

Anton Chekhov

The Cherry Orchard

A Comedy in Four Acts

Translated from the original Russian by

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Dramatis Personae

Lyubov Andreyevna RANEVSKAYA, a landowner

Anya, her daughter, 17 years old.

Varya, her adopted daughter, 22 years old.

Leonid Andreyevich GHAYEV, the brother of Ranevskaya

Yermolai Alekseyevich LOPAKHIN, a merchant

Pyotr Sergeyevich TROFIMOV, a [university] student

Boris Borisovich SIMEONOV-PISHCHIK, a landowner

Charlotta Ivanovna, the governess

Semyon Panteleyevich YEPIKHODOV, the clerk of the office of the estate

Dunyasha, the chambermaid

Fierce, the butler, an old man of 87

Yasha, the valet, a young man

A passerby

The station agent

The postal clerk

Guests, servants

The action takes place on L.A. Ranevskaya's estate.

Abbreviations used to identify principal speaking parts:

RA = Lyubov Andreyevna RANEVSKAYA

AN = Anya

VA = Varya

GH = Leonid Andreyevich GHAYEV

LO = Yermolai Alekseyevich LOPAKHIN

TR = Pyotr Sergeyevich TROFIMOV

SP = Boris Borisovich SIMEONOV-PISHCHIK

CH = Charlotta Ivanovna

YE = Semyon Panteleyevich YEPIKHODOV

DU = Dunyasha

FI = Fierce

YA = Yasha

BY = A passerby

SA = Station agent

PC = Postal clerk

ACT ONE

A room which to this day remains known as the Nursery [in the sense of children's playroom or family room, since young children would traditionally be kept out of the more formal rooms of large estates until they were old enough to behave appropriately. The Nursery would be the room in a manor or mansion where the family would gather when the parents were prepared to spend time with their children – M.A.]. One of its doors leads into Anya's private bedroom. Dawn. The sun will soon be rising. Even though it is May already, and the cherry trees are in bloom, it is a chilly morning outdoors, in the orchard. The windows in the room are shut. *Dunyasha* enters, lighting the way with a candle, followed by *Lopakhin*, who is holding a book.

LO: The train's come. Thank God. What time is it?

DU: Almost two. (*She blows out the candle.*) It's already light.

LO: So how late was the train, then? At least two hours late, must be. (*He yawns and stretches.*) I'm a fine one today, making such a fool of myself! Coming out all this way just to be there, waiting, at the station when the train comes in, and then sleeping through the arrival!.. Fell asleep in an armchair. What a shame... You really should have woken me.

DU: I thought you'd gone already. (*Listening.*) There, I think they're coming.

LO: (*Listening.*) Nope... Baggage to collect, this and that... (*Pause*). Lyubov Andreyevna's spent five years living abroad, I don't know, who knows what she's like now: maybe it's changed her... She's a good person. An uncomplicated, easygoing, straightforward kind of person. Easy to be with. I remember, when I was just a lad, fifteen or so, my late father – he kept a little shop here in town – he hit me in the face with a fist, the blood just gushed from my nose... We had come by the estate for some reason, we were out front and he was a little drunk. Lyubov Andreyevna, I remember it as clear as if it were yesterday, still so young then, so slender, she led me over to the washstand right here, right in this very room, in the nursery. "Don't cry, little man," she said, "don't cry, my good little peasant, it'll be as good as new by the time your wedding comes around." (*Pause*). My good little peasant... My father, now, true enough, he was a peasant, but here I am, in my

white waistcoat and my yellow dress shoes. Now, the swine's snout is not fit for the pastry shop, as the saying goes... Except for the money, of course. I'm rich, I have a lot of money, and yet, reckon that's about right, when you look at it from all sides: I'm your peasant's peasant, through and through... *(He leafs through the book.)*
Tried to read this book here and understood nothing. Fell asleep trying to read it, as a matter of fact. *(Pause).*

DU: While the dogs didn't sleep at all, the whole night through. They can sense the homecoming, that the owners are on their way.

LO: Oh, Dunyasha, what's wrong, why are you so --?

DU: My hands are shaking. I'm about ready to faint.

LO: You're such a delicate creature, Dunyasha. Look at you: you dress like a fine young lady, your hair's the same way. It's all wrong. You should remember your proper place.

(Yepikhodov enters, holding a bouquet of flowers. He is wearing a suit jacket and a pair of boots that have been polished to a brilliant shine, and which make considerable squeaking noises as he moves. He enters and the bouquet falls out of his hands.)

