

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 Sergeyeovich 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 Sergeevich 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 surrondings.)* 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 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 drivell!

(*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 be 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, Poly, 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

ACT TWO

A field. An old, tiny [wooden] chapel, long abandoned and leaning crookedly; next to it, a well, large boulders or stones which evidently were grave markers at some time in the past, and an old bench. The road leading to GHAYEV's estate is in plain sight. Off to the side, a row of poplars loom dark and tall: they mark the edge of the cherry orchard. In the distance, a row of telegraph poles, and far, far away in the distance, on the horizon, the hazy outline of a large city, that can only be seen clearly on a fine, clear day. The sun will soon be setting. CHARLOTTE, YASHA and DUNYASHA are seated on the bench; YEPIKHODOV is standing by, playing a guitar. All sit there occupied with their individual thoughts. CHARLOTTE is wearing a man's old cap, the type that has a brim. She has taken her rifle down from one shoulder and is adjusting her belt buckle.

CH: (*Thoughtfully.*) I don't have a proper passport, I don't know how old I am, and so I keep thinking that I'm still a young girl. When I was just a small child, my father and my mama used to travel around the fairs and put on shows, very nice ones, in fact. I would perform with them, doing the *salto-mortale*, and assorted tricks. And then, when Papa and Mama passed away, I was taken in by a certain German lady, who began to teach me. Well. I grew up, and accepted a situation as a governess. But I have no idea who I am, where I come from... Who my parents were, maybe they were never married in a church... I don't know. I have no idea. (*She takes a cucumber out of her pocket and begins to munch on it.*) I know nothing at all. (*Pause.*) I have such a yearning to talk to someone, but there's no one... I have no one.

YE: (*Plays on his guitar and sings [a song about passionate love].*) "What good are you, world full of sounds, what good are foes or friends..." It's such fun to play the mandolin!

DU: That's not a mandolin, that's a guitar. (*Checks her make-up in a compact mirror, and dusts herself with powder, primping and preening.*)

YE: For an amorous fool driven crazy with love, it's a mandolin... "When only mutual love's hot heat can warm us in the end..."

(*Yasha begins to help out with the song.*)

CH: Such dreadful singers, these people... phooey! Like jackals.

DU: (*Addressing Yasha.*) Still, it is so lucky to get the chance to visit abroad.

YA: Yes, certainly. I cannot disagree with you. (*Yawns, then lights a cigar.*)

YE: Understandably so. Abroad they have everything already in complete complexion, and so it has been for quite some time now. Yes, indeedy.

YA: As well it should be.

YE: I am an informed, advanced human individual, I read a variety of excellent books, howsomever, I cannot no matter how much I exert myself fix upon any specific direction, what it is that I in fact at the heart of it desire, whether it is to live on, or perhaps rather to shoot myself in the head dead, to be perfectly plain, and so notwithstanding the other, I always make a point of carrying one with me, meaning a revolver. Here it is... (*He produces his revolver and shows it off.*)

CH: That's it. We're through here. I'll be going now. (*Raises her rifle back up to her shoulder, the way she was carrying it before.*) You, Yepikhodov, you are a very intelligent person, as you know, and also really quite terrifying: women must be falling madly in love with you right and left. Brrrr! (*She walks away.*) These brainiacs are all so stupid there's no one at all left to talk to... I'm always alone, all alone, there's no one out there for me and... and who I am, why I am, it's all a perfect mystery to me. (*She leaves gradually, not in any particular hurry.*)

YE: To be specific, without touching upon other subject matter, I must express this about myself, a propos, that fate conducts itself with me in a manner exhibiting not the slightest compassion, as a tempest unto a very small boat. If, shall we say, I err, then why is it that this morning I waken, as a for instance, and I see, there's an enormous spider sitting on my chest, of monumental proportions... This big (*indicating with both of his hands*). Or then again, another case in point, you take some cider to drink and there it is, wow, some absolutely indecent undesirable participation in the liquid, such as a cockroach. (*Pause.*) Have you read Buckley? (*Pause.*) I would like to disturb you, Avodtya Fyodorovna, if you permit, for a couple of words.

DU: Speak away.

YE: It would be desirous of me that it were private, so to speak... *(He sighs.)*

DU: *(As if shy or embarrassed.)* Very well... Only please bring my wrap first... I left it next to the bookcase... It's a little damp here...

YE: Very well, Miss... I'll bring it, Miss... Now I know what to do with my revolver...
(Takes his guitar and walks off, strumming.)

YA: Mr. Walking Calamity himself. A stupid man, just between the two of us.
(Yawns.)

DU: God forbid, he might shoot himself. *(Pause.)* I've become nervous, I keep worrying all the time. The masters' family brought me in to work in the household when I was just a little girl. I've lost my common ways, I'm no longer used to the way common people live, and see, my hands are perfectly, perfectly white, just like a young lady's. Just like the young miss's. I've become tender, so delicate, so noble, I'm afraid of everything...It frightens me. And if you, Yasha, were to deceive me, betray me, I don't know what might happen to my nerves.

YA: *(Kisses her.)* Fresh as a cucumber! Ripe for the plucking! Of course, every young maiden must be mindful of her virtue, and what I hate above all is when a young maid acts improperly, and does very naughty things.

DU: I am passionately in love with you, you are so educated, you can reason about any subject at all. *(Pause.)*

YA: *(Yawns.)* Yes, miss... In my book, it's like this: if a girl loves a man, that means she has no morals left. *(Pause.)* It's so nice to have a whole cigar to smoke in the fresh air. *(Listening.)* Someone is coming... It's the masters...

(Dunyasha throws her arms around him with abandon, for a brief clinch.)

YA: Go home, make believe you went for a dip in the river, take that path there. Otherwise they'll run into you and will get it in their heads that I was meeting you here for a tryst. I hate when that happens.

DU: That cigar's given me a headache.... *She leaves.)*

(Yasha remains, sitting by the chapel. Lyubov Andreyevna, Ghayev and Lopakhin enter.)

LO: You must come to a final decision. Time will not stand still for you. The question is really plain and simple. Are you willing to relinquish some land for vacation lots, or not? Just answer with a single word: yes, or no? Just one word!

RA: Who's smoking those revolting cigars here... *(Sits down.)*

GH: Since they've built the railroad through here, it's become very convenient. *(Sits down.)* Anytime we like, we can just go into the city and go out for a nice meal in a restaurant, just like to day... Yellow ball up the middle! I should really go home first and shoot a round...

RA: There'll be time for that later.

LO: Just one word! *(Pleading, almost begging.)* Come on, give me an answer!

GH: *(Yawns.)* Whazzat?

