

A VOICE (off). This way, look.

*Enter RANYEVSKAYA, ANYA, and CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA, who has a little dog on a lead. All three ladies are dressed for travelling: VARYA in an overcoat and shawl; GAYEV, SIMONOV-PISHCHIK, LOPAKHIN, DUNYASHA with a bundle and an umbrella, SERVANTS carrying things – they all go across the room.*

ANYA. This way. Mama, do you remember which room this is?

RANYEVSKAYA (joyfully, on the verge of tears). The nursery!

VARYA. So cold. My hands are quite numb. (To RANYEVSKAYA.) Your rooms – the white one and the mauve one – they've stayed just as they were, Mama.

RANYEVSKAYA. The nursery. My own dear room, my lovely room . . . I slept in here when I was a little girl. (Weeps.) And now I'm like a little girl again . . . (Kisses her brother, then VARYA, then her brother once more.) And Varya's just the same as before – she looks like a nun. And Dunyasha I recognize . . . (Kisses her.)

GAYEV. The train was two hours late. What do you think of that? What kind of standards do these people have?

CHARLOTTA (to PISHCHIK). My dog can eat nuts even.

PISHCHIK (surprised). Would you believe it!

*They all go out except ANYA and DUNYASHA.*

DUNYASHA. We waited and waited . . . (She takes off ANYA's coat and hat.)

ANYA. I didn't sleep on the way – I haven't slept for four nights . . . Oh, I'm completely frozen!

DUNYASHA. You went away in Lent, with snow on the ground still, and now look at it. Oh, my dear! (Laughs and kisses her.) I've waited and waited for you. My own precious! My heart's delight . . . I'm going to tell you at once – I can't contain myself another minute . . .

ANYA (inertly). Nothing else.

DUNYASHA. Yepikhodov – you know who I mean, the estate clerk – just after Easter he proposed to me.

ANYA. Still on about the same old thing . . . (Tidying her hair.) I've gradually lost all the pins . . .

*She is completely exhausted – unable to keep her balance, even.*

DUNYASHA. I don't know what to think. He's in love with me, so in love with me!

ANYA (looks into her room, tenderly). My room, my windows, just as if I'd never been away. I'll get up in the morning, I'll run out into the orchard . . . Oh, if only I could get to sleep! I didn't sleep all the way – I was worn out with worry.

DUNYASHA. The day before yesterday Mr. Trofimov arrived.

ANYA (joyfully). Petya!

DUNYASHA. He's sleeping in the bath-house – he's living out there. He said he was afraid of being in the way. (Looks at her pocket watch.) We ought to wake him up, but Miss Varya said not to. Don't you go waking him, she says.

*Enter VARYA, with a bunch of keys on her belt.*

VARYA. Dunyasha, quick now – Mama's asking for coffee.

DUNYASHA. Very good. (Goes out.) (A)

VARYA. Well, God be praised, you've got here, both of you. You're home again, Anya. (Cuddling her.) My darling's come home! My lovely's come home again!

ANYA. I've had a most terrible time.

VARYA. I can imagine.

ANYA. I set out from here in Holy Week. It was cold. Charlotta talked the whole way – she kept showing me conjuring tricks. Why on earth you saddled me with Charlotta . . .

VARYA. You couldn't have travelled alone, my darling. Not at seventeen!

ANYA. Anyway, we get to Paris, and it's cold, it's snowing. My French is terrible. Mama's living up on the fifth floor, and when I arrive she's got people with her – Frenchmen, I don't know who they were, and ladies, and some ancient Catholic priest

holding a prayer-book – and the air's full of tobacco smoke, and it's bleak and uncomfortable. And suddenly I felt sorry for Mama. I felt so sorry for her I put my arms round her and pressed her head against me and couldn't let go. After that Mama kept hugging me, and crying . . .

VARYA (*on the verge of tears*). Don't, don't . . .

ANYA. She'd already sold that villa she had outside Menton. She's nothing left, nothing. Nor have I – not a kopeck. We scarcely managed it here. And Mama doesn't understand! We'll sit down to dinner in a station restaurant, and she orders the most expensive item on the menu. Then she tips all the waiters a ruble each. Charlotta's the same. And Yasha has to be fed, too – it's simply frightful. You know Mama has this footman, Yasha. We brought him with us.

VARYA. I've seen the rogue.

ANYA. So what – have we paid the interest?

VARYA. How could we?

ANYA. Oh God, oh God . . .

VARYA. In August they're going to sell the estate off.

ANYA. Oh God . . .

LOPAKHIN (*looks in at the door, and moos*). M-c-e-e . . . (*Goes out.*)

VARYA (*through her tears*). Oh, I'd like to give him such a . . .  
(*Raises her fist threateningly.*)

ANYA (*embraces VARYA – quietly*). Varya, has he proposed?

VARYA *shakes her head.*

Look, he loves you . . . Why don't you get things straight between you? What are you both waiting for?

VARYA. I'll tell you what I think – I think nothing's going to come of it. He's very busy, he hasn't got time for me – he doesn't even notice. Well, good luck to him, but I can't bear the sight of him. Everyone talks about our wedding, everyone keeps congratulating me, but in fact there's nothing there – it's all a kind of dream. (*In a different tone.*) You've got a bumble-bee brooch.

ANYA (*sadly*). Mama bought it. (*Goes into her room, and speaks cheerfully, childishly.*) And in Paris I went up in an air-balloon!

VARYA. Oh, my darling's come home! My lovely's come home again!

DUNYASHA *is back with the coffee-pot. She makes the coffee.*  
VARYA *stands by the door to ANYA's room.*

Oh, my darling, I go about the house all day in a dream. If we could just get you married to some rich man, then I could be easy in my mind. I could take myself off into a retreat, then to Kiev, to Moscow, and oh, I'd walk all round the holy places . . . I'd just keep walking and walking. The glory of it!

ANYA. The birds are singing in the orchard. What time is it now?

VARYA. It must be after two. Time for you to sleep, my darling. (*Going in to ANYA.*) The glory of it!

*Enter YASHA with a rug and travelling bag.*

YASHA (*crosses with delicacy*). All right to come through?

DUNYASHA. I shouldn't even recognize you, Yasha. You've changed so abroad!

YASHA. Mm . . . And who are you?

DUNYASHA. When you left I was so high . . . (*Indicates from the floor.*) Dunyasha. Fyodor Kozoyedov's daughter. You don't remember!

YASHA. Mm . . . Quite a pippin, aren't you? (*Looks round and embraces her. She screams and drops a saucer.*)

*Exit YASHA, swiftly.*

VARYA (*in the doorway, displeased*). Now what's going on?

DUNYASHA (*through her tears*). I've smashed the saucer . . .

VARYA. That's good luck.

ANYA (*coming out of her room*). We should warn Mama – Petya's here.

VARYA. I gave orders not to wake him.

LOPAKHIN. I have to leave straight away, before five o'clock. I'm off to Kharkov. Such a shame. I just wanted to get a look at you, have a few words . . . You're still as magnificent as ever.

PISHCHIK (*breathes hard*). You've grown even more lovely . . . Dressed in Paris fashions . . . I could throw caution to the winds.

LOPAKHIN. In the eyes of your sort – your brother here, for instance – I'm a boor, I'm a money-grubbing peasant, but I don't give a damn about that. The only thing I want is for you to trust me as you did before, to see your amazing, heart-breaking eyes looking at me the way they used to. Merciful God! My father was a serf, and your father and grandfather owned him. But you – yes, you were the one – you did so much for me once that I've forgotten all that, and I love you like my own flesh and blood . . . more than my own flesh and blood.

RANYEVSKAYA. I can't sit still. I'm physically incapable . . . (*Jumps up and walks about in a state of great emotion.*) I shall never survive this joy . . . Laugh at me, I'm such a fool . . . My bookcase, my own dear bookcase . . . (*Kisses the bookcase.*) My dear old table.

GAYEV. Nanna died while you were away.

RANYEVSKAYA (*sits and drinks coffee*). Yes, God rest her soul. They wrote and told me.

GAYEV. And Anastasy died. Petrushka – you remember him? With the squint? He left me. Living in town now, working for the local police inspector. (*He takes a box of fruit-drops out of his pocket and sucks one.*)

PISHCHIK. My daughter Dashenka – she sends her best regards . . .