YE: *(picking up the bouquet).* Here, the gardener sent these, he said to put them in the dining room. *(Hands Dunyasha the bouquet.)*

LO: Bring me some cider while you're at it. [Or use the Russian word: *kvahss*, a fermented refreshing drink served cold. – Tr. Note]

DU: If you insist. *(She leaves.)*

YE: It's a bitter morning, three degrees below freezing, and the cherries are in bloom. I simply cannot endorse our climate. *(He sighs.)* I just can't. Our climate is altogether obstreperous in the highest degree. It cannot deliver. See, Yermolai Alekseyevich, allow me to juxtaposify, I purchased myself three days' time since these boots here, and might I make so bold as to assert you, they squeak so relentlessly that it is utterly not to be endured in the extreme. What should I use to grease the squeak out?

LO: Go away. Stop pestering me.

YE: Each and every day some terrible calamity darkens my existence. But I don't rail against my lot. I am accustomed to it, and even smile at my own foibles.

(Dunyasha enters and gives Lopakhin his drink [cider, or kvahss].)

YE: I'll be going. *(Stumbles against a chair and knocks it over.)* See... *(Almost triumphant at having been proven right.)* You see? You see that? What did I tell you, if you'll pardon the expression? Just look at this convergence of events, in a manner of speaking! Impossible! It's just amazing! Who would have thought?

(Leaves).

DU: You know, Yermolai Alekseyich, I must warn you, Yepikhodov's proposed to me.

LO: Ah!

DU: And I really don't know... He's a peaceful man, not one to make trouble of any kind, it's just that sometimes, when he starts to talk, he's making no sense whatsoever. It sounds good, it's thoughtful and considerate, only it's not anything anyone can understand. I even think, sometimes, that maybe I like him in a way. And he's madly in love with me. He's not a lucky man, everyday if it's not one thing, it's another. They even call him that, around here: the walking calamity...

LO: *(Listening).* There, I think they're coming...

DU: They're coming! Oh, what's come over me... I'm all cold all at once.

LO: They are coming, it's a fact. Let's go welcome them. Will she recognize me? It's been five years since we last saw each other.

DU: *(Agitated).* I'm going to faint... Oh, I'm fainting!

*(The sound of two carriages rolling up the drive to the house becomes increasingly distinct. **Lopakhin and Dunyasha** exit quickly. The stage is empty. Then a great bustling noise begins in the adjoining rooms. **Fierce**, using a cane, crosses the stage in apparent haste: he is returning from having gone to the train station to wait for the arriving lady of the manor, **Lyubov Andreyevna**. He is dressed in livery of an antiquated style and in an equally outdated tall hat. **Fierce** seems to be talking to himself, but it is garbled and not a single word makes any kind of sense. The offstage noises intensify. **Voices** begin to be heard more clearly: "This way, come*

*this way... "Enter **Lyubov Andreyevna, Anya and Charlotte Ivanovna** leading a miniature dog on a chain, and dressed for travelling; also, **Varya** in a coat and with her head covered by a kerchief [or draped with a shawl – Tr. Note]; **Ghayev, Simeonov-Pishchik, Lopakhin; Dunyasha** carrying a bundle and an umbrella [or parasol – Tr. Note] and **Servants** bringing in the baggage [and purchases] from the long voyage. All of these arrivals cross through the room.)*

AN: Let's go through here. Mama, do you remember this room?

RA: *(Overjoyed, through tears).* The Nursery!

VA: It's so cold, my hands are numb. *(Addressing Lyubov Andreyevna.)* Your rooms, the white one and the violet one, stayed exactly as they were, Mummy-dear.

RA: The Nursery, my darling, such a wonderful room... I slept here when I was just a baby... *(She weeps).* And now I'm being a baby again... *(She kisses her brother, Varya, and then her brother again.)* See, Varya's just the same as always, she looks like a nun... And I recognized Dunyasha straight away... *(She kisses Dunyasha.)*

GH: The train was two hours late. How do you like that? Doesn't that just say it all!

CH: *(Addressing Pishchik.)* My dog eats nuts, too.

SP: *(In amazement).* Just think!

*(Everyone except **Anya and Dunyasha** leaves.)*

DU: We've waited so long to see you again... *(She removes Anya's coat and hat.)*

AN: I haven't slept for four nights straight on the road... and now I'm chilled through and through.

DU: It was Great Lent when you left us, we had snow, it was bitter cold... And now? My precious! *(She laughs, and kisses her.)* I've waited so long to see you again, Miss, my joy, my light... I'm going to tell you right now, Miss, I can't hold it back even for one minute...

AN: *(Wanly).* Oh, no, not something else...

DU: The office clerk, Yepikhodov, proposed to me just after Holy Week.

AN: You're still on that... *(Adjusting her hair.)* I've lost all my pins... *(She is extremely fatigued, even unsteady on her feet.)*

DU: I just don't know what to think. He loves me so much, he just loves me so much!

AN: *(Gazing tenderly at the door leading to her room.)* My room, my windows, just as if I never left. I'm home! Tomorrow morning, I'll get up and run into the garden... Oh, if only I could sleep! I couldn't sleep at all, the entire time on the road, I was fretting and worrying – overcome with anxiety.

DU: Pyotr Sergeyevich arrived three days ago.

