

THE SEAGULL HYPERDRAMA

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THE SEAGULL HYPERDRAMA

A play with simultaneous action
based on Chekhov's *The Seagull*

Charles Deemer



Sextant Books
2004

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Published by Sextant Books
<http://www.sextantbooks.com>

By arrangement with:
Three Moons Media
2300 Bill Owens Parkway #928
Longview, Texas 75604-3059
<http://www.threemoonsmedia.com>

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 0-9747440-1-8

Cover photograph by Lorenzo Colloreta.

A hypertext version of *The Seagull Hyperdrama* is online at
<http://www.ibiblio.org/cdeemer/chekindx.htm>

Book orders:

Bookstores and libraries: <http://www.booksurgedirect.com>

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*To the playwrights, directors, and actors
who work in hyperdrama.
Although very few in number, you are great
in craft, imagination, energy and enthusiasm.*

Keep the faith.

Hyper-text: text that is more than text, which is more than one word after another, from beginning to end, with no variation allowed. Hypertext is like the nation's system of highways and roads. There are many ways to get from the west coast to the east coast, depending on whether or not we are in a hurry, depending on what kind of scenery we want to look at, depending on what may intrigue us as a side trip from moment to moment.

Hypertext is a web of possibilities, a web of reading experiences. Hypertext is like life itself, full of choices and consequences, full of forks in the road.

Hypertext is the language of exploration and discovery – and therefore is the perfect language to become the mother tongue of the Information Age.

For writers and readers alike, hypertext may well define what it means to be literate in the 21st century.

— Charles Deemer, “What Is Hypertext?” (1994)

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THE NEW HYPERDRAMA

How hypertext scripts are changing the parameters of dramatic storytelling

What do we do when we watch a stage play?

Traditionally, we enter a building called a theater and take a seat that faces a stage. The house lights come down, which is a signal that the play is about to begin, and when the stage lights come on, actors on stage begin talking and moving, and in this way present the action of a story. We sit in the dark in our seats and watch.

We soon begin to understand what the play, the story, is about and to distinguish between major characters, who carry the story, and minor characters, who at best carry the action of a secondary, less important story called a subplot. There may be one or several utility "walk on" roles, characters inserted for practical reasons who have few or no lines.

By the end of the play, we should be able to identify a central story and one or two subplots, which in a traditionally well-crafted play have a relationship to the main story; we also should be able to identify one or two major characters.

How do we learn these things?

We know them because the playwright has made a series of choices that skews the information we receive as stage action

in favor of the main plot and the main character or characters. The action we see on stage is the focus of the play; what happens off stage does not concern us as much, if at all.

In fact, when too much action of interest to us occurs out of our focus – off stage – we are disappointed, and this failure of writing becomes a traditionally valid criticism of the play.

What the playwright presents to us in traditional theater is highly personal, an artistic skewing of a story that depends on personal choices – what to emphasize here or understate there – a personal shaping of the material that is communicated to us by the linear action we watch on stage as we sit in the dark, passively taking it in. I will call this personalized communication the traditional playwright's Single Vision.

It was William Blake who warned us about Single Vision:

May God us keep
From Single vision and Newton's sleep!

Hyperdrama challenges Single Vision. This new kind of theater, generated from scripts written in hypertext, challenges the notion of theater as a performance that is watched by an immobile audience sitting in a dark theater in chairs that are bolted to the floor.

In hyperdrama, the traditional linear narrative line explodes into branches, multiplying the action on a "stage" into simultaneous scenes occurring throughout a performance space. The bolted chairs of the audience are uprooted to give the audience mobility, an opportunity to follow different branches of the narrative line as they unfold into different, often distant, areas of this expanded new "stage."

The result of this explosion and uprooting is that some traditional parameters of theater lose their meaning.

For example, a main character normally is on stage more often than a minor character, the better to be the primary focus. The story in which the main character is most intimately involved is called the main plot.

But what does it mean to identify a "main character" if all performers are "on stage" – that is to say, active within the performance space – all the time, from the beginning of the play to the end?

What does it mean to identify a "main plot" if each character is associated with a fully developed story, and each of these stories is told in the performance space (albeit in different areas of that space) with the same attention and focus?

The skewing of material by the playwright in traditional theater, making choices to bring a central linear action into focus at center stage, thereby relegating other actions and moving still others entirely off stage, disappears when the narrative splits into different branches. Instead we have several narratives told at the same time, all of which are developed with equal focus, none of which are primary (more "main") to another.

But hyperdrama is not in competition with traditional theater, any more than the new physics is in competition with traditional physics. In each case, we have a new model into which the old model is welcomed as a special case. In other words, we can look at traditional drama as a special case of hyperdrama.

Consider a play that is set in the interior of a house. Imagine telling this story – *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, for example – using two different theatrical approaches:

- a traditional approach, as Edward Albee has given us the story;
- and as a new "hyperdramatist" (this sounds less neurotic to me than "hyperplaywright") might tell it.

Normally, of course, the living room set of Albee's play is built upon a stage, and we take our bolted seats in the dark theater to watch the action as if through an invisible fourth wall.

But the play also could be staged in an actual house, in which the audience members stand around the room or sit among the actors, watching the action as if each was an invisible voyeur who happened upon the scene.

If these voyeurs spent the entire play in the living room, watching the action there, then they would see the play exactly as Albee wrote it. But what if some of these voyeurs chose to follow any character who left the room?

Albee, of course, puts some of the action off stage. A hyperdramatist would write this action, since in hyperdrama we are never off stage, and each audience member would choose whether or not to stay in the living room or to follow the action elsewhere whenever that alternative presented itself.

Pursuing this off-stage action, we might choose to follow Martha and Nick when they leave together, for example, and learn for ourselves exactly what kind of hanky-panky does and does not happen between them. This direct experience obviously would tweak our understanding of the play.

In both hyperdrama and traditional theater, "off stage" means out of the performance area, but the Single Vision of traditional theater expands into parallel actions branching simultaneously throughout the space.

What normally we call "the play" becomes a special case – only one selected focus of many – of a larger hyperdrama. A traditional play is a single viewing from a single perspective of a story that is far richer and denser in experience than Single Vision can ever communicate.

From this perspective, hyperdrama is an enriching expansion of the theatrical event, both for the artist and for the audience. Hyperdrama is changing the meaning of dramatic narrative in ways playwrights and audiences alike are still discovering. What is clear is that this new mode of theater embraces traditional theater even as it reaches into new and no doubt surprising frontiers, redefining what it means to tell a dramatic story in live performance.

BACKGROUND OF *THE SEAGULL HYPERDRAMA*

In the late 1980s, after I had several produced hyperdramas under my belt, I became aware that a great deal of audience education would be necessary before the power and significance of hyperdrama were appreciated. At best, hyperdrama was appreciated as a kind of eccentric entertainment, the way "happenings" were appreciated in the 1960s, a trend that would continue with the later production of the most popular hyperdrama to date, *Tony and Tina's Wedding*.

But I took hyperdrama more seriously than this. I had come to believe, and still believe, that this dramatic form, more than traditional theater, mirrored reality as the new physicists had come to define it: traditional theater was Newtonian, a passive audience observing in the dark, while hyperdrama was modern ("quantum"), the audience defining its own play by the choices it made.

So the question I posed myself was: what can be done to give hyperdrama respect, to have it taken seriously? My answer became: by adapting a classic work of theater to the form.

This decided, it did not take me long to decide that Chekhov's *The Seagull* was a perfect vehicle for this purpose. There was even an appropriate speech in the play to justify the experiment:

"Uncle, what we need is a new kind of theater," says Treplev.
"A theater with new theatrical forms!"

There was an advantage to tackling Chekhov. I had served in the Army as a Russian linguist with the Army Security Agency. Although my Russian was rusty, with a dictionary and a pile of other translations, I was sure I could get through the text and adapt my own translation in modern American speech.

In the late 1980s, I began the translation. Five years later, I was still working on it. When I finally finished, I began adding all the scenes necessary for the hyperdrama. The work was slow and complicated, as technically challenging as it was artistically challenging. I decided that writing a hyperdrama from an existing work was the most intense form of literary criticism I could have undertaken.

Over ten years later, I finally completed the project (in July, 2002). I immediately put it online at my literary archive in the Ibiblio Collection at the University of North Carolina, where it continues to be regularly accessed.

In early 2004, I decided to bring out the hyperdrama as a book despite the awkwardness of reading a branching narrative in a linear package. Obviously not a popular book, *The Seagull Hyperdrama* nonetheless belonged in a library where a rare, passing reader might find it and get as excited about the new theater form as I have been. I steadfastly believe that hyperdrama has a bright future because it more closely mirrors reality than traditional theater. I expect playwrights younger than I to prove me right, even if I am not around to appreciate their accomplishment. I would be delighted if *The Seagull Hyperdrama* inspires one of them toward this purpose.

Charles Deemer
Portland, Oregon

THE SEAGULL HYPERDRAMA

The Players:

IRINA Arkadina ... an actress

Konstantin TREPLEV ... her son, a playwright

Pyotr SORIN ... her brother

NINA ... a young girl of wealth

ILYA Shamrayev ... a retired officer, who runs Sorin's estate

POLINA ... his wife

MASHA ... their daughter

Boris TRIGORIN ... a literary figure

Yevgeny DORN ... a doctor

Semyou MEDVEDENKO ... a teacher

THE HYPERDRAMA SETTING

These areas must be defined:

Outside:

- near the stage
- back stage
- the Garden
- the Boat House

In the house:

- the living room
- the dining room
- the kitchen
- the study

ACT ONE

Where do you want to start the play? Choose from the list below:

[Go to stage area for Chekhov's scene] Masha and Medvedenko ... go to p23

[Go to dining room for Deemer's scene] Irina, Trigorin, Polina and Dorn ... go to p59

[Go to study for Deemer's scene] Treplev, Sorin and Ilya ... go to p99

[Nina's entrance] ... go to p31

Author's Note: In the script pages that follow, my translation of Chekhov is marked by [Chekhov] at the top of the scene. My original, additional scenes (about two-thirds of the manuscript) are marked by [Deemer].

Readers of a hyperdrama, like audience members at a performance, can easily become lost because so much simultaneous action is going on. To insure focus and coherence, you may want to use the following strategy: read through the manuscript following a single character. This done, return to the beginning and read again following a different character, and so on. Each character has his or her own story, and the overall impact of the play will accumulate by reading their individual stories.

C.D.

[I-1]

[Chekhov]

(Masha and Medvedenko enter after a walk along the lake.)

MED: Masha, tell me – why do you always wear black?

MASHA: Because I'm in mourning and miserable.

MED: I don't understand why. You have your health. You father's well off. If anyone should be unhappy, it's me. I don't earn enough to support my family – yet you don't see me in mourning.

MASHA: Money has nothing to do with it. Poor people can be happy.

MED: Only in theory. Look at my situation – I have to support my mother, two sisters and my little brother on my salary. How do we afford to eat and drink? By cutting corners! You don't buy as much tea, sugar or tobacco as you'd like.

(MASHA looks back at the stage built near the lake.)

MASHA: The play starts soon.

MED: Ah, yes – Treplev's play for Nina. They're so much in love, and tonight their play will give witness to the union of their souls. But look at us – we're as far apart as we can be. Masha, I love you so much. I can't stand to stay at home alone, so I walk six miles to get here and all you give me is indifference. But I don't blame you. How can I support a wife on my salary?

MASHA: It's not about money.

(She takes some snuff.)

MASHA: I'm touched by your love, I really am. I just can't return it.

(She offers him the snuff.)

MED: No, thanks.

MASHA: It's so humid. I think we'll have a thunderstorm tonight. Semyou, you worry too much about money. You think being poor is the worst thing in the world. Happiness has nothing to do with wealth. It's easier to wear rags than to— . . . oh, you wouldn't understand.

(Sorin and Treplev enter.)

[continue] ... to next page

[I-2]

[Chekhov]

(Sorin and Treplev enter.)

SORIN: My boy, you'd think I'd be used to staying in the country by now. No such luck. Last night I went to bed at ten and slept till nine, and I still woke up feeling sluggish. I felt as if my brain were glued inside my skull. Then, to top it off, I fell asleep right after lunch. I'm a mess.

TREPLEV: You obviously belong in town. (To Masha and Med. :) You shouldn't be here till the play starts. I'll call you when it's time.

SORIN: Masha, would you ask your father not to tie up the dog at night? Its howling kept my sister awake.

MASHA: I'm not about to get involved in that, so go ask father yourself. (To Med:) Let's go.

MED: Don't forget to call us for the play.

(Masha and Med. exit.)

[continue] ... to next page

[follow Masha and Med.] ... to p66

[I-3,4]

[Chekhov]

SORIN: Looks like the dog will howl again tonight. You see how it is here? In the country, I never get my way. I used to come here from town on vacation but I'd be faced with so much nonsense that as soon as I got here, I wanted to leave. Leaving was the highlight of the visit! But now that I'm retired, I'm stuck here.

TREPLEV: (changing the subject) What do you think of my theater? A curtain, the wings – and nothing but empty space. No scenery at all. You can look straight across the lake to the horizon. We're starting the play just as the moon rises over the lake.

SORIN: Magnificent.

TREPLEV: If Nina gets here on time, that is. Otherwise the whole effect will be lost. Her parents keep such a watch on her, getting out of the house is like escaping from prison. (Fixing Sorin's tie:) Time for a trim, uncle. You look rough around the edges.

SORIN: The tragic story of my life is that I look drunk even when I haven't been drinking. Women have never been attracted to me. (He sits down on a bench.) Why's your mother in such a foul mood?

TREPLEV: She's just bored. And jealous that Nina's in the play but she isn't. She hasn't read it but she already hates it.

SORIN: You're serious?

TREPLEV: Even on this little stage in the middle of nowhere, Nina will be the star and not herself. Mother's so full of contradictions. She's a far more talented actress than Nina, and clever and kind – she can nurse the sick back to health like an angel. But try to give praise to someone else in the theater, and she won't speak to you for days. No, the good reviews only go to Irina Arkadina, we can get enthralled only by her performances. She's also a miser. She has a small fortune in the bank in Odessa – I know that for a fact. But just try asking her for a loan. She breaks into tears.

SORIN: You're getting all worked up because you think she won't like your play. Irina worships the ground you walk on.

TREPLEV: Shall we find out?

(He picks a flower and starts picking off the petals.)

TREPLEV: She loves me, she loves me not . . . she loves me, she loves me not . . . she loves me, she – loves me not! See there? Well, why should she love me? She wants excitement and romance in her life. I'm twenty-five already and a constant reminder that she's not young any more. She says she's only thirty-two when I'm not around. And there's something else – I don't believe in the capital-T theater. She thinks theater serves humanity, that as an actress she is working in the Holy Shrine of Art. As far as I'm concerned, theater today is boring and irrelevant. Look at it – the curtain rises, the lights come up, and all we see are actors strutting around, showing us how to eat and drink and wear the latest fashions, in a story the playwright has infested with a moral, something any dolt can understand, it's so obvious, and then each play repeats the same tired formula over and over again, ad nauseam. That's why I run from the theater, the same way Maupassant ran from the Eiffel Tower, he found it so vulgar.

SORIN: But we need the theater.

TREPLEV: Uncle, what we need is a new kind of theater.

[continue] ... to next page

[I-5]

[Chekhov]

SORIN: And what kind of theater is that?

TREPLEV: A theater with new theatrical forms! If we can't find them, then let's have no theater at all. Look at my mother – I love her very much, but her life is so pointless. Always partying with her latest flame, the famous writer, and hobnobbing with famous theater people, always getting her name in the paper – it all gets so boring. I'd be so much happier if she weren't a famous actress. You can't imagine what it's like for me at home. The house is always full of people, famous writers and famous actors, and the only nobody in the room is yours truly. The only reason anyone puts up with me is because I'm the son of the great actress. What have I got to show for myself? Three years at the University? Whenever anyone paid attention to me at all, I imagined they were feeling sorry for me. It was a terrible way to grow up.

SORIN: What kind of man is this writer she's hooked up with, Trigorin? I can't make him out at all.

TREPLEV: He's intelligent and decent – but a little melancholic. He's under forty and already famous. He seems to have everything he wants. As for his writing, it's charming and clever – but certainly he's no Tolstoy or Zola.

SORIN: I admire literary lions like Trigorin. You see, as a young man there were two things I passionately wanted – to marry and to become a writer. But neither happened. It would have been nice to be even a second-rate writer . . .

TREPLEV: Someone's coming – I'm sure it's her. Uncle, I can't live without her – even the sound of her footsteps gets my heart racing. She makes me so happy.

(Nina enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[I-6]

[Chekhov]

TREPLEV: Darling!

NINA: Am I late?

TREPLEV: Of course not.

NINA: I've been a nervous wreck all day, worrying that father wouldn't let me come. He finally went for a ride with my stepmother, and I raced the horse as fast as I could to get here. Look, the sky's getting red and the moon will be rising soon . . . and I'm so happy.

SORIN: You look like you've been crying. (He comforts her.)

NINA: I was so afraid I'd be late. Can we hurry? I only have half an hour. Please don't try to keep me longer – father doesn't know I came.

TREPLEV: I'll go call everybody so we can start.

SORIN: I'll do it. (He starts out, singing "The Two Genadiers".) I was singing that once at work and a colleague told me I had a very strong voice – but an offensive one! (Sorin exits).

TREPLEV: At last we're alone.

[follow Sorin] ... to p70

[continue] ... to next page

[I-7]

[Chekhov]

NINA: Not entirely.

TREPLEV: Enough. (He kisses her.)

NINA: (breaking away) Konsty, what kind of tree is that?

TREPLEV: An elm. Kiss me.

NINA: Why's it so dark?

TREPLEV: Because it's evening. You don't really have to run off after the play, do you?

NINA: I must.

TREPLEV: Then I'll follow you. I'll spend all night gazing up at your window.

NINA: You mustn't. The watchman would find you. My dog would start barking at you.

TREPLEV: I love you so much.

NINA: Sshh. Look, the moon's rising.

TREPLEV: Right on schedule. Places everyone! We're about to begin. Are you nervous?

NINA: Very. I don't mind your mother but Trigorin is here. He's such a famous writer, I'll be nervous performing in front of him. Is he young?

TREPLEV: Yes.

NINA: He writes such wonderful stories.

TREPLEV: I wouldn't know.

NINA: I have to say this – your play is very difficult to act in. There are no living people in it.

TREPLEV: Well, why should there be? I'm not trying to follow the same old formula. I have a new vision of what theater should be.

NINA: But nothing happens, it's all talk. And there's no love story . . .

(They disappear behind the curtain.)

(Polina and Dorn enter.)

[follow Treplev and Nina] ... to p56

[continue] ... to next page

[I-8]

[Chekhov]

(Polina and Dorn enter.)

POLINA: It's getting damp. Go inside and put on your boots.

DORN: But I'm hot.

POLINA: You don't take care of yourself. You're so stubborn. You know perfectly well that the evening dampness is bad for you, but you insist on getting my goat. Last night you sat out on the terrace the whole evening.

DORN: (singing) "Never say that youth is wasted . . ."

POLINA: You didn't notice how cold it was last night because you were flirting with Irina. You find her attractive, don't you?

DORN: Polina, I'm fifty-five.

POLINA: That's not old for a man. Women still find you attractive.

DORN: Back to the same old subject. Polina, what do you expect from me?

POLINA: Men! You're always so eager to throw yourselves at the feet of a famous actress.

DORN: Of course we treat actors differently than we treat shopkeepers. It's natural to look up to them.

POLINA: It appears to be natural for women to look up to you as well. Women are always falling in love with you.

DORN: They look up to me because I'm a good doctor. Ten or fifteen years ago, I was the best in the area. I'm also an honest man.

POLINA: Which is why I love you, my darling.

(She takes his hand.)

DORN: Not here – people are coming.

(Entering are Irina, on Sorin's arm, Trigorin, Ilya, Medvedenko and Masha.)

[continue] ... to next page

[I-9]

[Chekhov]

(Entering are Irina, on Sorin's arm, Trigorin, Ilya, Medvedenko and Masha.)

ILYA: I saw her at the Fair in 1873 – she gave an extraordinary performance. And what about Pavel Chadin? I don't know of a better comedian. Do you ever hear from him?

IRINA: All that was so long ago. I have no idea where he is.

(They begin to take seats for the play.)

ILYA: There's no one like Pavel around any more. The theater's not what it used to be, Irina. Where once stood mighty oaks – today mere stumps!

DORN: Genius on stage may be more rare – but I think the general level of acting is much better today.

ILYA: I beg to differ with you. I suppose it's a matter of taste.

(Treplev comes out from behind the stage.)

[continue] ... to next page

[I-10]

[Chekhov]

IRINA: Are we about to start, dear?

TREPLEV: Any minute now, mother.

IRINA: (quoting Shakespeare) "Oh Hamlet, speak no more – thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul—"

(She is drowned out by a horn blowing behind stage – and she quits.)

TREPLEV: Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please! (He thumps on the stage three times with a stick.) We're starting now. (He thumps again and speaks more loudly.) Oh, you timeless shapes that float over the lake at night, lull us to sleep so we might dream of what life will be like two-hundred thousand years from now.

SORIN: In two-hundred thousand years, there will be nothing.

TREPLEV: Then let the shapes present us with nothing.

IRINA: Yes, let them – and we'll all fall asleep.

(The curtain rises. The moon is rising over the lake, casting its reflection on the water. Nina, dressed in white, sits on a rock.)

NINA: Men and lions, eagles and quail, stags and geese and spiders, the silent fishes of the sea, starfish and creatures invisible to the naked eye – every form of life on earth has become extinct. For thousands of centuries, the earth has been

barren. The moon shines her light in vain. No cranes wake and cry in the meadow. In the lime grove, no hum of beetles is heard. The earth is cold – and empty – and filled with cold, empty terror.

Living bodies have crumbled into dust; Eternal Matter has forged them into stone and water and clouds, but their souls have merged with the One Soul. And I am that Cosmic Oversoul. I encompass the spirit of Alexander the Great and Caesar, of Shakespeare and Napoleon, as well as of the worm and leech. Through me, the consciousness of man and the instincts of animals have become one. I remember everything that ever happened; I embrace everything that ever lived.

IRINA: (whispering) This is the theater of decadence.

TREPLEV: Mother, sshh!

[continue] ... to next page

[I-11]

[Chekhov]

NINA: I am alone. Once a century I open my lips and speak, but in the vast empty void no one hears me. Not even the pale fire hears me. Its flames, born in the marsh toward daybreak, flicker lifelessly – and Satan, who is the father of Eternal Matter, fears that life may be born in you, pale fire, and so creates the movement of atoms. You and the stones and the sea change endlessly. Only I, the Oversoul, remain eternal and unchanged.

But I am like a prisoner thrown into a deep, dark well, lost and alone. Only one thing is not hidden from me – my victory over Satan, so that Spirit and Matter will merge and the reign of Universal Will will begin. But that will happen long after everything turns to dust. Until then – only desolation and horror.

(Two red dots appear against the background of the lake.)

My enemy, Satan, is approaching. See his terrible red eyes!

IRINA: I smell sulfur. Is this part of the play?

TREPLEV: Yes.

IRINA: (laughing) How modern – special effects!

TREPLEV: Mother!

NINA: Satan is lonely without mankind.

POLINA: (to Dorn) Put your hat back on before you catch cold.

IRINA: He's taken his hat off to Satan, the father of Eternal Matter.

TREPLEV: That's it! Curtain! The play's over!

(The curtain closes in front of Nina. She waits silently backstage until ... go to p44)

[stay here] ... to next page

[I-12]

[Chekhov]

IRINA: Why are you so angry?

TREPLEV: Close the curtain! We're finished! You must forgive me, mother. I forgot that only a chosen few are permitted to take part in the theater. I seem to have infringed on your monopoly. I seem to— . . .

(He can't finish and quickly exits.)

[follow Treplev] ... to p74

[continue here] ... to next page

[I-13]

[Chekhov]

IRINA: What's the matter with him?

SORIN: You hurt his feelings.

IRINA: But he told us the play was for our amusement. I was just being amused.

SORIN: You hurt his pride.

IRINA: So I'm supposed to be impressed that he wrote a masterpiece? He fumigates us with sulfur and preaches at us. This isn't for our amusement but to teach us a lesson. He thinks he knows the best way to write a play and act on stage. Well, I'm sick of it. He's always trying to show me up. He's selfish and conceited.

SORIN: He just wants to please you.

IRINA: Is that so? Then why doesn't he write a real play? I don't mind listening to rubbish now and again if I'm entertained, but this high pretension to a new kind of theater, ushering in new forms, a whole new era of theater, is ridiculous. He's acting like a conceited brat.

TRIGORIN: Every writer has his own method.

IRINA: Let him write what he likes, as long as I don't have to listen to it!

DORN: The Goddess of Theater is angry.

IRINA: I'm not angry. (She lights a cigarette.) I hate to see him wasting his time like this. I didn't mean to hurt his feelings.

MED.: There's no grounds for his premise of separating Matter and Spirit. But you know, somebody should write a play depicting the life of a teacher. We have such a hard time.

IRINA: It's too beautiful an evening to argue. Listen – do you hear someone singing?

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

IRINA: Boris, sit next to me. (Trigorin does.) A decade ago, we had music and singing on the lake every night. So much laughter and noise and love. The doctor here (nodding toward Dorn) broke many a young girl's heart. He was irresistible. (A pause.) I feel so guilty. Why did I upset him? (She calls:)

Konstantin! Kostya! Come join us!

MASHA: I'll get him.

IRINA: Thank you.

MASHA: Konstantin!

(She leaves to look for Treplev.)

[follow Masha] ... to p76

[continue] ... to next page

[I-14]

[Chekhov]

(Nina comes out from behind the curtain.)

NINA: Since we quit, I guess I can come out.

SORIN: Bravo, bravo!

IRINA: Bravo! We were all enchanted by your beauty and voice, my dear. It's a shame you're stuck here in the country. With your talent, you belong on a real stage.

NINA: That's my dream – but I don't think it will ever happen.

IRINA: Who can say? Let me present Boris Trigorin, the writer.

NINA: It's such an honor – I've read all your books.

IRINA: Don't be shy, my dear. For a famous writer, he's shy enough for both of you.

DORN: Can we keep the curtains open? Closed curtains get on my nerves.

ILYA: I'll open them.

(He does.)

NINA: The play was strange, don't you think?

TRIGORIN: I didn't understand a word of it. But I liked watching you. And the setting is lovely indeed. (Pause.) I bet the lake is filled with fish.

NINA: Yes.

TRIGORIN: I love to fish – especially at sunset, sitting on the bank, mesmerized by the bobbing float.

NINA: But surely nothing gives you as much pleasure as writing.

