



THE SEAGULL

ANTON CHEKHOV

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THE SEAGULL

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY
ANTON PAVLOVICH CHEKHOV

1895

The Seagull By Anton Pavlovich Chekhov.

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TRIGORIN. She would not do that now. Her son has been behaving outrageously. First he attempted suicide, and now I hear he is going to challenge me to a duel, though what his provocation may be I can't imagine. He is always sulking and sneering and preaching about a new form of art, as if the field of art were not large enough to accommodate both old and new without the necessity of jostling.

MASHA. It is jealousy. However, that is none of my business. [A pause. JACOB walks through the room carrying a trunk; NINA comes in and stands by the window] That schoolteacher of mine is none too clever, but he is very good, poor man, and he loves me dearly, and I am sorry for him. However, let me say good-bye and wish you a pleasant journey. Remember me kindly in your thoughts. [She shakes hands with him] Thanks for your goodwill. Send me your books, and be sure to write something in them; nothing formal, but simply this: "To Masha, who, forgetful of her origin, for some unknown reason is living in this world." Good-bye. [She goes out.]

NINA. [Holding out her closed hand to TRIGORIN] Is it odd or even?

TRIGORIN. Even.

NINA. [With a sigh] No, it is odd. I had only one pea in my hand. I wanted to see whether I was to become an actress or not. If only some one would advise me what to do!

TRIGORIN. One cannot give advice in a case like this. [A pause.]

NINA. We shall soon part, perhaps never to meet again. I should like you to accept this little medallion as a remembrance of me. I have had your initials engraved on it, and on this side is the name of one of your books: "Days and Nights."

TRIGORIN. How sweet of you! [He kisses the medallion] It is a lovely present.

NINA. Think of me sometimes.

TRIGORIN. I shall never forget you. I shall always remember you as I saw you that bright day—do you recall it?—a week ago, when you wore your light dress, and we talked together, and the white seagull lay on the bench beside us.

NINA. [Lost in thought] Yes, the sea-gull. [A pause] I beg you to let me see you alone for two minutes before you go.

She goes out to the left. At the same moment ARKADINA comes in from the right, followed by SORIN in a long coat, with his orders on his breast, and by JACOB, who is busy packing.

ARKADINA. Stay here at home, you poor old man. How could you pay visits with that rheumatism of yours? [To TRIGORIN] Who left the room just now, was it Nina?

TRIGORIN. Yes.

ARKADINA. I beg your pardon; I am afraid we interrupted you. [She sits down] I think everything is packed. I am absolutely exhausted.

TRIGORIN. [Reading the inscription on the medallion] "Days and Nights, page 121, lines 11 and 12."

JACOB. [Clearing the table] Shall I pack your fishing-rods, too, sir?

TRIGORIN. Yes, I shall need them, but you can give my books away.

JACOB. Very well, sir.

TRIGORIN. [To himself] Page 121, lines 11 and 12. [To ARKADINA] Have we my books here in the house?

ARKADINA. Yes, they are in my brother's library, in the corner cupboard.

TRIGORIN. Page 121—[He goes out.]

SORIN. You are going away, and I shall be lonely without you.

ARKADINA. What would you do in town?

SORIN. Oh, nothing in particular, but somehow—[He laughs] They are soon to lay the corner-stone of the new court-house here. How I should like to leap out of this minnow-pond, if but for an hour or two! I am tired of lying here like an old cigarette stump. I have ordered the carriage for one o'clock. We can go away together.

ARKADINA. [After a pause] No, you must stay here. Don't be lonely, and don't catch cold. Keep an eye on my boy. Take good care of him; guide

him along the proper paths. [A pause] I am going away, and so shall never find out why Constantine shot himself, but I think the chief reason was jealousy, and the sooner I take Trigorin away, the better.

SORIN. There were—how shall I explain it to you?—other reasons besides jealousy for his act. Here is a clever young chap living in the depths of the country, without money or position, with no future ahead of him, and with nothing to do. He is ashamed and afraid of being so idle. I am devoted to him and he is fond of me, but nevertheless he feels that he is useless here, that he is little more than a dependent in this house. It is the pride in him.

ARKADINA. He is a misery to me! [Thoughtfully] He might possibly enter the army.

