

**THE DODO BIRD**  
A COMEDY THAT'S ACTUALLY A COMEDY  
IN FOUR ACTS

by

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**CHARACTERS:**

SIMON – An idiot. Twenties.

MERCEDES – A socialite. Twenties.

SNORENSTEIN – A retired film director. Sixties to Eighties.

CHANCE – A Film Studies student. Late twenties/early thirties.

JAVIER – A groundskeeper. Twenties to forties. Hispanic.

PAULA – A maid. Thirties or forties. Asian.

OLLIE – A film director. Fifties (preferable), could be forties.

IGGY – An assistant. Thirties to fifties. Any ethnicity.

IRENE – An actress. Forties to fifties.

BORIS – A Method actor. mid-thirties to mid-forties.

DARSHAWN – A performance artist.

GALINA – An actress. Played by the same actress who plays MERCEDES.

STANISLAVSKI – Actor, director, teacher. Played by the same actor who plays BORIS

OLGA – An actress. Played by the same actress who plays IRENE.

VASSILI – An actor. Played by the same actor who plays SNORENSTEIN.

PAVEL – A stagehand. Played by the same actor who plays IGGY.

MEYERHOLD – An actor. Played by the same actor who plays CHANCE.

YURI – An actor. Played by the same actor who plays SIMON.

ALEXANDER – An actor. Played by the same actor who plays OLLIE.

ELENA – An actress. Played by the same actress who plays PAULA

BUBNOV – Government Commissar. Played by the same actor who plays JAVIER.

**SETTING:**

Act I – The near future in a Hollywood Hills compound.

Act II – Same.

Act II - August 1898 in Pushkino, a holiday resort on the outskirts of Moscow.

Act IV – Late 1930's in The Moscow Art Theater.

## ACT I

*The rumbling of thunder; the distant howling of a dog; the even more distant sound of traffic. Flashes of lightening and an impending sense of DREAD. A projection fades up on a curtain.*

**PROJECTION: “Nature is unkind to man and rarely gives him what he needs in life. The perfect actor is as yet unborn.” – Constantin Stanislavski**

*The curtain opens on a part of SNORENSTEIN’s private Hollywood compound. A generic gazebo has been draped with a make-shift theatrical curtain. Beyond that, indications of a swimming pool; hedges; trees; white, whicker furniture.*

*The sun has just set. We hear the sounds of hispanic workmen inside the gazebo, behind the curtain, hammering and occasionally chattering nervously in Spanish.*

*Eventually MERCEDES crosses the space followed by SIMON. They read from copies of “The Seagull” by Anton Chekhov. MERCEDES always wears black and her acting should always be a bit stilted.*

SIMON

“Why do you always wear black?”

MERCEDES

“Because I’m in mourning for my life.”

SIMON

“But...”

MERCEDES

“Because I’m in *mourning* for my life.”

SIMON

”But...”

MERCEDES

“Because I’m in mourning *for* my life.”

*Simon waits for her to continue. She doesn’t.*

SIMON

”But...”

MERCEDES

You want another bump?

SIMON

Sure.

*They exit. CHANCE and SNORENSTEIN enter. CHANCE is in preparations for a play; rearranging chairs, placing properties, etc. He is a young man possessed, one note shy of a discordant jazz solo.*

CHANCE

Now there's a theater! A simple curtain, a simple space, and after that, the estate. No scenery. You look out across the pool to the L.A. skyline and that's it. Curtain goes up at exactly eight-thirty, right when the moon is rising over downtown.

SNORENSTEIN

Gold dust, kiddo! Gold dust!

CHANCE

Of course, if my 'Nina' is late then the whole effect will be ruined.

SNORENSTEIN

Your 'Nina'?

CHANCE

God, I despise my mother. Despise her actress lifestyle and everything it stands for. And now this whole 'reading series' of hers. Thinking that organizing her Hollywood clique to read the classics will somehow redeem a lifetime of pop-culture serfdom. Ha! Ha ha ha! And now, of all the plays she wants to bastardize, she chooses "The Seagull"...? Of course! Let's strut about the compound and drink vodka and pretend we're nineteenth century Russians waxing poetic about our provincial lives. Of course! It's perfect!

