

## II -The Witchand Other Stories

In *The Witch and Other Stories*, the scene unfolds with the characters settling down for the night. Nikolay, an invalid, is placed on the stove with his elderly father, while Sasha lies down on the floor. Olga, accompanied by the other women, heads to the barn, where she lies down beside Marya on the hay. Olga comforts Marya, advising her to bear her troubles in patience, quoting a Scripture: "If anyone smite thee on the right cheek, offer him the left one also."

Olga continues with a singsong tone, sharing stories of her life in Moscow. She describes the grand houses and the numerous churches in the city, speaking of the gentry who live in them, elegant and proper. Marya, however, reveals that she has never been to Moscow and is unfamiliar with even the basics of reading, writing, or prayer. She and her sister-in-law Fyokla are both uneducated and know little of the world outside their immediate environment. Both women are also dissatisfied with their marriages—Marya is terrified of her husband, Kiryak, who reeks of vodka and tobacco, while Fyokla expresses frustration at her own situation and her indifference to her husband's absence.

As the night progresses, the air grows cool, and a rooster's crowing disrupts their attempts at sleep. The women fall into silence, and as the morning light begins to dawn, Fyokla sneaks away from the barn, her bare feet running off somewhere in the dark.

The next day, Olga and Marya go to church together. As they walk through the meadow, the mood is lighter, with Olga appreciating the open landscape and Marya finding comfort in the companionship of her sister-in-law. The rising sun casts a soft glow over the meadow, setting the tone for a peaceful moment.