AN: *(Joyfully.)* Petya!

DU: The gentleman's taken up residence in the bathhouse, and insists on sleeping there. I fear, he said, to impose. *(With a glance at her pocket watch.)* I should go and wake him so he can present himself, but Varvara Mikhailovna [*meaning Varya* – M.A.] will not allow it. Don't you go wake him, she told me.

(Varya enters. She wears a bundle of keys at the waist.)

VA: Dunyasha, coffee, quickly... Mummy is asking for coffee.

DU: Right away. *(She leaves.)*

VA: Well, thank God, you're back. You're home again. *(Affectionately, tenderly, holding and stroking her.)* My heart and soul is back! Our lady fair is back! Our beauty...

AN: I've had a time of it, you know.

DU: I can well imagine!

AN: It was Holy Week when I set out. It was cold then. Charlotte talking all the time, entertaining me with her magic tricks. Why on earth did you foist Charlotte on me?...

VA: But you can't exactly be travelling alone, my heart and soul. At seventeen!

AN: We arrive in Paris, it's cold, there's snow. My French is dreadful. Mama is living on the fifth floor, I arrive, she's entertaining some kind of French guests, gentlemen, ladies, an elderly priest or pastor with a book, the rooms are full of smoke, unpleasant. Suddenly I felt so sorry for Mama, so sorry for her, I put my

arms around her head, squeezed it tight and held on for dear life, and couldn't let go. Mama was so kind afterwards, so full of caresses and tenderness... She wept...

VA: *(Through tears.)* Don't tell me, please, don't...

AN: Well, it turned out she had already sold her summer villa near Menton, she had nothing left, nothing. And I had spent everything, down to the last kopek, just getting to her, we barely managed to make it last long enough to reach Paris. And Mama understands nothing! We sit down to eat at the train station, and she goes and orders all the most expensive dishes, and then gives each of the waiters a whole ruble as a tip. And Charlotte follows suit. And so Yasha orders accordingly, it was just dreadful. You know, Mama has that Yasha for her personal valet, we brought him back here with us, to the house...

VA: I saw the shameless degenerate.

AN: Well then, and you? How are things? Did you manage to make the interest payment?

VA: Not even close.

AN: Oh, my God, oh, my God.

VA: The estate will be auctioned in August. In its entirety...

AN: Oh, my God...

LO: *(Peeking in through the door and making sheep-like bleating noises.)* Meh-eh-eh-eh... [Or "Baaa-baaa!" – M.A.] *(He exits.)*

VA: *(Through tears.)* I'd let him have this instead, if I could, honestly... *(She shakes her fist in frustration after him.)*

AN: *(Embracing Varya, she speaks softly and carefully.)* Varya, has he proposed? *(Varya shakes her head in the negative.)* But we all know he loves you... Why don't you have it out with him, talk it over, what are you waiting for?

VA: My opinion is, nothing will come of it. We won't get around to it. He's mind is all consumed with his deals, his business, I'm the furthest thing from it... He doesn't even know that I exist. God be with him, I'm tired of it all, I can barely stand the sight of him... Everyone is saying we're getting married, they're all

congratulating me, but the truth of it is there's nothing there, nothing at all whatsoever, it's all just a dream... *(In a different tone of voice, making an effort.)*

Your brooch looks kind of like a bee, yes?

AN: *(Sadly).* It's one of Mama's purchases. *(Goes into her room, and speaks brightly, cheerfully, like a child.)* You know, in Paris, I got to fly up into the air in a hot air balloon!

VA: My heart and soul is back! My princess fair is back! Our beautiful girl!

(Dunyasha has returned with the coffee urn and is making coffee.)

VA: *(Standing in the doorway as she addresses Anya.)* You know, my heart and soul, all day long I go about my business on the estate and I daydream. Wouldn't it be fine, marrying you off to some wealthy man, and then I could have my peace again, I could go visit my little convent in the wilderness, and from there to Kiev... and then to Moscow... and so on, that's what I would do, visit all the holy places, one by one... I'd just walk and walk. Oh, the beauty of it! The rapture!

AN: The birds are singing in the orchard. What time is it?

VA: Must be after two already. You really must sleep, my heart and soul. *(Entering into Anya's bedroom.)* The rapture!

(Yasha enters, carrying a light, plaid blanket [throw] for travelling, and a small travelling bag of the sac de voyage variety.)

YA: *(Crosses the stage, stepping gingerly and with all manner of gentility, as if unsure of his surropundings.)* Is it allowed to cross through here?

DU: Why, you're unrecognizable, Yasha. You've really come up in life, abroad.

YA: Hmm... And who might you be?

DU: When you went away on your travels, I was just this tall... *(Indicates a height from the floor.)* I'm Dunyasha, Fyodor Kozodoyev's daughter. You don't remember me at all!