IRINA: (laughing) Don't compliment him, dear. He becomes speechless.

ILYA: I remember one evening at the Moscow Opera, the great Silva hit a low C note. The bass from our church choir was sitting in the second balcony and suddenly shouted, "Bravo, Silva!" – but a whole octave lower! Like this: (in a deep bass) "Bravo, Silva!" You could've heard a pin drop.

(A silence, as the story falls flat.)

DORN: The angel of silence has visited us.

NINA: I have to go.

IRINA: So soon?

NINA: My father is expecting me.

IRINA: Then shame on him. We hate to see you go.

NINA: If you only knew how much I'd like to stay.

IRINA: Someone will escort you home.

NINA: No, that won't be necessary.

SORIN: Don't go.

NINA: I must.

SORIN: Just one more hour.

NINA: I really can't.

(And she exits. Nina is done for Act I.)

[continue] ... to next page

[I-15]

[Chekhov]

IRINA: That poor girl. They say that her late mother left a huge fortune to her father, who plans to give it all to his second wife, leaving Nina nothing. It's shameful.

DORN: Her father is despicable.

SORIN: (rubbing his hands to warm up) Why don't we all go inside? It's getting damp, and my legs are killing me.

IRINA: Let me help you – you can barely walk, you're so stiff.

(She takes Sorin's arm and they start off.)

ILYA: My dear?

(He offers his arm to his wife, Polina.)

SORIN: That damn dog is barking again. Ilya, get them to unchain it, would you?

ILYA: I can't unlock the barn, I've got mullet in there. (To Med., who is walking beside him toward the house:) A whole octave lower, "Bravo, Silva!" And he was just an ordinary choir singer.

MED.: How much money does a choir singer make?

(Everyone has exited except Dorn. Ilya and Polina go into the kitchen. Irina stops in the garden to talk to Masha. Sorin, Trigorin and Medvedenko go into the living room.)

[follow Ilya and Polina] ... to p91

[follow Irina] ... to p79

[follow Sorin, Trigorin and Medvedenko] ... to p93

[continue here] ... to next page

[I-16]

[Chekhov]

DORN: (speaking to the audience) Maybe I don't understand it, or maybe I'm crazy, but I liked the play. I think it makes a point. When Nina talked about loneliness, and when the red eyes appeared, my hands started trembling. I found the play fresh and exciting. And I'll tell Treplev so . . .

(Treplev enters.)

TREPLEV: So everybody went inside.

DORN: Except for me.

TREPLEV: Masha's been following me everywhere. It's unbearable.

DORN: Konstantin, I liked your play very much. I didn't see the end, of course, and it's very different, but it made a very strong impression on me. You have real talent and must keep writing. (Treplev embraces him spontaneously.) You chose a difficult subject, an abstract subject, but that's good – a work of art should express great ideas.

TREPLEV: You really think I should keep writing?

DORN: Yes – but only write about what is timeless and important. I've had good enough a life – but nothing like an artist must feel in the ecstasy of creation. For a chance at that, to be carried to such heights, I would have given up all the material comforts.

TREPLEV: Excuse me – but have you seen Nina?

DORN: And another thing – every work of art must have a clear purpose. If you follow "art for art's sake," you'll get lost along the way, and then your talent will be for naught. It may even destroy you.

TREPLEV: Where's Nina?

DORN: She went home.

TREPLEV: I have to see her. I'm going after her.

DORN: Calm down.

TREPLEV: I can't help myself.

(Masha enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[I-17]

[Chekhov]

(Masha enters.)

MASHA: Please go inside. Your mother's worried about you.

TREPLEV: Tell her I've gone for a walk. Just leave me alone –
and nobody follow me!

DORN: You shouldn't do this.

TREPLEV: Goodnight, doctor. Thank you for the kind words
about my play.

(He leaves.)

[follow Treplev] ... to p54

[continue] ... to next page

[Chekhov] [I-18]

DORN: Youth . . .

MASHA: When people don't know what to say, they say "youth". (She takes a pinch of snuff.)

DORN: That's a disgusting habit. (He grabs the snuffbox and throws it into the bushes.) I hear music from the house. We'd better go in.

MASHA: Wait a minute.

DORN: What is it?

MASHA: I have to tell you something. I have to tell somebody, and I can't talk to my father. I feel close to you, doctor. I hope you can help me before I do something really stupid.

DORN: What's the matter?

MASHA: I suffer so much. No one realizes how much pain I'm in. You see – I'm in love with Konstantin.

DORN: Poor youth, always falling in love. The lake is so enchanting. Masha, tell me – what can I do?

(They start inside.)

MASHA: (turning to audience) We have an intermission now.

(End of Act I)

Begin Act II ... to p103

[B-I-1]

[Deemer]

(Ilya arrives at the boathouse. He speaks to the audience.)

ILYA: Polina thinks I have vodka stashed away here. How wrong she is.

(He uncovers a bottle hidden along the side of the boathouse.)

ILYA: Cognac!

(He takes a drink.)

ILYA: She thinks I'm oblivious to her flirtations with the doctor. Of course, he will have nothing to do with her, that's easy enough to see. A man in his position, a doctor, he can have any woman he wants – so why would he be interested in someone like Polina? She flatters herself imagining that he has an interest in her.

Poor Polina, she can't accept that she's just a farm wife. She'd rather be a doctor's mistress! What a delusion she has!

(He toasts and drinks.)

(Treplev enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[B-I-2]

[Deemer]

(Treplev joins Ilya at the boathouse.)

TREPLEV: I'm taking a boat across the lake to Nina's.

ILYA: Very good.

(He starts preparing a boat.)

ILYA: I have a horse ready, if you prefer to ride.

TREPLEV: I want a boat.

ILYA: Won't take a minute. (As he prepares a boat:) Sorry about your mother doing that.

TREPLEV: It doesn't matter.

ILYA: I thought it was very interesting up to that point.

TREPLEV: What was interesting?

ILYA: The play.

TREPLEV: What about the play?

ILYA: Everything. Here you are.

TREPLEV: Everything! How can everything be interesting? I'll be back late.

(He moves to the boat, as if to board – then quickly turns to the audience:)

TREPLEV: This ends the First Act.

(He and Ilya move quickly to the house, into their dressing rooms, where they cannot be followed.)

(End of Act I)

Go to Act II ... to p103

[BS-I-1]

[Deemer]

(Treplev and Nina move behind the curtain.)

TREPLEV: My darling – if my play doesn't have a love story, fine. We are the love story!

(He tries to embrace her but she moves away.)

NINA: Not now. I'm nervous.

TREPLEV: You're going to be wonderful.

NINA: But I don't understand anything I'm saying!

TREPLEV: At rehearsal, you were fine.

NINA: Why can't you write an ordinary play?

TREPLEV: Because I'm not an ordinary person. You wouldn't want me to be, would you? I can understand that you're nervous. It's the energy that will drive your performance.

NINA: I hope so.

TREPLEV: Of course it will. You're going to make mother jealous.

NINA: I don't want to do that.

TREPLEV: Why not? She deserves a little humility. She thinks she owns the stage.

NINA: Do you think she'll like the play?

TREPLEV: No.

NINA: Then why are we doing it?

TREPLEV: Because it demands to be done.

NINA: But if no one likes it . . .

TREPLEV: I didn't say no one will like it. I said mother will dislike it. Her tastes are so conventional.

NINA: I think mine are, too.

TREPLEV: Because you're young.

NINA: But if I don't understand what you're writing, how can I learn to appreciate something different like this?

TREPLEV: It takes time. Being around me, you're bound to grow.

(A pause.)

NINA: My heart is racing.

TREPLEV: Take deep breaths.

NINA: Do you truly believe I won't make a fool of myself?

TREPLEV: Is that what worries you? Nina, I've seen you rehearse this, you are doing a wonderful job. People will love you, even if they hate my play.

NINA: I wouldn't want that.

TREPLEV: People don't understand new movements in art.

NINA: That's what this is?

TREPLEV: (ignoring this) It's time to begin.

(He moves through the curtain to the stage to announce the play. Nina gets in position for her scene.)

[follow Treplev to the stage] ... to p37

[watch Nina's scene] ... to p37

[DR-I-1]

[Deemer]

(Sitting at the dining room table over tea are Irina, Trigorin, Polina and Dorn.)

IRINA: I think he's looking very well, all things considered. He's not getting any younger.

DORN: Sorin will be the first to agree with you. How he loves to complain!

POLINA: I'll be complaining at his age myself, I expect.

DORN: Then shame on you. Life must be faced squarely.

IRINA: None of us are perfect.

DORN: All of us have the capacity to be better than we are. Don't you think so, Trigorin?

TRIGORIN: I believe all of us have the capacity to be worse than we ever imagined.

IRINA: He's pulling your leg.

DORN: Maybe he's not. Are you?

TRIGORIN: I'm serious. She likes to pretend I'm not as cynical as I am.

IRINA: You just like people to think you're cynical. People think cynics are smarter than other people.

DORN: They are!

IRINA: That is a myth. Happiness and intelligence are not incompatible.

DORN: What says the writer to that?

TRIGORIN: The writer has learned never to disagree with a beautiful woman. Especially this one.

IRINA: I hope that's a compliment.

TRIGORIN: I compliment you as often as I can.

IRINA: You do. And what kind of a cynic is that?

DORN: A cynic who appreciates beautiful women.

(Ilya enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[DR-I-2]

[Deemer]

(Ilya enters.)

ILYA: Treplev wants a writing room. Sorin wants me to convert his study. Where am I supposed to find time for this?

POLINA: You can make time, dear.

ILYA: No one understands how much I do around here. Do you think it is easy to keep so many animals healthy, to see the crops through their seasons, to keep on top of repairs here in the house? This is not a small house, I want you to know.

POLINA: We know it's not a small house, dear.

ILYA: A writing room – for what? One writer around here is plenty. No offense meant, sir.

TRIGORIN: None taken.

(Polina gets up, Dorn rises immediately after her.)

POLINA: In the time you spend complaining, you could get it done. I'll check on the soup.

DORN: Excuse me. (Polina leaves for the kitchen with Dorn behind her.)

[follow Polina and Dorn] ... to p83

[stay here] ... to next page

[DR-I-3]

[Deemer]

ILYA: Not even my own wife understands what I have to do around here.

IRINA: Poor Ilya. We all know my brother couldn't manage without you.

ILYA: Maybe your brother doesn't even understand. Or he would show his appreciation more often.

IRINA: I'll tell him to keep you happy before you find a better job.

ILYA: Don't get me wrong, this is a wonderful job. I can't think of a better job. I just want to be appreciated now and again. Especially by people who think I sit around and do nothing all day.

IRINA: Now I'm sure no one thinks that.

TRIGORIN: It's we artists who sit around and do nothing all day!

ILYA: You have your kind of work, I have mine.

IRINA: And the world needs both.

TRIGORIN: Yours first, Ilya. If we don't get fed, if we don't have a horse and carriage to get to the railway station, we starve and we go nowhere.

ILYA: Well, I'm glad you seem to understand. A great writer, of course, must know about all kinds of people.

TRIGORIN: It certainly helps.

ILYA: And artists are special people, whatever their field. I have a great admiration for artists.

TRIGORIN: So Irina has told me.

IRINA: See how famous you are? And how appreciated?

ILYA: By you, perhaps. To my wife, I am nothing.

IRINA: How can you believe that?

ILYA: You don't know what it's like around here, day to day. You come and visit and everyone is on their best behavior to impress the famous actress and the famous writer, but once you're gone, that's when her true colors come out. I get no help from anyone. Not even your brother knows what goes on around here. Without me, he'd be bankrupt.

IRINA: And I'm sure he's aware of that and appreciates how much you do.

ILYA: To hear him complain, it's quite the opposite.

IRINA: My brother is old and set in his ways, is all.

TRIGORIN: Age and flexibility are sparring partners.

ILYA: I wish you could appear here like ghosts, invisible voyeurs who follow everyone around. You'd see what I mean.

TRIGORIN: A house filled with invisible voyeurs! I like that.

(He makes a note of it, writing in a small notebook.)

ILYA: It must be something to be so creative, always finding stories everywhere.

TRIGORIN: It's not as romantic as it may seem.

ILYA: Seems to me it would be an extraordinary life. So much freedom!

TRIGORIN: Freedom? This little notebook is like a prison.

ILYA: How can that be? It's full of poetry!

TRIGORIN: It's full of demands on my time. Every note is a possible story, yes, and every story is a demand on my time – several weeks to develop this idea, a couple months this other one. When I jot my little notes to myself, I am borrowing against my future.

ILYA: How extraordinary. I never thought of it that way before.

TRIGORIN: My chores are more limiting than yours. At least you get to be outside, breathing fresh air and seeing this wonderful landscape! I am cooped up in my room, writing away, endlessly. What kind of freedom is that?

(A silence, broken by:)

ILYA: Seeing you always gives me many things to think about. That's another reason I like artists.

IRINA: We are all artists, in our way.

ILYA: No, I could never see a story everywhere, the way Boris does, or act on stage with your talent.

IRINA: I had proper training, that's all.

TRIGORIN: Discipline is everything.

ILYA: On this we agree. I wish I saw a little more discipline around here, believe me.

IRINA: (to change the subject) I suppose it's time for the play to start. We don't want to be late or we'll never hear the end of it.

ILYA: Anyone for a little fortification? I have a special bottle in the kitchen.

TRIGORIN: Thank you, I will. My dear?

IRINA: No thank you. I'll save you a seat.

(They all leave the dining room.)

[follow Irina] ... to p70

[follow Trigorin and Ilya] ... to p87

[G-I-1]

[Deemer]

(Masha and Medvedenko enter the garden behind the estate.)

MASHA: Pyotr's afraid to talk to father himself. Father gets away with murder around here.

MED.: Should I talk to him?

MASHA: You? Don't be silly.

MED.: I would if it helps.

MASHA: This is not my affair or yours. Let them stew in their own juices.

MED.: Whatever you say.

MASHA: Dear Semyou, you're too agreeable for your own good.

MED.: How do you mean?

MASHA: If you don't understand, I can't explain it to you.

MED.: You're being very cryptic today.

MASHA: No, we just are worlds apart. We speak a different language.

MED.: Please don't say that.

MASHA: It's the truth.

MED.: It doesn't have to be. People learn foreign languages all the time.

MASHA: We learn the language of our heart at birth.

MED.: That's ridiculous.

MASHA: And that comment is exactly what I mean. Another man might understand exactly what I am talking about.

MED.: What other man? Who is he?

MASHA: An ideal man.

MED.: You have someone in mind, don't you?

MASHA: If I did, I wouldn't tell you.

MED.: I suppose you wouldn't.

MASHA: Poor Semyou. I don't.

MED.: No, you don't have to tell me. I have no right to ask.

MASHA: There's isn't anyone else. My ideal man doesn't even know I exist.

MED.: I wish I could be your ideal man.

MASHA: I know you do.

MED.: If you told me what to do . . .

MASHA: It doesn't work like that.

MED.: I can change.

MASHA: You don't understand anything I've told you.

MED.: I try to understand.

MASHA: It's an intuitive thing. It's about the soul, not understanding.

MED.: I'll never win your heart, will I?

MASHA: Not the way you want to. Only when you accept that, can we be as good friends as we might.

MED.: I suppose that's my booby prize.

MASHA: That's the way you think of me, something to be won, like a prize at the fair?

MED.: That's not what I meant.

MASHA: I like your company, but not when you present yourself like this. Forget me. There are other girls who would be delighted to have your attention.

MED.: But I love you.

MASHA: Then love me as a friend, as a sister.

MED.: That will be hard.

MASHA: It's the only love possible for us.

(Entering the garden is Irina from the dining room and Polina and Dorn from the kitchen.)

[continue] ... to next page

[G-I-2]

[Deemer]

(Irina enters, and then Polina and Dorn.)

IRINA: Time to see what Konstantin has for us.

MASHA: He kicked us out of the area.

MED.: He'll call us when it's time to start.

DORN: It can't be long. I'm sure he's eager to begin.

(Sorin enters.)

SORIN: Konstantin is ready for everyone.

DORN: Did I speak of the devil? Shall we?

IRINA: Trigorin and Ilya are still inside.

SORIN: I'll fetch them.

IRINA: They're nipping vodka in the kitchen.

SORIN: Not a bad idea.

IRINA: I don't want the three of you staggering in late.

SORIN: When have I had too much to drink? Not once since I retired.

IRINA: I don't want Konstantin to be upset.

SORIN: I'm sure they're looking forward to seeing the play as much as I am.

IRINA: Good, then you'll be on time.

(Sorin leaves to go inside. Polina and Dorn also leave, going to the stage.)

[stay here] ... to next page

[follow Sorin inside] ... to p89 (bottom of page)

[follow Polina and Dorn] ... to p34

[G-I-3]

[Deemer]

(Masha and Medvedenko start off.)

IRINA: Wait a minute.

MASHA: What is it?

IRINA: I want to make sure they are coming.

MASHA: Are you worried about whether the play will be good or not?

IRINA: Not as much as Kostya is worrying, I'm sure. I didn't know he'd taken such an interest in writing. Has he been at it long?

MASHA: Yes, he is writing all the time. I see him in the garden or by the lake, scribbling away into his journal. I'm surprised you didn't know.

IRINA: He never talks about it. Do you know what he writes?

MASHA: I imagine him writing poetry.

MED.: You've heard him recite?

MASHA: Oh no, he's much too private about his work for that.

MED.: Showing us a play is private?

MASHA: I was talking about his poetry.

IRINA: I can't imagine him a poet! Hard enough a playwright.

MASHA: I think his play will be good.

IRINA: I hope it's a comedy. Young writers can be so tediously serious.

MASHA: You think he'll write a farce for us?

(She has to laugh.)

IRINA: I can hope.

MASHA: Not a chance.

IRINA: You probably know my son better than I do. Here they come.

(The three men come outside from the kitchen, and all move to the stage.)

[follow them] ... to p36

[G-I-4]

[Deemer]

(Treplev enters the garden. He is very upset. He moves about, unable to contain his energy, then turns and talks to the audience.)

TREPLEV: Philistines, the lot of them! And mother is the worst. It's one thing if she hates the play – I expected her to. My play confronts everything her kind of theater stands for and challenges its very method. Of course, she wouldn't like it.

But to be so rude as to interrupt the performance! Then she becomes a tyrant, she decides that because she doesn't like it, no one else can like it either. That's what upset me.

Poor Nina. She's the one who must take the brunt of such bad manners. She lacks confidence about her talent as it is, what will this tell her? She make think the commotion is about her own performance.

I should have foreseen this. I should have known that mother not only would hate the play, she couldn't stand to let it be performed – because that would be like evidence, that would be like admitting into existence a piece of work that challenges the very direction of her energy and life, that mocks them, really. My play mocks everything her kind of theater stands for.

She no doubt thinks I am pouting, that I had my feelings hurt. But this is not a personal issue, this is an artistic issue. This is not about me, this is about the kind of theater we need on our stages today. We desperately need new forms for theater! I could have as easily presented the play anonymously, if that were possible – this is not about my ego!

This is about the very nature of theater. This is about nothing less.

But poor Nina. She doesn't have the slightest idea what the play is about. She's so young and ignorant about such things. It doesn't matter. An actress doesn't have to know anything about dramatic theory.

But I hope she isn't taking this interruption personally. She has a marvelous raw talent. Mother is probably too jealous to see that.

Mother is the egotistical one, she can't see beyond her own press clippings. She was jealous of Nina from the start and determined that she would hate my play even before she had the slightest idea what it was about.

You know what just happened? A self-fulfilling prophecy. Mother got just what she wanted. She always gets what she wants.

(Masha enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[G-I-5]

[Deemer]

(Masha joins Treplev in the garden.)

MASHA: Are you all right?

TREPLEV: I'm fine.

MASHA: Your mother feels bad.

TREPLEV: She's an actress. She's acting as if she feels bad.

MASHA: I loved your play.

TREPLEV: Did you?

MASHA: What I saw of it.

TREPLEV: What did you like about it?

MASHA: Everything.

TREPLEV: That covers a lot of ground. What, for example?

MASHA: I liked Nina. She's very good.

TREPLEV: What about the play?

MASHA: I told you I loved it.

TREPLEV: Could you be more specific?

MASHA: What do you mean?

TREPLEV: What specifically did you like about the play?

MASHA: I told you, I liked Nina.

TREPLEV: Her acting. What about her character, her language?

MASHA: Of course. I liked everything.

TREPLEV: How did the play make you feel?

MASHA: Proud to know you.

TREPLEV: If it had been written by someone you didn't know, how would it make you feel?

MASHA: But I know you!

TREPLEV: But if you didn't . . . ?

MASHA: Why are you asking me all these questions?

TREPLEV: To find out what you like about the play.

MASHA: I told you I like everything. I just came to tell you your mother wants to apologize and I know how bad she made you feel and I wanted you to know that I loved your play so maybe you'd feel better.

TREPLEV: You want me to feel better. This is your motivation?

MASHA: Why are you doing this to me?

TREPLEV: Because you're a stupid young girl! You haven't the slightest idea what my play is about!

(He storms off into the house. Masha follows him.)

[follow them] ... to p101

[G-I-6]

[Deemer]

(Masha exits to enter the garden. She sees Treplev making a circuitous way toward the stage, to avoid the others who are approaching. Everyone goes into the house except Irina.)

IRINA: Does he hate me?

MASHA: I think it's me he hates.

IRINA: Of course he doesn't hate you.

MASHA: He's in love with Nina.

IRINA: I'm sure that's just a passing phase. Playwrights are always falling in love with their actresses. I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt, of course. He's not much of a playwright.

MASHA: I liked the play.

IRINA: My dear, it wasn't even a play! It was – I don't know what it was. An eccentric kind of lecture.

MASHA: I found it very interesting.

IRINA: I think your infatuation is speaking.

MASHA: I'm not infatuated with him.

IRINA: Of course you are. You should see the way you look at him. One woman can recognize infatuation in another, believe me.

MASHA: He won't give me the time of day.

IRINA: You have to be patient, my dear.

MASHA: That's easy for you to say. Your heart isn't ripped in two every day.

IRINA: I've done a bit of waiting in my time, too. Patience is a woman's greatest strength.

MASHA: Why are you so critical of him?

IRINA: I shouldn't be, I know. He's my son, I should encourage him. But I'm a professional actress – it's hard to be silent when presented with something like what I saw today.

MASHA: He says he expected you to hate it.

IRINA: I do hate it. But I shouldn't have spoken up like I did. I do want to apologize for that to him. Maybe you'd be so kind to give him the message. We have too little time to be angry with one another. Can you do that for me? Ask him to join us for tea.

MASHA: I can try.

(She exits to find Treplev again. Irina moves inside, to the living room.)

[follow Masha] ... to p51

[follow Irina] ... to p95

[G-I-7]

[Deemer]

(Medvedenko and Polina enter the garden.)

POLINA: What is it?

MED.: I want your opinion about something.

POLINA: Yes?

MED.: It's hard to find the right words.

POLINA: Is this about Masha?

MED.: Why do you say that?

POLINA: Because some things are obvious.

MED.: I want to ask her to marry me. Of course, I will ask permission from your husband first.

POLINA: And . . . ?

MED.: Perhaps you might have an idea how he will regard the matter.

(Polina laughs.)

POLINA: So you don't have the courage to speak with Ilya, so you come to me? I'm afraid I can't help you. I have no idea what Ilya will say to you. You're going to have to do this on your own.

MED.: I see. Well, thank you.

(He turns to leave. Polina speaks to the audience:)

POLINA: We have an intermission now.

(Both actors go to the dressing rooms.)

(End of Act I)

Go to Act II ... to p103

[K-I-1]

[Deemer]

(Polina tries to embrace Dorn after they enter the kitchen but he moves away.)

POLINA: What's the matter?

DORN: I think your husband is suspicious.

POLINA: Ilya doesn't pay attention to anything I do.

DORN: I think you're wrong.

POLINA: Are you rejecting me?

DORN: Of course not.

POLINA: Then why can't I embrace you?

DORN: Because someone could walk in at any moment.

POLINA: I get so tired of this.

DORN: I know, darling. But what choice do we have?

POLINA: I can think of one.

DORN: I'm too old to run away with a woman.

POLINA: Or too old to run away with this woman?

DORN: Any woman.

POLINA: You're not as old as you like to think.

DORN: I usually feel older than I am.

POLINA: You use that as an excuse.

DORN: Think what you like.

POLINA: I don't want to fight.

DORN: Then try to live in the situation the way it is.

POLINA: You don't think we can change our situation?

DORN: Not as much as you like to believe.

POLINA: Then why go on, if we have no freedom?

DORN: I didn't say we have no freedom. Our freedom is limited.

POLINA: By what? What we dare to do, I think.

DORN: No. By what is usually called reality. I'm not a bird. I can't fly. I am not a young man who has the energy to sweep a woman off her feet and race off into the uncertain future with her. I am a retired doctor. Who gets older by the day.

POLINA: Then what do we do?

DORN: We've been doing well enough.

POLINA: For you, maybe.

DORN: For both of us. Unless it's you who wants to stop. Is it?

POLINA: Of course not.

DORN: If the wheel's not broken, don't fix it.

POLINA: But it is broken.

DORN: There you go again. Will you accept our fate or not?

POLINA: Fate? That's an impressive word.

DORN: The reality of our situation. Call it what you want.

POLINA: I'm tired of sneaking around, is all I'm trying to say.

DORN: Which is a matter of attitude. You could as easily find sneaking around dangerous and exciting. It could lend romance to what we're doing.

POLINA: I feel tired and frustrated, not romantic.

DORN: Your attitude alone, my dear. You create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

POLINA: This kind of talk is giving me a headache.

DORN: All the better, if it gets rid of some of the nagging ideas that make you unhappy.

POLINA: Sometimes I listen to what you say and think you are talking in circles.

DORN: Maybe you are confusing these circles with something else. If you think you've heard all this before, maybe that's because the old cliché is true: "There's nothing new beneath the sun."

POLINA: Which is another depressing idea of yours.

DORN: I am not depressed, my dear! I am trying to live in the real world the way it presents itself to me.

POLINA: Let's talk about something else.

DORN: Fine.

(A silence.)

POLINA: I wish we didn't have to watch Konstantin's play. Do you think it will be any good?

DORN: Sshh, someone's coming.

(Ilya and Trigorin enter.)

[continue] ... to next page

[K-I-2]

[Deemer]

(Ilya and Trigorin enter.)

ILYA: It's time for the play.

POLINA: I want a front row seat.

(She quickly exits.)

ILYA: Fortification before the misery, doctor?

DORN: No, thank you.

(He exits behind Polina.)

