

Anton Chekhov's
THE SEAGULL

a play in four acts
adaptation by

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CHARACTERS

IRINA ARKADINA, an actress, possibly in her late fifties (admits to 43 under certain circumstances)

CONSTANTINE TREPLEV, her son 25

PETER SORIN, her brother 65

NINA ZARIETCHNAYA, a young girl, the daughter of a rich landowner 19

ILIA SHAMRAEFF, the manager of SORIN'S estate, fifties

PAULINA, his wife, late forties

MASHA, their daughter, mid twenties

BORIS TRIGORIN, an author, 35 - 40

EUGENE DORN, a doctor, mid fifties

SIMON MEDVIEDENKO, a schoolmaster, late twenties / early thirties

YACOB, a workman, 30-40

A COOK, age open

A MAIDSERVANT, age open

SETTING - RUSSIA 1893

ACT I	The park on the SORIN family estate. A summer evening at sunset.
ACT II	The lawn in front of the SORIN house. Mid day. Three days later.
ACT III	The dining room of the SORIN house. Morning. One week later.
ACT IV	A sitting-room in the SORIN house. Evening. Two years later.

A NOTE ON THE NOTATIONS:

1. A slash “ / ” indicates the character with the next line of dialogue begins his or her speech (overlapping dialogue).
2. Dialogue in parenthesis “ () ” is expressed aloud, as an aside or unintentionally.
3. Dialogue in brackets “ [] ” is not verbalized / MAY be expressed nonverbally.
4. Dialogue in brackets/parenthesis “ [()] ” is not verbalized / is an internal aside—purposely unspoken; nor expressed nonverbally; more likely disguised under a smile, stare or a glance.

A CLARIFICATION REGARDING TYPOS:

Nope. They aren't. Did I miss one (or two)?—probably. But for the most part, if you see a typo, such as a word repeated, a grammatical error, lower case or UPPER CASE used in place of common punctuation (even a few misspellings), it was, indeed, intended.

All I wanted was to say honestly to people: "Have a look at yourselves and see how bad and dreary your lives are!" The important thing is that people should realize that, for when they do, they will most certainly create another and better life for themselves. I will not live to see it, but I know that it will be quite different, quite unlike our present life. And so long as this different life does not exist, I shall go on saying to people again and again: "Please, understand that your life is bad and dreary!"

— **ANTON CHEKHOV**,
letter to Alexander Tikhonov

ACT 1

(A lakeside park set on the SORIN family estate. Shrubbery and trees align the edges of our scene. A makeshift platform and curtain have been set up in this small clearing at the edge of the lake, blocking our view of the shore itself. A bench, a few chairs and tables have been setup to view the 'stage'. It is dusk and the sun setting behind us throws its last rays of light across our scene. We hear the coughing and hammering of the crew finishing the final touches of construction behind the closed curtain.

MASHA and MEDVIEDENKO enter from the left, returning from a walk.)

MEDVIEDENKO

So ...
Black? [Again?] Why?

MASHA

I'm in mourning.

MEDVIEDENKO

For [what]?

MASHA

My life.

MEDVIEDENKO

[Why do I even ask?]

... And why do you have to talk like that? You—you should be happy. You have a wonderful life: You're ... you're healthy. You live [on a beautiful estate—]Your father ... works—he may not own it, but he runs it—it's a good job. Look at me: I[ook at my job: I] spend the better part of the day sitting in a room with one window and a sea full of juvenile delinquents [who] don't know whether they want to overthrow the government or which finger they should pick their noses with: and what do I get [for it]: twenty-three rubles a month. [But do] you see me walking around as if I'm at my own funeral?

(MASHA sits at one end of the bench. MEDVIEDENKO following suit sits beside her. Slight pause.)

MASHA

You think being rich and being happy are mutually tied to each other: there are plenty of poor people happy in the world ... (or so I'm told).

MEDVIEDENKO

You'd like to believe that, wouldn't you?

I know poor; I teach their children .. I scrape by on twenty three rubles a month; which maybe if I were on my own would be one thing but add to that: my mother and two sisters, and my little brother—and somehow we make it work. We survive. We don't have a villa overlooking a lake but we're not starving. I mean we eat. But tell me, if you were me, what would you have us give up? Should we stop smoking? Maybe we should draw straws and one of us stop eating altogether? Not myself, of course—I'd have to eat because I'm the one bringing in the money—but who do I turn out into the streets?; you tell me.

(There is an awkward pause.)

MASHA

Do you think this is what hell is like?

MEDVIEDENKO

All this [talk about] death. It's just a game: you know you really don't want to die.

MASHA

I don't have to die: I already am. Now I'm just waiting for my body to catch up. Because the law demands it. So, I wait. And evidently you wait with me.

MEDVIEDENKO

[I don't want to die either; and neither do you.] If you *were* to do anything—

MASHA

[I already am.]

MEDVIEDENKO

Your parents would go to jail. [Have you thought of that]?

MASHA

It's a stupid law.

MEDVIEDENKO

But then again no one I've ever known has been convicted for it. I can't even remember ever hearing of anybody even being charged.

MASHA

You know a lot of dead people?

MEDVIEDENKO

[Now you're just talking nonsense.]

(Another silence. MASHA turns and just looks at him for a moment then back at the stage.)

MASHA

Is the play going to start soon?

MEDVIEDENKO

[Yes ... that] ... soon ...

(Searching for a segue:)

Don't you find it interesting that Nina Zarietchnaya is starring in Treplev's play?

(No reply.)

Rather than his mother, the famous actress, and instead he casts the daughter of the landowner next door?

(No reply.)

[You know it'll have to be a] love [story. And when it's over, after their play is a huge success, I imagine the night will end with the two of them celebrating their passion without an audience around, the way] ... young people in love [tend to do ... when no one's looking ...]

(No reply. He sighs. She sighs.)

MEDVIEDENKO

So remind me why do I walk here every day? Why do I torment you? Why do I torment myself? Because I love you, Masha.

(No reply—but there again he never expected one.)

There, I've said it. Take a gun to me now. But [I know] ... You don't need to say anything. I trudge here six miles . . . each way ... just so my heart can get its daily thrashing. But who can blame you? Really? Why should you care? What do I have to offer? Only a pathetic teacher's salary and an already too large of a family . . . it makes perfect sense. I understand. So

(Another pause. MASHA takes out a snuff box from her her bodice and openly uses the same. Pause. She offers the same to MEDVIEDENKO.)

MEDVIEDENKO

No, thank you.

(The pause continues.)

MASHA

I think it's going to rain.

(MEDVIEDENKO throws his head back looking up to the heavens for guidance if it weren't for the fact his eyes are closed.)

MASHA

Oh, Simon, it's not you. Well, yes, it *is* you. All you ever do is ... talk ... and moralize or go on about money—mostly about how much you don't have.

(Laying herself across his lap as if he were only an extension of the bench.)

Think about it, if you had money, what would you do with it? Tell me your dreams.

(At a loss for words and a growing awareness that her head is in his lap, MEDVIEDENKO says nothing; for Masha: point made.)

MASHA

To you being poor is the greatest tragedy that can happen to a person but I think, I know, it's about a thousand times easier to go around begging in rags than to ... ah, you wouldn't understand ...

(After a small bit of reflection—unmoved from her position:)

Just think: if I were to marry you and then I finally did kill myself: you would be going to jail instead of my parents.

In a way I am saving you, Simon.

MEDVIEDENKO

You have the most peculiar way of looking at things.

MASHA

You don't need to thank me.

(MEDVIEDENKO is torn at this moment between, longing, lust and his keen awareness that for Masha he is nothing more than piece of furniture. MASHA, however, just stares out into the sunset. PETER SORIN leaning on a cane, and TREPLEV, his nephew, enter from right. MASHA, fully aware of their entrance continues to stare out into the setting sun.)

SORIN

I don't know what I hate about this more: my being put out to pasture or the pasture itself. Last night I went to bed at ten and didn't wake up until nine this morning, feeling as if my brain was stuck to the left side of my head for its apparent lack of use.

(choosing to laugh as always his better practice:)

Then at dinner tonight I couldn't help myself just drifting off again. It's as if I'm testing out my own death and I can't quite decide where I want to be.

TREPLEV

Give yourself time, Uncle,—I know it's not like it was for you in Moscow.

(Treplev catches sight of MASHA [whose gaze has drifted off to stare at him] and MEDVIEDENKO [trying not to look embarrassed by their positions.]

TREPLEV (Continued:)

We're not seating anyone yet. We'll call you when the play begins. Don't want to ruin the magic.

(MASHA unenthusiastically sits up accordingly.
MEDVIEDENKO crosses his legs quietly.)

TREPLEV

Go away, please.

SORIN

Miss Masha, will you kindly have a word with your father and ask him to leave that dog of his off its chain tonight? It howled so much last night it kept my sister up half the evening.

MASHA

You'll have to ask him yourself ... I can't.
(To Medviedenکو:)

Simon?

MEDVIEDENKO

... I'll be right with you.

(MASHA heads out before him, not looking back, knowing he'll follow.)

MEDVIEDENKO

You will let us know when the play begins?

(No answer. MEDVIEDENKO carefully rises and exits following MASHA out.)

SORIN

That dog is going to wail all night long again tonight Why? This is my home.

TREPLEV

I know.

SORIN

I retired here because it's supposed to be good for my health but it's killing my sanity. But no, "that's not how we do things out here." "That's city talk, this is the country. You city folk re supposed to come out here to rest." I remember coming here for summers when I was your age; ready to leave first day. Everything here is just wrong.

(Laughing:)

But: Here I am: retired; so, where else do I have to go? I'm stuck here. What is it people see in this place?

YACOB

(Stepping out from behind the curtain; to Treplev:)

If it's alright with you, we are going to take a quick swim in the lake, Mr. Constantine.

TREPLEV

The play starts in ten minutes.

YACOB

We'll be back. The lake's right there.

(The sky's eminent sunset cascades across the horizon creating an idyllic backdrop.)

TREPLEV

(As he goes:)

Ten minutes.

SORIN

I just don't get it.
What is all this?

TREPLEV

(Looking over the stage:)

It's a ... Just like a real theatre stage, right? We've got your curtain; a raised platform, and all the scenery you could never buy. No flats, no door, who needs windows And painted backdrops when you have [the real thing]? And look at that light. Nothing fake, nothing artificial. Sit here.

SORIN

I'm already [sitting] ..

TREPLEV

Please. I chose this seat for you.

(As Sorin takes his new position:)

TREPLEV (Continued:)

From where you're sitting: your eye travels directly to the lake and you'll see the moon rising on its edge at exactly

(Checks his watch:)

Fourteen minutes!

(Hollering out to Yacob and the workers:)

We start in fourteen minutes! I need you here in five!

SORIN

It's cold.

TREPLEV

Where's Nina?

(SORIN just stares at him—oblivious to who Nina is.)

TREPLEV

She should be here / already; If we don't start right when the moon just—

SORIN

Is that the name of the neighbor girl you've been seeing? She seems nice, I'm sure she's not going to miss your little debut.

TREPLEV

She *is* the debut. God, if her parents—she said she could get away, she told me she could get away, I trusted she could get away, if she doesn't get away—but getting away from them is like escaping a prison.

(He straightens Sorin's collar.)

Uncle, your hair ... You have a comb? Honestly, you should just shave it all off.

SORIN

(Smoothing his beard:)

It's just the way I look—don't fuss with it—

(Changing the subject:)

What's got your mother in such a snit?

TREPLEV

She's .. mother.

Jealous I asked Nina to act in my play and not her.

SORIN

You didn't ask?

TREPLEV

She just would have said, "no" and I would have asked Nina anyway. So, I skipped—and Nina's better. Just not punctual.

SORIN

You should have asked.

TREPLEV

She hasn't even read it. She hates it because she's not the star. If she can't be the star—so she hates the play, she hates the performance, she hates everything about it.

SORIN

She is your mother.
She tries.

TREPLEV

When?

(Nervously checks his watch.)

On the stage? Yes: she's brilliant—she can cry on cue. Or when she's feeding the homeless or visiting the sick: she's an absolute saint. She's brilliant. And she must be told and reminded of her brilliance on a daily basis. It's exhausting.

(He is now up and pacing: regarding Nina—for a moment:)

Oh my god, where is she? And she's superstitious to a fault.

SORIN

Who're we talking about now?

TREPLEV

Mother. Who does anyone ever talk about? Who else are we allowed to talk about? And she holds onto every red cent she's ever made like it's the last one she'll ever have.

SORIN

That's just her way.

TREPLEV

No: I happen to know for a fact that she has seventy thousand rubles in a bank at Odessa, but she'll burst into tears if you ask her to lend you a penny.

SORIN

She's going to love your play because she loves you.

TREPLEV

Really? Why: because it's in her nature? Let's ask nature then, shall we?

(Pulling a flower to pieces:)

She loves me, loves me not; loves—loves me not; loves—loves me not!

(showing Sorin the stem:)

Nature says, "Not."

SORIN

They'll be here.

TREPLEV

All mother loves is to dress up and be the center of everyone else's life. I'm twenty-five years old and look at me: a constant reminder that she's not. When I'm not around she's thirty-two. When I am: she's forty-three and she hates me for it. How she explains away that you and her are brother and sister is beyond me. I think that's why she loves the theatre because from the cheap seats you can't see the age lines. I hate the theatre. I hate what it's become. People just sitting around talking, complaining, nothing happens.

(There is a pause.)

TREPLEV

I want it to be different, Uncle. I want it to be more than just talk. I want it to be—I want it to be so many things ... I just want—I want my actress here, that's what I want... Why did I tell them they could go take a swim? What happened to the theatre, Uncle? When I was a child I thought it was so invigorating. Why can't it inspire anymore? Why does it have to just droll on? And why does my mother have to be the queen of the droll? It's suffocating. You find yourself sitting there in a seat, elbow to elbow with some stranger you'd never talk to in a million years, and watch "art" in a box and it just makes me want to vomit. It makes me want to run away, that's what it does. It makes me want to leap out of my seat and run as far and fast as I can. I feel like I'm Maupassant running away from the Eiffel Tower just before it crushed him under its vulgarity.

SORIN

Yes, but what we do if we didn't have theatre? We'd have to talk to each other.

TREPLEV

I love my mother but ... if you don't have something to say, why do theatre at all?
(again at his watch:)

I know, it's just nerves. I talk too much when I'm nervous but she leads a stupid life.

(Switching subjects entirely:)

And did she have to bring ...

SORIN

Her latest beau?

TREPLEV

The "writer".

SORIN

Boris Trigorin.

TREPLEV

If you can call him that [a writer].

SORIN

He seems nice.

TREPLEV

“Yes he does, doesn’t he?”

(SORIN chooses Not to respond.)

TREPLEV

I’m so tired of it.

SORIN

He’s a little younger but your mother ... is your mother.

TREPLEV

When I went to college those three years .. she would eye my classmates.

SORIN

I wouldn’t go that far. Is that why you [gave it up early]?

TREPLEV

Truth be told? I told her I got bored but I I couldn’t ... it all started going over my head and ...

So, here I am no money, no brains and to the rest of the world I don't even exist. Like my father before me—but at least he was a famous actor in his day. He was somebody for a moment. And when these self-important celebrities my mother litters our house with deign to notice me at all it's just to measure my own insignificance. Do you know what it's like to live like that?

SORIN

What is Trigorin like, by the way? I can't understand him, he's always so quiet.

TREPLEV

Simple. He's clever enough but . . that would be the best way to describe him: simple. Like his writing: simple, pleasant enough, but if you've read Tolstoy or Zola you somehow you can't really enjoy Trigorin.

SORIN

I always wanted to be a writer. Fascinating lifestyle. When I was your age I wanted just two things: to be married, and to become an author.

(He sighs: a smile at best—no laugh.)

TREPLEV

Did you hear that?

(Not knowing what else to do—he embraces his uncle.)

It's her: Oh my God, I think I recognize her footstep; what does that mean? I should be furious with her at her making me wait like this but . . . I'm just—[I'm just thrilled knowing she's here.] This isn't making sense.

(He goes quickly to meet NINA, who comes in at that moment)

"Nymph in thy orisons."

NINA

What?

It can't be that late, am I? Am I late? No, I'm not late.

TREPLEV

(Kissing her conventionally on the hands)

No, no, no! You're right on time. You're here.

NINA

The moon hasn't—

(Checking out the stage:)

Ooooooh.

(Rattling off her thoughts as she checks out the stage, lights and seating.)

I didn't know if I could get away in time. I swear I thought I was going to be sick—I was running a fever this morning and I thought my parents would never leave—I was so afraid my father would spoil it all but he and his wife left for a drive so I ran as fast as I could to get here—then I thought to myself—what am I doing? So I ran back to the house and got out the horse and let her do the running for me then when I saw the moon starting to lift and I knew I had to get here—I'm not too late, am I?

(To Sorin:)

Good to see you.

(NINA shakes hands with SORIN.)

SORIN

My dear, you look as if you've been crying; you mustn't do that.

(TREPLEV begins lighting torches along the perimeter.)

NINA

What? No. It's nothing. The wind, it blew my make-up ... So, we have to hurry. I have to be gone in half an hour before father—

TREPLEV

(following her closely, unable to distance himself:)

It's perfect, right?

And look at the view.

You're here now, that's all that matters.

You look fantastic.

NINA (Continued:)

(Back to Treplev:)

You can't ask me to stay: I can't stay—so don't ask me. I can't stay. I'm so excited. Are you excited?

(Sharing the secret with Sorin:)

(My father doesn't know I'm here.)

TREPLEV

(Watching for Yacob, spying the moon's position while rushing to get the torches lit:)

Then we have to get started. I have to call the audience.

SORIN

I'll go. I was needing to get my wrap, anyway.

(He starts off toward the house singing to himself—then stops:)

I sang that song once just outside of court when another lawyer turned to me and said, "Sir, you have a powerful voice."

"A powerful voice—but a decidedly disagreeable one."

(He exits laughing at his own amusement and picks back up singing as his voice trails off with him.)

NINA

I'm not late, am I? Don't tell me I'm late. My father and his wife never want me to come here; they call this place Bohemia. They're afraid I'll become an actress. But what would be so wrong with that? I love the lake. Do you love the lake? It pulls me here like the gulls. It calls to me. Or is it you?
Well?

TREPLEV

Breathe.

Just breathe.

Just look at me.

TREPLEV

(Lighting the next to last:)

One more torch.

NINA

Is somebody coming? I think somebody's—

TREPLEV

(Moving in to her—hand torch in hand:)

No.

(He moves in. They kiss. A stolen moment—albeit a lingering one.)

NINA

Careful, you don't want to set me on fire.

(As TREPLEV moves away from her with the hand torch to finishes lighting the last stand, NINA touches her hair to be sure of its quaff—her eye is caught by the foliage above her.)

What kind of tree is that?

TREPLEV

An elm.

NINA

Why does it look so dark?

TREPLEV

It's nighttime; everything looks dark at night.

(He puts out the hand torch and sets it down.)

Don't go away early, I beg you.

NINA

I have to.

TREPLEV

I'll just follow you.

NINA

You can't.

TREPLEV

I will.

NINA

You mustn't.