YA: Hmm... Ripe for the plucking! *(He looks around and puts his arms around her; she cries out, objecting to his crude advances, and drops the saucer she was holding. Yasha exits in great haste.)*

VA: *(In the doorway, in a stern and alarmed voice.)* What's going on?

DU: *(Through tears.)* I broke a saucer...

VA: That's a good omen, they say.

AN: *(Coming out of her room.)* We ought to warn Mama: Petya is here...

VA: I ordered the servants not to wake him.

AN: *(Thoughtfully.)* Six years ago, Father dies. A month later, my brother Grisha, a lovely seven year-old boy. Drowns in a river. Mama never recovered, never, she simply left us, left us and never looked back... *(She shudders.)* How well I understand her, if only she knew! *(Pause).* And Petya Trofimov was Grisha's teacher, seeing him here might remind her...

(Fierce enters; he is dressed in a proper jacket and white waistcoat, butler-style.)

FI: *(Approaching the coffee urn, concerned.)* Our lady shall be taking their coffee in this room... *(He dons his white gloves for serving with great care.)* Is the coffee prepared? *(Addressing Dunyasha, sternly.)* You! The cream?

DU: Oh, my God... *(She exits in haste.)*

FI: *(Fussing over the coffee urn.)* Dimwit... *(Muttering under his breath.)* Back home... from Paris... The master, he went to Paris to in his day... on horseback... *(Laughs.)*

VA: Fierce, what are you going on about?

FI: You called? *(Joyously.)* My lady's home again! I lived to see the day! Now, even if I die, at least... *(Weeps from joy.)*

(Lyubov Andreyevna, Ghayev and Simeon-Pishchik enter; the latter is wearing a loose, baggy overshirt of fine cloth, and loose pants tucked into boots [i.e., traditional Russian costume for country living adapted to the season, his rank and the occasion – M.A.]. Ghayev enters with his arms and body twisting and gesticulating in the distinctive manner of a billiards player in the middle of a game, and his speech is peppered with phrases from billiards.)

RA: How does it go again?... Yellow in the corner pocket! Dupe in the side pocket!

GH: Bank shot to the corner! Once upon a time, Sis, you and I slept in this very room, and here I am now, 51 years old, strange though it may seem...

LO: Yes. Time flies.

GH: Whazzat?

LO: Time. I said, it flies.

GH: Why, yes. Smells like patchouli here.

AN: I'm going to sleep. Good night, Mama. (*Kisses her mother.*)

RA: My adorable baby angel. (*Kisses her hands.*) Are you glad to be home? I can't get over it.

AN: Good-bye, Uncle.

GH: (*Kisses her face, her hands.*) Lord keep you. How you resemble your own mother! (*Addressing his sister.*) You, Lyuba, you were exactly like this at her age. (*Anya offers her hand to **Lopakhin and Pishchik**, then leaves and closes the door to her room behind her.*)

RA: She's completely exhausted.

SP: The road, of course, must have been long.

VA: (*Addressing **Lopakhin and Pishchik**.*) Well, gentlemen? It's almost three in the morning. Time for decent guests to let the hosts rest, as they say.

RA: (*Laughing.*) You're still the same, Varya.. (*Draws her close and kisses her.*) I'll just finish my coffee, and we'll all go. (*Fierce places a cushion or pillow under her feet.*) Thank you, my good man. I have a coffee habit. I drink it day and night.

Thank you, my venerable friend. (*She kisses Fierce.*)

VA: I'll go see if they've brought all the things... (*She leaves.*)

RA: Is it really me sitting here? (*She laughs.*) I want to jump up and down, wave my arms up and down. (*She covers her face with her hands.*) What if I'm dreaming! God only knows, I love the motherland, I love her tenderly, I couldn't even look out the window of the train, I was crying so hard. (*Through tears.*) However, I must drink my coffee. Thank you, Fierce, thank you, my venerable friend. I am so happy that you are still alive.

FI: Day before yesterday.

GH: He's hard of hearing.

LO: I have to go to Kharkov this morning, right now, just after four this morning. Such bad timing! A nuisance! I wanted to sit here and look at you some more, to talk... You are just as superb as ever.

SP: (*Breathing heavily.*) Even lovelier than before... Dressed in the Parisian style... I'm doomed, doomed, I say, lock, stock, and barrel, what's the point!

LO: This brother of yours, here, Leonid Andreyevich, according to him, I'm coarse, insolent, uncouth, I'm a tight-fisted rapacious peasant, but I really couldn't care less what he says. Let him. All I want is just for you to believe in me the way you used to, for your amazing eyes that stir me to the depths of my soul gazed at me just exactly the way they used to. Merciful God! My father was a serf – property – of your grandfather and your father, but you, you specifically, did so much for me once, that I forgot about everything else and love you, as if you were my own flesh and blood... more than my own flesh and blood.

RA: I can't sit still, I just can't, I'm in such a state... (*Leaps to her feet and walks about, highly agitated.*) This happiness will be the death of me... Go ahead, laugh at me. I'm a fool.... My precious, darling bookcase... (*She kisses the antique bookcase.*) My precious darling desk...