RA: *(Looking in side her coin purse.)* Yesterday there was a lot of money, and today there's hardly any left. My poor Varya is trying to conserve funds by feeding everyone with a thin milky broth; all the kitchen will serve the old folks are peas, and here I am mindlessly, senselessly spending what I have... *(She drops the coin purse, spilling the gold coins it contains.)* [The standard currency in Russia for this time among people with means were five- and ten-ruble gold coins, in addition to paper currency – M.A.] See, they're scattering... *(She's upset.)*

YA: Allow me, I'll collect them. *(He finds and picks up the coins.)*

RA: Do be so kind, Yasha. Why on earth did I agree to eat out in town? That restaurant of yours, with the music, was really quite bad; the tablecloths smelled of soap... Why drink so much, Lonya? Why eat so much? Why speak so much? Today, at the restaurant, you went on and on again, and all of it was inappropriate. The seventies, the decadents. And with whom? To discuss the decadents with busboys!

LO: Yes.

GH: *(Waves his hand dismissively.)* I am evidently incorrigible... *(Addressing Yasha, with considerable irritation.)* What is it with you, why are you always busy doing something every time I turn around... I can't get away from you!

YA: *(Laughing.)* Every time I hear the sound of your voice, I can't stop laughing.

GH: (*Addressing his sister.*) It's either me, or him...

RA: Go home, Yasha, please, go...

YA: (*Returning the coin purse to Lyubov Andreyevna.*) Right away, any moment now. (*Barely able to contain his laughter.*) This instant... (*He leaves.*)

LO: Your estate is going to be bought by Deriganov, the tycoon. They say he will be attending the auction in person.

RA: Where did you hear that?

LO: It's the talk of the town.

GH: The aunt in Yaroslavl promised to send money, but when and how much she will send, nobody knows...

LO: How much will she send? A hundred thousand? Two hundred?

RA: Well... Maybe fifteen-twenty thousand, even that would be a boon.

LO: Forgive me, but such irresponsible people, as you, sir, as you, madam, such unbusinesslike, such strange people, are new to my experience. I have never come across this type before. I am telling you, in plain Russian: your estate is being sold. And you act as if you don't understand in the least.

RA: But what are we to do? Teach us: what?

LO: I've been teaching you every day. Every day I keep repeating myself to you, over and over. You need to take your cherry orchard, and your landholdings, and let it be carved up to lease out parcels for vacation homes. And you need to do this right now, without delay, just as quickly as possible – the auction is right around the corner! You must understand! As soon as you make a final decision, to allow the vacation homes to be built, you will be able to obtain any amount of money you desire, and that will mean you are saved.

RA: Vacation homes, vacationers – that's so banal, so vulgar. Forgive me.

GH: I couldn't agree with you more.

LO: I'm either going to break down in a sobbing heap, or start shrieking at the top of my lungs, or perhaps I'll faint. I can't do this anymore! You're torturing me! (*Addressing Ghayev.*) You're a fishwife!

GH: Whazzit?

LO: A stupid, common, dimwitted peasant woman! (*Wants to leave.*)

RA: (*Frightened.*) No, don't leave, stay, please, my dear old boy. I'm asking you. Maybe all together we can come up with some kind of a plan.

LO: There's no plan to come up with!

RA: Please, don't leave. I'm asking you. It's easier, it's more cheerful with you here. Even so... (*Pause.*) I keep waiting for something to happen, as if the whole house is about to come crashing down on my head.

GH: (*Deep in thought.*) Dupe to the corner pocket... Cross-shot up the middle...

RA: We've sinned an awful lot in our lives...

LO: What sins can you possibly...

GH: (*Popping a candy drop into his mouth.*) It's been said I spent my entire fortune on candy drops... Ate it all up.

RA: Oh, my sins. My sins... I was always profligate with my money, utterly out of control, spent it like a woman mad, and married a man, who only made debts. Champagne killed my husband – he drank dreadfully – and to my great misfortune I fell in love with another man, I took up with him, and right at that time – it was the first punishment, a blow directly to the head – right here, right on the river here... my little boy drowned. And I fled the country, went abroad, left completely, intending never to return, never to see this river again... I clenched my eyes shut and fled, headlong, unheeding, and *he* gave chase... Mercilessly, cruelly, brutally *he* chased me down. I bought a villa near Menton, in France, and then *he* fell ill there. And for three years I knew no respite, neither by day, nor by night. He wore me out with his sickness; my soul dried up. And then a year ago, I sold that little villa to cover the debts and moved to Paris. And that was where he finally plucked me clean, deserted me, took up with another woman. I tried to poison myself... Such foolishness, the shame of it all... And all of a sudden, I had this longing to go home to Russia, back to my homeland, to see my little girl again... (*She wipes away her tears.*) Lord, oh, Lord, be merciful, forgive me my sins! Stop punishing me! (*She takes a telegram out of her pocket.*) It came today again, from Paris...

He's asking for forgiveness, begging me to come back... (*Rips the telegram into pieces.*) Sounds like music somewhere near here. (*Listens.*)

GH: That'd be our famous Jewish orchestra. Remember? The four violins, the flute and the bass fiddle?

RA: They're still around? We should invite them to come round sometime, have a little evening with music.

LO: (*Listening.*) I can't hear them... (*Humming softly, sings a phrase or two.*) " Give them money and the Germans turn you Russians into French." (*Laughs.*) I saw a play yesterday, at the theatre, it was very funny.

RA: Nothing whatsoever funny about it, I shouldn't wonder. You shouldn't be watching plays, you should have a good close look at yourselves, instead. How drab your lives are, how many unnecessary things you have to say.

LO: That's true. Truth be told, we lead the lives of hopeless fools... (*Pause.*) My old man was a peasant, a proper idiot, he understood nothing, he taught me nothing, never even thought to get me an education of any kind, all he did was beat on me when he was drunk, and with a stick, too. And in essence I am the same kind of dolt and idiot he was. I never learned anything, never went to school, my handwriting's atrocious, when I write a line I'm ashamed of other people, I write just like a pig.

RA: You need a wife, my friend.

LA: Yes... It's true.

RA: You should marry our Varya. She's a good girl.

LO: Yes.

RA: She's uncomplicated. I took her in from a common family, she works all day long, she's used to it, but most importantly, she loves you. And you like her, too – you've liked her for years.

LO: Well, then? I don't object... She's a good girl. (*Pause.*)

GH: I'm being offered a position with the bank. Six thousand a year... D'you hear?

RA: You? Up to it? Stay home...

(*Fierce arrives. He's brought a long overcoat.*)

FI: (*Addressing Ghayev.*) Would you be so kind, sir, as to wear this. It's damp.

GH: (*Donning the coat.*) I'm fed up with you, man.

FI: Stuff and nonsense... Going off in the morning like that, and never saying a word about it. (*Inspects him from head to foot.*)

RA: You've aged so much, Fierce!

FI: You called, Madam?