TREPLEV

You know I will. I'll stand in your garden with flowers at my feet and my eyes on your window till morning.

NINA

(Fixing her hair—combing out any nettles from the horse ride.)

You wouldn't last that long—first: the watchman would see you and even if you could keep clear of him, Treasure would start barking because she's not used to you yet—it'd be a miracle if you got away with an hour.

TREPLEV

I love you.

NINA

(Responding to his remark rather than his looks:)

You're cute.

TREPLEV

Who is that? Is that you, Yacob?

YACOB

(Steps out again from behind the curtain—dripping wet.)

Yes, sir.

TREPLEV

How long've you—

Alright, everybody take your places then. How's the moon?

NINA

(Moving behind the curtain.)

Yes, sir.

TREPLEV

Is the alcohol ready? The sulphur? I want big bursts of sulphur in the air when the red eyes shine out.

(YACOB does not reply but stands at the curtain's edge dripping on the ground awaiting his cue to pull the curtain. TREPLEV is left to assume by Yacob's silence that everything is in its place. To Nina:)

Are you nervous?

NINA (Behind the curtain)

Very.

TREPLEV

How's the moon?

NINA (Behind the curtain)

Halfway there. I am not so much afraid of your mother as I am of Trigorin. I've never met him but I've read all his books—have you read his books? He's so famous. Is he young?

TREPLEV

That depends on what you consider young.

NINA (Behind the curtain)

What beautiful stories he writes! He's so funny.

TREPLEV

[I have] never read any of them, so I couldn't say.

NINA (Behind the curtain)

Your play is very hard to act, did you know that? There aren't any real people in it.

TREPLEV

It's a metaphor—it's not supposed to be real people—it's supposed to be symbolic.

NINA (Behind the curtain)

There's so—there's no—there's so little action [to it]; it seems more like reciting a poem but it doesn't rhyme. Maybe it should rhyme.

TREPLEV

(Seeing the guests coming: mouthing to YACOB:)

("Behind the curtain." "Behind the curtain.")

NINA (Behind the curtain/Continuing:)

And there's no love in your play. I think every story should really be a love story at its heart. At least every play I've ever seen. But if there's no one alive in your play then it stands to reason so there's no one to love I guess.

(TREPLEV shoos YACOB back stages. YACOB complies as the guests start to arrive. TREPLEV follows him.)

NINA (Behind the curtain)

Do I look alright?

TREPLEV (Behind the curtain)

Shhhh.

(PAULINA and DORN are the first to arrive.)

PAULINA

It's getting damp. You should go back in and put on your galoshes.

DORN

My feet are [fine, they're] warm enough; thank you.

PAULINA

If you were to catch a cold, who would doctor the doctor? Would you say that to your own patients or are you happier trying mine [patience]?

DORN

[Clever. I see what you did there.]

PAULINA

You enjoy watching see me suffer?

DORN

[I it's all that important to you] ...

PAULINA

Watching you all night yesterday, watching her. Such a famous actress, all night, sitting out on a freezing cold terrace.

DORN

(Begins singing to himself:)

("Oh, tell me not that youth is wasted.")

PAULINA (Continuing:)

You were so fixed on her, you couldn't even see your own breath rising from your lips like the mist coming off the lake. Confess it: you like her. And / by "like her"—

DORN

(Stops singing:)

I'm fifty-five years old.

PAULINA

When has that ever stopped a man? Fifty five is hardly old .. for a man. Unless—well—maybe for her. But look at you. You look magnificent. I'm sure you could have any woman--you could have any woman you wanted.

DORN

And whom am I supposed to be wanting?

PAULINA

All you men are all the same; ready and willing to fall to your knees over an actress. What is it about them other than they can be had for a price?

DORN

(Starts up singing again:)

("Once more I stand before thee.")

PAULINA

You're all just little boys at heart. Or lower.

DORN

My [dear,] it has nothing to do with [availability]—it has to do artistry. All of society—society has always admire its artists. It's only natural for us. Why shouldn't we treat them differently than say—merchants. They're celebrities.

PAULINA

Oh, and so when women line up to throw themselves at you—Is that because of your celebrity speaking?; doctor?

DORN

I see them as purely clinical.

PAULINA

“Clinical” [you say]? “Pure”ly?

DORN

They respect me for my position and I--have had one or more admirers over the years .. a number of women, yes. But one at a time; one at a time. As a doctor ..Ten years ago when I came to this town I was the only physician available and that did—it brought with it a certain amount of celebrity, yes, but I assure you I always respected that relationship, each relationship, I of them and they of me and if I'm not / mistaken that's—

(During the course of the above PAULINA has softly taken hold of his hand—DORN catches sight of the rest coming and takes back his hand.)

DORN (Continued:)

—Your husband.

(DORN completes his movement to find his seat as PAULINA waits for her husband [SHAMRAEFF] and take his arm as he passes.

Enter ARKADINA the actress, on SORIN'S arm; flanked by TRIGORIN, SHAMRAEFF, and MEDVIEDENKO. MASHA trails behind, completing the group.)

SHAMRAEFF

You didn't see her. I did. She was wonderful—breathtaking—and at the Poltava Fair in 1873? Oh my lord, there are no words: No one has ever done that role as well as she did—and no one ever will.

ARKADINA

I'm sure that wasn't me. [Couldn't have been [that was too many years ago, wasn't it?]

SHAMRAEFF

In my dreams then; you should do the role—you must—*that* I would like to see—I would *love* to s—I would *pay* to see. And Tchadin, the comedian, do you know what became of him? Did you ever see him as Rasplueff—he was better than Sadofski—where is *he* now?

ARKADINA

How would I know—he was before my time—[why would you ask me such things?]

(ARKADINA sits. The rest follow.)

SHAMRAEFF

Lord, he could make us laugh. Not like the Czar kissers they have nowadays. Nothing was off limits then. The theatre, has gone nothing but downhill and everybody's a—

DORN

I'll grant you there may fewer "stars" today but that's only because the caliber of acting's bar has been set so much higher than it was back then.

SHAMRAEFF

Forgive me, you couldn't be wronger if you tried; what passes for acting today couldn't let a candle to—

(Again referring to Irina:)

Present company accepted, of course.

(ARKADINA just smiles—choosing not to respond further.)

DORN

We shall agree to disagree then.

SHAMRAEFF

Some people have taste.

DORN

Some.

(Through the above TREPLEV taken stage from behind the curtains awaiting a pause.)

ARKADINA

(Seeing Treplev—to Dorn & Shamraeff:)

Boys?

ARKADINA (Continued:)

(To Treplev, a bit cooler than her words might convey:)

Kostya? We're getting cold.

TREPLEV

(Looks back to check the position of the moon before answering:)

In ... just a moment, Momma. Please be patient.

ARKADINA

(Quoting from Hamlet:)¹

My son, "speak no more. Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul; And there I see such black grained spots as will not leave their tinct."

(A horn is blown behind the stage.)

TREPLEV

"Attention. Ladies and gentlemen. Welcome. Take your seats."

(But of course, everyone already has.)

Good. Thank you. "Our play is about to begin."

MEDVIEDENKO

What's the name of it?

TREPLEV

The name?

MEDVIEDENKO

Of the play? What do you call it?

TREPLEV

It doesn't have a name.

MEDVIEDENKO

Oh. Sorry.

ARKADINA

It has to have a name. Every play has to have a name. What're you going to call it when people ask, "what did you do last night?" "I went to see a play." "What play?" "I don't know: it didn't have a name." ..

I'm done. Go ahead.

(A pause.)

TREPLEV

It doesn't have a name.

¹ HAMLET, ACT 3, sc 2 (GERTRUDE)

TREPLEV (Continued:)

(He takes a breath before he begins. He taps the floor with a stick, and speaks in a loud voice:)

“O, ye time-honoured, ancient mists that drive at night across the surface of this lake, blind you our eyes with sleep, and show us in our dreams that which will be in twice ten thousand years!”

SORIN

(I don't expect there'll be anything here in twice ten thousand years.)

TREPLEV

(Playing off his Uncle's remark:)

Then let them now show us that nothingness.

ARKADINA

Yes, let them—we'll all be dead.

(The curtain rises. A vista opens across the lake. The moon hangs low above the horizon and is reflected in the water. NINA, dressed in white, is seen seated on a great rock. The moon, shining in such a way behind her, as to create a possibly unintentional silhouette, clearly outlines her form inside the translucent whiteness of her dress. No one chooses to react. [The silhouetted effect is further enhanced when Nina, inevitably, stands later into her performance.]

NINA

All men and beasts, lions, eagles, and quails, horned stags, geese, spiders, silent fish that inhabit the waves, starfish from the sea, and creatures invisible to the eye—in one word, life—all, all life, completing the dreary round imposed upon it, has died out at last. A thousand years have passed since the earth last bore a living creature on her breast, and the unhappy moon now lights her lamp in vain. No longer are the cries of storks heard in the meadows, or—

(An unscripted whooping crane can be heard calling in the distance. NINA continues undeterred:)

NINA (Continued:)

—the drone of beetles in the groves of limes. All is cold, cold.

(Whooping crane hollers.)

All is void, void, voi—

(Whooping crane calls.)

—Void. All is terrible, terrible—

(A pause. There is no crane—NINA struggles for her line:)

The bodies of all living creatures have dropped to dust, and eternal matter has transformed them into stones and water and clouds; but their spirits have flowed together into one, and that great world-soul am I! In me is the spirit of the great

NINA (Continued:)

Alexander, the spirit of Napoleon, of Caesar, of Shakespeare, and of the tiniest leech that swims. In me the consciousness of man has joined hands with the instinct of the animal; I understand all, all, all, and each life lives again in me.

(The will-o-the-wisps flicker out along the lake shore.)

ARKADINA

(What the hell is this?)

TREPLEV

(Mother!)

NINA

(Standing by now:)

I am alone. Once in a hundred years my lips are opened, my voice echoes mournfully across the desert earth, and no one hears.

(The Whooping crane calls out one more time. NINA perseveres:)

And you, poor lights of the marsh, you do not hear me. You are engendered at sunset in the putrid mud, and flit wavering about the lake till dawn, unconscious, unreasoning, unwarmed by the breath of life. Satan, father of eternal matter, trembling lest the spark of life should glow in you, has ordered an unceasing movement of the atoms that compose you, and so you shift and change forever. I, the spirit of the universe, I alone am immutable and eternal.

(A pause for dramatic effect. Sparklers are set off just beyond our view. During the following, unable to keep his legs from cramping up, SORIN gets up and starts walking around.)

Like a captive in a dungeon deep and void, I know not where I am, nor what awaits me. One thing only is not hidden from me: in my fierce and obstinate battle with Satan, the source of the forces of matter, I am destined to be victorious in the end. Matter and spirit will then be one at last in glorious harmony, and the reign of freedom will begin on earth. But this can only come to pass by slow degrees,—

(We hear sloshing footsteps of YACOB rushing away.)

—when after countless eons the moon and earth and shining Sirius himself shall fall to dust. Until that hour, oh, horror! horror! horror!

(A pause. Two glowing red points of light are seen shining at the edge of the lake.)

Satan, my mighty foe, advances; I see his dread and lurid eyes.

ARKADINA

(Do I smell sulphur; is that part of the play? Please tell me that's sulphur.)

TREPLEV

(Yes.)

ARKADINA

(Oh, I see; is that is part of the effect?)

TREPLEV

(Mother!)

NINA

He longs for man—

PAULINA

(To Dorn:)

(You took your hat off again! Put it back on—you're going to catch a cold.)

(The Crane screams.)

ARKADINA

(The doctor has simply taken off his hat in respect to Satan, the father of all eternal matter—)

TREPLEV

ENOUGH!! We're done. That's it. Close the curtain.

NINA

He longs for ...

ARKADINA

What are you so angry about?

TREPLEV

The curtain! Shut the curtain!! Just—(oh my god)—shut the—

(YACOB, still dripping wet rushes to pull the curtain closed. NINA is left staring out as the drapes shut before her.)

ARKADINA

(Completely innocent:)

What has gotten into you?

TREPLEV

(Standing in front of the closed curtain—stumbling for words:)

Into *me*? I'm sorry—Excuse me, I—forgot who I was for a moment: I forgot that only the chosen few are worthy enough to write plays or to act in them. I have overstepped [my bounds. I have] infringed on the monopoly. I ... I ...

(But the words escape him. He waves his arms in the air as if to summon them forth but nothing comes. Left speechless he storms off toward the house.)

(There is a pause.)

ARKADINA

(Again sincerely innocent:)

What's the matter with him?

SORIN

And they were afraid you might never catch on to this mothering role, dear sister.

ARKADINA

What did *I* say?

SORIN

I'd say you hurt his feelings.

ARKADINA

How? He told me this was all in fun—I thought it was supposed to be a comedy.

SORIN

If you say so.

ARKADINA

Oh, so did I interrupt his opus, his masterpiece? You're telling me, *that* wasn't supposed to be amusing, it was supposed to *enlighten* us? He insults our senses—(not to mention the stench)—to educate us on what? Demonstrate to us how plays should be written and should be performed—because, after all, how would we know what the public wants? We've only been doing so successfully for how many years—Don't answer that—I'm tired of this—I'm tired of him—I'm tired of being [tired]—When is he going to grow up? When? First he insults me, now he mocks me and now what? What did *I* do to *him*?

SORIN

He was hoping he might please you.

ARKADINA

Really? Is that—Really? I notice, though, that he didn't choose a normal play; just another soapbox to rant his decadent drivel on. I tell you, I'm willing to listen to any raving, so long as I don't have to take it too seriously. Does he actually think that is the direction of theatre to come? Because what I saw was nothing more than a childish temper tantrum set to ... well, if he'd added music—It'd be set to music . . . I don't know what that was but it wasn't theatre, I'll tell you that. Why am I hearing music? Is it just me?

TRIGORIN

People write what they feel ... as best as they can.

ARKADINA

Then let him write what he feels and what he can, but spare me the sermons.

DORN

Thou art angry, O God?

ARKADINA

I'm just a woman, not God.

(She takes out a cigarette to which DORN and SHAMRAEFF rush to offer a light, but she waits and ultimately accepts the match finally produced by TRIGORIN. The irony of which is not lost on SORIN ["Let there be light"]—to which she responds to him:)

Oh shut up.

(She exhales with a sigh.)

And I'm not angry; I just hate to see him wasting his time like this. I wasn't trying to hurt him.

MEDVIEDENKO

I think I have a question with the point he was trying to make in how life could somehow exist outside the body itself. There's really no proof to support that. From an academic point of view. As a schoolmaster—that's simply how I spend my days—

(As he realizes, to Trigorin:)

Ohh, you could write a play about that—about a schoolmaster sometime. Now there's a story or twelve for you.

ARKADINA

Yes, wouldn't that be wonderful—but let's not bore ourselves with all this talk about writings or plays or atoms. This is such a lovely evening—Listen: Does anyone else hear that?

(Pause: They all listen—straining to hear the faint sounds of singing and laughter.)

PAULINA

It's coming from the other side of the lake.

SHAMRAEFF

I could send someone to ask them to keep it down, if you want but it'll do no good.

ARKADINA

(To Trigorin:)

Sit here next to me.

(As he does so:)

I remember ten or fifteen years ago we had music and singing on this lake almost every night. There are six houses here sitting on the lake shore. Spread out at least a stone's throw from each other. But the water here acts like a huge echo chamber and you can hear absolutely everything going on everywhere. And I do mean everything. And the star of our little lakeside parlor plays, in those days, was none other than this man here,

(Nods toward Dorn, an aside to Paulina)

Doctor Eugene Dorn. If you think he's fascinating now he was simply irresistible then.

(As the attention turns to Dorn:)

But maybe you're right: maybe I was too hard on him. Why did I hurt my poor boy? I don't feel good about it.

(Calling after him:)

Constantine!

MASHA

Do you want me to go look for him?

ARKADINA

Would you? That would be a dear.

MASHA

(Goes off toward the house, calling:)

Mr. Constantine!? Mr. Constantine!?

(There is a pause. MEDVIEDENKO is obviously sitting alone—awkwardly so. NINA steps out from behind the curtain.)

NINA

I ... suppose we won't be finishing the play, so I'll ... I guess I should .. [I'll] be heading on home then. Good evening.

(She hesitates and then steps forward to customarily kiss both Arkadina and Paulina goodbye.)

SORIN

Bravo! Bravo!

TRIGORIN

(Correcting him politely:)

Brava.

SORIN

"Brava?" Brava!

ARKADINA

You were simply .. everything, my dear. Brava, quite right. You were charming and .. You know with your looks and such a lovely voice you should really go on the stage, it would be a crime not to.

NINA

[oh my god are you talking to me; you just talked to me; she's talking to me;]Really? That would be my .. You're not just ... From your lips ... ;[that would b]e my dream but ... you're too kind.

ARKADINA

Well stop dreaming, child and make it happen.

(Following NINA's own train of attention:)

May I introduce you to Monsieur Boris Trigorin.

(To Trigorin:)

Nina— ...

What *is* your last name, child?

NINA

Zachara—It doesn't matter—I'm delighted to meet you.

I think I've read every one of your books. [Which is your favorite?]

ARKADINA

Don't be afraid of him, dear. He won't bite you. If he does, I'll kick him for you.

He's nothing special, dear, he's just a man. See, he's embarrassed himself.—

(To Paulina and the others:)

I don't know who's blushing more.

DORN

(Politely, so as not to interrupt the others; to the staff:)

Could we open the curtains now? So maybe we could enjoy the lake.

SHAMRAEFF

(Unconcerned that he's speaking over everyone else:)

Yacob, my man! Open the curtains!

NINA

(To Trigorin:)

It was a .. curious play, wasn't it? It was uh ... different ...

TRIGORIN

Precisely. I don't think I understood it all but you acted it beautifully—you rivaled nature herself.

(A slight pause.)

MASHA Offstage)

(Off in the distance:)

Constantine!!

NINA

...Oh my word, Thank you.

TRIGORIN

Tell me, are there a lot of fish in this lake?

NINA

"Fish"? I don't know—I don't—I would think uh—Yes, I'm sure there are.

TRIGORIN

I haven't been fishing in ... I find there's nothing more relaxing than sitting on a lake's shore in the evening just watching a cork floating and bobbing along the surface.

NINA

Really? Really, I would think that for someone who's tasted the joy of creating something from nothing, no other pleasure could compare.

ARKADINA

Don't embarrass him, dear. I don't think he can turn another shade of red.

SHAMRAEFF

I remember when the famous Silva was singing once in the Opera House at Moscow, he hit a low C: pitch perfect: if it was a high C it would have broken glass.

(Enjoying his own story:)

Then some cantor from the church—he just happened to be sitting in the gallery, suddenly boomed out: "Bravo, Silva!" a whole octave lower.

(Demonstrating in a deep voice:)

"Bravo, Silva!" The audience ... were stunned into silence.

(No reaction. There is instead just an awkward silence.)

DORN

Something like *that*, I suppose.

NINA

I really hate to but I I really do have to go but .. It was such a pleasure meeting you.

ARKADINA

Where? Do you really have to? We simply can't let you.

NINA

My father's waiting for me.