LOPAKHIN. I want to tell you some very pleasant and cheering news. (*Glances at his watch.*) I shall be leaving very shortly, we haven't time for a proper talk . . . I'll put it in two words, then. You know, of course, that your cherry orchard is to be sold to pay your debts – the sale is fixed for the twenty-second of August. But don't you worry yourself about it, my dear – sleep easy in your bed at night – there is a way out . . . This is my plan. Now listen carefully. Your estate is only thirteen miles out

of town; the railway has now come through right next to it; and if the cherry orchard and the land along the river are broken up into building lots and leased out as sites for summer cottages, then you will possess an income of – at the very least – twenty-five thousand rubles a year.

GAYEV. I'm sorry, but it's such nonsense!

RANYEVSKAYA (*to LOPAKHIN*). I don't entirely understand you.

LOPAKHIN. You will get from your leaseholders at the very minimum ten rubles a year per acre. And if you advertise it now, then I swear upon anything you like to name that by the autumn you won't have a single acre left – it will all have been taken up. In short – congratulations, you're saved. It's a marvellous position with this deep river. The only thing, of course, is that you need to tidy it up a bit. Remove all the old buildings, for example – like this house, which won't have any use now – and cut down the old cherry orchard.

RANYEVSKAYA. Cut it down? My dear, forgive me, but you don't understand. If there is one thing of any interest at all in this whole province – if there is even something rather remarkable – then it's our cherry orchard.

LOPAKHIN. There's only one thing remarkable about this orchard. It's very big. You only get a full crop every other year, and then there's nothing to do with it – no one buys it.

GAYEV. There's even a reference to this orchard in the encyclopaedia.

LOPAKHIN (*glances at his watch*). If we don't think of something, if we don't come to some decision, then on the twenty-second of August not only the cherry orchard but the whole estate will be sold at auction. So nerve yourselves! There is no other way out, I swear to you. None whatsoever. (A)

FIRS. In the old days, forty, fifty years ago, they used to dry the cherries, they used to soak them, they used to pickle them, they used to make jam out of them, and year after year . . .

GAYEV. Do be quiet, Firs.

FIRS. And year after year they'd send off dried cherries by the cartload to Moscow and Kharkov. There was money then! And the dried cherries were soft and juicy and sweet and scented . . . They knew the recipe in those days.

RANYEVSKAYA. And what's happened to this recipe now?

FIRS. They've forgotten it. No one remembers it.

PISHCHIK (to RANYEVSKAYA). How was it in Paris, then? Did you eat frogs?

RANYEVSKAYA. I ate crocodiles.

PISHCHIK. Would you believe it!

LOPAKHIN. Up to now in the countryside we've had only the gentry and the peasants. But now a new class has appeared – the summer countrymen. Every town now, even the smallest, is surrounded with summer cottages. And we may assume that over the next twenty years or so our summer countryman will be fruitful and multiply exceedingly. Now he merely sits on his verandah and drinks tea, but you know it may come to pass that he'll put his couple of acres to some use, and start to cultivate them. And then this old cherry orchard of yours will become happy and rich and luxuriant . . .

GAYEV (exasperated). Such nonsense!

*Enter VARYA and YASHA.*

VARYA. Mama, there are two telegrams that came for you. (Selects a key which clicks in the lock as she opens the antique bookcase.) Here.

RANYEVSKAYA. From Paris. (Tears up the telegrams without reading them.) Paris is over and done with.

GAYEV. But, Lyuba, do you know how old this bookcase is? I pulled out the bottom drawer last week, and I looked, and there were some numbers burnt into the wood with a poker. This bookcase was built exactly one hundred years ago. What do you think of that? We could celebrate its centenary. It's an inanimate object, but all the same, whichever way you look at it, it's still a bookcase.

PISHCHIK (in surprise). A hundred years . . . Would you believe it!

GAYEV. Yes . . . Quite an achievement . . . (Feels the bookcase.)

Dear bookcase! Most esteemed bookcase! I salute your existence, which for more than a hundred years now has been directed towards the shining ideals of goodness and of truth. For a hundred years your unspoken summons to fruitful labour has never faltered, upholding, (on the verge of tears) through all the generations of our family, wisdom and faith in a better future, and fostering within us ideals of goodness and of social consciousness.

*Pause.*

LOPAKHIN. Yes . . .

RANYEVSKAYA. You're the same as ever, Lenya.

GAYEV (in some slight confusion). In off into the righthand corner!

Then screw back into the middle pocket!

LOPAKHIN (glances at his watch). Well, I must be on my way.

YASHA (hands pills to RANYEVSKAYA). Take your pills now, perhaps . . .

PISHCHIK. Dearest heart, you mustn't go taking medicines . . . there's neither harm nor charm in them . . . Give them here . . .

Dear lady. (Picks up the pills, tips them out on to his palm, blows on them, puts them into his mouth, and washes them down with kvass.) There!

RANYEVSKAYA (alarmed). But you've gone utterly mad!

PISHCHIK. I've taken all the pills.

LOPAKHIN. There's a greedyguts!

*Everyone laughs.*

FIRS. When he was here at Easter he put away half a bucket of pickled cucumbers . . . (Mutters.)

RANYEVSKAYA. What's he going on about now?

VARYA. He's been muttering away like this for the last three years. We've got used to it.



VARYA. Mama's exactly the same as she was. She hasn't changed at all. If it was up to her she'd have given everything away.

GAYEV. Yes . . .

*Pause.*

If for some disease a great many different remedies are proposed, then it means that the disease is incurable. I think, I cudgel my brains – I have many remedies, a great many – and what that means when you get down to it is that I haven't a solitary one. It would be a good thing if we got an inheritance from someone. It would be a good thing if we married Anya to some very rich man. It would be a good thing if we went to Yaroslavl and tried our luck with that aunt of ours, the countess. She's very rich indeed, you know.

VARYA (*weeps*). If only God would help.

GAYEV. Don't howl. Aunt is very rich, but she doesn't like us. In the first place, my sister married an ordinary lawyer instead of a gentleman with property . . .

ANYA *appears in the doorway*.

She married a commoner, and the way she's behaved – well, you couldn't say it was very virtuously. She's good, she's kind, she's a splendid woman, I love her dearly, but however many extenuating circumstances you think up, the fact has to be faced: she is depraved. You can sense it in her slightest movement.

VARYA (*in a whisper*). Anya is standing in the doorway.

GAYEV. Who?

*Pause.*

Funny – I've got something in my right eye. I can't see properly. And on Thursday, when I was at the district court . . .

*Enter ANYA.*

VARYA. Why aren't you asleep, Anya?

ANYA. I can't get to sleep.

GAYEV. My pet. (*Kisses ANYA's face and hands.*) My child . . .

(*On the verge of tears.*) You're not my niece – you're my angel. You're everything to me. Believe me. Trust me.

ANYA. I trust you, uncle. Everyone loves you, everyone looks up to you . . . but, dear Uncle, you must be quiet, only be quiet. What were you saying just then about my mother – about your own sister? Why did you say that?

GAYEV. Yes, yes . . . (*Covers his face with her hand.*) Really, that was terrible! God forgive me! And today I made a speech to the bookcase . . . so stupid! And only when I'd finished did I realize how stupid it was.

VARYA. It's true, Uncle dear, you must keep quiet. Just be quiet, that's all.

ANYA. If you're quiet, you'll be calmer in yourself, too.

GAYEV. I am silent. (*Kisses their hands.*) Not a word. Just one thing on a matter of business. On Thursday I was at the district court, and, well, a few of us there got talking about this and that, one thing and another, and it seems it would be possible to arrange a loan against my note of hand to pay the bank interest.

VARYA. If only the Lord would help!

GAYEV. On Tuesday I'll go and have another talk about it. (*To VARYA.*) Don't howl. (*To ANYA.*) Your mother will have a word with Lopakhin. He obviously won't refuse her. And you – as soon as you've got your breath back you'll go to Yaroslavl to see the countess, your great aunt. So we'll be operating from three sides at once – and the job's as good as done. We shall pay the interest, of that I'm convinced. (*Puts a fruit drop in his mouth.*) I swear, upon my honour, upon whatever you like, that the estate will not be sold! (*Excitedly.*) By my hope of happiness I swear it! Here's my hand on it – call me a low, dishonourable fellow if I let it go to auction! By my whole being I swear to you!