[follow Polina and Dorn] ... to p70

[stay here] ... to next page

[K-I-3]

[Deemer]

ILYA: They think I'm stupid.

TRIGORIN: What do you mean?

ILYA: It doesn't matter.

(He fetches a bottle from the cupboard.)

ILYA: Here, try this.

(He'll pour two small glasses.)

ILYA: This is Moscow vodka. I've been saving it.

TRIGORIN: This is such a special occasion?

ILYA: I need such special fortification. Irina thinks her son is a writer. I'm prepared to discover he isn't.

TRIGORIN: (He drinks.) Quite good!

ILYA: Then we'll have more. Irina is playing the proud mother.

(He fills their glasses.)

TRIGORIN: Irina is only capable of playing herself.

ILYA: But she plays so many roles on stage.

TRIGORIN: But here, in her more mundane life, she plays herself. I don't think she is trying to help her son's writing career. If he has one.

ILYA: Then I'm surprised.

TRIGORIN: Irina is full of surprises.

ILYA: Keeps you on your toes, does she?

TRIGORIN: More than I prefer.

ILYA: I imagine a writer of your reputation could have any woman he wants.

(A pause.)

ILYA: At least it seems to me.

TRIGORIN: I'm sorry. Was that a question?

ILYA: It's your own business, of course.

TRIGORIN: Yes, it is.

(Sorin enters.)

SORIN: Time for the play. Ilya, you wanted me to remind you to ask Irina about some actor. I forget his name.

ILYA: Ah, yes! I shall have to do that.

SORIN: Has Masha asked you about typing up the dog?

ILYA: No.

SORIN: The mutt howled all night again. Kept everybody awake.

ILYA: I must've slept right through it. Did you hear anything?

TRIGORIN: I did hear a dog bark.

SORIN: Irina was quite upset by it.

ILYA: She must have above-average hearing. Didn't bother any of us.

SORIN: Do take care of it.

ILYA: The alternative may be worse. You know what a mess he can get in to, roaming around at night.

SORIN: At least till my sister leaves, try to remember to let him roam at night.

ILYA: Well, don't say I didn't warn you.

SORIN: I'll take full responsibility for what happens.

ILYA: You're my witness.

TRIGORIN: This is what you want?

SORIN: This is what I want. (They drink and all leave.)

[follow them] ... to p36

[K-I-4]

[Deemer]

(Ilya and Polina enter the kitchen. Ilya goes to the vodka bottle and takes a swig.)

POLINA: You're drinking early today.

ILYA: Not as early as you're complaining.

POLINA: You're going to do what you want.

ILYA: That's right. And with a kind heart – do you want a glass?

POLINA: Why not?

(Smiling, Ilya pours two glasses.)

ILYA: I hope Treplev learned his lesson.

POLINA: What lesson is that?

ILYA: That he has no talent writing for the stage.

POLINA: Irina still was more cruel than she had to be.

ILYA: Better he learns the lesson now than later, when it's even more painful.

To your health.

(They drink.)

POLINA: Will you be joining us for cake?

ILYA: I have work to do at the boathouse.

POLINA: Another bottle stashed there, too?

ILYA: And if I do?

POLINA: You're going to do what you want.

ILYA: That I am. More before I go?

POLINA: No.

ILYA: This is Moscow vodka. If you want more later, use the other bottle.

POLINA: I'm not going to steal your precious Moscow vodka.

ILYA: You're a wise woman.

(He leaves. Polina fetches a prepared tray of small cakes and exits to the living room.)

[follow Ilya to boathouse] ... to p53

[follow Polina to living room] ... to p96

[LR-I-1]

[Deemer]

(Sorin, Trigorin and Medvedenko enter the living room.)

SORIN: You're a writer, Boris. Can my nephew write or not?

TRIGORIN: It's hard to say. He's still looking for his voice.

MED.: He's temperamental enough to be a writer. Nothing personal, understand. I've just met a lot of writers who can't take criticism.

TRIGORIN: A writer must learn to become his own best – and worst – critic.

MED.: In which case, he has a long way to go.

TRIGORIN: He's really no different from any other beginning writer. In the beginning, no one believes in you and your talent isn't developed enough to demand a following anyway – so you are faced with the task of believing in yourself despite all evidence to the contrary. So one is hypersensitive.

MED.: You had success from the beginning, didn't you?

TRIGORIN: Yes. I'm one of the lucky ones.

SORIN: Surely talent has something to do with it.

TRIGORIN: But what is talent? Sometimes I think talent – real talent, lasting talent – is a commodity only dead writers enjoy. Even when critics praise me to the sky, they point out that, of

course, I'm not Tolstoy. We like our real literary heroes buried six feet under.

MED.: I've never looked at it that way but you may have a point.

SORIN: Is Polina bringing us cake?

MED.: She said she was.

(Irina enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[LR-I-2]

[Deemer]

(Irina enters.)

IRINA: Kostya is sulking. Why can't I keep my big mouth shut?

TRIGORIN: Beginning writers are overly sensitive. If he wasn't upset by you, it would've been something else.

IRINA: You're trying to make me feel better, dear man. Keep talking that way.

(Polina enters with a tray of cakes.)

[continue] ... to next page

[LR-I-3]

[Deemer]

(Polina enters with a tray of cakes.)

POLINA: They look especially good today.

IRINA: Good. I can use some cheering up.

POLINA: Everyone help yourself.

(She puts down the tray, and others take cake. Medvedenko moves close to Polina to talk privately.)

MED.: May I talk to you privately a minute?

POLINA: This way.

(She leads him out into the garden.)

[follow them] ... to p81

[stay here] ... to next page

[LR-I-4]

[Deemer]

SORIN: Where are they going?

IRINA: I think Medvedenko is getting ready to pop the question.

SORIN: What question is that?

IRINA: He's in love with Masha.

SORIN: A wedding at the estate! What a lovely idea.

IRINA: I don't think she'll have him.

SORIN: What a pity.

TRIGORIN: I think Masha has an eye for your son.

IRINA: Who never gives her the time of day. He can't see anyone but Nina.

SORIN: Maybe Kostya and Nina will marry on the estate.

IRINA: I hope not.

TRIGORIN: Why?

IRINA: He's too unsettled to marry anyone. He's a young man floundering around to find himself.

SORIN: You should send him abroad.

IRINA: I'm not made out of money. These are delicious, don't you think? I'm going to have another.

(She helps herself to another small cake and speaks to the audience:)

IRINA: Which is where we have our first intermission.

(All actors leave to the dressing rooms.)

(End of Act I)

Go to Act II ... to p103

[S-I-1]

[Deemer]

(Treplev, Sorin and Ilya are in the study.)

SORIN: I don't think it would take much work, do you?

ILYA: No. It's a matter of finding time.

SORIN: Is this what you had in mind?

TREPLEV: Yes, it will make a perfect writing room. It's close to the garden. I like to take breaks when I'm writing. How soon can you get to it?

ILYA: That's hard to say, I'm afraid. The chores here come first.

TREPLEV: I understand.

ILYA: If I put it at the end of my list of projects to do, well, it could be a while.

SORIN: Then give it priority.

TREPLEV: Uncle, that's not necessary. I'm in no hurry.

SORIN: A writer needs his space.

ILYA: You wrote your play somewhere, so you must be able to write now.

TREPLEV: Like I said, there's no rush. When you find time, that will be great.

ILYA: If that's all?

SORIN: Yes. Thank you, Ilya.

(Ilya leaves. Treplev and Sorin follow him out of the study.)

SORIN: (confidentially to Treplev) His damn dog kept Irina awake again.

[follow Ilya] ... to p61

[follow Treplev and Sorin] ... to p25

[S-I-2]

[Deemer]

(Treplev enters Sorin's study, with Masha right behind him.)

TREPLEV: Masha, I want to be alone.

MASHA: You had no right to talk to me that way. I was just trying to help.

TREPLEV: Then I'm sorry.

MASHA: You're not sorry at all.

TREPLEV: Okay, I'm not sorry. You shouldn't be putting your nose into business that doesn't concern you.

MASHA: Why are you always so mean to me?

TREPLEV: Am I?

MASHA: Always.

TREPLEV: I don't like people butting into affairs that don't concern them. When you do that, that's why.

MASHA: I knew how badly you felt— . . .

TREPLEV: See what I mean? I'm a big boy, Masha, I can take care of whatever pain I may be feeling.

MASHA: You don't let anyone get close to you, do you?

TREPLEV: That's not true.

(He goes to the window, looking out beyond the garden toward the stage.)

MASHA: Nina is close to you?

TREPLEV: Yes, she is. The others are coming, so if you'll excuse me – and please don't follow me.

(He leaves. Masha also leaves.)

[follow Treplev] ... to p49

[follow Masha] ... to p79

ACT TWO

Where do you want to begin?

Chekhov's scene, outside on the croquet lawn. Irina, Dorn, Masha ... to p105

Deemer's scene, in the garden. Sorin, Nina and Medvedenko ... to p137

Deemer's scene, in the study. Treplev and Ilya ... to p166

Deemer's scene, in the kitchen. Trigorin and Polina ... to p143

[II-1]

[Chekhov]

(Irina, Dorn and Masha sit on a bench on the lawn between the house and the lake.)

IRINA: (to Masha) Walk with me. (They get up.) I'm almost twice your age. Yevgeny, who looks younger?

DORN: You do, naturally.

IRINA: You see? It's because I'm always working and staying active, and you just sit around all day. Masha, you're not really living. Look at me – I don't worry about the future or growing old. What happens, happens.

MASHA: I feel like I'm a thousand years old. Sometimes I wish I were dead. (She sits again.) Not really. I just have to pull myself together.

(DORN hums a tune, as if in reply.)

IRINA: I'm as fastidious as an English duchess. I would never think of leaving the house in my dressing gown or with my hair undone – not even to come out here into the garden. I look young because I take care of myself. (She quickly moves up and down the lawn.) See how light I am on my feet? I could play croquet with a fifteen year old.

DORN: Good for you. (He picks up a book in his lap.) But we left off at the corn merchant and the rats . . .

IRINA: So go on. (She sits.) Or let me read. (She takes the book from Dorn.) It's my turn. (She finds the place to continue.) The rats . . . here we are . . .

(reading) "Writers are much in demand, even though for most people inviting a writer into the home is like a corn merchant inviting in the rats. But when a woman has her eyes on a writer, she traps him with flattery and favors . . ."

Well, that may be true in France but certainly not here. Russian women aren't that devious. Here a woman is already in love with a writer by the time she sets out to capture him. Look at Trigorin and me.

(Sorin enters with Nina, with Medvedenko pushing a wheelchair behind them.)

[continue] ... to next page

[II-2]

[Chekhov]

(Sorin enters on the arm of Nina, followed by Medvedenko pushing a wheelchair.)

SORIN: (to Nina) So we're finally happy today, yes? Happy at last! Your papa and stepmother are out of town, and you're free for three whole days!

NINA: (sitting down beside Irina) Yes, I am happy. Now I belong to you.

SORIN: (sitting in a wheelchair) She's looking so pretty today.

IRINA: Such a pretty dress. But we mustn't praise you too much, it's bad luck. Where's Trigorin?

NINA: Fishing at the lake.

IRINA: I don't see how he can fish all day.

NINA: What are you reading?

IRINA: Maupassant. But it's getting dull. And something's bothering me. What's wrong with Kostya? Why's he so moody all the time? He spends the entire day on the lake and I never see him.

MASHA: He's very troubled. (To Nina, timidly) Would you recite something from his play?

NINA: Should I? It's so boring.

MASHA: When he reads aloud, his eyes glow and his face turns pale. He has such a sad voice. He looks like a poet.

(Sorin starts snoring.)

DORN: Sweet dreams.

IRINA: Petroosha!

SORIN: Hmm?

IRINA: You were snoring.

SORIN: I'm wide awake.

IRINA: It's so foolish, the way you never take your medicine.

SORIN: The doctors never give me any.

DORN: Taking medicine at sixty . . .

SORIN: Even at sixty, one wants to live.

DORN: Then take your medicine.

IRINA: I think he should go to a health spa.

DORN: Might do him good, might not.

IRINA: What's that supposed to mean?

DORN: Just what it says.

MED.: I think you should quit smoking.

SORIN: Rubbish.

DORN: It's not rubbish. Liquor and tobacco rob us of our true selves. When you drink or smoke, you become someone else, some third person "him" instead of "me."

SORIN: That's easy for you to say, with the life you've led. I spent twenty-eight years in court and only now am finally beginning to live a little. Now I can enjoy my sherry and my cigars and all the rest.

DORN: But when you depend on medicine at sixty and complain that you never lived when you were young – it's just silly.

MASHA: (rising) It must be lunchtime. (She walks toward the house, limping.) My foot's asleep.

[follow her] ... to p139

[continue] ... to next page

[II-3]

[Chekhov]

DORN: She'll have a couple of drinks before lunch.

SORIN: Masha is not very happy.

DORN: Of course she's happy.

SORIN: Easy for a man like you, who has everything, to say.

IRINA: But what's more boring than life in the country? It's hot, it's quiet, there's nothing to do but sit around and talk. I love your company, of course, and I love listening to you – but I confess I'd rather be alone in a hotel room, studying my lines for a wonderful role.

NINA: I understand completely!

SORIN: Of course it's nicer in town. You sit in your study, no one comes in unannounced, you have a telephone, a taxi waiting outside . . .

(Ilya and Polina enter.)

[continue] ... to next page

[II-4]

[Chekhov]

(Ilya and Polina enter.)

ILYA: Here you are! Good morning. (He kisses Irina's hand, then Nina's. To Irina:) Nice to see you looking so well. Polina tells me you're going into town with her today.

IRINA: Yes, we are.

ILYA: That's well and good – but we're hauling in rye today. What do you plan to use for horses?

IRINA: What do I know about horses?

SORIN: They'll use the carriage horses.

ILYA: And what am I supposed to use for collars? Madam, I bow before your talent and I'd give you ten years of my life – but you can't have any horses.

IRINA: Then how do I get to town? Surely you have horses I can use.

ILYA: Madam, I don't think you understand the first thing about running a farm, or you wouldn't ask such a question.

IRINA: And where have I heard that before? Fine! I'll return to Moscow today. Send someone to the village to hire me some horses. That, or I'll walk to the station.

ILYA: If you're going to treat me that way, I resign! Find yourself another manager!

(He storms off.)

[follow him] ... to p151

[continue] ... to next page

[II-5]

[Chekhov]

IRINA: He insults me like this every summer. I'm never coming here again.

(She exits to bathhouse. Quickly she and Trigorin can be seen heading for the house.)

[follow her] ... to p129

SORIN: I've had it with Ilya! I want every one of the horses brought here immediately.

NINA: (to Polina) How can your husband insult a great actress? What she wants is much more important than farming!

POLINA: What can I do? Put yourself in my shoes.

SORIN: (to Nina) Let's find my sister and convince her to stay. Ilya acts like a tyrant.

NINA: (keeping him in the wheel chair) Don't get up. We'll push you. (She and Medvedenko push the wheelchair to the house.) This is all so terrible.

SORIN: Ilya won't dare leave. I'll talk to him.

(They exit. Dorn and Polina remain.)

[follow them] ... to p153

[continue] ... to next page

[II-6]

[Chekhov]

DORN: People are so tiresome. Your husband should have been fired years ago, but in the end everyone will apologize to him, wait and see.

POLINA: He put the carriage horses in the field. Every day it's something else – he just makes me sick. Look how I'm trembling. Yevgeny, darling, take me away with you. We're not getting any younger. Let's live the rest of our lives without hiding and lying.

DORN: I'm 55 – I can't change now.

POLINA: You won't change because you want other women in your life as well. All of us can't live with you. I think you're already getting tired of me.

(Nina appears outside the house, picking flowers.)

DORN: I'm not tired of you.

POLINA: I admit I'm jealous. A doctor can't avoid women.

(Nina approaches.)

[continue] ... to next page

[II-7]

[Chekhov]

(Nina joins them.)

DORN: What's going on in there?

NINA: Irina is crying, and Pyotr is having an asthma attack.

DORN: I'll give them some medicine.

(Nina hands him the flowers.)

NINA: For you.

DORN: Thank you.

(He starts away, with Polina following.)

POLINA: What pretty flowers! (As they move away:) Give them to me!

(Dorn resists, she grabs them and tears them into tiny pieces, tossing them away. Then they go toward the house.)

[follow them] ... to p140

(Nina is alone. She speaks to the audience:)

NINA: How strange to see such a famous actress cry over nothing. And Trigorin – a famous writer, read by everyone and always written up in the papers, his photograph for sale everywhere, his books translated into every language – and he

likes nothing better than to fish all day and is delighted to catch two fish. I always put famous people on a pedestal – I thought they were unapproachable and had contempt for the rest of us. I thought they used glamour and fame to get revenge on those who put money and class first. But it seems they cry and fish, play cards and laugh, and get upset like anyone else.

(Treplev enters, carrying a gun and a dead seagull.)

[continue] ... to next page

[II-8]

[Chekhov]

(Treplev enters.)

TREPLEV: Are you alone?

NINA: Yes. (He lays the dead seagull at her feet.) What's that supposed to mean?

TREPLEV: I was vile enough to kill it, and I lay it at your feet.

NINA: What's the matter with you?

(She picks up the seagull and looks at it.)

TREPLEV: Soon I'll kill myself. I'll be as dead as the gull.

NINA: You've become so different. I feel I hardly know you any more.

TREPLEV: It's you who have changed. Your eyes are cold. You're embarrassed to be around me.

NINA: You're so irritable lately. And you talk in riddles, in symbols. Is the seagull a symbol, too? I'm afraid I don't understand it. (She puts the seagull on the bench.) I'm not intellectual enough to understand you.

TREPLEV: This all started the night my play failed. Women never forgive failure. I burned the manuscript, all of it. If you only knew how unhappy I am now – I can't stand your rejection. I might as well have woken up to find that the lake

was dry. You say you don't understand me – but what is there to understand? You didn't like my play, you have no respect for my work. In your eyes, I'm worthless and unimportant. How well I understand! My worthlessness is like a nail driven into my head. Dammit, my pride sucks my blood like a leech . . . (he sees Trigorin approaching) Here comes the real genius, coming forward like Hamlet, even carrying a book – "words, words, words!" The sun hasn't even reached you but you're already smiling. Your eyes melt in his rays. I won't stand in your way.

(He leaves as Trigorin arrives.)

[follow Treplev] ... to p132

[continue] ... to next page

[II-9]

[Chekhov]

(Trigorin enters, lost in his thoughts.)

TRIGORIN: (taking notes and talking to himself) "Takes snuff, drinks vodka, always wears black . . . and the schoolmaster's in love with her . . ."

NINA: Good morning, Boris.

TRIGORIN: Nina. Something's come up, and I'm sorry to say we're leaving today. We probably won't meet again, you and I – which is unfortunate. I don't often have the pleasure of being around someone as young and charming as yourself. I've forgotten what's it like to be eighteen or nineteen. I can't imagine what it's like. I'm sure this is why the young female characters in my stories ring untrue. How I'd love be in your shoes for an hour, to know what you're thinking and feeling.

NINA: I'd like to be in your shoes as well.

TRIGORIN: But why?

NINA: To know what it's like to be a famous writer. What is it like?

TRIGORIN: I've never thought about it. Either you're exaggerating my fame or I'm not feeling much of anything.

NINA: And when you read about yourself in the papers?

TRIGORIN: If they praise me, good; in they criticize me, not so good. Then I can feel awful for a day or two.

NINA: What an extraordinary world! If you only knew how much I envy you. People have such different fates. Some barely drag through their miserable lives, every dreary day like the next, so unhappy. But one in a million, like you, have lives that are interesting and worthwhile. You must be very happy.

TRIGORIN: Me? (He shrugs.) You talk about fame and happiness but these are just words to me, about as meaningful as fruit salad. You are very young – and very kind.

NINA: But your life is beautiful.

TRIGORIN: What's so beautiful about it? (He looks at his watch.) Time for me to get back to work. But you do ask interesting questions – so, okay, let's talk. Let's talk about this beautiful life of mine. (He thinks a moment.) You know how a person can become obsessed about something? Like the moon? So that day and night, that's all they think about? Well, I have a moon of my own – writing. I'm constantly obsessed with a single thought – I have to write. I have to write! As soon as I finish writing a story, I have to write another – and then a third, and a fourth, and another. I write at lightning speed and can't stop. One story after another. Now tell me – what's so beautiful about that?

(Nina doesn't reply.)

TRIGORIN: Life is strange. I find myself getting energy talking to you. All the same, in the back of my mind is the thought that there's an unfinished story waiting for me in my room. See the cloud? Don't you think it looks like a grand piano? And so I'm making a mental note now to add this in my

story, a cloud that looks like a grand piano. Everything we've been talking about is locked up in my literary storeroom. Maybe I can make use of it later. So tell me – what's so beautiful about my life?

(Nina is still silent.)

TRIGORIN: I try to rest, to find diversion – at the theater, or going fishing. But then an idea comes crashing into my head like a cannonball, and I'm back at my desk writing and writing and writing. I'm always like that. I never rest. I feel like my life is being consumed.

(A pause.)

TRIGORIN: It was worse when I was your age. Young writers are so insecure, so awkward in the world. Who needs a young writer? He's like a gambler without any money. You know, I've never met my readers but for some reason I picture them as hostile. Theater audiences are worse – whenever a new play of mine opened, I imagined that the dark-haired people in the audience were openly hostile but the blond-haired people merely indifferent. It was terrible! Pure torture.

NINA: But writing itself – getting inspired and then creating something – must make you happy.

TRIGORIN: Yes. I love writing. I enjoy reading my proofs. And then when it's published, I hate it. It's never what I meant. And I get angry and depressed.

(He laughs.) Then the critics say, "Charming, clever – but certainly not Tolstoy or Turgenev." They'll be saying that till my dying day. "Not Tolstoy or Turgenev." When I'm dead, my

friends will stand at my grave and say, "He was a good writer – but no Tolstoy or Turgenev."

NINA: I don't understand you. I think you're spoiled by success.

TRIGORIN: What success? I don't like myself. I finally don't even like my work. I live in a daze – most of the time I don't even understand what I'm writing about. I love nature – the lake, the trees, the sky. Nature stirs up a deep passion in me and an urge to write – but I'm only a landscape artist.

I'm also a man, a citizen, who loves his country and its people. Writers should write about people. About their suffering and their dreams. Meanwhile the world goes forward so fast I feel like I'm chasing a train, and in the end all I write about are landscapes. So I'm a failure.

NINA: You're working too hard. Maybe you're not satisfied but other people think you're a great man. If I were a writer like you, I'd dedicate my life to the people and try and raise them to my level. The people would pull my chariot.

TRIGORIN: A chariot? You think I'm Agamemnon?

NINA: I'd endure anything to be a famous writer or actress! The disapproval of my family and friends, poverty, disappointment. I'd live in a garret and survive on dry bread. I'd suffer whatever it took – to be famous! The thought makes my head spin . . .

(Irina calls from the back of the house).

[continue] ... to next page

[II-10]

[Chekhov]

(Irina calls from the back of the house.)

IRINA: Boris!

TRIGORIN: She's calling me to come in and pack, I suppose. Suddenly I don't feel like leaving. (He looks toward the lake.) The lake is so beautiful.

NINA: See the house with the garden across the lake?

TRIGORIN: Yes.

NINA: That was my mother's house. I was born there. I've spent all my life at this lake. I know every little island.

TRIGORIN: It's beautiful. (He sees the seagull on the ground.) What's that?

NINA: A seagull. Konstantin shot it.

TRIGORIN: To shoot such a beautiful bird . . . Nina, I don't want to leave. Will you persuade Irina that we should stay?

(He writes something in his notebook.)

NINA: What are you writing?

TRIGORIN: An idea for a story struck me just now. A young girl like you has lived her entire life by a beautiful lake. She loves the lake, like a seagull, and is free and happy, like a

seagull. And then a man comes and, having nothing better to do, destroys her as easily as he might shoot a seagull.

IRINA: (Calling from house) Boris! Where are you?

TRIGORIN: Coming!

(He starts toward the house, looking back at Nina, then to Irina.)

TRIGORIN: What is it?

IRINA: We're staying.

(Trigorin enters the house.)

NINA: I feel like I'm in a dream . . .

(She starts away.)

NINA: Oh yes – I'm supposed to tell you we're having an intermission . . .

(End of Act II)

Go to Act III ... to p171

[B-II-1]

[Deemer]

(Treplev and Trigorin enter the area of the boathouse.)

TRIGORIN: Is it necessary to take a boat out? Or can you fish from the shore?

TREPLEV: Have you ever fished before?

TRIGORIN: Not much. Please don't tell anyone. I already have the reputation of a great fisherman!

TREPLEV: Your secret's safe with me.

TRIGORIN: Thank you. So . . . where do we begin?

TREPLEV: We'll see if they are biting near the shore.

TRIGORIN: Excellent.

TREPLEV: The rods are in the boathouse.

(Treplev fetches two fishing rods and quickly returns.)

TREPLEV: Have you cast a line before?

TRIGORIN: Oh yes! But, in truth, not very well. Once I caught the hook in another fisherman. It was very embarrassing.

TREPLEV: Let me show you how.

(Treplev makes an excellent cast from the shore.)

TREPLEV: Now you try it.

TRIGORIN: Oh my . . . don't you think you'd better move away some?

TREPLEV: Perhaps you're right.

(Treplev takes some distance.)

TREPLEV: Okay, any time . . . over your shoulder, pointing with the end of your rod.

(Trigorin makes a cast – not too bad.)

TREPLEV: That wasn't bad at all! Reel in the line and try again.

(Trigorin reels in the line. As he is reeling, he gets a bite.)

TRIGORIN: I have a bite! What do I do? Oh my God, it feels like a whale!

(Treplev runs up to instruct him.)

TREPLEV: That's okay, he's just taking some line. Now stop him, don't let him take too much . . .

TRIGORIN: Maybe you'd better take it!

TREPLEV: Boris, this is your fish, you have to reel him in.

TRIGORIN: I'm too nervous!

TREPLEV: You're doing fine. Now give him a little line, then reel in a bit more . . . that's it . . .yes, just like that . . .

Give a little, take in a little . . .

(Trigorin is doing his best.)

TRIGORIN: I don't feel like I'm making any progress.

TREPLEV: You're doing fine.

TRIGORIN: He's a mean son of a gun, isn't he?

TREPLEV: You'll have yourself a fine dinner tonight.

TRIGORIN: How long will this take?

TREPLEV: Not too long. You're doing fine.

(Irina arrives in a huff.)

[continue] ... to next page

[B-II-2]

[Deemer]

(Irina arrives as Trigorin is struggling with his fish.)

IRINA: Boris, come on – we're leaving immediately.