LO: She's just saying you've aged a whole lot!

FI: I've been alive for ages. Small wonder. They were going to marry me off already before your Papa had ever even been born... (*Laughs.*) And by the time the freedom came, I was already head butler. And so I didn't go along with the freedom laws, I stayed with the masters, instead... (*Pause.*) I remember the day, too: everyone so happy, but nobody knowing what it was they were all so happy about.

LO: It was a very good system, wasn't it? At least there was a sense of decency, and limits? You could always have the offenders whipped. [*He's deliberately taunting the old man – M.A.*]

FI: (*Not quite hearing.*) You betcha. The peasants had their masters, and the masters had their peasants. Everybody knew where they fit, but now it's all smashed to pieces, bits o' this and that all mixed up together, and no sorting us out. Can't make heads or tails of us. No sense.

GH: Be quiet already, Fierce. Enough! I need to go into the city again tomorrow. They promised to introduce me to a general who might be able to advance me some money on a bond.

LO: Nothing will come of it. You won't cover even the interest, so you might as well stop worrying about it.

RA: That's just his fantasies. There's no general.
(*Trofimov, Anya and Varya enter.*)

GH: And here come some more of us.

AN: That's Mama sitting over there.

RA: (*Tenderly.*) Over here, over here... My darlings... (*She hugs Anya and Varya.*)

If only you knew how much I love you both. Sit down right here, side by side, like that. (*Everyone sits down.*)

LO: Our eternal student, always out promenading with the young ladies.

TR: And that's none of your business.

LO: He'll be fifty years old tomorrow, but he's still studying away.

TR: Drop your stupid jokes already.

LO: What're you angry about, you ridiculous man?

TR: Just get off my case, already, man.

LO: (*Laughing.*) Might I then inquire, sir, what exactly do you think of me?

TR: What I think, Yermolai Alekseyich, is this, then: you are a wealthy man. You will soon be a millionaire. Because as with the natural metabolism there is a need for the vicious predator to exist, so that he might devour everything that comes his way, well, that's precisely how it is with you. You're just another necessary kind of predator. (*Everyone laughs.*)

VA: Petya, why don't you tell us about the planets, instead.

RA: No. Let's continue yesterday's discussion, instead.

TR: What about?

GH: About the traits of the proud man.

TR: We spoke at length yesterday, but we came to nothing. The proud man, according to you, has some kind of mystical dimension. You may be right in your own way, but if we reason it through more simply, without convoluted concepts, then really there is no pride to speak of in humanity. How could there be, rationally, when human beings are not especially well developed in a physiological sense, to begin with, as an organism; if, in its overwhelming preponderance mankind is coarse, rough, unintelligent, profoundly wretched. We must stop admiring ourselves in the mirror, singing our praises. We must only toil.

GH: You're still going to die.

TR: Who knows? And what does it really mean, to die? Maybe human beings have a hundred senses, and at the time of death only five actually perish, the five that we know of. Maybe the remaining ninety-five senses continue to function.

RA: Petya! You're so brilliant!

LA: (*Sarcastically.*) The wonder of it all!

TR: Mankind marches forward, perfecting its strengths. Everything that is unattainable today shall someday become accessible, familiar, intimately known... All that is necessary is to toil away, to help those who are searching for the truth with all the strength we can muster. Here, in Russia, very few actually toil at this time. The overwhelming preponderance of that intelligentsia, of the educated upper and middle classes that I know, is not searching for anything at all, and are incapable of any kind of productive work as of yet. They call themselves educated and enlightened, but they still address their servants using the informal *you*, they treat the peasants as if they were animals, they fail in school, they read nothing serious, they do nothing of any value whatsoever, they only speak of the sciences, they understand very little about art. They are all serious, everyone wears a stern expression on their face, everyone talks only of important matters, philosophizes, and at the same time, the overwhelming preponderance of us, ninety-nine out of every hundred, live like savages. The least little thing sets them off, they're at each other's throats, knocking out teeth, cursing, eating revolting meals, sleeping in filth, in stifling houses, with bedbugs everywhere, and foul smells, and dampness, immorality, impurity... And, evidently, all our hearty conversations are just a device to draw attention away from ourselves, and to distract others. Show me, where are our child care institutions for the people, the reading rooms we keep talking about? These are only details in fashionable novels; they don't exist at all in real life. All that does exist is filth, vulgarity, an Asiatic mentality and customs... I fear and I feel an antipathy towards very serious faces. So let's don't talk!

LO: You know, I'm up before five every morning, I work from morning until late at night, and I am constantly putting my own and other people's money to use, and, well, I see what kind of people there are out there. All it takes is for you to start

doing something productive, and it immediately becomes clear, how few honest, decent people there actually are. Sometimes, when I can't sleep, I think: "Lord, You have given us these vast forests, these endless fields, these vanishing horizons, and, living here, we ourselves ought by rights to be giants..."

RA: You want us to become giants... They are only good as characters in fairy tales, the rest of the time they're scary.

(Yepikhodov crosses the stage far upstage. He is playing the guitar.)

RA: *(Pensive.)* Here comes Yepikhodov....

AN: *(Pensive.)* Here comes Yepikhodov.

GH: Gentlemen, ladies, the sun has set.

TR: Yes.

GH: *(In a voice that is not too loud, yet sounding as if he were giving a public recitation of some poetic work.)* Oh, Nature, so miraculous, you are resplendent in your eternal glow, so beautiful and yet so indifferent, you, whom we call our Mother, being and death are made one in you, you live and you destroy...

VA: *(Pleading.)* Uncle-dear!

AN: Uncle, you're at it again!

TR: Stick to the kick shot up the middle, why don't you. It's much better.

GH: I'm silent. I'm silent.

(Everyone simply sits, lost in their own thoughts. Silence reigns. Only Fierce, quietly muttering under his breath as is his custom, can be heard. Suddenly, a single distinctive sound rings out, coming from afar, almost as if it were coming from on high in the heavens. It is a sound similar to that of a breaking string [on a string instrument], a sound that dies down slowly, and is tinged with sadness.)

RA: What was that?

LO: I don't know. Might be a cable, somewhere far away, in the mines, a cable that failed. But somewhere very far away.

GH: Or maybe a bird of some kind... a crane or some such.

TR: Or maybe a hoot owl...

RA: *(With a slight convulsion.)* Something unpleasant about it. *(Pause.)*

FI: Same sort of doings just before the calamity: owls screeching, the samovar blasting away like some trumpet... There was not stopping it.

GH: Before what calamity?

FI: Before they proclaimed the freedom. *(Pause.)*

RA: You know what, my friends? Let's go in, the night time's already closing in on us. *(Addressing Anya.)* There are tears in your eyes... What's the matter with you, my darling girl? *(She embraces her.)*

AN: It's not important, Mama. It's nothing at all.