ANYA (*her calm mood has returned to her: she is happy*). What a good man you are, Uncle, what a good and clever man! (*Embraces him.*) Now I'm calm! Quite calm! I'm happy!

*Enter FIRS.*

FIRS (*to GAYEV, reproachfully*). What? Have you no fear before God? When are you going to bed?

GAYEV. Right now, right now. You go off. Don't worry about me, I'll undress myself. Well, night night, then, children. Details tomorrow, but now to bed. (*Kisses ANYA and VARYA.*) I am a man of the eighties. Not a period they speak well of these days, but I can tell you that I have suffered not a little in this life for my convictions. It's no accident that your ordinary peasant loves me. You have to know your peasant! You have to know how to . . .

ANYA. Uncle, you're off again!

VARYA. Dear uncle, just be quiet.

FIRS (*angrily*). Leonid Andreyich!

GAYEV. I'm coming, I'm coming . . . Off to bed, then. Cushion, cushion, and into the middle pocket! Clean as a whistle . . . (*Goes out, with FIRS trotting behind him.*)

ANYA. Now I'm calm. I don't want to go to Yaroslavl – I don't like our great aunt. But all the same I'm calm. Thanks to Uncle. (*Sits down.*)

VARYA. We must get some sleep. I'm off. One rather annoying thing happened while you were away, though. You know what used to be the servants' quarters? Well, of course, it's only the elderly servants who live there now: Yefimushka, Polya, Yevstigney, oh, yes, and Karp. Well, they began to let various riff-raff in to spend the night. I said nothing about it. Only then I hear they've been spreading a rumour to the effect that I've had them fed on nothing but dried peas. Out of meanness, do you see . . . And all this is Yevstigney's doing . . . Right, I think to myself. If that's the way you want it, then just you wait. So I send for Yevstigney . . . (*Yawns.*) He comes in . . .

What's all this, then, Yevstigney? I say to him . . . You're such a fool . . . (*Looks at ANYA.*) Anyechka . . .!

*Pause.*

Asleep . . .! (*Takes ANYA by the arm.*) Off we go to bed, then . . . Off we go . . .! (*Leads her.*) My poor precious has fallen fast asleep! Off we go . . .

*A long way away, beyond the orchard, a SHEPHERD plays on a reed pipe.*

TROFIMOV *crosses the stage, and stops at the sight of VARYA and ANYA.*

VARYA. Sh . . . She's asleep . . . asleep . . . Off we go, my own sweet precious.

ANYA (*quietly, half asleep*). So tired . . . I can still hear the harness bells . . . Uncle . . . dear Uncle . . . Mama and Uncle, too . . .

VARYA. Off we go, my own sweet love. Off we go . . .

*They go into ANYA's room.*

TROFIMOV (*moved*). My sunshine! My springtime!

CURTAIN

## Act Two

*The open fields. A wayside shrine – old, crooked, and long neglected. Beside it – a well, large slabs which were evidently once tombstones, and an old bench. A path can be seen leading to the Gayev estate. At one side rise the dark shapes of poplars; this is where the cherry orchard begins.*

*In the distance is a row of telegraph poles, and a long way away on the horizon a large town can just be made out, visible only in very fine, clear weather. The sun is just about to set.*

CHARLOTTA, YASHA and DUNYASHA are sitting on the bench; YEPIKHODOV is standing beside it, playing the guitar. They are all in a reflective mood.

CHARLOTTA is wearing an old peaked cap. She has taken a gun off her shoulder and is adjusting the buckle on the sling.

CHARLOTTA (*meditatively*). I haven't got proper papers – I don't know how old I am. So I always think of myself as being young. When I was a little girl Mama and my father used to go round all the fairs giving shows. Very good shows they were, too. And I'd turn somersaults and do all kinds of little tricks. And when Papa and Mama died, some German lady took me in and began to give me an education. So, all right, I grew up, and then I went to be a governess. But where I come from and who I am, I don't know. Who my parents were – whether they were even married or not – I don't know. (*Gets a cucumber out of her pocket and eats it.*) I don't know anything.

*Pause.*

I so long to talk to someone, but there's no one to talk to. I haven't got anyone.

## ACT TWO

23

YEPIKHODOV (*plays the guitar and sings*).

*What should I care for life's clamour,*

*What for my friend or my foe . . .*

How very agreeable it is to pluck at the strings of a mandoline!

DUNYASHA. That's not a mandoline – that's a guitar. (*Powders herself in a pocket mirror.*)

YEPIKHODOV. For the madman who's in love it's a mandoline. (*Sings.*)

*. . . Had I a passion requited*

*Warming my heart with its glow?*

YASHA joins in.

CHARLOTTA. Horrible way these people sing! Faugh! Like jackals howling!

DUNYASHA (*to YASHA*). All the same, how lovely to spend some time abroad.

YASHA. Yes, of course. I couldn't agree more. (*Yawns, and then lights a cigar.*)

YEPIKHODOV. Oh, absolutely. Everything abroad's been in full constitution for years.

YASHA. Obviously.

YEPIKHODOV. Here am I – I mean, I'm a grown man – I read – I read all sorts of important books – but what I can't make out is any I mean kind of movement of opinion when it comes to what I personally want in life. Put it this way – do I want to go on living, or do I want to shoot myself? I mean, I always carry a revolver on me, look. (*Shows the revolver.*)

CHARLOTTA. Done it. I'm off. (*Slings the gun on her shoulder.*) Yepikhodov, you're a genius. A terrifying genius. All the women ought to be mad about you. Brrr! (*Starts to go.*) These great brains – they're all such fools. I've no one to talk to. Alone, always alone, I haven't got anyone. And who I am and why I am remains a mystery . . . (*Goes unhurriedly off.*)

YEPIKHODOV. I mean, leaving everything else aside, I mean just taking my own case, and I'm not going to mince my words, but,

really, fate has treated me quite relentlessly. I've been tossed around like a rowing-boat in a high sea. All right, let's say I'm talking nonsense. In that case, why, just to take one example, why, when I woke up this morning, why did I find, sitting there on my chest, this enormous spider? Like this. (*Demonstrates with both hands.*) All right, take another example. I pour myself some kvass, to have a drink, and there in the glass is something really profoundly horrible. I mean, a cockroach, for example.

*Pause.*

Have you read Buckle? The History of Civilization?

*Pause*

(A) (To DUNYASHA.) If I might trouble you, I should appreciate the chance of a word or two.

DUNYASHA. Go on, then.

YEPIKHODOV. I should have been hopeful of having it in private. (*Sighs.*)

DUNYASHA (*embarrassed*). All right – only first fetch me my cloak. You'll find it by the cupboard. It's rather damp here.

YEPIKHODOV. Now I know what to do with my revolver . . . (*Takes his guitar and goes off playing it.*) (K)

YASHA. Poor old Disasters! Between you and me, that man is a fool. (*Yawns.*)

DUNYASHA. Just so long as he doesn't go and shoot himself.

*Pause.*

I've got so nervy these days – I worry all the time. They took me into service when I was a little girl still. I've got out of the way of ordinary people's life now. Look at my hands – white as white, like a lady's. I've turned into someone all refined, someone terribly delicate and ladylike – I'm frightened of everything. It's dreadful being like this. And Yasha, if you deceive me, well, I don't know what would become of my nerves.

YASHA (*kisses her*). Real country pippin, aren't you? Of course, every girl's got to remember who she is. If there's one thing I hate more than anything else, it's a girl who doesn't know how to behave herself.

DUNYASHA. I'm absolutely passionately in love with you. Because you're an educated man – you can talk about anything.

*Pause.*

YASHA (*yawns*). Right . . . What I think is, if a girl's in love with someone then she's got no morals.

*Pause.*

Nice having a cigar in the open air . . . (*Listens.*) Someone coming . . . It's *them*.

DUNYASHA *impetuously embraces him*.

Go home as if you'd been down to the river for a swim – here, along this path. Otherwise you'll run into them and they'll think I've been seeing you. I'm not having that.

DUNYASHA (*coughs quietly*). Your cigar's given me a headache . . . (A) (*Goes off.*)

YASHA *remains, sitting beside the shrine.*

*Enter RANYEVSKAYA, GAYEV, and LOPAKHIN.* ← *change*

LOPAKHIN. It has to be settled once and for all – time won't wait. Look, it's a simple enough question. Do you agree to lease out the land for summer cottages or not? Answer me one word: yes or no? Just one word!