TRIGORIN: I have a fish!

IRINA: I don't care about your stupid fish. I said, we're leaving immediately! Boris!

(She goes to him and grabs the fishing rod. There is a struggle, during which the fish is able to release the hook – the line goes dead.)

TRIGORIN: You let my fish get away!

IRINA: I'll buy you a fish at the market! We are leaving this very minute!

(She storms off, heading for the house.)

TRIGORIN: What happened?

(He looks sheepishly at Treplev, who nods. Then Trigorin hurries after her.)

[follow Irina and Trigorin] ... to p153 (bottom)

[stay here] ... to next page

[B-II-3]

[Deemer]

(Alone, Treplev goes into the bathhouse. He returns with a shotgun, leans it against the bathhouse, and goes back inside. This time he comes out carrying several dead seagulls.)

(Ilya arrives as Treplev is staring down at the dead birds.)

ILYA: What's this?

TREPLEV: What's it look like? I shot them this morning.

ILYA: Why?

TREPLEV: They upset me.

ILYA: Why?

TREPLEV: I'm not sure.

ILYA: The seagulls aren't hurting anyone.

TREPLEV: They are scavengers. They survive on death.

ILYA: They keep the grounds clean! My job would be harder without them!

TREPLEV: They depend on death to survive. They have no real independence.

ILYA: What are you talking about? These are just birds, for Christ's sake.

TREPLEV: No. They are more than birds.

ILYA: How can they be more than what they are? They're seagulls, plain and simple. They have a job to do, and they do it, and I like them for doing it. I don't see the point of shooting them for no reason at all.

TREPLEV: Who said I didn't have a reason?

ILYA: Well, what reason then?

TREPLEV: Excuse me.

(He picks up the shotgun and one dead bird and starts off.)

ILYA: What the hell are you doing now?

TREPLEV: I have something to take care of.

ILYA: You can't just leave these dead birds here.

TREPLEV: Too bad they don't eat their own.

ILYA: You're making a big mess here!

(Treplev doesn't reply.)

ILYA: (to audience) He's loony.

(Ilya moves off, entering the house.)

[follow Treplev] ... to p117

[follow Ilya] ... to p157

[B-II-4]

[Deemer]

(Trepnev returns to the boathouse. He puts the rifle away, then sits on the ground, staring out at the lake. Dorn enters.)

DORN: A kopek for your thoughts.

TRIPLEV: They aren't worth that much.

DORN: Ah, you never can tell. Out of whatever misery you are feeling right now might be planted the seed to a great play!

TREPLEV: You're too kind.

DORN: Is it Nina?

TREPLEV: It's always Nina. She is infatuated with Trigorin. If mother knew, she's be heart-broken.

DORN: So Nina will break your heart, and Boris will break your mother's heart? Is this a prediction?

TREPLEV: It doesn't have to be predicted. It is obvious. Betrayal is part of human nature. The heart does not obey the crude ethics we raise to try and control our passion.

DORN: Well put. You must insert that into a play.

TREPLEV: I may never write a play again.

DORN: Of course you will. That's actually what all this is about. All this suffering. It's the fuel that drives your art.

TREPLEV: Must all artists suffer?

DORN: If they didn't, then how much more miserable our own lives would be – the lives of the rest of us, I mean. You, my friend, are an artist. I am not. In your suffering, you put together a piece of work that, when I watch it, manages to ease my own suffering a little. This is your calling. You heal the soul, the same way that I heal the body.

TREPLEV: I wish I could believe that.

DORN: No, you don't have to be too aware of it or the calling might go to your head. Then your writing would be too self-conscious.

TREPLEV: You are full of so much wisdom.

(Dorn laughs.)

DORN: Not wisdom so much as experience. I have practiced medicine for a long time, after all. You see a good deal as a doctor.

TREPLEV: I am just so tired of heartache.

DORN: Then write! Write the pain out of yourself!

TREPLEV: Where do I find the energy?

DORN: Out of disappointment. Out of frustration. Even out of hatred.

TREPLEV: Who am I supposed to hate? I could never hate Nina.

DORN: Hate Boris, for breaking your mother's heart. Because you're right, if he gives in to Nina, that is exactly what he will do.

TREPLEV: Mother has lost lovers before.

DORN: But you haven't. You're too young. That's why you are feeling such special pain now.

TREPLEV: They'll never be another woman in my life.

DORN: That is a prediction that never comes true, even though all spurned young lovers make it

TREPLEV: Then I will be the exception.

DORN: I've heard that before, too. I'm not insulting you, Kostya. Just telling you the facts of life. It is an unfortunate truth of existence that we all have to reinvent the wheel. If you ever learned anything from experience, if society ever learned anything from history, what grandiose accomplishments our species could achieve! What heights we could reach! But it never happens – because we never learn anything, not as individuals, not as societies. We have to stumble along and make our own mistakes, which are exactly the same mistakes our parents made, and their parents before them, reinventing the wheel and all the while believing that no one on the planet has ever gone through the deep feelings that we ourselves have gone through. It's a kind of arrogance in the final analysis. That's what distinguishes us from the apes. Arrogance. We are homo arrogance.

TREPLEV: If you believe that – why go on living?

DORN: Because our arrogance is also very amusing! It's laughter that keeps us alive.

TREPLEV: I can't remember the last time I laughed.

DORN: I can fix that.

(He attacks Treplev, trying to tickle him.)

TREPLEV: What are you doing?

DORN: We are going to laugh a little here!

(He continues tickling Treplev, who finally starts laughing, almost painfully, and into this wrestling scene enters Ilya. When Dorn sees him, he stops.)

ILYA: I am taking Junior out of the field so your mother and Polina can go to town.

DORN: Good for you!

ILYA: If they would tell me what's going on, none of this would've happened.

DORN: (pulling his leg) It's absolutely shameful the way they treat you!

ILYA: Absolutely true.

DORN: I'd ask for a raise, is what I'd do.

ILYA: Really?

DORN: Surely you're worth more than you're getting paid.

(Dorn sneaks a wink to Treplev.)

ILYA: Of course I'm worth more.

DORN: Sounds to me like you are holding the winning hand here. You quit and they begged you to stay, is what it sounds like.

ILYA: Yes, I guess they did.

DORN: So a raise is probably a sure thing.

ILYA: I hadn't thought of that. Thank you, doctor.

DORN: I like to see a man get what he's worth.

ILYA: I have to fetch Junior and get the carriage ready. Damn right, I will ask for a raise!

(He moves off.)

(Dorn smiles at Treplev.)

DORN: See how ridiculous we humans are? How comical? You're one of the lucky ones with the talent to document all this in literature.

(The actors move off for intermission.)

(End of Act II)

Go to Act III ... to p171

[G-II-1]

[Deemer]

(In the garden are Sorin, Nina and Medvedenko. A wheelchair sits nearby.)

SORIN: I don't want to spend my life in a goddamn wheelchair. As long as I can take your arm, I'm fine.

NINA: There's nothing wrong with being in a wheelchair.

SORIN: Will you speak to her about getting old?

MED.: He wants to keep his independence.

SORIN: Of course I do.

NINA: I don't understand what this has to do with whether or not you use the wheelchair.

SORIN: You're too young to understand.

NINA: I'm sure that's true. Here, take my arm. We'll do as you wish.

SORIN: That's the spirit.

(He takes Nina's arm. Nina gets Medvedenko's eye and gestures to the wheelchair. He picks up the message and will wheel it behind them as they leave.)

SORIN: Besides, being with you makes me feel much younger.

NINA: I'm glad.

SORIN: How about you, you aging coot, you feel younger in the presence of youth?

MED.: I am often in the presence of my students, and they just remind me how old I am.

(They continue on to join the others at the bench on the lawn.)

[follow them] ... to p107

[G–II–2]

[Deemer]

(Masha enters the garden and speaks to the audience.)

MASHA: Sometimes I ask myself why I go on living. It is so hopeless, my love for Kostya. He will never love me. I know that. And yet I can't stop loving him. Love is a curse.

I could be so good for him. No one understands him like I do. Certainly not Nina. He is hopelessly infatuated with her – and for what? All she will do is drive him to depression and despair.

She doesn't care for him like I do. She doesn't understand his work like I do.

Only I believe that Kostya will become a great writer! I know he will. He'll be remembered long after Trigorin is forgotten.

But will he give me the time of day? It's almost as if he is afraid of me.

So that's my predicament. Unrequited love. I read about it in books but I never imagined it would happen to me, that I'd be living the life of a tragic heroine in a novel. You read about these things but don't believe they happen to real people. Just to people in books.

Well, I'm now a woman in a novel – and the novel is my life!
(She heads inside to the kitchen.)

[follow her] ... to p149

[G-II-3]

[Deemer]

(Polina and Dorn enter the garden.)

DORN: Why did you have to do that?

POLINA: Because she gave them to you.

DORN: You're jealous.

POLINA: Can you blame me? You have eyes for every young woman you see.

DORN: I'm old enough to be her father.

POLINA: She still gives you flowers.

DORN: It was a meaningless gesture of courtesy. Nothing more.

POLINA: How do I know you're not having an affair with her?

DORN: That's ridiculous.

POLINA: Will you deny it?

DORN: Of course I'll deny it. It's not true.

POLINA: Something is distracting you lately.

DORN: Meaning?

POLINA: You've been ignoring me.

DORN: I've been behaving toward you exactly the same as I always have.

POLINA: Then why do I feel ignored?

DORN: Because you want me to take you away. You feel sorry for yourself whenever you think of it.

POLINA: What a cruel thing to say.

DORN: I think it's true. We go along for months and everything is fine. Then you decide this isn't enough, what we have, and you want more. You want me to carry you off into the sunset. You probably even want me to marry you. You get sick of your life here and become obsessed about running off with me. And then we start fighting. Don't you see the pattern? This is not the first time this has happened.

POLINA: You must hate me.

DORN: Of course I don't hate you.

POLINA: How can you put up with me?

DORN: Usually you regain your senses, and everything between us is good again.

POLINA: This is enough for you? What we have here?

DORN: Quite enough. It's what is real. It's what we have. I'm not a dreamer.

POLINA: I guess I am a dreamer, aren't I?

DORN: Yes, you are.

POLINA: I can't help it.

DORN: No, I suppose you can't.

POLINA: You are not having an affair with Nina?

DORN: Of course not. She's a child. Besides, Treplev is madly in love with her.

POLINA: Do you think she loves him back?

DORN: No. I think she will break his heart.

POLINA: Men deserve to have their hearts broken now and again. Women are always the ones to suffer.

DORN: Don't feel sorry for yourself. Go fix yourself a cup of tea – I want to talk to Kostya, I see him over at the boathouse. (He moves off, and Polina enters the house.)

[follow Dorn] ... to p132

[follow Polina] ... to p160

[K-II-1]

[Deemer]

(Trigorin and Polina are in the kitchen.)

POLINA: Thank you so much for your help.

TRIGORIN: The pleasure's mine.

POLINA: I'm not used to a man helping in the kitchen – let alone saying it's a pleasure!

TRIGORIN: I spend too much time in my books. The diversion is good for me. In fact, I plan to spend the rest of the day fishing. I assume there are fish in that beautiful lake of yours.

POLINA: Oh yes, you'll probably catch some fish.

TRIGORIN: I haven't decided if I want to catch any yet. Perhaps that will be a distraction from the pleasure of watching my bob in the water.

POLINA: It's a strange way to fish if you are distracted by getting a bite!

TRIGORIN: (smiling) I must be a strange fisherman.

(He starts to leave.)

POLINA: Good luck anyway!

TRIGORIN: No luck involved, madam. Not luck at all.

(He leaves, and Ilya immediately enters.)

[follow Trigorin] ... to p168

[stay here] ... to next page

[K-II-2]

[Deemer]

(Ilya joins Polina in the kitchen, going quickly to the vodka bottle in the cupboard.)

POLINA: Well, there's one gentleman staying here for a change. Boris helped me with the dishes.

ILYA: Sounds like something a fancy writer would do. Women's work!

POLINA: His "work" is his art, writing.

ILYA: He hasn't done a man's work a day in his life.

POLINA: Are you a literary critic all of a sudden? Read his books before you judge him. I have – and they are wonderful. And he is a gentleman.

ILYA: He's no Tolstoy. Even the critics who like him say that.

POLINA: It's not fair to compare him to a literary lion.

ILYA: Because he comes away looking like a literary pussycat!

POLINA: He's as good as anybody writing in Russia today. The critics say that about him, too!

ILYA: Critics, what do they know?

POLINA: Obviously not as much as Mr. Know-It-All.

ILYA: I know more than you think I know.

POLINA: You haven't even read his books.

ILYA: I wasn't talking about his books.

POLINA: What were you talking about?

ILYA: You think you fool me, but you don't.

POLINA: I see. Who is it now? You're always accusing me of being interested in some other man.

ILYA: You don't even try to hide it. Do you really think I'm that stupid?

POLINA: So who is it this time?

ILYA: You make me sick.

POLINA: Do I? You don't think so when you wake me in the middle of the night.

(He starts away.)

ILYA: I've got work to do.

POLINA: Work didn't stop you from coming in here for a drink. I don't know why you don't get fired, carrying on the way you do.

ILYA: I do the work of three men around here.

POLINA: You drink the vodka of three men, too.

ILYA: A man deserves a drink when he's as over-worked as I am.

POLINA: Over-worked! Listen to him. I'm the one who needs help. I had to ask Irina to come to town with me today, I have so much to do.

ILYA: Well, you already got your help, didn't you? I don't see Trigorin asking if he can haul rye or groom the horses or fix the fences.

POLINA: He's on vacation.

ILYA: He's also lazy.

POLINA: As many books as he's published? Don't be ridiculous.

ILYA: Lazy to do a man's day of work. He couldn't last an hour in the fields with me.

POLINA: And I'd just like to see you try and write a novel.

ILYA: I've got stories to tell. Believe me, I do. If I had time, I could tell them, too.

POLINA: You must be drunk already.

ILYA: I don't have to listen to this.

(He starts away again.)

POLINA: One of these days you'll drink so much you get careless and hurt yourself.

ILYA: I bet you're just counting the days for that to happen.

POLINA: I'm doing no such thing.

ILYA: If you got rid of me, you think you could go to one of your fantasy men. That's what they are, just fantasies. Those that flirt back do so because they know they don't have to worry about getting serious with you. If you were available all of a sudden, watch them run then! That would be something to see!

POLINA: You're disgusting with your constant jealousy.

ILYA: You think I don't notice. I see every goddamn thing that happens around here. I know every man you get infatuated with – and when.

POLINA: Vodka has your tongue.

(But Ilya is already gone. She follows him.)

[follow them] ... to p111

[K-II-3]

[Deemer]

(Masha enters the kitchen. She goes straight to the vodka bottle. She speaks to the audience.)

MASHA: Of course I drink. What would you do?

Would you marry Semyou? I don't love him – but what does it matter? My parents aren't in love, and they've been married forever.

At least it would be a change. At least it would be a distraction.

I can't spend the rest of my life longing for Kostya. He will never want me. He wants Nina. He wants only what is bad for him, what will destroy him.

Semyou wants to marry me. What if I said yes? What would life be like for me, married to a school teacher?

He says he's so poor. He says he's not worthy of me. He knows nothing about love.

If I married him, maybe then I could kill this longing in my heart. Maybe I can use Semyou to crucify my love for Kostya.

Why must life be so complicated?

I can't imagine a world without vodka. Vodka makes life bearable.

(Ilya enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[K-II-4]

[Deemer]

(Ilya joins Masha in the kitchen and takes the vodka bottle away from her.)

ILYA: What are you doing drinking at this hour? (He takes a big swig from the bottle.) I get no appreciation around here. Who do they think I am?

MASHA: Who? What's the matter with you?

ILYA: I just quit.

MASHA: You quit your job?

ILYA: Under protest. Irina expects horses, when I have no horses available for her. She and your mother want to go shopping. They expect me to stop the harvest so they can go shopping.

MASHA: How can you quit? What will you do?

ILYA: Sorin can't manage without me. I just want a little respect around here.

MASHA: What will you do?

ILYA: I will wait for an apology!

(He starts out.)

MASHA: Now where are you going?

ILYA: To take a swim!

MASHA: Are you crazy?

(He leaves. Masha follows him out of the kitchen, then turns into the living room.)

[follow Ilya] ... to p130

[follow Masha] ... to p153 (middle of page)

[L-II-1]

[Deemer]

(Nina, Sorin and Medvedenko enter the living room.)

SORIN: Ilya would never quit. There's no one else who would hire such a drunk. He just wants to feel important, to be begged to stay.

(He begins an asthma attack.)

NINA: Don't get yourself upset about it. Maybe you two want to play cards.

MED.: Feel up to a game?

(Masha enters.)

MASHA: Why's father so upset?

SORIN: He insulted Irina.

NINA: You need to stay calm. There's nothing to get worked up about. Will you watch him?

MED.: Of course.

(Irina and Trigorin enter.)

IRINA: I will not be treated this way, Pyotr! (She starts crying.) I've never been so insulted in my life.

SORIN: I don't blame you. But that doesn't mean you have to run off.

MASHA: He'll be angry and go for a swim, and then he'll be fine. You'll get your horses or anything else you want.

NINA: I'm sure everything will be fine. If you'll excuse me . . .

(She leaves.)

[follow Nina] ... to p115

[stay here] ... to next page

[L-II-2]

[Deemer]

(Nina has left.)

IRINA: What is the problem with getting a few horses?

SORIN: No problem at all.

MASHA: He uses the carriage horses in the field.

SORIN: He does?

MASHA: He says it makes the harvest go more quickly.

SORIN: Carriage horses don't belong in the field!

IRINA: Sounds to me like you don't know what he does.

SORIN: Well, we'll put an end to this!

MED.: You shouldn't get yourself riled up.

SORIN: I'll get as angry as I want!

IRINA: He's right – it's not good for you to be angry.

SORIN: You're a fine one to talk. You're no spring chicken yourself.

IRINA: Now my own brother insults me!

(She starts crying again. Trigorin comforts her.)

(Ilya enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[L-II-3]

[Deemer]

(Ilya enters the living room.)

ILYA: I need my wages.

SORIN: You need nothing of the kind.

ILYA: I'm owed them.

MED.: Gentlemen, please . . .

(Medvedenko has everyone's attention.)

MED.: Perhaps there's no need for anyone to quit.

MASHA: Father isn't quitting.

ILYA: Shut up. Where's your mother?

MASHA: I don't know.

ILYA: With the doctor, no doubt. I don't even get the support of my own wife.

IRINA: You are a rude ruffian!

ILYA: I have my work to do, that's all. I can't bow to your every whim and fancy.

SORIN: Why are the carriage horses in the field?

ILYA: Because I'm short-handed and the barley needs to get in before a storm comes up.

MASHA: What storm? We've had beautiful weather.

ILYA: See what I put up with? My own daughter contradicts me.

SORIN: We have carriage horses, and we have field horses. They should not be confused.

ILYA: I did not know madam would have a sudden urge to go shopping.

IRINA: You can't stop insulting me!

ILYA: I thought you and my wife wanted to go to town.

IRINA: We do.

ILYA: I assume when women go to town, it is to go shopping. Pardon me if I'm wrong.

TRIGORIN: May I make a suggestion?

IRINA: Yes, that we pack right away.

TRIGORIN: There's no need for this. I think, now that he understands the problem, certainly a couple of carriage horses can be taken out of the field.

ILYA: They'd never been in the field in the first place if anyone bothered to tell me what was going on. I don't read minds. Especially of a woman.

TRIGORIN: I suggest you all stop bickering and find an agreement. Excuse me.

IRINA: (after him) Boris?

(He leaves.)

[follow him] ... to p119

SORIN: He's right. But we don't have a solution if you quit.

MASHA: Father, tell them you didn't quit.

ILYA: All I ask for is a little respect.

(Polina enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[L-II-4]

[Deemer]

(Polina enters.)

MASHA: It's time for lunch.

POLINA: I would offer to fix lunch, but I don't know if I'm still employed.

SORIN: Of course, you're still employed. We were just reaching an agreement.

ILYA and IRINA together: Were we?

MED.: At least you agree on something. Maybe it's a start.

SORIN: Excellent idea. Both of you feel lack of respect, I take it.

(Irina and Ilya start talking at once:)

IRINA: This did not have to turn into a major confrontation. All I ask is— . . .

ILYA: If I knew this morning that you needed horses— . . .

SORIN: Please! Not everyone at once.

POLINA: I told you I was going to town. Did you expect me to walk?

ILYA: You never told me.

POLINA: I told you. You never listen to me.

MASHA: Must we do this?

SORIN: Ilya, surely you can spare a single horse? We can use the small buggy.

IRINA: You don't have to go to any trouble for me. I can walk to the station.

SORIN: That is ridiculous. You are not leaving. You and Polina are going to town, just as planned. Ilya?

ILYA: When do you need it?

MASHA: Father, why must you be so difficult?

ILYA: I just asked a question.

MASHA: It's obvious they want it now.

ILYA: You want it now?

IRINA: I'm not going to town.

POLINA: Irina, please bend a little . . .

IRINA: Well, if you still want to go, that's another matter.

SORIN: Ilya?

ILYA: I suppose I could spare a horse.

SORIN: Excellent. Then get the small buggy ready for the ladies.

ILYA: I have a lot of barley to haul today.

SORIN: Then you'd better get the buggy ready so you can start.

ILYA: Any horse in particular? I thought I'd better ask in case you don't agree with my choice.

IRINA: You insist on being difficult.

POLINA: (quickly) The bay.

ILYA: The bay?

POLINA: No, the black, the one you call Major.

ILYA: I can't spare Major!

POLINA: Then pick any horse you like!

MASHA: He does insist on being difficult.

ILYA: My own family abandons me.

SORIN: Which horse do you suggest?

ILYA: I haven't really thought about it.

SORIN: No time like the present.

MED.: May I suggest the worst worker of the bunch. That way you won't be missing much.

ILYA: Junior can be lazy, that's for sure.

SORIN: Junior is perfect! Then we agree? Ladies?

POLINA: I was looking forward to going to town with you so much.

IRINA: If you still want to . . .

POLINA: Very much so.

SORIN: Won't take an hour for Ilya to get the carriage ready.

ILYA: Half hour.

SORIN: See there? Then we all agree? Ilya?

ILYA: I suppose so.

SORIN: Irina?

IRINA: For Polina's sake, I'll go. I'd better tell Boris we're not leaving.

ILYA: I'll get the carriage ready.

[follow Irina] ... to p124

[follow Ilya] ... to p135 (middle of page)

[stay here] ... to next page

[L-II-5]

[Deemer]

(Irina and Ilya are gone.)

SORIN: So maybe we'll have peace and quiet around here again.

MED.: You handled that very nicely. Didn't he, Masha?

MASHA: Better than I would have.

POLINA: He would die if he lost this job.

SORIN: Proud people are like horses that haven't been broken in yet – you have to give them a lot of rope.

MASHA: Father is disagreeable just to hear himself talk.

MED.: I think he had a legitimate point.

MASHA: You would.

MED.: It's not easy planning all the work around here.

SORIN: That's true enough, and your father does a good job most of the time, Masha. If that wasn't true, I would've fired him a long time ago.

MASHA: He's always complaining. It drives me crazy.

SORIN: For some men, complaining is in their nature.

MASHA: It's hard to hear all day long.

SORIN: Let it go in one ear and out the other. Polina, since you're still employed, maybe we can have lunch?

POLINA: Right away.

SORIN: Nothing like a good argument to whet the appetite!
(He turns to the audience.) Now we have an intermission.

(All actors move off.)

(End of Act II)

Go to Act III ... to p171

[S-II-1]

[Deemer]

(Treplev and Ilya are in the study.)

TREPLEV: I like my desk facing the window.

ILYA: We can move the desk anywhere you like. What I was asking is whether you want any real changes – a wall taken out, partition added, that sort of thing.

TREPLEV: No, I don't think you have to do anything major at all.

ILYA: Then what's the problem?

TREPLEV: I don't know what you mean.

ILYA: If it's just a matter of moving furniture around, why is the boss getting me involved? I mean, I don't mind – but I don't see that there's really anything for me to do.

TREPLEV: Perhaps he just wanted to keep you informed.

ILYA: Of course, I could move all the furniture around myself as long as I know where to put it.

TREPLEV: I confess I haven't thought that far ahead.

ILYA: If you give me a sketch, I could fit it in here and there, maybe get it done sooner rather than later.

TREPLEV: That's very nice of you.

ILYA: That's what I'm here for.

(He leaves.)

[follow Ilya] ... to p145

[stay here] ... to next page

[S-II-2]

[Deemer]

(Treplev speaks to the audience.)

TREPLEV: I'd rather have a cabin in the woods, away from all this. A writer needs privacy! What kind of privacy is here, with mother always showing up and strutting about like she's still on stage. Mother is always on stage.

(Trigorin enters.)

TRIGORIN: Here you are. Will this become your study?

TREPLEV: In time, I expect it will.

TRIGORIN: Very nice. Reminds me of my own writing room early in my career. Like here, I was able to look out onto a garden. It's a good view for a writer.

TREPLEV: I'd rather have an isolated cabin in the woods.

TRIGORIN: I've had that, too. There are advantages and disadvantages to both.

TREPLEV: It's hard to get any work done when mother is here.

TRIGORIN: You need to put your foot down and demand silence and privacy.

TREPLEV: Easier said than done.

TRIGORIN: Who said a writer's life is easy? You need to take control of your career.

TREPLEV: I don't have a career.

TRIGORIN: And you never will until you take charge! Your audience won't find you. You have to find them.

TREPLEV: Maybe I'm my only audience.

TRIGORIN: That's the voice of youth and despair. Believe me, I know it well. I once thought the same thing myself.

TREPLEV: You didn't expect to have an audience when you started?

TRIGORIN: Oh, I wanted one, a huge one! I wanted to become the new Tolstoy! I've always been ambitious. But wanting an audience and actually having one are two different things.

TREPLEV: How did you get one?

TRIGORIN: I wrote every day. And everything I wrote I sent out. I suffered rejection after rejection, so much rejection that many a less dedicated writer would have quit. Many a more talented writer has quit, believe me! Endurance is much more important than talent for a young writer. You can always improve your craft. But if you give up, if you stop sending out your work before you find that audience that is just waiting for you out there, then your career never gets off the ground. So I wish you endurance above all else.

TREPLEV: I wonder if I have it.

TRIGORIN: Of course you do! Dig in! And never give up!

TREPLEV: You're inspiring. I didn't think you liked me.

TRIGORIN: Of course I like you. Now come on, you're coming with me.

TREPLEV: Where?

TRIGORIN: You're going to show me the best fishing holes in this lake of yours.

