ACT FOUR

The same set as in Act One. The windows have been stripped of drapes and curtains; there are no paintings on the walls. Very little remains in the way of furniture, and it is all stacked in a corner, as if in preparation for sale. The emptiness is palpable. Suitcases, bundles and other items packed for a journey are heaped up against the door leading outside, and also upstage. The door to the left is open: VARYA’s and ANYA’s voices can be heard coming from there. LOPAKHIN is standing, waiting. YASHA is holding a tray with champagne poured into glasses. YEPIKHODOV, in the front room, is packing up a crate. There is a considerable din offstage and out back, indicative of activity. The local peasants have come by to make their farewells. GHAYEV’s Voice is heard: “Thank you, brothers, thank you!”

YA: The local folk have come to say good-bye. I am of the following opinion, Yermolai Alekseyich: the people are a good people, as people go, but they understand little.

(The din dies down. Lyubov Andreyevna enters through the front door, followed by Ghayev. She is not weepy, but pale; her face is trembling; she cannot speak.)

GH: You gave them all the money in your purse, Lyuba. That’s not right! It’s not right!

RA: I couldn’t! I couldn’t! (Both exit.)

LO: (Calling after them through the door they walked through.) if you please, won’t you be so kind! A little glass of champagne in parting. It didn’t occur to me to pick up a case in town, and when I asked at the station, they could only find one bottle. Won’t you please join me? (Pause.) Well, then! Not inclined? (Steps away from the door.) I wouldn’t have gotten it, had I known. Well, then, I won’t have any, either! (Yasha carefully sets the tray down on a chair.) You have it, then, Yasha, so it won’t go to waste.

YA: To the departing party! Have a happy life! Good times to you! (Drinks.) This is not real champagne, I can assure you.

LO: Eight rubles the bottle. (Pause.) Infernally cold here.

YA: They didn’t heat the house today, seeing as we’re leaving anyway. (Laughs.)

LO: What’s wrong with you?
YA: It's just the joy of the moment. The anticipation.

LO: Outside, it's October already, but it's sunny and bright and quiet, as if it were summer still. The construction's going well. *(Checking the time on his watch, addressing the doors.)* Gentlemen, ladies, keep in mind there are only 47 minutes left before the train comes! So we leave for the station in 20 minutes. Please make haste.

*(Trofimov comes in from outside, wearing an overcoat.)*

TR: I think it's already time to go. The horses are ready. Devil knows where my galoshes've got to. They're gone. *(Through the doorway.)* Anya, my galoshes are gone! I can’t find them! *[Note: The fact the he is addressing the character by her first name, and discussing his wardrobe, is intended to be highly indicative of an advanced degree of intimacy between them. – M.A.]*

LO: As for me, I’m off to Kharkov. Business. I’ll take the same train with you. I’ll be spending the winter in Kharkov. I’ve spent all my time lounging about here with you all, it’s been torture not to work. I can’t not work, I don’t know what do with my hands when I’m resting. They just hang there strangely, as if they’re someone else’s.

TR: Well, we’ll be off now, and you’ll revert back to your feats of productivity.

LO: Help yourself to a glass, then.

TR: I won’t.

LO: So, it’s off to Moscow now?

TR: Yes, I’ll see them as far as the city, and the tomorrow I’ll leave for Moscow.

LO: Yes… Why, the professors must be holding off, waiting for you, putting off their lectures!

TR: It’s none of your business.

LO: How many years have you been in the university, now?

TR: See if you can come up with a more original taunt. That one’s old and stale. *(Searches for his galoshes.)* You know, most likely we’ll never see each other again, so let me give you a piece of advice in parting: don’t swing your arms! Give that habit up, swinging and waving your arms around. And you know, those
vacation cabins you’re building, counting on the vacationers becoming individual homeowners over time, making those kinds of assumptions and calculations: that’s another form of arm swinging… of overreaching. Because, you know, when all is said and done, I love you in spite of everything, old man. You have the slender, delicate fingers of an artist, an artist’s slender, delicate soul…

**LO:** *(Embracing him.)* Good-bye, old boy. Thanks for everything. Take some money from me for the trip, if you can use it.

**TR:** What for? I don’t need it.

**LO:** But you don’t have any!

**TR:** I have money. Thank you for offering. I got paid for a translation. I have them right here, in my pocket. *(Worried.)* But where are my galoshes? They’ve disappeared!