RANYEVSKAYA. Who's smoking some foul cigar? (*Sits.*)

GAYEV. It's very convenient now they've built the railway. (*Sits.*) We popped into town and had some lunch . . . Yellow into the middle pocket! I should have gone indoors first and had a quick game.

RANYEVSKAYA. You've still got time.



RANYEVSKAYA. You've aged, Firs, haven't you?

FIRS. What do you want?

LOPAKHIN. She says you've aged a lot!

FIRS. I've lived a long life. They were marrying me off before your Papa even arrived in the world. (*Laughs.*) And when the Freedom came, in sixty-one, I was already head valet. I didn't agree to have the Freedom – I stayed with the masters . . .

*Pause.*

And I remember, everyone was glad. But what they were glad about they didn't know themselves.

LOPAKHIN. Lovely it was before. At least they flogged you.

FIRS (*not having heard right*). Oh, my word, they were. The peasants belonged to the masters, and the masters to the peasants. Now it's all chippety-choppety – you can't make any sense of it.

GAYEV. Do be quiet for a moment, Firs. Tomorrow I have to go into town. I've been promised an introduction to a general who might put up something against my note of hand.

LOPAKHIN. Nothing's going to come of it, whatever you do. And you're not going to pay that interest, don't worry.

RANYEVSKAYA. He's living in a dream. There's no general.

*change* → Enter TROFIMOV, ANYA and VARYA.

GAYEV. Some more of us coming.

ANYA. It's Mama.

RANYEVSKAYA (*tenderly*). Here . . . here . . . my own darlings . . . (*Embracing ANYA and VARYA.*) If only you knew how much I love you both! Sit next to me – here . . .

*They all settle themselves down.*

LOPAKHIN. Our Wandering Student always seems to be wandering with the young ladies.

TROFIMOV. Mind your own business.

LOPAKHIN. He'll be fifty before he knows where he is, and still a student.

TROFIMOV. Why don't you leave off your stupid jokes?

LOPAKHIN. Not losing your temper, are you, O weird one?

TROFIMOV. Don't keep badgering me.

LOPAKHIN (*laughs*). All right, then, my dear sir. What do you make of me?

TROFIMOV. I'll tell you what I make of you, sir. You're a wealthy man – you'll soon be a millionaire. And just as there must be predatory animals to maintain nature's metabolism by devouring whatever crosses their path, so there must also be you.

*They all laugh.*

VARYA. Petya, I think it would be better if you told us about the planets.

RANYEVSKAYA. No, let's go on with the conversation we were having yesterday.

TROFIMOV. What was that about?

GAYEV. Pride.

TROFIMOV. We talked for a long time yesterday, but we never arrived at any conclusions. Human pride, in the sense you're using it, has some kind of mystical significance. And you may even be right, in your own fashion. But if we're going to talk about it in a down-to-earth way, without any fancy trimmings, then what sort of pride can there be – does the expression have any sense at all – if man is physiologically ill-constructed, if in the vast majority of cases he is crude and stupid and profoundly unhappy? We have to stop admiring ourselves. We have simply to work.

GAYEV. It makes no difference – you still die.

TROFIMOV. Who knows? And what does it mean – you die? Perhaps man has a hundred senses, and at death it's only the five we know of that perish, while the other ninety-five go on living.

RANYEVSKAYA. What a clever man you are, Petya!

LOPAKHIN (*ironically*). Oh, staggeringly.

TROFIMOV. Mankind is advancing, perfecting its powers. All the things that are beyond its reach now will one day be brought close and made plain. All we have to do is to work, to bend all our strength to help those who are seeking the truth. Here in Russia very few as yet are working. Most members of the intelligentsia, so far as I know it, are seeking nothing, neither the truth nor anything else. They're doing nothing – they're still incapable of hard work. They call themselves the intelligentsia, but they treat servants like children, and peasants like animals. They don't know how to study. They never do any serious reading. They understand next to nothing about art; science they merely talk about. They're all terribly serious people with terribly stern expressions on their faces. They all talk about nothing but terribly important questions. They all philosophize away. And right in front of their eyes the whole time there are workers living on filthy food and sleeping without pillows to their heads, thirty and forty to a room – and everywhere bugs, damp, stench, and moral squalor. And all the fine conversations we have are plainly just to distract attention from it all. Our own attention, and other people's, too. Show me – where are the crèches that everyone's always going on about – where are the reading-rooms? They're only in novels – they don't exist in reality. There's just filth and banality and barbarism. I have little love for all those serious faces; I fear those serious conversations. Better to be silent. <sup>(A)</sup>

LOPAKHIN. Listen, I get up before five every morning, I work all the hours God gave, I'm constantly handling money – my own and other people's – and I can't help seeing what my fellow men are like. You've only got to start trying to do something to discover how few honest, decent people there are in the world. Sometimes, when I can't sleep, I think to myself: 'Lord, you gave us immense forests, boundless plains, broad horizons – living in it all we ought properly to be giants.'

RANYEVSKAYA. A lot of use giants would be. They're all right in fairy-tales. Anywhere else they're frightening.

YEPIKHODOV *crosses upstage, playing the guitar.*

(*Pensively.*) There goes Yepikhodov . . .

ANYA (*likewise*). There goes Yepikhodov . . .

GAYEV. The sun has set, ladies and gentlemen.

TROFIMOV. Yes.

GAYEV (*softly, as if declaiming*). O nature, wondrous nature! You shine with an everlasting radiance, beautiful and indifferent; you that we call Mother unite within yourself existence and death; you give life and you destroy it . . .

VARYA (*imploringly*). Uncle!

ANYA. You're doing it again!

TROFIMOV. You'd be better off potting yellow.

GAYEV. I am silent, I am silent.

*They all sit lost in thought. Silence. All that can be heard is FIRS muttering quietly. Suddenly there is a distant sound, as if from the sky: the sound of a breaking string – dying away, sad.*

RANYEVSKAYA. What was that?

LOPAKHIN. I don't know. Somewhere a long way off, in the mines, a winding cable has parted. But a long, long way off.

GAYEV. Perhaps a bird of some sort . . . something like a heron.

TROFIMOV. Or some kind of owl.

RANYEVSKAYA (*shivers*). Horrible, I don't know why.

*Pause.*

FIRS. It was the same before the troubles. The owl screeched, and the samovar moaned without stop.

GAYEV. Before what troubles?

FIRS. Before the Freedom.

*Pause.*

## Act Three

*The drawing-room, with an archway leading through into the ballroom. The chandelier is lit.*

*From an ante-room comes the sound of the Jewish orchestra mentioned in Act Two. Company has been invited for the evening. In the ballroom they are dancing the 'grand-rond'.*

(A) SIMEONOV-PISHCHIK (off). *Promenade à une paire!*

*The COUPLES emerge into the drawing-room – first PISHCHIK and CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA, second TROFIMOV and RANYEVSKAYA, third ANYA and the POSTMASTER, fourth VARYA and the STATIONMASTER, and so on. VARYA is quietly weeping, and wiping her eyes as she dances. In the last couple is DUNYASHA. They go round the room.*

PISHCHIK. *Grand-rond balancez . . . ! Les cavaliers à genoux et remerciez vos dames!*

FIRS, *wearing a tailcoat, brings the seltzer water on a tray.*  
PISHCHIK and TROFIMOV *come into the drawing-room.*

PISHCHIK. Blood-pressure – that's my trouble. I've had two strokes already, and I don't find dancing easy. But you know what they say – if you run with the pack you must wag your tail. I'm as strong as a horse. My late father, who was something of a humourist, God rest his soul, used to say the venerable tribe of Simeonov-Pishchik was descended from the horse that Caligula made consul . . . (Sits down.) But the snag is – no money! What do people say? – A hungry dog believes only in meat . . . (Snore and immediately wakes up again.) Same with me – can't think about anything but money.

TROFIMOV. It's true – there is something rather horse-like about you.

## ACT THREE

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PISHCHIK. Well, that's all right . . . a horse is a good beast . . . a horse can be sold.

*There is the sound of billiards being played in the next room.*  
VARYA *appears in the archway to the ballroom.*

TROFIMOV (teasing). Madame Lopakhina! Madame Lopakhina!  
VARYA (angrily). And who's this? The mangy-looking gentleman.  
TROFIMOV. Yes, that's what I am – a mangy-looking gentleman.  
And proud of it!

