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HODEL, PERCHICK

the barn. (SHPRINTZE and BIELKE exit into the barn. To HODEL) Call me when Papa gets up. (GOLDE exits. HODEL pumps a bucket of water.)

HODEL

That was a very interesting lesson, Perchik.

PERCHIK

Do you think so?

HODEL

Although I don't know if the rabbi would agree with your interpretation. *strange ideas.*

PERCHIK

~~And neither, I suppose, would the rabbi's son.~~

HODEL

~~My little sisters have big tongues.~~

PERCHIK

~~And what do you know about him, except that he is the rabbi's son? Would you be interested in him if he were the shoemaker's son, or the tinsmith's son?~~

HODEL

~~At least I know this, he does not have any strange ideas about turning the world upside down.~~

PERCHIK

Certainly. Any new idea would be strange to you. Remember, the Lord said, "Let there be light."

HODEL

Yes, but He was not talking to you personally. Good day. (Starts off.)

PERCHIK

You have spirit. Even a little intelligence, perhaps.

HODEL

Thank you.

PERCHIK

But what good is your brain? Without curiosity it is a rusty tool. Good day, Hodel.

HODEL

We have an old custom here. A boy acts respectfully to a girl. But, of course, that is too traditional for an advanced thinker like you.

PERCHIK

Our traditions! Nothing must change! Everything is perfect exactly the way it is!

HODEL

We like our ways.

PERCHIK

Our ways are changing all over but here. Here men and women must keep apart. Men study. Women in the kitchen. Boys and girls must not touch, should not even look at each other.

HODEL

I am looking at you!

PERCHIK

You are very brave! Do you know that in the city boys and girls can be affectionate without permission of a matchmaker? They hold hands together, they even dance together — new dances — like this. *(He seizes her and starts dancing, humming.)* I learned it in Kiev. Do you like it?

HODEL

(Startled)

It's very nice.

PERCHIK

(Stops dancing.)

There. We've just changed an old custom.

HODEL

(Bewildered)

Yes. Well, you're welcome — I mean, thank you — I mean, good day.

PERCHIK

Good day!

~~*(FEVYE enters, suffering from a headache.)*~~

~~FEVYE~~

~~Bielke, Shprintz, what's your name?~~