SORIN. [Gives a whistle, and then speaks with hesitation] It seems to me that the best thing for him would be if you were to let him have a little money. For one thing, he ought to be allowed to dress like a human being. See how he looks! Wearing the same little old coat that he has had for three years, and he doesn't even possess an overcoat! [Laughing] And it wouldn't hurt the youngster to sow a few wild oats; let him go abroad, say, for a time. It wouldn't cost much.

ARKADINA. Yes, but—However, I think I might manage about his clothes, but I couldn't let him go abroad. And no, I don't think I can let him have his clothes even, now. [Decidedly] I have no money at present.

SORIN laughs.

ARKADINA. I haven't indeed.

SORIN. [Whistles] Very well. Forgive me, darling; don't be angry. You are a noble, generous woman!

ARKADINA. [Weeping] I really haven't the money.

SORIN. If I had any money of course I should let him have some myself, but I haven't even a penny. The farm manager takes my pension from me and puts it all into the farm or into cattle or bees, and in that way it is always lost for ever. The bees die, the cows die, they never let me have a horse.

ARKADINA. Of course I have some money, but I am an actress and my expenses for dress alone are enough to bankrupt me.

SORIN. You are a dear, and I am very fond of you, indeed I am. But something is the matter with me again. [He staggers] I feel giddy. [He leans against the table] I feel faint, and all.

ARKADINA. [Frightened] Peter! [She tries to support him] Peter! dearest! [She calls] Help! Help!

TREPLIEFF and MEDVIEDENKO come in; TREPLIEFF has a bandage around his head.

ARKADINA. He is fainting!

SORIN. I am all right. [He smiles and drinks some water] It is all over now.

TREPLIEFF. [To his mother] Don't be frightened, mother, these attacks are not dangerous; my uncle often has them now. [To his uncle] You must go and lie down, Uncle.

SORIN. Yes, I think I shall, for a few minutes. I am going to Moscow all the same, but I shall lie down a bit before I start. [He goes out leaning on his cane.]

MEDVIEDENKO. [Giving him his arm] Do you know this riddle? On four legs in the morning; on two legs at noon; and on three legs in the evening?

SORIN. [Laughing] Yes, exactly, and on one's back at night. Thank you, I can walk alone.

MEDVIEDENKO. Dear me, what formality! [He and SORIN go out.]

ARKADINA. He gave me a dreadful fright.

TREPLIEFF. It is not good for him to live in the country. Mother, if you would only untie your purse-strings for once, and lend him a thousand roubles! He could then spend a whole year in town.

ARKADINA. I have no money. I am an actress and not a banker. [A pause.]

TREPLIEFF. Please change my bandage for me, mother, you do it so gently.

ARKADINA goes to the cupboard and takes out a box of bandages and a bottle of iodoform.

ARKADINA. The doctor is late.

TREPLIEFF. Yes, he promised to be here at nine, and now it is noon already.

ARKADINA. Sit down. [She takes the bandage off his head] You look as if you had a turban on. A stranger that was in the kitchen yesterday asked to what nationality you belonged. Your wound is almost healed. [She kisses his head] You won't be up to any more of these silly tricks again, will you, when I am gone?

TREPLIEFF. No, mother. I did that in a moment of insane despair, when I had lost all control over myself. It will never happen again. [He kisses her hand] Your touch is golden. I remember when you were still acting at the State Theatre, long ago, when I was still a little chap, there was a fight one day in our court, and a poor washerwoman was almost beaten to death. She was picked up unconscious, and you nursed her till she was well, and bathed her children in the washtubs. Have you forgotten it?

ARKADINA. Yes, entirely. [She puts on a new bandage.]

TREPLIEFF. Two ballet dancers lived in the same house, and they used to come and drink coffee with you.

ARKADINA. I remember that.

TREPLIEFF. They were very pious. [A pause] I love you again, these last few days, as tenderly and trustingly as I did as a child. I have no one left me now but you. Why, why do you let yourself be controlled by that man?

ARKADINA. You don't understand him, Constantine. He has a wonderfully noble personality.

TREPLIEFF. Nevertheless, when he has been told that I wish to challenge him to a duel his nobility does not prevent him from playing the coward. He is about to beat an ignominious retreat.

ARKADINA. What nonsense! I have asked him myself to go.

TREPLIEFF. A noble personality indeed! Here we are almost quarrelling over him, and he is probably in the garden laughing at us at this very moment, or else enlightening Nina's mind and trying to persuade her into thinking him a man of genius.