GH: Nanny died while you were gone, by the way.

RA: Yes, God rest her soul. They wrote me.

GH: And Anastasius died, too. Cross-eyed Petrushka left me and now lives in town, at the bailiff's. (*Takes a box of hard candy out of his pocket, chooses one and sucks on it.*)

SP: My daughter, Dashenka... sends her best respects...

LO: I want to tell you something very pleasant, something amusing. (*Glancing at the time.*) I have to be going, there's not time to talk... Well, briefly then. As you already know, your cherry orchard is being sold to cover the debts, the auction will be held on August 22nd, but don't you worry, my dearest, don't lose any sleep over it, there's a way out of this... Here's what I propose. Attention, please! Your estate is situated just twenty versts from town, with the railroad within sight, right by us, and if we were to take the cherry orchard and the land along the riverbanks and

subdivide it into lots for vacation homes and then lease it out to vacationers to build to suit, then you would have, at the very minimum, 25 thousand a year in income [i.e., a very substantial sum of money sufficient to supporting a grand lifestyle – M.A.]

GH: Oh, what utter drivel, if you'll pardon me!

RA: I don't entirely understand you, Yermolai Alekseyich.

LO: You will be charging the vacationers no less than 25 rubles per annum per unit of land, and if you lose no time making the announcement, I'll stake anything you want on it, by autumn there won't be a single patch of land left free, they'll snap it right up. In a word, I congratulate you. You are saved. It's a marvellous location, the river is deep. Of course, there'd be some cleaning up to do, some clearing... For example, let's see, you might tear down all the old structures, and this house here, which is so rundown now, and you'd chop down the old cherry orchard...

RA: Chop it down? My dear man, forgive me, you understand absolutely nothing. If there is anything at all interesting about our entire province, anything in the least way remarkable, it would have to be this cherry orchard of ours.

LO: The only remarkable thing about the orchard is that it's very big. The cherries only come every other year, and even that has nowhere to go. Nobody buys it.

GH: This here cherry orchard is mentioned even in the national Encyclopaedia.

LO: (*Glancing at the time.*) Unless we come up with a plan and agree on something, come the 22nd of August this cherry orchard and the whole estate will be sold at auction. So make up your minds! There's no other way out, I swear. None whatsoever. None.

FI: In the old days, forty-fifty years ago, we dried the cherries, then soaked them, then marinated them, then stewed them into a jam, and it used to be...

GH: Put a lid on it, Fierce.

FI: And it used to be, the dried cherries would then be driven to Moscow, to Kharkov... Whole wagonloads of them. The money they brought! And the dried cherries, back then, were so tender, juicy, sweet, fragrant... Back then, our people knew this way of...

RA: And where's this way now?

FI: Forgotten. No one remembers.

SP: (*Addressing Lyubov Andreyevna.*) So how's Paris? What's happening? Did you try the frogs?

RA: I tried crocodile.

SP: Just think...

LO: Up until now, the only people living in the countryside were the landowners and the peasants, but now there's a new kind of people: the vacationing kind. All the cities, and even the average towns are now surrounded by vacation homes. In fact, it can be said in fairness that in another twenty years or so, the vacationing tenant will have multiplied to an astonishing degree. For the moment, they are content just to sit and take tea on their veranda, but it may very well be that they will take their single unit of land and decide to cultivate it, take up gardening or whatnot, and then your cherry orchard will become happy, wealthy, luxurious...

GH: (*Becoming angry.*) Such utter drive!

(*Varya and Yasha enter.*)

VA: Mummy-dear, there are two telegrams that came for you. (*She finds the right key and opens the antique bookcase with a jangle.*) Here they are.

RA: From Paris. (*She tears up the telegrams without reading them.*) Paris is done with...

GH: And do you have any idea, Lyuba, how old this bookcase is? A week ago, I pulled out the bottom drawer and what do I see? Numbers burnt into the wood. This bookcase was manufactured exactly one hundred years ago. How about that? Eh? Why, we could celebrate its centenary, you know. It's an inanimate object and all, and yet, you must concede, it's a bookcase.

SP: A hundred years! Just think!

GH: Yes... This is an object... (*Touching the bookcase as if seeking reassurance, or as a blind man might.*) Our dear, our valuable, our greatly respected bookcase! I welcome your presence, your existence among us, that for one hundred years and more now has been directed to the bright ideals of the kindness and justice;

your silent summons to fruitful toil has never faltered in one hundred years, maintaining (*through tears*) throughout the generations of our family our vigour, our faith in a future that is better than the present, and nurturing in our hearts the ideals of goodness and social consciousness. (*Pause*).

LO: Yes...

RA: I see you're exactly the same as you ever were, Lonya.

