



THE SEAGULL

ANTON CHEKHOV

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translated by

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CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

Irina Nikolayevna Arkadin (Madame Treplev) (an actress)

Konstantin Gavrilovitch Treplev (her son, a young man)

Pyotr Nikolayevitch Sorin (her brother)

Nina Mihailovna Zarechny (a young girl, the daughter of a wealthy landowner)

Ilya Afanasyevitch Shamraev (a retired lieutenant, Sorin's steward)

Polina Andreyevna (his wife)

Masha (his daughter)

Boris Alexeyevitch Trigorin (a literary man)

Yevgeny Sergeyevitch Dorn (a doctor)

Semyon Semyonovitch Medvedenko (a schoolmaster)

Yakov (a labourer)

A Man Cook

A Housemaid

The action takes place in SORIN's house and garden. Between the Third and the Fourth Acts there is an interval of two years.

THE SEAGULL
A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

ACT I

Part of the park on SORIN'S estate. Wide avenue leading away from the spectators into the depths of the park towards the lake is blocked up by a platform roughly put together for private theatricals, so that the lake is not visible. To right and left of the platform, bushes. A few chairs, a little table.

(The sun has just set. YAKOV and other labourers are at work on the platform behind the curtain; there is the sound of coughing and hammering. MASHA and MEDVEDENKO enter on the left, returning from a walk.)

MEDVEDENKO Why do you always wear black?

MASHA I am in mourning for my life. I am unhappy.

MEDVEDENKO Why? *(Pondering.)* I don't understand.... You are in good health; though your father is not very well off, he has got enough. My life is much harder than yours. I only get twenty-three roubles a month, and from that they deduct something for the pension fund, and yet I don't wear mourning. *(They sit down.)*

MASHA It isn't money that matters. A poor man may be happy.

MEDVEDENKO Theoretically, yes; but in practice it's like this: there are my two sisters and my mother and my little brother and I, and my salary is only twenty-three roubles. We must eat and drink, mustn't we? One must have tea and sugar. One must have tobacco. It's a tight fit.

MASHA *(Looking round at the platform.)* The play will soon

begin.

MEDVEDENKO Yes. Miss Zarechny will act: it is Konstantin Gavrilitch's play. They are in love with each other and today their souls will be united in the effort to realise the same artistic effect. But your soul and mine have not a common point of contact. I love you. I am so wretched I can't stay at home. Every day I walk four miles here and four miles back and I meet with nothing but indifference from you. I can quite understand it. I am without means and have a big family to keep.... Who would care to marry a man who hasn't a penny to bless himself with?

MASHA Oh, nonsense! (*Takes a pinch of snuff.*) Your love touches me, but I can't reciprocate it—that's all. (*Holding out the snuffbox to him.*) Help yourself.

MEDVEDENKO I don't feel like it (*a pause*).

MASHA How stifling it is! There must be a storm coming.... You're always discussing theories or talking about money. You think there is no greater misfortune than poverty, but to my mind it is a thousand times better to go in rags and be a beggar than... But you wouldn't understand that, though....

(SORIN *and* TREPLEV *enter on the right.*)

SORIN (*Leaning on his walking-stick.*) I am never quite myself in the country, my boy, and, naturally enough, I shall never get used to it. Last night I went to bed at ten and woke up this morning at nine feeling as though my brain were glued to my skull, through sleeping so long (*laughs*). And after dinner I accidentally dropped off again, and now I am utterly shattered and feel as though I were in a nightmare, in fact....

TREPLEV Yes, you really ought to live in town. (*Catches sight of MASHA and MEDVEDENKO.*) When the show begins, my friends, you will be summoned, but you mustn't be here now. You must please go away.

SORIN (To MASHA.) Marya Ilyinishna, will you be so good as to ask your papa to tell them to take the dog off the chain?—it howls. My sister could not sleep again last night.

MASHA Speak to my father yourself; I am not going to. Please don't ask me. (To MEDVEDENKO.) Come along!

MEDVEDENKO (To TREPLEV.) So you will send and let us know before it begins. (Both go out.)

SORIN So I suppose the dog will be howling all night again. What a business it is! I have never done as I liked in the country. In old days I used to get leave for twenty-eight days and come here for a rest and so on, but they worried me so with all sorts of trifles that before I had been here two days I was longing to be off again (*laughs*). I've always been glad to get away from here.... But now I am on the retired list, and I have nowhere else to go, as a matter of fact. I've got to live here whether I like it or not....

YAKOV (To TREPLEV.) We are going to have a bathe, Konstantin Gavrilitch.

TREPLEV Very well; but don't be more than ten minutes (*looks at his watch*). It will soon begin.

YAKOV Yes, sir (*goes out*).

TREPLEV (*Looking round the stage.*) Here is our theatre. The curtain, then the first wing, then the second, and beyond that—open space. No scenery of any sort. There is an open view of the lake and the horizon. We shall raise the curtain at exactly half-past eight, when the moon rises.

SORIN Magnificent.

TREPLEV If Nina is late it will spoil the whole effect. It is time she was here. Her father and her stepmother keep a sharp eye on her, and it is as hard for her to get out of the house as

to escape from prison (*puts his uncle's cravat straight*). Your hair and your beard are very untidy. They want clipping or something....

SORIN (*Combing out his beard.*) It's the tragedy of my life. Even as a young man I looked as though I had been drinking for days or something of the sort. I was never a favourite with the ladies (*sitting down*). Why is your mother out of humour?

TREPLEV Why? Because she is bored (*sitting down beside him*). She is jealous. She is set against me, and against the performance, and against my play because Nina is acting in it, and she is not. She does not know my play, but she hates it.

SORIN (*Laughs.*) What an idea!

TREPLEV She is annoyed to think that even on this little stage Nina will have a triumph and not she (*looks at his watch*). My mother is a psychological freak. Unmistakably talented, intelligent, capable of sobbing over a book, she will reel off all Nekrassov by heart; as a sick nurse she is an angel; but just try praising Duse in her presence! O-ho! You must praise no one but herself, you must write about her, make a fuss over her, be in raptures over her extraordinary acting in *La Dame aux Camélias* or the *Ferment of Life*; but she has none of this narcotic in the country, she is bored and cross, and we are all her enemies—we are all in fault. Then she is superstitious—she is afraid of three candles, of the number thirteen. She is stingy. She has got seventy thousand roubles in a bank at Odessa—I know that for a fact—but ask her to lend you some money, and she will burst into tears.

SORIN You imagine your mother does not like your play, and you are already upset and all that. Don't worry; your mother adores you.

TREPLEV (*Pulling the petals off a flower.*) Loves me, loves me not; loves me, loves me not; loves me, loves me not (*laughs*).

You see, my mother does not love me. I should think not! She wants to live, to love, to wear light blouses; and I am twenty-five, and I am a continual reminder that she is no longer young. When I am not there she is only thirty-two, but when I am there she is forty-three, and for that she hates me. She knows, too, that I have no belief in the theatre. She loves the stage, she fancies she is working for humanity, for the holy cause of art, while to my mind the modern theatre is nothing but tradition and conventionality. When the curtain goes up, and by artificial light, in a room with three walls, these great geniuses, the devotees of holy art, represent how people eat, drink, love, move about, and wear their jackets; when from these commonplace sentences and pictures they try to draw a moral—a petty moral, easy of comprehension and convenient for domestic use; when in a thousand variations I am offered the same thing over and over again—I run away as Maupassant ran away from the Eiffel Tower which weighed upon his brain with its vulgarity.

SORIN You can't do without the stage.

TREPLEV We need new forms of expression. We need new forms, and if we can't have them we had better have nothing (*looks at his watch*). I love my mother—I love her very much—but she leads a senseless sort of life, always taken up with this literary gentleman, her name is always trotted out in the papers—and that wearies me. And sometimes the simple egoism of an ordinary mortal makes me feel sorry that my mother is a celebrated actress, and I fancy that if she were an ordinary woman I should be happier. Uncle, what could be more hopeless and stupid than my position? She used to have visitors, all celebrities—artists and authors—and among them all I was the only one who was nothing, and they only put up with me because I was her son. Who am I? What am I? I left the University in my third year—owing to circumstances “for which we accept no responsibility,” as the editors say; I have no talents, I haven't a penny of

my own, and on my passport I am described as an artisan of Kiev. You know my father was an artisan of Kiev, though he too was a well-known actor. So, when in her drawing-room all these artists and authors graciously noticed me, I always fancied from their faces that they were taking the measure of my insignificance—I guessed their thoughts and suffered from the humiliation. . . .

SORIN And, by the way, can you tell me, please, what sort of man this literary gentleman is? There's no making him out. He never says anything.

TREPLEV He is an intelligent man, good-natured and rather melancholy, you know. A very decent fellow. He is still a good distance off forty, but he is already celebrated and has enough and to spare of everything. As for his writings . . . what shall I say? They are charming, full of talent, but . . . after Tolstoy or Zola you do not care to read Trigorin.

SORIN Well, I am fond of authors, my boy. At one time I had a passionate desire for two things: I wanted to get married, and I wanted to become an author; but I did not succeed in doing either. Yes, it is pleasant to be even a small author, as a matter of fact.

TREPLEV (*Listens.*) I hear steps . . . (*embraces his uncle*). I cannot live without her. . . . The very sound of her footsteps is lovely. . . . I am wildly happy (*goes quickly to meet NINA ZARETCHNY as she enters*). My enchantress—my dream. . . .

NINA (*In agitation.*) I am not late. . . . Of course I am not late. . . .

TREPLEV (*Kissing her hands.*) No, no, no!

NINA I have been uneasy all day. I was so frightened. I was afraid father would not let me come. . . . But he has just gone out with my stepmother. The sky is red, the moon is just rising, and I kept urging on the horse (*laughs*). But I am glad (*shakes SORIN'S hand warmly*).

SORIN *(Laughs.)* Your eyes look as though you have been crying... Fie, fie! That's not right!

NINA Oh, it was nothing... You see how out of breath I am. I have to go in half an hour. We must make haste. I can't stay, I can't! For God's sake don't keep me! My father doesn't know I am here.

TREPLEV It really is time to begin. We must go and call the others.

SORIN I'll go this minute *(goes to the right, singing "To France Two Grenadiers." Looks round)*. Once I sang like that, and a deputy prosecutor said to me, "You have a powerful voice, your Excellency"; then he thought a little and added, "but not a pleasant one." *(Laughs and goes off.)*

NINA My father and his wife won't let me come here. They say it is so Bohemian here... they are afraid I shall go on the stage... But I feel drawn to the lake here like a seagull... My heart is full of you *(looks round)*.

TREPLEV We are alone.

NINA I fancy there is someone there.

TREPLEV There's nobody. *(They kiss.)*

NINA What tree is this?

TREPLEV An elm.

NINA Why is it so dark?

TREPLEV It's evening; everything is getting dark. Don't go away early, I entreat you!

NINA I must.

TREPLEV And if I come to you, Nina, I'll stand in the garden all night, watching your window.

NINA You can't; the watchman would notice you. Trésor is not used to you, and he would bark.

TREPLEV I love you!

NINA Sh-h....

TREPLEV (*Hearing footsteps.*) Who is there? You, Yakov?

YAKOV (*Behind the stage.*) Yes, sir.

TREPLEV Take your places. It's time to begin. Is the moon rising?

YAKOV Yes, sir.

TREPLEV Have you got the methylated spirit? Have you got the sulphur? When the red eyes appear there must be a smell of sulphur. (*To NINA.*) Go, it's all ready. Are you nervous?

NINA Yes, awfully! Your mother is all right—I am not afraid of her—but there's Trigorin... I feel frightened and ashamed of acting before him... a celebrated author... Is he young?

TREPLEV Yes.

NINA How wonderful his stories are.

TREPLEV (*Coldly.*) I don't know. I haven't read them.

NINA It is difficult to act in your play. There are no living characters in it.

TREPLEV Living characters! One must depict life not as it is, and not as it ought to be, but as we see it in our dreams.