ARKADINA. You enjoy saying unpleasant things to me. I have the greatest respect for that man, and I must ask you not to speak ill of him in my presence.

TREPLIEFF. I have no respect for him at all. You want me to think him a genius, as you do, but I refuse to lie: his books make me sick.

ARKADINA. You envy him. There is nothing left for people with no talent and mighty pretensions to do but to criticise those who are really gifted. I hope you enjoy the consolation it brings.

TREPLIEFF. [With irony] Those who are really gifted, indeed! [Angrily] I am cleverer than any of you, if it comes to that! [He tears the bandage off his head] You are the slaves of convention, you have seized the upper hand and now lay down as law everything that you do; all else you strangle and trample on. I refuse to accept your point of view, yours and his, I refuse!

ARKADINA. That is the talk of a decadent.

TREPLIEFF. Go back to your beloved stage and act the miserable ditch-water plays you so much admire!

ARKADINA. I never acted in a play like that in my life. You couldn't write even the trashiest music-hall farce, you idle good-for-nothing!

TREPLIEFF. Miser!

ARKADINA. Rag-bag!

TREPLIEFF sits down and begins to cry softly.

ARKADINA. [Walking up and down in great excitement] Don't cry! You mustn't cry! [She bursts into tears] You really mustn't. [She kisses his forehead, his cheeks, his head] My darling child, forgive me. Forgive your wicked mother.

TREPLIEFF. [Embracing her] Oh, if you could only know what it is to have lost everything under heaven! She does not love me. I see I shall never be able to write. Every hope has deserted me.

ARKADINA. Don't despair. This will all pass. He is going away to-day, and she will love you once more. [She wipes away his tears] Stop crying. We have made peace again.

TREPLIEFF. [Kissing her hand] Yes, mother.

ARKADINA. [Tenderly] Make your peace with him, too. Don't fight with him. You surely won't fight?

TREPLIEFF. I won't, but you must not insist on my seeing him again, mother, I couldn't stand it. [TRIGORIN comes in] There he is; I am going. [He quickly puts the medicines away in the cupboard] The doctor will attend to my head.

TRIGORIN. [Looking through the pages of a book] Page 121, lines 11 and 12; here it is. [He reads] "If at any time you should have need of my life, come and take it."

TREPLIEFF picks up the bandage off the floor and goes out.

ARKADINA. [Looking at her watch] The carriage will soon be here.

TRIGORIN. [To himself] If at any time you should have need of my life, come and take it.

ARKADINA. I hope your things are all packed.

TRIGORIN. [Impatiently] Yes, yes. [In deep thought] Why do I hear a note of sadness that wrings my heart in this cry of a pure soul? If at any time you should have need of my life, come and take it. [To ARKADINA] Let us stay here one more day!

ARKADINA shakes her head.

TRIGORIN. Do let us stay!

ARKADINA. I know, dearest, what keeps you here, but you must control yourself. Be sober; your emotions have intoxicated you a little.

TRIGORIN. You must be sober, too. Be sensible; look upon what has happened as a true friend would. [Taking her hand] You are capable of self-sacrifice. Be a friend to me and release me!

ARKADINA. [In deep excitement] Are you so much in love?

TRIGORIN. I am irresistibly impelled toward her. It may be that this is just what I need.

ARKADINA. What, the love of a country girl? Oh, how little you know yourself!

TRIGORIN. People sometimes walk in their sleep, and so I feel as if I were asleep, and dreaming of her as I stand here talking to you. My imagination is shaken by the sweetest and most glorious visions. Release me!

ARKADINA. [Shuddering] No, no! I am only an ordinary woman; you must not say such things to me. Do not torment me, Boris; you frighten me.

TRIGORIN. You could be an extraordinary woman if you only would. Love alone can bring happiness on earth, love the enchanting, the poetical love of youth, that sweeps away the sorrows of the world. I had no time for it when I was young and struggling with want and laying siege to the literary fortress, but now at last this love has come to me. I see it beckoning; why should I fly?

ARKADINA. [With anger] You are mad!

TRIGORIN. Release me.

ARKADINA. You have all conspired together to torture me to-day. [She weeps.]

TRIGORIN. [Clutching his head desperately] She doesn't understand me! She won't understand me!

