

The Family

based on a story by Anton Chekhov

Marsha's parents were poor. They worked on a small farm near a village. Still, they managed to send Marsha to a fine school in Moscow.

After Marsha finished school, she began to look for work. One week later, she found a job. She worked for a family named Kushkin. The Kushkins were very rich. They had a cook and maids. They had many servants.

Marsha's job was to teach the children of the family. In return, she lived at the house and received some pay. Marsha did her job very well. Before long, all the children loved Marsha. She was the best teacher the family ever had.

One afternoon, Marsha went out for a walk. When she returned, a servant met her at the door. He said, "Mr. and Mrs. Kushkin are having a fight. I have never seen Mrs. Kushkin so angry. She has been yelling and screaming for almost an hour."

Marsha knew that Mrs. Kushkin had a very bad temper. Marsha thought to herself, "I will stay out of her way today."

In the hall, Marsha saw Lisa, who was one of the maids. Lisa had tears in her eyes. Then Mr. Kushkin came running down the stairs. He was a little man who had almost no hair. He was red in the face. He was shaking all over. He rushed past Marsha. He did not even see her.

Mr. Kushkin was very upset. He was saying, "Oh, this is awful. Just awful! I can't believe what she's doing. It doesn't make any sense!"

Marsha went up the stairs and stepped into her room. What she saw shocked and amazed her. Mrs. Kushkin was in her room! She was standing in front of Marsha's dresser. The drawers of the dresser were open.

Mrs. Kushkin was looking through Marsha's things! Mrs. Kushkin was *searching* through her things!

Mrs. Kushkin was surprised. "Oh," she said. "I thought you were out taking a walk. I didn't expect you to come back so soon. I seem to have knocked over some of your things. Sorry for the accident." Then she marched out of the room.

Marsha did not know what to think. What was Mrs. Kushkin doing in her room? On top of the dresser was a small wooden box. In it Marsha kept a few coins and some stamps. The box had been opened! The cover was off.

Marsha looked around. She could tell that Mrs. Kushkin had searched the whole room. Things on the table had been moved. The bookshelves, the closet, the bed—they had all been searched. But why? What was going on? What had happened?

Marsha remembered that Lisa had tears in her eyes. She thought about Mr. Kushkin rushing down the stairs. Did those things have anything to do with this search? Marsha did not know. She sank into a chair. She wondered about it all.

A few minutes later, Lisa entered the room. Marsha jumped up. "Lisa," she said. "Mrs. Kushkin has been searching my room. Do you know why?"

Lisa answered, "Mrs. Kushkin has lost one of her necklaces. It is worth two thousand rubles."

"Yes," said Marsha. "But why did she look in my room? She could not have lost it here."

"Don't you see?" said Lisa. "She thinks that one of us stole it."

"But . . . but why search here?" continued Marsha. She still did not understand.

"Mrs. Kushkin is certain that somebody stole the necklace. It's **ridiculous**. The idea! But she is searching for it everywhere."

Marsha could not believe what she heard. She was so angry she began to shake.

Lisa said, "But there's no need for you to worry, Miss. She didn't find anything here. You didn't take the necklace, so you have nothing to be afraid of."

"But . . . but this is terrible, Lisa. It's wrong! It's wrong! How dare she think I stole her necklace! What right has she to look through my things!"

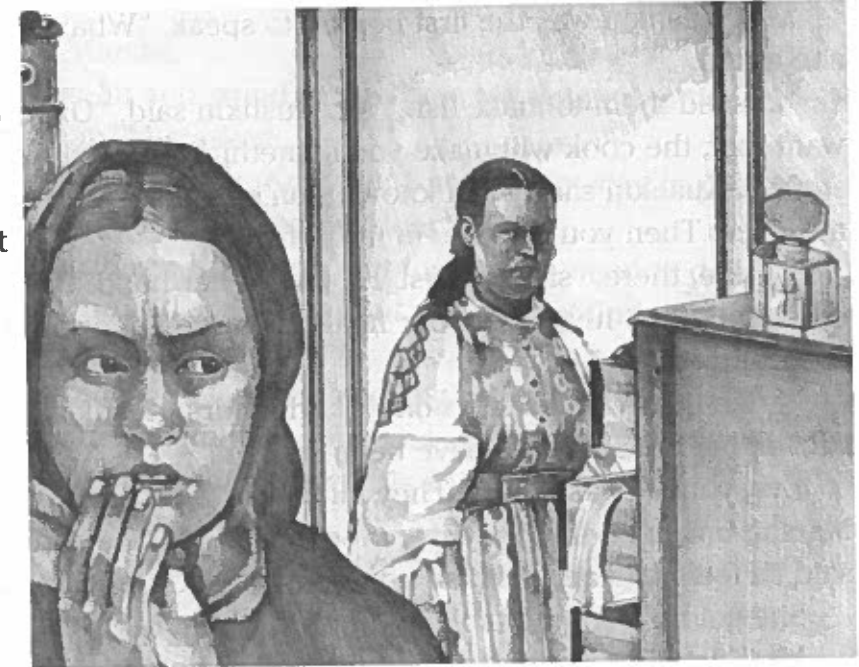
"You are living among strangers," said Lisa. She sighed. "You are a teacher. You are a young lady. Still they treat you this way. It's not like living at home with your mama and papa."

After Lisa left, Marsha was close to tears. Never before had she suffered such an insult. Imagine. They thought she might steal a necklace. They thought she might be a thief!

