

CHEKHOV, Anton

**The Lady with the Dog**

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She laughed. Then they both went on eating in silence, like complete strangers. But after dinner they left the restaurant together, and embarked upon the light, jesting talk of people free and contented, for whom it is all the same where they go, or what they talk about. They strolled along, remarking on the strange light over the sea. The water was a warm, tender purple, the moonlight lay on its surface in a golden strip. They said how close it was, after the hot day. Gurov told her he was from Moscow, that he was really a philologist, but worked in a bank; that he had at one time trained himself to sing in a private opera company, but had given up the idea; that he owned two houses in Moscow. . . . And from her he learned that she had grown up in Petersburg, but had got married in the town of S., where she had been living two years, that she would stay another month in Yalta, and that perhaps her husband, who also needed a rest, would join her. She was quite unable to explain whether her husband was a member of the gubernia council, or on the board of the Zemstvo, and was greatly amused at herself for this. Further, Gurov learned that her name was Anna Sergeyevna.

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**The Husband**

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"It makes me sick to look at her!" he muttered. "Going on for forty, and nothing to boast of at any time, and she must powder her face and lace herself up! And frizzing her hair! Flirting and making faces, and fancying she's doing the thing in style! Ugh! you're a pretty figure, upon my soul!"

Anna Pavlovna was so lost in the dance that she did not once glance at her husband.

"Of course not! Where do we poor country bumpkins come in!" sneered the tax-collector.

"We are at a discount now. . . . We're clumsy seals, unpolished provincial bears, and she's the queen of the ball! She has kept enough of her looks to please even officers. . . They'd not object to making love to her, I dare say!"

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**At home**

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And again she went out into the fields. And wandering aimlessly about, she made up her mind that when she was married she would look after the house, doctor the peasants, teach in the school, that she would do all the things that other women of her circle did. And this perpetual dissatisfaction with herself and everyone else, this series of crude mistakes which stand up like a mountain before one whenever one looks back upon one's past, she would accept as her real life to which she was fated, and she would expect nothing better. . . . Of course there was nothing better! Beautiful nature, dreams, music, told one story, but reality another. Evidently truth and happiness existed somewhere outside real life. . . . One must give up one's own life and merge oneself into this luxuriant steppe, boundless and indifferent as eternity, with its flowers, its ancient barrows, and its distant horizon, and then it would be well with one. . . .

A month later Vera was living at the works.

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**Enemies**…..
Abogin and the doctor stood face to face, and in their wrath continued flinging undeserved insults at each other. I believe that never in their lives, even in delirium, had they uttered so much that was unjust, cruel, and absurd. The egoism of the unhappy was conspicuous in both. The unhappy are egoistic, spiteful, unjust, cruel, and less capable of understanding each other than fools. Unhappiness does not bring people together but draws them apart, and even where one would fancy people should be united by the similarity of their sorrow, far more injustice and cruelty is generated than in comparatively placid surroundings.

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**The Cherry Orchard**

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There is something mystical in the proud man in the sense in which you use the words. You may be right from your point of view, but, if we look at it simple-mindedly, what room is there for pride? Is there any sense in it, when man is so poorly constructed from the physiological point of view, when the vast majority of us are so gross and stupid and profoundly unhappy? We must give up admiring ourselves. The only thing to do is to work.

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I know exactly the potential of the people around here. They have the potential to lie. They have the potential to deceive. They have the potential to inveigle. They’ll change nothing. Sometimes, when I can’t sleep, I lie awake thinking, my God! We have so much. We have these huge forests. We have boundless open fields. We can see the deepest, furthest horizons. Look around you. Look. We should be giants. We really, really aren’t.

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 **The Seagull**

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‘Nina, I cursed you. I hated you. I tore up all your letters and photographs, but every minute I was conscious that my soul was bound to yours forever. I can never stop loving you. Ever since I lost you, my life has been unbearable. I’m miserable. I call to you, I kiss the ground you walked on. Wherever I look, I see your face. I am alone. I’ve no one’s affection to warm me. I am as cold as if I were living in a dungeon, and no matter what I write, it’s dry, hard, dark.

Stay here, Nina, I implore you, or let me go with you.’

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**The Wife**

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By all means I will be married if you wish it. But on these conditions: everything must be as it has been hitherto — that is, she must live in Moscow while I live in the country, and I will come and see her ... I promise to be an excellent husband, but give me a wife who, like the moon, won't appear in my sky every day.