GH: (*A little embarrassed.*) Trick shot off the rail to the right pocket! High English up the middle! [*This is all billiards slang, his own particular tic – M.A.*]

LO: (*Checking the time.*) Well, it's time for me to go.

YA: (*Handing Lyubov Andreyevna her medicines.*) Perhaps now would be a good time, ma'am, to take your pills...

SP: No, no, my dearest woman, we can't have you taking any medications, now... they do neither harm nor good... Give them here, please... Our dearest, most worthy lady... (*And with this he takes all the pills, pours them out onto the palm of his hand, blows on them, puts them all in his mouth at once, and downs them with a glass of cider or kvass.*) There!

RA: (*Horried.*) You've lost your mind!

SP: I took all the pills.

LO: Eyes bigger'n your belly? (*Everybody laughs.*)

FI: Himself were over at Easter, helped themselves to a half-bucket of our best pickles... (*Fades into muttering.*)

RA: What's he saying?

VA: He's been muttering like that for three years now. We're all used to it.

YA: It's the advanced age.

(**Charlotte Ivanovna**, wearing a white dress, very thin, tightly wound and stiffly corseted, with a lorgnette hanging at her waist, crosses the stage.)

LO: Pardon me, Charlotte Ivanovna, I did not have the chance yet to welcome you back. (*Wants to kiss her hand.*)

CH: (*Snatching her hand back.*) if I were to allow you to kiss my hand, the next thing you'd want would be to kiss my elbow, and then my shoulder...

LO: Not my lucky day, is it? (*Everyone laughs.*) Charlotte Ivanovna, show us a magic trick!

RA: Magic trick, Charlotte!

CH: Not a chance. I desire to sleep. (*Exits.*)

LO: We'll see each other in three weeks' time. (*Kisses Lyubov Ranevskaya's hand.*) Good-bye, for now. It's time. (*Addressing Ghayev.*) Until we meet. (*Giving his hand to Varya, then Fierce, then Yasha.*) I wish I could stay. (*Addressing Lyubov Andreyevna.*) If you change your mind about the vacation lots, and make a decision, let me know. I think I can raise maybe fifty thousand or so on credit to get you started. Think about it. Seriously. Give it some thought.

VA: (*Gruffly.*) Will you leave here, already!

LO: I'm leaving, I'm leaving... (*He leaves.*)

GH: What a boor. The worst. I mean, I'm sorry... Varya's marrying him, don't you know, that's Varya's fiancé, our little treasure.

VA: Don't, Uncle-dear, don't go around saying too much, now.

RA: Well, then, Varya, I'll be very happy for you. He's a good man.

SP: A good man, indeed, and that's the truth... A most worthy man... And my Dashenka... says the same thing, she says... that... she says different things. (*He drifts off, snoozes, snores, but instantly wakes up.*) But still... Most esteemed lady, lend me 240 rubles, please... as a loan... the interest on my mortgage is due tomorrow...

VA: (*Alarmed.*) We can't, we can't!

RA: I actually as a matter of fact have nothing, no money, at all.

SP: You'll find them. (*He laughs.*) I never lose hope. It's like this: just when I think, that's it, it's all over, I'm doomed, I'm done for, suddenly, what do you know – the railroad comes through my land and... the government pays me for the right. And then, you know, something else might come along, if not today, then tomorrow... Maybe me Dashenka will win two hundred thousand rubles in the lottery... She bought a ticket.

RA: My coffee's all gone, we can go rest now.

FI: (*He's brushing Ghayev with a stiff clothes brush, and making instructive comments.*) You wore the wrong trousers again, young master. What am I to do with you!

VA: (*Softly*). Anya's sleeping. (*She opens a window, softly.*) The sun's up already, it's not cold. Take a look, Mummy-dear, such wonderful trees! My God, the air! The songbirds, listen!

GH: (*Opens the other window.*) The orchard's all white. You remember this, Lyuba? This long alley that runs so straight, so straight, all the way down, like a stretched out belt, and shimmers on a moonlit night. You remember? You haven't forgotten?

RA: (*Gazing out the window at the orchard.*) Oh, my childhood, my purity! This was the nursery I slept in, these were the windows through which I gazed out at the orchard, each morning happiness woke with me, and the orchard was exactly the same back then, nothing has changed. (*Laughs with joy.*) It's all white, all of it! Oh, my orchard! After the dark, stormy autumn, and the cold winter, there you are again, young, new, full of happiness, the heavenly angels have not forsaken you... Oh, if this heavy stone that weighs upon it could be lifted from my heart and shoulders, if only I could forget my past!

GH: Yes, and the orchard will be sold to settle the debts, strange though it may seem...

RA: Look, there's our sainted mother walking through the orchard... in a white dress! (*Laughs with joy.*) It's her.

GH: Where?

VA: Lord help you, Mummy-dear.

RA: There's nobody there, I was imagining it. Over to the right there, at the turn that leads to the gazebo, a slender white tree was leaning over, and the shape looked like a woman...

