

FROGGY. Wearin' is little wot?

BETTY. No, Charlie ain't borin' at all. No, sir. Charlie, he's—why, he's jest simply—.

CHARLIE. Remarkable. (Froggy reacts.)

BETTY. Remarkable. Yes.

FROGGY. Well! (*Smiling, surprised.*) I thought e'd be a bit shy around 'ere. In 'is native country, of course, I know 'e's quite the, eh—the raconteur.

BETTY. The what?

FROGGY. You know—jokes. Amusin' stories. (*Going to the bar for a drink.*) Oh, yes, quite the entertainer back 'ome, they tell me. But 'ere, I thought—.

BETTY. (*To Charlie.*) Oh, tell one!

CHARLIE. (*Falsetto.*) Hm?

BETTY. (*Almost jumping up and down.*) Tell one of yer— . (*To Froggy.*) Make him tell one of his stories!

FROGGY. Oh no, I didn't mean—.

BETTY. Oh, please! Go on, ask him!

CHARLIE. Oh— .

FROGGY. Well—.

BETTY. (*To Ellard and Catherine.*) Y'all listenin'? Charlie's gonna tell one o' his favorite stories! This is the chance of a lifetime! (*To Froggy.*) Go on!

FROGGY. Oh, well — uh, Charlie— ?

CHARLIE. Hm?

FROGGY. Is this all right? I mean, eh—poko dum funnostoros? (*There being no way out, Charlie acquiesces graciously, though nervously.*)

CHARLIE. Ah—blasny, blasny. Eh—.

FROGGY. (*Going for drinks.*) Sorry, mate.

CHARLIE. Eh— . (*Experimentally.*) Brope snyep, snyope ss— . (*Starts over.*) Breez neez-nyeep, sneep— . (*No good. Clears throat.*)

Froggy hands him a whiskey. He downs it in one gulp, concentrates, and starts— slowly at first.)

Mirduschki omni	("In the little town of
bolyeeshnya,	Merridew
mirlo aramznyi bro-o-oach	(there lived a little o-o-old
peevno . . .	woman . . .

(In a quavering falsetto.)

"Zhmeetna! Zhmeetna! Zhmeetna!
Zhmeetna!" (*Narrator voice again.*)

Do—du berznoznia dottsky, (*And—her beautiful Marla. . . .*
daughter, Marla. . . .)

(*With appropriate gestures.*)

Ah! Byootsky dottsky! Perch (*Ah! A beautiful daughter! damasa*
But as baxa raxa. Hai.)

stupid as a stone. . . (*In a silly, youthful falsetto.*)

"Mirlo *meechno*, mirlo em?" (*'I'm heading out now, Mom,'*
dichni Marla omsk, "y said Marla, 'and trade these preeznia
praznia, preeznia cheeses for some fine
praznia, preep?" buttons."")

"Hai schmotka!" mirlotski . . . and so on. . . .)

momsk.

"Per dontcha hopni skipni

truda wudsk!"

"Meem? Hopni skipni truda wudsk?"

Ha! Ha! Ha! No! No! No!

(*Aside.*)

Heh! Heh! Heh!

(*Aloud.*)

Adios, momsk!"

(*With his left hand, he imitates a skipping youth.*)

Hopni, skipni, hopni, skipni, hopni, skipni truda wudsk.

(*His tone becomes ominous.*)

Meemskivai — omby odderzeiden der foretz, mirduschka — Omskivar!

(*Deep, decadent, hungry voice.*)

"Broizhni, broizhni! Broizhni, broizhni!"

Yach! Aglianastica, Omskivar. Das leetskicheelden ranski haidven
Omski's inda vutz.

"Mir-lo," Omski deech praznadya. (*Rubbing his stomach.*) "Miro-
/o! Porlo papno obscrednyi! Das

(*Imitating with his right hand a huge, slovenly beast crashing through
the forest.*)

broizhni, broizhni! Broizhni, broizhni!" Y byootsky dottsky? Hai.

(*Skipping in a semi-circle with his left hand.*)

"Hopni, skipni, hopni, skipni, hopni, skipni — !"

(Right hand, starting an opposite semi-circle toward the same point.)
"Broizhni, broizhni! Broizhni, broizhni — !"

(Left hand.)

"Hopni, skipni, hopni— ."

(Right hand.)

"Broizhni, broizhni—."

(Left.)

"Hopni, skipni— ."

(Right.)

"Broizhni — ."

(The two hands confront each other.)

"Ah?"

(As Marla, in a fearless—not to say foolhardy falsetto, chanting loudly.)

"Irlo mirlo momskey meem! Eevno peevno pomskey peem!"

(A moment—then the right hand, with a snort, gobbles the left and remains alone. Charlie, with a shrug, tells the moral..)

Blit?

(The others laugh and applaud.)

CATHERINE. Well, Charlie? You old storyteller, you.

FROGGY. I don't believe it.

CHARLIE. Thank you.

ELLARD. Charlie, that was real *good*.

CHARLIE. Thank you.

BETTY. An' I understood practically all of it, I think.

CATHERINE. That's funny, I did too, I thought.

BETTY. That part about the tractor? That 'uz *real* clear, to me.

CATHERINE. Tractor?

CHARLIE. Hm?

BETTY. Wadn' there sump'm about a tractor, ridin' around?

CATHERINE. Oh, I don't know—.

CHARLIE. Tractor?

BETTY. Yeah.

CHARLIE. No.

CATHERINE. No, Betty, I didn't think so. There wadn' any tractor in the story.