TREPLEV: I didn't know you were a fisherman.

TRIGORIN: That remains to be seen. Will you be my guide?

TREPLEV: Of course. {They leave for the boathouse.}

[follow them] ... to p126

ACT THREE

Where do you want to begin?

With Chekhov's scene, Trigorin and Masha in the dining room
... to p173

With Deemer's scene, Dorn and Polina at the boat house
... to p194

With Deemer's scene, Treplev and Nina in the kitchen
... to p223

With Deemer's scene, Irina and Sorin in the living room
... to p234

With Deemer's scene, Medvedenko and Ilya in the garden
... to p207

[III-1]

[Chekhov]

(A week later. In the dining room at Sorin's house: Trigorin is eating lunch. Masha stands at the table. Each has a drink. A few pieces of luggage are in the room, preparations for departure.)

MASHA: I'm telling you this because you're a writer – maybe you can use the material. It's the truth. If he'd died when he shot himself, I couldn't have gone on living. But I'm braver today. I'm determined to tear out my love for him by the roots.

TRIGORIN: How will you manage that?

MASHA: By marrying Medvedenko.

TRIGORIN: The schoolmaster?

MASHA: Yes.

TRIGORIN: I don't see the point.

MASHA: Loving Konstantin year after year for nothing – what's the point of that? When I'm married, I won't have time for love. I'll have new things to worry about. At least it'll be a change. Shall we have another?

TRIGORIN: Haven't we had enough?

MASHA: So? And don't look at me like that. (She fills their glasses.) Women drink more than you think they do – just few do it openly like I do. It's always vodka or cognac. (They clink

glasses.) Cheers. I like you. You're easy to talk to. I'm sorry you're going.

TRIGORIN: I don't want to.

MASHA: Then ask her to stay.

TRIGORIN: She won't. Konstantin is acting too strangely. First he tries to shoot himself, and now I hear he wants to challenge me to a duel. And for what? He sulks and grumbles and rambles on about new art forms. Well, there's room enough in the world for old and new alike. Why so much grumbling?

MASHA: He's jealous of you. I guess it's none of my business.

(Nina enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[III-2]

[Chekhov]

(Nina stands by the window of the dining room.)

MASHA: Medvedenko isn't very bright, and he's poor, but he's a good man and loves me dearly. I feel sorry for him and his old mother. Well, let me wish you the best. (She shakes Trigorin's hand.) I've appreciated your friendship. Be sure to send me your books – and autograph them. Write, "To Masha, who doesn't know who she is – or why she is alive." Goodbye.

(She exits.)

[follow Masha] ... to p247

[continue here] ... to next page

[III-3]

[Chekhov]

(Nina comes forward, holding out two clenched fists to Trigorin.)

NINA: Which hand?

TRIGORIN: The right one.

NINA: Wrong. (She opens her left hand, revealing a small stone.) I'm trying to decide whether to become an actress or not. I wish someone would tell me what to do.

TRIGORIN: You have to decide for yourself.

NINA: You're leaving, and we'll probably never see each other again. I want to give you this to remember me by. (She hands him a medallion.) Your initials are on one side and your book, *Days and Nights*, on the other.

TRIGORIN: It's beautiful. (He kisses the medallion.) I'm touched.

NINA: Think of me now and again.

TRIGORIN: Of course I will. I'll remember you as I saw you last week, in your white summer dress. We talked, and there was a seagull at your feet.

NINA: Yes, the seagull . . . Someone's coming. Please give me two minutes alone before you leave . . .

(She leaves, as Irina and Sorin enter.)

[follow Nina] ... to p225

[continue here] ... to next page

[III-4]

[Chekhov]

(Irina and Sorin enter. Sorin is in full civil bureaucrat uniform.)

IRINA: With your rheumatism, Pyotr, you'd best stay at home and not go out visiting so much. (To Trigorin:) Who just left? Nina?

TRIGORIN: Yes.

IRINA: Pardon us for interrupting. (She sits down.) I finished packing. I'm exhausted.

TRIGORIN: (reading the inscription on the medallion:) Days and Nights, page 121, lines 11 and 12 . . . (quietly to himself) ... lines 11 and 12 ... (to Irina) Where are my books?

IRINA: In the corner bookcase of Pyotr's study.

TRIGORIN: (to himself) Page 121 . . .

(He exits.)

[follow Trigorin] ... to p250

[continue here] ... to next page

[III-5]

[Chekhov]

IRINA: Promise me you'll stay home.

SORIN: But you're going away, and it gets lonely here.

IRINA: What's there to do in town?

SORIN: Not much. They're laying the foundation for the new City Hall. I've been lying around here like an old cigar butt, so I've arranged the horses so we can leave together.

IRINA: Whatever you say. Just try and keep yourself occupied when you return. Try to avoid catching cold. And try to look after Konstantin. Maybe you can give him some advice. (A pause.) I have no idea why he tried to kill himself. Maybe it was jealousy – in which case, the sooner I get Trigorin out of here, the better.

SORIN: There may be more to it than that. He's bright and young – but he's isolated here and doesn't have money or position. He probably thinks he has no future at all. There's nothing for him to do here, and maybe he's ashamed of that. I love him dearly, and I think he cares for me, too – but he must feel in the way here, like he's sponging. He does have his pride.

IRINA: I worry so much about him! Maybe you could help him get a job in the civil service or something.

SORIN: Personally, I think the best thing would be for you to give him a little money. He needs some decent clothes, he's been wearing that same old sports coat for three years and

doesn't even have an overcoat. If wouldn't be bad for a young man to go abroad either, would it? It shouldn't cost much.

IRINA: Well, perhaps I could manage a new suit but going abroad is out of the question. I'm not even sure I can afford to buy him clothes! I don't have the money. (Sorin laughs.) Well, I don't.

SORIN: Of course not. You're a warm-hearted woman who does the best she can.

IRINA: (almost to tears) I'm not as wealthy as you think I am.

SORIN: If I had any money, I'd send him myself. Ilya takes my pension and spends it on the farm, so he can raise his bees and cattle, and everything ends up going down the drain. The damn bees die, the cows die, and when I want to go somewhere I can't even get a horse.

IRINA: I have some money, of course, but the cost of my costumes alone is enough to ruin me.

SORIN: You're a kind and generous woman. (His demeanor changes.) I feel dizzy all of a sudden. My head is swimming ...

(He uses the table for support.)

IRINA: Petrusha! (She tries to support him. Then she calls:) Someone help me!

(Treplev and Medvedenko enter.)

[continue] ... to next page

[III-6]

[Chekhov]

(Treplev, his head bandaged, and Medvedenko enter.)

IRINA: He's feeling faint.

SORIN: I'm fine . . . it's gone already.

TREPLEV: It's not serious, mother. Uncle often has these spells. You must go and lie down.

SORIN: For a little while. And then I'm going to town . . .

(He starts out, and Medvedenko offers his arm.)

MED.: I've a riddle for you: what uses four legs in the morning, two at noon, three in the evening— . . .

SORIN: —and at night is on it's back! I've heard it. Thank you, but I can manage by myself.

MED.: You don't have to pretend you're fine with me.

(And they leave.)

[follow them] ... to p237

[stay here] ... to next page

[III–7]

[Chekhov]

IRINA: He scared me.

TREPLEV: It's not good for him to live here – he gets depressed and restless in the country. If you'd loan him the money, he could live in town.

IRINA: I don't have money to loan. I'm an actress, not a banker.

TREPLEV: Will you change my bandage for me? You're so good at it.

(She'll prepare to change the bandage.)

IRINA: The doctor's late.

TREPLEV: Yes, he was supposed to be here at ten – it's already noon.

IRINA: Sit down. (He does, and she takes off his bandage.) It looks like a turban on you. Yesterday someone asked the kitchen help what nationality you were. It's almost healed, just a slight scar. (She kisses his head.) When I'm gone, you won't do something like that again, will you?

TREPLEV: No, mother; it's like I was temporarily insane, I was so depressed. It won't happen again. (He kisses her hands.) You have such golden hands. I remember when I was a child, when you were still playing the regional theaters, there was a fight in our courtyard and a neighbor, a washerwoman, was

almost beaten to death. She was unconscious when they picked her up, but you cared for her and took her medicine, you even washed her children in a tub. Do you remember?

IRINA: No. (She puts on a fresh bandage.)

TREPLEV: Two ballerinas also lived there. They'd come over for coffee.

IRINA: I remember that.

TREPLEV: They were very religious.

(There's a pause.)

TREPLEV: Lately I've felt like a child again, loving you as innocently as I did then. But why do you let that man influence you so much?

IRINA: Konstantin, you don't understand him. He's a man of great principles.

TREPLEV: When I challenged him to a duel, his "great principles" didn't stop him from being a coward. Now he's running away.

IRINA: That's ridiculous. I myself asked him to leave.

TREPLEV: Great principles! Here we are arguing about him, and he's off somewhere laughing at us – and trying to expand Nina's mind and show her what a genius he is.

IRINA: You certainly enjoy saying upsetting things to me. I told you how much I respect him, and I don't want you speaking badly of him in my presence.

TREPLEV: Mother, I don't respect him. You want me to think he's a genius, don't you? Well, I can't lie. His books make me sick.

IRINA: You're jealous. People without talent are always putting down real genius. I'm sure it's a comfort to you.

TREPLEV: Real genius! I've got more genius and talent than the lot of you! You and Trigorin, all of you, are boring and out-dated. Yet you have control of the arts and won't tolerate anything but your convention of clichés. Well, I won't accept this. I reject you all!

IRINA: That attitude leads to decadence!

TREPLEV: Then go run to your boring theater and act in your pitiful plays.

IRINA: I have never acted in a pitiful play! Who are you to criticize me? You can't even write a cheap vaudeville sketch. You sponge off me!

TREPLEV: How can I, when you're a miser?

IRINA: And you a beggar!

(Treplev starts crying softly.)

IRINA: You're a nobody. (A pause.) Please don't cry. Stop this. (She starts crying herself.) Please. (She starts kissing him on

the forehead, cheeks, head.). Forgive me. I feel miserable. It's my fault. Do forgive me, darling boy.

TREPLEV: (embracing her) If you only knew what I've been through. I've lost everything. She doesn't love me; I can't write . . . my life is hopeless.

IRINA: Everything will work out, you'll see. He's leaving today, and she'll love you again. (She wipes away his tears.) Now we're friends again.

TREPLEV: Yes, mother.

IRINA: Make friends with him. You don't need a silly duel.

(Trigorin can be heard.)

TREPLEV: Don't make me see him again. I couldn't stand it. I'm leaving, (He removes his bandage.) The doctor can bandage me later. (He leaves as Trigorin enters.)

[follow Treplev] ... to p199

[stay here] ... to next page

[III–8]

[Chekhov]

(Trigorin enters with the book.)

TRIGORIN: (still looking for the passage) Page 121, lines 11 and 12. Here it is . . . "If ever you should need my life, come and take it."

IRINA: The horses will be ready soon.

TRIGORIN: "If ever you should need my life . . ."

IRINA: Are you packed?

TRIGORIN: Yes, I'm packed. Why does that make me sad? "If ever you should need my life, come and take it." (A pause.) I want to stay another day.

IRINA: I know why you want to stay, but you must try and control yourself. You're just a little drunk. Try to act sober.

TRIGORIN: You act sober as well – and try to understand, please. You can make a sacrifice now: be a true friend – and set me free.

IRINA: (upset) Are you that infatuated with her?

TRIGORIN: I'm drawn toward her. Maybe she's just what I need.

IRINA: In love with a young country girl! You don't even know what's best for you.

TRIGORIN: I'm talking to you – but I'm thinking about her. Such lovely dreams are possessing me right now. Please turn me loose . . .

IRINA: I'm a woman, Boris – don't talk to me like that, it's torture. You frighten me.

TRIGORIN: Do the extraordinary thing. Young love is so different, so full of poetry and enchantment, it sweeps you off into a world of make-believe. It's the only thing that brings true happiness. But I've never experienced love like that. I was too busy in my own youth, trying to get published and make a living. Now young love has dropped into my lap. How can I run away from it?

IRINA: That's drunken crazy talk.

TRIGORIN: So what?

IRINA: Why is everyone set on torturing me today?

TRIGORIN: You don't even try to understand!

IRINA: Have I become so old and ugly that you must talk to me about other women? (She embraces and kisses him.) You're mad – my wonderful madman, the last page of my life! (She falls on her knees, embracing his legs.) My joy and bliss! If you leave me for even an hour, I'll die.

TRIGORIN: Please, someone might come in.

(He helps her to her feet.)

IRINA: Let them. I'm not ashamed of loving you. (She kisses his hands.) My precious, reckless love, you want to do this mad thing – but I won't let you. Because you're mine! (She laughs.) Your forehead, your eyes, your silky hair – all mine! You're so intelligent and talented, the best living writer in Russia, the hope of the entire country. You write with such simplicity and humor – with a single phrase, you go right to the heart of a character. Your characters spring to life on the page. It's impossible to read you without rapture! Do you think I'm just flattering you? Look into my eyes. Look! Do I look like someone who is lying? You see? I'm the only one who truly appreciates you. I'm the only one who tells you the truth. My darling, you'll come with me now, won't you? You won't leave me?

TRIGORIN: I have no will power of my own. I never have. I'm weak and spineless – what woman could want me? Yes, take me away with you – but don't let me out of your sight for an instant.

IRINA: (casually, as if nothing had happened) Of course, you can stay if you want to – and join me in a week. There's no need for you to be in such a hurry.

TRIGORIN: No, we'll leave together.

IRINA: Whatever you say. We'll leave together then. (Trigorin writes something in his notebook.) What are you writing?

TRIGORIN: A phrase I heard this morning. "The virgin forest." It may prove useful some day. (He yawns and stretches.) So we're actually leaving. Carriages and railway stations, railroad food and casual conversations . . .

(Ilya enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[III-9]

[Chekhov]

(Ilya enters.)

ILYA: Madam, I am sorry to say that the horses are ready. It's time for you to go to the station. If you'll do me a favor, please inquire about the actor Suzdaltze. Is he alive and well? We used to drink together. He was so good in *The Stolen Mail*. As I recall, the tragic actor Izmaylov was in the same company. No need to hurry, madam, you still have five minutes. Once they played in a melodrama together and Izmaylov was supposed to say, "We're as doomed as rats in a trap!" but instead he said, "We're as tuned as drafts in a rap!" (He roars with laughter.) "As tuned as drafts in a rap!"

(Polina, Sorin and Medvedenko enter.)

[continue] ... to next page

[III-10]

[Chekhov]

(Polina, Sorin and Medvedenko enter.)

POLINA: (She carries a basket.) I brought you a treat – plums for the trip. They're very sweet.

IRINA: How kind, thank you.

POLINA: Goodbye. Please forgive us if things weren't perfect. (She starts to cry.)

IRINA: (Embracing her) Everything was perfect. You mustn't cry.

POLINA: We don't get any younger.

IRINA: There's nothing we can do about that.

SORIN: Irina, you don't want to be late. I'll be at the carriage.

(He leaves.)

MED.: I'm walking to the station to see you off. If I hurry, I can just make it. (He leaves.)

[follow Sorin] ... to p220

[follow Medvedenko] ... to p220

[stay here] ... to next page

[III–11]

[Chekhov]

IRINA: (after the men) Goodbye, my dears. We'll see you next summer.

ILYA: Don't forget to write. Take care of yourself, Boris.

IRINA: Where's Konstantin? Tell him I want to say goodbye.

(All leave – but Trigorin.)

[follow Irina] ... to p221

[follow Ilya] ... to p205

[follow Polina] ... to p233

[stay here] ... to next page

[III-12]

[Chekhov]

TRIGORIN: (after the others) I'll be right along – I can't find my walking stick.

(Nina enters.)

TRIGORIN: We're leaving.

NINA: I knew I'd see you again. Boris, I've made up my mind. I'm going on the stage. I'm leaving home tomorrow and not looking back. I'm going to Moscow, just like you. We can meet there, if you like.

TRIGORIN: Stay at the Hotel Slavyansky Bazaar. (He writes something down and gives it to Nina.) Get in touch with me as soon as you arrive. I have to go.

NINA: Please, just a minute more . . .

TRIGORIN: You're so beautiful – it makes me happy to know we'll see each other again. Your eyes, your smile, your face like the purest angel . . . oh my darling . . .

(They kiss deeply. Trigorin breaks long enough to say to the audience:)

TRIGORIN: This ends Act Three.

(They kiss deeply again.)

[Begin Act IV] ... to p259

[B-III-1]

[Deemer]

(Polina and Dorn have just finished rowing on the lake. They stand by the boathouse and kiss. Dorn breaks their embrace.)

POLINA: Let's not go back yet.

DORN: What do you want to do?

POLINA: I don't care. I'm just not ready to go back.

DORN: Kostya amuses himself here by shooting at the seagulls.

POLINA: He's not well.

DORN: He's afflicted with a very common disease. Sentimentalism.

POLINA: Do you suppose I have this disease?

DORN: You tell me.

POLINA: No, I've learned that some things are best left unsaid.

DORN: Yes, they are.

POLINA: Sometimes I wonder if loving you is better than the way I was.

DORN: Do you expect me to reply to that?

POLINA: No. I was thinking aloud.

DORN: I think that was one of those things best left unsaid.

POLINA: Our time together is so fleeting. We don't really have a future, do we?

DORN: We have as much future as people can expect to have.

POLINA: You are such a cynic.

DORN: Or a realist.

POLINA: I applaud Kostya for trying to kill himself. At least he feels passion for her. At least he would die for her.

DORN: Now you are sounding like a sentimentalist.

POLINA: What is wrong with passion? It's better than the dreary life we live.

DORN: Speak for yourself.

POLINA: The great doctor. You're so superior to the rest of us.

DORN: Happier.

POLINA: (laughing) You, happy?

DORN: Yes, I call myself happy. Because the truth about life does not frighten me.

POLINA: At times like this, we seem so far apart.

DORN: Sometimes we are very far apart.

POLINA: Then why continue? Why go to so much trouble for our fleeting moments together?

DORN: We must enjoy them. Or perhaps we've become masochists.

POLINA: Maybe that's it. We prefer our misery together than our misery separately.

DORN: You didn't enjoy our time on the lake?

POLINA: It was lovely.

DORN: I think so.

POLINA: Let's not spoil it.

DORN: I don't think we're spoiling it.

POLINA: Hold me.

DORN: Someone may be watching.

POLINA: I don't care.

(He briefly holds her.)

DORN: I don't understand why he hasn't accosted you when he knows.

POLINA: He doesn't care. Unless there's a scandal. He'd care about a scandal.

DORN: A strange man.

POLINA: Yes.

DORN: And poor Masha, hopelessly in love with Kostya.

POLINA: She is thinking of marrying Semyou.

DORN: Really?

POLINA: She could never be happy with him. She won't listen to me.

DORN: Of course not. It is human nature to reinvent the wheel.

POLINA: What do you mean?

DORN: We never learn from the mistakes of others. We seldom learn from our own mistakes. At any rate, young people do not listen to their parents. They repeat the same mistakes, generation after generation. Reinventing the wheel.

POLINA: She's never listened to me, that's true enough. But what a grim view. What about progress?

DORN: What about it? We invent new tools, new weapons, new machinery. The human soul stays the same.

POLINA: You're depressing me.

DORN: Why should the truth be depressing?

POLINA: I'm going back to the house.

DORN: Good idea.

POLINA: Aren't you coming?

DORN: Part of the way. We don't want to push our luck.

POLINA: Sometimes I think that deep down you are a coward.

DORN: Do I deny it?

(They leave for the house, but will separate along the way.)

[follow Polina] ... to p213

[follow Dorn] ... to p226 (middle of page)

[B-III-2]

[Deemer]

(Treplev at the boathouse. He stares out over the lake. Masha arrives.)

MASHA: Let's not fight.

(Treplev ignores her.)

MASHA: It was my fault before.

(Still no response.)

MASHA: A penny for your thoughts.

TREPLEV: Masha, Masha, Masha.

MASHA: You're thinking of me? I don't think so! You're always thinking of the same one, aren't you?

TREPLEV: She's fallen in love with Trigorin.

MASHA: I know.

(A pause.)

TREPLEV: I shot the dog.

MASHA: What?

TREPLEV: The other night. And no one noticed.

MASHA: I don't understand.

TREPLEV: If it was tied up, it would bark all night and bother mother. If it wasn't tied up, it would get into the garbage and make a mess. It was a hopeless situation. So I shot it. I buried it right over there. Only now I'm sorry.

MASHA: Oh Kostya ... what's wrong with you?

(Ignoring her.)

TREPLEV: I actually liked the dog. It was always following me when I went on a walk. I have no idea why I shot it.

MASHA: It was an old dog. It was about to die anyway.

TREPLEV: I suppose.

(A pause.)

TREPLEV: Why do you always make excuses for me?

MASHA: I'm trying to make you feel better.

TREPLEV: I feel fine.

MASHA: But when you were talking about the dog—

TREPLEV: I feel fine!

(A pause.)

TREPLEV: You're getting married.

MASHA: (bitterly) Yes, I've heard the same thing.

TREPLEV: I should congratulate you. Semyon will make you very happy.

MASHA: I've given up on happiness. I wish only to be less miserable.

TREPLEV: I'm sorry I couldn't ...

MASHA: I know.

TREPLEV: How long have you loved me?

MASHA: As long as I can remember. Longer than you've loved Nina.

TREPLEV: God must have a nasty sense of humor, to play such games with us.

MASHA: I haven't thought about God in a long time.

TREPLEV: When is the wedding?

MASHA: We haven't set a date. Semyon's still trying to get the nerve to talk to father. He believes in doing everything by tradition.

TREPLEV: Yes, he would. You'll stay here?

MASHA: Of course. He has his obligations.

TREPLEV: Maybe he'll surprise you and make you happy.

MASHA: I can't remember the last time I was surprised.

(A pause.)

MASHA: I'd be surprised if you held me.

(Treplev embraces her. They break it.)

MASHA: Thank you.

TREPLEV: Masha, we'll always be friends.

MASHA: I know.

TREPLEV: You're one of my few fans.

MASHA: I think you'll become a famous writer.

TREPLEV: I don't need to be famous. Just more skilled than I am now.

MASHA: Everything is going to work out for you. I know it is.

TREPLEV: I want you to be happy, Masha. Give your marriage a chance.

MASHA: I'll try.

TREPLEV: Good.

(A pause.)

TREPLEV: Has mother left?

MASHA: They're about to. Will you see her off?

TREPLEV: I think not.

MASHA: She's worried about you.

TREPLEV: And you?

MASHA: I don't understand many of the things you do, but I have faith that everything will work out. You're an artist. Artists are not easy to understand.

TREPLEV: Faith. You think about God more than you think.

(A pause.)

MASHA: Let's take out a boat.

TREPLEV: I don't know ...

MASHA: As friends.

TREPLEV: I know how much I've hurt you. I don't know how to apologize. It wasn't intentional.

MASHA: Kostya, you don't have to apologize for anything.

TREPLEV: You're so understanding. Semyou is a lucky man.

(Masha turns away, close to tears.)

TREPLEV: I'm sorry. I've hurt you again.

MASHA: You are right. God has a cruel sense of humor.

TREPLEV: Help me get the boat.

MASHA: Let's row all the way to the other side.

TREPLEV: I hope I have the strength.

MASHA: I have the strength.

TREPLEV: Masha, the strong one.

MASHA: You are strong, too. You haven't even discovered how strong you are yet.

TREPLEV: I wonder.

MASHA: I know you are.

(They start into the boathouse to get a boat. Masha turns to the audience.)

MASHA: Act III is over.

[Begin Act IV] ... to p259

[F-III-1]

[Deemer]

(Ilya waits outside at the carriage. Medvedenko joins him.)

MED.: Ilya! Are you busy?

ILYA: Do I look busy?

MED.: I was going to walk to the station to see them off.

ILYA: Goodbye, then.

(Medvedenko doesn't move.)

ILYA: The station's that way.

MED.: Well, Ilya, I did want to talk to you.

ILYA: Is that a fact? Well, here I am.

MED.: Yes.

ILYA: Well?

MED.: It's about Masha.

(Ilya starts laughing.)

MED.: I don't understand what's so funny.

ILYA: You are, sir! It's taken you weeks to get the nerve to ask me for Masha's hand. Of course, you can have her. We'll have a drink to celebrate as soon as they go.

MED.: We will?

ILYA: She's all yours, my friend. She's all yours!

(Ilya breaks into more laughter.)

(Medvedenko turns to the audience.)

MED.: We end Act III here.

[Begin Act IV] ... to p259

[G-III-1]

[Deemer]

(Medvedenko and Ilya are in the garden. Ilya is looking toward the lake and boathouse with binoculars.)

ILYA: He just kissed her. Here, see for yourself.

MED.: I take your word for it.

ILYA: They've been out there over an hour.

MED.: It must be so painful for you.

ILYA: What do I care? She cooks my meals. She does my laundry. When she stops doing that, then she'll hear from me.

MED.: How can you say that?

ILYA: The trouble with you, Semyou, is you're a romantic. Look where it gets you.

MED.: It has nothing to do with whether one is a romantic or not.

ILYA: They are embracing and kissing again. Idiots. They think they are fooling me.

MED.: If my wife was doing that, I couldn't keep my rage inside myself.

ILYA: Polina will never leave me. The doctor just uses her. I laugh at how gullible she is.

MED.: Your heart is made of stone.

ILYA: Better than mush, like yours.

MED.: Why must you treat me like an enemy?

ILYA: I'm not.

MED.: This is treating me like a friend?

ILYA: Of course you're my friend! I wouldn't be sharing this with you if you weren't.

MED.: Then God help your enemies.

ILYA: I just refuse to slobber over spilt milk.

MED.: But watching your own wife in the arms of another!
How can't it bother you? Aren't you jealous?

ILYA: She's the one who should be jealous. My woman in town is half her age.

MED.: You have a woman in town?

(Treplev enters in a rush. Seeing them, he stops.)

[continue] ... to next page

[G–III–2]

[Deemer]

(Treplev rushes into the garden. He catches his breath.)

TREPLEV: Hello! Beautiful day.

MED.: The weather is nice, yes.

ILYA: Dorn is kissing my wife. Want a peek?

TREPLEV: Pardon me?

ILYA: There, at the boathouse.

(He offers the binoculars. Treplev takes them and looks.)

TREPLEV: I see no one kissing.

ILYA: (ignoring this) They think they're getting away with it.

TREPLEV: How long have you known?

ILYA: Almost as long as it's been going on.

(Treplev hands back the binoculars.)

TREPLEV: I'm sorry.

ILYA: Don't be. In town, I have a woman almost as young as Nina.

MED.: He has a heart of stone.