ARKADINA. Am I then so old and ugly already that you can talk to me like this without any shame about another woman? [She embraces and kisses him] Oh, you have lost your senses! My splendid, my glorious friend, my love for you is the last chapter of my life. [She falls on her knees] You are my pride, my joy, my light. [She embraces his knees] I

could never endure it should you desert me, if only for an hour; I should go mad. Oh, my wonder, my marvel, my king!

TRIGORIN. Some one might come in. [He helps her to rise.]

ARKADINA. Let them come! I am not ashamed of my love. [She kisses his hands] My jewel! My despair! You want to do a foolish thing, but I don't want you to do it. I shan't let you do it! [She laughs] You are mine, you are mine! This forehead is mine, these eyes are mine, this silky hair is mine. All your being is mine. You are so clever, so wise, the first of all living writers; you are the only hope of your country. You are so fresh, so simple, so deeply humourous. You can bring out every feature of a man or of a landscape in a single line, and your characters live and breathe. Do you think that these words are but the incense of flattery? Do you think I am not speaking the truth? Come, look into my eyes; look deep; do you find lies there? No, you see that I alone know how to treasure you. I alone tell you the truth. Oh, my very dear, you will go with me? You will? You will not forsake me?

TRIGORIN. I have no will of my own; I never had. I am too indolent, too submissive, too phlegmatic, to have any. Is it possible that women like that? Take me. Take me away with you, but do not let me stir a step from your side.

ARKADINA. [To herself] Now he is mine! [Carelessly, as if nothing unusual had happened] Of course you must stay here if you really want to. I shall go, and you can follow in a week's time. Yes, really, why should you hurry away?

TRIGORIN. Let us go together.

ARKADINA. As you like. Let us go together then. [A pause. TRIGORIN writes something in his note-book] What are you writing?

TRIGORIN. A happy expression I heard this morning: "A grove of maiden pines." It may be useful. [He yawns] So we are really off again, condemned once more to railway carriages, to stations and restaurants, to Hamburger steaks and endless arguments!

SHAMRAEFF comes in.

SHAMRAEFF. I am sorry to have to inform you that your carriage is at the door. It is time to start, honoured madam, the train leaves at two-five. Would you be kind enough, madam, to remember to inquire for me where Suzdaltzeff the actor is now? Is he still alive, I wonder? Is he well? He and I have had many a jolly time together. He was inimitable in "The Stolen Mail." A tragedian called Izmailoff was in the same company, I remember, who was also quite remarkable. Don't hurry, madam, you still have five minutes. They were both of them conspirators once, in the same melodrama, and one night when in the course of the play they were suddenly discovered, instead of saying "We have been trapped!" Izmailoff cried out: "We have been rapped!" [He laughs] Rapped!

While he has been talking JACOB has been busy with the trunks, and the maid has brought ARKADINA her hat, coat, parasol, and gloves. The cook looks hesitatingly through the door on the right, and finally comes into the room. PAULINA comes in. MEDVIEDENKO comes in.

PAULINA. [Presenting ARKADINA with a little basket] Here are some plums for the journey. They are very sweet ones. You may want to nibble something good on the way.

ARKADINA. You are very kind, Paulina.

PAULINA. Good-bye, my dearie. If things have not been quite as you could have wished, please forgive us. [She weeps.]

ARKADINA. It has been delightful, delightful. You mustn't cry.

SORIN comes in through the door on the left, dressed in a long coat with a cape, and carrying his hat and cane. He crosses the room.

SORIN. Come, sister, it is time to start, unless you want to miss the train. I am going to get into the carriage. [He goes out.]

MEDVIEDENKO. I shall walk quickly to the station and see you off there. [He goes out.]

ARKADINA. Good-bye, all! We shall meet again next summer if we live. [The maid servant, JACOB, and the cook kiss her hand] Don't forget me. [She gives the cook a rouble] There is a rouble for all three of you.

THE COOK. Thank you, mistress; a pleasant journey to you.

JACOB. God bless you, mistress.

SHAMRAEFF. Send us a line to cheer us up. [TO TRIGORIN] Good-bye, sir.

ARKADINA. Where is Constantine? Tell him I am starting. I must say good-bye to him. [To JACOB] I gave the cook a rouble for all three of you.

All go out through the door on the right. The stage remains empty. Sounds of farewell are heard. The maid comes running back to fetch the basket of plums which has been forgotten. TRIGORIN comes back.

TRIGORIN. I had forgotten my cane. I think I left it on the terrace. [He goes toward the door on the right and meets NINA, who comes in at that moment] Is that you? We are off.

