

# The Caucasian Chalk Circle

by Bertolt Brecht

THE SINGER, GOVERNOR, SOLDIERS 1&2, GUARDS, SERVANTS, DOCTORS  
1&2, GRUSHA, ADJUTANT, SIMON

## THE SINGER

Oh, blindness of the great! They walk like gods  
Great over bent backs, sure  
Of hired fists, trusting  
In their power which has already lasted so long.  
But long is not forever.  
Oh, Wheel of Fortune! Hope of the people!

*From the gateway, enter the Governor with a grey face, manacled between two soldiers armed to the teeth.*

Walk, Your Highness, walk even now with head up.  
From your Palace the eyes of many foes follow you!  
You no longer need an architect, a carpenter will do.  
You will not move into a new palace,  
but into a little hole in the ground.  
Just look about you once more, you blind man!

*The arrested Governor looks about him.*

Does all you once possessed still please you?  
Between the Easter Mass and the banquet  
You are walking to that place from which no one returns.

*The Governor is led away. The palace guard follows. A horn sounds. Noise behind the gateway.*

When the houses of the great collapse  
Many little people are slain.  
Those who had no share in the fortunes of the mighty  
Often have a share in their misfortunes. The plunging wain  
Drags the sweating beasts with it into the abyss.

*Servants come rushing through the gateway in panic.*

**THE SERVANTS** *in confusion:* The hampers! - Take them all into the third courtyard! Food for five days! - Her Ladyship has fainted! Someone must carry her down. She must get away. - And what about us? We'll be slaughtered like chickens, it's the old story. - Jesus and Mary, what's going to happen? There's already bloodshed in the town, they say. - Nonsense, the Governor has just been asked politely to appear at a Princes' meeting. Everything'll be all right. I have this on the best authority.

*The two doctors rush into the courtyard.*

**FIRST DOCTOR** *trying to restrain the other:* Niko Mikadze, it is your duty as a doctor to attend Natella Abashvili.

**SECOND DOCTOR:** My duty? It's yours!

**FIRST DOCTOR:** Niko Mikadze, who is in charge of the child today? You or me?

**SECOND DOCTOR:** Do you really think, Mikha Loladze, I'm going to stay another minute in this cursed house for that little brat?

*They start fighting. All one bears is: 'You neglect your duty' and 'Duty be damned!' Then the second doctor knocks down the first.*

**SECOND DOCTOR:** Oh, go to hell! *Exit.*

**THE SERVANTS:** There's time enough before night. The soldiers won't be drunk till then. - Does anyone know if they've started a mutiny yet? - The Palace Guard has ridden away. - Doesn't anyone know what's happened?

**GRUSHA:** Meliva the fisherman says a comet with a red tail has been seen in the sky over the capital. That means bad luck.

**THE SERVANTS:** Yesterday they were saying in the capital that the Persian War is lost. - The Princes have started a great revolt. There's a rumour that the Grand Duke has already fled. All his Governors are to be hanged. - The likes of us will be left alone. I have a brother in the Ironshirts.

*Enter the soldier Simon Chachava, searching the crowd for Grusha.*

**THE ADJUTANT** *appearing in the doorway.* Everyone into the third courtyard! All hands help with the packing!

*He drives the servants out. Simon finally finds Grusha.*

**SIMON:** There you are at last, Grusha! What are you going to do?

**GRUSHA:** Nothing. If the worst comes to the worst, I've a brother with a farm in the mountains. But what about you?

**SIMON:** Don't worry about me. *Polite again.* Grusha Vachnadze, your desire to know my plans fills me with satisfaction. I've been ordered to accompany Madam Natella Abashvili as her guard.

**GRUSHA:** But hasn't the Palace Guard mutinied ?

**SIMON** *serious:* That's a fact.

**GRUSHA:** But isn't it dangerous to accompany the woman ?

**SIMON:** In Tiflis they say: Isn't stabbing dangerous for the knife ?

**GRUSHA:** You're not a knife. You're a man, Simon Chachava. What has this woman to do with you?

**SIMON:** The woman has nothing to do with me. But I have my orders, and so I go.

**GRUSHA:** The soldier is a pig-headed man; he gets himself into danger for nothing - nothing at all. *As she is called from the palace:* Now I must go into the third courtyard. I'm in a hurry.

**SIMON:** As there's a hurry we oughtn't to quarrel. For a good quarrel one needs time. May I ask if the young lady still has parents?

**GRUSHA:** No, only a brother.

**SIMON:** As time is short - the second question would be: Is the young lady as healthy as a fish in water?

**GRUSHA:** Perhaps once in a while a pain in the right shoulder; but otherwise strong enough for any work. So far, no one has complained.

**SIMON:** Everyone knows that. Even if it's Easter Sunday and there's the question who shall fetch the goose, then it's she. The third question is this: Is the young lady impatient? Does she want cherries in winter?

**GRUSHA:** Impatient, no. But if a man goes to war without any reason, and no message comes, that's bad.

**SIMON:** A message will come. *Grusha is again called from the palace.* And finally the main question ...

**GRUSHA:** Simon Chachava, because I've got to go to the third courtyard and I'm in a hurry, the answer is 'Yes'.

**SIMON** *very embarrassed:* Hurry, they say, is the wind that blows down the scaffolding. But they also say: The rich don't know what hurry is. - I come from ...

**GRUSHA:** Kutsk.

**SIMON:** So the young lady has already made inquiries? Am healthy, have no dependents, earn ten piastres a

month, as a paymaster twenty, and am asking honourably for your hand.

**GRUSHA:** Simon Chachava, that suits me.

**SIMON** *taking from his neck a thin chain from which hangs a little cross:* This cross belonged to my mother, Grusha Vachnadze. The chain is silver. Please wear it.

**GRUSHA:** I thank you, Simon. *He fastens it round her neck*

**SIMON:** Now I must harness the horses. The young lady will understand that. It would be better for the young lady to go into the third courtyard. Otherwise there'll be trouble.

**GRUSHA:** Yes, Simon.

*They stand together undecided.*

**SIMON:** I'll just take the woman to the troops who've remained loyal. When the war's over, I'll come back. in two weeks. Or three. I hope my intended won't get tired waiting for my return.

**GRUSHA:** Simon Chachava, I shall wait for you.

Go calmly into battle, soldier  
The bloody battle, the bitter battle  
From which not everyone returns.  
When you return I will be there.  
I will be waiting for you under the green elm  
I will be waiting for you under the bare elm  
I will wait until the last soldier has returned  
And even longer.  
When you return from the battle

No boots will lie before the door  
The pillow beside mine will be empty  
My mouth will be unkissed.  
When you return, when you return  
You will be able to say: all is as it was.

**SIMON:** I thank you, Grusha Vachnadze, and farewell!

*He bows low before her; she bows low before him. Then she runs off without looking round.*