ARKADINA

How cruel he is, really.

(Sharing polite *au revoir* kisses:)

Then I suppose we can't keep you, but it is very hard indeed to let you go.

NINA

If you only knew how hard it is for me to leave [you as well]...

ARKADINA

But you must; I know: sweet sorrow—Somebody must see you home, my pet.

NINA

No, no, I—know the [way.] I have a horse.

SORIN

Stay a little while.

ARKADINA

She has a horse.

NINA

I must.

ARKADINA

If you must.

SORIN

One hour. That's all.

NINA

I so so want to but ... I can't—I really—. Thank you. I'll remember this night forever.

(She shakes hands with him and quickly goes out.)

ARKADINA

Won't we all?

(After she is gone and well out of earshot:)

Poor little thing. They say her mother left the whole estate and a huge fortune to her husband, and now the child is penniless because the father has already willed everything away to his second wife. Isn't that sad?

DORN

Yes, her papa is a perfect beast, and I don't mind saying so—he doesn't deserve her.

SORIN

(Rubbing his chilled hands:)

Can we go in now? It's getting cold out here: my legs are starting to ache.

ARKADINA

Of course. You'd think your legs were turned to stone you go on so much about them. Can you walk? Come on, I'll help you.

(She takes his arm helping him up and provides him his cane and her own arm for support through the following dialogue:)

SHAMRAEFF

(Offering his arm to his wife:)

Madam?

SORIN

I don't want to hear that dog of yours howling again all night again tonight. Take it off the chain and let it rest for one night, would you, Shamraeff?

SHAMRAEFF

I would gladly, sir but ... No, really I can't. You see, you've got the granary's and that's full of millet, and if the dog's not there, I'm afraid thieves might break in if the dog's not there. Then where would we be?: I'm only looking out for your best interests.

(Walking beside Medviedenko:)

"Bravo, Silva!" and he wasn't even a singer, just some simple church cantor.

MEDVIEDENKO

How much does the church pay for cantors, do you know?

ARKADINA

You're sure you can make it; do you want me to get the men to carry you?

SORIN

Just keep me moving, I'll get there.

(All have now exited out except DORN. YACOB steps out again and begins to dismantle the curtain from the stage.)

DORN

So what did you think of the play?

I may be crazy but I think I liked it. There was something [different about it.] When the girl was talking about her solitude and the Devil's eyes—those were the Devil's eyes, were they not—staring out at us from across the lake—it gave me goose bumps.

YACOB

Maybe it was the cold.

DORN

Do you have to take that down now?

YACOB

It's supposed to rain.

DORN

Ahh. Oh, look here comes the author now.

(To Yacob:)

Do that later, you'll only upset the boy.

(But YACOB doesn't reply. He leaves the curtain hanging and goes off in direction of the house instead. TREPLEV enters.)

TREPLEV

Everyone's gone already?

DORN

All but me I'm afraid.

TREPLEV

Masha is yelling my name all over the park. What .. an insufferable creature.

I thought at one time you two were ... [dare I say, lovers?]

[What?]

DORN

Constantine ... your play. I have to tell you I was .. intrigued. It was a little strange, yes, but .. what I saw of it made an impression. Good work, my son.

(TREPLEV again is unable to speak: it is all he can do to not hug the man but he manages to control himself to the point of over enthusiastically taking DORN's hand and shaking it repeatedly—squeezing a bit too eagerly.)

DORN

(Politely rescuing his hand from Treplev's vice grip.)

You're welcome—you're welcome. What a ball of excitement you are. Oh please don't start crying. Please—listen to me—Man to man: choosing your subject in the abstract—I thought was .. touching on brilliant. But I think a work of art should invariably embody our more lofty ideas; You understand?

TREPLEV

So ... I should keep writing?

DORN

Oh, god yes. Yes, yes. But stay with your eternal truths. You have a talent; you need to use that talent to express the deep universal struggle that lies in all of us. This country is at the brink of—you are at the brink of something eternal. I'm just a simple man, but you have me thinking of eternity. What it must be to—if I could—just once—ever experience what must be the exhilaration that you must feel when you're creating something so—I imagine it must rival the company of women. Is that what it's like? For you, I mean?

TREPLEV

I beg your pardon, but where did Nina go?

DORN

(Inspired by more thoughts:)

And another thing, I think—I think every work of art should have a definite object in view. A lesson and a goal.

TREPLEV

And Nina is where?

DORN

Oh, she went home.

TREPLEV

Home? No. (why did she) What am I going to do now? I wanted to see her. I have to see her.

I'm going to follow her.

DORN

Word of advice? The water echoes everything.

(MASHA comes in; she has been running and is out of breath.)

MASHA

Constantine. There you are.

(Catches her breath ...)

Your mother wants you to come in, Mr. Constantine. She is waiting for you, and she wants to see you. I don't know what kind of mood she's in ... they seem to [change every twenty minutes or so] ...

TREPLEV

Tell her I already left. And for heaven's sake, all of you, please, leave me alone! Stop following me around!

DORN

Come, come, my boy, don't be like this; it isn't kind at all.

TREPLEV

Good-bye, doctor, and thank you.

(TREPLEV goes following out toward Nina—away from the house.)

MASHA

The house is ...

DORN

(Sits at the bench, quietly sighing:)

("Ah, youth, youth!")²

MASHA

(Having caught her breath, she too sits at on the bench.)

Everyone always says, "Youth, youth," when they've got nothing else to say.

(Pause. MASHA takes out her snuff box and inhales a fingernail's worth. DORN takes the box from her before she can fill the second nostril.)

DORN

(Flinging the box into the bushes.)

Don't do that, that's disgusting.

² Being the first three words of a quote from Turgenieff's novella *First Love*:

"Ah youth, youth! You don't worry about anything; you seem to possess all the treasures of the universe—even sorrow gives you pleasure, even grief suits you.... And perhaps the whole secret of your charm lies not in your ability to do everything, but in your ability to think that you will do everything."

(A pause. The sound of music can be heard from far off.)

DORN

They've started the music, maybe we should go in.

MASHA

[Wait] a moment?

DORN

Of course.

MASHA

Can I talk to you? I feel like talking.

(She takes a beat then launches in:)

I know I should talk to my father and I know you're not my father but I can't really talk to my mother and I just feel as if I can talk with you. I love my parents but I can't talk to them and if I don't talk to somebody—and I'm desperate. Help me. Help me or I'm afraid I might do something foolish and ruin my whole life.

DORN

what--what is it, child, how can I help?

MASHA

I am in agony. No one, no one can imagine how much I'm suffering. I know I hide it well but ...

(She lays her head on his shoulder and speaks softly:)

I'm in love with Constantine.

DORN

Does he know?

(Her silence says everything.)

Oh, my poor child. My poor, poor child.

(He softly pets her hair in a fatherly fashion:)

(damn this lake.)

(They sit there quietly as the curtain falls.)

END ACT I

ACT II

(The lawn in front of SORIN'S house. The house stands in the background, on a broad terrace. The lake, brightly reflecting the rays of the sun, lies to the left. There are flower-beds here and there. It is noon; the day is hot. ARKADINA, DORN, and MASHA are sitting on a bench on the lawn, in the shade of an old linden as ARKADINA has been applying make up on a obliging but otherwise non-committal MASHA. An open book is lying on DORN'S knees. ARKADINA steps away from her human canvas as the scene begins:

ARKADINA

(To Masha:)

Ohhhh my dear, c'mon, up, get up. Up, up, up.

(MASHA reluctantly following her head. ARKADINA stands beside her.)

Here. Next to me. Alright. Now, you are what? Twenty-two years old? And I am ... [(almost twice your age but I'm not going to say that, am I?)]. So: tell me, Doctor, which of us is the younger looking?

DORN

.. Is there even a choice?.

ARKADINA

You see? Now why is that, do you suppose?

I'll tell you: it's because I work at it; constantly; my heart and mind are always busy, whereas you: you never seem to move off the same spot. Do you even have a life?

MASHA

In my world I've already succumbed to a thousand years, and I trail my carcass behind me like an endless scarf, dragging in the dirt.

ARKADINA

I don't know what that means—but the next thing we have to pay attention to is posture. Head forward, eyes straight, bosom out. Always dress as if you're meeting your new lover. Hair. Teeth. Eyes. Would I ever leave my room without everything perfectly in place? Need I say more?
The walk.

DORN

(Singing softly to himself:)
("Tell her, oh flowers ... ")

ARKADINA (Continued:)

(Demonstrating:)

Aware but never obvious. Toe-heel, toe-heel never heel-toe, heel-toe. Like a fifteen year old girl. Tuck and point. Tuck and point. Do you see? As if you're balancing a book; give me that book.

DORN

Yes, perfect, should I continue with our reading.

(Taking up the book)

Let me see, we had come to the part about the grain-dealer and the rats.

ARKADINA

And the rats, yes, go on. No, wait, it's my turn.

(She takes the book and finds the passage:)

"And the rats." Here it is.

(She reads:)

"It is as dangerous for society to attract and indulge authors as it is for grain-dealers to raise rats in their granaries. Yet society loves authors. And so, when a woman has found one whom she wishes to make her own, she lays siege to him by indulging and flattering him."

(Girl to girl to Masha:)

(That may be how it works in France, but certainly not how it is here in Russia. We don't operate that way. Quite the opposite, just look at me and Trigorin. [or as I call him:] Boris).

(SORIN comes in leaning on a cane, with NINA beside him. MEDVIEDENKO follows, pushing an empty arm-chair.)

SORIN

(In a caressing voice, as if speaking to a child:)

And look what I found growing in our garden.

Father and our evil stepmother have gone away to Tver, and we are free for three whole days! Hence her disarming smile.

ARKADINA

How marvelous for you.

NINA

(moving to ARKADINA, and embraces her:)

Isn't it though? I hope I'm not intruding—I'm so happy—I belong to all of you now.

SORIN

(Sits down in his arm-chair:)

Doesn't she look lovely today?

ARKADINA

A vision. And that dress ... prettiest thing. You look so sweet. Doesn't she just look so sweet?

(She kisses Nina)

But we mustn't praise her too much; we'll only spoil her. Where's Boris?

NINA

I think I saw Mr. Trigorin fishing off the wharf.

ARKADINA

Lord, it's a wonder he isn't bored with that already.

(She begins to read again.)

NINA

What are you reading?

ARKADINA

"On the Water," by Maupassant.

(She tries to read to herself—keenly aware of NINA sitting next to her watching her read. She captures a few lines then closes the book.)

But the rest is neither true nor interesting.

(And lays the book down beside her.)

Are you here to see, Kostya—I'm worried about him.

Tell me, what is the matter with my son? Why is he so dull and depressed lately?

He spends all his days on the lake, and I scarcely ever see the boy anymore.

DORN

(Are we talking about Kostya or Trigorin?)

MASHA

His heart hurts.

(All eyes fall to her. She and MEDVIEDENKO share a look. Wisely, nothing is mentioned about her make-up.

Either way she changes the subject, addressing Nina:)

Recite something from his play.

NINA

... Why would I do that?

MASHA

When he recites, his eyes shine and his face grows pale. His voice is so beautiful and sad, just like a poet. I want to see what happens to your face when you say the same things.

(SORIN begins to snore.)

(Coward.)
DORN

Peter!
ARKADINA

What?
SORIN

You were sleeping.
ARKADINA

No, I wasn't.
SORIN

(A pause.)

ARKADINA
You don't do a thing for your health, brother, you really need to start taking of yourself.

DORN
He's sixty-five.

SORIN
Because we all know, one stops wanting to live at sixty-four.

DORN
I'm just saying the damage is already done.
Fine. Have some chamomile tea.

ARKADINA
I think a journey to some hot springs would be good for him.

DORN
Yes well ... he might go as well as not.

ARKADINA
You don't understand, doctor.

DORN
There's nothing to understand, Madame, in his case; it just is what it is.

MEDVIEDENKO

He might consider giving up smoking.

SORIN

As if that's going to happen; what nonsense

DORN

No, it's not nonsense. It's a proven fact that wine and tobacco alter a man's identity. What happens is your ego breaks in two: and you begin to think of yourself in the third person.

SORIN

Well the two of me want to know if you ... [I was going somewhere with that but I] ... It's all fine for you to condemn smoking and drinking: you've had a full life while I served in the Department of Justice for twenty-eight years. The criminals I put away led more exciting lives than mine. You: you've lived a gallant, carefree life already while the rest of us .. And at sixty-five, all I have left for me is a glass of wine and a good cigar and and and and that's all I have left.

DORN

You may be sixty-five but if you ever want to live into your seventies you'll have to make a few changes—belly-aching that you didn't do more with the life you had when you were young is, forgive me, just a little bit childish.

MASHA

I think its time for lunch.

(She starts to walk away—stops sluggishly:)

(dammit. my foot fell asleep.)

(Either unaware or unconcerned over the reaction her language may or may not have stirred she languidly continues on out off toward the house.)

DORN

She's off to have a couple of drinks before lunch; talk to her in forty years.

SORIN

The poor girl's unhappy.

DORN

Ah, you have a keen sense of the obvious, Councilor.

SORIN

If my legs didn't ache so much, I'd kick you.

ARKADINA

Oh, tell me, what could be duller than this dear tedium of the country? It's too hot here to do anything and it's too quiet to enjoy anything and nobody does anything but sit around and speculate about everybody else's life. It's pleasant enough, my friends, to sit and listen to you here, but to tell you the truth I would so much rather be locked in some room of a hotel learning lines for my next part about people who actually have lives.

NINA

Oh, wouldn't that be wonderful?

SORIN

I had a life: in the city. Where I would sit in my own library with a telephone at my elbow, no one comes in without being first announced by the footman, the streets are full of cabs, and and and and so on and—

DORN

(Sings:)

("Tell her, oh flowers—")

SORIN

(To Dorn—regarding his singing:)

Must you?

(SHAMRAEFF enters from the farm (opposite the house), followed by PAULINA.)

SHAMRAEFF

Thank you. Ladies. How do you do?

(Per protocol he kisses Arkadina's hand and then Nina's.)

[I am] so happy you're looking so well.

(To Arkadina:)

My wife tells me that you mean to go into town with her today. Is that so?

ARKADINA

Yes, that is our plan; why?

SHAMRAEFF

Hm—splendid. But, may I ask, madam, how do you intend to get there?

ARKADINA

Excuse me?

SHAMRAEFF

We are hauling rye today, and all the men are hauling rye. So exactly which horses were you planning to take?

ARKADINA

Which horses? How should I know which horses we have?

SORIN

She's talking about the carriage horses.

SHAMRAEFF

The carriage horses?

But we have no carriage available. And where—If I were to find—find a carriage available; and horses available, where am I to find the harness for them?

(Regrouping:)

My dear madam, I have nothing but the greatest respect for you and your many talents, and I would gladly sacrifice ten years of my life for you and for them, but I regret to inform you that I there are no harnesses, horses or carriages available today.

DORN

“Nor”, my good man.

ARKADINA

But ... if I must go to town, how am I to get there?

SHAMRAEFF

Exactly.

ARKADINA

What if this were a medical emergency?

SHAMRAEFF

You have the doctor here.

ARKADINA

And if this were another sort of an emergency?

SHAMRAEFF

Is this an emergency?

ARKADINA

It .. could be.

SHAMRAEFF

Then that "could be" a problem.

ARKADINA

(Looks to DORN then SORIN then ... not knowing where or who to look to next:)

What an extraordina[ry]—you do not know what it is you're saying—

SHAMRAEFF

I'm afraid, madam, you do not know what it is to run a farm.

ARKADINA

That is—This is entirely unacceptable!! Under these circumstances, Mr. Shamraeff, I must insist! I shall go back to Moscow this very day.

SHAMRAEFF

Under these circumstances, Madame Arkadina, how do you suppose to get there?

ARKADINA

(Through her teeth:)

Order me a carriage for me from the village, or I shall go to the station on foot.

SHAMRAEFF

(Matching her:)

Then under these circumstances, Madame Arkadina, I resign my position and I suggest you start walking. Find yourself another manager.

(He storms off.)

(There is an awkward silence. ARKADINA gathers what things she has brought out with together in an attempt to punctuate her exit:)

ARKADINA

I have never in my entire life ... It is like this every summer: every summer I come here and every summer I am insulted. Every summer it is something. I love you brother, but I swear I shall never set foot on this property again.

(Having gathered her things she marches off toward the house. A beat. She is then seen crossing the length of the scene and disappear again (in the direction of the wharf) as the scene continues. Moments later she crosses into view once again and exiting into the house, followed by TRIGORIN, who carries a bucket and fishing-rod.)

SORIN

What on earth did he—Who do you think you are, sir!?

(Calling off to him:)

I want all the horses brought here at once!

NINA

(To Paulina:)

I can't believe he could--How could anyone talk to Madame Arkadina [that way]? She's famous ... she's ... how can he refuse her?

PAULINA

What am I supposed to do about it?

No, really: put yourself in my place and tell me what can I do?

SORIN

(To Nina:)

First we go to my sister and patch things up with her, maybe if we beg her not to go.

(He looks in the direction in which SHAMRAEFF left.)

Your husband, madam, is an insufferable tyrant.

NINA

(Preventing him from getting up:)

No, you sit—you just sit still, and let us wheel you.

(She and MEDVIEDENKO push the chair before them.)

This is beyond terrible!

SORIN

(As they wheel him into the house:)

Terrible, I know, but he won't leave. (Remind me to have a good talk with that man before the day's out.)

(And they're gone. They go out toward the house. Only DORN and PAULINA are left. Slight pause.)

DORN

Your husband, my dear, deserves nothing more than to be thrown out of here on his neck and crop. But in the end, I'm sure old granny Sorin and his sister will end up begging him to stay. He might even get a raise out of it.

PAULINA

He has to use the carriage horses in the fields today, that's why he can't ... And it's just a .. a little misunderstanding. Again. Look at me: I'm trembling all over. I don't know how I put up with it. That man that man will be death of me yet.

(Changing tone:)

Eugene ... Isn't it time? We're not that young anymore. Why shouldn't we be together for whatever time we have left?

(A pause. DORN tries to sing but no tune comes to his head.)

DORN

I'm fifty-five years old, Madame. I'm afraid I'm rather set in my ways at this point.

PAULINA

I know there have been other women in your life and I know that there probably still are—and you can't take in everybody but what we have...

(Looking into his eyes for something other than panic only to resign herself to the obvious:)

[I understand. Excuse me—] I see I am only bothering you.

(Back at the house NINA can be seen quietly gathering flowers.)

PAULINA

Who am I to think, right? I know my place—just another irrational woman tortured by her own desires. But I'm sure you see women every day—you're a doctor, of course you do—half of your practice must be women ... naked. Coming in for their annual ... checkups. How can you possibly escape that? Why would you ... want to .. to retire? Silly me.

DORN

(As Nina comes toward them.)

Say, how're things going on inside?

NINA

Madame Arkadina is crying, and Mr. Sorin is having what I believe is an attack of asthma.

DORN

..Well then, let us go tend to the wounded, shall we?

NINA

(Hands him the flowers she's gathered.)

These are for you.

DORN

(Caught off guard a moment:)

Why ... thank you.