NINA. I knew we should meet again. [With emotion] I have come to an irrevocable decision, the die is cast: I am going on the stage. I am deserting my father and abandoning everything. I am beginning life anew. I am going, as you are, to Moscow. We shall meet there.

TRIGORIN. [Glancing about him] Go to the Hotel Slavianski Bazar. Let me know as soon as you get there. I shall be at the Grosholski House in Moltchanofka Street. I must go now. [A pause.]

NINA. Just one more minute!

TRIGORIN. [In a low voice] You are so beautiful! What bliss to think that I shall see you again so soon! [She sinks on his breast] I shall see those glorious eyes again, that wonderful, ineffably tender smile, those gentle features with their expression of angelic purity! My darling! [A prolonged kiss.]

The curtain falls.

Two years elapse between the third and fourth acts.

ACT IV

A sitting-room in SORIN'S house, which has been converted into a writing-room for TREPLIEFF. To the right and left are doors leading into inner rooms, and in the centre is a glass door opening onto a terrace. Besides the usual furniture of a sitting-room there is a writing-desk in the right-hand corner of the room. There is a Turkish divan near the door on the left, and shelves full of books stand against the walls. Books are lying scattered about on the windowsills and chairs. It is evening. The room is dimly lighted by a shaded lamp on a table. The wind moans in the tree tops and whistles down the chimney. The watchman in the garden is heard sounding his rattle. MEDVIEDENKO and MASHA come in.

MASHA. [Calling TREPLIEFF] Mr. Constantine, where are you?
[Looking about her] There is no one here. His old uncle is forever asking for Constantine, and can't live without him for an instant.

MEDVIEDENKO. He dreads being left alone. [Listening to the wind]
This is a wild night. We have had this storm for two days.

MASHA. [Turning up the lamp] The waves on the lake are enormous.

MEDVIEDENKO. It is very dark in the garden. Do you know, I think that old theatre ought to be knocked down. It is still standing there, naked and hideous as a skeleton, with the curtain flapping in the wind. I thought I heard a voice weeping in it as I passed there last night.

MASHA. What an idea! [A pause.]

MEDVIEDENKO. Come home with me, Masha.

MASHA. [Shaking her head] I shall spend the night here.

MEDVIEDENKO. [Imploringly] Do come, Masha. The baby must be hungry.

MASHA. Nonsense, Matriona will feed it. [A pause.]

MEDVIEDENKO. It is a pity to leave him three nights without his mother.

MASHA. You are getting too tiresome. You used sometimes to talk of other things besides home and the baby, home and the baby. That is all I ever hear from you now.

MEDVIEDENKO. Come home, Masha.

MASHA. You can go home if you want to.

MEDVIEDENKO. Your father won't give me a horse.

MASHA. Yes, he will; ask him.

MEDVIEDENKO. I think I shall. Are you coming home to-morrow?

MASHA. Yes, yes, to-morrow.

She takes snuff. TREPLIEFF and PAULINA come in. TREPLIEFF is carrying some pillows and a blanket, and PAULINA is carrying sheets and pillow cases. They lay them on the divan, and TREPLIEFF goes and sits down at his desk.

MASHA. Who is that for, mother?

PAULINA. Mr. Sorin asked to sleep in Constantine's room to-night.

MASHA. Let me make the bed.

She makes the bed. PAULINA goes up to the desk and looks at the manuscripts lying on it. [A pause.]

MEDVIEDENKO. Well, I am going. Good-bye, Masha. [He kisses his wife's hand] Good-bye, mother. [He tries to kiss his mother-in-law's hand.]

PAULINA. [Crossly] Be off, in God's name!

TREPLIEFF shakes hands with him in silence, and MEDVIEDENKO goes out.

PAULINA. [Looking at the manuscripts] No one ever dreamed, Constantine, that you would one day turn into a real author. The magazines pay you well for your stories. [She strokes his hair.] You have

grown handsome, too. Dear, kind Constantine, be a little nicer to my Masha.

MASHA. [Still making the bed] Leave him alone, mother.

PAULINA. She is a sweet child. [A pause] A woman, Constantine, asks only for kind looks. I know that from experience.

TREPLIEFF gets up from his desk and goes out without a word.

MASHA. There now! You have vexed him. I told you not to bother him.

PAULINA. I am sorry for you, Masha.

MASHA. Much I need your pity!