VARYA (reflecting bitterly). Here we are, we've hired musicians – but what are we going to pay them with? (Goes out.)

TROFIMOV (to PISHCHIK). If all the energy you've expended during your life in the quest for money had gone on something else, you could have turned the world upside down by now.

PISHCHIK. Nietzsche – the philosopher – very great philosopher, very famous one – man of enormous intelligence – he claims in his books that it's all right to forge banknotes.

TROFIMOV. You've read Nietzsche, have you?

PISHCHIK. Well . . . my daughter Dashenka was telling me about him. Though with the position I'm in now, even if I started forging banknotes . . . I've got to pay three hundred and ten rubles the day after tomorrow . . . I've got hold of a hundred and thirty . . . (Feels his pockets in alarm.) The money's gone! I've lost the money! (On the verge of tears.) Where's the money? (Joyfully.) Here it is, in the lining . . . I'd quite come out in a sweat.

*Enter RANYEVSKAYA and CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA.*

RANYEVSKAYA (hums a Caucasian dance, the *lezghinka*). Why is Leonid taking so long? What can he be doing in town? (To DUNYASHA.) Dunyasha, ask the musicians if they'd like some tea.

TROFIMOV. The sale probably never took place.

RANYEVSKAYA. It wasn't the moment to have the band, it wasn't

the moment to get up a ball. Well, who cares? (*Sits down and hums quietly.*)

CHARLOTTA (*offers PISHCHIK a pack of cards*). Think of a card. Any card you like.

PISHCHIK. I've thought of one.

CHARLOTTA. Now shuffle the pack. Good. Give it to me, then, my dear monsieur Pishchik. *Ein, zwei, drei!* Now have a look and you'll find it in your side pocket.

PISHCHIK (*gets a card out of his side pocket*). The eight of spades – that's absolutely right! (*Amazed.*) Well, would you believe it!

CHARLOTTA (*to TROFIMOV, holding the pack in the palm of her hand*). The top card – quick – what is it?

TROFIMOV. I don't know . . . oh . . . the queen of spades.

CHARLOTTA. Right! (*To PISHCHIK.*) Well? The top card?

PISHCHIK. The ace of hearts.

CHARLOTTA. Right! (*Claps her hands, and the pack disappears.*) Marvellous weather we're having!

*A mysterious female voice answers, apparently from under the floor.*

VOICE. Oh, yes, wonderful weather!

CHARLOTTA. You are my heart's ideal!

VOICE. Yes, I've taken rather a fancy to you.

STATIONMASTER (*applauds*). Madame the ventriloquist! Bravo!

PISHCHIK (*amazed*). Would you believe it! Enchanting woman! I've absolutely fallen in love with you.

CHARLOTTA. In love? (*Shrugs her shoulders.*) Are you really capable of love? *Guter Mensch, aber schlechter Musikant.*

TROFIMOV (*claps PISHCHIK on the shoulder*). You're so much like a horse, you see . . .

CHARLOTTA. Your attention please. One more trick. (*Takes a travelling rug off one of the chairs.*) I have here a very fine rug, a very fine rug for sale. (*Shakes it.*) Who'll buy this very fine rug?

PISHCHIK (*amazed*). Would you believe it!

CHARLOTTA. *Ein, zwei, drei!* (*She has lowered the rug; now she quickly raises it.*)

ANYA is standing behind the rug. She curtseys, runs to her mother and embraces her, then runs back into the ballroom amid general delight.

RANYEVSKAYA (*applauds*). Bravo, bravo . . .!

CHARLOTTA. Once more, now! *Ein, zwei, drei!* (*Raises the rug.*)

VARYA is standing behind the rug. She bows.

PISHCHIK (*amazed*). Would you believe it!

CHARLOTTA. And that is the end of my show. (*Throws the rug at PISHCHIK, curtseys, and runs out into the ballroom.*)

PISHCHIK (*hurries after her*). What a witch, though! What a witch! (*Goes.*)

RANYEVSKAYA. And still no sign of Leonid. I don't understand what he could be doing in town for all this time. It must be over by now. Either the estate is sold, or else the sale never took place. What's the point of keeping us all in suspense?

VARYA (*trying to calm her*). Uncle has bought it – I'm sure of that.

TROFIMOV (*sarcastically*). Oh, of course he has.

VARYA. Great-aunt gave him authority to purchase it in her name, and to transfer the mortgage to her. It was all for Anya's sake. And, God willing, I'm sure Uncle will have done it.

RANYEVSKAYA. To buy this estate – and to buy it in her own name, because she doesn't trust us – your great-aunt sent fifteen thousand rubles – not enough even to pay the interest. (*Covers her face with her hands.*) Today my fate is being decided. My fate . . .

TROFIMOV (*teases VARYA*). Madame Lopakhina!

VARYA (*angrily*). The Wandering Student! They've thrown you out of university twice already.



RANYEVSKAYA. Why are you getting so cross, Varya? All right, he's teasing you about Lopakhin – but what of it? If you want to marry Lopakhin, then marry him. He's a good man, he's an interesting person. If you don't want to, then don't. Darling, no one's forcing you.

VARYA. I must tell you, Mama, that this is something I take very seriously. He's a good man, and I like him.

RANYEVSKAYA. Then marry him. Why wait? I don't understand.

VARYA. Mama dear, I can't propose to *him*. For two years now everyone's been talking to me about him. Everyone's been talking except him. He either says nothing or else makes a joke of it. I see why. He's busy making his fortune – he's no time for me. If only we had some money – just a little, a hundred rubles even – I'd throw up everything, I'd go away. I'd go into a nunnery.

TROFIMOV. The glory of it!

VARYA (to TROFIMOV). I thought students were supposed to have a little sense in their heads! (*In a gentle voice, with tears in her eyes.*) Oh, but Petya, you've grown so ugly, you've aged so! (*To RANYEVSKAYA, no longer crying.*) It's just that I can't manage without things to do, Mama. Every minute of the day I must have something to do.

Enter YASHA.

YASHA (*scarcely restraining himself from laughing*). Yepikhodov's broken the billiard cue . . .! (*Goes out.*)

VARYA. What's Yepikhodov doing here? Who said he could play billiards? I simply don't understand these people. (*Goes out.*)

RANYEVSKAYA. Don't tease her, Petya. You can see, she's unhappy enough as it is.

TROFIMOV. She's very diligent, I must say that for her. Particularly at minding other people's business. All summer she's given me and Anya no peace. She's been frightened we were going to have some kind of romance. What's it to do with her?

Particularly since I've shown not the slightest sign of it – I'm not given to that sort of vulgarity. We're above such things as love!

RANYEVSKAYA. I suppose I must be beneath them. (*In great anxiety.*) Why isn't Leonid back? If only I knew whether the estate was sold or not. It seems such an incredible disaster that I just can't think – I can't keep control of myself . . . I could scream as I stand here . . . I could do something quite foolish. Save me, Petya. Talk to me about something, talk to me . . .

TROFIMOV. Does it make any difference whether the estate's been sold today or not? All that was finished with long ago – there's no way back – the path's grown over. Be calm now, my dear. Don't deceive yourself. Face up to the truth for once in your life.

RANYEVSKAYA. Yes, but what truth? You can see which is truth and which is falsehood, but I feel as if I'd gone blind – I can't see anything at all. You boldly settle all the great questions, but my love, isn't that because you're young, isn't that because you've never had to live a single one of those questions out? You look boldly forwards, but isn't that because you have the eyes of youth, because life is still hidden from them, so that you see nothing frightening in store? You're more daring than the rest of us, you're deeper, you're more honest – but think about it for a moment, be just a touch magnanimous in your judgment, take pity on me. After all, I was born here, my father and mother lived here, my grandfather . . . I love this house. Without the cherry orchard I can't make sense of my life, and if it really has to be sold, then sell me along with it . . . (*Embraces TROFIMOV, and kisses him on the forehead.*) And then this is where my son was drowned . . . (*Weeps.*) You're a good man, a kind man – have pity on me.

TROFIMOV. You know I sympathize with all my heart.