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**Ariadne**

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Ariadne's voice, her walk, her hat, even her footprints on the sandy bank where she used to angle for gudgeon, filled me with delight and a passionate hunger for life. I judged of her spiritual being from her lovely face and lovely figure, and every word, every smile of Ariadne's bewitched me, conquered me and forced me to believe in the loftiness of her soul. She was friendly, ready to talk, gay and simple in her manners. She had a poetic belief in God, made poetic reflections about death, and there was such a wealth of varying shades in her spiritual organisation that even her faults seemed in her to carry with them peculiar, charming qualities. Suppose she wanted a new horse and had no money -- what did that matter? Something might be sold or pawned, or if the steward swore that nothing could possibly be sold or pawned, the iron roofs might be torn off the lodges and taken to the factory, or at the very busiest time the farm-horses might be driven to the market and sold there for next to nothing. These unbridled desires reduced the whole household to despair at times, but she expressed them with such refinement that everything was forgiven her; all things were permitted her as to a goddess or to Caesar's wife. My love was pathetic and was soon noticed by every one -- my father, the neighbours, and the peasants -- and they all sympathised with me. When I stood the workmen vodka, they would bow and say: "May the Kotlovitch young lady be your bride, please God!"

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**The Grasshopper**

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When she got up at eleven o'clock every morning, Olga Ivanovna played the piano or, if it were sunny, painted something in oils. Then between twelve and one she drove to her dressmaker's. As Dymov and she had very little money, only just enough, she and her dressmaker were often put to clever shifts to enable her to appear constantly in new dresses and make a sensation with them. Very often out of an old dyed dress, out of bits of tulle, lace, plush, and silk, costing nothing, perfect marvels were created, something bewitching - not a dress, but a dream. From the dressmaker's Olga Ivanovna usually drove to some actress of her acquaintance to hear the latest theatrical gossip, and incidentally to try and get hold of tickets for the first night of some new play or for a benefit performance. From the actress's she had to go to some artist's studio or to some exhibition or to see some celebrity - either to pay a visit or to give an invitation or simply to have a chat. And everywhere she met with a gay and friendly welcome, and was assured that she was good, that she was sweet, that she was rare.... Those whom she called great and famous received her as one of themselves, as an equal, and predicted with one voice that, with her talents, her taste, and her intelligence, she would do great things if she concentrated herself. She sang, she played the piano, she painted in oils, she carved, she took part in amateur performances; and all this not just anyhow, but all with talent, whether she made lanterns for an illumination or dressed up or tied somebody's cravat - everything she did was exceptionally graceful, artistic, and charming. But her talents showed themselves in nothing so clearly as in her faculty for quickly becoming acquainted and on intimate terms with celebrated people. No sooner did any one become ever so little celebrated, and set people talking about him, then she made his acquaintance, got on friendly terms the same day, and invited him to her house. Every new acquaintance she made was a veritable fête for her. She adored celebrated people, was proud of them, dreamed of them every night. She craved for them, and never could satisfy her craving. The old ones departed and were forgotten, new ones came to replace them, but to these, too, she soon grew accustomed or was disappointed in them, and began eagerly seeking for fresh great men, finding them and seeking for them again. What for?

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**Three Sisters**

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Background: Several years pass. Andréy and Natásha are married with a new baby. Natásha and a local council member named Protopópov are having an affair, as are Vershínin and Másha. Túzenbach continues his attempts to get Irína to marry him. Andréy’s gambling problem has gotten worse. Throughout all of Act Three, there is a fire in the village running people out of their homes, though the Prózorovs hardly react to this.*

 *Act Three*

[...] MÁSHA: And I’m bored. I am bored, bored, bored! (*Straightens up and speaks,* *sitting there)* There’s one thing I can’t get out of my head; it feels like someone nailed it there. I mean Andréy — he took out a mortgage on this house, and his wife got all the money, and this house isn’t just his, it belongs to the four of us! He must know that, if he’s got any decency left.

KULÝGIN: Why bring it up, Másha? It doesn’t affect you. Andréy owes money all over town; I feel sorry for him.

MÁSHA: I don’t care, it’s still revolting. *(Lies down)*

KULÝGIN: You and I are not poor. I work, I teach at the high school, I give private lessons in my spare time... I’m a plain, honest man. Omnia mea mecum porto, as they say.

MÁSHA: I don’t want anything, but the injustice of it revolts me. (*Pause)* Go on home, Fyódor.