(*Trofimov enters, dressed in a well-worn uniform of the type standard for university students.*)

RA: The orchard is stunning! The white masses of blossoms, the azure sky...

TR: Lyubov Andreyevna! (*She turns around and sees him.*) I will only bow to you, pay my respects and leave right away. (*He kisses her hand with passionate intensity.*) I was told to wait until morning, but I just didn't have the patience... (*Lyubov Andreyevna looks at the newcomer, clearly unable to make the connection.*)

VA: (*Through tears.*) It's Petya Trofimov....

TR: Petya Trofimov, the former tutor of your little Grisha... Is it possible that I have changed as much as that?

(*Lyubov Andreyevna embraces him and weeps softly.*)

GH: (*Embarrassed.*) Enough, enough, Lyuba.

VA: (*Weeping.*) I told you, Petya, best to wait until tomorrow, didn't I now?

RA: Grisha... my baby... my little boy... Grisha... my son...

VA: What's to be done, Mummy-dear. God's will.

TR: (*Softly, through tears.*) There, there now...

RA: (*Weeping softly.*) My little boy perished... he drowned... What for? What for, my friend? (*Even quieter.*) Anya's asleep, and I'm talking loudly... making noise... Well, then, Petya, how are you? What happened to your former good looks? Why have you aged so dreadfully?

TR: A peasant woman actually called me that on the train: the mangy gentleman.

RA: You were just a boy back then, just a young lad, a charming young university student, and now your thick head of hair has thinned out, you're wearing eyeglasses. Are you still a student, then? Is that possible? (*She walks towards the door.*)

TR: I'm destined to be a student forever, it must be.

RA: (*Kisses her brother, then Varya.*) Well, go to sleep then... You've aged too, Leonid.

SP: So, bedtime. Off to bed... Oh, my gout. I'll stay here with you... It would be best for me, Lyubov Andreyevna, my heart and soul, if I could have the money tomorrow, in the morning... 240 rubles...

GH: And this one's still harping about that.

SP: Two hundred forty rubles... to pay the interest on the mortgage for my estate.

RA: I don't have any money, old boy.

SP: I'll pay it back, dear girl... It's a trivial sum, really...

RA: Oh, all right, Leonid'll give it to you... Give him the money, Leonid.

GH: If you think I'm giving him any money, don't hold your breath.

RA: What's to be done? Give him the money... He needs it... He'll pay it back.

(Lyubov Andreyevna, Trofimov, Pishchik and Fierce all leave the stage.

Ghayev, Varya and Yasha remain.)

GH: I see my sister hasn't lost her habit of throwing money around, yet.

(Addressing Yasha.) If you don't mind, step back, my good man. You reek of chicken.

YA: *(Smirking.)* As for you, Leonid Andreyevich, you're exactly the same as you ever were.

GH: Whazzit? *(Addressing Varya.)* Did that man just say something?

VA: *(Addressing Yasha.)* Your mother walked from the village to see you. She's been sitting up in the servants' common room since yesterday, hoping she might catch a glimpse of you, speak with you...

YA: God help that insufferable woman!

VA: Shame on you!

YA: What's the big deal? She could have just as well come by tomorrow. *(Leaves.)*

VA: Mummy-dear's exactly the same, as she always was, she has not changed even the tiniest bit. If she could do anything she pleased, she'd give it all away.

GH: Yes... *(Pause.)* If you a certain disease has to be treated with a great variety of different measures, that means that the disease is incurable. I keep thinking, straining all my mental faculties, I have many measures at my disposal, many measures, and what that really means is that in essence I have none. No recourse. It would be good to receive an inheritance, it would be good to marry off our Anya to some very wealthy man, it would be good to go to Yaroslavl and try my luck with our aunt the Countess. You know that aunt of ours is very, very wealthy.

VA: *(Weeping.)* If only God would help.

GH: Quit your bawling. Our aunt is extremely wealthy, but she does not like us. For one thing, my sister went and married an officer of the criminal justice system, instead of a hereditary nobleman...

(Anya appears in the doorway.)

GH: She married outside the nobility and conducted herself in a manner that could not be described as being especially virtuous. She is good, kind, delightful company, I love her very much, but, no matter what kind of extenuating circumstances we devise to excuse her actions, it must still be recognized, that she is a woman corrupted by vice. She exudes it in even the tiniest gestures, in every movement she makes.

VA: *(Whispering.)* Anya is standing in the doorway.

GH: Whazzat? *(Pause.)* Extraordinary... Something in my right eye... My vision is failing me... And on Thursday, when I visited the district court...

(Anya enters.)

VA: Why aren't you asleep, Anya?

AN: Can't sleep. Can't.

GH: My precious baby. *(Kisses Anya's face and hands.)* My darling child...

(Through tears.) You're not my niece, you're my angel, you're everything to me. Believe me, believe...