SNORENSTEIN

You think a lot, don't you boy?

CHANCE

"So, mother," I say. "Wouldn't it be an absolute hoot if I put together the play-within-a-play" from Act One? You should have seen her face. It was as if I had stolen all her thunder!

SNORENSTEIN

Well, she...

CHANCE

Look, I love mother. Very much. But she lives like a tweeny, always running around with that Method actor.

SNORENSTEIN

Yes, what kind of feller is this Boris Knox guy? I can't get any sense of him. He's quiet.

CHANCE

That's him 'getting into character'. *(Does a crude impression of a self-possessed actor brooding.)* Oh, don't bother him while he's preparing. He's focusing on the role. He just finished a Zombie movie with Michael Bay and now, all of a sudden, he's a Method actor? Please.

*JAVIER sticks his head out from behind the curtain. He is extremely nervous.*

JAVIER

Mister Chance, we finish the stage. Eh, we go start work on the storm shelters and the panic rooms now, Mister Snorenstein? We might need them soon. Heh heh.

SNORENSTEIN

Did you finish the watering, Javier.

JAVIER

Oh yes, Mister Snorenstein. Eh. And this is very important I think. Heh heh.

SNORENSTEIN

Well, alright.

*JAVIER ducks back behind the curtain. He shouts at the other workers in Spanish to hurry up and help him fix the locks on the shelters and panic rooms. They all run to begin preparing for certain disaster. CHANCE begins working himself into a fiery froth.*

CHANCE

Be back here in ten minutes! We'll be starting soon!

JAVIER

Okay, Mister Chance. *(to the workers)* Rapido! Rapido!

SNORENSTEIN

Industrious people, the Mexicans.

CHANCE

And now, not only is Boris Knox beginning to dress like he's from the nineteenth century and pretending to...

SNORENSTEIN

Well, he certainly sounds like he's taking his role seriously...

CHANCE

It's pretentiousness! Now, I've set a little trap, Uncle and... I don't want to spoil the surprise. *(laughs maniacally)*

SNORENSTEIN

Now, Chance. Your mother adores you, son.

*CHANCE pulls a large aloe plant out of the ground.*

CHANCE

My symbolic gesture of adulation for her! *(He begins plucking branches off of the aloe plant.)* She loves me, she loves me not. She loves me, she loves me... not! *(He laughs maniacally.)*

SNORENSTEIN

Calm down, boy!

CHANCE

*(Listens)* I think I hear footsteps! *(embraces his uncle)* Oh, uncle! This is absolutely going to destroy mother's happiness! I'm so ecstatic!

*CHANCE goes quickly to meet 'Nina' who is hooded and heavily cloaked. He whisks her back behind the gazebo curtain. At exactly the same time OLLIE and PAULA enter from the other side of the stage. OLLIE wears round rimmed sunglasses, a Von Dutch cap and a tweed jacket. PAULA is dressed conservatively.*

OLLIE

Snorenstein, old boy, how are you keeping?

SNORENSTEIN

Ollie! It's been too long. Where has that little sister of mine got to? We've got to get this show on the road before it rains.

OLLIE

Last I saw her she was with Boris Knox up in the drive. He claims its his first ride in a horseless carriage. And he's asking for vapors to help with his vocal apparatus lest he strain his chords and "attract the consumption". An odd man.

SNORENSTEIN

*(Going off)* He he he. I love those Method actors!

*SNORENSTEIN exits. A heated pause.*

PAULA

It's going to rain. Perhaps I should go get my rubbers.

OLLIE

No. I like it when you get wet. Wish I'd brought my camera.

PAULA

Silly. You're a filmmaker and you should know perfectly well where you'll find inspiration.

OLLIE

Well, that's why I come when Irene calls.

PAULA

You like her, don't you?

OLLIE

My dear, it's very well known that I like *asian* women.... *(coming close)* And you... are... asian.

PAULA

My God, you're a poet.... But all of you men fall for actresses.

OLLIE

Please. Paula. Actors are my livelihood. Biopics of Republic presidents and national tragedies are... well, this might surprise you... but they're a bit formulaic.