RANYEVSKAYA. Yes, but not said like that, not like that . . . (*Takes out her handkerchief, and a telegram falls on the floor.*)

There is such a weight upon my heart today, you can never know. All this noise here – my heart jumps at every sound – everything in me jumps. But to go away and be on my own – I can't, because as soon as I'm alone and surrounded by silence I'm terrified. Don't judge me, Petya. I love you as if you were my own child. I should have been glad to let you marry Anya – I truly should. Only, my precious boy, you must study, you must finish at university. It's so strange – you do nothing but get yourself tossed by fate from one place to the next. Isn't that true? Yes? And you must do something with your beard somehow to make it grow. (*Laughs.*) You are an absurd man!

TROFIMOV (*picks up the telegram*). I've no desire to be known for my looks.

RANYEVSKAYA. It's a telegram from Paris. Every day they come. One yesterday, another one today. That wild man – he's ill again, he's in trouble again. He begs my forgiveness, he implores me to come, and really I ought to go to Paris, I ought to be with him. You're pulling your stern face, Petya, but my dear, what can I do, what can I possibly do? He's ill, he's lonely and unhappy, and who'll look after him there, who'll keep him from making mistakes, who'll give him his medicine at the right time? And what's the point of hiding it or not talking about it? – I plainly love him. I love him, love him. He's a millstone round my neck – he'll take me to the bottom with him. But I love this millstone of mine – I can't live without it. (*Presses TROFIMOV's hand.*) Don't think harsh thoughts, Petya. Don't say anything to me. Don't speak.

TROFIMOV (*on the verge of tears*). Forgive me if I'm frank, please God forgive me, but listen – he's openly robbed you!

RANYEVSKAYA. No, no, no, you mustn't say things like that . . . (*Covers her ears.*)

TROFIMOV. Look, he's no good, and you're the only one who doesn't know it! He's a petty scoundrel, a nobody . . .

RANYEVSKAYA (*angry now, but restraining it*). You're twenty-

six, twenty-seven years old, and you're still a schoolboy, you're still a fifth-former.

TROFIMOV. If you say so.

RANYEVSKAYA. It's time you were a man. At your age you must understand people who know what it is to love. You must know what it is yourself! You must fall in love! (*Angrily.*) Yes, yes! You're no more pure than I am! You're just a prig, a ridiculous freak, a monster . . .!

TROFIMOV (*in horror*). What is she saying?

RANYEVSKAYA. 'I'm above such things as love!' You're not above anything – you're merely what our Firs calls a sillybilly. Fancy not having a mistress at your age!

TROFIMOV (*in horror*). This is appalling! What is she saying? (*Rushes towards the ballroom, holding his head.*) Appalling . . . I can't cope with this, I shall have to go . . . (*Goes out, but immediately comes back.*) Everything is finished between us! (*Goes out into the anteroom.*)

RANYEVSKAYA (*calls after him*). Petya, wait! You absurd man! I was joking! Petya! // (A)

*In the anteroom someone can be heard rushing downstairs, and then suddenly falling with a crash. ANYA and VARYA cry out, but then at once there is a sound of laughter.*

What's happening out there?

ANYA runs in.

ANYA (*laughing*). Petya's fallen downstairs! (*Runs out.*)

RANYEVSKAYA. What a freak that Petya is . . .

*The STATIONMASTER takes up a position in the middle of the ballroom.*

STATIONMASTER. The Scarlet Woman. A poem in six parts by Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy. Part One.

The merry rev'llers throng the hall;  
The lute plays sweet; the cymbals brawl;  
The crystal blazes; gold shines bright;

YEPIKHODOV (*off, behind the door*). I'll tell about you!

VARYA. Oh, coming back, are you? (*Seizes the stick that FIRS left beside the door.*) Come on, then . . . Come on . . . Come on . . .

I'll show you . . . Are you coming? My word, you're going to be for it . . .! (*Raises the stick threateningly.*)

*Enter LOPAKHIN.*

LOPAKHIN. Thank you kindly.

VARYA (*angrily and sarcastically*). Sorry! My mistake.

LOPAKHIN. That's all right. I'm touched to get such a warm welcome.

VARYA. Oh, please – think nothing of it. (*Goes away from him, then looks round and asks softly.*) I didn't hurt you, did I? (A)

LOPAKHIN. No, no. Don't worry about it. I shall just have the most enormous bump, that's all.

VOICES (*off, in the ballroom*). Lopakhin's arrived! Lopakhin's here!

*Enter PISHCHIK.*

PISHCHIK. As large as life . . . (*He and LOPAKHIN kiss.*) You smell of brandy, my dear fellow. And we're making merry here as well.

*Enter RANYEVSKAYA.*

RANYEVSKAYA. Is it him . . .? (*To LOPAKHIN.*) Why so long? Where's Leonid?

LOPAKHIN. He arrived with me – he's just coming . . .

RANYEVSKAYA (*alarmed*). So what happened? Did they hold the sale? Speak!

LOPAKHIN (*confused, afraid to reveal his joy*). The sale ended just on four o'clock. We missed the train – we had to wait till half-past nine. (*Sighs heavily.*) Ouf! My head's rather going round . . .

*Enter GAYEV. In his left hand he is carrying his purchases; with his right he is wiping away his tears.*

RANYEVSKAYA. Lenya! Lenya!, what happened? (*Impatiently in tears.*) Quickly, for the love of God . . .

GAYEV (*gives her no reply except a flap of the hand; to FIRS, weeping*). Here, take these . . . anchovies, Crimean herrings . . . I haven't eaten anything all day . . . Oh, what I've been through!

*The door into the billiard room is open; the click of balls can be heard.*

YASHA (*off*). Seven and eighteen!

GAYEV's expression changes; he is no longer weeping.

GAYEV. I'm horribly tired. Help me change, will you, Firs? (*Goes off to his room by way of the ballroom, with FIRS after him.*)

PISHCHIK. What happened at the sale? Tell us!

RANYEVSKAYA. Is the cherry orchard sold? (A)

LOPAKHIN. It is.

RANYEVSKAYA. Who bought it?

LOPAKHIN. I did.

*RANYEVSKAYA is utterly cast down; if she were not standing beside the armchair and the table she would fall. VARYA takes the keys off her belt, throws them on the floor in the middle of the room, and goes out.*

I bought it! One moment . . . wait . . . if you would, ladies and gentlemen . . . My head's going round and round, I can't speak . . . (*Laughs.*) We got to the sale, and there was Deriganov – I told you he was going to be there. All your brother had was fifteen thousand, and Deriganov straightway bid the mortgage plus thirty. I thought, all right, if that's the way things are, and I got to grips with him – I bid forty. Him – forty-five. Me – fifty-five. So he's going up in fives, I'm going up in tens . . . Well, that was that. I bid the mortgage plus ninety, and there it stayed. So now the cherry orchard is mine! Mine! (*He gives a shout of laughter.*) Great God in heaven – the cherry orchard is mine! Tell me I'm drunk – I'm out of my mind – tell me it's all an illusion . . . (*Stamps his feet up and down.*) Don't laugh at me!

If my father and grandfather could rise from their graves and see it all happening – if they could see me, their Yermolay, their beaten, half-literate Yermolay, who ran barefoot in winter – if they could see this same Yermolay buying the estate . . . The most beautiful thing in the entire world! I have bought the estate where my father and grandfather were slaves, where they weren't allowed even into the kitchens. I'm asleep – I'm imagining it – it's all inside my head . . . (*Picks up the keys, smiling tenderly.*) She threw down the keys – she wants to demonstrate she's no longer mistress here. (*Jingles the keys.*) Well, it makes no odds.

*The sound of the band tuning up.*

Hey, you in the band! Play away! I want to hear you! Everyone come and watch Yermolay Lopakhin set about the cherry orchard with his axe! Watch the trees come down! Summer cottages, we'll build summer cottages, and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren will see a new life here . . . Music! Let's have some music!

*The music plays. RANYEVSKAYA has sunk down on to a chair and is weeping bitterly.*

(*Reproachfully.*) Why, why, why didn't you listen to me? My poor dear love, you won't bring it back now. (*In tears.*) Oh, if only it were all over. If only we could somehow change this miserable, muddled life of ours.