NINA There is very little action in your play—nothing but speeches. And to my mind there ought to be love in a play. (*Both go behind the stage.*)

(*Enter* POLINA ANDREYEVNA *and* DORN.)

POLINA It is getting damp. Go back and put on your goloshes.

DORN I am hot.

POLINA You don't take care of yourself. It's obstinacy. You are a doctor, and you know perfectly well that damp air is bad for you, but you want to make me miserable; you sat out on the verandah all yesterday evening on purpose....

DORN (*Hums.*) "Do not say that youth is ruined."

POLINA You were so absorbed in conversation with Irina Nikolayevna... you did not notice the cold. Own up... you are attracted by her.

DORN I am fifty-five.

POLINA Nonsense! That's not old for a man. You look very young for your age, and are still attractive to women.

DORN Well, what would you have?

POLINA All you men are ready to fall down and worship an actress, all of you!

DORN (*Hums.*) "Before thee once again I stand." If artists are liked in society and treated differently from merchants, for example, that's only in the nature of things. It's idealism.

POLINA Women have always fallen in love with you and thrown themselves on your neck. Is that idealism too?

DORN (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) Well, in the attitude of women to me there has been a great deal that was good. What they principally loved in me was a first-rate doctor. You remember that ten or fifteen years ago I was the only decent accoucheur in the district. Then, too, I have always been an honest man.

POLINA (*Seizes him by the hand.*) Dearest!

DORN Sh-h! They are coming.

(Enter MADAME ARKADIN *arm in arm with* SORIN, TRIGORIN, SHAMRAEV, MEDVEDENKO *and* MASHA.)

SHAMRAEV In the year 1873 she acted marvellously at the fair at Poltava. It was a delight! She acted exquisitely! Do you happen to know, madam, where Pavel Semyonitch Tchadin, a comic actor, is now? His Rasplyuev was inimitable, even finer than Sadovsky's, I assure you, honoured lady. Where is he now?

MADAME
ARKADIN You keep asking me about antediluvians. How should I know? (*Sits down.*)

SHAMRAEV (*With a sigh.*) Pashka Tchadin! There are no such actors now. The stage has gone down, Irina Nikolayevna! In old days there were mighty oaks, but now we see nothing but stumps.

DORN There are few actors of brilliant talents nowadays, that's true; but the average level of acting is far higher than it was.

SHAMRAEV I can't agree with you. But, of course, it's a matter of taste. *De gustibus aut bene aut nihil.*

(TREPLEV *comes out from behind the stage.*)

MADAME
ARKADIN (*To her son.*) My dear son, when is it going to begin?

TREPLEV In a minute. I beg you to be patient.

MADAME
ARKADIN (*Recites from Hamlet.*)
"Oh, 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."

TREPLEV (*From Hamlet.*)

And let me wring your heart, for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff."

(A horn is sounded behind the stage.)

TREPLEV Ladies and gentlemen, we begin! I beg you to attend (*a pause*). I begin (*taps with a stick and recites aloud*). Oh, you venerable old shadows that float at nighttime over this lake, lull us to sleep and let us dream of what will be in two hundred thousand years!

SORIN There will be nothing in two hundred thousand years.

TREPLEV Then let them present that nothing to us.

MADAME Let them. We are asleep.

ARKADIN

(The curtain rises; the view of the lake is revealed; the moon is above the horizon, its reflection in the water; NINA ZARETCHNY, all in white, is sitting on a big stone.)

NINA Men, lions, eagles and partridges, horned deer, geese, spiders, silent fish that dwell in the water, starfishes and creatures which cannot be seen by the eye—all living things, all living things, all living things, having completed their cycle of sorrow, are extinct.... For thousands of years the earth has borne no living creature on its surface, and this poor moon lights its lamp in vain. On the meadow the cranes no longer waken with a cry, and there is no sound of the May beetles in the lime trees. It is cold, cold, cold! Empty, empty, empty! Dreadful, dreadful, dreadful! (*A pause.*) The bodies of living creatures have vanished into dust, and eternal matter has transformed them into rocks, into water, into clouds, while the souls of all have melted into one. That world-soul I am—I... In me is the soul of Alexander the Great, of Caesar, of Shakespeare and of Napoleon, and of the lowest leech. In me the consciousness of men is blended with the instincts of the animals, and I remember

all, all, all! And I live through every life over again in myself! (*Will-of-the-wisps appear.*)

MADAME (*Softly.*) It's something decadent.
ARKADIN

TREPLEV (*In an imploring and reproachful voice.*) Mother!

NINA I am alone. Once in a hundred years I open my lips to speak, and my voice echoes mournfully in the void, and no one hears.... You too, pale lights, hear me not.... The stagnant marsh begets you before daybreak and you wander until dawn, but without thought, without will, without the tremor of life. For fear that life should spring up in you the father of eternal matter, the devil, keeps the atoms in you, as in the stones and in the water, in continual flux, and you are changing perpetually. For in all the universe nothing remains permanent and unchanged but the spirit (*a pause*). Like a prisoner cast into a deep, empty well I know not where I am and what awaits me. All is hidden from me but that in the cruel, persistent struggle with the devil—the principle of the forces of matter—I am destined to conquer, and, after that, matter and spirit will be blended in glorious harmony and the Kingdom of the Cosmic Will will come. But that will come only little by little, through long, long thousands of years when the moon and the bright Sirius and the earth are changed to dust.... Till then—terror, terror... (*a pause; two red spots appear upon the background of the lake*). Here my powerful foe, the devil, is approaching. I see his dreadful crimson eyes....

MADAME There's a smell of sulphur. Is that as it should be?
ARKADIN

TREPLEV Yes.

MADAME (*Laughs.*) Oh, it's a stage effect!
ARKADIN

TREPLEV Mother!

NINA He is dreary without man—

POLINA (*To DORN.*) You have taken your hat off. Put it on or you will catch cold.

MADAME The doctor has taken his hat off to the devil, the father of
ARKADIN eternal matter.

TREPLEV (*Firing up, aloud.*) The play is over! Enough! Curtain!

MADAME What are you cross about?
ARKADIN

TREPLEV Enough! The curtain! Let down the curtain! (*Stamping.*)
Curtain! (*The curtain falls.*) I am sorry! I lost sight of the
fact that only a few of the elect may write plays and act
in them. I have infringed the monopoly. I... I... (*tries to
say something more, but with a wave of his hand goes
out on left*).

MADAME What's the matter with him?
ARKADIN

SORIN Irina, you really must have more consideration for
youthful vanity, my dear.

MADAME What did I say to him?
ARKADIN

SORIN You hurt his feelings.

MADAME He told us beforehand that it was a joke, and I regarded
ARKADIN his play as a joke.

SORIN All the same...

MADAME Now it appears that he has written a great work. What
ARKADIN next! So he has got up this performance and smothered
us with sulphur not as a joke but as a protest.... He
wanted to show us how to write and what to act. This is

getting tiresome! These continual sallies at my expense—these continual pinpricks would put anyone out of patience, say what you like. He is a vain, whimsical boy!

SORIN He meant to give you pleasure.

MADAME Really? He did not choose an ordinary play, however, but
ARKADIN made us listen to this decadent delirium. For the sake of a joke I am ready to listen to delirium, but here we have pretensions to new forms and a new view of art. To my thinking it's no question of new forms at all, but simply bad temper.

TRIGORIN Everyone writes as he likes and as he can.

MADAME Let him write as he likes and as he can, only let him
ARKADIN leave me in peace.

DORN Jupiter! you are angry....

MADAME I am not Jupiter—I am a woman (*lights a cigarette*). I am
ARKADIN not angry—I am only vexed that a young man should spend his time so drearily. I did not mean to hurt his feelings.

MEDVEDENKO No one has any grounds to separate spirit from matter, seeing that spirit itself may be a combination of material atoms. (*With animation, to TRIGORIN.*) But you know someone ought to write a play on how we poor teachers live, and get it acted. We have a hard, hard life.

MADAME That's true, but don't let us talk either of plays or of
ARKADIN atoms. It is such a glorious evening! Do you hear? There is singing! (*Listens.*) How nice it is!

POLINA It's on the other side of the lake (*a pause*).

MADAME (*To TRIGORIN.*) Sit down beside me. Ten or fifteen years
ARKADIN ago there were sounds of music and singing on that lake continually almost every night. There are six country

houses on the shores of the lake. I remember laughter, noise, shooting, and love affairs without end.... The *jeune premier* and the idol of all those six households was in those days our friend here, the doctor (*motions with her head towards DORN*), Yevgeny Sergeitch. He is fascinating still, but in those days he was irresistible. But my conscience is beginning to trouble me. Why did I hurt my poor boy's feelings? I feel worried. (*Aloud.*) Kostya! Son! Kostya!

MASHA I'll go and look for him.

MADAME Please do, my dear.
ARKADIN

MASHA (*Going to the left.*) Aa-oo! Konstantin Gavrilitch! Aa-oo!
(*Goes off.*)

NINA (*Coming out from behind the stage.*) Apparently there will be no going on, and I may come out. Good evening!
(*Kisses MADAME ARKADIN and POLINA ANDREYEVNA.*)

SORIN Bravo! Bravo!

MADAME Bravo! Bravo! We admired you. With such an
ARKADIN appearance, with such a lovely voice, you really cannot stay in the country; it is a sin. You must have talent. Do you hear? It's your duty to go on the stage.

NINA Oh, that's my dream! (*Sighing.*) But it will never be realised.

MADAME Who knows? Here, let me introduce Boris Alexyevitch
ARKADIN Trigorin.

NINA Oh, I am so glad... (*overcome with embarrassment*). I am always reading your...

MADAME (*Making her sit down beside them.*) Don't be shy, my
ARKADIN dear. He is a celebrity, but he has a simple heart. You see, he is shy himself.

DORN I suppose we may raise the curtain; it's rather uncanny.

SHAMRAEV (*Aloud.*) Yakov, pull up the curtain, my lad. (*The curtain goes up.*)

NINA (*To TRIGORIN.*) It is a queer play, isn't it?

TRIGORIN I did not understand it at all. But I enjoyed it. You acted so genuinely. And the scenery was delightful (*a pause*). There must be a lot of fish in that lake.

NINA Yes.

TRIGORIN I love angling. There is nothing I enjoy so much as sitting on the bank of a river in the evening and watching the float.

NINA But I should have thought that for anyone who has known the enjoyment of creation, no other enjoyment can exist.

MADAME (*Laughing.*) Don't talk like that. When people say nice things to him he is utterly floored.

ARKADIN

SHAMRAEV I remember one evening in the opera theatre in Moscow the celebrated Silva took the lower C! As it happened, there was sitting in the gallery the bass of our church choir, and all at once—imagine our intense astonishment—we heard from the gallery “Bravo, Silva!” a whole octave lower—like this: (*in a deep bass*) “Bravo, Silva!” The audience sat spellbound (*a pause*).

DORN The angel of silence as flown over us.

NINA It's time for me to go. Goodbye.

MADAME Where are you off to? Why so early? We won't let you go.

ARKADIN

NINA My father expects me.

MADAME What a man, really ... (*kisses her*). Well, there is no help

ARKADIN for it. I am sorry—I am sorry to let you go.

NINA If you knew how grieved I am to.

MADAME Someone ought to see you home, my little dear.

ARKADIN

NINA (*Frightened.*) Oh, no, no!

SORIN (*To her, in an imploring voice.*) Do stay!

NINA I can't, Pyotr Nikolayevitch.

SORIN Stay for an hour. What is there in that?

NINA (*Thinking a minute, tearfully.*) I can't! (*Shakes hands and hurriedly goes off.*)

MADAME Unfortunate girl she is, really. They say her mother left
ARKADIN her father all her immense property—every farthing of it—and now the girl has got nothing, as her father has already made a will leaving everything to his second wife. It's monstrous!

DORN Yes, her father is a pretty thorough scoundrel, one must do him the justice to say so.

SORIN (*Rubbing his cold hands.*) Let us go too, it's getting damp. My legs ache.