PAULA

I know.

OLLIE

I need Irene Mutton to play Betty Ford. Financing is dependent upon an 'A' list actress for that role.

PAULA

But you're Oliver Boulder. You can have anyone you...

OLLIE

*(Putting a finger to her lips)* Shhhh. No shop talk. Just talk in that voice...

PAULA

Oh, Ollie...

OLLIE

For me. Please, Paula.

*PAULA looks at him. Then she presses her hands together at her chest and begins to bow.*

PAULA

*(Japanese accent)* Oh, Mista Boulder. I so sorry. I like it very much you tell this little Japanese girl what to do. *(She puts her hand to her mouth and giggles.)*

OLLIE

Oh, my dear God in heaven.

PAULA

Oh, Mista Boulda. You make-a me blush! I don't know what to do. I hope maybe you like massage, Mista Boulda?

OLLIE

Cut it. They're coming.

*Enter IRENE, SNORENSTEIN, BORIS, IGGY, SIMON, and MERCEDES. They all carry new, paperback copies of Chekhov's "Four Major Plays". BORIS, dressed in 19<sup>th</sup> century garb, looks around in awe, yet seems to mark the location with the judgmental eye of a director. IRENE chews the scenery.*

IGGY

*(reading stiltedly as 'Ilya')* "She acted marvelously at the Poltava Fair in 1873. Phenomenal acting. Phenomenal! I don't suppose you happen to know, madam, where Chadin is now? Paul Chadin, the comic actor."

IRENE

*(reading voluptuously as 'Arkadinaya')* "You keep asking me about out-dated actors! How should I know? Sits down." Oh, that means I sit. *(Sits down.)*

IGGY

"Paul Chadin! There are no such actors now. The stage is no longer what it was, madam."

*IRENE points to OLLIE.*

OLLIE

Oh, is that me? *(reading seriously as 'Dorn')* "It's true there aren't many geniuses left on our stage now, but I should say the general standard..."

IGGY

"I'm afraid I don't agree with you, Sir..."

OLLIE

You jumped my...

IGGY

*(to IRENE)* Miss Mutton, I really should be helping the guards to secure the front gate.

BORIS

We finish the line.

SNORENSTEIN

Let's allow Iggy to...

BORIS

We finish the line!

IGGY

“I’m afraid I don’t agree with you, sir. However, I suppose it’s all a matter of taste.”

BORIS

Excellent sense of something lost and forever unattainable. Go!

*IGGY starts runs off with tremendous urgency and dread.*

BORIS

Stop!

*IGGY stops.*

BORIS

More laconic but just as concerned. Go!

*IGGY attempts to walk laconically while still scared shitless about something.. He exits.*

BORIS

*(To the rest)* My friends! The Stanislavski Method must be approached through Chekhov and serves as a bridge to Chekhov. One necessitates the other. *(To IGGY in the distance)* Excellent exit, Comrade Shomkin! Continue searching! We... will work. Ha ha!

*IRENE gives CHANCE a peck on the cheek which he resents.*

IRENE

I’m so excited that my brilliant son wants to participate in this reading. Look at him. I just want to eat him up! *(Privately to CHANCE, indicating BORIS)* Isn’t Boris brilliant? He’s actually channeling the great Stanislavski, the man who created Method acting. Oh! Just genius.

CHANCE

Yes. Thrilling.

IRENE

And you’re friend is playing ‘Nina’? Can we trust...?

CHANCE

Yes, mother. She’s in position. Let’s go.

IRENE

So exciting! I feel like I'm on the Russian stage.

CHANCE

Except you're in L.A.

IRENE

Oh, you.

CHANCE

Javier!

*JAVIER runs in out of breath. IRENE goes to sit and motions for BORIS to sit next to her, which he does.*

JAVIER

Yes, Mr. Chance.

CHANCE

Sound the horn.

JAVIER

*(With an intense sense of purpose, he salutes.)* Yes, Señor. *(Shouting to the other workers)* Comience la alarma!

CHANCE

*(reading as Treplev)* "Ladies and Gentlemen..."