(He starts off to the house.)

PAULINA

(Following him:)

How thoughtful of you! We'll put them in a vase, shall we?

(As they reach the house:)

(Give me those flowers! Give them to me)

(DORN hands her the flowers; walking a step behind him she absent mindedly begins tearing at the petals until she finally she tears them to pieces and flings them away— following Dorn into the house. Slight pause. The MAID enters from the house and sets about to clear up the glasses and tea cups left about by the residents and guests.)

NINA

(Ignoring protocol:)

Oh my. What a day this is becoming. Who'd have thought to see such a famous actress weeping over such a little thing. It's as if she's almost a real person. And such a brilliant author, read all over the world, doing nothing but fishing all day? I would pinch myself but it would hurt.

(No reply. She returns to picking flowers.)

But here they are: weeping and playing cards and flying into rages like everybody else. I feel so at home here.

(The MAID returns to the house. NINA watches her go quietly. TREPLEV comes in without a hat on, carrying a gun and a dead seagull. NINA is stopped by the sight of him not because of the dead bird itself but more because having it is so unlike Treplev himself.)

TREPLEV

Are you alone?

NINA

... Yes.

(TREPLEV lays the sea-gull at her feet. There is a slight pause. She looks to him, to the bird then back to Treplev.)

NINA

What what what exactly is that is this supposed to mean?

TREPLEV

I was base enough to kill this gull today. I lay it at your feet.

NINA

I can see that.

(Still holding the flowers in one hand she picks the bird up with the other and stands there looking at it.)

NINA (Continued:)

What is happening to you?

TREPLEV

(Giving the moment a slight beat for dramatic effect:)

And in this same way I shall put an end to my own life as well.

NINA

(Matching his beat—searching for the right words ...)

... Who are you anymore?

TREPLEV

"Who am I?" I could ask the same thing of you. I barely recognize you anymore.

NINA

You've changed.

TREPLEV

Me? I didn't even begin to change until after you changed first.

NINA

I didn't change first.

TREPLEV

You most certainly did.

NINA

Did not.

TREPLEV

Did too.

NINA

Did not.

TREPLEV

Too.

NINA

Not.

TREPLEV

Look at you: you can't even stand to have me near you.

NINA

What? You've brought me a dead bird. How'm I supposed to react? All you've been lately is irritable and moody, and when you do talk it's always so dark and riddled in symbols—

NINA (Continued:)

(Referring to the seagull as an example:)

you'll have to forgive me if I fail to follow your deep, deep thoughts. Maybe I'm just too "simple" to understand you.

TREPLEV

This all started when my play failed. A woman can never forgive failure.

NINA

I dropped one line.

TREPLEV

Well you won't have to worry about that now: I've burnt it. Every last page. If you could just see how miserable I am.

NINA

Apparently I can't.

TREPLEV

You abandoned me at my weakest. It's as if I woke up and found this lake dried up and nothing left but a gaping hole where my life used to be. Oh but, I'm sorry, what am I saying? You can't understand me: but what is there to understand? You hated my play; you hate my talents—no wait, what talents? Apparently I have none. To you: I'm nothing. Just another common nothing. That's all I am. Common. Forgettable.

(He sees TRIGORIN, who approaches from the house writing notes in a book.)

Ohh, but here comes your great captain; O my captain. Your real genius, strolling around like another Hamlet; and with his book, too. How perfect for you.

(Mocking:)

"Words, words, words." Look at you. You're melting just being near him. The rays of his sun haven't even reached you and you're already turning to liquid. I'll ... I'll let you two alone, this is one scene I'd rather not share. I ...

(But his words fail him and he leaves NINA alone with the gull and the approaching Trigorin.)

(NINA carefully sets the bird down again, wiping her hands off on her flower stems, covers the bird politely with the same flowers, and then again wipes her hands off on her dress. All the while TRIGORIN jots the following notes in his book.)

TRIGORIN

"Takes snuff" "drinks vodka" "wears black" "is loved by a—"ALWAYS wears black" "—loved by a schoolteacher she—"

NINA

(Before he passes:)

Hello.

(He stops.)

How do you do?

TRIGORIN

Miss Nina. How are you today? Unfortunately, it seems that Irina and I will be leaving here today so, I'm sorry we never got our chance to really talk, did we?

(No reply. She just stares at him. There is an awkward silence being accustomed to this from time to time he presses on:)

I seldom if ever get the chance to meet many pretty young girls now. I can hardly remember what it feels like to be nineteen and—wait, that sounded so wrong, didn't it?—What I meant to say is that the girls in my stories are seldom based on actual people and I'd love to ... get inside your thoughts and trade lives with you for an hour and rummage around a bit. Feel what it is to be you.

NINA

Oh, and I would love to change places with you as well.

TRIGORIN

With me? I'm afraid you'd be rather disappointed.

NINA

Oh, never.

Tell me, if you don't mind me asking, what is it like to be famous? What does it feel like?

TRIGORIN

"Feel?" It doesn't really "feel" anything.

(Thinks on it a moment:)

Either you exaggerate my fame, or else, if it does exist, all I can say is there's no "feeling" to be associated with it.

NINA

Nonsense: you must feel something when you read about yourself in the papers.

TRIGORIN

There is that. Well, to be totally honest, if the critics praise me, I'm happy for an hour or two; and if they hate me, I'm usually depressed for the next three days.

NINA

Now you're just being modest. I think your life must be wonderful. If you only knew how many people envy you! Most people are born to live simple, dreary, useless little lives, lost in the crowd, unhappy and dragging their useless, weary dreams behind them, and then one out of a million, like you, for instance, are born to be remarkable men, with brilliant destinies, living happy and interesting and meaningful lives. You have no idea how lucky you are.

TRIGORIN

Lucky?

(He shrugs his shoulders.)

Yes well ... to hear you talking about fame, and happiness, and great destinies, and all but ... your fine words, though flattering as they are, relate about as much to me as—forgive my saying so—as sweetmeats do, which I never eat, by the way. But you're very young, and you're very kind.

NINA

But your life is so ... beautiful.

TRIGORIN

If you say so.

(He looks at his watch.)

Excuse me, I'm afraid I have to go in and—

(Referring to his notebook:)

Books to write... .

(He starts to go then just as decidedly stops himself. He turns back to Nina and changes his tone:)

I'm sorry, you've stepped on my pet corn, as they say, and I'm not really handling it all that well. But, since you brought it up, let me do this: let me describe for you this bright and beautiful life of mine.

(Secures the thought then launches in:)

It begins with an obsession. Some men obsess over things; some over people; some over ideals. It's not that they want to, mind you, it's more of a hunger. Some demon grip takes hold of a man: he may, for instance, think day and night of nothing but the *moon*: "why's it up there—how do I get to it—what's it made out of—does anybody live there?" Everyone has their own moon. For some ... never mind—I have *my* own moon. Day and night I am held in the grip of one pervasive thought: "I have to write." "I have to write." "I have to write." I can hardly finish one book when something urges me on to write another, and then a third, and then a fourth and all these books overlap each other in my mind screaming "Me" "Me" "Me" all the time. I'm writing constantly; as if I were chained to a treadmill. I *run* from one story to another, and I can't help myself. It's like a drug but there's no rest in it; no peace: now tell me, do you see anything bright and beautiful in that? Yes, it can be a wild life but it never ends: Take now for instance, right now, thrilled as I am to be talking to you—(and I am by the way)—in the back of my mind a little voice is whispering, "You still have a story to finish on your desk at

TRIGORIN (Continued:)

home." The last thing I want to do is to go home. I see a cloud over there, looks like a grand piano. Immediately I tuck away the thought: "use it in a story: 'a cloud hung low in the shape of a grand piano, waiting for the maestro.' Or some such drivel." You smell that? Heliotrope. Mental note: "sickly smell", "a color worn by widows"; have to remember to use that the next time I'm writing a description of a summer evening. You and I are talking: and my thoughts fly around us taking notes—capturing phrases—always working, working, working. When I'd much rather get lost in your eyes and your voice and hang on every word you say and still I know I have to lock these literary treasures away into some mental storage room, hoping that someday, somewhere, they may be useful to me. And as soon as I try to stop working and rush off to the theatre or go fishing, praying for a few moments of relief, some new subject for a story comes rolling through my brain like an iron cannonball lodging itself firmly in the barrel. My desk at home: it owns me. And so I have to go back to it and there I am, again, and I write, and I write, and I write. That is my life. It consumes me. I sound like a lunatic even to myself. A wee bit better than when I was young, I'm afraid: when I was starting out I was terrified. Terrified that no one would read me then terrified they wouldn't like it. Then when they started to like it—they always wanted more and I was terrified I couldn't keep up. They tell you you're wonderful to your face but then you start to think, 'maybe it's a lie'. Maybe it's all a lie and they're just saying those nice things about you to make you want to go out and produce more. I should be in an insane asylum—sometimes I think the only reason I'm not is because when you're in there they won't let you have a pen and paper there because they're afraid you'll go and swallow the ink. And the worst of it is the best years of my life were lost wanting nothing more than to write to people I'll never know. I'll never meet and can't say I really want to. I remember when my first play was produced and I thought, "Now, this is it. This is my audience. These are my people. Right here. With me." And I remember thinking every member of the audience with brown eyes hated me. And everyone with a green or a blue eye felt nothing but apathy or cold indifference. And that, my dear, is the life of an artist. Agony in its purest form.

(NINA flounders a moment for something to say.)

NINA

But when you're writing—when you're creating: when you're actually writing, it has to inspire you, doesn't it?—you're so, so ...

TRIGORIN

Funny? Clever? Witty?

NINA

Doesn't that bring you any happiness?

TRIGORIN

Sometimes the writing itself can be a pleasure. And maybe reading through the proofs. But just as soon as it leaves the printing press I find a phrase I should have never written, or a mistake on page three and I find it nothing but an embarrassment and I wonder what the hell made me write the thing at all? Then the public reads it and they say: "How clever, how witty, but then again, not as good as Tolstoy," or "It made me laugh but not as much as Turgenieff's 'Fathers and Sons,' " and that's the way it is. And that's the way it'll always be. To my dying day I shall hear people say: "Clever and witty; clever and witty," and nothing more; and when I am gone, those that knew me will say as they pass my grave: "Here lies Trigorin, a clever writer, but he was no Turgenieff."

NINA

Forgive me saying this but maybe you've just been spoilt by your own success.

TRIGORIN

[Have I now?] And how would you measure "my success"? I've never pleased myself; as a writer, I've never liked my work at all. I'm more like a drunkard but intoxicated on the fumes of my own brain, it seems. And there have been times—and I confess more times than not—that I hardly even know what I'm writing. I'm here in the midst of this beautiful utopia: with a beautiful girl, by a beautiful lake, full of trees and birds and blue skies and ...

(Points to his head.)

NINA

"You have to write."

TRIGORIN

"I have to write." Because the public is screaming for more. And who am I to keep them waiting? I love the sound of their laughter, but as a writer I feel I should be writing something important. I owe it to my country. To give a voice to the people's sorrows, to their future, and then there's science, and the rights of man, and on and on and on and on. So I write about everything and say ... nothing. I can describe a landscape better than the best of them but so what?

NINA

Maybe you don't realize how important your writings are to people. You're discontent? Aren't we all at some level? But you need to know that to the rest of us you are more than a great and splendid man. You are the people's voice. You're more than that you're a ...

TRIGORIN

a god?

(They share a smile.)

NINA

To be a writer, or be an actress : to be the voice, the heart, of the people: I could give up anything— I could endure want, and disillusionment, my own family turning against me, and even my own dissatisfaction with myself; but in return: I would demand fame; real, eternal fame!

(Aware she may be blushing:)

Just thinking about it ...

ARKADINA (Offstage:)

(From inside the house:)

Boris! Boris!

TRIGORIN

She's calling me in, probably to pack. My dear, this was very lovely.

(His eyes rest on the lake.)

Why would anyone ever want to leave this place?

NINA

Do you see that house over there, on the far shore?

TRIGORIN

That one?—Yes.

NINA

That was my mother's. She died. I was born there. I've lived my whole life beside this lake. I know every inlet and every swamp and every little island in it.

TRIGORIN

[Such a beautiful place, I can't imagine—]

(He catches sight of the dead sea-gull:)

Oh my word, what is that?

NINA

A gull. Constantine shot it.

TRIGORIN

Oh. My ...

(Pulls out his book again:)

What a lovely bird.

(Uncaps his pen.)

I hate to have to go but ...

Tell me, is there any way you might persuade Irina to stay?

(He writes something in his note-book.)

NINA

Me? Why would she want—She wouldn't want to listen to me. Who would want to list—... What are you writing?

TRIGORIN

... just a thought.

(He puts writing implements back in his pocket.)

Just an idea for a short story.

(Seeing his most endearing fan waiting for more.)

A young girl grows up on the shores of a lake, someone like you. She loves the lake the same way the gulls do. She's happy and she's free. Just like the birds are. And by and by—she meets a man who chances to come that way, and he takes her in and ultimately destroys her out of his own idleness, just as if she was this gull right here.

NINA

.. That's not very funny.

TRIGORIN

The humor's in the telling—not the plot.

(Another beat: ARKADINA appears at one of the windows.)

ARKADINA

Boris! Where are you?

TRIGORIN

I'm on my way; be right there.

(He goes toward the house. ARKADINA remains at the window.)

ARKADINA

Boris?

TRIGORIN

What do you need?

ARKADINA

I've changed my mind: we're not going away, after all.

TRIGORIN

(Continuing into the house.)

Yes dear.

(NINA is now alone again, lost in her own thoughts.)

Pinch me.

NINA

END ACT TWO

ACT III

(The dining-room of SORIN'S house. Doors open out of it to the right and left. A table stands in the centre of the room. Trunks and boxes encumber the floor, and preparations for departure are evident. TRIGORIN is sitting at a table eating his breakfast, as MASHA stands beside him, not quite tipsy but not quite sober either—somewhere in the ether between the two.)

MASHA

I'm only telling you these things because you're a writer and as a writer you may find this ... useful in your ...

TRIGORIN

Writing?

MASHA

(Points at him: "yes"; conceding him the right word.)

I can tell you honestly I think that if he *had* killed himself that I would have had—had to have gone next. But unfortunately, I am a survivor. And I have decided ... I have decided to

(long pause for what seems no reason whatsoever)

tear this love of mine out of my heart by the roots.

TRIGORIN

And how will you do that?

MASHA

By marrying Medviedenko.

TRIGORIN

The school teacher?

MASHA

Is that what he does? Teaches [school]? Then: yes. The school teacher, yes.

TRIGORIN

I don't quite see the necessity to take things to that extreme.

MASHA

Ohhhhh ... you wouldn't, would you? You ..if you only knew—if you only you knew what it is to love *without* hope [for years and years], waiting [forever] for something that—it will never come. So, I have decided to abandon love altogether and [I will] not marry for love—that boat has set sail—but for me the institution

MASHA (Continued:)

of marriage will at least be a welcome change. It will bring new lows and depths to deaden the memories of an otherwise uneventful and unmemorable .. [past. Shall we have] another drink?

TRIGORIN

I think maybe you've had enough.

MASHA

Phhphhhh.

(She refills a glass)

Don't look at me with that face. I'll have you know women drink more often than you might imagine. It's just that most of them do it in secret, and not openly and honestly, as I do. They do indeed, and what more: it is always either vodka or brandy.

(They touch glasses.)

Write that in your book. You're easy to talk to, you know that? I'm going to miss you.

(They drink.)

TRIGORIN

And I'm just as sorry to have to leave.

MASHA

Then stay. Just ask her if you can stay.

TRIGORIN

She thinks it's probably for the best that we leave now. Her son—

MASHA

(please don't mention his name)

TRIGORIN

... Yes. His behavior has been a bit erratic / to say the least.

MASHA

By shooting himself ; it was just / a graze.

TRIGORIN

If you recall he *first* killed that bird and *then* he tried to shoot and kill himself—

MASHA

He didn't though.

TRIGORIN (Continuing:)

(—adapting his response accordingly to her interjection:)

No, no, thank God for that, and—but now I understand he's challenged me to a duel—though I can't imagine why. He's moody / to sday the least.

MASHA

(He's a terrible shot. He would miss. Unless you're a bird.)

TRIGORIN

Either way—it's probably for the best that we go. He keeps going on about this new art form he's stumbled upon as if there's not room enough for both his art and the rest of the world's.

MASHA

I'd say he's jealous—But that's none of my business (anymore).

(A pause. YACOB walks through the room carrying a trunk; NINA comes in and stands by the window.)

MASHA

It's settled: I will marry the school teacher. He's not clever .. he's not handsome., he's not .. but he is a good ... man. God knows he's a poor man but ... he loves me dearly and I deserve that much, I guess, and I do feel something for him [too], I think. I feel sorry for him at least. That's something, isn't it? Well

(Looking at Trigorin oddly more sober than before she started drinking:)

Goodbye then. I wish you a pleasant journey and ask only that when you think of me: that you would think of me kindly.

(She offers him her hand and as he takes hold of hers she shakes hands with him firmly.)

Thank you for your time here. And be sure to send me your books.

(Another thought:)

And make sure you write something in them when you send them.

(And another thought.)

Nothing too formal—but nothing too personal either.

(One more clarification:)

Write this: "To Masha, who, despite everything else, is for some unknown reason, is still living in this world."

(One last thought—no never mind—no more thoughts: but with her hands she bids one more:)

[Farewell.]

(She goes out.)

NINA

(Holding out a closed hand to Trigorin.)

Odd or even?

TRIGORIN

(Taking the moment to switch gears from Masha to Nina—
not knowing what he's answering for but jumping right in:)

Even.

NINA

[Ah well, No, it's] odd. I had only one pea in my hand. I wanted to see whether I was going to become an actress or not. If only I had someone would advise me on that.

TRIGORIN

That's not something you can generally advise on. I've learned that nobody usually likes the answer.

(There is a slight but awkward pause.)

NINA

I know you're leaving today ... And we'll probably never meet like this again and I just—I wanted to give you something—it's nothing magnificent or anything—it's just a—

(Giving it to him:)

It's a medallion. I had your initials engraved on it, and on this side is the name of one of your books: "Days and Nights." Just something [to remember me by] ...

TRIGORIN

That is so sweet.

(He kisses the medallion.)

It's lovely..

NINA

Think of me sometimes.

TRIGORIN

I am sure I will never forget you. I shall always remember you [just as I saw you] on a bright summer's day—You know which day I'm speaking about?— on the lawn, a week ago?: and you were wearing chiffon, and we talked [alone together] and time stood still, and there was that ... white seagull laying on the bench beside us.

NINA

(Of all the things to remember?:)

(... a seagull ...)

Please, before you go—give me just two more minutes of your time alone.

(TRIGORIN almost responds but NINA instead softly squeezes his hand (which still holds the medallion) and

then leaves quickly out to the left. At the same moment ARKADINA comes in from the right, followed by SORIN in a long coat, dressed and decorated in his formal court attire, and by YACOB, who is busy packing.)

ARKADINA

No; stay here.

SORIN

Why not?

ARKADINA

You can barely walk across a room—

(To Trigorin:)

Who was that just now, was that the neighbor girl? / I'm so sorry I interrupted your little tete-a-tete.