MADAME They seem like wooden legs, you can hardly walk. Let us
ARKADIN go, unlucky old man! (*Takes his arm.*)

SHAMRAEV (*Offering his arm to his wife.*) Madame?

SORIN I hear that dog howling again. (*To SHAMRAEV.*) Be so kind, Ilya Afanasyitch, as to tell them to let it off the chain.

SHAMRAEV It's impossible, Pyotr Nikolayevitch, I am afraid of thieves getting into the barn. Our millet is there. (*To MEDVEDENKO who is walking beside him.*) Yes, a whole

octave lower: “Bravo, Silva!” And he not a singer—
simply a church chorister!

MEDVEDENKO And what salary does a chorister get? (*All go out except DORN.*)

DORN (*Alone.*) I don’t know, perhaps I know nothing about it, or have gone off my head, but I liked the play. There is something in it. When that girl talked about loneliness and afterwards when the devil’s eyes appeared, I was so excited that my hands trembled. It is fresh, naive.... Here he comes, I believe. I want to say all the nice things I can to him.

TREPLEV (*Enters.*) They have all gone.

DORN I am here.

TREPLEV Mashenka is looking for me all over the park. Insufferable creature she is!

DORN Konstantin Gavrilitch, I liked your play extremely. It’s a strange thing, and I haven’t heard the end, and yet it made a strong impression! You are a gifted man—you must persevere.

(*TREPLEV presses his hand warmly and embraces him impulsively.*)

DORN Fie, what an hysterical fellow! There are tears in his eyes! What I mean is this. You have taken a subject from the realm of abstract ideas. So it should be, for a work of art ought to express a great idea. A thing is only fine when it is serious. How pale you are!

TREPLEV So you tell me to persevere?

DORN Yes.... But write only of what is important and eternal. You know, I have had varied experiences of life, and have enjoyed it; I am satisfied, but if it had been my lot to know the spiritual heights which artists reach at the

moment of creation, I should, I believe, have despised my bodily self and all that appertains to it and left all things earthly as far behind as possible.

TREPLEV Excuse me, where is Nina?

DORN And another thing. In a work of art there ought to be a clear definite idea. You ought to know what is your aim in writing, for if you go along that picturesque route without a definite goal you will be lost and your talent will be your ruin.

TREPLEV (*Impatiently.*) Where is Nina?

DORN She has gone home.

TREPLEV (*In despair.*) What am I to do? I want to see her ... I must see her ... I must go....

(*Enter MASHA.*)

DORN (*To TREPLEV.*) Calm yourself, my boy.

TREPLEV But I am going all the same. I must go.

MASHA Come indoors, Konstantin Gavrilitch. Your mother wants you. She is worried.

TREPLEV Tell her that I have gone away. And I beg you—all of you—leave me in peace! Let me alone! Don't follow me about!

DORN Come, come, come, dear boy.... You can't go on like that.... That's not the thing.

TREPLEV (*In tears.*) Goodbye, doctor. Thank you ... (*goes off*).

DORN (*With a sigh.*) Youth! youth!

MASHA When people have nothing better to say, they say, "Youth! youth!" ... (*takes a pinch of snuff*).

DORN *(Takes her snuffbox from her and flings it into the bushes.)* That's disgusting! *(A pause.)* I believe they are playing the piano indoors. We must go in.

MASHA Wait a little.

DORN What is it?

MASHA I want to tell you once more. I have a longing to talk... *(growing agitated)*. I don't care for my father... but I feel drawn to you. For some reason I feel with all my heart that you are very near me... Help me. Help me, or I shall do something silly, I shall make a mock of my life and ruin it... I can't go on....

DORN What is it? Help you in what?

MASHA I am miserable. No one, no one knows how miserable I am! *(Laying her head on his breast, softly.)* I love Konstantin!

DORN How hysterical they all are! How hysterical! And what a lot of love... Oh, the sorcery of the lake! *(Tenderly.)* But what can I do, my child? What? What?

(Curtain.)

ACT II

A croquet lawn. The house with a big verandah in the background on the right, on the left is seen the lake with the blazing sun reflected in it.

(Flower beds. Midday. Hot. MADAME ARKADIN, DORN and MASHA are sitting on a garden seat in the shade of an old lime tree on one side of the croquet lawn. DORN has an open book on his knee.)

MADAME *(To MASHA.)* Come, let us stand up. *(They both get up.)*
ARKADIN Let us stand side by side. You are twenty-two and I am nearly twice as old. Yevgeny Sergeitch, which of us looks the younger?

DORN You, of course.

MADAME There! And why is it? Because I work, I feel I am always
ARKADIN on the go, while you stay always in the same place and have no life at all. ... And it is my rule never to look into the future. I never think about old age or death. What is to be, will be.

MASHA And I feel as though I had been born long, long ago; I trail my life along like an endless train. ... And often I have not the slightest desire to go on living *(sits down)*. Of course, that's all nonsense. I must shake myself and throw it all off.

DORN *(Hums quietly.)* "Tell her, my flowers."

MADAME Then I am as particular as an Englishman. I keep myself
ARKADIN in hand, as they say, my dear, and am always dressed and

have my hair done *comme il faut*. Do I allow myself to go out of the house even into the garden in a dressing-gown, or without my hair being done? Never! What has preserved me, is that I have never been a dowdy, I have never let myself go, as some women do... (*walks about the lawn with her arms akimbo*). Here I am, as brisk as a bird. I could take the part of a girl of fifteen.

DORN Nevertheless, I shall go on (*takes up the book*). We stopped at the corn merchant and the rats...

MADAME And the rats. Read (*sits down*). But give it to me, I'll
ARKADIN read. It is my turn (*takes the book and looks in it*). And rats... Here it is... (*Reads.*) "And of course for society people to spoil novelists and to attract them to themselves is as dangerous as for a corn merchant to rear rats in his granaries. And yet they love them. And so, when a woman has picked out an author whom she desires to captivate, she lays siege to him by means of compliments, flattery and favours..." Well, that may be so with the French, but there is nothing like that with us, we have no set rules. Among us, before a woman sets to work to captivate an author, she is generally head over ears in love herself, if you please. To go no further, take Trigorin and me...

(*Enter SORIN, leaning on his stick and with him NINA; MEDVEDENKO wheels an empty bath-chair in after them.*)

SORIN (*In a caressing tone, as to a child.*) Yes? We are delighted, aren't we? We are happy today at last? (*To his sister.*) We are delighted! Our father and stepmother have gone off to Tver, and we are free now for three whole days.

NINA (*Sits down beside MADAME ARKADIN and embraces her.*) I am happy! Now I belong to you.

SORIN (*Sits down in his bath-chair.*) She looks quite a beauty today.

MADAME Nicely dressed and interesting. ... That's a good girl
ARKADIN (*kisses NINA*). But we mustn't praise you too much for
fear of ill-luck. Where is Boris Alexeyevitch?

NINA He is in the bathing-house, fishing.

MADAME I wonder he doesn't get sick of it! (*Is about to go on*
ARKADIN *reading.*)

NINA What is that?

MADAME Maupassant's *Sur l'eau*, my dear (*reads a few lines to*
ARKADIN *herself*). Well, the rest isn't interesting or true (*shuts the*
book). I feel uneasy. Tell me, what's wrong with my son?
Why is he so depressed and ill-humoured? He spends
whole days on the lake and I hardly ever see him.

MASHA His heart is troubled. (*To NINA, timidly.*) Please, do read
us something out of his play!

NINA (*Shrugging her shoulders.*) Would you like it? It's so
uninteresting.

MASHA (*Restraining her enthusiasm.*) When he reads anything
himself his eyes glow and his face turns pale. He has a
fine mournful voice, and the gestures of a poet.

(*There is a sound of SORIN snoring.*)

DORN Good night!

MADAME Petrusha!
ARKADIN

SORIN Ah?

MADAME Are you asleep?
ARKADIN

SORIN Not a bit of it (*a pause*).

MADAME You do nothing for your health, brother, and that's not

ARKADIN right.

SORIN I should like to take something, but the doctor won't give me anything.

DORN Take medicine at sixty!

SORIN Even at sixty one wants to live!

DORN (*With vexation.*) Oh, very well, take valerian drops!

MADAME It seems to me it would do him good to go to some
ARKADIN mineral springs.

DORN Well, he might go. And he might not.

MADAME What is one to make of that?
ARKADIN

DORN There's nothing to make of it. It's quite clear (*a pause*).

MEDVEDENKO Pyotr Nikolayevitch ought to give up smoking.

SORIN Nonsense!

DORN No, it's not nonsense. Wine and tobacco destroy the personality. After a cigar or a glass of vodka, you are not Pyotr Nikolayevitch any more but Pyotr Nikolayevitch plus somebody else; your ego is diffused and you feel towards yourself as to a third person.

SORIN (*Laughs.*) It's all very well for you to argue! You've lived your life, but what about me? I have served in the Department of Justice for twenty-eight years, but I haven't lived yet, I've seen and done nothing as a matter of fact, and very naturally I want to live very much. You've had enough and you don't care, and so you are inclined to be philosophical, but I want to live, and so I drink sherry at dinner and smoke cigars and so on. That's all it comes to.

DORN One must look at life seriously, but to go in for cures at

sixty and to regret that one hasn't enjoyed oneself enough in one's youth is frivolous, if you will forgive my saying so.

MASHA (*Gets up.*) It must be lunchtime (*walks with a lazy, lagging step*). My leg is gone to sleep (*goes off*).

DORN She will go and have a couple of glasses before lunch.

SORIN She has no personal happiness, poor thing.

DORN Nonsense, your Excellency.

SORIN You argue like a man who has had all he wants.

MADAME Oh, what can be more boring than this sweet country
ARKADIN boredom! Hot, still, no one ever doing anything, everyone airing their theories... It's nice being with you, my friends, charming to listen to you, but... to sit in a hotel room somewhere and learn one's part is ever so much better.

NINA (*Enthusiastically.*) Delightful! I understand you.

SORIN Of course, it's better in town. You sit in your study, the footman lets no one in unannounced, there's a telephone... in the streets there are cabs and everything....

DORN (*Hums.*) "Tell her, my flowers."

(*Enter SHAMRAEV, and after him POLINA ANDREYEVNA.*)

SHAMRAEV Here they are! Good morning! (*Kisses MADAME ARKADIN'S hand and then NINA'S.*) Delighted to see you in good health. (*To MADAME ARKADIN.*) My wife tells me that you are proposing to drive into town with her today. Is that so?

MADAME Yes, we are thinking of it.
ARKADIN

SHAMRAEV Hm! that's splendid, but how are you going, honoured lady? They are carting the rye today; all the men are at work. What horses are you to have, allow me to ask?

MADAME What horses? How can I tell which?

ARKADIN

SORIN We've got carriage horses.

SHAMRAEV (*Growing excited.*) Carriage horses! But where am I to get collars for them? Where am I to get collars? It's a strange thing! It passes my understanding! Honoured lady! forgive me, I am full of reverence for your talent. I would give ten years of my life for you, but I cannot let you have the horses!

MADAME But if I have to go! It's a queer thing!

ARKADIN

SHAMRAEV Honoured lady! you don't know what farming means.

MADAME (*Flaring up.*) That's the old story! If that's so, I go back to Moscow today. Give orders for horses to be hired for me at the village, or I'll walk to the station.

ARKADIN

SHAMRAEV (*Flaring up.*) In that case I resign my position! You must look for another steward (*goes off*).

MADAME It's like this every summer; every summer I am insulted here! I won't set my foot in the place again (*goes off at left where the bathing shed is supposed to be; a minute later she can be seen entering the house.* TRIGORIN follows her, carrying fishing rods and tackle, and a pail).

ARKADIN

SORIN (*Flaring up.*) This is insolence! It's beyond everything. I am thoroughly sick of it. Send all the horses here this minute!

NINA (*To POLINA ANDREYEVNA.*) To refuse Irina Nikolayevna, the famous actress! Any wish of hers, any whim even, is

of more consequence than all your farming. It's positively incredible!

POLINA *(In despair.)* What can I do? Put yourself in my position: what can I do?