*SOUND EFFECT: An air-raid warning rises.*

CHANCE

Not that horn, Javier.

JAVIER

*(To the workers)* Pare la alarma! Los gringos tienen unas ganas de morir!

*JAVIER walks to the gazebo, extracts a horn and blows through it. CHANCE begins to speak when BORIS stands to give JAVIER some direction. CHANCE looks at him. BORIS thinks twice about it and sits back down.*

CHANCE

"Ladies and Gentlemen, the play is about to begin. Quiet, please, quiet! I begin."

BORIS

*(Unable to help himself and turning to the others)* We say, "Ah, the beginning... Ah, he's starting... Ah! General conversation." Yes yes yes.

*They do as directed. CHANCE, annoyed, taps a stick and speaks loudly.*

CHANCE

“O, ye venerable shades that hover over this lake at night, send us to sleep so that we may dream of what will be in two hundred thousand years!”

SNORENSTEIN

*(reading as ‘Sorin’)* “There’ll be nothing in two hundred thousand years.”

CHANCE

”Very well, let them show us that nothing.”

IRENE

“Let them. We are falling asleep.”

CHANCE

Javier!

*JAVIER, sweating and distracted by something off stage, realizes its his cue. He pulls a string raising the curtain. A view of the pool is revealed. ‘Nina’, wrapped in white, standing with her back to us. Pause.*

BORIS

Why is the pond surrounded by hardened clay?

IRENE

*(To BORIS)* It’s alright, Constantin. *(To CHANCE)* Why isn’t she saying her lines? We can’t have a first act without the play-within-a-play. It won’t make sense.

CHANCE

Please, mother! Wait for it.

*‘Nina’ turns around. She... or rather he... is decidedly not a woman. He is a young, BLACK MAN with a large afro. This is DARSHAWN. He walks to the apron of the stage and looks at the attendees one-by-one, seeming to stare them down or dare them to say something.*

*CHANCE snaps his fingers at JAVIER, who picks up two white globes on sticks and waves them around the DARSHAWN’s head and makes a whistling sound with his mouth.*

*Just as it seems IRENE is going to stand up and call for security, DARSHAWN throws the white sheet down, revealing that he is dressed in nothing but a dance belt, black socks and high-heeled shoes. He strikes a pose. A collective GASP rises from the attendees.*

BORIS

Yes, this gasp is a good reaction.

CHANCE

And scene!

*JAVIER lets the curtain drop and puts his hands to his head.*

JAVIER

Ah, mi Dios! Estamos vayando a morir.

IRENE

Uh... Sweetie?

CHANCE

Yes! Perfect! Don't you see? It's a perfect non-sequitur and, therefore, a perfect opportunity for our dear Mr. Knox to prove he is the true thespian he claims and roll with the punches. How do you propose to justify *this* with a nineteenth century Russian theater company, Mr. Knox? Oh, excuse me... Comrade Stanislavski!

*A challenge.*

BORIS

This absurd rebelliousness is good for your character, Vsevelod Emilevich. To even deny the very text we are working on and present this Tartur in place of Maria Roksanova. *(To the rest.)* This is good improvisation, no?

EVERYONE

Yes, yes/Very good/We like it...

CHANCE

I'm not Meyerhold. And that... was not a Tartur. That was a black man! A big, strapping, angry, fuck-you of a modern African American performance artist who refuses to speak to the Man! A completely mute African American performance artist who I hired to come and play 'Nina' and thereby rain on this little naturalistic parade of yours! Ha ha! And you continue to falsely... that's right *falsely*... pretend that you don't *know* that this is the twenty-first century! Or that this is Hollywood, California. Where we have cars! Where we have blenders and swimming pools! You are a half-trained actor with the unlikely screen-name 'Boris Knox', and you're going through a *ridiculous*, self-righteous actor's 'process' so that you can seduce my mother.

IRENE

*(gasps)* Chance!

CHANCE

You are not self-hypnotized! You are not under any artistic delusions! You are not the director of our lives or our play and you are sure as *fffffuck* not... Constantin motherfucking Stanislavski *mother fucker*... *Shit cock.... Pussy fuck!*

*CHANCE storms off. Pause.*

BORIS

Absolutely brilliant improvisation.