TR: Someone is coming.

(A Passerby appears, with a white, well-worn brimmed cap on his head, and wearing a winter coat; he is slightly drunk.)

BY: Might I make so bold as to inquire, is it possible for me by crossing here to arrive at the railway station?

GH: Yes, it is. Just follow this road here.

BY: I am most heart-rendingly obliged to you. *(After an awkward little cough.)* Such splendid weather... *(Reciting a bit of verse.)* My brother, my suffering brother... Come out to the Volga, whose groans... *(Addressing Varya.)* Mademoiselle, do permit a hungry Russian to receive a monetary contribution of thirty or so kopeks...

(Varya, alarmed by this development, cries out in fright.)

LO: *(Angry.)* All manner of indecency has its natural limits of propriety.

RA: *(Completely taken aback by the effrontery.)* Take this... here you are... *(Searches in her coin purse.)* There's no silver left... Never mind, it's all the same, here's a gold piece for you...

BY: I am most heart-rendingly obliged to you! *(Exits.)*

(Laughter all around.)

VA: *(Alarmed.)* I'm leaving... I'm leaving... Oh, Mummy-dear, the servants at home have nothing to eat, and you just gave him a gold piece.

RA: Well, what's to be done with silly old me! When we get home, I'll give you everything I've got with me. Yermolai Alekseyich, you will lend me some more money, won't you?

LO: At your service.

RA: Gentlemen, let's go, it's time. Oh, and by the way, Varya, we've just promised you in marriage, congratulations.

VA: *(Through tears.)* That's nothing to kid about, Mother.

LO: Hopelia [*accidental or deliberate mispronunciation of Ophelia's name – M.A.*], to a nunnery, go...

GH: I've got the shakes, look, my hands! It's been too long since I've held a cue in them.

LO: Hopelia, o, nymph, remember me in thy orisons!

RA: Let's go, gentlemen. It will be supertime soon.

VA: He frightened me. My heart is just pounding.

LO: Gentlemen, ladies, I remind you: the cherry orchard will be auctioned off on the 22nd of August. Think about it!... Think!

(Everyone leaves, except for Trofimov and Anya.)

AN: *(Laughing.)* That stranger who just came by gave Varya a good fright, and now at last we can be alone. We should thank him.

TR: Varya's afraid we'll fall in love, and so she spends all her time, every day, keeping us company. She can't get it through her narrow head that we are beyond love. The goal and purpose of our life together is to circumvent any fleeting, picayune illusions that interfere with personal liberty and personal happiness. We go forward! We march on, relentlessly, towards that bright star that burns up ahead in the distance! Nothing and no one can keep us from going further and further! We cannot be controlled! We keep on going! Keep up with us, friends!

AN: *(Clapping her hands in admiration.)* You speak so beautifully! You say such good things! *(Pause.)* It's so lovely here tonight!

TR: Yes, the weather's astonishingly fine.

AN: What have you done to me, Petya... Why is it I can no longer love the cherry orchard the way I used to before. I used to love it with such tenderness. It seemed to me as if there couldn't be a finer place anywhere on earth, than our orchard.

TR: All of Russia is our orchard. The earth is enormous and beautiful, it has many magnificent places all over. *(Pause.)* Just think, Anya: your grandfather, your great-grandfather and all your ancestors owned serfs, they held living and breathing souls as property. How can it be that you don't hear human voices crying out to you from every cherry in this orchard, from its every leaf... Oh, it's too horrible for words. Your orchard is a terrifying, hideous place, and when at night you happen to walk through it, the old bark on the trees glimmers dimly and it seems as if the cherry trees are seeing dreams of what they witnessed one hundred, two hundred years ago, and these monstrous hallucinations must torment them. Why even speak of it! We are backward, we are at least two hundred years behind everyone else in our development, we have exactly nothing to show for our efforts after all this, we have no defined, politically correct attitude to our own past; we merely keep on philosophizing, complaining of our gloomy dispositions, or drinking vodka.. And it's so simple, really! In order to begin to live in the present, we must first atone for the past, we must bury it – and it can only be atoned for by suffering, by toiling away at something, by some extraordinary, never ending toil. I hope you can understand this, Anya.

AN: The house in which we live has not been ours, by rights, for quite some time, now. And I will leave it, I promise you. I give you my word.

TR: If you have any keys to the household, you must toss them in the well, and just leave. Be as free as the wind.

AN: *(Enraptured.)* That was so beautiful, what you just said!

TR: Believe me, Anya, believe you me! I'm not even thirty yet, I'm young still, I'm still just a student, but I have already endured so much! Come winter, I am always hungry, ill, upset, as poor as any beggar and – fate has tossed me and flung me about all over the place! And still, no matter where I was, at every moment, by day and by night, my soul was always overflowing with inexpressible premonitions. I

can sense happiness about to descend, Anya, I can feeling it rising, coming at me,
I can already see it...

AN: (*Pensive.*) The moon is rising.

(*Yepikhodov can be heard, playing the same mournful song on the guitar. The moon rises. Somewhere over by the poplars, Varya is searching for Anya, and calling out to her: "Anya, where are you?"*)

TR: Yes, the moon is rising. (*Pause.*) There it is, our happiness, here it comes, drawing ever nearer and nearer, I can hear its footsteps already. And if we do not live to see it, and never recognize it, what difference does it make? Where's the trouble? Someone else will see it!

Varya's Voice: Anya! Where are you?

TR: There's that Varya again! (*Angry.*) It's an outrage!

AN: What of it? Let's just go down to the river. It's so nice there.

TR: Let's go, then. (*The walk off together.*)

Varya's Voice: Anya! Anya!

Curtain

ACT THREE

The drawing room, separated by an archway from the great room, or salon. A chandelier has been lit. The Jewish Orchestra can be heard playing from the foyer – the same Jewish Orchestra that had been mentioned in passing during Act Two. An evening party is in progress. A *grand rond* dance is being danced in the great room [or main hall]. The dancing pairs come out into the drawing room in orderly dancing pairs, with the first couple, leading the way, being SIMEONOV-PISHCHIK with CHARLOTTE IVANOVNA. The second pair consists of TROFIMOV with LYUBOV RANEVSKAYA. The third is ANYA with THE POSTAL CLERK. The fourth is VARYA with the STATION AGENT. And so forth. VARYA is crying softly, so that she is wiping her eyes dry even as she dances. DUNYASHA appears in the last dancing couple. They promenade, as the dance requires, through the drawing room. PISHCHIK is calling out the steps: "*Grand rond, balancez!*" and "*Les cavaliers a genou et remerciez vos dames!*" [At the last instruction, the gentlemen are expected to get down on one knee and thank their lady; this is obviously an antique dance – M.A.]