SORIN *(To NINA.)* Let us go to my sister. We will all entreat her not to go away. Won't we? *(Looking in the direction in which SHAMRAEV has gone.)* Insufferable man! Despot!

NINA *(Preventing him from getting up.)* Sit still, sit still. We will wheel you in. *(She and MEDVEDENKO push the bath-chair.)* Oh, how awful it is!

SORIN Yes, yes, it's awful. But he won't leave, I'll speak to him directly. *(They go out; DORN and POLINA ANDREYEVNA are left alone on the stage.)*

DORN People are tiresome. Your husband ought to be simply kicked out, but it will end in that old woman Pyotr Nikolayevitch and his sister begging the man's pardon. You will see!

POLINA He has sent the carriage horses into the fields too! And there are misunderstandings like this every day. If you only knew how it upsets me! It makes me ill; see how I am trembling. . . . I can't endure his rudeness. *(In an imploring voice.)* Yevgeny, dearest, light of my eyes, my darling, let me come to you. . . . Our time is passing, we are no longer young, and if only we could lay aside concealment and lying for the end of our lives, anyway . . . *(a pause).*

DORN I am fifty-five; it's too late to change my life.

POLINA I know you refuse me because there are other women too who are as near to you. You can't take them all to live with you. I understand. Forgive me, you are tired of me.

(NINA appears near the house; she is picking flowers.)

DORN No, it's all right.

POLINA I am wretched from jealousy. Of course you are a doctor, you can't avoid women. I understand.

DORN (*To NINA, who comes up to them.*) How are things going?

NINA Irina Nikolayevna is crying and Pyotr Nikolayevitch has an attack of asthma.

DORN (*Gets up.*) I'd better go and give them both valerian drops.

NINA (*Gives him the flowers.*) Please take these.

DORN *Merci bien (goes towards the house).*

POLINA (*Going with him.*) What charming flowers! (*Near the house, in a smothered voice.*) Give me those flowers! Give me those flowers! (*On receiving them tears the flowers to pieces and throws them away; both go into the house.*)

NINA (*Alone.*) How strange it is to see a famous actress cry, and about such a trivial thing! And isn't it strange? A famous author, adored by the public, written about in all the papers, his photographs for sale, his works translated into foreign languages—and he spends the whole day fishing and is delighted that he has caught two gudgeon. I thought famous people were proud, unapproachable, that they despised the crowd, and by their fame and the glory of their name, as it were, revenged themselves on the vulgar herd for putting rank and wealth above everything. But here they cry and fish, play cards, laugh and get cross like everyone else!

TREPLEV (*Comes in without a hat on, with a gun and a dead seagull.*) Are you alone here?

NINA Yes.

(TREPLEV *lays the seagull at her feet.*)

NINA What does that mean?

TREPLEV I was so mean as to kill this bird today. I lay it at your feet.

NINA What is the matter with you? (*Picks up the bird and looks at it.*)

TREPLEV (*After a pause.*) Soon I shall kill myself in the same way.

NINA You have so changed, I hardly know you.

TREPLEV Yes, ever since the day when I hardly knew you. You have changed to me, your eyes are cold, you feel me in the way.

NINA You have become irritable of late, you express yourself so incomprehensibly, as it were in symbols. This bird is a symbol too, I suppose, but forgive me, I don't understand it (*lays the seagull on the seat*). I am too simple to understand you.

TREPLEV This began from that evening when my play came to grief so stupidly. Women never forgive failure. I have burnt it all; every scrap of it. If only you knew how miserable I am! Your growing cold to me is awful, incredible, as though I had woken up and found this lake had suddenly dried up or sunk into the earth. You have just said that you are too simple to understand me. Oh, what is there to understand? My play was not liked, you despise my inspiration, you already consider me commonplace, insignificant, like so many others... (*stamping*). How well I understand it all, how I understand it! I feel as though I had a nail in my brain, damnation take it together with my vanity which is sucking away my life, sucking it like a snake... (*sees TRIGORIN, who comes in reading a book*). Here comes the real genius, walking like Hamlet and with a book too. (*Mimics.*) "Words, words, words."... The sun has

scarcely reached you and you are smiling already, your eyes are melting in its rays. I won't be in your way (*goes off quickly*).

TRIGORIN (*Making notes in his book.*) Takes snuff and drinks vodka. Always in black. The schoolmaster is in love with her....

NINA Good morning, Boris Alexeyevitch!

TRIGORIN Good morning. Circumstances have turned out so unexpectedly that it seems we are setting off today. We are hardly likely to meet again. I am sorry. I don't often have the chance of meeting young girls, youthful and charming; I have forgotten how one feels at eighteen or nineteen and can't picture it to myself, and so the young girls in my stories and novels are usually false. I should like to be in your shoes just for one hour to find out how you think, and altogether what sort of person you are.

NINA And I should like to be in your shoes.

TRIGORIN What for?

NINA To know what it feels like to be a famous, gifted author. What does it feel like to be famous? How does it affect you, being famous?

TRIGORIN How? Nohow, I believe. I have never thought about it. (*After a moment's thought.*) It's one of two things: either you exaggerate my fame, or it never is felt at all.

NINA But if you read about yourself in the newspapers?

TRIGORIN When they praise me I am pleased, and when they abuse me I feel out of humour for a day or two.

NINA What a wonderful world! If only you knew how I envy you! How different people's lots in life are! Some can scarcely get through their dull, obscure existence, they are all just like one another, they are all unhappy; while

others—you, for instance—you are one out of a million, have an interesting life full of brightness and significance. You are happy.

TRIGORIN I? (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) Hm... You talk of fame and happiness, of bright interesting life, but to me all those fine words, if you will forgive my saying so, are just like a sweetmeat which I never taste. You are very young and very good-natured.

NINA Your life is splendid!

TRIGORIN What is there particularly nice in it? (*Looks at his watch.*) I must go and write directly. Excuse me, I mustn't stay... (*laughs*). You have stepped on my favourite corn, as the saying is, and here I am beginning to get excited and a little cross. Let us talk though. We will talk about my splendid bright life... Well, where shall we begin? (*After thinking a little.*) There are such things as fixed ideas, when a man thinks day and night for instance, of nothing but the moon. And I have just such a moon. I am haunted day and night by one persistent thought: I ought to be writing, I ought to be writing, I ought... I have scarcely finished one novel when, for some reason, I must begin writing another, then a third, after the third a fourth. I write incessantly, post haste, and I can't write in any other way. What is there splendid and bright in that, I ask you? Oh, it's an absurd life! Here I am with you; I am excited, yet every moment I remember that my unfinished novel is waiting for me. Here I see a cloud that looks like a grand piano. I think that I must put into a story somewhere that a cloud sailed by that looked like a grand piano. There is a scent of heliotrope. I hurriedly make a note: a sickly smell, a widow's flower, to be mentioned in the description of a summer evening. I catch up myself and you at every sentence, every word, and make haste to put those sentences and words away into my literary treasure-house—it may come in useful! When I finish work I race off to the theatre or to fishing; if only I could rest in that

and forget myself. But no, there's a new subject rolling about in my head like a heavy iron cannon ball, and I am drawn to my writing table and must make haste again to go on writing and writing. And it's always like that, always. And I have no rest from myself, and I feel that I am eating up my own life, and that for the sake of the honey I give to someone in space I am stripping the pollen from my best flowers, tearing up the flowers themselves and trampling on their roots. Don't you think I am mad? Do my friends and acquaintances treat me as though I were sane? "What are you writing? What are you giving us?" It's the same thing again and again, and it seems to me as though my friends' notice, their praises, their enthusiasm—that it's all a sham, that they are deceiving me as an invalid and I am somehow afraid that they will steal up to me from behind, snatch me and carry me off and put me in a madhouse. And in those years, the best years of my youth, when I was beginning, my writing was unmixed torture. A small writer, particularly when he is not successful, seems to himself clumsy, awkward, unnecessary; his nerves are strained and overwrought. He can't resist hanging about people connected with literature and art, unrecognised and unnoticed by anyone, afraid to look anyone boldly in the face, like a passionate gambler without any money. I hadn't seen my reader, but for some reason I always imagined him hostile, and mistrustful. I was afraid of the public, it alarmed me, and when I had to produce my first play it always seemed to me that all the dark people felt hostile and all the fair ones were coldly indifferent. Oh, how awful it was! What agony it was!

NINA But surely inspiration and the very process of creation give you moments of exalted happiness?

TRIGORIN Yes. While I am writing I enjoy it. And I like reading my proofs, but... as soon as it is published I can't endure it, and I see that it is all wrong, a mistake, that it ought not to have been written at all, and I feel vexed and sick about it... (*laughing*). And the public reads it and says:

“Yes, charming, clever. Charming, but very inferior to Tolstoy,” or, “It’s a fine thing, but Turgenev’s *Fathers and Children* is finer.” And it will be the same to my dying day, only charming and clever, charming and clever—and nothing more. And when I die my friends, passing by my tomb, will say, “Here lies Trigorin. He was a good writer, but inferior to Turgenev.”

NINA Forgive me, but I refuse to understand you. You are simply spoiled by success.

TRIGORIN What success? I have never liked myself; I dislike my own work. The worst of it is that I am in a sort of delirium, and often don’t understand what I am writing. I love this water here, the trees, the sky. I feel nature, it arouses in me a passionate, irresistible desire to write. But I am not simply a landscape painter; I am also a citizen. I love my native country, my people; I feel that if I am a writer I am in duty bound to write of the people, of their sufferings, of their future, to talk about science and the rights of man and so on, and so on, and I write about everything. I am hurried and flustered, and on all sides they whip me up and are angry with me; I dash about from side to side like a fox beset by hounds. I see life and culture continually getting farther and farther away while I fall farther and farther behind like a peasant too late for the train; and what it comes to is that I feel I can only describe scenes and in everything else I am false to the marrow of my bones.

NINA You are overworked and have not the leisure nor the desire to appreciate your own significance. You may be dissatisfied with yourself, but for others you are great and splendid! If I were a writer like you, I should give up my whole life to the common herd, but I should know that there could be no greater happiness for them than to rise to my level, and they would harness themselves to my chariot.

TRIGORIN My chariot, what next! Am I an Agamemnon, or what?

(Both smile.)

NINA For such happiness as being a writer or an artist I would be ready to endure poverty, disappointment, the dislike of those around me; I would live in a garret and eat nothing but rye bread, I would suffer from being dissatisfied with myself, from recognising my own imperfections, but I should ask in return for fame... real, resounding fame.... *(Covers her face with her hands.)* It makes me dizzy.... Ough!

(The voice of MADAME ARKADIN from the house.)

MADAME
ARKADIN Boris Alexeyevitch!

TRIGORIN They are calling for me. I suppose it's to pack. But I don't want to leave here. *(Looks round at the lake.)* Just look how glorious it is! It's splendid!

NINA Do you see the house and garden on the other side of the lake?

TRIGORIN Yes.

NINA That house was my dear mother's. I was born there. I have spent all my life beside this lake and I know every little islet on it.

TRIGORIN It's very delightful here! *(Seeing the seagull.)* And what's this?

NINA A seagull. Konstantin Gavrilitch shot it.

TRIGORIN A beautiful bird. Really, I don't want to go away. Try and persuade Irina Nikolayevna to stay *(makes a note in his book)*.

NINA What are you writing?

TRIGORIN Oh, I am only making a note. A subject struck me *(putting away the notebook)*. A subject for a short story:

a young girl, such as you, has lived all her life beside a lake; she loves the lake like a seagull, and is as free and happy as a seagull. But a man comes by chance, sees her, and having nothing better to do, destroys her like that seagull here (*a pause*).

(MADAME ARKADIN *appears at the window.*)

MADAME Boris Alexeyevitch, where are you?
ARKADIN

TRIGORIN I am coming (*goes and looks back at NINA. To MADAME ARKADIN at the window*). What is it?

MADAME We are staying.
ARKADIN

(TRIGORIN *goes into the house.*)

NINA (*Advances to the footlights; after a few moments' meditation.*) It's a dream!