TREPLEV: I envy a man with a heart of stone.

ILYA: I'm sure you do. Kostya, you have to come to grips with life! Don't let any woman shove you around. Show her who's boss! Take command!

TREPLEV: Easier said than done.

ILYA: If Nina rejects you, so what? There are plenty of fish in the sea.

MED.: No. There's only one Masha. I'm sure Kostya feels there is only one Nina.

TREPLEV: This is not a very pleasant conversation. If you'll excuse me . . .

(He leaves.)

[follow him] ... to p248

[stay here] ... to next page

[G-III-3]

[Deemer]

(After Treplev leaves:)

ILYA: I don't see how he missed.

MED.: He didn't really want to die.

ILYA: He sure made a mess of it if he did.

MED.: Maybe he thought Nina would realize how much he loved her and come to him.

ILYA: If he did, he's a fool.

MED.: Love makes us all fools.

ILYA: Only if you let a woman get under your skin.

MED.: It's hard for me to hide my feelings.

ILYA: Try, for God's sake! You walk around wearing "devotion" on your sleeve. You think I don't know how you feel about Masha? But what does she see when she looks at you? A man? Or a slobbering dog?

(Medvedenko is quiet.)

ILYA: Semyou, isn't there something you want to ask me?

MED.: (weakly) No, I don't thank so.

(Relief, to change the subject:)

MED.: Your wife is coming this way. If you'll excuse me.

ILYA: You don't have to run off.

MED.: Give my best to Polina.

ILYA: (after him, quietly) Simpering dog . . .

(He waits for Polina to arrive.)

[follow Medvedenko] ... to p250

[stay here] ... to next page

[G–III–4]

[Deemer]

(Polina enters.)

ILYA: I've been looking for you.

POLINA: I've been picking up trash along the shore.

ILYA: Have you now?

POLINA: Someone has to. Are they ready to leave yet?

ILYA: And what kind of trash did you find?

POLINA: Why are you suddenly so interested?

ILYA: It's my job, in case you've forgotten.

POLINA: If it's your job, why don't you do it?

ILYA: I do plenty enough around here.

POLINA: And I help you.

ILYA: Do you?

POLINA: Have you been drinking?

ILYA: No. I've been observing.

POLINA: Observing what.

ILYA: Guess.

POLINA: What is wrong with you? I feel like you're playing games with me.

ILYA: I am.

POLINA: Not any more.

(She starts to leave.)

ILYA: I know everything.

(This stops her. A pause.)

ILYA: You must think I'm very stupid.

POLINA: You don't know anything.

ILYA: I know he won't run off with you, no matter how much you beg him. In fact, all you are going to accomplish by that is to drive him away. Then where will you be?

POLINA: He loves me.

(Ilya laughs.)

POLINA: You know nothing!

ILYA: Then he loves a pig.

POLINA: You're a bastard.

ILYA: Better than being a fool.

POLINA: A coward. A real man wouldn't stand there and let another man have an affair with his wife!

ILYA: He can have you. The trouble is, he won't take you. So like I said before. Where does that leave you?

(Polina is silent.)

ILYA: Let me tell you. Let's say you leave me. You're alone. Masha is going to marry, she can't run off with you. Dorn will have nothing to do with you once you stop falling into his lap here. You can't stay here. Where will you go?

POLINA: Masha will put me up until I get settled.

ILYA: That's a laugh! She's marrying a school teacher who can't even support the dependents he already has! Now he's getting a wife. You think he wants a mother-in-law in the bargain? No, Polina, Masha won't take you in. You'll be left on the street with nowhere to go, is what will happen. You're too old to make a buck there, even if it occurred to you.

POLINA: I'll go to Moscow and find work.

ILYA: Excellent! Shall I help you pack?

(Again Polina is silent.)

ILYA: Well?

POLINA: Why are you doing this?

ILYA: Just making sure you understand the situation.

POLINA: I hate you.

ILYA: Are you packing or not?

(Polina stays but says nothing.)

ILYA: Very well.

POLINA: How long have you known?

(Ilya laughs.)

POLINA: What kind of husband does nothing?

ILYA: One who doesn't care, my dear.

POLINA: I should leave you.

ILYA: But you won't. Because you have nowhere to go.

POLINA: If I stay, I will still see him.

ILYA: Don't you see he's already tired of you?

POLINA: No, I don't see. You just say that to torment me.

ILYA: Open your eyes. I've seen how he looks at Masha.

POLINA: What do you mean?

ILYA: A girl with a broken heart is so ready for attention.

POLINA: That's not true.

ILYA: Your eyes are open but you see nothing.

POLINA: Masha would have nothing to do with him.

ILYA: I hope that's true.

POLINA: Poor Masha will be in love with Kostya her whole life.

ILYA: Then she's a fool.

POLINA: Like her mother.

ILYA: At least you admit it.

POLINA: What happened to us?

ILYA: You tell me. Am I chasing after Irina?

(Polina laughs.)

POLINA: That would be a sight.

ILYA: No more absurd than you, my dear.

POLINA: He loves me.

ILYA: We've already been through that. I should get the horses ready.

POLINA: What do we do now?

ILYA: Life goes on.

POLINA: That's it?

ILYA: Of course that's it. You expect miracles?

POLINA: I expect something to be different.

ILYA: Then you get the horses ready. That'd be different.

POLINA: Did you ever love me?

ILYA: Is that all you can think about?

POLINA: Is all I've ever thought about. All I've ever wanted is to be in love and happy.

ILYA: And how often have you succeeded?

(Polina is silent.)

ILYA: That's what I thought. You are like all women. You live in a dream world. You are possessed by the obsession that life can be wonderful.

POLINA: You don't want happiness?

ILYA: When do I have time to be happy?

POLINA: I feel sorry for you.

ILYA: Don't waste your energy.

POLINA: I couldn't live in a world without the hope of happiness.

ILYA: It's not so hard.

POLINA: I'd ask myself, What's the point?

ILYA: And while you were asking, your work would remain undone.

POLINA: There's more to life than work.

(Ilya laughs.)

ILYA: Have you noticed how only the lazy say that?

POLINA: You can't call me lazy. I do my share around here. I just don't complain all the time.

ILYA: Your share, huh? That'll be the day.

POLINA: You don't appreciate me.

ILYA: Go slobber on the doctor. I have work to do.

(Ilya exits to prepare the horses. Polina exits to kitchen.)

[Follow Ilya]. ... to p222

[Follow Polina]. ... to p232

[G-III-5]

[Deemer]

(Sorin enters the garden. He waits for Medvedenko.)

(Medvedenko enters.)

SORIN: Now is your chance, Semyou. Go talk to Ilya.

MED.: But this is—

SORIN: Nonsense. This is the perfect time. Go on now.

(He pushes Medvedenko toward the front of the house, where Ilya waits.)

[Follow Medvedenko]. ... to p205

[Stay here] ... to next page

[G–III–6]

[Deemer]

(Sorin notices Treplev and Masha at the boathouse. Irina enters.)

IRINA: Do you know where my son is?

SORIN: There — with Masha. They're taking a boat out.

IRINA: I wanted to say goodbye. I do hope he's changing his mind about her. She loves him so much.

SORIN: She's marrying Semyou.

IRINA: Well, I'll believe that when it happens. Come see me off.

(She starts away. Sorin turns to the audience.)

SORIN: This ends Act III.

[Begin Act IV] ... to p259

[H-III-1]

[Deemer]

(Ilya prepares the carriage and horses. Then he joins the others in the dining room.)

[Follow him] ... to p190

[K-III-1]

[Deemer]

(Treplev and Nina enter the kitchen. Treplev wears a head bandage from an attempted suicide.)

NINA: You expect my sympathy.

TREPLEV: Have I asked for sympathy?

NINA: You expect me to come running to you in grief, begging for your forgiveness.

TREPLEV: I have not asked you for anything.

NINA: Of course not! That would be too obvious.

TREPLEV: I am quite aware that you are infatuated with Boris now.

NINA: That's not true.

TREPLEV: I've seen the way you look at him.

NINA: This is why you did this? Because you think I am in love with Boris?

TREPLEV: My word was infatuation. So you love him.

NINA: Why are you doing this?

TREPLEV: Because I love you.

NINA: If you love me, why can't you be my friend?

TREPLEV: You don't understand anything.

NINA: Then tell me. Explain to me what I don't understand.

TREPLEV: It's useless.

NINA: So where does that leave us? I want to be your friend. I've tried to be your friend. You've always wanted more from me than I can give to you. You've wanted more from the start. Is that my fault? Is it my fault that I'm not in love with you?

TREPLEV: At last, you said it.

NINA: You've known that. I've never lied to you.

TREPLEV: Please go.

NINA: Why can't we—?

TREPLEV: Stop it!

(Treplev rushes out. Nina composes herself and exits.)

[follow Treplev] ... to p209

[follow Nina] ... to p175

[K-III-2]

[Deemer]

(Nina enters the kitchen. She is alone.)

NINA: (to audience) I am not responsible for what he did. I never told Kostya I loved him, never. Never!

I can't believe he did such a thing. He did it to torture me.

Well, I refuse to be tortured!

But if I am ... it's not because of what he did. It's because I'm in love with Boris. I know what you're thinking. He's old enough to be my father. So what? The heart is blind to age.

I feel like I've had too much to drink. I want so much to tell him how I feel. I think he has feelings for me, too. I've seen the way he looks at me. I know we could be so good for one another. He could give me strength and the confidence to become an actress. I could give him a reason to keep on writing, to write with renewed energy. He can give me wisdom, and I can give him energy.

He's tired of Irina. You can see it the way he looks at her, the way he pretends to be listening to her. But when he looks at me — I see something reawakening in his soul ... (Masha enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[K-III-3]

[Deemer]

(Masha enters.)

MASHA: Hello.

NINA: I was just leaving.

MASHA: Don't go. I think we should talk.

NINA: I'm not sure that's a good idea.

MASHA: It's not your fault if he's in love with you.

(Dorn stands in the doorway but is not noticed.)

NINA: I'm glad you realize that.

MASHA: I'm jealous, of course.

NINA: Masha, I never encouraged him.

MASHA: I believe you.

NINA: Thank you.

(They notice Dorn.)

DORN: Don't stop on my account.

NINA: Why should we let you judge us?

DORN: Is that what I do?

NINA: You hold me responsible for what Kostya did.

DORN: That's not true. Neither of you are responsible for what he did.

MASHA: Who would blame me?

DORN: No one with just cause.

MASHA: I wish he would shoot himself over me.

DORN: Would you really?

MASHA: I don't want to talk about this. If you'll excuse me ...

(She exits.) [Follow her] ... to p253

NINA: She's so hopelessly in love with him.

DORN: Too bad. He's really not available to anyone, is he?

NINA: Why do you say that?

DORN: An artist is married to his art.

NINA: You don't think an artist can be in love?

DORN: An artist can love the way a man loves a mistress. But his soul belongs to his work.

NINA: I think the artistic soul is bigger than that — it can love on many levels at the same time.

DORN: The true artist has a one-track mind ultimately — his final allegiance is to his work.

NINA: Another soul can inspire an artist's work.

DORN: Of course. The lover as Muse. This doesn't contradict what I mean.

NINA: I guess I don't understand.

DORN: Two artists can inspire one another. But this doesn't mean they communicate in the same way that an artist communicates with his work.

NINA: You don't believe two artists can be in deep spiritual love?

(Dorn laughs.)

DORN: No, Nina, I don't.

NINA: Then I'm more optimistic than you.

DORN: Or more naive.

NINA: You can be wrong, you know.

DORN: Nina, I don't mean to upset you but—

NINA: Well, you have upset me!

DORN: Then I'm sorry. Let's talk about something else.

NINA: If I ask you a question, will you tell me the truth?

DORN: Of course.

NINA: Do you think I'm an artist?

(Dorn hesitates.)

NINA: You said you'd be truthful.

DORN: I think you want to be. Whether or not you actually become one remains to be seen.

NINA: Why don't you think I'm an artist now?

DORN: You are an actress with considerable talent, considerable potential. But being an artist requires long study in what is often called the school of hard knocks. I don't see you studying that curriculum.

NINA: I will be. I'm moving to Moscow.

DORN: Really?

NINA: Yes. Right away, in fact.

DORN: Have you told Konstantin?

NINA: You don't think he'll follow me?

DORN: No. But you'll upset him.

NINA: That can't be helped.

DORN: Now you're sounding like an artist. Artists are necessarily selfish.

NINA: I'm do whatever it takes to be an actress in Moscow.

DORN: And that's the only reason you're going?

NINA: What do you mean?

DORN: You wouldn't be going because a particular famous writer lives in Moscow?

(Nina looks away.)

NINA: Is it that obvious?

DORN: I'm afraid it is, dear.

NINA: Irina knows?

DORN: I doubt it. Irina is too infatuated with herself to pay attention to what others around her are up to.

NINA: Thank God.

DORN: Your motives worry me, Nina. You say you want to become an actress.

NINA: I do!

DORN: But also a mistress.

NINA: They don't have to be incompatible desires.

DORN: I think they are.

NINA: Then you're wrong.

(Dorn doesn't reply.)

NINA: You've never been wrong before?

DORN (half-heartedly): Then I could be wrong.

NINA: Everything's going to happen just as I've planned it!

DORN: Then you are a very lucky young lady.

NINA: I am. I've always been lucky.

DORN: I look forward to reading your reviews.

NINA: You don't believe me.

DORN: I think it's time to change the subject again.

NINA: Is your life so tidy? Everyone knows about you and Polina.

DORN: I suppose they do.

NINA: Why don't you run off with her?

DORN: Because that would solve nothing.

NINA: Then you aren't as smart as you think you are. You can't even solve your own situation. (She exits.)

[Follow Nina] ... to p241

[Stay here] ... to next page

[K-III-4]

[Deemer]

(Polina enters.)

POLINA: I'll give them some plums for the trip.

DORN: They're really to go?

POLINA: As soon as Ilya brings the carriage around. We'd better fetch the others to say goodbye.

(She gets the plumbs. Then she and Dorn exit.)

[Follow them] ... to p245

[K-III-5]

[Deemer]

(Polina enters the kitchen, goes to the cupboard, and takes out a bottle of vodka. She takes a nip.)

(Dorn enters.)

DORN: Are you sharing?

POLINA: Why not?

(She shares the bottle. Dorn takes a nip.)

POLINA: I can't go on like this.

DORN: Then don't.

(They stare at one another. Polina turns to the audience.)

POLINA: This is the end of Act III.

[Begin Act IV] ... to p259

[L—III—1]

[Deemer]

(Irina and Sorin enter the living room. Sorin is in uniform.)

IRINA: Why are pleasant stays in the country never pleasant?

SORIN: Because we have too much time on our hands. We get on one another's nerves.

IRINA: Is that Kostya's problem? Too much time on his hands?

SORIN: Part of it.

IRINA: I can't afford to send him abroad. I can't afford to give him the kinds of adventures a young man wants.

SORIN: I made my own adventures at his age.

IRINA: He has imagination – his god awful play at least showed some imagination. You'd think he could occupy himself here.

SORIN: He does that – brooding.

IRINA: What does he brood about? Not Nina, I hope.

SORIN: Of course he broods about Nina. He's in love with her, and she's not in love with him.

IRINA: Maybe I should speak to her.

SORIN: You think speaking to her will change what's in her heart?

IRINA: Kostya can be so shy and reserved. Maybe she isn't aware of his feelings.

SORIN: I think she must be.

IRINA: You don't think I should interfere, do you?

SORIN: I haven't given any thought to it.

IRINA: Of course you have.

SORIN: You're going to do what you want. I know that much about my sister.

IRINA: Yes, I shall. And I'm going to talk to her.

SORIN: Not much time.

IRINA: It won't take long.

SORIN: Before you do, there's something you should know. Perhaps you already know it.

IRINA: I'm afraid to ask what.

SORIN: She's infatuated with Boris.

IRINA: Nina?

SORIN: Haven't you seen it?

IRINA: Actually, yes. But I can't imagine it's reciprocated. I mean everything to Boris. Are you implying that I don't?

SORIN: Just wanted to make sure you knew.

IRINA: Young girls are always infatuated with him. It's romantic to fall in love with a writer.

SORIN: I wouldn't know.

IRINA: But I see what you mean. It might be awkward to speak with her. Is that what you're saying?

SORIN: I never knew being awkward to stop you.

IRINA: Maybe it's not such a good idea, all the same.

SORIN: If you think not.

IRINA: Imagine, Kostya shot himself over her! No one ever shot himself over me.

SORIN: I thought there was an actor who did.

IRINA: Vladimir! I'd almost forgotten. Yes, he was in love with me so much. He did shoot himself. That makes me feel better. Shall we have a drink before we say goodbye?

SORIN: I was just about to make the suggestion. Then I'll accompany you to the station.

IRINA: Do you think you should? (They exit to dining room.)

[follow them] ... to p178

[L-III-2]

[Deemer]

(Medvedenko brings Sorin into the living room and helps him stretch out on a divan.)

MED.: Here we go ... why don't you get some sleep?

SORIN: I'm not tired.

MED.: You look exhausted.

SORIN: What do you know about it?

MED.: We are cantankerous today, aren't we?

SORIN: You're right. I'm sorry. I hate getting old.

MED.: I'm sure I'll be the same.

SORIN: Don't rush it. You have a lot of life to look forward to. Marrying Masha will be a new start for you.

MED.: You know?

SORIN: Everyone knows.

MED.: They do?

SORIN: Of course. Why are you surprised?

MED.: It's not official yet.

SORIN: I thought it was.

MED.: Yes, I asked her, and yes, she accepted me — but I haven't spoken to Ilya yet. I've been afraid to, to be honest.

SORIN: What are you afraid of?

MED.: He's always frightened me.

SORIN: His bark is worse than his bite.

MED.: Do you think he'll have any objections?

SORIN: Are you serious? To Ilya, it means one less mouth to feed.

MED.: I don't know why I'm so nervous. I did talk to Polina some time ago.

SORIN: He surely knows already. It's common knowledge.

MED.: I had no idea.

SORIN: You must talk to Ilya today.

MED.: It would be a bad time, with Irina leaving and all.

SORIN: Don't make excuses.

MED.: I suppose it was an excuse.

SORIN: There's nothing to be afraid of. Believe me, what matters to Ilya is money. He'll be relieved to have her someone else's responsibility.

MED.: I hope I haven't made a mistake. I can barely get by as it is.

SORIN: A little late for that.

MED.: I'm not changing my mind. I'm just worried.

SORIN: You always worry.

MED.: I want to make her happy.

SORIN: I'm sure Masha wants to get out of here as much as Ilya wants to get rid of her.

MED.: I can't offer her much, of course. I'm just a school teacher.

SORIN: Where's the violin? You're making me cry.

MED.: I'm sorry. Sometimes I talk too much.

SORIN: Let's go find Ilya right now.

MED.: No! I mean, there's too much going on now. He's probably preparing the horses.

SORIN: As soon as Irina leaves, you march up to Ilya and tell him.

MED.: I will.

SORIN: Promise me.

MED.: I promise.

SORIN: Tell me what you'll say.

MED.: What?

SORIN: Practice on me. I'm Ilya.

(Silence.)

SORIN: You have to be strong. Tell me.

(Medvedenko clears his throat.)

MED.: Yes. Well, you see, I've been talking to Masha and ...
what I mean is, we thought that ... I thought ...

(He clears his throat again.)

SORIN: Don't think! Just speak!

MED.: I want to marry Masha! (Sorin applauds. Nina enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[L-III-3]

[Deemer]

(Nina enters.)

NINA: Congratulations!

(Medvedenko is embarrassed.)

SORIN: Nina, come in! We were rehearsing the big moment.

NINA: You haven't asked permission yet? I thought everything was settled.

SORIN: Masha said yes. He just has to work out the details. We like to play by the rules, don't we?

MED.: I want to do what's right.

NINA: You shouldn't be nervous.

SORIN: That's what I told him.

MED.: Suddenly everything is so complicated.

SORIN: Only because you make them so!

NINA: He's right, Semyou. You have nothing to worry about.

SORIN: Maybe he'll listen to you.

MED.: I can't do anything now. Ilya must be getting the carriage ready for Irina.

SORIN: And we'll have a little peace around here. House guests always seem like a good idea before they arrive.

NINA: I'm going to Moscow, too.

MED.: With Irina?

SORIN: (overlapping) With Trigorin?

NINA: Alone. To become an actress.

SORIN: Bravo! You have to take chances while you're young in this world.

MED.: That's a very brave thing to do, Nina. You must be nervous.

NINA: I thought I would be. But I'm suddenly very calm. I know it's the right thing to do.

MED.: At least you'll know someone there.

SORIN: Boris surely has contacts in the theater. He can help you.

NINA: Yes, perhaps he can.

SORIN: Just be careful of my sister — younger actresses make her jealous.

NINA: She's a star. How can she be jealous of someone just starting out?

SORIN: Aging stars are always jealous of youth.

MED.: They fear their beauty will fade.

SORIN: As it does!

NINA: But an actress doesn't have to be beautiful, only talented.

(Sorin laughs.)

SORIN: You have a lot to learn about theater, my dear!

MED.: But you already are beautiful. And talented. I expect you will do very well.

NINA: Thank you. I'm so happy you and Masha are getting married. Have you set a date?

MED.: No. Soon, I hope. After I talk to Ilya ...

SORIN: Don't get yourself riled up again.

NINA: You should count your blessings.

MED.: I do! To be honest, when Masha accepted me, after so many rejections, I was shocked. I was so used to her giving me the run around. I didn't know what to say, and she asked if I'd changed my mind.

NINA: You've been in love with her for a long time.

MED.: Unrequited love was my habit. I'm still getting used to the change.

SORIN: You two will live happily ever after.

NINA: I think so, too.

MED.: I will talk to Ilya today. As soon as everyone's gone.

SORIN: That's the spirit!

(Polina and Dorn enter.)

[continue] ... to next page

[L—III—4]

[Deemer]

(Polina and Dorn enter.)

POLINA: They're almost ready to go, if anyone wants to say goodbye.

SORIN: Well, I don't want them to leave without saying goodbye.

POLINA: Ilya is bringing the carriage around.

(Sorin, Medvedenko and Polina exit; Nina and Dorn remain.)

[Follow them] ... to p191

DORN: You're not going to say goodbye?

NINA: In a minute. You?

DORN: I hate goodbyes.

NINA: I should apologize about what I said to you. I have no right to judge anyone. It's all I can do to manage my own life.

DORN: Apology accepted — but I didn't hold it against you. You were angry.

NINA: Yes, I was. I'm terrified about going to Moscow.

DORN: I know. But I do think it's necessary, if you want to be an actress. An artist. The first rule, Nina, is not to listen to people like me. You have to be driven.

NINA: Good. Because I feel like I am. Sometimes I feel like I'm standing to one side, watching myself do things that amaze me.

DORN: You probably will become a great actress.

NINA: I have to try!

DORN: Good luck to you.

NINA: You sound like you're saying goodbye.

DORN: I am, aren't I?

NINA: Yes. I guess you are.

DORN: I'll be looking for your name in the papers.

NINA: Goodbye. [Follow Nina] ... to p193

(Dorn watches her go. He turns to the audience.)

DORN: She's going after Trigorin, I expect. To tell him she's following him to Moscow. Youth is so impulsive. But I envy him, in a way, because that kind of energy can be catching. So nice to be around. Well. I won't bore you by complaining. Well, I need a drink.

[Follow him] ... to p233

[S-III-1]

[Deemer]

(Masha enters the study. She is alone. She moves to a desk and recognizes Treplev's handwriting on a poem.)

MASHA: (to audience) Why doesn't he understand how much I love him? He's written a poem for Nina. I would give anything in the world if he would write a poem for me.

(Suddenly she tears it up.)

MASHA: There! If I can't have it, then no one will.

(She looks around the study.)

MASHA: I'm sure Pyotr hides a bottle here somewhere.

(She starts looking for a bottle.)

MASHA: Boris thinks I drink too much. What does he know? It's easy enough for him to say, with women falling for him all the time. Who falls for Masha? At least I have Semyou. Medvedenko will take care of me. There are worst fates than being cared for.

(She finds a small bottle of vodka.)

MASHA: Here. I knew there was one somewhere.

(She takes a drink. As she is drinking, Treplev enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[S-III-2]

[Deemer]

(Treplev is surprised to find Masha in the study.)

TREPLEV: Must you drink so much?

MASHA: Who are you to criticize me? You are an example of such wonderful behavior?

TREPLEV: I'm sorry. I have no right to criticize you at all.

MASHA: To do such a thing for a woman who doesn't care for you at all. Why?

TREPLEV: You wouldn't understand. I'm not sure I do myself.

MASHA: Kostya, why can't you love me?

TREPLEV: Love isn't the result of some equation, like an addition problem.

MASHA: I love you so much!

TREPLEV: Masha, please. Don't do this to yourself.

MASHA: You know what you're doing? You're forcing me to marry someone else.

TREPLEV: Maybe someone else can make you happy.

MASHA: Only you can make me happy!

TREPLEV: You get maudlin when you drink.

MASHA: I can't help it.

TREPLEV: You have to come to grips.

MASHA: You're a fine one to talk.

TREPLEV: Masha, I didn't want to kill myself. I truly didn't. It wasn't an accident exactly – I mean, I know what I was doing, I remember picking up the gun and pulling the trigger – but if you want to do something like that, you succeed. Obviously it was just a charade, I was play-acting.

MASHA: You wanted to make her feel sorry for you.

TREPLEV: I suppose I did.

MASHA: And did you?

TREPLEV: No. It made things worse, not better. (Medvedenko has entered, listening, and they notice him now. Masha quickly leaves.)

[follow her] ... to p226

[stay here] ... to next page

[S—III—3]

(Medvedenko enters. He watches until Masha leaves.)

MED.: Excuse me. I'm interrupting.

TREPLEV: No, you're fine.

(Trigorin appears in the doorway.)

TRIGORIN: I'm looking for one of my books.

(Trigorin will start looking for his book. He'll take books off the shelf and turn to the page, looking for the right one.)

TRIGORIN: I won't be long. Don't mind me.

(Medvedenko cautiously moves into the room. Treplev takes him aside, and they speak quietly as Trigorin continues his search.)

TREPLEV: I'm sorry, Semyou.

MED.: It is not your fault.

TREPLEV: Maybe you should follow her.

MED.: No. She wouldn't like that.

TREPLEV: Perhaps you're wrong. If you showed her— . . .

MED.: She knows how I feel.

TREPLEV: Whatever you think best. I hope you know that I have no intentions— . . .

MED.: Of course.

TREPLEV: And I think she does care for you.

MED.: I know. She finally agreed to marry me.

TREPLEV: See there! Congratulations.