PAULINA. My heart aches for you. I see how things are, and understand.

MASHA. You see what doesn't exist. Hopeless love is only found in novels. It is a trifle; all one has to do is to keep a tight rein on oneself, and keep one's head clear. Love must be plucked out the moment it springs up in the heart. My husband has been promised a school in another district, and when we have once left this place I shall forget it all. I shall tear my passion out by the roots. [The notes of a melancholy waltz are heard in the distance.]

PAULINA. Constantine is playing. That means he is sad.

MASHA silently waltzes a few turns to the music.

MASHA. The great thing, mother, is not to have him continually in sight. If my Simon could only get his remove I should forget it all in a month or two. It is a trifle.

DORN and MEDVIEDENKO come in through the door on the left, wheeling SORIN in an arm-chair.

MEDVIEDENKO. I have six mouths to feed now, and flour is at seventy kopecks.

DORN. A hard riddle to solve!

MEDVIEDENKO. It is easy for you to make light of it. You are rich enough to scatter money to your chickens, if you wanted to.

DORN. You think I am rich? My friend, after practising for thirty years, during which I could not call my soul my own for one minute of the night or day, I succeeded at last in scraping together one thousand roubles, all of which went, not long ago, in a trip which I took abroad. I haven't a penny.

MASHA. [To her husband] So you didn't go home after all?

MEDVIEDENKO. [Apologetically] How can I go home when they won't give me a horse?

MASHA. [Under her breath, with bitter anger] Would I might never see your face again!

SORIN in his chair is wheeled to the left-hand side of the room.

PAULINA, MASHA, and DORN sit down beside him. MEDVIEDENKO stands sadly aside.

DORN. What a lot of changes you have made here! You have turned this sitting-room into a library.

MASHA. Constantine likes to work in this room, because from it he can step out into the garden to meditate whenever he feels like it. [The watchman's rattle is heard.]

SORIN. Where is my sister?

DORN. She has gone to the station to meet Trigorin. She will soon be back.

SORIN. I must be dangerously ill if you had to send for my sister. [He falls silent for a moment] A nice business this is! Here I am dangerously ill, and you won't even give me any medicine.

DORN. What shall I prescribe for you? Camomile tea? Soda? Quinine?

SORIN. Don't inflict any of your discussions on me again. [He nods toward the sofa] Is that bed for me?

PAULINA. Yes, for you, sir.

SORIN. Thank you.

DORN. [Sings] "The moon swims in the sky to-night."

SORIN. I am going to give Constantine an idea for a story. It shall be called "The Man Who Wished—L'Homme qui a voulu." When I was young, I wished to become an author; I failed. I wished to be an orator; I speak abominably, [Exciting himself] with my eternal "and all, and all," dragging each sentence on and on until I sometimes break out into a sweat all over. I wished to marry, and I didn't; I wished to live in the city, and here I am ending my days in the country, and all.

DORN. You wished to become State Councillor, and—you are one!

SORIN. [Laughing] I didn't try for that, it came of its own accord.

DORN. Come, you must admit that it is petty to cavil at life at sixty-two years of age.

SORIN. You are pig-headed! Can't you see I want to live?

DORN. That is futile. Nature has commanded that every life shall come to an end.

SORIN. You speak like a man who is satiated with life. Your thirst for it is quenched, and so you are calm and indifferent, but even you dread death.

DORN. The fear of death is an animal passion which must be overcome. Only those who believe in a future life and tremble for sins committed, can logically fear death; but you, for one thing, don't believe in a future life, and for another, you haven't committed any sins. You have served as a Councillor for twenty-five years, that is all.

SORIN. [Laughing] Twenty-eight years!

TREPLIEFF comes in and sits down on a stool at SORIN'S feet. MASHA fixes her eyes on his face and never once tears them away.

DORN. We are keeping Constantine from his work.

TREPLIEFF. No matter. [A pause.]

MEDVIEDENKO. Of all the cities you visited when you were abroad, Doctor, which one did you like the best?

DORN. Genoa.

TREPLIEFF. Why Genoa?

DORN. Because there is such a splendid crowd in its streets. When you leave the hotel in the evening, and throw yourself into the heart of that throng, and move with it without aim or object, swept along, hither and thither, their life seems to be yours, their soul flows into you, and you begin to believe at last in a great world spirit, like the one in your play that Nina Zarietchnaya acted. By the way, where is Nina now? Is she well?