**VA:** *(from the next room [presumably, Anya’s bedroom – M.A.]) Take your revolting things! *(She throws a pair of rubber galoshes out onto the stage.)* *(Another detail suggestive of Trofimov’s intimacy with Anya,, since according to the mores of the time, it would have been impossible for his footwear to be in her bedroom except if he had abandoned it there – M.A.)*

**TR:** Why are you so angry, Varya? Eh? *(Thinks hard, catches on – M.A.)* Oh! But these aren’t mine!

**LO:** I planted a thousand hectares of poppy in the springtime and now I’ve cleared forty thousand in net profit from them. And what a sight it was, when my poppies were in bloom! So here, I’m telling you, I’ve just cleared forty thousand and, you know, I’m offering you a loan, because I can. Why are you turning your nose up at me? It’s a man to man proposition… plain and simple. I’m just regular folks.

**TR:** Your father was a peasant, but mine was an apothecary, a chemist, and it all means nothing at all, ultimately… *(Lopakhin takes his billfold out.)* Don’t, don’t…. Even if you were to offer me two hundred thousand, I wouldn’t take it. I’m a free man. And all those things which you all, rich and poor alike, value so highly, holds absolutely no dominion over me, any more than the downy blossoms wafting in the breeze. I can do without any of you; I can walk by you with indifference and
equanimity; I am strong and proud. Humanity marches on towards a higher truth, towards the highest form of happiness that can be achieved here on earth, and I am marching in the very front lines!

LO: You think you’ll get there?

TR: I’ll get there. (Pause.) I’ll get there, or I’ll show others the way to get there.

(The sounds of an striking against wood can be heard in the distance.)

LO: Well, in that case, good-bye, old boy. Time to go. We turn our noses up at each other, and meanwhile life passes us by and never looks back. When I work for a long time without respite, and feel no fatigue, my thoughts become lighter, and it seems to me, then, as if I also know what my life is for. But only think, brother, how many people there are in Russia who have no idea why they exist, and what for. Not that it matters, anyway, since it has no impact whatsoever on commercial circulation. They say Leonid Andreyich has accepted a position with the bank, six thousand a year in income… Only you know he won’t last: he’s very lazy…

AN: (In the doorway.) Mama’s asking you to hold off on chopping down the orchard until we’ve gone.

TR: Indeed, you’d think you’d have the decency to wait… It’s tactless… (Exits through the front door.)

LO: All right, all right… You’re all a piece of work, you know. (Follows him out.)

AN: Did you take Fierce over to the hospital?

YA: I told them to, in the morning. They must’ve by now.

AN: (Addressing Yepikhodov, who is passing through the main hall.) Semyon Panteleyich, please go make sure they’ve drive Fierce over to the hospital.

YA: I gave Yegor the instructions this morning. What’s the point in asking a dozen times over?

YE: The venerable Fierce, long in years, is not suited for repairs, in my opinion. It’s time for him to join the forefathers. And I can only envy him. (Setting a suitcase down on top of a hatbox, and crushing the latter.) Well, there you have it, of course. I knew this would happen. (Exits.)
YA: (Mocking.) The walking calamity…

VA: (From behind the door.) Have they taken Fierce to the hospital?

AN: They’ve taken him.

VA: Then why’d they leave the letter behind, for the doctor?

AN: We’ll just have to send it after, then… (Exits.)

VA: (From the other room.) Where’s Yasha? Go tell him, his mother’s here, she’s come to say good-bye.

YA: (Waving his hand in despair.) She does it just to annoy me.

(Dunyasha has been fussing over the bundles and piles of suitcases for much of this time; now that Yasha is alone at last, she approaches him.)

DU: You could at least throw a single glance my way, Yasha. You’re leaving… Abandoning me… (She starts crying, flings her arms around his neck and clings to him.)

YA: What’s the point of crying over it? (Drinks champagne.) In six days, I’ll be back in Paris. Tomorrow, we’ll board the express train and off we go, out of sight. It’s almost impossible to believe. Vive la France! This place here, it’s not for me, I can’t live here… There’s nothing to be done about it. I’ve had enough of the ignorance, I’ve seen it right up close, and that’ll do. (Drinks some more champagne.) And what are you crying over? You should have minded your morals, more, then you wouldn’t have anything to cry over.