SNORENSTEIN

He had a bit of coffee this morning.

JAVIER

Please, Mister Snorenstein. I no want to interrupt, but Mister Iggy... He no come back from securing the gates. And the television, it say for nobody to go outside. I don't know where Mister Iggy is!

SNORENSTEIN

Well, then go on, Javier. And tell Iggy to bring us some of those shrimp salad sandwiches with the crusts cut off. Love those things.

*JAVIER runs off, shouting to the other workers to search the compound.*

IRENE

*(still reeling)* Well, I simply don't know what to say...

BORIS

*(as Trigorin)* "Everyone writes as he likes and as he can." *(Motions for everyone to continue reading.)*

IRENE

"Well, in that case let him write as he likes and as he can..." I'm sorry. I can't work like this. It's ridiculous. There's an unknown man on the property and I'm absolutely beside myself. I'm sorry, Boris... I mean, Constantin.

BORIS

Let us have a five minute respite! I will stretch!

*He does so. The others relax. IRENE takes a cigarette from SNORENSTEIN. OLLIE approaches IRENE and lights her cigarette.*

OLLIE

Me-ow. There's something regal about you today, Irene.

IRENE

Don't start, Ollie.

*She crosses up to watch BORIS as he stretches.*

MERCEDES

Okay, can I be the first to say that was like off the fuckin' chain?

SIMON

I didn't understand it all. But, like, that Hendrix dude in the heels... or maybe he was supposed to be Prince.

IRENE

Let's not talk about work during the break. It's a gorgeous night. Oh, listen! People are singing next door.

*Pause. They listen. SOUND EFFECT: Distant moaning.*

PAULA

God, they're not very good, are they?

IRENE

*(To Boris)* Sit down, dear. Ten or fifteen years ago the music and singing could be heard in almost every estate up here. Why, I remember a time Goldie and I just walked from place to place wearing nothing but our smiles and a bottle of vodka. *(Laughs. No one else does. PAUSE.)*

SIMON

Or maybe like that Gnarles Barkeley dude.

IRENE

*(sotto voce)* Alright, why did my son bring that man here. Do you think he's a gang-member.

EVERYONE

No... Come on... That's ridiculous...

MERCEDES

I have to say, Miss Mutton. That's like really racist of you? We've already had, like, a black president.

IRENE

Yes, of course. You're right. That was terribly racist.

MERCEDES

And all the gang members in L.A. are like Mexican. So... seriously.

*DARSHAWN walks through the curtain. He still wears the high heels and has donned a little black dress and pearls. He looks at everyone, not as confrontational as before. Now it's as if he's wondering what he should do. PAUSE. Everyone is unnerved by his presence.*

IRENE

*(Starting out)* Well, I wonder where Chance went off to.

MERCEDES

I'll go find him. Chance!

*MERCEDES leaves.*

IRENE

No... *(Too late. She looks at DARSHAWN.)*

*SILENCE. The MOANING in the distance has gotten a bit louder.*

BORIS

Brava. You, sir, have informed our rehearsal process. I take it you are from the southern Provinces where they play the Arabian tales. Brilliant!

*DARSHAWN ignores BORIS. He goes to a lounge and sits, seeming to wait uncomfortably for CHANCE to return. PAUSE. IRENE puts on her best gracious-movie-star persona.*

IRENE

Hello there. I'm Irene Mutton. *(She extends her hand. DARSHAWN just sits there.)* You'll have to excuse me. I'm a bit out of sorts after working at Arkadanaya. I haven't done theater in some time. Distracted by films and premieres, you know. *(PAUSE. No reaction. The others give her encouraging gestures.)* This is my brother's estate but we live here and keep a small artistic community of friends close by. We've been having a bit of a sleep over lately since the quarantine or whatever it is. *(PAUSE. Nothing.)* Well, you know, you're welcome to stay just as long as you like. And if you'd like to change out of that costume I'm sure Chance has some extra things in the pool house. *(PAUSE. Nothing.)* And, of course, I'd love for you to read the role of 'Nina'. That certainly was very... interesting... what you did there. *(PAUSE)* But I'd... do you mind? Can I? It's just the wordless thing. Brilliant choice. Really. Just a bit different. I'm not sure that's a choice I would have made, I don't know, what do you think? *(PAUSE.)* Well, it's clear you have certain ideas about the role and that's your right. I suppose we'll do your takes and then we'll do mine. Shall I have a stand-in read my lines for you? Would that be all right? *(PAUSE.)* I voted for Obama, you unappreciative fuck!

