

TODAY IN 1864

by

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A free adaptation of Nikolai Timofeev, *Zapiski sledovatel'ia*

[Notes of an Investigator; first published 1871]

DRAFT ONLY

CAST

Main characters

IVAN GEMFRISKY - A BBC radio presenter, nearing retirement

MARFA KARNOVA - A BBC radio presenter; in her mid-40s

TIMOFEY ('TIM') TIMOFEEV - celebrity detective; 26 years old

MARIANNA BODRESOVA - a former serf, under arrest for attempted suicide; 26 years old

Incidental characters

CONTINUITY ANNOUNCER

MR MEDVEDEV - A bear trainer

GARY WITH THE SPORT - BBC Sports Correspondent

COUNT ALEXEY VRONSKY - Champion steeplechase jockey

LIZA DUSETOVNA - BBC security correspondent

JUDGE

CHILD - The daughter of Marianna Bodresova; 5 years old

BISHOP

VLADIMIR - step-father of Marianna Bodresova

MASHA - A former serf on the Grondevsky estate

DOMINIK KASHIANSKY - BBC Home and Legal Correspondent

AGATA KROLEVA - A maid of Mrs VENSKY

MRS VENSKY - The wife of a landowner

NIKOLAI CHERNYSHEVSKY - Polemicist; Arch-rival of Fyodor Dostoevsky

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY - Author of *Notes from Underground*

PROFESSOR PAFNUTY CHEBYSHEV - Number theory expert

TROSHKA - Double-murderer

Doubling:

Dusetovna / Child / Kroleva

Announcer / Vronsky / Vladimir / Chernyshevsky

Bodresova / Masha / Mrs Vensky

Mr Medvedev / Gary with the Sport / Dostoevsky / Troshka

Judge / Bishop / Kashiansky / Chebyshev

All police / crowds / prisoners etc to be played by members of the cast.

SCENE 1. INT. BBC STUDIO

IT'S 1864 IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE. IN THE
WORLD OF THIS DRAMA THE TODAY
PROGRAMME IS BROADCASTING THEN AS IT
WOULD TODAY, WITH ONLY VERY MINOR
TECHNICAL ADJUSTMENTS.

ANNOUNCER:

East Siberian Sea: wind south-easterly, 2-3; ice fields, semi-permanent; Chukhchi Sea: wind easterly; fast ice; extreme fog; very poor; Bering Straits, hummocked ice; variable; Sea of Okhotsk: easterly 4-5; slush; ice floes in parts; visibility: moderate; Caspian Sea; southerly 2-3; good; Lake Baikal, ice; fog; occasional tornados; Black Sea: northerly, smooth; fair; very good. And now, tweet of the day.

A CROAKING SOUND.

And that was the Siberian grouse, the only bird that is endemic to our Great Empire of all the Russias.

THE PIPS SOUND.

SCENE 2. INT. BBC STUDIO

GEMFRISKY:

(CLEARS THROAT). It's 6 AM St Peterburg Solar Time on Monday 21 November 1864, Julian calendar. You're listening to the Today Programme with Ivan Gemfrisky and Marfa Karnova, who's reporting live from the radio troika in a location near Moscow.

ANNOUNCER:

The headlines this morning. Our Great Tsar-Liberator Alexander II continues to implement his reform programme. Last night, at exactly one minute to midnight, the Tsar signed the Court Statutes decree, which brings in the most sweeping changes in our judicial system ever to be seen, rivalled only in its scale and consequence by the Emancipation Bill of three years ago when 23-million of our fellow countrymen were liberated from serfdom. And as we'll see in today's special programme on crime in modern Russia, one of the main changes is that trials are now open to the public. In foreign news, Abraham Lincoln has been re-elected President of the United States. The Civil War continues. Also in today's programme we'll bring you a report from Liza Dusetova on the state of Russia's prisons, news from our home affairs correspondent Dominik Kashiansky, and an interview with best-selling crime novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky. Weather: the outlook for today is for more snow. Racing tips: The Happy Nihilist, Not as Superfluous as I Look, and Madame Frou-Frou in the 4.20 Steeplechase Championship at the Moscow Hippodrome.

SCENE 3. INT. BBC STUDIO

GEMFRISKY:

Good morning, and as sweeping reforms to our justice system began last night, our focus today is on the state of crime - and punishment - in our great Empire. Our guest editor is none other than the young man who best represents the new system in the public eye: the man who in recent months single-handedly captured the St Petersburg Strangler and brought down the Moscow curare-smuggling ring - Timofey Timofeev, celebrity police detective! Mr Timofeev's here with me while my

colleague Marfa Karnova is in the radio troika, reporting live from the sensational Marianna Bodresova trial that has gripped the Empire all the way from the foothills of the Urals to outer Alaska. Marfa?

KARNOVA: Good morning Ivan. Yes, I'm here as we await the outcome of the -

GEMFRISKY: Ah, Marfa, I think it's best if I say a few words to Mr Timofeev first.

KARNOVA: But you just -

GEMFRISKY: Mr Timofeev?

TIMOFEEV: (SIGHS) First, bruv, I ain't no fed ...

GEMFRISKY: Pardon me?

TIMOFEEV: I'm a JI. Judicial Investigator. New stylee. Not some plod from the 1840s.

GEMFRISKY: Well, you're certainly one of the new breed of heroes of the Empire who are busy keeping crime off our streets and criminals behind bars! And, if I may say so, an incredibly youthful hero at that – just how old are you, Mr Timofeev?

TIMOFEEV: And that's relevant - how?