DU: (Powdering her face as she checks it in the mirror.) Send me a letter from Paris. You know, I loved you Yasha, I really loved you! I’m a tender creature, I am, Yasha!

YA: Somebody’s coming. (Fusses around the suitcases, singing softly to himself.)

(Lyubov Andreyevna, Ghayev, Anya and Charlotte Ivanovna enter.)

GH: We should be going. There’s very little time left. (Looking suspiciously at Yasha.) Who smells strongly of herring?

RA: In about ten minutes or so, let’s start boarding our carriages… (Casting a parting glance about the room.) Good-bye, dear house, old granddad to us all. The winter will pass, and the spring will come, and you’ll be gone, they’ll have torn you
down. These walls have seen so much! *(Kisses her daughter with intense feeling.)* My treasure, you’re radiant, you’re precious eyes are sparkling like a pair of diamonds. Are you pleased? Very?

**AN:** Very much! A new life is beginning, Mama!

**GH:** *(Cheerily.)* Absolutely right, everything is just fine now. All that time before the cherry orchard was sold we were in a state of stress, upset, worrying all the time, suffering – but then, once it was over and the matter had been settled once and for all, and there could be no going back, we all calmed down, and even cheered up. I’m a bank official now, a financier… Yellow ball straight up the middle! And you Lyuba, you can’t deny it, you’re looking better now, without a doubt.

**RA:** Yes. My nerves are better, it’s true. *(Her hat and coat are brought to her.)* *(Imagining the future.)* I’m sleeping well. Take my things out, Yasha. It’s time. *(Addressing Anya.)* My precious child, soon we won’t be seeing each other anymore… I’m off to Paris, I’ll live there on the money your great-aunt sent from Yaroslavl to buy you the estate – long live our great-aunt! – and that money will not last very long.

**AN:** You’ll be coming back very, very soon, Mama… Isn’t that right? Meanwhile, I’ll prepare for my exams, I’ll get my diploma and then I’ll go work, so I can help you out. We’ll live together again yet, Mama, we’ll read all kinds of books together… Won’t we? *(She kisses her mother’s hands.)* We’ll read aloud in the autumn evenings, and an amazing new world of wonders will open up to us… *(Imagining the future.)* Come back, Mama…

**RA:** I will come back, my precious. *(She embraces her daughter.)* *(Lopakhin enters. Charlotte quietly sings a song.)*

**GH:** Charlotte’s happy: she’s singing!

**CH:** *(Picking up a bundle that looks vaguely like a swaddled child.)* My baby, bye-bye, baby… *(Sounds like the crying of a baby are heard: “Waah! Waaah!” [It’s her ventriloquism again – M.A.] Be quiet, my sweet little baby son. *(More imaginary cries.)* I’m so sorry for you, baby dear! *(She tosses the bundle aside casually, back onto the heap of things.)* So you will please find me a situation of some kind. I can’t go on like this.
LO: We’ll find you something, Charlotte Ivanovna, no need for you to worry.

GH: Everyone’s deserting us, Varya’s leaving… All of a sudden no one needs us any more.

CH: I have no place to stay in the city. So I have to leave… *(Humming and singing.)* It’s all the same…

*(Pishchik enters.)*

LO: One of the great wonders of Nature has arrived!

SP: *(Out of breath.)* Oh, let me just catch my breath… I’m bushed… exhausted… My most esteemed… Give me some water, please…

GH: Come for money, no doubt? Your humble servant, I’ll be off now… *(Exits.)*

SP: It’s been ages since I last paid a visit… Magnificent lady… *(Addressing Lopakhin.)* And you’re here, too… Glad to see you… A man of immense intelligence… Here you are… Please accept this… *(Gives Lopakhin money.)* Four hundred rubles… That leaves me owing you eight hundred and forty…

LO: *(Shrugging his shoulders as he strives to understand.)* It’s like a dream… Where’d you get the money?

SP: In a moment… I’m hot… The most extraordinary eventuality. Some Englishmen came to see me and found some kind of white clay in my soil… *(Addressing Ranevskaya.)* And here’s four hundred for you… my beautiful… my amazing… *(Hands her the money.)* You’ll have the rest later. *(Drinks water.)* A young man was telling me on the train just now that some… great philosopher recommends jumping off buildings… “Just jump!” he says, and that that’s the whole point. *(Amazed.)* Just think! Water!