MED.: I think she just said it to shut me up.

TREPLEV: You need to show her more confidence.

MED.: Yes, I've heard that.

TREPLEV: Don't give up so easily.

MED.: She knows how you feel?

TREPLEV: Of course. She knows I will never love her.

MED.: Thank you.

TREPLEV: I can only do what's in my heart.

MED.: I know.

TREPLEV: Come, let's find the others.

(He takes Medvedenko's arm, and they leave to the dining room.)

[follow them] ... to p181

[stay here] ... to next page

[S—III—4]

[Deemer]

(Masha enters.)

MASHA: I'm sorry. You look busy.

TRIGORIN: No, that's all right. I was just looking for something I'd written once.

MASHA: You can't remember?

TRIGORIN: I have a page reference. It's not important. What is it?

MASHA: Oh — I was just looking for someplace quiet.

TRIGORIN: I don't blame you. It gets so hectic around here. Sometimes I look forward to returning to the city just for the peace and quiet of it!

MASHA: I'd like to go to the city.

TRIGORIN: Maybe you'll have a chance one day.

MASHA: I'll never have a chance.

TRIGORIN: Don't be so pessimistic.

MASHA: How will I get to the city?

TRIGORIN: Maybe Semyou will take you to Moscow.

MASHA: He has too many obligations here.

TRIGORIN: Perhaps you'll marry someone else. You'll suddenly meet a stranger and fall in love and he'll take you away from here.

MASHA: That sounds like one of your stories — and a bad one, at that.

TRIGORIN: It does, doesn't it?

MASHA: I met a man and fell in love. All it did was make me miserable.

TRIGORIN: I know. But life goes on. You must keep up your hope.

MASHA: I'll die here. Probably hating the ground Semyon walks on.

TRIGORIN: Love is a funny business. It's possible, after marrying him, that you would grow to love him.

MASHA: And possible I would not.

TRIGORIN: Still, it might not be the worst life for you.

MASHA: I would be so good for Kostya.

TRIGORIN: But he might not be so good for you. Did you ever think of that?

MASHA: I love him. How could he not be good for me?

TRIGORIN: He's a writer. That makes him impossible to live with. Believe me, I know.

MASHA: Irina puts up with you. I could put up with Kostya.

TRIGORIN: Irina ...

MASHA: Yes?

TRIGORIN: Never mind.

(He goes back to looking for the passage in the book. Masha lingers. Trigorin stops and looks up.)

TRIGORIN: But I do know what you mean. Love can be like an obsession. You can't get the love object out of your mind.

MASHA: Like a curse.

TRIGORIN: Yes, like a curse.

MASHA: Do you love Irina?

TRIGORIN: Yes. But there's love and there's love.

MASHA: Yes.

TRIGORIN: You seem wise for one so young.

MASHA: They say misery is a good teacher.

TRIGORIN: The Greeks, yes.

MASHA: Greeks?

TRIGORIN: A literary reference.

MASHA: Is Kostya a good writer?

TRIGORIN: What do you think?

MASHA: I think he's brilliant. He wants to create a new form of theater.

TRIGORIN: Then what does it matter what I think?

MASHA: You have experience.

TRIGORIN: I think he shows promise.

MASHA: That sounds like a criticism.

TRIGORIN: There's so much to writing, so much to establishing a career. Much will depend on how persistent he is and how much he can learn from his own mistakes. Of course, first you have to be able to see them before you learn how to correct them. But he does seem like a dedicated young man. I would say he has a good chance to become a successful writer. First, however, he must grow up and get over these petty obsessions of his.

MASHA: He will become a famous writer.

TRIGORIN: Fame is fickle. For that, he will need luck as well as artistry.

MASHA: He'll become famous and move to Moscow and I'll be stuck here the rest of my life.

TRIGORIN: Has Semyou already proposed?

MASHA: Many times.

TRIGORIN: And you're set on rejecting him?

MASHA: I put him off. Sometimes I feel cruel doing it. But the last time, I said yes.

TRIGORIN: A part of you realizes this may be your best opportunity. Don't you want children?

MASHA: I don't know. Sometimes I think so. But I wouldn't want a daughter.

TRIGORIN: If you had a daughter, you would change your mind.

MASHA: Probably. But I'd feel sorry for her. She'll only have her heart broken.

TRIGORIN: Men get their hearts broken, too.

MASHA: Yes. Kostya's heart is broken because Nina rejects him. I think she wants you.

TRIGORIN: What makes you say that?

MASHA: A young woman knows how a young woman thinks. I've watched her looking at you.

(Trigorin wants to change the subject and goes back to the book.)

TRIGORIN: Where is that passage?

MASHA: You don't know she wants you?

TRIGORIN: Many young women become infatuated with me. It's one of the occupational hazards of being a writer.

MASHA: I think she's in love with you.

TRIGORIN: (in the book) Ah, now we're getting somewhere. This is close.

MASHA: I think you know she is.

TRIGORIN: If you'll excuse me, dear ...

(He leaves. When he's gone, she also exits.)

[Follow Trigorin] ... to p186

[Follow Masha] ... to p199

ACT FOUR

Where do you want to begin?

In the study (Chekhov's scene) with Masha and Medvedenko.
... to p261

In the dining room (Deemer's scene) with Treplev and Polina.
... to p292

At the boathouse (Deemer) with Irina, Trigorin and Ilya.
... to p289

In the garden (Deemer) with Sorin and Dorn. ... to p301

Nina's entrance (Deemer). ... to p313

[IV-1]

[Chekhov]

(Two years have passed. We are in a drawing room in Sorin's house that Treplev has turned into a study. A writing desk, bookcases, a sofa.)

(Medvedenko and Masha enter.)

MASHA: (calling) Konstantin! . . . Kostya! . . . Nobody's here. The old man's always asking, "Where's Kostya? Where's Kostya?" He can't live without him.

MED.: He's afraid of being alone. Listen to the wind. It's been blowing like that for two days.

MASHA: There are even waves on the lake.

MED.: The stage should be torn down. It's standing in the garden like a skeleton, curtain flapping in the wind. When I went by last night I thought I heard someone on stage – crying.

MASHA: What'll it be next?

MED.: I think we should go home.

MASHA: No, I'm staying here tonight.

MED.: Please. The baby must be hungry.

MASHA: You worry too much. Matryona will feed him.

MED.: Poor thing, it's the third night in a row he's been without his mother.

MASHA: All I hear from you lately is go home and take care of the baby. You've become such a bore. There was a time when we'd talk, you'd tell me about philosophy . . . now it's "go home and take care of the baby!"

MED.: Please come home.

MASHA: Go home by yourself.

MED.: Your father won't give me a horse.

MASHA: Of course he will. Ask him.

MED.: I'll try. Will you be coming home tomorrow then?

MASHA: (taking snuff) Fine, tomorrow . . . just stop pestering me.

(Treplev and Polina enter, carrying bed linen.)

[continue] ... to next page

[IV-2]

[Chekhov]

(Treplev and Polina enter the study.)

MASHA: What's that for, mama?

POLINA: Now he wants his bed made here.

MASHA: Let me do it.

(She begins making a bed on the sofa.)

POLINA: Old men are like children.

(She notices a manuscript on the desk and peeks at it.)

MED.: I'd better be going. Goodbye, Masha. (He kisses his wife's hand.) Goodbye, mother. (He tries to kiss his mother-in-law's hand but Polina pulls it away.)

POLINA: Just go if you're going.

MED.: Goodbye, Konstantin.

(Treplev silently offers his hand, and Medvedenko leaves.)

[follow Medvedenko] ... to p304

[stay here] ... to next page

[IV-3]

[Chekhov]

POLINA: (looking at the manuscript) Who would have thought you'd turn out to be a real writer, Kostya? Selling to the magazines and everything. (She strokes his hair.) And you've grown so handsome – I wish you'd be nicer to my little Masha.

MASHA: (making the bed) Leave him be, mother.

POLINA: Masha's so sweet. (A pause.) She doesn't demand much, Kostya – a loving glance once in a while, is all.

(Treplev gets up from his desk and leaves silently.)

[follow Treplev] ... to p321

[stay here] ... to next page

[IV-4]

[Chekhov]

MASHA: Now you've made him angry. Why can't you leave him alone?

POLINA: I feel so sorry for you, Mashenka.

MASHA: A lot of good it does!

POLINA: My heart just aches and aches for you. I understand everything you're going through.

MASHA: This is all so stupid. Unrequited love! It only happens in novels. I refuse to sit around brooding, waiting for something to happen. I was foolish enough to fall in love, so I can just fall out of love as well. My husband's been promised a transfer to another school district, and when he gets it, I'll forget all about love. I'll tear love from my heart by the roots!

(A melancholy waltz is heard, coming from another room.)

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

(Masha waltzes a few turns, silently.)

MASHA: Mother, it's important for me to be where I can't see him. If only Semyou would get his transfer – I'd forget about Kostya in a month, I know I would. This is all so stupid. (The door opens, and Dorn and Medvedenko wheel in Sorin.)

[continue] ... to next page

[IV-5]

[Chekhov]

(DORN wheels in SORIN, with MED. following.)

MED.: And now I've got six mouths to feed, and the price of flour goes up again.

DORN: (laughing) Have to cut corners, I guess.

MED.: Go ahead. laugh – you have more money than you know what to do with.

DORN: You think so? I practiced medicine for thirty years, on call day and night, never a moment to myself, and you know what I managed to save? Two thousand rubles. And I just spent that on my trip abroad. So now I'm broke.

MASHA: (to Med.) I thought you were leaving.

MED.: (guiltily) Your father won't give me a horse.

MASHA: (under her breath) I can't stand the sight of you.

(Sorin is wheeled to a side of the room, where all but Medvedenko gather around him. Med. moves across the room, alone.)

DORN: (brightly) I see you've turned this room into a study!

MASHA: Konstantin likes to work here. It's close to the garden, where he can go and think.

SORIN: Where's my sister?

DORN: She went to the station to meet Trigorin. She should be back shortly.

SORIN: If you went to all the trouble to send for her, then I must be very sick. But if I'm so sick, why doesn't anyone give me any medicine?

DORN: Well, what would you like? Valerian drops? Soda? How about some quinine?

SORIN: He's making fun of me again. (He gestures toward the sofa.) A bed for me?

POLINA: Yes, just for you.

SORIN: Thank you.

DORN: (humming) "The moon drifts across the evening sky..."

SORIN: I could give Kostya a subject for a story. He could call it, "The Man Who Wanted." L'Homme qui a voulu. When I was young, I wanted to become a writer. I didn't. Then I wanted to be a great orator – but I spoke abominably. (Mimicking himself) "And furthermore, and so on and so forth, blah blah . . ." I could go on like that for hours, sweating like a pig. I wanted to get married – but didn't. I wanted to live in the city – and here I am, dying in the country. And so on and so forth.

DORN: You wanted to become a State Councillor – and became one!

SORIN: (laughing) I didn't set out to do that, it just happened.

DORN: Arguing with your life at sixty-two is a little ungrateful, don't you think?

SORIN: You're so stubborn. Can't you get it through your thick skull that I still want to live?

DORN: You're being irrational. The laws of nature dictate that every life comes to an end.

SORIN: You talk like a man who's had everything he ever wanted. You can afford to be philosophical now – but wait, in the end you'll be afraid to die just like the rest of us.

DORN: The fear of death is an animal instinct – one that should be overcome. Only religious people have a reason to fear death because they have to pay for their sins. But you're not religious – and have never sinned! Well, except for serving in the Ministry of Justice for twenty-five years.

SORIN: (laughing) Twenty-eight.

(Treplev enters and sits on a stool beside Sorin. Masha never takes her eyes off him.)

[continue] ... to next page

[IV-6]

[Chekhov]

(Treplev enters.)

DORN: We're keeping Konstantin from his writing.

TREPLEV (on stool beside Sorin): No, not at all.

(An awkward pause.)

MED.: Doctor, what's your favorite city abroad?

DORN: Genoa.

MED.: Really? Why?

DORN: The streets are so lively. I love the crowds. In the evening, the streets are just swarming with people and you can drift among them, going with the flow of the crowd, and imagine that there really is a single world spirit after all, just like the one Nina portrayed in Konstantin's play. How is Nina doing anyway? Where's she living now?

TREPLEV: I suppose she's fine.

DORN: I heard a rumor she was living a strange life. What do you suppose that means?

TREPLEV: It's a long story, doctor.

DORN: Perhaps you can shorten it.

(A pause.)

TREPLEV: She left home and had an affair with Trigorin. Did you already know that?

DORN: Yes, I did.

TREPLEV: She had a child, and the child died. Trigorin grew tired of her and went back to his old attachments, which could have been predicted. He'd never really left them but went back and forth between Nina and the others, in his cowardly way. So I guess you could say that Nina's personal life hasn't turned out very well.

DORN: And her career on stage?

TREPLEV: Worse. She started out in a summer theater near Moscow, then went on tour through the provinces. I followed her everywhere at the time. She had lead roles, but her acting was crude, over-stated. She could break into tears and she could die. But that's all she was good at.

DORN: Then she has some talent at least.

TREPLEV: It's hard to say. Probably so. I never got to see her in person. They kept me from going into her hotel room, and I didn't push it. I understood how she felt. (Pause.) What more can I say? After I returned home, she started writing me. She never complained but I could tell how unhappy she was. Every line she wrote was like exposing a nerve. And she'd ramble. She always signed herself as "The Sea Gull." In Pushkin's play, "Rusalka," the miller calls himself a raven, and in the same way she kept calling herself a seagull. And now she's back again.

DORN: You mean, here?

TREPLEV: She's staying at the inn. She's been here for five days but won't see anyone – I tried, and Masha tried. Didn't you say you saw her last night after dinner, in the fields not two miles from here?

MED.: Yes, she was walking toward town. I asked her why she hadn't come to see us yet. She said she would.

TREPLEV: But she won't. (Pause.) Her parents have disowned her. They even put guards on the estate to keep her away. How easy, doctor, to be a philosopher on paper – and how difficult in life!

SORIN: She was such a beautiful girl.

DORN: What's that?

SORIN: I said she was lovely. Yours truly was once a little in love with her himself.

DORN: The dirty old man.

(They hear laughter.)

POLINA: They're back from the station.

TREPLEV: I can hear mother.

(Irina, Trigorin and Ilya enter.)

[continue] ... to next page

[IV-7]

[Chekhov]

ILYA: (entering with Irina and Trigorin) All of us get older except you, madam – you're as young and lively as ever!

IRINA: Are you trying to bring me bad luck?

TRIGORIN: (to Sorin) How are you? Still sick? That won't do. And Masha!

MASHA: I'm surprised you recognize me.

(They shake hands.)

TRIGORIN: Are you married?

MASHA: For a long time now.

TRIGORIN: And happy?

(Not waiting for an answer, he bows to Dorn and Medvedenko, who bow in return. Then he approaches Treplev.)

TRIGORIN: Your mother tells me you've forgotten the past and aren't angry at me anymore.

IRINA: (to Treplev) He brought you the magazine with your new story in it.

TREPLEV: (taking the magazine from Trigorin) Thank you. That was very kind.

TRIGORIN: Your fans in St. Petersburg and Moscow send their greetings. They're always asking me about you: what are you like?, how old are you?, is he dark or fair? For some reason, everyone thinks you're an old man, and since you write under a pseudonym, no one knows your real name. You're as mysterious as the Man in the Iron Mask.

TREPLEV: Will you be staying long?

TRIGORIN: No, I must go to Moscow tomorrow. I have a novel deadline to meet and I promised to contribute something to an anthology. Busy as ever.

(As he continues, Irina and Polina set up a card table. Ilya brings out chairs and puts out candles. He brings out a lotto game.)

TRIGORIN: The weather certainly hasn't welcomed me. If the wind dies down tomorrow, I'm going to fish at the lake. I also want to look at the garden, where your play was done – remember? Been brooding about a story and need to refresh my memory.

MASHA: Papa, can my husband have a horse? He wants to go home.

ILYA: (mimicking her) "He wants to go home." The horses have just come from the station. They can't go out again in this weather.

MASHA: There are other horses. (She's being ignored.) You're impossible.

MED.: I can walk, Masha. Please.

POLINA: Walk in this weather! (She sits down at the card table.) Come on, everyone, let's play cards.

MED.: It's only six miles. (He kisses his wife's hand.)
Goodbye, mother. (He kisses Polina's hand, which she offers reluctantly.) I wouldn't be making a fuss except for the baby.
Goodbye.

(He leaves.)

[follow Medvedenko] ... to p312

[continue here] ... to next page

[IV-8]

[Chekhov]

ILYA: He'll get there all right.

POLINA: Please, sit down. I want to get in a game before supper.

(Ilya, Dorn and Masha sit at the table to play cards.)

IRINA: (to Trigorin) We always play lotto here when the nights get longer in the fall. This is the same set my mother taught us with when we were children. Let's play.

(Irina and Trigorin sit down at the card table.)

IRINA: It's not a bad game once you get used to it.

TREPLEV: (looking through the magazine at his desk, then to audience) He read his own story, but the pages of mine haven't been touched.

(He puts the magazine on the desk and moves for the door, kissing his mother on the top of the head as he passes.)

IRINA: Won't you play a game with us?

TREPLEV: I don't feel like it. I'm going for a walk. (He leaves.)

[follow Treplev] ... to p322

[stay here] ... to next page

[IV-9]

[Chekhov]

IRINA: Everyone has to put ten kopeks in the pot. Put mine in for me, doctor.

DORN: Certainly.

(They start playing lotto.)

MASHA: Is everybody in? I'll start . . . twenty-two!

IRINA: Here.

MASHA: Three!

DORN: Got it.

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

ILYA: You're going too fast.

IRINA: They loved me in Kharkov! My head's still spinning from all the adoration.

MASHA: Thirty-four.

(A melancholy waltz is heard in the distance.)

IRINA: The students gave me an ovation and showered me with flowers. And look what they gave me . . . (she takes off a brooch and tosses it onto the table.)

ILYA: Very nice!

MASHA: Fifty!

DORN: You said fifty?

IRINA: I was dressed to the teeth. Whatever else you say about me, my taste is exquisite.

POLINA: Konstantin is playing that song again. He's so unhappy.

ILYA: The critics in the paper have been going after him again.

MASHA: Seventy-seven!

IRINA: He shouldn't worry about critics.

TRIGORIN: He's had no luck. And he can't find his style. There's something strange and vague about his style – sometimes he seems delirious. His characters never come to life.

MASHA: Eleven!

IRINA: (glancing at Sorin) Petrusha, are you bored? He's asleep.

DORN: That he is.

MASHA: Seven! Ninety!

TRIGORIN: If I lived here by the lake, do you think I'd get much writing done? I'd forget my passion for literature and do nothing but fish.

MASHA: Twenty-eight!

TRIGORIN: Catching perch all day – I'd be in heaven.

DORN: Well, I like Konstantin's writing. There's something special about it. He thinks in images and his stories are quite vivid, they move me a good deal. The pity is, he has no clear purpose. He creates an impression but nothing more. Irina, are you glad your son is a writer?

IRINA: To be honest, I haven't read a word he's written. There's never any time.

MASHA: Twenty-six!

(Treplev enters and goes to his desk.)

[continue] ... to next page

[IV-10]

[Chekhov]

(Treplev enters and stands by his desk.)

ILYA: Boris, we've still got that thing of yours.

TRIGORIN: What thing?

ILYA: Konstantin shot a seagull a few years ago, and you wanted it stuffed.

TRIGORIN: Did I? I don't recall.

MASHA: Sixty-six! One!

TREPLEV: (throwing open the window) Why do I feel so uneasy?

IRINA: Kostya, close the window. There's a draft.

(Treplev closes the window.)

MASHA: Eighty-eight.

TRIGORIN: And I'm out. My game, good people.

IRINA: Bravo, bravo!

ILYA: Bravo!

IRINA: This man is lucky at everything. (She gets up.) And now let's eat. Our celebrity hasn't even had lunch today. We

can play again after supper. Kostya? Quit writing and come have supper.

TREPLEV: I'm not hungry.

IRINA: As you wish. (She wakes Sorin.) Petrusha, supper's ready. (She takes Ilya's arm.) I want to tell you about the wonderful reception they gave me in Kharkov.

(Polina blows out the candles. Everyone leaves but Treplev. Polina, Dorn and Masha wheel out Sorin in his wheelchair.)

[follow Sorin, Polina, Dorn and Masha] ... to p316

[follow Irina, Trigorin and Ilya] ... to p294

[stay here] ... to next page

[IV-11]

[Chekhov]

(Treplev looks over his manuscript. He looks up and speaks to the audience.)

TREPLEV: I've talked a lot about new forms in writing – but bit-by-bit, my own work is becoming very conventional. (He reads:) Take this: "The poster on the fence announced a pale face framed by dark hair." "Announced" . . . "framed" . . . a terrible choice of words. (He crosses them out.) I'll start with the hero being wakened by the rain and cut everything else. My description of a moonlit night is too long and precious. Trigorin has it all worked out, writing is easy for him: a broken piece of bottle, glittering on the dam; a mill wheel casts a dark shadow – and there's his moonlit night. But I have to bring in more, shimmering light and softly twinkling stars and the distant sound of a piano dying in the fragrant air. It's terrible. Writing is agony. (Pause.) More and more, I think it's not a matter of old or new forms, what matters is what you write without thinking of form at all, what matters is what you write straight from the heart.

(There's a tap at the window near his desk.)

TREPLEV: Who's there? (He opens the door and calls out into the garden.) Hello? Who's there?

(He hears something and exits. Then he quickly returns with Nina.)

[continue] ... to next page

[IV-12]

[Chekhov]

TREPLEV: Nina! (She leans her head on his breast, sobbing with restraint.) I had a feeling you'd come. My heart's been pounding all day. My darling Nina, you've come to me. Don't cry.

NINA: There's someone here.

TREPLEV: No one, just us.

NINA: Lock the doors.

TREPLEV: No one will come.

NINA: I know your mother's here. Please lock them.

(He locks one door and goes to the other.)

TREPLEV: This one has no lock, but I'll put a chair against it. (He does so.) Don't worry, we're safe.

NINA: Let me look at you. (She looks at him intently, then away.) It's so cozy here. It used to be the drawing room. (She turns to him.) Do you think I've changed?

TREPLEV: Yes. You're thinner. Your eyes seem larger. It seems strange to be with you finally. Why didn't you let me see you? Why didn't you come here earlier? You've been back nearly a week. I went to the inn every day, standing under your window like a beggar.

NINA: I was afraid you'd hate me. I dreamed you didn't recognize me . . . if only you knew. Every day I would walk near the lake, near the house, but I couldn't bring myself to come here. But now we can sit and talk. It's so cozy here. Hear the wind? Somewhere Turgenev writes, "Happy is he who has a roof over his head and a warm corner of his own." But I'm just a seagull . . . no, that's not right. (She rubs her forehead.) I'm sorry. Where was I? Turgenev: "May the Lord help the homeless wanderers." It doesn't matter.

TREPLEV: Nina, you're crying again. Oh Nina . . .

NINA: It's a relief. I haven't had a good cry in two years. Last night I went into the garden to see if our stage was still there – and it was! It's still standing! I began to cry for the first time in two years, and it was like a heavy weight lifted from my heart. But see, I'm not crying now. (She takes his hand.) You've become a writer. You're a writer, and I'm an actress. We both got what we wanted – and so fell into the whirlpool. I was so happy as a child. I'd wake up and start singing – I was in love with you and dreamed of becoming a famous actress. And look at me now. Tomorrow morning I leave for Yeletz, third class, riding with the peasants. In Yeletz, cultured businessmen will shamelessly flirt with me. Life is so sordid.

TREPLEV: Do you have to go?

NINA: I'm booked there for the winter.

TREPLEV: Nina, how I cursed you and tried to hate you. I tore up your letters and photographs, but my heart always belonged to you. I've never stopped loving you. Ever since I lost you, even though my work has been published, I've been miserable. I feel like my youth was snatched away from me, I feel so old. I keep calling your name, I keep seeing your face everywhere. I

kiss the ground you walk on. I remember your smile when we were happy.

NINA: (aside to the audience) Why does he talk like that?

TREPLEV: I'm so lonely. I have no one's affection to warm me, it's like living in a dungeon. Everything I write is dark and gloomy. Stay, Nina. And if you can't stay, then take me with you. (She quickly puts on her hat and cloak.) Nina, for God's sake . . .

NINA: My carriage is at the gate. You don't have to see me off. (She is almost crying.) I'd like a glass of water before I go.

(He gives her one.)

TREPLEV: Where are you going now?

NINA: To town. Your mother's here?

TREPLEV: Yes. My uncle became ill on Thursday, and we wired her to come.

NINA: Why would you kiss the ground I walk on? You should kill me. I'm so tired. If only I could rest. But I'm a seagull. No, that's not right – I'm an actress. Yes. (She hears Trigorin and Irina laughing in the dining room. She listens and looks through the keyhole.) So he's here, too. It doesn't matter. Boris doesn't believe in the theater. He laughed at my dreams so often that I stopped believing in them. I felt so much anxiety and jealousy – and, of course, so much worry for the baby. I became petty and couldn't act, couldn't figure out what to do with my hands. Couldn't stand on stage right or control my voice. You don't know what it's like to realize how badly you're acting. I'm a seagull – I'm sorry, that's not what I meant to say.

Remember when you shot a seagull? A man passed by and saw a seagull and shot it just for fun – the subject for a short story. No, that's not right. (She rubs her forehead.) What was I talking about? My acting. I'm not like that now. I'm a real actress, and I revel in it. I feel intoxicated with beauty when I'm on stage! And since I've been back, walking and thinking so much, I feel myself getting stronger every day. Kostya, I've learned what matters in our work now, for an actress or a writer, and it's not fame or the things I used to dream about – it's being able to endure. It's knowing how to bear your cross and keep the faith. You see, I do have faith now, and my life isn't so painful. I'm not afraid any more.

TREPLEV: You've found your bearings, Nina. I still wander around in a haze of dreams and images. I can't make sense of them, I don't know why I write. I have no faith. I don't even know if I have a calling.

NINA: Sshh – I have to go. When I'm a great actress, come and see me perform. Promise? But I can hardly stand, I feel so faint. I need to eat

TREPLEV: Stay, I'll bring you supper.

NINA: Thank you, I can't. My carriage is at the gate. Don't see me off. So your mother brought him with her. It doesn't matter. When you see Trigorin, don't tell him you saw me. I still love him. I love him even more than before. Passionately, desperately – a good subject for a short story. How lovely it used to be for us, Kostya, remember? Life was so pure, so innocent and happy. Our feelings were like delicate fresh flowers. Remember the speech you wrote for me?