(*Fierce enters in full evening dress, wearing a tail-coat, and brings seltzer water for the dancers on a tray. Pishchik and Trofimov pass into the drawing room.*)

SP: I'm full-blooded, a thoroughbred through and through, I've already had a stroke, twice, it's a real effort for me to dance, but, as they say, once you've joined the pack, you must run and bark and wag your tail with the best of them. I have the health of a horse, you know. My sainted parent, a regular comedian, God rest his soul, when asked about our ancestry used to reply that our ancient Simeonov-Pishchik family is in fact progeny descended from the selfsame horse Caligula had installed in the Senate of Rome... (*He sits.*) Problem is, we're out of money! A hungry dog believes in one thing only, and that's meat... [*Falls into a narcoleptic fit, snoring, and instantly wakes up again.*] I'm the same way... I've got just one thing on my mind, and that's money...

TR: You know, it's interesting, there really is something horse-like about your figure...

SP: And what of it, then? The horse is a good animal... You can always sell a horse...

(The sounds of a billiard game can be heard coming from an adjoining room.)

Varya appears under the archway leading into the main hall.)

TR: *(Taunting her.)* Madame Lopakhin! Madame Lopakhin!

VA: *(Retaliating with hostility.)* The mangy gentleman!

TR: Yes, I am the mangy gentleman in question, and proud of it, too!

VA: *(In bitter recriminations, thinking aloud.)* Here they went and hired these musicians, but how are we going to pay them? *(She leaves.)*

TR: *(Addressing Pishchik.)* If all that energy you've expended over your entire lifetime to scrounge up the money to pay the interest on your mortgage could have been spent instead on something else, why you probably could have turned the world upside down.

SP: Nietzsche... the philosopher... the greatest, the most celebrated... a man of immense intellect, says in his writings that it is possible to counterfeit money.

TR: Have you read any Nietzsche?

SP: Well... My Dashenka tells me. And I'm in such an extreme state of ruin, right now, that I might as well start counterfeiting money... I have to pay them 310 rubles the day after tomorrow... I've already got the first 130...*(Patting his pockets anxiously, alarmed.)* My money's gone! I've lost it! *(Through tears.)* Where's my money? *(Overjoyed.)* Here it is! Behind the lining!... Just thinking about it made me break out in a cold sweat...

(Lyubov Andreyevna and Charlotte Ivanovna enter.)

RA: *(Humming to the melody of a lezginka [a type of colourful ethnic dance common to parts of the Caucasus, with Persian and Levantine motifs – M.A.]* What's taking Leonid so long? What can he be up to in the city? *(Addressing Dunyasha.)* Dunyasha, please offer the musicians some tea...

TR: The auction was cancelled, most likely.

RA: The musicians picked the wrong day to drop by, and we've picked the wrong time for a dance [*alternative: ball, or even shindig – M.A.*]... Well, it's all right, it's nothing, really... *(She sits down and keeps on singing softly to the music.)*

CH: *(Offering Pishchik a deck of cards.)* Here's a deck of cards. Select one of them in your mind, and remember which one it is.

SP: Done.

CH: Now shuffle the deck. Very good. Give it to me, my dear Mister Pishchik. Ein, zwei, drei! You will find your card in your side pocket...

SP: *(Producing the card from his side pocket.)* The eight of spades, absolutely right! *(Amazed.)* Just think!

CH: *(Holding the deck of cards out on the palm of her hand, offering it to Trofimov.)* Quickly, now, tell me which card is on top?

TR: Well, then – how about the queen of spades?

CH: Yes! [*Presumably, she shows the necessary card – M.A.*]*(Addressing Pishchik.)* And you, sir? Which card is on top?

SP: The ace of hearts.

CH: Yes! [*Again, presumably, she shows the necessary card – M.A.*]*(Strikes her palm with the other hand, and the deck of cards vanishes.)* And what exceptionally fine weather we are having here today! *(A mysterious female voice answers her, as if speaking from under the floorboards: "Oh, yes, the weather today is simply marvellous!")* You are so good, really, so ideal... *(The 'voice' appears to reply: "And you, too, Miss, are very dear to me.")*

SA: *(Applauds.)* Bravo, madam ventriloquist!

SP: *(Still amazed.)* Just think! Oh, most charming Charlotte Ivanovna... I am simply enamoured...

CH: Enamoured? *(Shrugging her shoulders.)* Do you actually think yourself capable of love? Guter Mensch, aber schlechter Musikant.

TR: *(Slapping Pishchik on the shoulder.)* You really are a kind of horse, you know...

CH: Attention, please: one more trick. *(Takes a plaid throw from a chair.)* Look here, a very nice plaid throw, I am interested in selling it... *(Shaking the blanket slightly as she holds it up.)* Are there any buyers?

SP: *(Amazed.)* Just think!

CH: Ein, zwei, drei! *(She quickly raises the lowered plaid throw: Anya is standing where it used to be. Anya curtsies and runs to her mother, embraces her then flees back into the great room or large hall, as everyone cheers her on in delight.)*

RA: *(Applauds.)* Bravo, bravo!

CH: And one more time! Ein, zwei, drei! *(She lifts up the plaid throw: this time it is Varya who is revealed. Varya bows.)*

SP: Just think!

CH: The end! *(She throws the light blanket over Pishchik, curtsies and flees into the great hall.)*

SP: *(Following her, in a hurry to catch up.)* The wicked girl... Isn't she something? Isn't she something? *(Exits.)*

RA: But Leonid's not back yet. What can he be doing all this time over in the city, I can't imagine! Because it must all be over by now, either the estate's been sold or the auction's been cancelled, so why is he keeping us in the dark all this time, then?

VA: *(Attempting to console her.)* Dear Uncle's bought it, I'm certain of it.

TR: *(Mocking.)* Oh, yes.

VA: Our great-aunt sent him a power-of-attorney, so that he could buy it in her name and transfer all the debts to her with it. She did it for Anya's sake. And I'm certain, God will help, Uncle will make the purchase.

RA: The Yaroslavl great-aunt sent fifteen thousand to buy the estate in her name – because she doesn't trust us to do it in our own – but those fifteen thousand would not even have been enough to cover the interest on the debts. *(Covering her face with her hands.)* My fate is being sealed today, my fate...

TR: *(Taunting Varya.)* Madam Lopakhin!

VA: *(Retaliating with hostility.)* And you, the permanent undergraduate! You've been expelled from university twice already!

RA: Why are you losing your temper, Varya? He's teasing you about Lopakhin, so? You are free to marry Lopakhin, if you like – he is a good man, an interesting

and attractive man. But if you don't want to marry him, you don't have to. Nobody is forcing you to do anything, sweetie pie.

VA: It's a matter I take very seriously, Mummy-dear, to be perfectly honest. He is a good man, and I like him.

RA: So marry him, then. Why wait? I just don't understand!