LO: What Englishmen?

SP: I leased a parcel of land to them, with the white clay, for the next 24 years… And now, forgive me, but I must run off… No time… Others to see… I’m off to Znoikov’s, then Cardamonov’s… I owe everyone money… *(Drinks.)* Good health to you all… I’ll come by on Thursday…

RA: We’re moving to the city right now, actually, and tomorrow I’m going abroad…
SP: What? (Alarmed.) Moving to the city? But why? That’s why you have all the
furniture like this… and the suitcases… Well, it’s nothing then… (Through tears.)
It’s nothing… People of such enormous intellect… Those English… It’s nothing…
Be happy, then… God will help you… It’s nothing… All things in this world must
come to an end… (Kisses Ranevskaya’s hand.) And when the rumour reaches
you that my end has come at last, think back to this here… horse, and say: “Once
there was a certain Simeonov-Pishchik… God rest his soul…” Exceptionally fine
weather… Yes… (Leaves awkwardly and in great embarrassment, but immediately
comes back and addresses them again, from the doorway.) Dashenka said to be
sure and convey her respects! (Exits.)

RA: And now we can go. I leave with two worries. One is – Fierce, who is sick.
(Checking her watch.) We can take another five minutes, perhaps…

AN: Mama, Fierce has been taken to the hospital already. Yasha took care of it,
this morning.

RA: My second sorrow is Varya. She is accustomed to rising early and working,
and now, with no work to do, she is just like a fish out of water. She’s lost weight,
grown pale, and weeps constantly, poor dear… (Pause.) You know it very well,
Yermolai Alekseyich; I used to dream... about marrying her off to you, and to all
appearances, it certainly looked as if you two would marry. (She whispers to Anya,
who nods to Charlotte, and they both leave.) She loves you, you know, she suits
you, you like her, too, and I don’t know, I just don’t know why the two of you act as
if you were deliberately avoiding each other! I don’t understand it!

LO: I don’t understand it either, to be honest. It’s all so strange… If there’s still
time, I’m ready to oblige, even now… Let’s get it over with – and that’s it, a done
deal, because with you gone, I can feel it in my bones, I’ll never propose.

RA: Excellent. Because it only takes a minute, you know. I’ll go call her…

LO: And look, there’s even champagne. (Checking the tray.) Empty, all of them.
Somebody’s got to them. (Yasha coughs.) That’s not drinking, that’s slurping it up,
every last drop of it…
RA: (Animated.) So, wonderful. We'll step outside... Yasha, allez! I'll go call her...
(Addressing the door.) Varya, stop doing that, come here. Come on! (Leaves with Yasha.)

(Restrained laughter can be heard from the other room, followed by whispers, and then finally Varya appears.)

VA: (Examines the piled up belongings for a long time.) Strange, I can't seem to find it...

LO: What are you looking for?

VA: I packed it myself, and I can't remember where. (Pause.)

LO: And where will you be going now, Varvara Mikhailovna?

VA: Me? I'll be going to the Ragulins... I've agreed to accept a position in their household, as housekeeper... manage their property, as it were.

LO: That's in Yashnevo, right? That's about 70 versts away. (Pause.) And so life in this house comes to an end...

VA: (Looking over the bundles.) So where can it be?... Maybe I packed it in the trunk... Yes, life in this house has come to an end... it's over and done...

LO: As for me, I'm off to Kharkov now. Right on this same train. A lot of business waiting. I'm leaving Yepikhodov to look after the property while I'm gone... I've hired him.

VA: Well, then!

LO: This time last year it was snowing already, if you recall, but this year it's nice and calm, sunny and bright. Only cold... About three below.

VA: I hadn't checked. (Pause.) And our thermometer's broken, besides. (Pause.)

Voice from outside, calling through the door: Yermolai Alekseyich!

LO: (Exactly as if he was waiting to be summoned by this call.) Coming! (Leaves quickly.)

(Varya, slumps down onto the floor, rests her head on a bundle of clothes, and weeps softly. The door opens, and Ranevskaya enters carefully.)

RA: Well? (Pause.) It's time to go.
(Not crying anymore, she has dried her eyes.) Yes, it's time, Mummy-dear. I'll make it to the Ragulins' later tonight, but we mustn't miss the train…

(Calling through the door.) Anya, get dressed!

