

## ACT FOUR

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[A drawing-room in SORIN'S house, converted into a study by KONSTANTIN TREPLIOV. Doors right and left leading to other rooms. In the centre, a french window opening on to the terrace. There is a writing desk in the corner on the right and an ottoman by the door on the left; also a bookcase and the usual drawing-room furniture. Books are lying on the window-sills and on chairs. It is evening. The room is dimly lit by a shaded table-lamp. There is the noise of wind in the trees and the chimneys.]

[A watchman is heard tapping.<sup>1</sup> Enter MEDVIEDENKO and MASHA.]

MASHA [calling]. Konstantin Gavriylch! Konstantin Gavriylch! [Looking round.] No, there's no one here. The old man keeps on asking: where's Kostia, where's Kostia. . . . He just can't live without him. . . .

MEDVIEDENKO. He's afraid of being alone. [Listening.] What dreadful weather! It's been like this for nearly two days.

MASHA [turning up the lamp]. There are waves on the lake, enormous ones.

MEDVIEDENKO. It's very dark outside. By the way, we might as well tell them to pull down that stage in the garden. It stands there naked and ugly like a skeleton, with the curtain flapping in the wind. You know, last night as I was walking past it, I thought I heard someone inside - crying.

MASHA. What next. . . .

[A pause.]

MEDVIEDENKO. Let's go home, Masha.

1. In former days it was usual for a man to go round an estate, striking a wooden board with a stick to frighten away potential thieves.

MASHA [*shaking her head*]. No, I shall stay here for the night.

MEDVIEDENKO [*imploringly*]. Masha, do let us go! The baby may be hungry.

MASHA. What nonsense! Matriona will feed him.

[*A pause.*]

MEDVIEDENKO. I feel sorry for him. This is the third night he's been without his mother.

MASHA. How boring you've become! In the old days you did at least philosophize a bit now and again. Now all you talk about is baby and home, baby and home – I never hear anything else from you.

MEDVIEDENKO. Do come along, Masha!

MASHA. You go by yourself.

MEDVIEDENKO. Your father won't let me have a horse.

MASHA. Yes, he will. You go and ask him.

MEDVIEDENKO. I suppose I might ask him. . . . And you'll be coming home tomorrow then?

MASHA [*takes snuff*]. Well, yes . . . tomorrow. How you pester me!

[*Enter TREPLIOV and POLENA ANDRYEEVNA. TREPLIOV carries pillows and a blanket and POLENA ANDRYEEVNA some sheets, which they put on the ottoman. TREPLIOV then goes to his desk and sits down.*]

MASHA. What is this for, Mamma?

POLENA. It's for Piotr Nikolayevich. He wants his bed made in Kostia's room.

MASHA. Let me. . . . [*Makes the bed.*]

POLENA [*sighing*]. Old people are like children. . . . [*Walks over to the writing desk and, leaning on her elbow, looks at an open manuscript.*]

[*A pause.*]

MEDVIEDENKO. Well, I'd better go. Good-bye, Masha. [*Kisses his wife's hand.*] Good-bye, Mother. [*Tries to kiss his mother-in-law's hand.*]

POLENA [*with irritation*]. Go on with you! It's time you went if you are going.

MEDVIEDENKO. Good-bye, Konstantin Gavrilch.

[*TREPLIOV gives him his hand without speaking;*

*MEDVIEDENKO goes out.*]

POLENA [*looking at the manuscript*]. Who would have thought that you would turn out to be a real writer, Kostia? But, thank God, here you are getting money from magazines for your work. [*Strokes his hair.*] You've grown so good-looking, too. . . . Kostia, my dear, you're so kind, couldn't you be a little kinder to my Mashenka?

MASHA [*making the bed*]. Leave him alone, Mamma.

POLENA [*to TREPLIOV*]. She's a nice girl, you know.

[*A pause.*]

Give a woman a kind glance sometimes, Kostia, and she won't ask for more. I know that.

[*TREPLIOV gets up from his desk and goes out without speaking.*]

MASHA. There! now you've made him angry. What's the point of pestering him?

POLENA. I feel so sorry for you, Mashenka!

MASHA. A lot of use that is to me!

POLENA. My heart's been aching for you. I see it all, you know – I understand it all.

MASHA. All this is just nonsense. Love without hope – it only happens in novels. It's really nothing. You've only got to keep a firm hold on yourself, to stop yourself hoping for . . . hoping for the tide to turn. . . . If love sneaks into your heart the best thing to do is to chuck it out. My husband's been promised a transfer to another district. Once we get there, I'll forget it all . . . tear it out of my heart, roots and all.

[*A waltz with a melancholy tune is being played two rooms away.*]

POLENA. That's Kostia playing. He must be feeling sad.