VA: But, Mummy-dear, I can't exactly propose to him myself, you know. It's been two years now that everyone's been after me about him, everyone keeps going on and on about us. But he, himself, now: he either says nothing at all, or he kids around. I understand. He's getting richer, all the time, growing his fortune, he's busy with his deals – he has no time for me. If I had any money, even just a little, just 100 rubles, I'd leave all this behind and go somewhere far away. I'd go enter a convent.

TR: Oh, the rapture!

VA: *(Addressing Trofimov.)* Students are meant to be smart! *(In a kinder tone, with tears.)* My, how ugly you've become, Petya, how you've aged! *(Addressing Lyubov Andreyevna, and not weeping anymore.)* There's just one thing, though: I'm addicted to work, now, Mummy-dear. I have to be doing something useful, every minute.

(Yasha enters.)

YA: *(Barely able to keep from bursting out laughing.)* Yepikhodov's broken one of the billiard cues! *(Exits.)*

VA: Why is Yepikhodov even here? Who gave him permission to play billiards? I don't understand these people anymore... *(Exits.)*

RA: Don't tease her anymore, Petya. Can't you see she's suffering enough already...

TR: It's just that she's so awfully diligent, sticking her nose in other people's business. All summer long, she kept after Anya and me, terrified that we might somehow start up an affair. What business is it of hers, anyway? And besides which, I never gave her cause to suspect. I am way above any kind of vulgar overtures! We are well above and beyond love!

RA: Whereas evidently I am well beneath love. (*Highly agitated.*) So why isn't Leonid here yet? All I want to know is: has the estate been sold, or not? Such a calamity seems so unbelievable to me, that I don't even rightly know what to think; I'm at a loss... I might just start shrieking now... Or I might have some other kind of stupid fit. Save me, Petya. Say something to me, say something...

TR: Whether or not the estate was sold today, or not – does any of it really matter? Does it make any difference in the great scheme of things? It's all over and done with anyway, and has been for a long time. There's no turning back. That road has all grown over... Calm yourself, my fear woman. Let's not deceive ourselves. For once in your life, look the truth straight in the eyes.

RA: What truth? You see where the truth is, and where it isn't, but I'm like someone who has lost their sight, I can't see at all, I see nothing. You bravely decide all your important questions, but tell me, old boy, isn't that because you are still so young, so that you have never yet had to undergo the reality of the suffering that each one of your important questions presupposes? Aren't all your answers theoretical? You look bravely ahead at life, and isn't that because you neither see nor expect anything terrible to come your way, seeing as life remains as yet hidden from your youthful eyes? You are braver, more honest, a more profound thinker than any of us, but won't you ponder on this, can't you have at least one fingertip's worth of magnanimity and compassion, to spare me? Don't you see: I was born here, my father and mother lived here, my grandfather, too; I love this house; I cannot conceive of my life without this cherry orchard – and if it is so utterly necessary to sell them, then by all means sell me, too, together with this orchard... (*She embraces Trofimov and kisses him on the forehead.*) After all, my son drowned here... (*She weeps.*) Have some pity on me, won't you, you good, kind, decent man!

TR: You know, I sympathize, with all my soul.

RA: Yes, but you must express it in another way, another way... (*Takes out her handkerchief, and a telegram falls out.*) My soul is heavy today. You can't even imagine. There's too much noise here for me right now, my soul trembles with each

little sound – and yet I can't go and be alone in my rooms, the silence and solitude terrify me. Don't judge me harshly, please, Petya... I love you as one of my own. I would be glad to let you marry Anya, I swear, but, my dear old boy, you need to graduate first, you really must complete your studies. You do nothing all day long, you're not really working, you just let fate toss you around from point to point, it's so strange to watch... That is the truth, though, isn't it? Isn't it? And, really, you must do something about that beard of yours, if you're trying to grow one, somehow... (*Laughs.*) You're so funny!

TR: (*Picking up the telegram that fell out.*) I have no desire to be a pretty boy.

RA: That's a telegram from Paris. I get them each and every day. Yesterday, and today. That wild, besotted man is ill again, he's ailing once more... He asks me to forgive him, he begs me to come join him, and truly it probably would be the right thing for me to do, to go back to Paris again, to be by his side for a time. Petya, you look stern, but what is to be done, my dear old boy, what am I to do, he is old, he is lonely, he is wretched – who will look after him there? Who will keep him from making dreadful mistakes, who will give him his medicine on time? And what's the use hiding anything, or trying to keep it quiet: I love the man, that's obvious. I love him, I love him... It's like a stone around my neck, and it's taking me down into the depths, but I love this stone, and I cannot live without him. (*She presses Trofimov's hand.*) Don't think badly of me, Petya, say nothing to me, don't say a word...

TR: (*Through tears.*) For God's sake, then, forgive me for my candour, but my dear woman: the man robbed you blind!

RA: No, no, no, no: you mustn't talk that way... (*She covers her ears.*)

TR: But he's a no-good, miserable, worthless cad – you are the only one who doesn't see it! He is a mean, dishonourable, pathetic creature of no consequence, a complete nonentity...

RA: (*Angered by these words, but restraining herself.*) You're 26 or 26 years old already, but you're still just a schoolboy at heart!

TR: And so what!

RA: You need to be a man already, at your age, you need to be able to understand what people who love actually feel. And you need to have some experience of love, too... You need be to falling in love, regularly! (*Quite angry.*) Yes, yes! And you don't actually have any kind of true purity to speak of, you're merely puritanically fastidious, a funny sort of oddity, a deformed kind of...

TR: (*Horried and scandalized at the sight of her losing control.*) What's gotten into her? What is she saying?

RA: "I'm above and beyond love!" You're not above and beyond love, you're just a... a dimwit, that's Fierce's word for it. At your age, and no lover in sight!

TR: (*Even more horrified.*) But this is dreadful! What is she saying? (*He strides quickly into the other room, clutching his head.*) This is just dreadful... I can't, I won't, I'm leaving... (*Leaves, and immediately comes back.*) It's all over between the two of us! (*Leaves, exiting towards the foyer.*)

RA: (*Calling after him.*) Petya, wait! You funny man, I was just kidding! Petya! (*Someone's racing footsteps can be heard, followed by the sound of going quickly down the stairs, and then suddenly the crashing sounds of a bad fall down the stairs. Anya and Varya cry out in alarm at first, but then quickly laughter breaks out.*)

RA: What was that?