(*Curtain.*)

ACT III

The dining-room in SORIN'S house. Doors on right and on left. A sideboard. A medicine cupboard. A table in the middle of the room. A portmanteau and hatboxes; signs of preparation for departure. TRIGORIN is having lunch; MASHA stands by the table.

MASHA I tell all this to you as a writer. You may make use of it. I am telling you the truth: if he had hurt himself seriously I would not have gone on living another minute. But I have pluck enough all the same. I just made up my mind that I would tear this love out of my heart, tear it out by the roots.

TRIGORIN How are you going to do that?

MASHA I am going to be married. To Medvedenko.

TRIGORIN That's the schoolmaster?

MASHA Yes.

TRIGORIN I don't understand what's the object of it.

MASHA To love without hope, to spend whole years waiting for something. . . . But when I marry, there will be no time left for love, new cares will smother all the old feelings. And, anyway, it will be a change, you know. Shall we have another?

TRIGORIN Won't that be too much?

MASHA Oh, come! (*Fills two glasses.*) Don't look at me like that!

Women drink much oftener than you imagine. Only a small proportion drink openly as I do, the majority drink in secret. Yes. And it's always vodka or brandy. (*Clinks glasses.*) My best wishes! You are a good-hearted man; I am sorry to be parting from you. (*They drink.*)

TRIGORIN I don't want to go myself.

MASHA You should beg her to stay.

TRIGORIN No, she won't stay now. Her son is behaving very tactlessly. First he shoots himself, and now they say he is going to challenge me to a duel. And whatever for? He sulks, and snorts, and preaches new forms of art. . . . But there is room for all—new and old—why quarrel about it?

MASHA Well, there's jealousy too. But it is nothing to do with me.

(*A pause. YAKOV crosses from right to left with a portmanteau. NINA enters and stands by the window.*)

MASHA My schoolmaster is not very brilliant, but he is a good-natured man, and poor, and he is very much in love with me. I am sorry for him. And I am sorry for his old mother. Well, let me wish you all happiness. Don't remember evil against me (*shakes hands with him warmly*). I am very grateful for your friendly interest. Send me your books and be sure to put in an inscription. Only don't write, "To my honoured friend," but write simply, "To Marya who belongs nowhere and has no object in life." Goodbye! (*Goes out.*)

NINA (*Stretching out her arm towards TRIGORIN, with her fist clenched.*) Odd or even?

TRIGORIN Even.

NINA (*With a sigh.*) Wrong. I had only one pea in my hand. I was trying my fortune whether to go on the stage or not.

I wish someone would advise me.

TRIGORIN It's impossible to advise in such a matter (*a pause*).

NINA We are parting and... perhaps we shall never meet again. Won't you please take this little medallion as a parting gift? I had your initials engraved on one side of it... and on the other the title of your book, *Days and Nights*.

TRIGORIN How exquisite! (*Kisses the medallion.*) A charming present!

NINA Think of me sometimes.

TRIGORIN I shall think of you. I shall think of you as you were on that sunny day—do you remember?—a week ago, when you were wearing a light dress... we were talking... there was a white seagull lying on the seat.

NINA (*Pensively.*) Yes, a seagull... (*a pause*). We can't talk any more, there's someone coming.... Let me have two minutes before you go, I entreat you... (*goes out on the left*).

(*At the same instant MADAME ARKADIN, SORIN in a dress coat with a star of some order on it, then YAKOV, occupied with the luggage, enter on the right.*)

MADAME ARKADIN Stay at home, old man. With your rheumatism you ought not to go gadding about. (*To TRIGORIN.*) Who was that went out? Nina?

TRIGORIN Yes.

MADAME ARKADIN *Pardon*, we interrupted you (*sits down*). I believe I have packed everything. I am worn out.

TRIGORIN (*Reads on the medallion.*) "*Days and Nights*, page 121, lines 11 and 12."

YAKOV (*Clearing the table.*) Am I to pack your fishing things too, sir?

TRIGORIN Yes, I shall want them again. You can give away the hooks.

YAKOV Yes, sir.

TRIGORIN (*To himself.*) Page 121, lines 11 and 12. What is there in those lines? (*To MADAME ARKADIN.*) Are there copies of my books in the house?

MADAME Yes, in my brother's study, in the corner bookcase.
ARKADIN

TRIGORIN Page 121... (*goes out*).

MADAME Really, Petrusha, you had better stay at home.
ARKADIN

SORIN You are going away; it will be dreary for me at home without you.

MADAME And what is there in the town?
ARKADIN

SORIN Nothing particular, but still... (*laughs*). There will be the laying of the foundation-stone of the Zemstvo hall, and all that sort of thing. One longs to shake oneself free from this stagnant existence, if only for an hour or two. I've been too long on the shelf like some old cigarette-holder. I have ordered the horses for one o'clock; we'll set off at the same time.

MADAME (*After a pause.*) Come, stay here, don't be bored and
ARKADIN don't catch cold. Look after my son. Take care of him. Give him good advice (*a pause*). Here I am going away and I shall never know why Konstantin tried to shoot himself. I fancy jealousy was the chief cause, and the sooner I get Trigorin away from here, the better.

SORIN What can I say? There were other reasons too. It's easy to understand; he is young, intelligent, living in the

country, in the wilds, with no money, no position and no future. He has nothing to do. He is ashamed of his idleness and afraid of it. I am very fond of him indeed, and he is attached to me, yet in spite of it all he feels he is superfluous in the house, that he is a dependant, a poor relation. It's easy to understand, it's amour propre....

MADAME He is a great anxiety to me! (*Pondering.*) He might go
ARKADIN into the service, perhaps.

SORIN (*Begins to whistle, then irresolutely.*) I think that quite the best thing would be if you were to... let him have a little money. In the first place he ought to be able to be dressed like other people and all that. Just look at him, he's been going about in the same wretched jacket for the last three years and he has no overcoat... (*laughs*). It would do him no harm to have a little fun... to go abroad or something.... It wouldn't cost much.

MADAME But all the same... I might manage the suit, perhaps, but
ARKADIN as for going abroad... No, just at the moment I can't even manage the suit. (*Resolutely.*) I have no money!

(SORIN *laughs.*)

MADAME No!
ARKADIN

SORIN (*Begins to whistle.*) Quite so. Forgive me, my dear, don't be cross. I believe you.... You are a generous, noble-hearted woman.

MADAME (*Weeping.*) I have no money.
ARKADIN

SORIN If I had money, of course I would give him some myself, but I have nothing, not a halfpenny (*laughs*). My steward takes all my pension and spends it all on the land and the cattle and the bees, and my money is all wasted. The bees die, and the cows die, they never let me have horses....

MADAME Yes, I have money, but you see I am an actress; my
ARKADIN dresses alone are enough to ruin me.

SORIN You are a kind, good creature ... I respect you.... Yes...
but there, I got a touch of it again... (*staggers*). I feel
dizzy (*clutches at the table*). I feel ill and all that.

MADAME (*Alarmed.*) Petrusha! (*Trying to support him.*) Petrusha,
ARKADIN my dear! (*Calling.*) Help! help!

(*Enter TREPLEV with a bandage round his head and
MEDVEDENKO.*)

MADAME He feels faint!
ARKADIN

SORIN It's all right, it's all right! (*Smiles and drinks some
water.*) It's passed off... and all that.

TREPLEV (*To his mother.*) Don't be frightened, mother, it's not
serious. Uncle often has these attacks now. (*To his
uncle.*) You must lie down, uncle.

SORIN For a little while, yes... But I am going to the town all
the same... I'll lie down a little and then set off... It's
quite natural (*goes out leaning on his stick*).

MEDVEDENKO (*Gives him his arm.*) There's a riddle: in the morning on
four legs, at noon on two, in the evening on three...

SORIN (*Laughs.*) Just so. And at night on the back. Thank you, I
can manage alone....

MEDVEDENKO Oh come, why stand on ceremony! (*Goes out with
SORIN.*)

MADAME How he frightened me!
ARKADIN

TREPLEV It is not good for him to live in the country. He gets
depressed. If you would be generous for once, mother,

and lend him fifteen hundred or two thousand roubles, he could spend a whole year in town.

MADAME I have no money. I am an actress, not a banker (*a pause*).
ARKADIN

TREPLEV Mother, change my bandage. You do it so well.

MADAME (*Takes out of the medicine cupboard some iodoform and*
ARKADIN *a box with bandaging material.*) The doctor is late.

TREPLEV He promised to be here at ten, and it is midday already.

MADAME Sit down (*takes the bandage off his head*). It's like a
ARKADIN turban. Yesterday a stranger asked in the kitchen what nationality you were. But you have almost completely healed. There is the merest trifle left (*kisses him on the head*). You won't do anything naughty again while I am away, will you?

TREPLEV No, mother. It was a moment of mad despair when I could not control myself. It won't happen again. (*Kisses her hand.*) You have such clever hands. I remember, long ago, when you were still acting at the Imperial Theatre—I was little then—there was a fight in our yard and a washerwoman, one of the tenants, was badly beaten. Do you remember? She was picked up senseless... you looked after her, took her remedies and washed her children in a tub. Don't you remember?

MADAME No (*puts on a fresh bandage*).
ARKADIN

TREPLEV Two ballet dancers lived in the same house as we did at the time.... They used to come to you and have coffee....

MADAME I remember that.
ARKADIN

TREPLEV They were very pious (*a pause*). Just lately, these last

days, I have loved you as tenderly and completely as when I was a child. I have no one left now but you. Only why, why do you give yourself up to the influence of that man?

MADAME You don't understand him, Konstantin. He is a very
ARKADIN noble character....

TREPLEV And yet when he was told I was going to challenge him, the nobility of his character did not prevent him from faking it. He is going away. Ignominious flight!

MADAME What nonsense! It is I who am asking him to go.
ARKADIN

TREPLEV A very noble character! Here you and I are almost quarrelling over him, and at this very moment he is somewhere in the drawing-room or the garden laughing at us... developing Nina, trying to convince her finally that he is a genius.

MADAME You take a pleasure in saying unpleasant things to me. I
ARKADIN respect that man and beg you not to speak ill of him before me.

TREPLEV And I don't respect him. You want me to think him a genius too, but forgive me, I can't tell lies, his books make me sick.

MADAME That's envy. There's nothing left for people who have
ARKADIN pretension without talent but to attack real talent. Much comfort in that, I must say!

TREPLEV (*Ironically.*) Real talent! (*Wrathfully.*) I have more talent than all of you put together if it comes to that! (*Tears the bandage off his head.*) You, with your hackneyed conventions, have usurped the supremacy in art and consider nothing real and legitimate but what you do yourselves; everything else you stifle and suppress. I don't believe in you! I don't believe in you or in him!

MADAME Decadent!
ARKADIN

TREPLEV Get away to your charming theatre and act there in your paltry, stupid plays!

MADAME I have never acted in such plays. Let me alone! You are
ARKADIN not capable of writing even a wretched burlesque! You are nothing but a Kiev shopman! living on other people!

TREPLEV You miser!

MADAME You ragged beggar!
ARKADIN

(TREPLEV sits down and weeps quietly.)

MADAME Nonentity! *(Walking up and down in agitation.)* Don't
ARKADIN cry. You mustn't cry *(weeps)*. Don't... *(kisses him on the forehead, on the cheeks and on the head)*. My dear child, forgive me.... Forgive your sinful mother. Forgive me, you know I am wretched.

TREPLEV *(Puts his arms round her.)* If only you knew! I have lost everything! She does not love me, and now I cannot write... all my hopes are gone....

MADAME Don't despair... Everything will come right. He is going
ARKADIN away directly, she will love you again *(wipes away his tears)*. Give over. We have made it up now.

TREPLEV *(Kisses her hands.)* Yes, mother.

MADAME *(Tenderly.)* Make it up with him too. You don't want a
ARKADIN duel, do you?