KULÝGIN:(*Kissing her)* You’re tired, you take a little rest; I’ll wait downstairs for you. Get some sleep... *(Crosses to the door)* I’m a happy, happy man. *(Goes out)*

IRÍNA: Andréy has gotten so petty, so slow, and so old, living with that woman. He used to want to be a scientist, and yesterday he was bragging that he’d finally become a member of the County Council. He’s a member, and Protopópov is the chairman... The whole town is talking and laughing, and he’s the only one who doesn’t know anything, doesn’t see anything. Tonight everybody went to see the fire, but not him. He just sits in his room and pays no attention to anything; he just plays his violin. *(On edge)* Oh, it’s awful, it’s awful, awful! *(Cries)* I can’t stand it. I can’t stand it anymore! I can’t, I can’t!

*ÓLGA enters and goes to straighten up her dressing table. IRÍNA sobs loudly.)*

Throw me out, please, get rid of me! I can’t stand it anymore!

ÓLGA: *(Frightened)* What’s the matter? Darling, what’s the matter?

IRÍNA: *(Sobbing)* Where is it? Where did it all go? Oh, my God, my God! I’ve forgotten everything; my head is all mixed up... I can’t remember the Italian word for window, or ceiling... I keep forgetting things; every day I forget more and more, and life goes by and it won’t ever come back and we’re never going to Moscow, never, never. I can see it all now — we’re never going to get there... *(Trying to control herself*) Oh, I’m so unhappy... I can’t work anymore, I won’t work anymore. I’m sick of it, I’ve had enough! I worked at the telegraph office, and now I work at the municipal6 building, and I despise it, I hate everything I have to do there... I’m almost 24, I’ve been working all this time, and my brain has shriveled up; I’ve lost my looks, I’ve gotten old, and nothing, nothing! There’s no satisfaction in any of it, and the time passes and you realize you’ll never have the beautiful life you dreamed of; you just keep on digging yourself deeper and deeper into a hole... I’m in despair, I am really in despair! And I don’t understand why I’m still alive. I should have killed myself long ago.

ÓLGA: Don’t cry, my little girl, don’t cry... It tears me apart.

IRÍNA: I’m not crying, I’m not... It’s all right... There, see, I’m not crying anymore. It’s all right, it’s all right!

ÓLGA: Dearest, let me talk to you, as your sister, as a friend. If you want my advice, marry the baron.

*(IRÍNA weeps quietly.)*

After all, you respect him, you value his friendship... I know he’s not very good-looking, but he’s a good man, an honest man... People don’t marry for love; they marry because they’re supposed to. At least I think they do. I would have married without love. It wouldn’t have made any difference who it was, as long as he was an honest man. I’d even marry an old man...

IRÍNA: I kept waiting for us to move to Moscow. I knew I’d meet my true love there; I used to dream about him. But you see it was all a lot of nonsense...

ÓLGA: *(Hugging her sister)* Oh, darling, I know, I know. When the baron resigned from the service and first came to see us in his civilian clothes, he was so plain-looking I started to cry... And he asked me what I was crying about, and what could I tell him? But if God brings the two of you together, I would be very happy. You see, things are very different from what you thought, very different.

(*NATÁSHA enters with a candle in her hand. She walks silently across the room in a straight line from right to left.)*

MÁSHA*: (Sitting)* You’d think she started the fire herself.

ÓLGA: Másha, you are so silly. You are the silliest person in this family!... I’m sorry; excuse me.

*(Pause.)*

MÁSHA: My dear sisters, I want to confess something. I want to bare my soul. I want to confess something to you, and then I never want to say another word about it ever again. I want to tell you everything right now. (*Quietly)* It’s my secret, but you should know it anyway... I can’t keep it to myself anymore. (*Pause)* I’m in love, I’m in love... I love that man, the one you saw just now... Well, that’s it: I love Vershínin.

ÓLGA: *(Going behind the screen to her bed)* Stop that; I’m not going to listen.

MÁSHA: What can I do? *(Puts her hands to her head)* At first I thought he was strange, then I started feeling sorry for him... then I fell in love with him: in love with his voice, with the things he says, with all his problems, with his two little girls...

ÓLGA: *(Behind the screen)* I’m not listening. I don’t care what you’re saying; I’m not listening.