(*Anya comes running in.*)

AN: (*Laughing.*) Petya fell down the stairs! (*She runs out.*)

RA: He's such an oddball, that Petya... [*Presumably, based on the following stage direction, she steps out to join the others and see what is happening – M.A.*]
(*The Station Agent stops in the middle of the main hall – where the dancing was taking place – and begins reading aloud Leo Tolstoy's work, The Sinful Woman. People are listening, but no sooner has he read a few sentences, than the musicians in the foyer strike up a waltz, and the reading stops abruptly. Everyone dances some more. Trofimov, Anya, Varya and Lyubov Andreyevna come back into the drawing room from the main hall.*)

RA: Come now, Petya... come now, my pure soul... I'm asking you to forgive me... Let's go dance... (*She and Petya dance together.*)

(*Anya and Varya dance together.*)

(*Fierce comes in, setting his walking stick or cane by the side doors. Yasha also comes in from the other room, and watches the dancing.*)

YA: What's the matter, Grandpa?

FI: I'm feeling poorly. Used to be when we threw a ball, we'd have generals, barons, admirals dancing here, and now the best we can do is send for the station agent and the postal clerk, and even they aren't thrilled to come. I'm feeling weak. My strength's leaving me. The late master, the grandfather that was, he treated us all with sealing wax, whatever the ailment. I've been taking my sealing wax every day now for the past twenty years, maybe more. Who knows, maybe it's keeping me alive.

YA: I'm sick of you, Gramps. (*Yawns.*) Make up your mind and keel over already.

FI: You! You... dimwit! (*Muttering to himself.*)

(*Trofimov and Ranevskaya dance first in one room, then in the next, coming back into the drawing room that is the main part of the stage.*)

RA: Merci. I'll sit for a bit... (*She sits down.*) I'm tired.

(*Anya enters.*)

AN: (*Agitated.*) Just now, in the kitchen, a man was saying that the cherry orchard's been sold already, that it sold today.

RA: Sold to whom?

AN: He didn't say. He left. (*Anya and Trofimov dance, and move into the other room.*)

YA: That was just some old man talking nonsense. A stranger.

FI: And no sign of Leonid Andreyich, yet, he hasn't come back. He's wearing a little coat, too, *demi-saison* [*he uses the French fashion term for a lighter spring or early autumn overcoat – M.A.*]. He'll catch cold if we're not careful. Oh, these young 'uns, these greenhorns!

RA: I'm going to die right here, right now. Go, Yasha, go find out who the buyer was.

YA: But I'm telling you, he's gone already, the old blabbermouth. *(Laughs.)*

RA: *(Slightly annoyed.)* Now, what on earth are you laughing at? What are you so pleased with yourself about?

YA: It's just that Yepikhodov cracks me up. There's nothing to him. Just a walking-talking calamity. One big disaster.

RA: Fierce, if they sell the estate, where will you go?

FI: I'll go wherever you tell me.

RA: Why is your face so drawn? Are you unwell? You should just go to bed, you know...

FI: Yes... *(Scoffing.)* I'll go off to bed, and who'll take over for me? Who'll serve, who'll take charge of things? I'm the only one in the whole house...

YA: *(Addressing Ranevskaya.)* Lyubov Andreyevna! If I may, permit me to appeal to you with my request, do be so kind! If you go back to Paris, won't you take me with you, please, merciful lady! It is positively impossible for me to stay here. *(Looking around him and speaking softly so as not to be overheard.)* There's no need to elaborate, you see it yourself, plain as day, it's an uneducated land, an immoral people, and on top of that it's dull, there's nothing to do here, the food they serve us in the kitchen is atrocious, and here's Fierce stalking me, muttering all kinds of inappropriate words. Please take me with you, away from here, do be so kind!

(Pishchik enters.)

SP: Might I make so bold... as to invite you... for a bit of a waltz, my ravishing lady... *(Ranevskaya goes off with him.)* Oh, enchanting one, you know, I will take 180 rubles from you, yes, I will, you know I must... I must have them... *(Dances with her.)* A mere 180 rubles, don't you know... *(They dance into the next room.)*

YA: *(Singing softly to the music.)* "But can you understand my agitated soul..."

(In the other room, Charlotte Ivanovna, dressed in a grey silk top hat and checked trousers, leaps and tumbles and waves her arms about. There are cries of approval: "Bravo, Charlotte Ivanovna!")

DU: *(Stopping to powder her nose and cheeks.)* Miss has commanded me to dance, as there are many gentlemen and not so many ladies present... But the dancing makes my head go around, and my heart is pounding. Fierce Nikolayevich, the clerk from the post office just said some things to me that took my breath away altogether.

(The music dies down.)

FI: What did that whippersnapper say to you?

DU: You, he said, are just like a flower.

YA: *(Yawning.)* Such ignorance... *(Exits.)*

DU: Like a flower... I am such a delicate young lady, too, I just love hearing those tender kinds of words...

FI: Watch out, you'll lose your head and repent of it.

(Yepikhodov enters.)

YE: *(Addressing Dunyasha.)* You, Avdotya Fyodorovna, you no longer wish to see me... as if I were some kind of insect. *(Sighs.)* Oh, life!

DU: What is it you wish?

YE: Indubitably, you may be entirely right. *(Sighs.)* But, of course, if we look at it from such a point of view, if I might be allowed to put it in this manner, you, then, if you'll pardon my being frank, you have brought me altogether into a state of the spirit whereby. I know my fortune to be such, each and every day some calamity befalls me, but I have long become accustomed to such this my lot in life, and so I am able even to smile in the face of this fate of mine. Yet you gave me your word, and even though I...

DU: I beg of you, let's talk of this some other time, let me be for now. I'm busy daydreaming. *(She plays with her fan.)*

YE: Every day some kind of disaster, but, if I do say so myself, notwithstanding and howsomever, I still smile and that's all there is to it, I even laugh.

(Varya enters from the other room.)

VA: You haven't left yet, Semyon? You really are terribly inconsiderate, you know.
(Addressing Dunyasha.) You go, Dunyasha, leave. *(Addressing Yepikhodov.)*

First you're playing billiards and you break a cue, then you're wandering around among the company, as if you're one of the guests.

YE: You've no right, if I pardon the expression, to scold me, no right howsoever.

VA: I'm not scolding you, I'm just pointing it out. All you know to do, it seems like, is go around and about from place to place. You don't actually do any work. We hired you to help out in the estate office, but nobody actually ever sees you do anything.

YE: *(Hurt by the reprimand.)* Whether I'm working, walking on the grounds, eating or playing billiards, only persons of more advanced understanding and rank are entitled to judge.

VA: You dare speak to me that way! *(Losing her temper.)* You dare? So, according to you, I have no understanding? Then get out of here altogether! This instant!

YE: *(Frightened.)* I must ask you to express yourself in a more delicate manner, if you please!

VA: *(Beside herself.)* This instant! Get out! Out with you! Out! *(He retreats towards the door, she follows advancing on him.)* You walking calamity! Don't let me even hear you were around here! I don't ever want to lay eyes on you again!