*BORIS pulls her away.*

SNORENSTEIN

She's never the same when she works.

BORIS

(To IRENE) You want to use this gift of anger. (Points to a section of text.) Go! Now! Go!

IRENE

(Without emotion) “Let me introduce you – Trigorin...”

BORIS

To him. To him. He is half himself and half your mother. Go!

IRENE

(To DARSHAWN) “Don’t be so shy, my dear. He may be a famous man, but he isn’t at all conceited. Are you, dear?”

BORIS

Yes, and I move about grandly. (He does so.)

OLLIE

“I suppose we may raise the curtain now, mayn’t we? It gives me the creeps.”

BORIS

And so you do. But carefully. You are aging.

*OLLIE shoots him a look and begins raising the curtain.*

BORIS

“I couldn’t make heads nor tails of it. Still, I rather enjoyed it. (To DARSHAWN) You played so sincerely.” I cross over while Simon picks at his nails and Sorin begins to snore. “And the scenery is lovely. I expect there must be a lot of fish in that lake.” (Nothing) She says ‘yes’, we’ll get to that...

IRENE

This is a fiasco.

BORIS

“I do so love fishing...” I think of my boyhood and the smell of earth. I pause and reflect.

*While the scene continues, unbeknownst to the actors, IGGY shambles through the woods. He’s missing an arm, his skin is greenish-grey, blood is caked around his mouth. He moans and drools. In short, IGGY has become a ZOMBIE.*

SIMON

Do you want me to read the ‘Nina’ lines for now?

BORIS

You figure out what nail-picking means to your sense of humanity and knowledge of physics. Nina says, ‘But, surely, anyone who has experienced the joys of creation can’t possibly enjoy anything else!’ Arkadinaya’s line, brightly!

*IGGY stops. He notices the actors. He drools. He steps hungrily toward the actors.*

IRENE

“Don’t talk like that, my dear. When people say nice things to him, the poor lamb feels terribly embarrassed.”

*IGGY advances another step.*

BORIS

I create a blush through sense memory. Then, of course, I will replace the Black Man with the memory of my first love. A bit dark herself. Brown eyes. I give him supple breasts, hips for birthing, and I become aroused. Hello, my Nina.

*Another step. Throughout the next speech, JAVIER runs on with an axe and strikes IGGY. When IGGY goes down, he doesn’t stop. He begins to dismember the Zombie. Green blood flies all over JAVIER. The actors never notice.*

IRENE

*(Growing jealous of BORIS and DARSHAWN.)* “I remember in Moscow once – at the opera – the famous Silva took a lower C. As it happened, the bass of our cathedral choir was in the gallery at the time, and imagine our utter astonishment when we suddenly heard from the gallery: ‘Bravo, Silva!’ a whole octave lower... Like this (in the lowest voice possible) ‘Bravo, Silva’. The audience was entranced.” She laughs... Oh. Fuck. *(She laughs.)*

BORIS

A pause. We let this settle. And then...

*PAUSE. JAVIER is finally finished dismembering IGGY.*

JAVIER

Ayudanos, mi Dios.

IRENE

Javier! Enough with the Spanish. It really is quite ethnic of you.

*JAVIER shakes his head and begins hauling off the body parts.*

BORIS

Nina says, ‘I’m afraid I must fly,’ notice the bird imagery, ‘Good-bye.’ I must say, I find your silence extremely enticing. *(To IRENE)* Your line. Go.

IRENE

“Why? Where are you off to so early...” Is this really doing us any good? He’s not doing anything. And I’m beginning to...