TREPLEV Very well. Only, mother, do allow me not to meet him. It's painful to me—it's more than I can bear. *(Enter TRIGORIN.)* Here he is... I am going... *(rapidly puts away the dressings in the cupboard)*. The doctor will do the bandaging now.

TRIGORIN (*Looking in a book.*) Page 121 ... lines 11 and 12. Here it is. (*Reads.*) "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it."

(*TREPLEV picks up the bandage from the floor and goes out.*)

MADAME (*Looking at her watch.*) The horses will soon be here.
ARKADIN

TRIGORIN (*To himself.*) "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it."

MADAME I hope all your things are packed?
ARKADIN

TRIGORIN (*Impatiently.*) Yes, yes. (*Musing.*) Why is it that I feel so much sorrow in that appeal from a pure soul and that it wrings my heart so painfully? "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it." (*To MADAME ARKADIN.*) Let us stay one day longer.

(*MADAME ARKADIN shakes her head.*)

TRIGORIN Let us stay!

MADAME Darling, I know what keeps you here. But have control
ARKADIN over yourself. You are a little intoxicated, try to be sober.

TRIGORIN You be sober too, be sensible and reasonable, I implore
you; look at it all as a true friend should. (*Presses her
hand.*) You are capable of sacrifice. Be a friend to me, let
me be free!

MADAME (*In violent agitation.*) Are you so enthralled?
ARKADIN

TRIGORIN I am drawn to her! Perhaps it is just what I need.

MADAME The love of a provincial girl? Oh, how little you know
ARKADIN yourself!

TRIGORIN Sometimes people sleep as they walk—that's how it is with me, I am talking to you and yet I am asleep and dreaming of her. . . . I am possessed by sweet, marvellous dreams. . . . Let me be free. . . .

MADAME (*Trembling.*) No, no! I am an ordinary woman, you can't
ARKADIN talk like that to me. Don't torture me, Boris. It terrifies me.

TRIGORIN If you cared to, you could be not ordinary. Love—youthful, charming, poetical, lifting one into a world of dreams—that's the only thing in life that can give happiness! I have never yet known a love like that. . . . In my youth I never had time, I was always hanging about the editors' offices, struggling with want. Now it is here, that love, it has come, it beckons to me. What sense is there in running away from it?

MADAME (*Wrathfully.*) You have gone mad!
ARKADIN

TRIGORIN Well, let me?

MADAME You are all in a conspiracy together to torment me today!
ARKADIN (*Weeps.*)

TRIGORIN (*Clutching at his heart.*) She does not understand! She won't understand!

MADAME Am I so old and ugly that you don't mind talking of
ARKADIN other women to me? (*Puts her arms round him and kisses him.*) Oh, you are mad! My wonderful, splendid darling. . . . You are the last page of my life! (*Falls on her knees.*) My joy, my pride, my bliss! . . . (*embraces his knees*). If you forsake me even for one hour I shall not survive it, I shall go mad, my marvellous, magnificent one, my master. . . .

TRIGORIN Someone may come in (*helps her to get up*).

MADAME Let them, I am not ashamed of my love for you (*kisses*

ARKADIN *his hands*). My treasure, you desperate boy, you want to be mad, but I won't have it, I won't let you... (*laughs*). You are mine... mine.... This forehead is mine, and these eyes, and this lovely silky hair is mine too... you are mine all over. You are so gifted, so clever, the best of all modern writers, you are the one hope of Russia.... You have so much truthfulness, simplicity, freshness, healthy humour.... In one touch you can give all the essential characteristics of a person or a landscape, your characters are living. One can't read you without delight! You think this is exaggerated? That I am flattering you? But look into my eyes... look.... Do I look like a liar? You see, I am the only one who can appreciate you; I am the only one who tells you the truth, my precious, wonderful darling.... Are you coming? Yes? You won't abandon me?...

TRIGORIN I have no will of my own... I have never had a will of my own.... Flabby, feeble, always submissive—how can a woman care for such a man? Take me, carry me off, but don't let me move a step away from you....

MADAME (*To herself.*) Now he is mine! (*In an easy tone as though nothing had happened.*) But, of course, if you like, you can stay. I'll go by myself and you can come afterwards, a week later. After all, why should you be in a hurry?

TRIGORIN No, we may as well go together.

MADAME As you please. Let us go together then (*a pause*).

ARKADIN

(TRIGORIN *makes a note.*)

MADAME What are you writing?

ARKADIN

TRIGORIN I heard a good name this morning, "The Maiden's Forest." It may be of use (*stretches*). So we are to go then? Again there will be railway carriages, station, refreshment bars, mutton chops, conversations....

SHAMRAEV (*Enters.*) I have the honour to announce, with regret, that the horses are ready. It's time, honoured lady, to set off for the station; the train comes in at five minutes past two. So please do me a favour, Irina Nikolaevna, do not forget to inquire what has become of the actor Suzdaltsev. Is he alive and well? We used to drink together at one time.... In *The Plundered Mail* he used to play incomparably... I remember the tragedian Izmailov, also a remarkable personality, acted with him in Elisavetograd.... Don't be in a hurry, honoured lady, you need not start for five minutes. Once they were acting conspirators in a melodrama and when they were suddenly discovered Izmailov had to say, "We are caught in a trap," but he said, "We are caught in a tap!" (*Laughs.*) A tap!

(While he is speaking YAKOV is busy looking after the luggage. The maid brings MADAME ARKADIN her hat, her coat, her umbrella and her gloves; they all help MADAME ARKADIN to put on her things. The man-cook looks in at the door on left and after some hesitation comes in. Enter POLINA ANDREYEVNA, then SORIN and MEDVEDENKO.)

POLINA (*With a basket.*) Here are some plums for the journey.... Very sweet ones. You may be glad to have something nice....

MADAME
ARKADIN You are very kind, Polina Andreyevna.

POLINA Goodbye, my dear! If anything has not been to your liking, forgive it (*weeps*).

MADAME
ARKADIN (*Embraces her.*) Everything has been nice, everything! But you mustn't cry.

POLINA The time flies so fast!

MADAME
ARKADIN There's no help for it.

SORIN *(In a greatcoat with a cape to it, with his hat on and a stick in his hand, enters from door on left, crossing the stage.)* Sister, it's time to start, or you may be too late after all. I am going to get into the carriage *(goes out)*.

MEDVEDENKO And I shall walk to the station... to see you off. I'll be there in no time... *(goes out)*.

MADAME Goodbye, dear friends... If we are all alive and well, we
ARKADIN shall meet again next summer. *(The maid, the cook and YAKOV kiss her hand.)* Don't forget me. *(Gives the cook a rouble.)* Here's a rouble for the three of you.

THE COOK We humbly thank you, madam! Good journey to you!
We are very grateful for your kindness!

YAKOV May God give you good luck!

SHAMRAEV You might rejoice our hearts with a letter! Goodbye,
Boris Alexeyevitch!

MADAME Where is Konstantin? Tell him that I am starting; I must
ARKADIN say goodbye. Well, don't remember evil against me. *(To YAKOV.)* I gave the cook a rouble. It's for the three of you.

(All go out on right. The stage is empty. Behind the scenes the noise that is usual when people are being seen off. The maid comes back to fetch the basket of plums from the table and goes out again.)

TRIGORIN *(Coming back.)* I have forgotten my stick. I believe it is out there, on the verandah *(goes and, at door on left, meets NINA who is coming in)*. Is that you? We are going....

NINA I felt that we should see each other once more.
(Excitedly.) Boris Alexeyevitch, I have come to a decision, the die is cast, I am going on the stage. I shall be gone from here tomorrow; I am leaving my father, I am abandoning everything, I am beginning a new life. Like you, I am going... to Moscow. We shall meet there.

TRIGORIN (*Looking round.*) Stay at the Slavyansky Bazaar... Let me know at once... Molchanovka, Groholsky House... I am in a hurry... (*a pause*).

NINA One minute more....

TRIGORIN (*In an undertone.*) You are so lovely.... Oh, what happiness to think that we shall see each other soon! (*She sinks on his breast.*) I shall see again those wonderful eyes, that inexpressibly beautiful tender smile... those soft features, the expression of angelic purity.... My darling... (*a prolonged kiss*).

(*Curtain.*)

(*Between the Third and Fourth Acts there is an interval of two years.*)

ACT IV

One of the drawing-rooms in SORIN's house, which has been turned into a study for KONSTANTIN TREPLEV. On the right and left, doors leading to inner apartments. In the middle, glass door leading on to the verandah. Besides the usual drawing-room furniture there is, in corner on right, a writing-table, near door on left, a sofa, a bookcase and books in windows and on the chairs. Evening. There is a single lamp alight with a shade on it. It is half dark. There is the sound of the trees rustling, and the wind howling in the chimney. A watchman is tapping. Enter MEDVEDENKO and MASHA.

MASHA (*Calling.*) Konstantin Gavrilitch! Konstantin Gavrilitch! (*Looking round.*) No, there is no one here. The old man keeps asking every minute, where is Kostya, where is Kostya? He cannot live without him. . . .

MEDVEDENKO He is afraid of being alone. (*Listening.*) What awful weather! This is the second day of it.

MASHA (*Turns up the lamp.*) There are waves on the lake. Great big ones.

MEDVEDENKO How dark it is in the garden! We ought to have told them to break up that stage in the garden. It stands as bare and ugly as a skeleton, and the curtain flaps in the wind. When I passed it yesterday evening, it seemed as though someone were crying in it.

MASHA What next... (*a pause*).

MEDVEDENKO Let us go home, Masha.

MASHA *(Shakes her head.)* I shall stay here for the night.

MEDVEDENKO *(In an imploring voice.)* Masha, do come! Our baby must be hungry.

MASHA Nonsense. Matryona will feed him *(a pause)*.

MEDVEDENKO I am sorry for him. He has been three nights now without his mother.

MASHA You are a bore. In old days you used at least to discuss general subjects, but now it is only home, baby, home, baby—that's all one can get out of you.

MEDVEDENKO Come along, Masha!

MASHA Go by yourself.

MEDVEDENKO Your father won't let me have a horse.

MASHA Yes, he will. You ask, and he will.

MEDVEDENKO Very well, I'll ask. Then you will come tomorrow?

MASHA *(Taking a pinch of snuff.)* Very well, tomorrow. How you pester me.

(Enter TREPLEV and POLINA ANDREYEVNA; TREPLEV brings in pillows and a quilt, and POLINA ANDREYEVNA sheets and pillowcases; they lay them on the sofa, then TREPLEV goes to his table and sits down.)

MASHA What's this for, mother?

POLINA Pyotr Nikolayevitch asked us to make a bed for him in Kostya's room.

MASHA Let me do it *(makes the bed)*.

POLINA *(Sighing.)* Old people are like children *(goes up to the writing-table, and leaning on her elbow, looks at the*

manuscript; a pause).

MEDVEDENKO Well, I am going then. Goodbye, Masha (*kisses his wife's hand*). Goodbye, mother (*tries to kiss his mother-in-law's hand*).

POLINA (*With vexation.*) Come, if you are going, go.

MEDVEDENKO Goodbye, Konstantin Gavrilitch.

(*TREPLEV gives him his hand without speaking; MEDVEDENKO goes out.*)

POLINA (*Looking at the MS.*) No one would have guessed or thought that you would have become a real author, Kostya. And now, thank God, they send you money from the magazines. (*Passes her hand over his hair.*) And you have grown good-looking too.... Dear, good Kostya, do be a little kinder to my Mashenka!

MASHA (*As she makes the bed.*) Leave him alone, mother.

POLINA (*To TREPLEV.*) She is a nice little thing (*a pause*). A woman wants nothing, you know, Kostya, so long as you give her a kind look. I know from myself.

(*TREPLEV gets up from the table and walks away without speaking.*)

MASHA Now you have made him angry. What induced you to pester him?

POLINA I feel so sorry for you, Mashenka.

MASHA Much use that is!

POLINA My heart aches for you. I see it all, you know, I understand it all.