PISHCHIK (*takes him by the arm, speaks with lowered voice*). She's crying. We'll go next door and let her be on her own. Come on . . . (*Takes him by the arm and leads him out towards the ballroom.*)

LOPAKHIN. What's all this? Let's hear that band play! Let's have everything the way I want it! (*Ironically.*) Here comes the new landlord, the owner of the cherry orchard! (*Accidentally bangs into an occasional table, and almost overturns the candelabra.*) I can pay for it all! (*Goes out with PISHCHIK.*) (A)

*There is no one in either ballroom or drawing-room except RANYEVSKAYA, who sits crumpled and weeping bitterly. The music plays quietly.*

ANYA and TROFIMOV hurry in. ANYA goes up to her mother and kneels before her. TROFIMOV remains by the archway into the ballroom.

ANYA. Mama . . .! You're crying, Mama? Dear Mama, sweet, kind, beautiful Mama – I love you and bless you. The cherry orchard's sold, it's lost and gone – that's true. But don't cry, Mama. You still have life in front of you. You still have a generous heart and a pure soul . . . We'll go away, love, you and me, we'll go away from here, we'll go away. We'll plant a new orchard, lovelier still, and when you see it you'll understand. And your heart will be visited by joy, a quiet, deep, joy like evening sunlight, and you'll smile again, Mama! Come, love! Come . . .!

CURTAIN

*Change*



it doesn't stop the world going round. I'm told her brother's found a job – in a bank, apparently – six thousand a year. Only he'll never stick at it, of course – he's bone idle.

ANYA (*in the doorway*). Mama says will they please not start cutting down the orchard until she's gone.

TROFIMOV. For heaven's sake – how could anyone have so little tact? (*Goes out through the anteroom.*)

LOPAKHIN. I'll see to it, I'll see to it . . . It's quite true – these people . . . (*Goes out after him.*)

ANYA. Has Firs been sent off to the hospital?

YASHA. I told them this morning. I assume they sent him off.

ANYA (*to YEPKHODOV, who is crossing the room*). Ask them, will you, please, if they've taken Firs to the hospital.

YASHA (*offended*). I told Yegor this morning. What's the point of asking ten times over?

YEPKHODOV. The aged Firs, in my considered opinion, is past repair. It's not a hospital he needs – it's gathering to his fathers.

And I can only envy him. (*Puts down the suitcase he is carrying on top of a hat-box, and crushes it.*) Of course! Of course! I knew I was going to do that! (*Goes out.*)

YASHA (*mockingly*). Poor old Disasters!

VARYA (*outside the door*). Have they taken Firs to hospital?

ANYA. Yes, they have.

VARYA. Why didn't they take the letter to the doctor?

ANYA. It'll have to be sent on after him, then. (*Goes out.*)

VARYA (*from the next room*). Where's Yasha? Tell him, will you, his mother's come. She wants to say goodbye to him.

YASHA (*flaps his hand*). Oh, they'll drive me to drink.

DUNYASHA *all this while has been busying herself about things; now that YASHA is alone she goes up to him.*

DUNYASHA. If only you'd just give me a glance, Yasha. You're going away . . . abandoning me . . . (*Weeps and throws herself on his neck.*)

YASHA. What's all the crying for? (*Drinks champagne.*) Six days

from now I'll be in Paris again. Tomorrow we'll be getting on board that express and we'll be away like smoke. I can't believe it. *Vive la France* . . . ! Not my style, this place. I can't live here, there's no help for it. I've seen all I want to see of ignorance – I've had my fill of it. (*Drinks champagne.*) So what's there to cry about? Behave yourself properly, then you won't cry.

DUNYASHA (*powders herself, looking in a little mirror*). You will write to me from Paris, won't you? I loved you, you know, Yasha – I loved you so much! I'm terribly tender-hearted, Yasha!

YASHA. They're coming. (*Busies himself about the suitcases, humming quietly.*) // (A)

*Enter RANYEVSKAYA, GAYEV, ANYA and CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA.*

GAYEV. We ought to be going. We haven't much time in hand. (*Looking at YASHA.*) Who is it smelling of herrings?

RANYEVSKAYA. Another ten minutes, and we'll get into the carriages . . . (*Glances round the room.*) Farewell, dear house. Farewell, old grandfather house. The winter will go by, spring will come, and then soon you won't be here – they'll be pulling you down. So many things these walls have seen! (*Fervently kisses her daughter.*) My treasure, you're radiant – your eyes are sparkling like two diamonds. You're pleased, then? Very pleased?

ANYA. Very pleased. There's a new life beginning, Mama!

GAYEV (*cheerfully*). Absolutely – everything's all right now. Before the cherry orchard was sold we were all frightfully upset, we were all suffering. And then, as soon as the question had been finally settled, and no going back on it, we all calmed down, we got quite cheerful even . . . Here am I, I'm an old hand when it comes to banks – and now I'm a financier . . . yellow into the middle pocket . . . and Lyuba, you look better somehow, you really do.

RANYEVSKAYA. Yes. My nerves are better, it's true.

*She is helped into her overcoat and hat.*

I'm sleeping well. Take my things out, will you, Yasha. It's time to go. (To ANYA.) My own little girl, we'll see each other again soon. When I get to Paris I'll be living on the money your great-aunt in Yaroslavl sent to buy the estate – hurrah for her! But it won't last long.

ANYA. Mama, you'll come back soon, soon . . . won't you? I'm going to study and take my examinations – and then I'm going to work, I'm going to help you. Mama, you and I are going to read all sorts of books together. We will, won't we? (Kisses her mother's hands.) We'll read in the autumn evenings, read lots and lots of books, and a marvellous new world will open up before us . . . (Lost in her dreams.) Come back, Mama . . .

RANYEVSKAYA. I will, my precious. (Embraces her.)

*Change → Enter LOPAKHIN. CHARLOTTA quietly hums a tune.*

GAYEV. Charlotta's happy – she's singing!

CHARLOTTA (picks up a bundle that looks like a swaddled infant).

My little baby! Off to bye-byes now . . .

INFANT (cries). Wah! Wah!

CHARLOTTA. Hush, my pretty one! Hush, my darling boy!

INFANT. Wah! Wah!

CHARLOTTA. Poor little thing! (Tosses the bundle back where it came from.) So you'll try to find me a place, will you, please? I can't manage otherwise.

LOPAKHIN. We'll find something for you, never you fear.

GAYEV. They're all leaving us. Varya's going away . . . Suddenly no one needs us any more.

CHARLOTTA. I've nowhere to live in town. I shall have to go farther afield. (Hums.) But what do I care?

*Enter PISHCHIK.*

LOPAKHIN. Well, of all the world's wonders . . .!

PISHCHIK (out of breath). Oh, let me get my breath back . . . such a state . . . my dear good people . . . water, some water . . .

GAYEV. After money, is he? No good looking at me . . . I shall depart from temptation. (Goes out.)

PISHCHIK. Long time since I was in this house . . . wonderful woman . . . (To LOPAKHIN.) And you're here . . . Very pleased to catch you . . . Man of enormous intelligence . . . Here . . . Take this . . . Four hundred rubles . . . Eight hundred still to come . . .

LOPAKHIN (shrugs in bewilderment). It's like a dream . . . Where on earth did you get it?

PISHCHIK. Wait . . . Hot . . . Most extraordinary thing. Some Englishmen arrived – found some kind of white clay in my land . . . (To RANYEVSKAYA.) And four hundred for you . . . You amazing, wonderful woman . . . (Gives her the money.) The rest later. (Drinks the water.) Someone was just telling me – young man on the train – apparently there's some great philosopher who recommends jumping off the roof. 'Jump!' he says – and apparently that's the whole problem in life. (In amazement.) Would you believe it! Some more water . . .

LOPAKHIN. Who were these Englishmen?

PISHCHIK. I gave them a twenty-four year lease on the section with the clay in it . . . But forgive me, I can't stay now . . . I've got to gallop . . . Go and see old Znoykov . . . And Kardamov . . . I owe money to all of them . . . (Drinks.) Your very good health . . . I'll look in on Thursday . . .

RANYEVSKAYA. We're just moving into town – and tomorrow I'm going abroad.

PISHCHIK. What? (Alarmed.) What's this about moving into town? So that's why I can see all this furniture . . . all these suitcases . . . Well, there we are . . . (On the verge of tears.) There we are . . . People of the most tremendous intelligence, these Englishmen . . . There we are . . . Be happy . . . God give you strength . . . There we are, then . . . To everything in this world there is an end . . . (Kisses RANYEVSKAYA's hand.) And

if one day the rumour reaches you that the end has come for me, then remember this old . . . this old horse, and say: 'Once on this earth there was a certain Simeonov-Pishchik . . . God rest his soul . . .' Most remarkable weather . . . Yes . . . (*Exits in great confusion, but at once returns and speaks from the doorway.*) Dashenka sends her regards! (*Goes out.*)

RANYEVSKAYA. We could even be going now. I'm leaving with two things still on my mind. One is poor Firs. (*Glances at her watch.*) We could wait another five minutes . . .