*Suddenly, DARSHAWN stands, hocks a lugie, spits it into the bushes, and saunters off, looking around the estate. BORIS watches him go, entranced.*

SNORENSTEIN

Love those Method actors.

IRENE

What’s he doing? Where’s he going? And what is he doing here? Chance said he was some sort of performance artist? My God. A performance artist. Loose on the property.

SNORENSTEIN

Calm down, Sis.

IRENE

I’m calm. I’m very calm. What is there to be upset about?

JAVIER

*(From off. To the other workers)* Andele! Vamanos! They break through the service gate! Grab the shovel and the pick! We fight to the death!

*The dog begins HOWLING again.*

SNORENSTEIN

That damned dog again!

BORIS

Yes, raise your finger when you say that.

SNORENSTEIN

Like this?

BORIS

Yes, beautiful.

IRENE

Let’s go. I want to find Chance.

SNORENSTEIN

You like the finger.

BORIS

Excellent. Wasn’t that actor playing ‘Nina’ fascinating. So unexpected. So natural.

SNORENSTEIN

I suppose, yes.

SIMON

*(To BORIS)* I think he picks his nails 'cause they don't have salons out in the country.

*They all go out except for Ollie. He takes out a small dictaphone and speaks into it.*

OLLIE

Idea for a conspiracy movie revolving around Carter presidency. Ronald Reagan runs a secret slavery ring. Carter tries to put a stop to it. Think Geoffrey Rush with dental surgery. Additional note: Alzheimer's not real.

*CHANCE enters.*

CHANCE

Coast is clear?

OLLIE

*(Turning off dictaphone)* Seems that way.

CHANCE

Mercedes is coked out of her mind and wandering all over the compound looking for me. What a nuisance. Where's Darshawn?

OLLIE

I take it Darshawn is the young fellow we saw playing 'Nina'?

CHANCE

Yes.

OLLIE

And do you mind if I ask about your relationship with Darshawn? None of my business, of course, but your mother...

CHANCE

Did you see her face? She hates me and she loves that man.

OLLIE

Light on a screen, kid.

CHANCE

What?

OLLIE

Your projecting. We all do it. Life is a projection. *(beat)* Nevermind. The important thing is you've got talent and you showed it. I'm not a theater man but I enjoy shock value.

*CHANCE grabs OLLIE's hand and grips it firmly.*

CHANCE

And I loved "Organically Grown Killers".

OLLIE

Oh, that was just...

CHANCE

No. It was nothing short of genius. *(embraces him.)*

OLLIE

Thank you.

CHANCE

So you think I should continue?

*MERCEDES enters. She's coked to the gills and talks extremely fast.*

MERCEDES

Chance, you'd better come in. You're mom is like worried. Oh, my God. What is that moaning? Do you hear that moaning? I hear moaning. Or maybe that's just me. Oh my God. Am I talking loud?

CHANCE

God! Tell her I've gone to yoga or something. And wipe your nose for Christ sake. Good-bye, Ollie. Thank you.

*CHANCE goes. OLLIE takes his dictaphone out.*

OLLIE

*(Into dictaphone)* Fight scene between Jimmy and a stout Ronald Regan to be played by Ryan O'Neill. Additional note: Alzheimers not real.

MERCEDES

Chance like confuses me.

OLLIE

What I wouldn't give to go back to that age knowing everything I know now.

MERCEDES

*(Flirtatiously)* What do you know now?

OLLIE

Enough, young lady. Enough.

MERCEDES

Really. You know, I don't like my father but, like, I feel like I can talk to you. Can you talk to me before I do something silly?

*OLLIE begins to hustle her into the gazebo. Mercedes inadvertently steps on his feet and they stumble for a moment.*

OLLIE

Oh, I do silly little things all the time.

MERCEDES

I think I love Chance.

OLLIE

And I've been known to fall deeply in love with socialites. And you... are.... social.