MASHA It's all foolishness. There is no such thing as hopeless love except in novels. It's of no consequence. The only thing is one mustn't let oneself go and keep expecting

something, waiting for the tide to turn. . . . When love gets into the heart there is nothing to be done but to clear it out. Here they promised to transfer my husband to another district. As soon as I am there, I shall forget it all . . . I shall tear it out of my heart.

(Two rooms away a melancholy waltz is played.)

POLINA That's Kostya playing. He must be depressed.

MASHA *(Noiselessly dances a few waltz steps.)* The great thing, mother, is not to have him before one's eyes. If they only give my Semyon his transfer, trust me, I shall get over it in a month. It's all nonsense.

(Door on left opens. DORN and MEDVEDENKO wheel in SORIN in his chair.)

MEDVEDENKO I have six of them at home now. And flour is two kopeks per pound.

DORN You've got to look sharp to make both ends meet.

MEDVEDENKO It's all very well for you to laugh. You've got more money than you know what to do with.

DORN Money? After thirty years of practice, my boy, troublesome work during which I could not call my soul my own by day or by night, I only succeeded in saving two thousand roubles, and that I spent not long ago abroad. I have nothing.

MASHA *(To her husband.)* You have not gone?

MEDVEDENKO *(Guiltily.)* Well, how can I when they won't let me have a horse?

MASHA *(With bitter vexation in an undertone.)* I can't bear the sight of you.

(The wheelchair remains in the left half of the room; POLINA ANDREYEVNA, MASHA and DORN sit down beside it,

MEDVEDENKO *moves mournfully to one side.*)

DORN What changes there have been here! The drawing-room has been turned into a study.

MASHA It is more convenient for Konstantin Gavrilitch to work here. Whenever he likes, he can walk out into the garden and think there.

(A watchman taps.)

SORIN Where is my sister?

DORN She has gone to the station to meet Trigorin. She will be back directly.

SORIN Since you thought it necessary to send for my sister, I must be dangerously ill. *(After a silence.)* It's a queer thing, I am dangerously ill and here they don't give me any medicines.

DORN Well, what would you like to have? Valerian drops? Soda? Quinine?

SORIN Ah, he is at his moralising again! What an infliction it is! *(With a motion of his head towards the sofa.)* Is that bed for me?

POLINA Yes, it's for you, Pyotr Nikolayevitch.

SORIN Thank you.

DORN *(Hums.)* "The moon is floating in the midnight sky."

SORIN I want to give Kostya a subject for a story. It ought to be called "The Man Who Wished"—*L'homme qui a voulu*. In my youth I wanted to become a literary man—and didn't; I wanted to speak well—and I spoke horribly badly, *(mimicking himself)* "and all the rest of it, and all that, and so on, and so forth" ... and I would go plodding on and on, trying to sum up till I was in a regular perspiration; I wanted to get married—and I didn't; I

always wanted to live in town and here I am ending my life in the country—and so on.

DORN I wanted to become an actual civil councillor—and I have.

SORIN (*Laughs.*) That I had no hankerings after. That happened of itself.

DORN To be expressing dissatisfaction with life at sixty-two is really ungracious, you know.

SORIN What a persistent fellow he is! You might understand that one wants to live!

DORN That's just frivolity. It's the law of nature that every life must have an end.

SORIN You argue like a man who has had enough. You are satisfied and so you are indifferent to life, nothing matters to you. But even you will be afraid to die.

DORN The dread of death is an animal fear. One must overcome it. A rational fear of death is only possible for those who believe in eternal life and are conscious of their sins. And you, in the first place, don't believe, and, in the second, what sins have you to worry about? You have served in the courts of justice for twenty-five years—that's all.

SORIN (*Laughs.*) Twenty-eight.

(*TREPLEV comes in and sits down on a stool at SORIN'S feet. MASHA never takes her eyes off him.*)

DORN We are hindering Konstantin Gavrilitch from working.

TREPLEV Oh no, it doesn't matter (*a pause*).

MEDVEDENKO Allow me to ask you, doctor, what town did you like best abroad?

DORN Genoa.

TREPLEV Why Genoa?

DORN The life in the streets is so wonderful there. When you go out of the hotel in the evening, the whole street is packed with people. You wander aimlessly zigzagging about among the crowd, backwards and forwards; you live with it, are psychologically at one with it and begin almost to believe that a world-soul is really possible, such as was acted by Nina Zarechny in your play. And, by the way, where is she now? How is she getting on?

TREPLEV I expect she is quite well.

DORN I was told that she was leading a rather peculiar life. How was that?

TREPLEV That's a long story, doctor.

DORN Well, tell it us shortly (*a pause*).

TREPLEV She ran away from home and had an affair with Trigorin. You know that?

DORN I know.

TREPLEV She had a child. The child died. Trigorin got tired of her and went back to his old ties, as might have been expected. Though, indeed, he had never abandoned them, but in his weak-willed way contrived to keep both going. As far as I can make out from what I have heard, Nina's private life was a complete failure.

DORN And the stage?

TREPLEV I fancy that was worse still. She made her debut at some holiday place near Moscow, then went to the provinces. All that time I did not lose sight of her, and wherever she went I followed her. She always took big parts, but she acted crudely, without taste, screamingly, with violent

gestures. There were moments when she uttered a cry successfully or died successfully, but they were only moments.

DORN Then she really has some talent?

TREPLEV It was difficult to make it out. I suppose she has. I saw her but she would not see me, and the servants would not admit me at the hotel. I understood her state of mind and did not insist on seeing her (*a pause*). What more can I tell you? Afterwards, when I was back at home, I had some letters from her—warm, intelligent, interesting letters. She did not complain, but I felt that she was profoundly unhappy; every line betrayed sick overstrained nerves. And her imagination is a little unhinged. She signed herself the Seagull. In Pushkin's "Mermaid" the miller says that he is a raven, and in the same way in her letters she kept repeating that she was a seagull. Now she is here.

DORN Here? How do you mean?

TREPLEV In the town, staying at an inn. She has been there for five days. I did go to see her, and Marya Ilyinishna here went too, but she won't see anyone. Semyon Semyonitch declares he saw her yesterday afternoon in the fields a mile and a half from here.

MEDVEDENKO Yes, I saw her. She went in that direction, towards the town. I bowed to her and asked her why she did not come to see us. She said she would come.

TREPLEV She won't come (*a pause*). Her father and stepmother refuse to recognise her. They have put watchmen about so that she may not even go near the house (*walks away with the doctor towards the writing table*). How easy it is to be a philosopher on paper, doctor, and how difficult it is in life!

SORIN She was a charming girl.

DORN What?

SORIN She was a charming girl, I say. Actual Civil Councillor Sorin was positively in love with her for a time.

DORN The old Lovelace.

(SHAMRAEV's *laugh is heard.*)

POLINA I fancy our people have come back from the station. . . .

TREPLEV Yes, I hear mother.

(*Enter* MADAME ARKADIN, TRIGORIN *and with them* SHAMRAEV.)

SHAMRAEV (*As he enters.*) We all grow old and dilapidated under the influence of the elements, while you, honoured lady, are still young . . . a light blouse, sprightliness, grace. . . .

MADAME ARKADIN You want to bring me ill-luck again, you tiresome man!

TRIGORIN How do you do, Pyotr Nikolayevitch! So you are still poorly? That's bad! (*Seeing* MASHA, *joyfully.*) Marya Ilyinishna!

MASHA You know me, do you? (*Shakes hands.*)

TRIGORIN Married?

MASHA Long ago.

TRIGORIN Are you happy? (*Bows to* DORN *and* MEDVEDENKO, *then hesitatingly approaches* TREPLEV.) Irina Nikolayevna has told me that you have forgotten the past and are no longer angry.

(TREPLEV *holds out his hand.*)

MADAME ARKADIN (*To her son.*) Boris Alexeyevitch has brought the magazine with your new story in it.

TREPLEV *(Taking the magazine, to TRIGORIN.)* Thank you, you are very kind. *(They sit down.)*

TRIGORIN Your admirers send their greetings to you.... In Petersburg and Moscow there is great interest in your work and I am continually being asked questions about you. People ask what you are like, how old you are, whether you are dark or fair. Everyone imagines, for some reason, that you are no longer young. And no one knows your real name, as you always publish under a pseudonym. You are as mysterious as the Iron Mask.

TREPLEV Will you be able to make a long stay?

TRIGORIN No, I think I must go back to Moscow tomorrow. I am obliged to. I am in a hurry to finish my novel, and besides, I have promised something for a collection of tales that is being published. It's the old story, in fact.

(While they are talking MADAME ARKADIN and POLINA ANDREYEVNA put a card-table in the middle of the room and open it out. SHAMRAEV lights candles and sets chairs. A game of lotto is brought out of the cupboard.)

TRIGORIN The weather has not given me a friendly welcome. There is a cruel wind. If it has dropped by tomorrow morning I shall go to the lake to fish. And I must have a look at the garden and that place where—you remember?—your play was acted. I've got a subject for a story, I only want to revive my recollections of the scene in which it is laid.

MASHA *(To her father.)* Father, let my husband have a horse! He must get home.

SHAMRAEV *(Mimicking.)* Must get home—a horse! *(Sternly.)* You can see for yourself: they have just been to the station. I can't send them out again.

MASHA But there are other horses. *(Seeing that her father says nothing, waves her hand.)* There's no doing anything with you.

MEDVEDENKO I can walk, Masha. Really....

POLINA (*With a sigh.*) Walk in such weather... (*sits down to the card-table*). Come, friends.

MEDVEDENKO It is only four miles. Goodbye (*kisses his wife's hand*). Goodbye, mother. (*His mother-in-law reluctantly holds out her hand for him to kiss.*) I wouldn't trouble anyone, but the baby... (*bows to the company*). Goodbye... (*goes out with a guilty step*).

SHAMRAEV He can walk right enough. He's not a general.

POLINA (*Tapping on the table.*) Come, friends. Don't let us waste time, we shall soon be called to supper.

(SHAMRAEV, MASHA *and* DORN *sit down at the table.*)

MADAME (*To TRIGORIN.*) When the long autumn evenings come on,
ARKADIN they play *loto* here. Look, it's the same old *loto* that we had when our mother used to play with us, when we were children. Won't you have a game before supper? (*Sits down to the table with TRIGORIN.*) It's a dull game, but it is not so bad when you are used to it (*deals three cards to everyone*).

TREPLEV (*Turning the pages of the magazine.*) He has read his own story, but he has not even cut mine (*puts the magazine down on the writing-table, then goes towards door on left; as he passes his mother he kisses her on the head*).

MADAME And you, Kostya?
ARKADIN

TREPLEV Excuse me, I would rather not... I am going out (*goes out*).

MADAME The stake is ten kopeks. Put it down for me, doctor, will
ARKADIN you?

DORN Right.

MASHA Has everyone put down their stakes? I begin... Twenty-two.

MADAME Yes.
ARKADIN

MASHA Three!

DORN Right!

MASHA Did you play three? Eight! Eighty-one! Ten!

SHAMRAEV Don't be in a hurry!

MADAME What a reception I had in Harkov! My goodness! I feel
ARKADIN dizzy with it still.

MASHA Thirty-four!

(A melancholy waltz is played behind the scenes.)

MADAME The students gave me an ovation.... Three baskets of
ARKADIN flowers... two wreaths and this, see *(unfastens a brooch on her throat and lays it on the table)*.

SHAMRAEV Yes, that is a thing....

MASHA Fifty!

DORN Exactly fifty?

MADAME I had a wonderful dress.... Whatever I don't know, I do
ARKADIN know how to dress.

POLINA Kostya is playing the piano; he is depressed, poor fellow.

SHAMRAEV He is awfully abused in the newspapers.

MASHA Seventy-seven!

MADAME As though that mattered!
ARKADIN

TRIGORIN He never quite comes off. He has not yet hit upon his own medium. There is always something queer and vague, at times almost like delirium. Not a single living character.

MASHA Eleven!

MADAME (*Looking round at SORIN.*) Petrusha, are you bored? (*A pause.*) He is asleep.
ARKADIN

DORN The actual civil councillor is asleep.

MASHA Seven! Ninety!

