prepare bricks for his aunt.

Q6. On what issues did Lomov and Natalya quarrel? What does their quarrel reveal about them?

There are two controversies between Natalya and Lomov. First is about the Oxen Meadows and the other is about the dogs namely Guess and Squeezer.

Lomov states that his dog has become lame since its leg has been bitten by some other dog. Natalya points out that her dog Squeezer is better than Guess. She says that Guess is old, ugly and a worn-out cab horse.

Q7. How did Chubukov react when Lomov asked for the hand of his daughter?

Chubukov was overjoyed to know that Lomov wanted to propose to his daughter Natalya. He was highly excited and extremely glad. Chubukov embraced and kissed him. He said that he had been hoping for it for a long time.

Q8. How did the angry Natalya react when she learnt that Lomov had come to propose to her?

When Natalya learnt that Lomov had come to propose to her she got angry with her father. He regretted for not informing her about the proposal. She started wailing and asked her father to bring Lomov back. Finding Lomov very rich, she didn't want to miss the opportunity of marrying him. She was eager to patch up with him.