TRIGORIN

Why [yes]—she went—

ARKADINA (Continuing:)

Oh well, she's gone. We have everything packed and I'm completely exhausted.

TRIGORIN

(Reading the inscription on the medallion)

"Days and Nights, 121, 11, 12."

YACOB

(Clearing the table:)

Shall I pack your fishing rods, too, sir?

TRIGORIN

Yes, you can take out the books, I've already read them.

YACOB

Very well, sir.

TRIGORIN

You can have them if you want I can autograph them for you.

(But Yacob is already gone. To himself:)

(Page. Page 121. 11 and 12 ... lines. I love a puzzle.)

TRIGORIN (Continued:)

(To Arkadina:)

This may sound rude, but do have any of my own books here in the house?

(The MAID also enters, or should I say, makes her appearance known, busying herself with tidying up and eventually clearing the table.)

ARKADINA

You just told him to give them away.

TRIGORIN

Ones I've written, not ones I've read.

ARKADINA

I .. maybe in my brother's library.

(To the Maid as he leaves with the morning dishes—regarding fetching Trigorin as book:)

Be a dear.

Maybe in the corner cupboard.

(The MAID removes a first set of dishes and reaching the door is met by the COOK, who holds the door open for her [and in doing so making their own presence known. Holding the door until the MAID returns for the rest of the dishes.]

TRIGORIN

I can look.

(Jokingly to Arkadina as he exits:)

Don't leave without me.

(Throughout the following scene the MAID, the COOK, and YACOB politely find reasons to busy themselves in dining room—never lingering too long but ... you get the idea.)

SORIN

This old house and I will be lonely when you're gone.

ARKADINA

You have company. What would you do in Moscow anyway?

SORIN

Oh, I don't know ... Breathe?

(He laughs.)

The carriage will be here at one o'clock. I thought we could all go away together.

ARKADINA

How sweet. A whole hour. ...

But honestly, I think it best if you stay here. Please. Stay here and look after my boy? You need a purpose; he needs guidance. It'll be good for both of you.

(After letting that sink in.)

I would stay if I could but I can't so ... And I suppose I'll never know why he did what he did ...

SORIN

Shot himself.

ARKADINA

.. And I suppose none of us will ever really know why but I suspect it has something to do with jealousy, so the sooner I take Trigorin away, the better.

SORIN

... Irina .. you know I love you, [How do I say this politely?] but have you thought there might be another reason besides Trigorin for Kostya's behavior? He's a .. such a bright boy living in the middle of nowhere. He has no money,

ARKADINA

There it is.

SORIN (Continuing:)

Hear me out. He has no job, no future, no goals to speak of, and otherwise absolutely nothing to do here. I think he's more embarrassed and depressed than you give him credit for. I love your son dearly, I do, I am devoted to him and I'm sure he feels the same way about me but I also think he feels rather useless here. He needs to go out and make his mark on this world and stop feeling like someone's kenneled pet.

ARKADINA

Are we talking about him or yourself? And why would you bring this all up now? Am I supposed to just fix things? Am I the fixer now?

(The thought suddenly comes to her:)

Maybe he could join the army. Or are you talking about you because I think you're a little old.

SORIN

Maybe—maybe ... maybe if you gave the boy a little money to get by on.

ARKADINA

Starting the word: but refusing to say it:)

(Mmmmmmm[money].)

SORIN (Continuing still:)

For one thing he ought to be able to dress like a human being. Have you seen what he wears? He's had the same damn coat and hat for the last--over three years now. He doesn't even own an overcoat.

(Laughing)

And it wouldn't hurt him to sow a few wild oats as well. Do you remember what it was like to be his age? Let him get out and see the world for godsakes, it wouldn't / cost that--

ARKADINA

Why is it whenever I leave here, you have to have a tete-a-tete about money?

SORIN

Why is it when I bring up money you always leave; he's your son?

ARKADINA

Can we skip the vignette?

Maybe a new set of clothes wouldn't be out of the question but sending him off on a vacation: no, I don't think so. No. And no, I don't think I can manage a new wardrobe right now. I ... I just can't. I don't have the money for it.

(SORIN laughs.)

ARKADINA

I haven't.

SORIN

Very well. You know your finances better than I. Forgive me, darling; please, don't be angry with me. It was only suggesting just a suggestion and I know you would help if you could.

ARKADINA

I would.

SORIN

I know.

ARKADINA

But I can't.

SORIN

It's not your fault.

ARKADINA

I really don't have it.

SORIN

I know: you don't have it.

ARKADINA

(Starting to weep:)

I don't have any money.

SORIN

I know. I understand. I'd give him the money myself if I had it but you know all my pension goes to the farm manager and he takes it and puts it all back into the farm or into cattle or bees, or whatever it is they buy around here and then the bees die, and the cows die and I can never even get them to let me have a horse.

ARKADINA

Of course I have a little set aside but what I have [goes so fast and it's not [coming in like it used to, and I have to keep up with] Expenses. I'm an actress; I have to be seen and ... and I have to keep up appearances and ...

(switching gears on a dime to the staff:)

I see you!

(And with that the STAFF all busy themselves as they scurry out again during which SORIN stills himself:)

SORIN

You are a dear, and I love you so much, you know that but I think something might be the matter with *me* again.

(He staggers.)

I feel a little ...

(He reaches to support himself against a piece of furniture.)

A little

ARKADINA

(Rushing to him:)

Peter!?

(She tries to support him.)

Peter?! If you think you're—Oh my ...

(She calls:)

Help! Somebody! Help!

(But the STAFF do not return:)

Oh my god.

(TREPLEV and MEDVIEDENKO finally rush in; TREPLEV has a bandage around his head.)

ARKADINA

I think he fainted!

SORIN

(Gathering himself together:)

Nothing of the kind—I am fine. No, no, I'm I'm all right.

(He smiles and drinks some water.)

It's over now.

ARKADINA

Is he— ... ?

TREPLEV

Don't be frightened, mother, this just happens sometimes. He has these spells every now and then, they're not dangerous.

TREPLEV (Continued:)

You need to go lie down, Uncle.

(The MAID finally pokes her head back in:)

SORIN

Alright, but only for a few minutes. I am going to Moscow all the same; I'm just going to lie down a little before we start.

ARKADINIA

You're a little late.

(He starts out; leaning on his cane.)

(The MAID pulls herself back out.)

MEDVIEDENKO

(Giving him his arm:)

I have a riddle for you. Tell me if you've heard it: What walks on four legs in the morning; on two legs at noon; and on three legs in the evening?

SORIN

(Laughing while not taking Medviedenko up on his offer:)

Thank you, I can make it alone.

MEDVIEDENKO

(What did I say?)

(Still he follows SORIN out.)

ARKADINA

Well, that was more than I needed—right before I'm leaving—he scared me half to— ...

(She chooses not to use the "d" word.)

TREPLEV

He's not good out here in the country. The idleness is killing him. Mother, I never ask, and you know that ...

ARKADINA

(then don't.)

TREPLEV (Continuing:)

but if you would only untie your purse strings for once, and lend him a thousand rubles—

(Before she can say 'No':)

He could spend a whole year in town.

ARKADINA

What do you people expect of me? I'm an actress, not a banker.:Kostya, I have no money left.

(A slight pause.)

TREPLEV

[OK, forget it: I] was just asking.

(Another pause.)

TREPLEV

Before you go could I bother you to change my bandage for me?

(ARKADINA smiles politely and goes to the cupboard.)

TREPLEV

(Wanting to but choosing not to say "Mommy":)

Thank you, Mother.

ARKADINA

(Takes out a box of bandages and a bottle of iodoform from the cupboard.)

The doctor's running rather late, I take it. For someone who prides himself on being on time ...

TREPLEV

He promised to be here at nine, and now it's closer to noon already.

ARKADINA

Sit down.

(As she removes the bandage off his head:)

Ohhh, aren't we a sight? You look as if you're wearing a turban. We had stranger in the kitchen yesterday, + asked what nationality you belonged to. Your scratch is almost healed. I don't expect there'll even be a scar.

(She kisses his head.)

No more silly games while I'm gone?

TREPLEV

No, mother, I'll wait till you get back.

ARKADINA

Please don't.

TREPLEV

Don't worry yourself. It was a moment of ... [insane despair, I—].. wasn't even— ... I just lost [all control] for a moment ... It will never happen again.

ARKADINA

It better not. I don't know what I'd do without you.

TREPLEV

(He kisses her hand.)

[You have such a soft touch.] You should have been a nurse. Do you remember—remember when you were still acting at the State Theatre—

ARKADINA

That was so long ago.

TREPLEV

And I was— ...

(Stops a moment to allow her to interject but she doesn't—
he continues:)

I was just—I don't know: seven or something, and there was a fight one day in our courtyard. There was this poor washerwoman and she was almost beaten to death. They picked her up and she was unconscious as I recall and you: you nursed her till she was well, and you bathed her children in our washtubs. You remember?

ARKADINA

[I'm] afraid not.

(She begins putting on a new bandage.)

TREPLEV

Two ballet dancers were living in the same house with us, and they used to come and drink coffee with you in the mornings.

ARKADINA

I remember that.

TREPLEV

They were very religious as I recall.

ARKADINA

What makes you say that?

TREPLEV

Well, their room was opposite mine—we shared one wall—and I used to hear them at night saying, "oh god, oh god, oh god, oh— ... "

(He lets the realization quietly sink in:)

oh god ...

(ARKADINA finishes with his head dressing without comment.)

TREPLEV

I love you, Momma.
These last few days ... I've felt like I did when I was a kid ... like your son again.

ARKADINA

You'll always be my son.

TREPLEV

You're all I have, you know that?
(Before she can reply—or at worse: not reply:)
Why—why do you let yourself be controlled by that man?

ARKADINA

No one controls me, Kostya, you should know that. You don't understand him, honey. He's a good man. He has a wonderfully noble personality.

TREPLEV

Noble? Don't talk to me about noble—Noble doesn't walk out on a duel. He knows very well that I challenged him and he's running away like a coward.

ARKADINA

[Nonsense!] He's leaving because I asked him to.

TREPLEV

And that makes it better? Hiding behind a woman—there's noble for you. Why, I'll wager that right now while we're talking about him, he's probably out in the garden laughing at us at this very moment. That or else he's enlightening Nina's mind: trying to convince her into thinking he's some kind of genius.

ARKADINA

You enjoy saying unpleasant things to me, don't you? Well, I'll have you know that I have nothing but the greatest respect for that man, and I must ask you not to speak ill of him in my presence.

TREPLEV

And I'll have you know I have no respect for him at all. And his books make me sick.

ARKADINA

Why is it that people with little or no talent have nothing better to do than criticize those who are really gifted?

TREPLEV

"Gifted"? I have more talent in my little finger / than all the rest of you put together!

ARKADINA

I hope you enjoy stewing your own misery.

TREPLEV (Continued:)

(Tearing the bandage off his head.)

You are nothing but puppets. Slaves to your own convention. The only reason your public admires you is because they don't know any better. Because you and your bourgeoisie strangle any other voice that doesn't agree with yours so the stupid just stay stupid.

ARKADINA

You sound like the students marching on St. Petersburg.

TREPLEV

Good. And we refuse to accept your ignorant points of view. Yours Or his--And his. I won't do it!

ARKADINA

Do you know what you sound like right now? Like the lunatics out in th—

TREPLEV

Oh just go back to your beloved stage and act in your shit ridden plays you love so much.

ARKADINA

I have never acted in a—

(Doesn't repeat the word:)

—"play like that" in my life. You couldn't even write the trashiest music-hall farce if you tried, you idle good-for-nothing!

TREPLEV

Miser!

ARKADINA

Urchin!

(A beat. TREPLEV sits down and begins to cry softly.
ARKADINA begins to pace.)

ARKADINA

Don't do that. Don't cry. You mustn't cry! Be a ...

(She stops ... tries to gain her composure but ...)

You really mustn't cry ...

(She begins to give in to tears herself.)

(ARKADINA sits down beside TREPLEV. They are both now crying, feeding off each other's emotional state. The sobbing grows in intensity, turning from each other and then to each other as the tear fest runs its course and they eventually regain their composure. ARKADINA kisses her son: his forehead, his cheeks, his head.)

ARKADINA

Ohhh, My darling [child], I'm so sorry—I'm so sorry. Please forgive me. Forgive your stupid wicked mother.

TREPLEV

She doesn't love me, Momma. She doesn't. She did. I thought she did but she doesn't. And I'll never write anything again. I don't even want to.

ARKADINA

She does.

TREPLEV

She doesn't.

ARKADINA

She does.

TREPLEV

She did.

ARKADINA

She will. She will, love, she will. Don't be like this. This will all pass. He is going away today, and she will love you once more.

(Dabbing away at his tears:)

Stop your crying now. We're good. We're good now. We have made peace now, right?

TREPLEV

(Kisses the hand that tried to dry his tears:)

Yes, mother.

ARKADINA

(Softly, lightening the mood, as if reciting a children's rhyme:)

“Oh god-oh god-oh god-oh god-oh god-oh god-oh god-oh god-oh

TREPLEV and ARKADINA

(Treplev joins in with Arkadina in the mantra:)

god-oh god-oh god-oh god-oh god-oh god-oh god-oh god” ...

(They trail off together, sharing a moment of ignorant innocence.)

ARKADINA

(Tenderly:)

So ... you can make your peace with him again, too, hunh? You don't really want to have a duel.

TREPLEV

I did.

ARKADINA

No, you didn't. You don't want to fight. Promise me you won't fight? Promise.

TREPLEV

I [promise]. But I won't ... talk to him. You can't ... ask that [of me]. It's too much. I won't do it.

(As Trigorin comes in:)

And, of course, here he is right on cue. [I'm going. Goodbye,] Mother. I'll let the doctor tend to my head ... if he ever gets here.

(He exits.)

TRIGORIN

(Looking through the pages of a

book:)

(Yes. Page 121 yes. Lines 11 and 12; what does it say ...

"If at any time you should have need of my life, come and take it."

(The MAID returns, only to put away the bandages and iodine left out on the table.)

(TREPLEV returns, picks up the bandage off the floor and exits again. The MAID exits again back the way she came.)

ARKADINA

(Checks her watch:)

The carriage will be here in just a few minutes.

TRIGORIN

("If at any time you should have need of my life, come and take it.")

ARKADINA

Are you all packed?

TRIGORIN

(Why wouldn't I be?)

(The COOK enters with two cups of tea or coffee or any such excuse, sets them on the table and then exits back towards the kitchen.)

TRIGORIN (Continued:)

(Why don't I remember ever having written this? What was I thinking when I wrote that?)

(To Arkadina:)

What does this sound like to you?

(Looking at Irina while reciting the line one more time:)

"If at any time you should have need of my life, come and take it."

ARKADINA

That's nice dear.

TRIGORIN

I say we stay one more day.

ARKADINA

("Smiling":)

I say we don't.

TRIGORIN

Why not? Just one more day.

(ARKADINA shakes her head.)

TRIGORIN

Just one.

ARKADINA

Do you think I'm daft? You don't think I know why you want to stay here "One more day"? I know, I see, I understand, and that's exactly why we have to go. You're not thinking clearly, dearest. Be logical.

TRIGORIN

Oh, but I am. I am and I would ask the same of you: be logical.

(No reply. He takes her hand.)

You . . . are such a wonderful woman. Generous to a fault. Giving. Understanding. So, in honor of that same spirit of . . . charity: I'm asking you: give this one thing to me.

[I'm asking you to] look beyond your own emotions here and give me this.

ARKADINA

And why on god's earth would I do that?

TRIGORIN

... Think of it as research. Just as you research for a role—which keeps you brilliant by the way—

ARKADINA

Don't flatter / me—

TRIGORIN

I need this.

ARKADINA

(Just before the door to the kitchen just starts to push open:)

If You walk Through That Door.

(The door rests back and remains closed.)

ARKADINA

(At a loss for words:)

What? Do you think you love her?

TRIGORIN

Who can say? How can I know what 'love' is if we're not allowed to explore it?

ARKADINA

"We?"

TRIGORIN

That's not what I'm saying (although)—I'm drawn to this girl—

ARKADINA

I know full well what part of you is drawn to / her and where—

TRIGORIN

NO, no, that's not what this is about—

ARKADINA

And that's supposed to make me feel better?

TRIGORIN

I swear to you, I would never do anything inappropriate: I have morals here. I do. I would never dream of spending time with anyone else while totally devoted to you. That would just be wrong in so many ways, so, I'm asking you to ... let me explore this. The way I view it there are people who walk around half awake in this world; only half alive. And I feel as if I'm one of them—which helps me write to "these" people. But what about the other half: fully alive? Fully awake? Don't I need to understand them? Here I am, speaking with you and I'm only half here—the other half of me is ...

ARKADINA

Don't ... say it.

TRIGORIN

I'm only saying.

ARKADINA

Don't.

TRIGORIN

Let me .. just .. explore this. I don't know how else to put it.

ARKADINA

Stop it. Just .. stop it. What do you think you're doing to me—how do you expect me to respond to this? I'm just an ordinary woman. I'm not some ... Boris, you're making me nervous.

TRIGORIN

But you're not ordinary. We're not ordinary. And you could be extraordinary if you could just—consider it research.

ARKADINA

You said that already.

TRIGORIN

But that's all it is. That's all it would be. Young love. Love, without conditions, without limits, without the ... without experience—unbridled. I need to touch that. I need to delve into ... you understand what I'm saying here? It's not about the physical attraction here—

ARKADINA

So, you're not physically attracted to her?

TRIGORIN

It's about "love." Love that rules the world. What is that, really? What does it look like?—What does it feel like?—What does it ... When I was younger I was so buried in my writing and my career I never really lived. I wrote about living—my characters lived but I never lived. But now—now I have the chance to—

ARKADINA

Shut up!!

TRIGORIN

Let me have this. I'll never ask for anything else. It's not what you're thinking it is.

ARKADINA

Have you all conspired to torture me today?

TRIGORIN

(You don't understand. How do I make you understand?)

ARKADINA

What is there to understand? Am I such an old and ugly wretch that you can just walk in here and insult me like this?

TRIGORIN

(Moving softly to her:)

That's not ...

ARKADINA

(Taking hold of him she kisses him—a long hard kiss that brings them both to their knees, leaving them both breathless.)

You've gone a little crazy. It happens. But know this: you are mine. You are the last chapter of *my* life.

(She falls to her knees, clutching him.)

You are my joy. my pride. my light. You are ...

(Holding onto his knees.)

I can't let you go. How can I let you go? What would happen to me? What would people say?

TRIGORIN

(Trying to get her to let go:)

Someone might / come in.

ARKADINA

Let them! Let them come! I am not ashamed of my love. You want love without constrictions? Without limits? Without ... what did you call it?

TRIGORIN

(conditions.)

ARKADINA

And then what? And then what? You'll be bored in an hour and then where will you be?

(She kisses him, starting with his hands.)