TRIGORIN If I lived in such a place, beside a lake, do you suppose I should write? I should overcome this passion and should do nothing but fish.

MASHA Twenty-eight!

TRIGORIN Catching perch is so delightful!

DORN Well, I believe in Konstantin Gavrilitch. There is something in him! There is something in him! He thinks in images; his stories are vivid, full of colour and they affect me strongly. The only pity is that he has not got definite aims. He produces an impression and that's all, but you can't get far with nothing but an impression. Irina Nikolayevna, are you glad that your son is a writer?

MADAME Only fancy, I have not read anything of his yet. I never
ARKADIN have time.

MASHA Twenty-six!

(*TREPLEV comes in quietly and sits down at his table.*)

SHAMRAEV (*To TRIGORIN.*) We have still got something here belonging to you, Boris Alexeyevitch.

TRIGORIN What's that?

SHAMRAEV Konstantin Gavrilitch shot a seagull and you asked me to get it stuffed for you.

TRIGORIN I don't remember! (*Pondering.*) I don't remember!

MASHA Sixty-six! One!

TREPLEV (*Flinging open the window, listens.*) How dark it is! I don't know why I feel so uneasy.

MADAME
ARKADIN Kostya, shut the window, there's a draught.

(*TREPLEV shuts the window.*)

MASHA Eighty-eight!

TRIGORIN The game is mine!

MADAME
ARKADIN (*Gaily.*) Bravo, bravo!

SHAMRAEV Bravo!

MADAME
ARKADIN That man always has luck in everything (*gets up*). And now let us go and have something to eat. Our great man has not dined today. We will go on again after supper. (*To her son.*) Kostya, leave your manuscripts and come to supper.

TREPLEV I don't want any, mother, I am not hungry.

MADAME
ARKADIN As you like. (*Wakes SORIN.*) Petrusha, supper! (*Takes SHAMRAEV's arm.*) I'll tell you about my reception in Harkov.

(*POLINA ANDREYEVNA puts out the candles on the table. Then she and DORN wheel the chair. All go out by door on*

left; only TREPLEV, sitting at the writing-table, is left on the stage.)

TREPLEV *(Settling himself to write; runs through what he has written already.)* I have talked so much about new forms and now I feel that little by little I am falling into a convention myself. *(Reads.)* “The placard on the wall proclaimed. . . . The pale face in its setting of dark hair.” Proclaimed, setting. That’s stupid *(scratches out)*. I will begin where the hero is awakened by the patter of the rain, and throw out all the rest. The description of the moonlight evening is long and over elaborate. Trigorin has worked out methods for himself, it’s easy for him now. . . . With him the broken bottle neck glitters on the dam and the mill-wheel casts a black shadow—and there you have the moonlight night, while I have the tremulous light, and the soft twinkling of the stars, and the faraway strains of the piano dying away in the still fragrant air. . . . It’s agonising *(a pause)*. I come more and more to the conviction that it is not a question of new and old forms, but that what matters is that a man should write without thinking about forms at all, write because it springs freely from his soul. *(There is a tap at the window nearest to the table.)* What is that? *(Looks out of window.)* There is nothing to be seen. . . . *(opens the glass door and looks out into the garden)*. Someone ran down the steps. *(Calls.)* Who is there? *(Goes out and can be heard walking rapidly along the verandah; returns half a minute later with NINA ZARETCHNY.)* Nina, Nina!

(NINA lays her head on his breast and weeps with subdued sobs.)

TREPLEV *(Moved.)* Nina! Nina! It’s you. . . . you. . . . It’s as though I had foreseen it, all day long my heart has been aching and restless *(takes off her hat and cape)*. Oh, my sweet, my precious, she has come at last! Don’t let us cry, don’t let us!

NINA There is someone here.

TREPLEV No one.

NINA Lock the doors, someone may come in.

TREPLEV No one will come in.

NINA I know Irina Nikolayevna is here. Lock the doors.

TREPLEV (*Locks the door on right, goes to door on left.*) There is no lock on this one, I'll put a chair against it (*puts an armchair against the door*). Don't be afraid, no one will come.

NINA (*Looking intently into his face.*) Let me look at you. (*Looking round.*) It's warm, it's nice... In old days this was the drawing-room. Am I very much changed?

TREPLEV Yes... You are thinner and your eyes are bigger. Nina, how strange it is that I should be seeing you. Why would not you let me see you? Why haven't you come all this time? I know you have been here almost a week... I have been to you several times every day; I stood under your window like a beggar.

NINA I was afraid that you might hate me. I dream every night that you look at me and don't know me. If only you knew! Ever since I came I have been walking here... by the lake. I have been near your house many times and could not bring myself to enter it. Let us sit down. (*They sit down.*) Let us sit down and talk and talk. It's nice here, it's warm and snug. Do you hear the wind? There's a passage in Turgenev, "Well for the man on such a night who sits under the shelter of home, who has a warm corner in safety." I am a seagull... No, that's not it (*rubs her forehead*). What was I saying? Yes... Turgenev... "And the Lord help all homeless wanderers!"... It doesn't matter (*sobs*).

TREPLEV Nina, you are crying again... Nina!

NINA Never mind, it does me good... I haven't cried for two

years. Yesterday, late in the evening, I came into the garden to see whether our stage was still there. It is still standing. I cried for the first time after two years and it eased the weight on my heart and made it lighter. You see, I am not crying now (*takes him by the hand*). And so now you are an author. . . . You are an author, I am an actress. . . . We too have been drawn into the whirlpool. I lived joyously, like a child—I woke up singing in the morning; I loved you and dreamed of fame, and now? Early tomorrow morning I must go to Yelets third-class . . . with peasants, and at Yelets the cultured tradesmen will pester me with attentions. Life is a coarse business!

TREPLEV Why to Yelets?

NINA I have taken an engagement for the whole winter. It is time to go.

TREPLEV Nina, I cursed you, I hated you, I tore up your letters and photographs, but I was conscious every minute that my soul is bound to yours forever. It's not in my power to leave off loving you, Nina. Ever since I lost you and began to get my work published my life has been unbearable—I am wretched. . . . My youth was, as it were, torn away all at once and it seems to me as though I have lived for ninety years already. I call upon you, I kiss the earth on which you have walked; wherever I look I see your face, that tender smile that lighted up the best days of my life. . . .

NINA (*Distractedly.*) Why does he talk like this, why does he talk like this?

TREPLEV I am alone in the world, warmed by no affection. I am as cold as though I were in a cellar, and everything I write is dry, hard and gloomy. Stay here, Nina, I entreat you, or let me go with you!

(*NINA rapidly puts on her hat and cape.*)

TREPLEV Nina, why is this? For God's sake, Nina! (*Looks at her as she puts her things on; a pause.*)

NINA My horses are waiting at the gate. Don't see me off, I'll go alone. . . . (*Through her tears.*) Give me some water. . . .

TREPLEV (*Gives her some water.*) Where are you going now?

NINA To the town (*a pause*). Is Irina Nikolayevna here?

TREPLEV Yes. . . . Uncle was taken worse on Thursday and we telegraphed for her.

NINA Why do you say that you kissed the earth on which I walked? I ought to be killed. (*Bends over the table.*) I am so tired! If I could rest . . . if I could rest! (*Raising her head.*) I am a seagull. . . . No, that's not it. I am an actress. Oh, well! (*Hearing MADAME ARKADIN and TRIGORIN laughing, she listens, then runs to door on left and looks through the keyhole.*) He is here too. . . . (*Turning back to TREPLEV.*) Oh, well . . . it doesn't matter . . . no. . . . He did not believe in the stage, he always laughed at my dreams and little by little I left off believing in it too, and lost heart. . . . And then I was fretted by love and jealousy, and continually anxious over my little one. . . . I grew petty and trivial, I acted stupidly. . . . I did not know what to do with my arms, I did not know how to stand on the stage, could not control my voice. You can't understand what it feels like when one knows one is acting disgracefully. I am a seagull. No, that's not it. . . . Do you remember you shot a seagull? A man came by chance, saw it and, just to pass the time, destroyed it. . . . A subject for a short story. . . . That's not it, though (*rubs her forehead*). What was I saying? I am talking of the stage. Now I am not like that. I am a real actress, I act with enjoyment, with enthusiasm, I am intoxicated when I am on the stage and feel that I am splendid. And since I have been here, I keep walking about and thinking, thinking and feeling that my soul is getting stronger every day. Now I know, I understand, Kostya, that in our work—in acting or writing—what matters is not fame, not glory, not what I

dreamed of, but knowing how to be patient. To bear one's cross and have faith. I have faith and it all doesn't hurt so much, and when I think of my vocation I am not afraid of life.

TREPLEV *(Mournfully.)* You have found your path, you know which way you are going, but I am still floating in a chaos of dreams and images, not knowing what use it is to anyone. I have no faith and don't know what my vocation is.

NINA *(Listening.)* 'Sh-sh... I am going. Goodbye. When I become a great actress, come and look at me. Will you promise? But now... *(Presses his hand)* it's late. I can hardly stand on my feet.... I am worn out and hungry....

TREPLEV Stay, I'll give you some supper.

NINA No, no.... Don't see me off, I will go by myself. My horses are close by.... So she brought him with her? Well, it doesn't matter. When you see Trigorin, don't say anything to him.... I love him! I love him even more than before.... A subject for a short story... I love him, I love him passionately, I love him to despair. It was nice in old days, Kostya! Do you remember? How clear, warm, joyous and pure life was, what feelings we had—feelings like tender, exquisite flowers.... Do you remember? *(Recites.)* “Men, lions, eagles, and partridges, horned deer, geese, spiders, silent fish that dwell in the water, starfishes, and creatures which cannot be seen by the eye—all living things, all living things, all living things, have completed their cycle of sorrow, are extinct.... For thousands of years the earth has borne no living creature on its surface, and this poor moon lights its lamp in vain. On the meadow the cranes no longer waken with a cry and there is no sound of the May beetles in the lime trees...” *(Impulsively embraces TREPLEV and runs out of the glass door.)*

TREPLEV *(After a pause.)* It will be a pity if someone meets her in the garden and tells mother. It may upset mother....

(He spends two minutes in tearing up all his manuscripts and throwing them under the table; then unlocks the door on right and goes out.)

DORN *(Trying to open the door on left.)* Strange. The door seems to be locked... *(comes in and puts the armchair in its place)*. An obstacle race.

(Enter MADAME ARKADIN and POLINA ANDREYEVNA, behind them YAKOV carrying a tray with bottles; MASHA; then SHAMRAEV and TRIGORIN.)

MADAME Put the claret and the beer for Boris Alexeyevitch here
ARKADIN on the table. We will play as we drink it. Let us sit down, friends.

POLINA *(To YAKOV.)* Bring tea too at the same time *(lights the candles and sits down to the card table)*.

SHAMRAEV *(Leads TRIGORIN to the cupboard.)* Here's the thing I was speaking about just now *(takes the stuffed seagull from the cupboard)*. This is what you ordered.

TRIGORIN *(Looking at the seagull.)* I don't remember it. *(Musing.)* I don't remember.

(The sound of a shot coming from right of stage; everyone starts.)

MADAME *(Frightened.)* What's that?
ARKADIN

DORN That's nothing. It must be something in my medicine-chest that has gone off. Don't be anxious *(goes out at door on right, comes back in half a minute)*. That's what it is. A bottle of ether has exploded. *(Hums.)* "I stand before thee enchanted again..."

MADAME *(Sitting down to the table.)* Ough, how frightened I was.
ARKADIN It reminded me of how... *(hides her face in her hands)*.

It made me quite dizzy....

DORN *(Turning over the leaves of the magazine, to TRIGORIN.)*
There was an article in this two months ago—a letter from America—and I wanted to ask you, among other things *(puts his arm round TRIGORIN'S waist and leads him to the footlights)* as I am very much interested in the question.... *(In a lower tone, dropping his voice.)* Get Irina Nikolayevna away somehow. The fact is, Konstantin Gavrilitch has shot himself....

(Curtain.)



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