ANYA. Mama, Firs has been taken to hospital. Yasha did it this morning.

RANYEVSKAYA. My other worry is Varya. She's used to rising early and doing a day's work. Now she has nothing to do all day she's like a fish out of water. Poor soul, she's grown thin and pale, she's forever weeping . . .

*Pause.*

(*To LOPAKHIN.*) As you well know, I dreamt of . . . seeing her married to you, and everything appeared to be pointing in that direction. (*Whispers to ANYA, who motions to CHARLOTTA, whereupon both of them go out.*) She loves you – you like her – and why you seem to avoid each other like this I simply do not know. I don't understand it.

LOPAKHIN. I don't understand it myself, I have to admit. It's all very strange. If there's still time, then I'm ready – here and now, if you like. Let's get it over with, and *basta*. I have a feeling I'll never propose once you've gone.

RANYEVSKAYA. Splendid. It'll only take a minute, after all. I'll call her in at once.

LOPAKHIN. We've even got champagne, appropriately enough. (*Looks at the glasses.*) Empty. Someone's drunk the lot.

YASHA *coughs*.

Well, that really is lapping it up.

RANYEVSKAYA (*animatedly*). Wonderful. We'll go out of the room. Yasha, *allez!* I'll call her . . . (*Through the doorway.*) Varya, leave all that and come here. Come on! (*Goes out with YASHA.*)

LOPAKHIN (*looks at his watch*). Yes . . .

*Pause.*

*There is stifled laughter and whispering outside the door. Finally VARYA comes in.*

VARYA (*looks round the room at some length*). That's strange. I can't find it anywhere . . .

LOPAKHIN. What are you looking for?

VARYA. I packed it myself and I can't remember where.

*Pause.*

LOPAKHIN. Where are you off to now, then?

VARYA. Me? To the Ragulins. I've agreed to keep an eye on the running of the house for them. Well, to be housekeeper.

LOPAKHIN. That's in Yashnevo, isn't it? What, about forty-five miles from here?

*Pause.*

Well, here we are, no more life in this house . . .

VARYA (*examining things*). Where is it . . .? Or perhaps I packed it in the trunk . . . No, no more life in this house. Never again.

LOPAKHIN. And I'm off to Kharkov now . . . on this train, in fact. Lot of business to do. I'm leaving Yepikhodov in charge here. I've taken him on.

VARYA. Really?

LOPAKHIN. This time last year we had snow already, if you remember. Now it's calm and sunny. The only thing is the cold. Three degrees of frost.

VARYA. I didn't look.

*Pause.*

Anyway, our thermometer's broken . . .

*Pause.*

A VOICE (*through the door from outside*). Where's Lopakhin?

LOPAKHIN (*as if he has been expecting this call for some time*).

Coming! (*Goes rapidly out.*)

VARYA, now sitting on the floor, lays her head on a bundle of clothing, and sobs quietly. The door opens and RANYEVSKAYA cautiously enters.

RANYEVSKAYA. What?

*Pause.*

We must go.

VARYA (*she has already stopped crying; wipes her eyes*). Yes, Mama, dear, it's time. I'll get to the Ragulins today provided we don't miss that train . . .

RANYEVSKAYA (*through the doorway*). Anya, get your things on!

*Enter ANYA, followed by GAYEV and CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA. GAYEV is wearing an overcoat with a hood.*

*The SERVANTS and CARRIERS foregather. YEPIKHODOV busies himself about the things.*

Well, then, I think we can finally be on our way.

ANYA (*joyfully*). On our way!

GAYEV. My friends! My dear good friends! Leaving this house forever, can I stand silent, can I refrain from saying a word of farewell, from giving expression to those feelings that now invade my whole being . . .?

ANYA (*imploringly*). Uncle!

VARYA. Dear uncle, don't!

GAYEV (*gloomily*). Off the cushion and into the middle . . . I am silent.

*Enter TROFIMOV, followed by LOPAKHIN.*

TROFIMOV. What are we waiting for, then? It's time to go!

LOPAKHIN. Yepikhodov, my coat!

RANYEVSKAYA. I'm going to stop here for one more minute. It's as if I'd never really seen before what the walls in this house were like, what the ceilings were like. And now I look at them avidly, with such a tender love.

GAYEV. I remember, when I was six years old, sitting up on this windowsill on Trinity Sunday and watching my father go to church.

RANYEVSKAYA. Have all the things been taken out?

LOPAKHIN. I think the lot. (*To YEPIKHODOV, as he puts on his overcoat.*) Have a look, though, see if everything's all right.

YEPIKHODOV (*in a hoarse voice*). Don't worry - leave it to me!

LOPAKHIN. Why are you talking in that sort of voice?

YEPIKHODOV. Just drinking some water, and I swallowed something.

YASHA (*contemptuously*). The ignorance of these people . . .

RANYEVSKAYA. We shall depart, and not a living soul will remain behind.

LOPAKHIN. All the way through until the spring.

VARYA (*pulls an umbrella out of one of the bundles in a way that looks as if she were raising it threateningly*; LOPAKHIN pretends to be frightened). What? What are you doing . . .? It never even entered my head.

TROFIMOV. Ladies and gentlemen, we must get into the carriages. It really is time! The train will be arriving any minute!

VARYA. Here they are, Petya - your galoshes, next to this suitcase. (*In tears.*) And what dirty galoshes they are . . .

TROFIMOV (*putting on the galoshes*). Off we go, then!

GAYEV (*in great confusion, afraid of bursting into tears*). The train . . . the station . . . In off into the middle, off the cushion into the corner . . .

RANYEVSKAYA. Off we go!



LOPAKHIN. Are we all here? No one left behind? (*Locks the side door on the left.*) The things are all stacked in here, we must lock up. Right, off we go!

ANYA. Farewell, old house! Farewell, old life!

TROFIMOV. Hail, new life! (*Goes with ANYA.*)

VARYA *looks round the room and goes out without hurrying.*  
YASHA and CHARLOTTA *go out with her little dog.*

LOPAKHIN. So, until the spring. Out you go, all of you . . . Good-bye! (*Goes out.*)

RANYEVSKAYA and GAYEV *are left alone together. As if they have been waiting for this, they throw themselves on each other's necks and sob quietly, restraining themselves, afraid of being overheard.*

GAYEV (*in despair*). My sister, my sister . . .

RANYEVSKAYA. Oh my dear orchard, my sweet and lovely orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness – farewell! Farewell!

ANYA (*off, calling cheerfully*). Mama!

TROFIMOV (*off, cheerfully and excitedly*). Hulloo . . .!

RANYEVSKAYA. One last look at the walls . . . the windows . . .

This is the room where our poor mother loved to walk . . .

GAYEV. My sister, my sister . . .!

ANYA (*off*). Mama!

TROFIMOV (*off*). Hulloo . . .!

RANYEVSKAYA. We're coming!

*They go out.*

*The stage is empty. There is the sound of all the doors being locked, and then of the carriages departing. It grows quiet. Through the silence comes the dull thudding of the axe. It sounds lonely and sad. Steps are heard.*

*From the door on the right comes FIRS. He is dressed as always, in jacket and white waistcoat, with his feet in slippers. He is ill.*

(A) FIRS (*goes to the door and tries the handle*). Locked. They've gone. (*Sits down on the sofa.*) They've forgotten about me. Well, never mind. I'll just sit here for a bit . . . And I dare say he hasn't put his winter coat on, he's gone off in his autumn coat. (*Sighs anxiously.*) I never looked to see. When will these young people learn? (*Mutters something impossible to catch.*) My life's gone by, and it's just as if I'd never lived at all. (*Lies down.*) I'll lie down for a bit, then . . . No strength, have you? Nothing left. Nothing . . . Oh you . . . sillybilly . . . (*Lies motionless.*) // (A)

*A sound is heard in the distance, as if from the sky – the sound of a breaking string, dying away, sad.*

*Silence descends, and the only thing that can be heard, far away in the orchard, is the thudding of the axe.*

CURTAIN