You want to do this foolish thing—you want to be foolish, but I don't want you to be. I'm sorry, love, I can't let you do it. I just can't. I won't. Because you're mine. Don't you see? You're mine. This forehead is mine, these eyes are mine, this silky hair is mine. Every-*part-of-you* is mine. You are so clever, so brilliant, half the country doesn't love you: the whole country loves you—what would *they* say? Your country needs you. I need you. And you're writing doesn't need this. Your writing is already superb; so fresh, so funny, witty, clever, so full of life. And I

ARKADINA (Continued:)

know you think I'm just flattering you but trust me when I tell you this: if you follow this foolish dream of yours that when you wake up and find yourself all alone ... what will happen to your writing then? We have enough sad Russians writing about despair. You don't want to be one of them, do you? Look into my eyes. You know I'm telling you the truth. You know it, you do.

(She holds him closer, nothing is off the table:)

You know. You know I can make you happy. Who needs love when you can have happiness instead? Who else would dare to tell you the truth about yourself? You need me. You do.

(And leaves him wanting more.)

I know. I know you do. How could you leave all this? You can't. You know you can't.

(Pause.)

TRIGORIN

(Why can't I say "no" to you; Why am I so weak; Is it possible women like that?)
You're right. You win. Take me—but don't let me out of your sites.

ARKADINA

(Smiles to herself coquettishly a moment ... then:)

Of course, if you have to stay I understand. I can go alone. You can follow me in week's time. After all, why should you not languish by the lake a while longer—with your .. fishing?

TRIGORIN

[Why do you toy with me so?] We'll go. Together.

ARKADINA

As you like. Together.

(A moment. The MAID returns again, to retrieve the cups brought on earlier by the COOK as switches gears to TRIGORIN writes something in his note-book.)

ARKADINA

What are you writing now?

TRIGORIN

Something I heard this morning. Just a phrase: "A grove of maiden pines." I might use it in a book at some point..

So, we're really going then? Condemned, once more, to railway carriages, train stations and restaurants, hamburger steaks and endless conversations.

(SHAMRAEFF comes in followed by YACOB with a makeshift luggage trolley fashioned from farm equipment.)

SHAMRAEFF

I am sorry to have to inform you that your carriage is at the door. Time to go. Your train leaves at five minutes after two. So. Is this everything?

(Starts gathering trunks and suitcases.)

When you get to Moscow, my dear madam, would you be kind enough to inquire for me as to where Suzdaltzeff the actor is now? Is he still alive? I remember back [in] the day we used to be drinking companions back in the—Did you ever see him in "The Stolen Mail?" oh my [god] he was hilarious. There was a dramatic actor by the name of uh Izmailoff or something like—he was in the same company, as I remember, he was also damned good. (Don't bother rushing, madam; you still have a whole five minutes.)

(Loading up Yacob with the bulk of things to carry manually:)

They both did this one play together once and this one night they were doing this scene where—

(Laughing at the memory of it already:)

—when in the play they were both searching for something and Izmailoff (for the case of—we'll decide that's his name) was supposed to yell out "We've been trapped!" and instead he yells out: "We've been tapped!"

(He laughs again, alone, with the joke:)

Tapped!

(And, of course, no one else laughs along. Meanwhile the MAID has brought ARKADINA her hat, coat, parasol, and gloves. The COOK looks hesitatingly through the door on the right, and finally makes their way into the room. PAULINA comes in. MEDVIEDENKO also enters.)

PAULINA

(Presenting Arkadina with a little basket:)

Here are some plums for your journey. They're the sweet ones. You may want something to nibble on, on the way.

ARKADINA

How very kind of you, Paulina. (were you in the kitchen this [whole time]?)

PAULINA

Goodbye, sweetie. I hope you found everything ... If things haven't been quite up to—as you could have wished for ... I'm sorry.

(Unable to hold it back any longer, she begins to weep.)

ARKADINA

Don't cry, honey. It was a wonderful visit. Everything was .. just .. delightful. You needn't cry.

(SORIN comes in through the door on the left, dressed in a long coat with a cape, and carrying his hat and cane. He crosses the room.)

SORIN

Irina. Time to leave, unless you want to miss the train. I'll be in the carriage.
(He exits out the front door.)

MEDVIEDENKO

I ... guess I'll just walk to the station then. And I can meet you there.
It's only six miles. Mostly downhill.
(He gives a moment for an objection. There is none.
He exits unceremoniously.)

ARKADINA

Well, goodbye everybody. Goodbye. Next summer, God willing.
(To the household as the maid servant, YACOB, and the cook kiss her hand.)

Don't forget me.

(She gives the MAID a ruble.)

([This is] Just For You.)

(She then offers her hand to the cook; privately:)

(I gave a ruble to the girl for all three of you.)

THE COOK

Thank you, mistress; a very pleasant journey to you.

YACOB

God bless you, mistress.

(ARKADINA hands the plums back to the MAID as she heads for the door:)

SHAMRAEFF

(Interrupting her grand exit:)

Send us a line to cheer us up.

(To Trigorin:)

Good-bye, sir.

ARKADINA

(Reclaiming her exit:)

Where is Constantine? Tell him I'm leaving. I must say goodbye to him.

(To Yacob as he exits loaded down with her luggage:)

I gave the cook a ruble for all three of you.

(All go out through the door on the right. The stage remains empty. Sounds of farewell are heard. The maid comes running back to fetch the basket of plums and re-exits. TRIGORIN then returns back in hollering to them outside as he enters:)

TRIGORIN

Oh damn; I just forgot my walking stick I'll be right—.

(To himself as well as those waiting:)

I think I left it out on the terrace.

(He goes toward the door on the right where his walking stick is leaning against the wall as NINA enters from within the house.)

Hello there. We were .. just leaving.

NINA

I knew you'd be back.

TRIGORIN

(Gathering his cane:)

For my stick.

(There is an awkward pause.)

NINA

I've made a decision.

(Silence. NINA is standing between Trigorin and the door.)

I have decided to follow my dream. I'm going on the stage. I'm running away [and] leaving my father, and starting a new life. As an actress. In Moscow.

(There is a pause: TRIGORIN looks to Nina, to the door beyond her and back to Nina again—to the door—to Nina ...)

TRIGORIN

Go to the Hotel Slavianski Bazar. Let me know as soon as you get there. I'll be at the Grosholski House in Moltchanofka Street.

(A beat.)

[I have to go now.]

(A pause. He tries to move around her toward the door)

NINA

Please, one more minute?

TRIGORIN

(In a low voice—pleading with himself to be stronger:)

"No"? "No"?

(But he lingers too long, too close ...)

And I shall see those glorious eyes again. That [wonderful, ineffably tender] smile. Those [gentle] features ...

oh ... god

(Too close: they kiss as the curtain falls.)

END ACT III

ACT IV

Two years later.

(A sitting-room in SORIN'S house, which has been converted into a writing-room for TREPLEV. To the right and left are doors leading into inner rooms, and in the centre is a glass door opening onto a terrace. Besides the usual furniture of a sitting-room there is a writing-desk in the right-hand corner of the room. There is a Turkish divan near the door on the left, and shelves full of books stand against the walls. Books are lying scattered about on the windowsills and chairs. It is evening. The room is dimly lighted by a shaded lamp on a table. The wind moans in the tree tops and whistles down the chimney. The watchman in the garden is heard sounding his rattle. MASHA enters.)

MASHA

Mr. Constantine? Mr. Constantine? Are you in here? Mr ... ?

(Looking around as MEDVIEDENKO follows in behind her.)

He's not in here. See for yourself, there's no one here.

MEDVIEDENKO

But the old man keeps asking for him.

MASHA

Well, he'll just have to bear to living without him for one night.

MEDVIEDENKO

He says he's cold and he doesn't want to be alone.

(There is an uncomfortable silence as neither of them expand on Medviedenکو's last remark.)

MEDVIEDENKO

(Peering through the patio doors leading out to the terrace: Listen to that wind. It's been storming like out there for two days now.

MASHA

(Turning up the lamps:)

You should be able to see the waves on the lake.

Right? MEDVIEDENKO

Half the shore is under water. MASHA

Right?. MEDVIEDENKO

A practical monsoon out there. MASHA

R— MEDVIEDENKO

(But MASHA turns to him and his words are stopped in their tracks. He returns to looking out the as MASHA moves on to her duties of tidying up:)

Pitch black out there. No moon or stars [to see by]. I think that old theatre'll has seen her last days. 'Bound to be wiped out in her path, poor beggar: hard to believe it's still standing there at all, like some tombstone rising out of the muck. My money says it doesn't make it to morning. You know I thought I heard it crying as I passed by there last night on the way home.

Of course you did. MASHA

Speaking of home. Tonight? MEDVIEDENKO

... Sorry. Can't. MASHA

But ... it's been three days. The baby's getting hungry. MEDVIEDENKO

So? Matriona'll feed it. MASHA

A baby needs her mother. MEDVIEDENKO

Is that all you have to talk about anymore? Crying and weather and baby and baby and baby. You used to talk about things that mattered, what happened to you? MASHA

MEDVIEDENKO

Come home, Masha.

MASHA

(Focusing more on arranging books, papers and pens:)

If you want to go home: go home; no one's keeping you.

MEDVIEDENKO

Your father won't give me a horse.

MASHA

Is that all you need? He'll give you a horse; just ask him. Do you want to ask him or do I have to do that too?

MEDVIEDENKO

I'll ask him—I can ask him. I will.

Will you be coming home tomorrow?

MASHA

Tomorrow? Wonderful: tomorrow.

(She looks around, satisfied with her work, she allows herself to taking snuff. TREPLEV and PAULINA come in. TREPLEV is carrying some pillows and a blanket, and PAULINA is carrying sheets and pillow cases. They lay them on the divan, and TREPLEV goes and sits down at his desk.)

MASHA

What're you doing?

PAULINA

Mr. Sorin wanted to sleep in Constantine's room tonight.

(She begins moving furniture.)

MASHA

Let me.

(MASHA begins making a bed as PAULINA continues to rearrange the room (undoing, redoing Masha's work) makes the bed. PAULINA goes up to the desk and looks at the manuscripts lying on it. A pause. MEDVIEDENKO watches as MASHA makes up the bed in Treplev's room ...)

MEDVIEDENKO

Well, I'll be going then.

(No reply.)

Goodnight, Masha.

(No reply.)

Mother.

(Still no reply. He walks up to Masha:)

Dearest.

(He takes Masha's hand, she obliges him the one hand as she continues making the bed with the other; he kisses it. He crosses to Paulina to pay honor to her hand as well:)

Mother / Shamrae—

PAULINA

(Pulling her hand back:)

I thought you'd left already.

(Left with his hand out TREPLEV rescues MEDVIEDENKO by taking hold of his outstretched hand and shaking it "goodbye." MEDVIEDENKO nods to TREPLEV and turns back to say one last ... but everyone else has already gone about their business. He exits out thru the terrace.)

PAULINA

(Moving the paperwork Masha preset:)

Who would have ever dreamed our little Constantine would one day turn into a real live author? The magazines pay you pretty well for your stories, don't they?

(She plays with his hair motheringly.)

MASHA

(Leave him alone, mother.)

PAULINA

Look at the striking man you've become. I remember when the two of you used to play behind the sofas together. You two will always have each other, won't you?

MASHA

(Mother ...)

PAULINA

(You could show her a little affection now and then. I'm sure the feelings are mutual.)

MASHA

(Still making the bed:)

(oh my god)

PAULINA

(She is a lovely child.

And a woman only asks for ... a kind look now and again.)

MASHA

(you know, I can hear you.)

PAULINA

I am speaking from experience.

(She smiles innocently enough ...)

(But Masha is mortified. TREPLEV gets up from his desk and goes out without a word.

MASHA stares at Paulina: if looks could scream ...)

PAULINA

Somebody has to make a first move.

MASHA

(I don't believe you!)

PAULINA

My heart aches for you, honey. I see how things are. I understand.

MASHA

You [see?] You s—what you think you see—what you think you see: doesn't exist. I am not living in one of your trashy French novels. Love does not make the world turn: it only gets in the way. My *husband* has been promised a new position as Headmaster in Zhokov—

PAULINA

(their little joke on the sound of name of the city:)

(bless you)

MASHA

Shut up Mother.

(pouring herself a drink:)

I only need to keep my head clear and a tight rein on [on my emotions] so if anything like “love” ...and pull it out by the roots. So when we finally do leave this god forsaken paradise I'll be able to put you and everything else here behind me once and for all.

(MASHA down her drink like a shot. The notes of a melancholy waltz are heard in the distance. Badly played. MASHA stares at PAULINA as if to say "you see what you've done?")

PAULINA

Constantine must be sad. He really should learn how to play someday.

(And yet this same music touches MASHA in her soul. She almost unwillingly moves to its notes and silently dances against its melody—losing herself for the moment to a dream that may never be—then forces herself not to submit to its charm—or lack thereof:)

MASHA

The great thing, mother, will not to have him continually in my sight, or you in my ear.

PAULINA

When does this headmaster post of yours open?

MASHA

[In] a few more weeks. {I am determined that I can make it } till then.

(DORN and MEDVIEDENKO come in through the door on the left, wheeling SORIN in an arm-chair.)

MEDVIEDENKO

Yes, and now I have six mouths to feed, and do you realize flour costs as much as seventy kopecks now?

DORN

Is that supposed to be a riddle or a math problem?

MEDVIEDENKO

Of course, what is seventy kopecks to you—do you know how much seventy kopecks is?

DORN

[Oh, so it's a] math problem.

MEDVIEDENKO

I'm only saying—

DORN

Do you think I'm rich, son? You have no idea how many patients I've had that paid me in chickens. And soup. My friend, after practicing for thirty years, during which I had no time to call my soul my own for one minute of the night or day, I succeeded in scraping together one thousand rubles, all of which I spent, not long ago, on a trip which I took abroad. I am proud to say I am now penniless and starting over from scratch.

MASHA

(To her husband:)

You're still here?

MEDVIEDENKO

(Apologetizing:)

How can I get home when no one'll give me a horse?

MASHA

(isn't it obvious:)

(The same way you got here.)

(SORIN in his chair is wheeled to the left-hand side of the room. PAULINA, MASHA, and DORN sit down beside him. MEDVIEDENKO stands sadly aside.)

DORN

I see you've made some of changes. Didn't this used to be a sitting room?

MASHA

Constantine turned it into his office. So he can step out into the garden to meditate whenever he feels like it.

(The watchman's rattle is heard.)

SORIN

Where is my sister?

DORN

She went back to the station to meet Trigorin. She'll be here soon.

SORIN

God, I must be dying if you had to send for her.

(He falls silent for a moment without laughing)

What kind of doctor, are you? Here I am, on death's door, and you can't even prescribe me an aspirin?

DORN

Did you want an aspirin? I don't think you need a prescription for that.

SORIN

Don't start with me.

(He nods toward the sofa:)

Is that for me?

PAULINA

Yes, for you, sir.

SORIN

Thank you. (Some people still care for my needs.)

DORN

(Sings:)

"The moon swims in the sky to-night."

SORIN

Kostya, I'm going to give you a story.

MEDVIEDENKO

He's not here, sir.

PAULINA

He's playing the piano.

SORIN

Oh ... well ... when he returns, remind me to give him an idea for his next great story. It shall be called "The Man Who Wished—L'Homme qui a voulu." When I was young, I wished to become an author; that, unfortunately, did not happen. I wished to be an elocutionist, only to stumble over words and end every other sentence with ... and so forth ... and so on—and somehow I just keep talking till I don't know when to stop or how until I sometimes break out into a cold sweat all over. And then, I wished to marry, and, of course, that never happened. So at least I could comfort myself to live in the city, and here I am ending my days in the country, and ... so forth and so on.

DORN

You wished to become State Councilor, and: you are one.

SORIN

(Laughing:)

I never wished for that; it just happened.

DORN

All things aside, you must admit, at your age, it's rather petty to look back and complain at sixty-two.

SORIN

I'm sixty-seven.

DORN

I stand corrected.

SORIN

You're a pig. It's not the years behind me I'm worried about it's the—because I don't [want to die: I want to live.] ...

DORN

Nobody does. That's the thing, isn't it? But everyone does. Shall we say it? Everyone: dies ... what you have to do is make your peace with it.

SORIN

You can talk; you've had the life you wanted.

(During the following the piano music comes to an end:)

DORN

The fear of death is more or less an animal passion; to be overcome. Only the poor fools who believe in an afterlife and worry about God's wrath can logically be afraid of dying—but since you're an admitted atheist—then again: even if you're wrong you haven't committed any sins because, as you say, you haven't done anything with your life, so either way, you have nothing to worry about. You served as a Councilor for twenty-five years, and that's no / small feat—

SORIN

Twenty-eight years!

DORN

Twenty-eight: there you are: you just gained three more years.

(TREPLEV re-enters and surveys the room, finally sitting down at his desk. MASHA fixes her eyes on his face and never once tears them away.)

DORN

I do believe we're keeping Constantine from his work.

TREPLEV

No [don't worry yourselves about it].

(A pause.)

DORN

Well, you tell us if you need the room.

(Another slight pause.)

MEDVIEDENKO

Doctor, I've been wanting to ask you, how many cities did you travel when you were abroad?

DORN

(Amusing himself with the most literal of answers:)

Eight.

MEDVIEDENKO

(Yet thoroughly satisfied with such a succinct answer:)

And of those eight, which of those cities you visited, which one did you like the best?

DORN

Genoa.

MEDVIEDENKO

And what was it about Gen—

TREPLEV

Why Genoa?

DORN

The crowds. In Genoa the streets are filled with people moving about their own business. When you leave the hotel in the evening, and throw yourself into the heart of that .. moving river, no cares, no—just being swept along in the current, their life seems to be yours, the city's soul flows into you, and you begin to believe at last in one great world spirit, like the one in your play that Nina Zarietchnaya acted. At last you become with—By the way, where is Nina now? Is she well, has anybody heard?

TREPLEV

I would guess so.

DORN

I hear rumors .. her father and stepmother say he's led a rather strange life; what happened?

TREPLEV

It is a rather long story, Doctor.

DORN

Just give me the short version.

(A pause.)

TREPLEV

She ran away from home, I'm sure her parents told you that. And then she joined up with Trigorin in Moscow.

DORN

I heard that too..

TREPLEV

And she had a child. Long story short. But then the child died. Trigorin went back to his former life, as might have been expected. He never really left my mother but was always vacillating between the two. He's a weak man.

DORN

And she became an actress, if I'm not mistaken..

TREPLEV

Mother always wa—Nina: yes, iff you want to call her that. She made her debut on the stage of the Summer Theatre in Moscow, playing maids and the like, after that she made a tour of the country towns. I saw her a few times—maybe more than a [few], maybe a lot—They gave her a chance at bigger roles but she really wasn't up for them. All her lines sounded pretty much the same. She did scream and die well. I tried to talk to her a few times but [she wouldn't see me.] ... She's written a few times .. sometimes funny, sympathetic, warm letters—[she] never complains, but I can read between the lines... she's always—wanting to get it right.

And: she signs all her letters as "The Seagull." I understand one word names are all the fancy now, like that miller in "Rusalka" calling himself "The Crow." So, Nina has decided she is "A Seagull."

And she's here right now.

DORN

With you?