MÁSHA: Oh, Ólga, you’re the silly one. I’m in love! It’s fate, I guess — I mean it’s just my luck. And he loves me... It’s all so funny. Don’t you think so? Doesn’t it strike you as funny? *(Takes IRÍNA’s hand, draws her close*) Oh, my darling, we’ll get through life together somehow, no matter what happens to us... When you read about these things in books, it all seems terribly silly and predictable, but when you fall in love yourself, you realize nobody knows anything about it, everyone has to figure out for herself. My dear sisters, there. I’ve told you. Now I will never say another word about it. The rest is silence.

*(Enter ANDRÉY, then FERAPÓNT.)*

ANDRÉY: What is it you want? I don’t understand...

FERAPÓNT: *(At the door, impatient)* Andréy Sergéyich, I already told you 10 times.

ANDRÉY: In the first place, when you speak to me, you call me Sir and not Andréy Sergéyich.

FERAPÓNT: Sir. The firemen want to know can they go through the yard to get to the river; they can’t keep goin’ around and around like they been.

ANDRÉY: All right! Tell them all right. (*FERAPÓNT leaves.)* What a bore. Where’s Ólga? (*ÓLGA motions from behind the screen.)*

What a terrible fire! It seems to be dying down. That damn Ferapónt made me so mad, I didn’t know how silly I sounded... “Sir... ” *(Pause*) Why don’t you say anything, Ólga? (*Pause)* Look, it’s time you stopped this nonsense, all this sulking for no reason. You and Másha are here, Irína’s here, fine — let’s get this out in the open once and for all. What is it you all have against me? Huh?

ÓLGA: Not now, Andréy. We can talk tomorrow. *(Shaking)* What an awful night!

ANDRÉY: (*Terribly embarrassed*) Don’t get upset. I just want to know very calmly what it is you all have against me. Just tell me.

*(VERSHÍNIN’s voice: “Tram-tam-tam.”)*

MÁSHA: *(Standing; loudly)* Tra-ta-ta! *(To ÓLGA)* Goodbye, Ólga, God bless you. (Goes behind the screen and kisses IRÍNA) Sleep well. Goodbye, Andréy. Leave them alone; they’re exhausted. We can talk tomorrow. *(Leaves)*

ÓLGA: Please, Andréy. Let it go until tomorrow... (*Goes behind her screen)* It’s time to go to bed.

ANDRÉY: No, I’m going to say what I came for, and then I’ll go. Right this minute. In the first place, you’ve got something against my wife, Natásha, and I’ve noticed it since the day I got married. Natásha is a lovely person, honest and straightforward and well brought up, in my opinion. I love my wife and I respect her, you understand? I respect her and I want to make sure the rest of you respect her too. I repeat, she is a lovely person, and all your remarks and attitudes — well, excuse me, but you’re just being stuck-up... (Pause) In the second place, you all seem mad at me because I’m not a scientist or a professor or something. But I have an occupation: I’m a member of the County Council, and I consider that just as honorable and just as important as an intellectual career. I’m a member of the County Council and I’m proud of it, if you want to know... *(Pause)* In the third place — I have something more to say — I mortgaged this house, and I didn’t get your permission. It’s my fault and I’m sorry and I ask you to forgive me. I had to do it because I owed a lot of money — 35,000. I don’t gamble anymore, I gave it up, but the main thing is you’re all girls, you get a military pension, and I don’t! I don’t have any income at all..

*(Pause.)*

KULÝGIN: *(At the door)* Isn’t Másha here? *(Nervously)* Where is she? That’s funny... *(Leaves)*

ANDRÉY: You’re not listening. Natásha is a fine, honest woman. (Walks up and down in silence, then stops) When I got married, I thought that we’d all live happily together... happily... But oh, my God... (*Starts to cry)* Oh, my dear sisters, my darling sisters, don’t believe me, don’t believe me... *(Leaves)*

KULÝGIN*: (At the door, nervously)* Where’s Másha? Isn’t she here? This is very disturbing.

*(He leaves. Sirens. The stage is empty.)*

IRÍNA: Ólga! Somebody’s knocking.

ÓLGA: It’s the doctor. He’s drunk.

IRÍNA: What an awful night! *(Pause)* Ólga... (*Glances from behind the screen)* Did you hear the news? The brigade is leaving. They’re being transferred someplace far away.

ÓLGA: That’s just a rumor.

IRÍNA: We’ll be left here all alone... Ólga!

ÓLGA: What?

IRÍNA: Ólga dear, I do respect the baron, I do, he’s a wonderful man, I will marry him, I promise, only please let’s go to Moscow! I beg you, please! There’s no place in the world like Moscow! Let’s go, Ólga! Please!

*CURTAIN.
…..*