GEMFRISKY: I'm the one asking the questions here, Mr Timofeev - we're not in a police cell now!

TIMOFEEV: Preach.

KARNOVA: Ivan, perhaps I could -

GEMFRISKY: Preach? No, no, that comes later, in Thought for the Day. Now, Mr Timofeev, what can you tell us about Miss Bodresova? I gather she's quite the beauty! En fleek, as I suppose you'd say -

TIMOFEEV: En fleek? Man, get with the times -

GEMFRISKY: But why arrest this helpless young woman? This single mother?

TIMOFEEV: So attempted suicide is a crime. It's cut and dried.

GEMFRISKY: Yes, but, what do you want to achieve, Mr Timofeev?

TIMOFEEV: Achieve? Progress, man, progress. That's what the new law is all about, capeesh? The law helps us go forward, build a better future, fix the stuff your generation has messed up so -

GEMFRISKY: But, really, what's to understand? Women are weak, and criminals are born bad. It's just a fact of life, like bribes! And how are you going to understand? As far as I'm aware, she hasn't said a word. Not a dicky. Not even to her young daughter. Silent, day after day after-

TIMOFEEV: Dude, we've got the latest scientific methods! You ever heard of the face-off? Forensic daguerreotypes? Trials in

open court? It's the new way, man. She'll speak, and then

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GEMFRISKY: And perhaps it's no coincidence that the Bodresova trial marks your hundredth arrest in as many days! I'm sure the Tsar will give you a medal if you secure a conviction, bringing you fame and a small fortune, no doubt - but if you fail ...

TIMOFEEV: Yeah ... Forgot what you were saying, granddad?

GEMFRISKY: Well, perhaps you won't turn out to be the hotshot investigator after all!

TIMOFEEV: Tss, chill! I'll, like, literally get to the bottom of it.

GEMFRISKY: Ah, what it is to be in the first flush of youth! We'll return to our 26-year-old Judicial Investigator - just fancy that! - in a moment. But now, back to my colleague Marfa Karnovna. Marfa? Marfa? Are you there?

SCENE 4. INT. THE RADIO TROIKA

KARNOVA: (OFF) Women are weak? In that case I don't know why he's sitting there in the heated studio day in day out while I'm freezing my -

GEMFRISKY: Hello, Marfa, you're live.

KARNOVA: Oh, yes, Ivan, I'm here. It's 7.20 AM Moscow Solar Time -

GEMFRISKY: That's 6.20 by St Petersburg Solar, Marfa -

KARNOVA: (OFF) Well, who cares what it's - ? If we want to be all picky, it's 4.20 in the afternoon in Vladivostok - what? Alright, alright. (RESUMES) Marianna Bodresova still refuses to speak a word. But we've heard today from Mr Medvedev, a bear trainer, whose testimony has caused an uproar in the court this morning. Mr Medvedev, can you repeat what you said?

MEDVEDEV: Well, it must have been about fifteen years ago now. Well before the Emancipation. The lads and I are doing the rounds of the villages with the bears, you know, getting them to perform a bit in exchange for a kopeck or two, when we get wind about old man Grondevsky -

KARNOVA: And Grondevsky is?

MEDVEDEV: Miss Bodresova's father. Cresus, we called him, he were that rich. So we get wind that he's throwing one of his special parties – you know. For all the bachelors. Powerful men. Businessmen, and the like. Princes, even.

KARNOVA: Allegedly.

MEDVEDEV: And we're walking towards the house with the bears, and you can hear the music and screams going on inside, when all of a sudden they tip out onto the veranda. So drunk they can barely stand. They're screaming with laughter ... and there's a little girl with them -

KARNOVA: A little girl?

MEDVEDEV: It was Marianna Bodresova. Little Marianna. So we have a bit of to and fro with them, and then Grondevsky - well, he shoves Marianna straight into the path of one of the bears -

KARNOVA: So Miss Bodresova suffered a terrible trauma - oh! Wait a moment! There's some sort of commotion going on outside - by the courtroom - wait - I can see that a carriage has just drawn up outside with what looks like - a - a body? - I'm going to - Mr Medvedev, come with me!

SCENE 5. EXT. RADIO CAR, ON THE STREET
NEAR COURTROOM

THE RADIO TROIKA DOOR OPENS; WE HEAR
KARNOVA RUNNING, OUT OF BREATH.

KARNOVA: Hello, officer! Officer! It's Marfa Karnova from the BBC! A quick word? Our listeners to the Today Programme would like to know -

POLICE OFFICER: Hey! Madam! You're scaring the horses! Stop! Stop waving that microphone around in their - watch out! Watch out! The coffin!

HORSES REAR AND WHINNY; WOOD
BREAKING; SCUFFLES; SCREAMS.

MEDVEDEV: Oh! Oh my God! God! It's him! It's Grondevsky!

KARNOVA: But ... I thought you said he died ten years ago?! This is a young man - he can't be over forty -

MEDVEDEV: I don't - I don't understand! It's the very spit of old man Grondevsky - ten years ago... the devil himself... he's returned!

CROWD: (CHANTING; THRILLED) The devil! The devil has returned! The dead walk among us!

KARNOVA: What - what ... officer, where did you find this man?

POLICE OFFICER: No comment! Move along there! Step away from the cart! Nothing to see here! Move along!

KARNOVA: We'll have more on that later. The forensic daguerrotypist has just arrived with his portable darkroom and he'll be - yes - he'll be fixing the dead man's image using the tried and trusted wet collodion process. We'll return to this breaking story throughout the programme. And now, back to the studio. Ivan?