TREPLEV

In the village, at the inn. For four or five days. I might have gone to see her myself, but Masha here went for me, and said Nina doesn't want to see anyone so .. But one of the farm hands said that they saw her wandering in the fields about a mile from here yesterday evening.

MEDVIEDENKO

That would be me. I asked her why she hadn't been by to see us. She said she hadn't gotten around to it yet but that—she said—she would.

TREPLEV

But she won't.

Her father and stepmother won't see her and they've disowned her. They've even put watchmen all around their estate to keep her away.

(He goes with the doctor toward the desk:)

Ah life. It's easier to write about than to live it.

SORIN

I always thought she was a beautiful girl. Even your uncle was a little in love with her for a time.

DORN

You old dog, you.

(SHAMRAEFF'S laugh is heard.)

PAULINA

They must be coming back from the station.

TREPLEV

Yes, the return of the prodigal parent.

(ARKADINA and TRIGORIN come in, followed by SHAMRAEFF.)

SHAMRAEFF

How is it, we all grow old and you never seem to age?.

ARKADINA

“Ahhh ha ha, I need to take *you* on tour with me”

(And behind his back she rolls her eyes.)

TRIGORIN

Bitter evening, eh?

(Seeking out Sorin:)

Peter? What's all this I hear about you still pretending to be sick?

(With evident pleasure, as he catches sight of MASHA:)

How are you, Miss Masha?

MASHA

uhhhh .. you remembered my name.

(She shakes hands with him.)

TRIGORIN

Tell me, did you marry him?

MASHA

“marry” who?

TRIGORIN

That teacher of yours.

MASHA

(Sharing a look two tipplers would only understand:)

Drink?

TRIGORIN

Not tonight, I’m afraid. So then, are you happy now?

(No reply needed. He bows to DORN and MEDVIEDENKO, and then goes hesitatingly toward TREPLEV:)

Kostya.

TREPLEV

Mr. Boris.

TRIGORIN

Your mother tells me you've buried the past and we're no longer angry with each other? Of course, I was never angry with you.

(TRIGORIN offers his hand TREPLEV takes the olive branch.)

ARKADINA

(To her son:)

Here's a magazine Boris brought for you with your latest story in it.

TREPLEV

(To Trigorin, as he takes the magazine:)

Well thank you, I haven't [gotten around to buying it myself so] ... And I'm sorry to say I have nothing for you ...

TRIGORIN

Your admirers all send you their regards: you are gaining quite the reputation. Everyone in Moscow and St. Petersburg is interested in you, and they all ply me with questions about you. To think you could live in obscurity and still make a living. I envy you, dear sir. You know, everybody asks me what you look like, how old you are, what color's your skin. For some reason they think you're an old Negro who escaped from slavery in America. Nobody knows who you are and

TRIGORIN (Continued:)

that's why you write under an assumed name. You are as great a mystery as the Man in the Iron Mask. My hat to you, sir.

TREPLEV

How long do you plan on staying?

TRIGORIN

I wish I could but I have to go back to Moscow tomorrow. Finishing up another novel, and I've promised something to a magazine besides. Deadlines, deadlines; my desk awaits as we speak.

(Referring to Treplev's desk:)

And this, I take it, must be your own ball and chain.

(No reply.)

(And the chill from outside was met by an equally formidable force from [inside] ..)

(And using the segue he too turns his attentions to the outdoors:)

Well, the wind seems to be having a hard time trying to say "hello" or "good-bye." It's everywhere it seems .. at once. If it does die down in the morning I might try to take in a little fishing before I go—maybe have look at the garden, maybe that—Is that spot still there with your—with your stage? You remember that?—where you did your play? I haven't forgotten. The beginnings of your writing career. I'd like to take a look at that again, if I may. Where we first ... so many firsts.

(As Trigorin continues with Treplev, ARKADINA and PAULINA have put up a card-table in the centre of the room; SHAMRAEFF lights the candles and arranges the chairs, then fetches a box of lotto from the cupboard.)

MASHA

(To her father:)

My husband needs a horse. So he can go home.

SHAMRAEFF

You are aware that the horses just came back from the station, aren't you? I can't send them out again in this.

MASHA

So, there are other horses.

(Seeing that her father remains silent:)

You are impossible!

MEDVIEDENKO

I can walk, Masha, it's fine—it's ... It's not that bad.

PAULINA

ohhhh, poor thing. do be careful.

(She takes a seat at the card-table.)

Who wants to go first?

MEDVIEDENKO

It is only six miles.

(A wave of wind crashes against the terrace. A chair is sent swimming across the landscape. MEDVIEDENKO takes a deep breath.)

Good-bye then.

(He kisses his wife's hand:)

Good-bye, mother.

(His mother-in-law allows him her hand for appearances.)

I wouldn't have troubled you at all, but the baby— ...

(He bows to everyone.)

Good-bye. I'm sorry.

(He goes out with an apologetic air.)

SHAMRAEFF

I'm sure he'll get there fine; he's not a major-general.

PAULINA

We have time to get one game in before dinner if we start now.

(SHAMRAEFF, MASHA, and DORN sit down at the card-table as ARKADINA pulls TRIGORIN away to join them:)

ARKADINA

Long autumn nights were made for this. We used to play this game when we were children, never outgrew it. Same set my mother bought us. Look at this old thing—it's ancient; can't bear to part with it. You have played this before, Lotto, you know it?

TRIGORIN

It should come back to me. (Not that I had a lot of— ...) well ...

ARKADINA

(Sitting with TRIGORIN at the table.)

It's a monotonous game, but it's all right once you gets used to it.

(She begins dealing out cards to all players.)

TREPLEV

(Looking through the pages of the magazine:)

(And I see he's read his story but—)

(Holding the magazine by its obviously conclusion:)

(—couldn't even bother to cut the pages to mine.)

(He lays the magazine back down.)

ARKADINA

(Having heard her son but choosing to keep the conversation light:)

You want to play with us, darling?

TREPLEV

No, sorry, maybe I ... not tonight.

(He wanders off into the rest of the house.)

ARKADINA

After dinner, then.

MASHA

[Are you] all ready? I'll start us off: twenty-two.

ARKADINA

Here it is.

MASHA

Three.

DORN

Right.

MASHA

Did you put down three? Eight. Eighty-one. Ten.

SHAMRAEFF

Slow down.

ARKADINA

Yes, please do; I'm still reeling from the reception they gave me in Kharkoff.

MASHA

Thirty-four.

(The notes of Treplev on the piano are heard again.)

ARKADINA

The students there gave me a standing ovation—three standing ovations, along with three baskets of flowers, a wreath, and this piece here.

(She unclasps a brooch from her breast and lays it on the table.)

SHAMRAEFF

What's it worth?

ARKADINA

Their love and admiration.

MASHA

Fifty.

DORN

Fifty, did you say fifty?

MASHA

Five-Oh.

ARKADINA

You should have seen what I was wearing. I was perfectly delectable.

PAULINA

Constantine's at it again. He's sad.

SHAMRAEFF

They thrashed him in the papers.

MASHA

Seventy-seven.

ARKADINA

They want to attract attention to him; good or bad it gets his name bandied about. It's all .. part of the process.

TRIGORIN

Time will tell, right? But it wouldn't hurt him to socialize more. If you want to be the voice of the people, talking to the people might be a place to start.

MASHA

Eleven.

ARKADINA

Are you bored, Peter?

ARKADINA (Continued:)

(No reply.)

Peter?

(One by one they all look over to SORIN, motionless in his chair. No one dare say what they're all thinking as Treplev's somber melody fills the silence ...)

PAULINA

(He's asleep.)

DORN

(He's just taking a nap.)

ARKADINA

(Are you sure?)

(SORIN snores softly. They all breathe a sigh of relief and go back to their game.)

MASHA

Seven. Ninety.

TRIGORIN

You can't blame the boy, if I lived here I don't think I'd ever write another thing in my life. I would do nothing but fish.

MASHA

Twenty-eight.

TRIGORIN

And if I caught a perch or a bass: I'd consider that my royalties for the day.

DORN

I believe in Constantine. I know he's had a hard start but I think there's something in him. He thinks in images; his stories are vivid, they're full of color, everything I've read affect me deeply and I can't believe I'm alone in that. I know he hasn't found his audience yet, but he will. He makes a grand impressions, but then again: impressions can only pay so many bills. What about you, Madam? Are you looking forward to having a famous author for a son? Your next rising star? What's your favorite thing he's written?

(There is an awkward moment of silence, punctuated by the realization that Treplev has stopped playing the piano as well.)

MASHA

Twenty-six.

(During the following TREPLEV comes into the room quietly making it a point not to make a point of his return.)

SHAMRAEFF

(As he realizes:)

Oh: Boris Trigorin: we have something here that belongs to you, sir.

TRIGORIN

What would that be?

SHAMRAEF

You told me to have that seagull stuffed that Mr. Constantine killed a couple of years ago.

TRIGORIN

I did?

SHAMRAEF

Yes, sir, you did. I'll dig it up for you.

TRIGORIN

(I hardly remember that.)

MASHA

Sixty-one.

SHAMRAEFF

You called that one already.

MASHA

No, I didn't.

SHAMRAEFF

Yes, you did.

MASHA

Then I'm calling it again. Sixty-one. One.

ARKADINA

Shut the door, Constantine, it's freezing out there.

(TREPLEV shuts the door.)

(TREPLEV throws open the window and stands listening, staring into the wind like a knight at the mouth of a cave readying himself to face the dragon, reminiscent of the final tableaux from Henrik Ibsen's *Enemy of the People*.)

MASHA

Ninety-eight.

TRIGORIN

Lotto! Or Huzzah! or what do I say when my card is full?

DORN

How is that even possible?

ARKADINA

(Sincerely happy for him:)

Good for you. Good game. Bravo.

SHAMRAEFF

Some people [have all the luck.]

ARKADINA

Wherever he goes and whatever he does, that man always has good luck.

(She gets up.)

And now, let's go to supper and continue our conversation and—We can play some more later.

(To her son:)

Come, Kostya, leave your writing alone a little and join us for supper.

TREPLEV

I [don't want anything to eat, mother; I'm] not hungry.

ARKADINA

... As you please.

(She wakes Sorin:)

Peter? Supper.

(As others attend to Sorin, she takes Shamraeff's arm.)

Let me tell you all about my reception in Kharkoff.

SHAMRAEFF

They were kids, right?

(SHAMRAEFF and ARKADINA exit. PAULINA and DORN catch each other's eyes but only for a moment; PAULINA blows out the candles on the table, then she and DORN roll SORIN'S chair out of the room. All go out through the door on the left, except TREPLEV, who is left alone. TREPLEV prepares to write. He runs his eye over what he has already written. He stares at the blank paper next to him on the desk and sighs.)

TREPLEV

(To himself—as more of a chore than a calling:)

I have to write, I have to write, I have to write.

(Scanning the pages:)

I talk here all about new forms of art but I just feel myself gradually slipping into the beaten track.

(He reads quietly to himself.)

TREPLEV

(God, what rubbish.)

(He looks over to the bed made up for his uncle and speaks to it as if Sorin were here.)

Why is it that “he” [Trigorin] can write about a moonlit night and it feels like a ... a goddam moonlight and I try to set the same scene and it's .. just so .. goddam awful—

All his writing is by formula. He’s got it down, he’s good at it, I have to give him that. He writes about light and shadows from meaningless objects and it works. Why does it have to—I write about stars and distant pianos and mystic scents and it’s all like I threw up with my pen. Why? It can’t be about formulas. Maybe we don’t need formulas—maybe we don't need .. Form—No form, no form at all—maybe it's ... no form at all—just ideas, ideas pouring out of one's own heart, one’s own head and just let the chips fall where they may.

(A knock is heard at the window nearest the table.)

What was that?

(He looks out of the window)

Is somebody out there?

(He opens the glass door and looks out into the garden.)

Who's there? Simon?

(He goes out, and is heard walking quickly along the terrace. Pause.)

TREPLEV (Offstage:)

Nina?

(No reply.)

Nina? Oh my lord.

(After a few silent moments TREPLEV re-enters with NINA. She is soaking wet and shivering but at the same time unaware of either condition. Once inside TREPLEV closes the terrace doors again and turns to her but before he can say anything she lays her head against his breast, stifling her own sobbing.)

TREPLEV

It's alright, Nina, it's alright. You're sa[fe now}, you're [safe. You're] home .. now. (You're home.)

(Holding her close—but delicately:)

(I always knew you'd come, I knew it, all day long I knew .. I could feel you.

(He gently takes off her hat and cloak.)

And now [you're here. Don't cry]. We mustn't cry, we mustn't [cry.]

NINA

There's someone here.

TREPLEV

There's no one here.

NINA

Lock the door, someone might come in.

TREPLEV

Were you being followed?

(Oh, she means the inside door:)

No one'll come in.

NINA

I know your mother's here. Lock the door.

(A beat. TREPLEV locks the doors on the right and comes back to NINA. He looks around.)

TREPLEV

There is no lock on that one.

(He braces an arm-chair up against the door.)

There. See? You're sa—we're sa—you're safe. Don't worry, no one'll come in.. I won't let them.

(He takes the blanket from Sorin's bed and puts it around her. He tries to hold her but she counters:)

NINA

Let me look at you.

(Moving around, adding more distance:)

This used to be a sitting room, wasn't it? Have I changed much?

TREPLEV

Never.

(Taking the moment to gaze back upon her:)

TREPLEV (Continued:)

... A little thinner maybe. Thinner or your eyes got bigger. This is so ... [sudden]. What are you doing here—Why did you come to[night]—No, I don't care why: you're here, that's what matters, that's *all* that matters. You know, you've been here a week why didn't you come sooner? Masha said ... Why wouldn't you let me see you—Would you let me see you?

NINA

I didn't think *you'd* want to see *me*. I was afraid you might hate me.

TREPLEV

How [could I? Ever?]??

NINA

I dream of you every night—

TREPLEV

oh my god, I / do [too]—

NINA

(Quietly continuing in a tone that causes Treplev to stop speaking:)

and in my dream you're looking at me but you never see me. I didn't want to see you because I didn't want to see that look on your face. Ever since I got back. All I've done is wandering the shores of this lake, circling this house, but I've never had the courage to come in.

TREPLEV

You're here now.

NINA

Can we sit?.

(As they do she returns the blanket:)

Just talk. Talk until we don't have anything left to talk about. It's warm in here, thank you. You hear that wind? Turgenieff says, "Happy is he who can sit at night under the roof of his own home, with a warm corner where he knows he's safe."³ⁱ I am a seagull⁴—and [you are the worm/but I can't say that—you won't understand] ... no.

³ The paraphrase is from Turgenev's first novel, *Rudin*, the story of a well-educated, intellectual and extremely eloquent nobleman. His finances are in a poor state and he is dependent on others for his living. *Rudin* is an intriguing, complex character who is prone to making sacrifices. These sacrifices, however, are often counter-productive and counter-intuitive.

Excerpt from the Epilogue: see END NOTES

⁴ Seagull again refers to a mix of the bird shot in act 2 and Turgenieff quotes: the worm (*Rudin*-see END NOTES) and the bird (*Fathers and Sons*:)

NINA (Continued:)

What was I [saying? Oh, yes], Turgenieff. Didn't he say, "and God help all homeless wanderers?"⁵

(NINA looks into his eyes—TREPLEV stares back at her blankly trying to follow her line of thought. NINA breaks down again and cries.)

TREPLEV

... Nina ... ?

NINA

It's all right. Don't. It's ... I'll feel better after this. I haven't cried like this for...[since my baby ...] almost two years. I went into the garden last night to see if our old theatre was still there.

TREPLEV

It is.

NINA

I know.; I saw.. I saw and I [wept there ..] something in me [broke for the first time in] two years ... it helps ... I think it [helps] ... you should really try it sometime.

(One more good wail and she's all cried out. A beat.)

See? All better. No more crying.

(She takes his hand in hers:)

So. Kostya. [Kostya is] an author now and little Nina is an actress. Seems we've both been sucked into the whirlpool. Remember when we were kids, playing at being grownups? What ever happened to them, hmm? I would wake up singing in the morning; I loved you and dreamt of fame, and all and all and what is [the reality?] Tomorrow morning I'll be back on a train heading for Eltz, in a third-class carriage, seated with peasants; and once I'm at Eltz the upper, upper educated and the rich [will pursue me without apology]. What a "contradiction of affairs", eh?

TREPLEV

Why are you going to Eltz?

"As we all know, time sometimes flies like a bird, and sometimes crawls like a worm, but people may be unusually happy when they do not even notice whether time has passed quickly or slowly"

⁵ Again from Rudin, Epilogue

NINA

I should fly south for the winter, shouldn't I? But there they'll have me. So. I really should go.

TREPLEV

please ... wait.

You've said your peace, I should [too]. For the last two years: I've .. tried to hate you, I cursed you, I hated, tore up your photograph, and yet every minute of every day I've known my heart and soul were yours forever. No matter how much [I try] I can't stop loving you. I worship you. For you it's been two years for me it's been ninety. You haven't cried for two years? I haven't lived; I haven't breathed; I haven't—

NINA

Why, why why—don't, don't talk to me like this.

TREPLEV

I have nothing here. The only fire in this room is you. Without you it's just a .. cave. I haven't written a thing with any life worth living since you ...

NINA

I'm a seagull.

TREPLEV

Don't go .. or let me go with you.

(NINA quickly puts on her coat and hat.)

TREPLEV

(why?)

(He watches her as she dresses. A pause.)

NINA

I have a carriage at the gate. Please don't come out to see me off. I can find my way alone.

(She is stopped—deciding between holding back the tears or letting them flow. She is unable to move.)

Do you have any water in here?

(TREPLEV grabs a glass left from the card game and gives it to her. She drinks. Conversation can be heard just slightly coming from the other room.)

TREPLEV

Where will you go?

NINA

Eltz. [Oh, you mean tonight:] Back to the village. Is your mother here?

TREPLEV

My uncle fell ill last Thursday; we telegraphed for her to come.

NINA

Why did you say you worshipped me? How? how can you—You should hate me, you should want to kill me—you should want me dead.

(Again she is unable to command her body to leave.)

I am so tired.

(She tries to begin her analogy one last time:)

I am a seagull— ... no: I am an actress.

(Laughter. Nina can make out both ARKADINA and TRIGORIN's voices amongst the assembled.)

NINA

She didn't come alone then.

(She looks to Treplev for confirmation regarding Trigorin—she sees the truth on his face.)

Ah, well—no matter. Do you know he doesn't even believe in theatre? Your mother will be so surprised. "A waste of an art form." He used to laugh [at my dreams.]

At first he laughed because he thought my dreams were cute. Somewhere "cute" became "ridiculous" and "ridiculous" is always "trivial" until I started not believing in them either. And then and then we--we had a ... we almost had [a child.] she never even had a name. I think all children should have a name, don't you .. everyone deserves to ...

(A slight pause: she chooses not to continue down that train of thought.)