TREPLIEFF. I believe so.

DORN. I hear she has led rather a strange life; what happened?

TREPLIEFF. It is a long story, Doctor.

DORN. Tell it shortly. [A pause.]

TREPLIEFF. She ran away from home and joined Trigorin; you know that?

DORN. Yes.

TREPLIEFF. She had a child that died. Trigorin soon tired of her and returned to his former ties, as might have been expected. He had never broken them, indeed, but out of weakness of character had always vacillated between the two. As far as I can make out from what I have heard, Nina's domestic life has not been altogether a success.

DORN. What about her acting?

TREPLIEFF. I believe she made an even worse failure of that. She made her debut on the stage of the Summer Theatre in Moscow, and afterward made a tour of the country towns. At that time I never let her out of my sight, and wherever she went I followed. She always attempted great and difficult parts, but her delivery was harsh and monotonous, and her gestures heavy and crude. She shrieked and died well at times, but those were but moments.

DORN. Then she really has a talent for acting?

TREPLIEFF. I never could make out. I believe she has. I saw her, but she refused to see me, and her servant would never admit me to her rooms. I

appreciated her feelings, and did not insist upon a meeting. [A pause] What more can I tell you? She sometimes writes to me now that I have come home, such clever, sympathetic letters, full of warm feeling. She never complains, but I can tell that she is profoundly unhappy; not a line but speaks to me of an aching, breaking nerve. She has one strange fancy; she always signs herself "The Sea-gull." The miller in "Rusalka" called himself "The Crow," and so she repeats in all her letters that she is a sea-gull. She is here now.

DORN. What do you mean by "here?"

TREPLIEFF. In the village, at the inn. She has been there for five days. I should have gone to see her, but Masha here went, and she refuses to see any one. Some one told me she had been seen wandering in the fields a mile from here yesterday evening.

MEDVIEDENKO. Yes, I saw her. She was walking away from here in the direction of the village. I asked her why she had not been to see us. She said she would come.

TREPLIEFF. But she won't. [A pause] Her father and stepmother have disowned her. They have even put watchmen all around their estate to keep her away. [He goes with the doctor toward the desk] How easy it is, Doctor, to be a philosopher on paper, and how difficult in real life!

SORIN. She was a beautiful girl. Even the State Councillor himself was in love with her for a time.

DORN. You old Lovelace, you!

SHAMRAEFF'S laugh is heard.

PAULINA. They are coming back from the station.

TREPLIEFF. Yes, I hear my mother's voice.

ARKADINA and TRIGORIN come in, followed by SHAMRAEFF.

SHAMRAEFF. We all grow old and wither, my lady, while you alone, with your light dress, your gay spirits, and your grace, keep the secret of eternal youth.

ARKADINA. You are still trying to turn my head, you tiresome old man.

TRIGORIN. [To SORIN] How do you do, Peter? What, still ill? How silly of you! [With evident pleasure, as he catches sight of MASHA] How are you, Miss Masha?

MASHA. So you recognised me? [She shakes hands with him.]

TRIGORIN. Did you marry him?

MASHA. Long ago.

TRIGORIN. You are happy now? [He bows to DORN and MEDVIEDENKO, and then goes hesitatingly toward TREPLIEFF] Your mother says you have forgotten the past and are no longer angry with me.

TREPLIEFF gives him his hand.

ARKADINA. [To her son] Here is a magazine that Boris has brought you with your latest story in it.

TREPLIEFF. [To TRIGORIN, as he takes the magazine] Many thanks; you are very kind.

TRIGORIN. Your admirers all send you their regards. Every one in Moscow and St. Petersburg is interested in you, and all ply me with questions about you. They ask me what you look like, how old you are, whether you are fair or dark. For some reason they all think that you are no longer young, and no one knows who you are, as you always write under an assumed name. You are as great a mystery as the Man in the Iron Mask.

TREPLIEFF. Do you expect to be here long?

TRIGORIN. No, I must go back to Moscow to-morrow. I am finishing another novel, and have promised something to a magazine besides. In fact, it is the same old business.

During their conversation ARKADINA and PAULINA have put up a card-table in the centre of the room; SHAMRAEFF lights the candles and arranges the chairs, then fetches a box of lotto from the cupboard.

TRIGORIN. The weather has given me a rough welcome. The wind is frightful. If it goes down by morning I shall go fishing in the lake, and

The curtain falls.