Suddenly, Marsha became frightened. She began to think about horrible things. They might have her arrested. They might throw her in jail. Who would be able to help her? Who would come to her side? Her parents lived far away. They could not travel to Moscow. She was alone in a big city, without family, without friends.

There was a knock on the door. "Dinner is ready," said a servant. Marsha wondered whether or not to go down. She did not want to eat with the family. But if she stayed in her room, they might think she was guilty.

Marsha went into the dining room. Dinner had already begun. Mr. Kushkin sat at one end of the table. Mrs. Kushkin sat at the other. At the sides of the table sat the children and some guests. Two servants brought out the food. Everyone knew that Mrs. Kushkin was very angry. No one said a word.



Mrs. Kushkin was the first person to speak. "What is the main course?" she asked.

"I asked them to make fish," Mr. Kushkin said. "Of course if you don't want that, the cook will make you something else. I thought that fish . . ."

Mrs. Kushkin said, "You know I don't like fish! First someone steals my necklace. Then you have them make fish!"

"There, there," said a guest. He patted her hand. "Don't be upset. Don't think about the necklace. Your health is more important than the two thousand rubles."

"I don't care about the money!" cried Mrs. Kushkin. "But I won't have a thief in my house! And I have been so kind!"

Everyone felt ashamed. They all looked down at their plates. But Marsha imagined that they were looking at her. She suddenly got up. She said, "I feel ill. I cannot finish my food. I am going upstairs."

She got up from the table and quickly went out.

Mr. Kushkin turned to his wife. "Really," he said. "There was no reason to search her room. She is not a thief."

"I do not say that she took the necklace," Mrs. Kushkin replied. "Still, you never can tell."

"But we trust her with our children," Mr. Kushkin went on. "And you know that they love her."

"I only know that my necklace is gone!" said Mrs. Kushkin. "I am going to find it! Now eat your fish, and mind your own business!"

Upstairs, Marsha was lying on the bed. She was not frightened. She was not ashamed. But she was very angry. She was thinking, "I wish that I could buy an **expensive** necklace. I would throw it in Mrs. Kushkin's face."

But that was just a dream. There was only one thing she could do. She must go away from here. She must go away quickly. She did not want to give up her job, but she could not work where people did not respect her. Marsha jumped up from the bed. She began to pack her things.

"May I come in?" asked Mr. Kushkin. He had come to the door. He spoke in a soft, **gentle** voice. "May I come in?"

"Come in," said Marsha.

Mr. Kushkin came in and stood at the door. He pointed to the suitcase. "What does this mean?" he asked.

"I am leaving. I am sorry, Mr. Kushkin. But I cannot stay in your house any longer. This search has insulted me deeply."

"I understand," said Mr. Kushkin. "But there is no need to do this. My wife searched your room. That is true. But she did not find anything. Don't let this bother you so much."

Marsha said nothing. She went on packing.

Mr. Kushkin said, "You are hurt, of course. But you know my wife. She has a terrible temper. Please don't take this so badly."

Still Marsha said nothing.

"Well, then," continued Mr. Kushkin. "I apologize to you. I am very sorry. I apologize."

Marsha didn't answer.

"That isn't enough for you? Then I apologize for my wife. I apologize for us both."

Marsha said, "I know that you are not to blame. It is not your fault. There is no need for you to worry about this."

"Of course," he said. "But, still . . . don't go away. Please stay."

Marsha shook her head and continued to pack.



Mr. Kushkin walked slowly to the window. He stared into the street. Then he said, "It is all my fault. If you leave, I'll never forgive myself. I beg you to stay!"

Marsha did not answer.

"I took my wife's necklace!" Mr. Kushkin said suddenly. "I took the necklace! Are you satisfied now?" He paused. Then he said, "Please. Don't say a word to anyone."

Marsha was **stunned**. She stared at Mr. Kushkin.

He was silent for a moment. Then he said, "She controls the money. She gives me very little. And I have bills to pay."

Just then, they heard Mrs. Kushkin's voice calling from below.

"Nicholas! Nicholas! I need your help. Come here at once! There is one more place that I want to search."

Mr. Kushkin went downstairs. Half an hour later, Marsha was on her way.



LOOKING FOR FACTS IN THE STORY.
How well can you find facts in a story? Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

1. Marsha worked for the Kushkins as a
 a. cook.
 b. maid.
 c. teacher.
2. The lost necklace was worth
 a. two thousand rubles.
 b. three thousand rubles.
 c. five thousand rubles.
3. Mrs. Kushkin said that she hated
 a. meat.
 b. fish.
 c. vegetables.
4. Who took the necklace?
 a. Lisa
 b. Marsha
 c. Mr. Kushkin

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

EXAMINING VOCABULARY WORDS.
Here are four vocabulary questions. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer. The vocabulary words are printed in **boldface** in the story. You may look back at the words before you answer the questions.

1. It was ridiculous to think someone took her necklace. The word *ridiculous* means
 a. foolish.
 b. interesting.
 c. good.
2. Her necklace was expensive. Something that is *expensive*
 a. is new.
 b. costs a lot.
 c. costs very little.
3. He spoke to her in a soft, gentle voice. The word *gentle* means
 a. kind.
 b. angry.
 c. loud.
4. When he said he took the necklace, Marsha was stunned. The word *stunned* means
 a. very pleased.
 b. very sorry.
 c. very surprised.

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