AN: I believe you, Uncle. Everyone loves you, everyone respects you... It's just that, Uncle, darling, you need to keep quiet, just keep quiet, just hush. What were you just saying, a moment ago, about my mother, about your own sister? What did you say that for?

GH: Yes, yes... *(Covering his own face with her hand.)* As a matter of fact, you're right. It's dreadful! My God! God, save me! And earlier today, when I gave that speech in front of the bookcase... So stupid! And only after I was done, that was when it hit me, that it was stupid.

VA: It's true, Uncle-dear, it would be best if you kept quiet. If you would just keep quiet and say nothing, and just be.

AN: If you keep quiet, it'll go easier for you, you'll be more at peace.

GH: I'm quiet. I have nothing to say. (*Kisses Anya's and Varya's hands.*) I'm quiet. Only, about this business, now. On Thursday, I paid a visit to the district court, and, well, various gentlemen were present, and we were talking, this-that, and the other, and well the long and short of it was that maybe we may be able to obtain some additional credit secured by bonds in the form of payment obligations.

VA: Of only the good Lord would help us!

GH: I'm going back again on Tuesday, I'll bring it up again. (*To Varya..*) Quit your bawling. (*To Anya.*) Your mother will have a talk with Lopakhin; he'll never say no to her, of course... And as for you, as soon as you're rested, you must go to Yaroslavl, to see the Countess, your great-aunt. That's how we'll do it, we'll charge ahead from three directions at once, and – well, it's a done deal. We'll pay off the interest, I'm certain of it... (*Retrieves a candy drop and pops it in his mouth.*) I swear it on my honour, I'll swear any oath you like, the estate will not be sold! (*Stirred, animated.*) I swear it on my happiness! Here's my hand on it, if I'm wrong, if I allow the auction to go forward, you can call me worthless, you can call me a dishonourable man, if you like! I swear it, with every fibre of my being!

AN: (*She's calm and happy again.*) You're so good, Uncle, you are such a great thinker! (*She embraces her uncle.*) I'm not worried anymore, now! I can rest easy! I'm so happy!

(*Fierce enters.*)

FI: (*Reproachfully.*) Leonid Andreyich, lost your fear of God, have you? When's bedtime?

GH: Right away, right away. You go away, Fierce. Oh, all right, why not, I'll undress myself, then, if you insist on going to bed right now. All right, then, children, nitey-nite... I'll give you the details tomorrow. Let's all go off to bed, now. (*Kisses Anya and Varya.*) I'm a man of the eighties... That's a decade that gets a lot of criticism, but still, I can say, my convictions got me through life, earned me many rewards, and for good reason. It's not for nothing that I command such

respect and even love among the peasants. You have to know the peasant through and through to command his respect! You have to know which...

AN: You're doing it again, Uncle!

VA: Uncle, please, just keep quiet.

FI: (*Showing anger with hostility in his voice, tone and demeanour.*) Leonid Andreyich!

GH: I'm coming, I'm coming... Go lie down. Killer shot off the rails! Cue to the pocket! And a fresh one! (*Leaves, with **Fierce** tottering off behind him.*)

AN: I'm not worried anymore. But I'm not going to Yaroslavl, I don't want to, I can't stand the old Countess, I don't love her in the least, great-aunt or no great-aunt, but still, I'm not worried anymore. Thanks to Uncle. (*She sits down.*)

VA: We need to sleep. I'll go. You know, while you were gone, we had almost a mutiny of some kind here... There was some grumbling. You know, only the very oldest of the servants live in the old servants' quarters: Yefimyushka, Polya, Yevstigney, and of, course, Carp. They started letting some vagabonds in to stay the night. I knew, but I kept quiet. Only, next thing I know, there are rumours going around that I ordered them all to be fed only plain pea soup. Supposedly from being such a miser and all... It was all Yevstigney's doing, you know... (*She yawns.*) Fine, I think to myself. Be that way. If that's the lay of the land, then I'll show you a thing or two. So I call Yevstigney in... (*Yawns.*) He comes in... So I lit into him. How dare you, Yevstigney, I say, you miserable old fool... (*Looking at Anya.*) Anya! Precious!... (*Pause.*) She's sleeping.... (*Takes **Anya** under the arm.*) Off to beddy-bye... Come along!... (*Leads her.*) My precious darling's asleep! Come along.... (*They begin to leave the stage together.*)

(*Far away, beyond the orchard, a shepherd is playing on his flute. **Trofimov** crosses the stage, and seeing **Varya and Anya** walking towards Anya's bedroom, stops.*)

VA: Sshhh... She's asleep... asleep... Come along, dearest.

AN: (*Softly, half-asleep.*) I'm sooo tired... all those bells... Uncle... darling... Mummy and Uncle, both...

VA: Come along, dearest, come along.... (*They enter Anya's bedroom.*)

TR: (*In rapture, with great tenderness.*) My sunlight! My life! My springtime!

Curtain