(Anya enters, followed by Ghayev and Charlotte Ivanovna. Ghayev is wearing a warm overcoat with a fur collar and hood. The servants and drivers assemble. Yepikhodov fusses near the baggage.)

Now we can go. The road waits.

(Happy.) The road waits!

My friends, my good, my kind friends! As we leave this house forever, can I possibly remain silent, can I possibly restrain myself and keep quiet, and not give expression, in parting, to those emotions, which at this moment fill my entire being…

(Begging him.) Uncle!

Uncle-dear, don't!

(Forlorn.) Dupe with the yellow to the corner pocket!... I'm silent…

(Trofimov enters, then Lopakhin.)

Well, good people, it's time to go!

Yepikhodov, my coat!

I'll sit for just one minute longer. It's as if I never noticed them before, the walls in this house, the ceilings, and now I can't get my fill of them, I stare at them with such tender love…

I remember when I was six years old, on Trinity Sunday, sitting in this window here, and watching my father walk to the church…

Have they loaded all the things?

I think they have. (Addressing Yepikhodov, and putting on his coat.) So you make sure, Yepikhodov, that everything's in order.

(With a voice that is hoarse with emotion.) You can rest easy, Yermolai Alekseyich!

What's the matter with your voice?

I just drank some water, I must've swallowed something.
YA: (Scornfully.) Ignorance…

RA: Once we’re gone, there won’t be a soul left in this place…

LO: Until the spring.

VA: (Pulling an umbrella out of a bundle. It seems at first as if she is planning to swing it; Lopakhin pretends to be scared of her gesture.) No, no… I didn’t mean anything by it…

TR: Gentlemen, ladies, let’s go take our places in the carriages… It’s time! The train will be arriving shortly!

VA: There they are, Petya, your galoshes, by the suitcase. (With tears.) And look at how dirty they are, and so worn!

TR: (Puts on the galoshes.) Let’s go, gentlemen!

GH: (Profoundly embarrassed, afraid to start crying.) The train… station… Cross-shot up the middle, dupe with the white and into the pocket!…

RA: Let’s go!

LO: All here? No one left behind? (Locking the side door on the left.) The things are stored in here, it needs to be locked. Let’s go!…

RA: Good-bye, house! Good-bye, old life!

TR: Hello, new life! (Exits with Anya.)

(Varya casts a parting look around the room and leaves slowly. Yasha and Charlotte Ivanovna exit, with her little dog.)

LO: Until spring, then. After you, gentlemen… Until next time! (He leaves.)

(Lyubov Andreyevna and Ghayev remain alone onstage. It’s as if they had been waiting for this moment. They fling themselves into each other’s arms and sob with restraint, softly, as if afraid to be overheard.)

GH: (In despair.) My sister, my sister!…

RA: Oh, my dear, my tender, my beautiful orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness, farewell! Forgive us! Farewell!

Anya’s Voice: (Happy, summoning.) Mama!

Trofimov’s Voice: (Happy, animated.) Yoo-hoo!
RA: To gaze for one last time upon these walls, these windows... This room, that our sainted mother loved to walk in...

GH: My sister, my sister!

Anya's Voice: Mama!

Trofimov's Voice: Yoo-hoo!

RA: We're coming! (She exits.)

(The stage is empty. The doors are locked from outside, the sounds of the keys being turned in all the locks are heard. It becomes quiet. Through the silence, the dead and numbing sound of an axe striking on wood can be heard. It sounds solitary and wistful.

Footsteps. Through the doors on the right Fierce appears. He is dressed as usual, in a coat and white waistcoat, with shoes on his feet. He is ill.)

FI: (Going up to the door and testing the handle.) Locked. They're gone... (Sits down on a sofa.) Forgot all about me... It's nothing... I'll just sit here for a spell... I'll bet Leonid Andreyich forgot to wear his fur coat, wore his overcoat instead... (Sighs in concern.) I should have looked him over... Those young 'uns... All greenhorns! Sprouts!.. (Mutter something unintelligible.) Life's all done, just as if I never even lived it.... (He lays down.) I'll just lie here for a spell... You've got no strength left, nothing left, nothing... Why, you... dimwit! (He lies immobile.)

(A distinctive sound is heard from afar, as if coming from the heavens above. It is the sound of a string breaking, dying out, mournful. Silence comes, and all that can be heard is the sound of the axe, far away in the orchard, striking against wood.)

Curtain.