And then everything else became meaningless. I would find myself standing on the stage, reciting my lines—empty—with nothing inside. I never knew what to do with my hands, I didn't know where to look, didn't know how to walk—I couldn't control my voice. You have no idea what it is like to act in a play knowing you're acting badly. And nothing you can do about it. I am a seagull—no, [that's not right.] I am an actress—That's not what I'm trying to say—what am I trying to say? Do you remember the day you shot a seagull? Then a man chanced by and destroyed it out of his own idleness. [That was] an idea for a short story, but [that's not I meant to say.] What was I saying? Oh, [yes,] the stage. The stage has changed—Or, *I* have changed. I'm an actress now. I act. I act with joy, with intensity, with everything but passion; and I'm intoxicated by it, and I'm good. I am really am good now. But I've been walking and walking and wandering and thinking and thinking and I think I understand something now. I understand, Kostya, that for us, for you, for me, whether we write, whether we

NINA (Continued:)

act, it doesn't matter—it's not about the honor or the glory or the fame but just to be able to make it through another day. To the next day. It's faith. Do you understand?

TREPLEV

"Faith". Like some sort of religion? I'm so glad you have faith, I'm so happy for you now: Something you—you know what you want and where you're going ... while some of us are still just struggling ... in the dark. Or groping. But you know who you are now. I'm happy for you. If you're happy, I'm happy for you..

(NINA Holds up her hand suddenly to quiet him—
Listening to the sounds of the rest of the house—she
quickly gathers her things. She softly touches his face:)

NINA

When I've become a famous actress, I'll send for you to see me. And when you write your next play ... Promise me? But for now ...

TREPLEV

... When's the last time you ate? Stay, and I'll bring you something.

NINA

No, no—and don't—don't follow me. I know my all around this lake, I know every inlet and every swamp and every little {island in it] and my carriage is [just down the road,] so ...

So, she brought him back with her, hm? Of course she did. But, please, don't say anything to Trigorin when you see him?

TREPLEV

(Not wanting to hear the answer but he has to know:)

Do you love him? Did you ever love me?

NINA

(Wanting to say "no", but unable to lie: a beat.)

What does it matter?

(Forcing a smile:)

There's an idea for a short story, eh? But let's not write that one. You remember? You remember that summer on the lakeshore? We were happy, weren't we?

(She recites:)

"All men and beasts, lions, eagles, and quails, horned stags, geese, spiders, silent fish that inhabit the waves, starfish from the sea, and creatures invisible to the eye—in one word, life—all, all life, completing the dreary round set before it, has died out at last. A thousand years have passed since the earth last bore a living creature on its breast, and the unhappy moon now lights her lamp in vain. No

NINA (Continued:)

longer are the cries of storks heard in the meadows, or the drone of beetles in the groves of limes——"

(She embraces TREPLEV impetuously and runs out through the terrace and off into the storm.)

TREPLEV

(After a pause watching her as she goes:)

(Don't let my mother see you, she'd only get upset ...)

(TREPLEV stands there watching for what seems like several lifetimes passing. He then picks up his writings on the desk, beginning with the magazine brought to him earlier, he tears the uncut binding and in the process rips the printed page itself. He follows suit by tearing the entire article out of the magazine. He moves on from there and tears the papers of the work he is currently writing and then to those pieces he has already finished ... this may take a number of minutes until all his work has been annulled. When he is finished he casts the corpse of his words under the desk. He then unlocks the door on the right and goes out. The patio doors waver in the wind.)

DORN

(Trying to force open the door on the left:)

I don't know—I don't know what the—it seems to be something seems to be— ...
Is there a—Did you put a lock on this door?

(The chair gives way and he comes in and puts the chair back in its former place.)

How in the world did ..

(Looking toward the storm outside, he refastens the lock on the patio door.:)

The wind must've [blown it.] All he {Sorin} needs to do is catch his cold ...

(He looks about, he may even eye a shredded paper or two, he begins picking up the clutter as the others make their way in.)

Watch your step.

(ARKADINA and PAULINA are first in, followed by YACOB carrying some bottles and the MAID; then come MASHA, SHAMRAEFF, and TRIGORIN bringing up the rear.)

ARKADINA

You can put the claret and the beer over here, on the table, so we can drink while we're playing. Sit down, everybody.

PAULINA

And bring the tea in before you clear the table.

(The MAID returns the way she came. YACOB joins the doctor in picking up strewn paper. PAULINA lights the candles as she takes her seat at the card-table. SHAMRAEFF, on a mission, leads TRIGORIN to the cupboard.)

SHAMRAEFF

(As he takes the seagull out of the cupboard.)

Here's the thing, if I'd remembered it was here before: that stuffed seagull I was telling you about.

You told me to have it done.

TRIGORIN

(Looking at the bird)

Really? I don't .. remember / anything about asking anyone to—

(A shot is heard. Every one jumps.)

ARKADINA

What was that?

DORN

Ohhhh.oh, damn—pardon my—I left my—probably another one of my medicine bottles blowing up. Forgive me, I'll go check on it.

(He goes out through the door on the right.)

ARKADINA

Alright, who's playing?

(To Trigorin:)

Come here, sit next to me. Maybe some of your luck will / rub off.

DORN

(As he enters:)

Just as I thought: a flask of ether exploded. Uh sorry. I shouldn't keep them so tightly corked, have to let 'em breathe once in a while or —well ... too much shop talk.

(He sings:)

"Spellbound once more I stand before thee."

(TRIGORIN notices and picks up the remnant of the magazine he gave to Treplev earlier.)

ARKADINA

(Handing playing pieces to Masha:)

Heavens! That was almost a fright. [That] noise reminded me of—needn't—

(She covers her face with her hands—quoting:)

"Everything is black before my eyes."⁶

DORN

Yes, well:

(Joining Trigorin, taking command of the magazine:)

There it is. I was reading this earlier. I wanted to ask you about—

(To Arkadina, without losing pace as he pulls Trigorin aside:)

—if I could steal him away just for a moment—I'll give him right back to you, I promise—

(As they move away from the table:)

—I have to have your opinion on this matter.

(Away from the others now:)

(You need to get Madame Arkadina out of here right away.)

(Aloud again for the other's benefit as he turns pages in the magazine:)

What I wanted to say was—

(Again privately:)

(The boy just shot himself.)

(Lights slowly fade as the curtain falls.)

END

⁶ HAMLET: ACT 3, sc 4 (paraphrased from the quote she spoke in ACT 1):

QUEEN GERTRUDE: "O Hamlet, speak no more: thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul; and there I see such black and grained spots as will not leave their tinct."

CURTAIN SPEECH:

*In many not-for-profit theatres it is not uncommon for someone associated with the organization to welcome the audience, run through a (prayerfully short) list of what's coming up next at the theatre/venue/community, emergency evacuation plans, admonition to shut down electronic devices, and other theatre etiquette. Some even try their hand at setting the mood by giving a brief background of the play's history (God and their therapists only knows why). Oh, yes and warnings: in this particular play the audience would be warned of both on the harmfulness of Tobacco (which is, ironically enough, the name of a great one man one-act by Chekhov himself) AND the mention of a gunshot: don't be alarmed it's just a play. However for this play it tends to be the all but last moment of the play itself. Telling the audience ahead of time to be on the lookout for a gun shot is kind of a spoiler, wouldn't you say? If this were a standard warning to every show (including say, *The Odd Couple* or *Annie*) I would have no qualms about its inclusion but it's not. So ...*

If your theatre feels impelled to warn the faint of heart that they may jump in their seats at some point in the production, then might I recommend some derivation of the following curtain speech:

(At rise:

The stage is all but set for ACT 1 of *The Seagull*. The outdoor theatre stage is in place (curtains drawn closed) and there is no movement inside. All other natural foilage: trees, bushes, flowers are in place, as is the suggestion of a lake. Two benches are also onstage and set to hold the bums for four patrons of the arts between them.)

(The actor playing SHAMRAEFF in our production enters stage steps forward to address the audience as himself:)

SHAMRAEFF

Good evening. Welcome to (name of theatre/company). My name is (actor's actual name) (that's actually my name, you can look it up in the program) I'll be playing the role of Shamraeff in tonight's production of *Anton Chekhov's The Seagull*: I am *not* your narrator. I know it may be a little out of the ordinary for a member of the company to come out here and introduce you to the play but ... they have their reasons. So ...

(As Shamraeff continues: the actors portraying the hired help [YACOB, MAID and COOK at minimum—not MASHA, nor PAULINA] enter stage from the direction of the house, laden down with five chairs and a side table [or two]. These pieces are placed roughly center stage with no consideration as to where they will be ultimately placed in relation to the "stage" onstage. After dropping off these

items, the workers [mentioned above] exit back behind the "stage" and proceed to finish working—unseen but clearly heard—if by nothing else the sound of hammering boards and curtains into place.)

SHAMRAEFF (Continued:)

First reason: we want to keep this brief: so ...

(Counting them off on his fingers:)

"thank you for coming." uh ... This is our (number such as 27th) season here at blah, blah, blah. Our next production is ... dammit. Just a minute

(As he fishes a card and glasses out of a pocket:)

I didn't want to have to do this.

(As he puts on the glasses:)

It's hell getting old, isn't it?

(Referring to the card as needed now:)

Our next production will be (name of production, playwright, opening dates etc.) And (listing any other cultural events associated with the theatre/venue/community)

What else?

"Emergencies" Emergency exits are located _____. Bathrooms are located _____ (that can be an emergency)

Turn off your cell phones or any other electronic devices Now; after all there were no cell phones in 1893 Russia. And there were a number of other things they didn't have in 1893 such as televisions, or movies or *telephones*—no, they had telephones, but they didn't have cars and: slaves had been freed only thirty-two years prior : it wasn't a race distinction in Russia as much as a class distinction but that's just a lot of background that you really don't need: let the play speak for itself, I say.

Warnings: there could be a loud and sudden sound—

(SLAM: there is a loud and sudden sound from behind the curtain on "stage")

YACOB (Behind the curtain)

Dammit.

SHAMRAEFF

What happened?

YACOB (Behind the curtain)

Nothing.

SHAMRAEFF

(Continuing on then:)

Such as what you just heard—or maybe that was it—or a distant explosion, thunder, gun shot—

YACOB (Behind the curtain)
 Hammer slipped.

SHAMRAEFF
 Are you bleeding?

YACOB (Behind the curtain)
 Not enough to notice.

SHAMRAEFF
 (Unconcerned:)
 Put a bandage on it.

(We hear the tear of fabric—presumably from the back of the curtain being installed.)

YACOB (Behind the curtain)
 Got it.

SHAMRAEFF
 Good.

(Returning to the audience:)
 Where was I?

(Regardless of the audience response—or lack thereof he checks through the card—his frustration starting to show:)
 Did that—did that—did that—that. Bathrooms? I told you where the bathrooms were? There'll be noise—could be a noise. No strobe lights (Did they even have those in 1893?)

(Meanwhile YACOB has come out to get assistance from Shamraeff to tie off the bandage on Yacob's finger. Shamraeff continues trying to read:)

SHAMRAEFF (Continued:)
 There'll be no ... ps—psee—p ...
 (To Yacob:)

What's that word?

YACOB
 (Looking over his shoulder:)
 I think the P is silent.

SHAMRAEFF
 What the hell does it say?

YACOB

(Taking the card and trying to read:)

Is this your handwriting?

(Meanwhile other workers have also come out to help if they can:)

YACOB

Psy— ...

SHAMRAEFF

(Forging ahead: to the audience:)

Anything that didn't exist in 1893 Russia isn't in the play.

COOK

Psychedelics.

SHAMRAEFF

What?

COOK

That's what it says.

SHAMRAEFF

What hell is that supposed to mean?

(Asking them to leave—although his tone offers no option:)

Can you—

(YACOB holds out his finger while the other workers return behind the curtain.)

SHAMRAEFF

(Ties off Yacob's bandage as he continues to the audience:)

No food. No eating and no drinking but if you did brought something in in a wrapper: for godsakes unwrap it now cause everybody hears the crinkling. And smoking: no smoking.

YACOB

I don't think you have to worry about that.

SHAMRAEFF

People still smoke.

YACOB

Not in a theatre.

SHAMRAEFF

There'll be smoking on stage. But not tobacco.

YACOB

And not in the audience.

SHAMRAEFF

That's what I said—Get back to what you were doing.

(YACOB chooses not to verbally respond but exits back with the rest of the workers behind the curtains. The sounds of their preparations continue.)

SHAMRAEFF

(Doing his best to contain his temper and remain calm and courteous. Looking through the card:)

Done, done, done, done, done, done—skip that—done, done.

There'll be an intermission between acts two and three.

Finally: If you like the show tell everyone: facebook, Instagram, twitter (add any other current social medias here), phone calls, texts, take out an ad in a paper—can't cost that much anymore: nobody reads them; buy them tickets yourself—we have postcards and flyers (out in the lobby) for you to pass out to ... whoever ... That's everything: that's it ... that's ...

(With a gesture to the set behind him:)

The Seagull.

(He mumbles something incoherently to himself as he exits the same way he came in.)

(The lights start to fade to reset as the hammering continues. SLAM.)

YACOB (Behind the curtain)

Dammit.

(Lights fade to black.)

FURTHER NOTES:

As the set changes between ACTS I & II as well as ACTS III & IV are set without the use of intermission: They should be conducted by the WORKERS (YACOB, MAID, COOK and any other WORKERS assigned to the show's run—all dressed in period costume). SHAMRAEFF should also be present throughout these set changes however he would not participate other than to sit and "Supervise". His supervision being non-existent other than his presence.

ALSO

Between ACTS I and II there should be a gun shot heard off in the distance (indicating Treplev shooting the Seagull).

Another gunshot should precede ACT III (indicating Treplev's self inflicted flesh wound).

Lastly there would be a peal of thunder at the commencement of ACT IV (indicating the outside storm).

ENDNOTE (the last paragraphs of *Rudin* by Ivan Turgeneff):

ⁱ 'Rudin!' he cried, 'why do you speak like that to me? How have I deserved it from you? Am I such a judge, and what kind of a man should I be, if at the sight of your hollow cheeks and wrinkles, "mere words" could occur to my mind? Do you want to know what I think of you, Dmitri? Well! I think: here is a man--with his abilities, what might he not have attained to, what worldly advantages might he not have possessed by now, if he had liked! . . . and I meet him hungry and homeless'

'I rouse your compassion,' Rudin murmured in a choked voice.

'No, you are wrong. You inspire respect in me--that is what I feel. Who prevented you from spending year after year at that landowner's, who was your friend, and who would, I am fully persuaded, have made provision for you, if you had only been willing to humour him? Why could you not live harmoniously at the gymnasium, why have you--strange man!--with whatever ideas you have entered upon an undertaking, infallibly every time ended by sacrificing your personal interests, ever refusing to take root in any but good ground, however profitable it might be?'

'I was born a rolling stone,' Rudin said, with a weary smile. 'I cannot stop myself.'

'That is true; but you cannot stop, not because there is a worm gnawing you, as you said to me at first. . . . It is not a worm, not the spirit of idle restlessness--it is the fire of the love of truth that burns in you, and clearly, in spite of your failings; it burns in you more hotly than in many who do not consider themselves egoists and dare to call you a humbug perhaps. I, for one, in your place should long ago have succeeded in silencing that worm in me, and should have given in to everything; and you have not even been embittered by it, Dmitri. You are ready, I am sure, to-day, to set to some new work again like a boy.'

'No, brother, I am tired now,' said Rudin. 'I have had enough.'

'Tired! Any other man would have been dead long ago. You say that death reconciles; but does not life, don't you think, reconcile? A man who has lived and has not grown tolerant towards others does not deserve to meet with tolerance himself. And who can say he does not need tolerance? You have done what you could, Dmitri . . . you have struggled so long as you could . . . what more? Our paths lay apart,' . . .

'You were utterly different from me,' Rudin put in with a sigh.

'Our paths lay apart,' continued Lezhnyov, 'perhaps exactly because, thanks to my position, my cool blood, and other fortunate circumstances, nothing hindered me from being a stay-at-home, and remaining a spectator with folded hands; but you had to go out into the world, to turn up your shirt-sleeves, to toil and labour. Our paths lay apart--but see how near one another we are. We speak almost the same language, with half a hint we understand one another, we grew up on the same ideas. There is little left us now, brother; we are the last of the Mohicans! We might differ and even quarrel in old days, when so much life still remained before us; but now, when the ranks are thinned about us, when the younger generation is coming upon us with other aims than ours, we ought to keep close to one another! Let us clink glasses, Dmitri, and sing as of old, *_Gaudemus igitur_!*'

The friends clinked their glasses, and sang the old student song in strained voices, all out of tune, in the true Russian style.

'So you are going now to your country place,' Lezhnyov began again. 'I don't think you will stay there long, and I cannot imagine where and how you will end. . . . But remember, whatever happens to you, you have always a place, a nest where you can hide yourself. That is my home,--do you hear, old fellow? Thought, too, has its veterans; they, too, ought to have their home.'

Rudin got up.

'Thanks, brother,' he said, 'thanks! I will not forget this in you. Only I do not deserve a home. I have wasted my life, and have not served thought, as I ought.'

'Hush!' said Lezhnyov. 'Every man remains what Nature has made him, and one cannot ask more of him! You have called yourself the Wandering Jew. . . . But how do you know,--perhaps it was right for you to be ever wandering, perhaps in that way you are fulfilling a higher calling than you know; popular wisdom says truly that we are all in God's hands. You are going, Dmitri,' continued Lezhnyov, seeing that Rudin was taking his hat 'You will not stop the night?'

'Yes, I am going! Good-bye. Thanks. . . . I shall come to a bad end.'

'God only knows. . . . You are resolved to go?'

'Yes, I am going. Good-bye. Do not remember evil against me.'

'Well, do not remember evil against me either,--and don't forget what I said to you. Good-bye.' . . .

The friends embraced one another. Rudin went quickly away.

Lezhnyov walked up and down the room a long while, stopped before the window thinking, and murmured half aloud, 'Poor fellow!' Then sitting down to the table, he began to write a letter to his wife.

But outside a wind had risen, and was howling with ill-omened moans, and wrathfully shaking the rattling window-panes. **The long autumn night came on. Well for the man on such a night who sits**

under the shelter of home, who has a warm corner in safety. . . . And the Lord help all homeless wanderers!

On a sultry afternoon on the 26th of July in 1848 in Paris, when the Revolution of the *ateliers nationaux* had already been almost suppressed, a line battalion was taking a barricade in one of the narrow alleys of the Faubourg St Antoine. A few gunshots had already broken it; its surviving defenders abandoned it, and were only thinking of their own safety, when suddenly on the very top of the barricade, on the frame of an overturned omnibus, appeared a tall man in an old overcoat, with a red sash, and a straw hat on his grey dishevelled hair. In one hand he held a red flag, in the other a blunt curved sabre, and as he scrambled up, he shouted something in a shrill strained voice, waving his flag and sabre. A Vincennes tirailleur took aim at him--fired. The tall man dropped the flag--and like a sack he toppled over face downwards, as though he were falling at some one's feet. The bullet had passed through his heart.

'*Tiens!*' said one of the escaping revolutionists to another, '*on vient de tuer le Polonais!*'

'*Bigre!*' answered the other, and both ran into the cellar of a house, the shutters of which were all closed, and its wall streaked with traces of powder and shot.

This 'Polonais' was Dmitri Rudin.

THE END