(Yepikhodov has left the stage. His voice can be heard beyond the door, replying: "I'm going to complain!" She continues.) You're coming back here then, are you?
(She grabs Fierce's cane or staff, menacingly.) Go ahead, try... Just try... I'll show you... Oh, so you are coming back! Are you now? Here you are, then... *(Swings at him, and at this very moment Lopakhin enters.)*

LO: Very much obliged to you.

VA: *(Embarrassed, angry and taunting.)* My apologies.

LO: Quite all right, miss. My humble thanks for the welcome, and the hospitality.

VA: Don't mention it. *(Steps away, then turns back, and asks, in a gentler, kinder tone.)* Did I hurt you?

LO: It's all right, not terribly. Of course, the bump will probably be somewhat gigantic.

Voices in the next room: Lopakhin is here! Yermolai Alekseyich!

SP: Finally, seeing is believing... *(Exchanges affectionate kisses in greeting with Lopakhin.)* I can smell some pretty fine cognac on you, my dear chap, attaboy! We've been having a ball here, too, old friend.

(Ranevskaya enters.)

RA: Is that you, Yermolai Alekseyich? Why so long? Where's Leonid?

LO: Leonid Andreyich came with me, he's coming...

RA: *(Becoming agitated.)* So what happened? Did they hold the auction? Tell us already!

LO: *(Awkwardly, afraid to allow his joy to show through.)* The auction was over by four... We were late for the train, we had to wait for the nine-thirty... *(Sighs deeply.)* Oof! My head's a little dizzy...

(Ghayev enters. He carries parcels in his right hand and wipes his tears away with his left.)

RA: Well, Lonya? Well? Lonya? *(Impatiently, with tears.)* Hurry up and say something, oh, for God's sake...

GH: *(Does not answer her, only waves at her with his hand in a dismissive gesture.)*

(Addressing Fierce, tearfully.) Here, take these... There's anchovies here, and herring from Kerch... I've had nothing to eat all day... God, how I suffered! *(The door to the billiard room is open. The sound of careening balls is heard, and Yasha's voice: "Seven! And eighteen!" Ghayev's expression changes. He stops crying as soon as he hears the sounds of the balls striking.)* I'm awfully tired.

Fierce, get me a change of clothes. *(Goes off to his rooms, crossing through the main hall, and followed by Fierce.)*

SP: So how was the auction? Tell us already!

RA: Was the cherry orchard sold?

LO: Sold.

RA: So who bought it?

LO: I bought it. *(Pause.)*

(Lyubov Andreyevna is dismayed to hear this, even stricken. She would collapse were it not for the armchairs and tables available for her to lean on. Varya takes the bundle of keys from their place at her waist, throws them on the floor in the middle of the room, and leaves.)

LO: I bought it! Wait a moment, ladies, gentlemen, do be so kind, my head is in a kind of foggy state right now, I can hardly speak... *(Laughs.)* So we got to the auction, and there's Deriganov. Leonid Andreyich only has the fifteen thousand, but Deriganov offers thirty thousand over and above the debt, straight out of the gate. So I see how it is, and I take him on, and I offer forty. So then he offers forty-five. And I up it to fifty-five. So he's raising his bids by five, and I'm raising mine by ten, each time... And so it ends. I wound up giving ninety thousand for it, over whatever is owed, and so it's mine. The cherry orchard is mine now! Mine! *(Laughing wildly.)* Mine! My God, my Lord God, the cherry orchard is mine! Tell me I'm drunk, I'm out of my mind, that I'm imagining all of this... *(Stamping his feet with joy.)* Don't laugh! If my father and my grandfather could get up out of their coffins and see the whole thing, how their Yermolai, the Yermolai they beat, the Yermolai who was barely literate, who ran around barefoot in the winter, how that same Yermolai bought this estate, this estate that's more beautiful than any other place on earth. I bought this estate, where my father and grandfather were slaves, where they weren't even allowed to set foot in the kitchens. I must be asleep, this is just some kind of hallucination, it's just some illusion... It is the fruit of your imagination, shrouded in the gloom of mystery... *(Picks up the keys from where they were flung, and smiles kindly.)* She threw the keys down, to demonstrate that she's no longer the mistress of the household, she's no longer in charge here... *(Jangles the keys.)* Well, and so what? It's all the same. *(The orchestra can be heard tuning up again.)* Hey, musicians, play away, I desire to hear you! Come one, come all, you're all invited to see how Yermolai Lopakhin swings the first axe in the orchard, and how the cherry trees come crashing down to the ground, one

after another! We'll build a mess of vacation houses here, and our children and grandchildren will live to see that new way of life... Play, music!
(And the music plays. Ranevskaya sinks down into a chair and weeps bitter tears.)

LO: *(Reproachfully.)* Why, why didn't you take my advice? My poor woman, my good woman, it's too late now. You can't bring it back. *(With tears.)* Oh, just let it go quickly, let's get it over with, let's just change our *[alternative: dysfunctional]* awkward, unhappy life somehow.

SP: *(Taking Lopakhin by the arm, speaking quietly.)* She's weeping. Let's go into the next room, give her some privacy... Let's go... *(Takes him by the arm and leads him away into the next room.)*

LO: What's wrong? Music, play, more crisply, now! I want everything my way now! *(With irony.)* The new landowner is here, the cherry orchard's master! *(Slightly jostling an end table, so that a candelabrum is almost tipped over.)* It's all right, I can pay for it! I can pay for anything! *(Leaves with Pishchik.)*
(No one remains in the two rooms, except for Ranevskaya, seated, hunched up into a shadow of herself, weeping bitterly. The music plays softly. Anya and Trofimov enter quickly. Anya goes to her mother's side and kneels before her. Trofimov stays by the archway that leads into the other room.)

AN: Mama!.. Mama, are you crying? My sweet, good, kind, wonderful Mama, my beautiful mother, I love you... I bless your name. The cherry orchard's been sold, it's gone, that's true, it's true, but don't weep, Mama, you still have your life ahead of you, you have your good, kind, pure soul... Come with me, come, my darling, come away with me from here! We'll plant a new garden, a whole new orchard, better than this one, even more luxurious, and you will live to see it, you'll understand, and then you will know serenity, and happiness... a deep joy will come over you, will settle into your soul, like the sun sinking down towards the evening, and you will smile again, Mama! Come now, my darling! Come!

Curtain

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.*) 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: "Waaah! 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.

VA: *(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...

RA: *(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.)

RA: Now we can go. The road waits.

AN: *(Happy.)* The road waits!

GH: 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...

AN: *(Begging him.)* Uncle!

VA: Uncle-dear, don't!

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

(Trofimov enters, then Lopakhin.)

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

LO: Yepikhodov, my coat!

RA: 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...

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

RA: Have they loaded all the things?

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

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

LO: What's the matter with your voice?

YE: 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!.. (*Mutters 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.