"Men and lions, eagles and quail, stags and geese and spiders, the silent fishes of the sea, starfish and creatures invisible to the

naked eye – every form of life on earth has become extinct. For thousands of centuries, the earth has been barren. The moon shines her light in vain. No cranes wake and cry in the meadow. In the lime grove, no hum of beetles is heard. The earth is cold – and empty – and filled with cold, empty terror."

(She embraces Treplev and runs out the veranda door.)

[follow her] ... to p314

TREPLEV: (to audience) I hope no one sees her in the garden and tells mother. Mother would be upset.

(Treplev goes to the desk and tears up all his manuscripts. Then he unlocks the door. He fetches a chair and puts in under the door handle, then exits to the garden.)

[follow him] ... to p315

[stay here] ... to next page

[IV-13]

[Chekhov]

(Entering are Dorn, Masha, Ilya, Polina, Irina and Trigorin.)

(DORN tries the door to the study.)

DORN: The door's jammed ...

(DORN rattles the door with the chair behind it, finally gets in. He enters with Irina, Polina, Masha, Ilya and Trigorin following behind.)

DORN: Why was the door locked? It's a regular obstacle course in here.

IRINA: Let's play another game. Sit down, my friends.

POLINA: Should I make tea?

ILYA: (leading Trigorin to the cupboard) Here's what I was telling you about before.

(Trigorin inspects the stuffed seagull.)

TRIGORIN: I don't remember.

(A gun shot is heard just outside the room. Everyone is startled.)

IRINA: What was that?

DORN: Something must've exploded in my medicine bag. I'll check.

(He looks out into the garden and returns almost immediately.)

DORN: Just as I suspected. A bottle of ether blew up.

IRINA: (sitting at the table) I was so frightened! It reminded me of— . . . (she covers her face with her hands) everything went black for a minute.

DORN: (leafing through a magazine) Two months ago I read an article in here . . . about America, very interesting, I wanted to ask you about it . . . (he takes Trigorin aside) You have to get Irina out of here. Konstantin just shot himself.

(The play is over.)

[B-IV-1]

[Deemer]

(Ilya, Irina and Trigorin pull up in a carriage near the boathouse.)

TRIGORIN: See! The lake is much calmer than you said.

ILYA: For an ocean, it would be calm. For a lake, it's rough waters.

TRIGORIN: It doesn't look all that rough to me. Does it to you, Irina?

IRINA: Boris, you're determined to fish. Just get out and fish.

ILYA: You'll catch nothing in this weather.

IRINA: Don't discourage him.

TRIGORIN: Where do the seagulls go in bad weather?

ILYA: I can't tell you. Somewhere dry, I'm sure.

TRIGORIN: Where do they sleep at night?

IRINA: Are you writing a story set in a forest? Suddenly you're interested in the natural world.

TRIGORIN: What a place this is to write! Kostya is very lucky.

IRINA: It's nice to hear you say something nice about him.

TRIGORIN: I didn't say he actually could write. I said he was lucky to be here to try.

ILYA: He spends a lot of time down here, he does. The funny thing is, he almost never takes a boat out.

IRINA: I think he's a poor swimmer.

TRIGORIN: He spends his time shooting at seagulls. Does he still do that?

ILYA: That only happened the one time.

IRINA: And no one will ever forgive him for it.

TRIGORIN: Something like that digs its way into one's permanent memory.

ILYA: Are we ready to go to the house?

IRINA: Yes.

TRIGORIN: No! Not yet.

IRINA: Oh, Boris.

TRIGORIN: Look at this view! I think the lake is more beautiful in bad weather than in good. Look! I think I saw a fish jump!

ILYA: I think your eyes are playing a trick on you.

TRIGORIN: I've decided something. The point of fishing is not to catch fish. Did you know that?

IRINA: Of course it is.

TRIGORIN: No. Am I right, Ilya?

ILYA: When I fish, I expect to catch something. I'm disappointed if I don't.

IRINA: See there?

TRIGORIN: The point of fishing is to enter a state of communion with nature. To become one with the pole and the line and the water and the hook. And the fish, too, of course. Fishing is a kind of meditation.

IRINA: Which is getting very uncomfortable, if I may say so. I'm cold.

TRIGORIN: It makes your blood circulate.

IRINA: Ilya, to the house, please.

ILYA: Yes, ma'am.

IRINA: Are you coming, Boris, or getting off?

TRIGORIN: I'm coming.

[follow them] ... to p323

[D-IV-1]

[Deemer]

(Treplev and Polina enter the dining room. Polina goes directly to a large chest and opens the bottom drawer.)

POLINA: The extra bed sheets are in here.

TREPLEV: Polina, I can take care of it.

POLINA: Don't be silly.

(She takes out a set of bed sheets.)

TREPLEV: I'm perfectly capable of making a bed.

POLINA: I'm sure you are but I work for your uncle, I should do this.

TREPLEV: Then I'll help.

POLINA: As you wish. Did he tell you why he wants to sleep in the study?

TREPLEV: To be near the garden, I think.

POLINA: To be near you is more like it. He worships the ground you walk on.

TREPLEV: He sees me every day. He doesn't have to sleep in my study.

POLINA: He wanted to be a writer, you know. You've become everything he's always dreamed about. He probably wants to wallow in your glory.

TREPLEV (half to himself, cynically): Glory ... so that's what you call it.

POLINA: From what I hear, you are getting quite a literary reputation for yourself.

TREPLEV: I didn't know you had your ear to the heart of Russian literature. Are you a closet poet?

POLINA: There's no need to be nasty.

TREPLEV: You're right, there isn't. Will you accept my apology?

POLINA: I'll think about it.

(She exits. Treplev follows.)

[follow them] ... to p263

[D-IV-2]

[Deemer]

(Irina, Trigorin and Ilya enter the dining room.)

ILYA: You deserve all the honors you receive!

IRINA: Listen to him, Boris. You'd think he was my most loyal admirer.

ILYA: I only wish I could see every play you perform in.

TRIGORIN: (a bit sarcastically) To find such culture in the country!

ILYA: (missing it) Tell me about the reception.

TRIGORIN: It was her birthday.

ILYA: I thought it was to honor your talent.

IRINA: It was both.

(Dorn wheels in Sorin.)

[continue] ... to next page

[D-IV-3]

[Deemer]

(Dorn wheels in Sorin.)

SORIN: We're out of herring again.

IRINA: We could have smoked trout if you'd ever catch any.

SORIN: I don't have the patience to fish.

TRIGORIN: I'd fish every day if I lived here.

SORIN: You're a writer, you think up stories when you're alone. I get bored.

DORN: To each his own.

IRINA: I get bored easily, too. That's why I could never live here.

TRIGORIN: I'd move out here in a minute.

IRINA: You can say that now. In a week you'd miss your literary teas and all your fawning fans who stop you in the street.

TRIGORIN: The fact is, I get tired of them.

ILYA: How can you say that? Without your fans, you'd be nowhere.

TRIGORIN: I respect them, I'm always kind to them — but I'd be happy never signing another autograph. It's exciting when you're young. Then it just gets tedious and pointless.

IRINA: Hardly pointless to them, Boris. My fans live to catch a moment with me, and so do yours.

SORIN: I had a fan once. She tried to marry me for my money. You ever have a fan, Dorn?

DORN: In medicine, we call them patients.

IRINA: They amount to the same thing.

TRIGORIN: I hate thinking of my readers as patients. It sounds like my books contain advice and prescriptions.

IRINA: They contain advice about how to live, about life!

TRIGORIN: Not intentionally.

ILYA: Why do you write if not to give advice about living?

TRIGORIN: I write to keep myself from getting bored. (Masha and Polina enter with supper.)

[continue] ... to next page

[D-IV-4]

[Deemer]

(Polina and Masha enter with supper. Everyone begins eating.)

DORN: Polina, you are a master in the kitchen.

ILYA: Don't flatter her, she gets spoiled.

POLINA: Thank you, doctor.

MASHA: Doctor! We certainly are getting formal.

ILYA: He worked hard for the title, people should use it.

SORIN: Hogwash.

(Dorn laughs.)

DORN: I bow to the wisdom of old age.

IRINA: How many former patients still call you doctor?

DORN: All of them.

ILYA: As they should.

DORN: To be honest, it's never mattered to me one way or another.

SORIN: I don't hear anyone calling me Mister.

IRINA: Mr. Sorin, you aren't eating.

SORIN: I had my mind set on herring.

POLINA: The next time I'm in town, I'll be sure to get some.

MASHA: Excuse me.

(She leaves.)

[follow her] ... to p319

SORIN: She's off to take a nip.

DORN: Which doesn't sound like a bad idea.

(He follows her.) [Follow him] ... to p319

SORIN: I feel like taking a nip myself.

IRINA: But you're staying here. You need to eat.

SORIN: I'm not hungry. I'm bored.

TRIGORIN: Why don't we go fishing later? I'm still a novice. I could use some help.

SORIN: Ilya will help you.

ILYA: I'll be busy all afternoon.

TRIGORIN: You can show me the best fishing holes.

SORIN: I can't remember the last time I went fishing.

IRINA: Going to the lake with Boris will be good for you.

SORIN: Everyone's too goddamn interested in my health and happiness.

POLINA: Has everyone had enough?

SORIN: More than enough. I'm not hungry.

IRINA: I wish Kostya would eat. I'll take him something.

(Dorn and Masha return.)

[continue] ... to next page

[D-IV-5]

[Deemer]

(Dorn and Masha return.)

MASHA: Is everyone done?

POLINA: I believe so.

IRINA: More cards anyone?

SORIN: I'm staying here.

IRINA: Try to take a nap.

SORIN: Quit sounding like my mother.

(Everyone but Sorin leaves.)

[follow them] ... to p287

(Sorin closes his eyes and goes to sleep. For him, the play is over.)

[G-IV-1]

[Deemer]

(Sorin and Dorn in the garden. Sorin sits in his wheelchair.)

SORIN: The older I get, the more I like bad weather.

DORN: You ought to be ecstatic today then.

SORIN: I wonder why that is? I don't like it because bad weather depresses me. On the contrary, it exhilarates me.

DORN: It gets your attention.

SORIN: I'm not sure what you mean.

DORN: A storm, the more violent the better, gets your attention, while a warm summer day just puts you to sleep. You like bad weather because it doesn't put you to sleep.

(Sorin laughs.)

SORIN: Maybe you're right!

(Dorn smiles.)

DORN: I, on the other hand, like bad weather because it depresses me.

SORIN: Why do you want to be depressed?

DORN: I find it comforting to live as closely to the truth of life as I can.

SORIN: You think life is depressing?

DORN: I think it's tedious.

SORIN: Your life is tedious but only because you make it so. That's a different story entirely.

DORN: I suppose I should say "touché!" But I won't. I don't want to give you the satisfaction of being right.

SORIN: You never do!

(They both laugh.)

SORIN: I'm going to give all this to Kostya. Did I tell you?

DORN: Several times. I think it's a splendid idea.

SORIN: A place like this is made for a writer. I always wanted to write.

DORN: It's never too late.

SORIN: Hogwash! You don't believe that any more than I do.

DORN: I'm serious. Many a successful author has started writing after retirement.

SORIN: I can't keep thoughts in my head long enough to write them down. Everyone thinks I'm dying, you know. They treat me like a corpse already.

DORN: You mean Polina.

SORIN: And Ilya, even Kostya. They all treat me like a dying old man.

DORN: Maybe that's because you are a dying old man.

SORIN: Go to hell.

DORN: I probably shall.

SORIN: I may meet you there.

(They laugh again. They are having a good time.)

SORIN: I feel good today. Irina will arrive and treat me like a patient and the day will be ruined.

DORN: She worries about you.

SORIN: I think she'll be angry if I give all this to Kostya and not to her. Even though she would never live here.

DORN: Maybe she'll surprise you.

SORIN: I've never known her to surprise me. I know what she's going to say before she says it.

DORN: But you won't be here to see how she takes it, will you?

SORIN: What was it you said? Touché?

(Medvedenko enters.)

[continue] ... to next page

[G-IV-2]

[Deemer]

(Medvedenko joins them in the garden.)

MED.: I hope I'm not interrupting anything.

DORN: We've been admiring the bad weather.

MED.: It's so depressing. Don't you think?

DORN: Wonderfully so!

SORIN: And exhilarating!

(Med. just looks at them.)

MED.: I can't get Masha to come home and take care of the baby. She plans to spend the night.

DORN: I see the blissful stage of marriage is over.

MED.: I don't know what she wants. You'd think she doesn't want to be a mother by the way she acts. The sitter is raising the child. I barely have time to be a parent myself for all the extra work I've taken on just to make ends meet. All I ever do is work, and all Masha ever does is complain and ignore her child.

SORIN: You complain too much yourself, goddamn it.

MED.: I'm sorry. I was just trying to explain the situation.

SORIN: Well, you've done more than enough of that.

MED.: So. We can talk about something else. You really enjoy the bad weather so much? All I can think of is that I'll have to walk home in it because Ilya won't give me a horse. It's six miles, and I have to walk in this weather.

SORIN (to Dorn): And people accuse me of not listening.

DORN (to Med.): That's why you keep so trim, you walk so much.

MED.: I'm rather take a horse.

SORIN: I want to go into the study and see if my bed is made.

DORN: We can do that.

(Dorn pushes Sorin's wheel chair. Med. follows behind.)

MED.: Every time I take a step forward, I fall two steps behind.

[follow them] ... to p266

[G-IV-3]

[Deemer]

(Ilya starts for the door but Irina stops in the garden. Trigorin stops with her. Ilya turns.)

ILYA: Coming in?

IRINA: Not yet. Ilya, tell me the truth. How bad is my brother?

ILYA: I can only tell you what I think personally.

IRINA: I understand.

ILYA: And I'm not a doctor.

TRIGORIN: Quit beating around the bush and tell us what you think.

ILYA: No need to get huffy about it.

IRINA: He didn't mean it. Did you, Boris? I just want your opinion, Ilya. I understand that's all it is.

ILYA: In my opinion, he doesn't have much time. But I could be wrong.

IRINA: When did the doctor come last?

ILYA: Oh, he has no use for doctors.

IRINA (to Trigorin): See what I have to put up with? The first thing I'm going to do is get a doctor here.

ILYA: He won't like that.

IRINA: I'm not going to tell him. I'm just going to do it.

TRIGORIN: I admire your brother's sense of independence.

IRINA: I don't when it puts his life in danger.

TRIGORIN: If it's his time, it's his time. You can't argue with destiny.

IRINA: I can argue with Pyotr being stubborn. There's no need for stupidity to usher destiny in sooner than she's expected.

TRIGORIN: Do you really think he will cooperate with a doctor simply because it's you who invite him to the house?

IRINA: What else can I do? I have to do what I think is right. If he still refuses to see a doctor, at least I have a free conscience.

TRIGORIN: Ah! So this isn't about your brother's health, it's about your conscience.

IRINA: Why are you trying to start a fight?

TRIGORIN: I'm just striving for clarity.

(A pause.)

ILYA: Shall we go in?

IRINA: I'm not ready. I need to prepare myself.

TRIGORIN (to Ilya): The mind of an actress: never make an entrance without preparing for it.

IRINA: I refuse to argue with you.

TRIGORIN: I'm not arguing with you either.

IRINA: It sounds like you are.

TRIGORIN: Irina, I know how hard any kind of illness is for you to deal with. I just think you should be prepared for the worst. Ilya may be right, and your brother is on his death bed.

IRINA: What a terrible way to put it.

ILYA: Oh, he still moves about, long as he's in the wheel chair.

IRINA: Then that isn't so bad, is it?

(A pause.)

IRINA: It does look like it may clear up. You may get to fish yet, Boris.

TRIGORIN: I hope so!

ILYA: You might catch something when they feed in the evening.

IRINA: It's hard to believe that all of this will be mine some day.

TRIGORIN: You think Pyotr will give you everything?

IRINA: Why wouldn't he? I'm the only family he has.

TRIGORIN: Maybe he has a woman in town.

IRINA: Don't be ridiculous.

TRIGORIN: Stranger things have happened. Especially at the reading of a will. It's as if the Last Will and Testament lets a man take off all his masks at last and address the world from beyond the grave, in absolute truth and candor. For twenty years he has had a mistress in town, and he will leave everything to her. It's happened.

IRINA: In stories.

TRIGORIN: In the world!

ILYA: I heard of a guy, married with children, and he left everything to his high school sweetheart, the first love of his life. Right out of the blue. It shocked his wife, let me tell you.

TRIGORIN: See there?

IRINA: I can't picture my brother with a mistress.

(She laughs at the idea.)

TRIGORIN: What would you do with the place anyway? Not move here, I trust.

IRINA: Not permanently. I'd keep you on to run it.

ILYA: That's a relief to hear, madam.

IRINA: But I'd do something else, too.

TRIGORIN: I can hear the wheels turning.

IRINA: I'd start an acting school.

TRIGORIN: I should have guessed.

IRINA: And you could start a writing school.

TRIGORIN: That's the last thing in the world I wish to do.

IRINA: All it requires is that you lend your name to it. Wouldn't this be a spectacular location for an acting school? We could build a permanent stage — only not near the house, near the lake.

ILYA: Where would you get students? I mean, I'm not so sure there are many children in town wanting to go on the stage.

IRINA: My students would come from Moscow!

ILYA: Moscow? How many would there be? Where would they stay?

IRINA: We'd have to build, of course — dormitories and classrooms. Oh, Boris, it could be just what I've always dreamed of doing when I retire.

TRIGORIN: I don't expect that will be soon.

IRINA: It's never too early to prepare.

TRIGORIN (to Ilya): The creed of the actress again.

ILYA: It sounds like a mighty ambitious plan.

IRINA: Of course it's ambitious. I wouldn't settle for something ordinary. They can find an ordinary acting school anywhere.

TRIGORIN: The location will be spectacular.

IRINA: Of course it is. And you envied Kostya for being able to be here to write. This is perfect for a writing school as well.

TRIGORIN: As long as I don't have to teach.

IRINA: Oh, I'm going to teach! I look forward to teaching. I have so much I can teach them.

(A pause, as Irina is lost in her dream.)

TRIGORIN: First things first. They're going to wonder where we are.

ILYA: Shall we go in now, madam?

IRINA: Yes, we'll go in. I'm not going to be startled. I'm not going to look concerned. This is just like any ordinary visit. I'm ready to enter. Boris, how do I look? I feel so old today.

(With great fanfare, she enters the house, and the others follow.)

[follow them] ... to p272

[G-IV-4]

[Deemer]

(Medvedenko comes from the study into the garden. He stops and speaks to the audience.)

MED.: Well, at least the weather has improved. It would be nice to stay dry. Don't think too harshly of Masha. She's not herself. Some women take naturally to motherhood but it's been a real struggle for her. I keep thinking she'll get better at it but not so far. Maybe when we move. She wants to move more than I do. I expect to get an offer to transfer. We shall see. Well, I'd like to stay but I'm worried about the baby. Maybe I'll stay dry. Wish me luck.

(He leaves. Medvedenko is done, for him the play is over.)

Continuous time:

Back to the study: to p275

[G-IV-5]

[Deemer]

(Nina enters the garden. She speaks to the audience.)

NINA: I don't know whether I should be here or not. I know how much I hurt Kostya. I can't blame him if he doesn't want to see me. And yet I feel like we've become kindred souls — in our suffering. I think I understand his play for the first time. Maybe he will be pleased to learn that. Maybe it will help, if just in the smallest way. I can't stand the thought of him hating me. We suffer so much in common.

(She moves into the study.)

[follow her] ... to p282

[G-IV-6]

[Deemer]

(Nina enters the garden again. She speaks to the audience.)

NINA: Poor Kostya. I was so young when he fell in love with me. I knew so little about the suffering of the world, I was so idealistic. I was so terrible in his play. I didn't understand any of the lines I was saying. I could do them so much better now.

(She moves to the stage.)

[follow her] ... to p325

[G-IV-7]

[Deemer]

(Treplev enters the garden. He fetches the pistol. He turns his back to the audience. He fires the gun and falls to the ground. In a moment, Dorn briefly appears, then goes back into the study. The play is over.)

[K-IV-1]

[Deemer]

(Masha, Polina, Dorn and Sorin enter the kitchen.)

DORN: Do you need help?

POLINA: Masha and I can handle it.

SORIN: I want herring.

POLINA: Where would I get herring?

SORIN: I'm not hungry anyway.

POLINA: Please, join the others. We won't be long.

DORN: Good. I'm starving. Here we go ...

(He starts to wheel Sorin out.)

SORIN: Why do we always run out of herring?

(The women watch them go.)

[stay here] ... to next page

[follow the men] ... to p295

[K-IV-2]

[Deemer]

(Polina and Masha start preparing supper.)

POLINA: I was surprised you didn't leave with your husband.

MASHA: Mother, don't start.

POLINA: It seems he spends more time with the child than you do.

MASHA: I'm not going to listen to this.

(She starts away.)

POLINA: Don't go. I'm sorry.

(Masha tentatively comes back.)

MASHA: We're just in a bad time right now. It will be different when we move.

POLINA: You really think he'll get a new position?

MASHA: He has to. I'm going crazy here.

POLINA: I'll never understand why Kostya—

MASHA: Mother, don't. That was all finished long ago.

POLINA: It could have been so—

MASHA: Worry about your own affair.

(This takes Polina momentarily aback.)

POLINA: What are you trying to say?

MASHA: You've done no better with "love" than I have. Neither of us should be talking about it. What do failures know about it?

POLINA: I don't consider myself a failure.

MASHA: Dorn rode you off into the sunset, did he?

POLINA: I never wanted that.

MASHA: Of course you did. It's a woman's curse.

POLINA: (to change the subject) I think pickled eggs ... what do you think?

MASHA: Whatever you want, mother.

(A long pause as they prepare supper.)

(Polina has all the food on a tray.)

POLINA: This should do it. Will you take this out?

MASHA: Fine. (Masha takes the tray. Polina takes table settings. They head for the dining room.)

[follow them] ... to p297

[K-IV-3]

[Deemer]

(Masha enters. She goes to the cupboard, takes out a vodka bottle and pours a glass. She quickly drinks it.)

(Dorn enters.)

DORN: Are you sharing?

MASHA: Of course.

(She pours him a drink and hands it to him. He sips. She pours another.)

MASHA: Are you still having an affair with my mother?

DORN: You don't expect me to answer that, do you?

MASHA: There are other ways to find out.

(She moves to him and kisses him on the lips. A long kiss. Finally Dorn starts kissing back.)

MASHA: No, I don't think you are.

DORN: You surprised me.

MASHA: Good. Maybe you'll find me mysterious.

DORN: I think I do.

MASHA: I'm available. In case you're wondering.

DORN: I thought you might be.

MASHA: Does that mean you're interested?

DORN: What do you think?

(She answers with a kiss — both are even more passionate than before. Dorn finally breaks it.)

DORN: I think we'd better get back. One for the road.

(She pours two, they clink glasses and drink. Then they leave.)

[follow them] ... to p300

[L-IV-1]

[Deemer]

(Treplev comes into the living room. He slowly makes his way to a small piano in the corner.)

TREPLEV (to audience): Do you know the worst thing about being a writer? Language. That the writer's primary tool, my tool, is the same instrument with which I talk to you now, or ask directions to the train station, or speak out in my sleep. It's as if the artist among birds had to rely on melody for his art. This is why I envy the musicians, the composers. They communicate the mundane with language — but as artists, in their highest mode of communication, they abandon language for music, which is a language in its own right, but one not perverted by association with the mundane. I think all writers envy composers.

(He sits down at the piano. He starts playing a sad waltz, very Russian, very melancholy.)

(He plays for about five minutes. Then he stops.)

TREPLEV (to audience): Why am I so restless today?

(He returns to the study.)

[follow him] to p269

[L-IV-2]

[Deemer]

(Treplev enters the living room. He sits at the piano, sometimes playing, sometimes talking to the audience.)

TREPLEV: Sometimes I feel like I know nothing about writing. Less now that I'm published, that I have an audience, however modest, than when I was starting out and declaring to anyone who would listen that I intended to bring new forms to the theater. ... Why doesn't Nina come to see me? I thought she would have by now. ... Enough.

(He gets up. He goes to a bookcase and removes several books. He reaches behind the adjacent books, feeling for something. He finds it. He brings out a small pistol.)

TREPLEV: Our little secret.

(He hides the pistol on his person. He takes a deep breath, as if preparing for a difficult entrance. Then he marches back to the study.)

[Follow him] ... to p279

[St-IV-1]

[Deemer]

(The carriage stops near the abandoned stage outside. Ilya helps Irina down and lets Trigorin fend for himself.)

IRINA: Look at that! Why on earth haven't you taken it down?

ILYA: I tried to, believe me. I think it's a complete eyesore. But Kostya saw what I was doing and had a fit. I thought he was going to do something crazy. He made me promise never to tear it down.

IRINA: It's a disgrace.

ILYA: I hope you can convince him so.

TRIGORIN: I can understand why he wants to keep it. It's like saving an old manuscript.

IRINA: Old manuscripts aren't a public eyesore. You hide them in a dark drawer.

TRIGORIN: For a playwright, the stage is his manuscript.

IRINA: It was a dreadful play. You know it was. Why be reminded of it?

ILYA: I won't go near it now, to be honest. I thought he was going to do something crazy.

IRINA: I'll try to talk to him.

(Trigorin laughs. Irina stares at him.)

TRIGORIN: When have you ever changed his mind?

IRINA: I've changed yours, and you're a better artist than he is.

TRIGORIN: I'll try not to see that as an insult.

IRINA: You know what I mean.

TRIGORIN: You change my mind, dear, when I let you change it.

(They start toward the house by way of the garden.)

[follow them] ... to p306

[St-IV-2]

[Deemer]

(Nina takes the abandoned stage. She recites from Treplev's play.)

NINA: "Men and lions, eagles and quail, stags and geese and spiders, the silent fishes of the sea, starfish and creatures invisible to the naked eye – every form of life on earth has become extinct. For thousands of centuries, the earth has been barren. The moon shines her light in vain. No cranes wake and cry in the meadow. In the lime grove, no hum of beetles is heard. The earth is cold – and empty – and filled with cold, empty terror."

(A shot is heard. Nina sinks to the floor of the stage. She wraps her arms over her head, softly crying. The play is over.)

HYPERDRAMAS BY CHARLES DEEMER

Chateau de Mort (1986)

Bateau de Mort (1987)

Turkeys (1987)

Rancho! (1987)

Cocktail Suite (1988)

The Bride of Edgefield (1995)

The Last Song of Violeta Parra (in English and Spanish, 1997)

The Seagull Hyperdrama (2002)

(Note: The last three hyperdramas are available online at <http://www.ibiblio.org/cdeemer/hdrama.htm>).