*MERCEDES snorts laughter as OLLIE lowers the curtain on the gazebo.*

*CURTAIN.*

## ACT II

*A projection fades up on the curtain:*

**From an email sent by the actor originally offered the role of Darshawn: "... There were several parts of the human beat box character that I really loved as far as the cultural revolutionary expression... Unfortunately there were other roles of that same character that carried a lot of homosexual tendencies. There is a part where there is male on male intimacy (homosexuality). Because of my beliefs and moral standards, I cannot take part in that role. I hope you understand. P.S. Still don't count me out of any roles pertaining to my gift that do not put me in any type of immoral light. Peace, Power and Paradise!"**

*Curtain opens on a croquet lawn. The estate, the pool, flowers. Mid day.  
IRENE, MERCEDES, PAULA and OLLIE are sunning themselves.  
The SOUND EFFECT of moaning continues in the background.*

IRENE

*(To MERCEDES)* You're what? Twenty-two? Ollie, if you met us at a club which one would you hit on? Seriously.

OLLIE

Well... you, of course.

MERCEDES

Oh yeah. Darn. I guess I can see that.

IRENE

Well, you have to take care of yourself, dear. You can't just lie about and expect to be in shape. You stay up late doing god-knows-what to god-knows-whom and then you sleep in. And you need to watch the partying, if you don't mind my saying.

MERCEDES

Well, I'm basically like detoxing anyway. Javier keeps saying we can't go anywhere. What the fuck for? God!

IRENE

I have no idea. But look at me: I take good care of myself. I stay vegan. I exercise. And that's it. Au naturelle.

*MERCEDES catches OLLIE's eye and pantomimes injecting Botox into her face.*

MERCEDES

You're so right, Miss Mutton. So where's Boris?

IRENE

He's fishing in the swimming pool. Brilliant man. He doesn't give up.

OLLIE

Well, I hear he's brilliant in that Zombie movie.

MERCEDES

*Love* Zombie movies!

*Suddenly, all the lights in the theater go out. An awkward pause and then a few, indiscernible murmurs from the people currently on stage. The beep of an emergency power system and then the sound of the STAGE MANAGER clicking on a sound system:*

STAGE MANAGER

Ladies and Gentlemen. We're experiencing a slight power problem, it seems. Please remain in your seats and we'll get this figured out and try to get the show back and running as soon as possible. Thank you. *(clicks off and then clicks back on)* Would the actors please return to their dressings rooms until notified. It shouldn't be long. Thank you.

As the actors begin shuffling off through the darkness we begin to hear general conversation as it is inadvertently broadcast over the sound system. A few bumps into set pieces, some short expletives, some grumbings about the building's wiring.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

I swear. If this happens one more time.

ACTOR PLAYING OLLIE

I know. I know.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Well, it's unbelievable.

ACTOR PLAYING OLLIE

It is. I know.

ACTRESS PLAYING PAULA

It's okay. We'll just take a little break...

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

God, (name of actress playing Paula). Just shut it for a second while we...

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

I can't find the...

ACTOR PLAYING OLLIE

Here it is. I got it.

Sounds of actors walking up the stairs.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

And it's not like we're qualifying for health insurance doing this thing. You'd think they'd... *(she stumbles)*. Oh, fuck me!

ACTOR PLAYING OLLIE

Here. Take my arm.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Thank you, (name of actor playing Ollie).

They reach the top of the stairs. Sound of a door opening.

ACTOR PLAYING DARSHAWN

Did the lights go out again?

ACTOR PLAYING OLLIE

Yep.

ACTOR PLAYING BORIS

Aw...!

ACTOR PLAYING DARSHAWN

This is some bullshit, man. First they tell me I don't have any lines and and and...

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Where's the hall...?

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

Here it is.

*The sounds of the male ACTORS fade as the women walk towards their dressing room.*

ACTOR PLAYING DARSHAWN

... and now! I got to put up with *this*? This is some *bullshit*, man! Bullshit! I'm a singer and a performer. And this is... I'm gonna sing me a song or *somethin'* by the end of this is what I'm gonna do! I'm gonna stand up and just sing...

*The ACTRESSES close their door and bumble through the space looking for their respective seats.*

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

God. Black actors are so dramatic. (*bumps into something*) Mother... fucker! It's that god-damn, idiot writer. I can't believe I got talked into this. He does one movie with Britney Spears and suddenly he thinks he's God's gift. What a pretentious prick.

*Sounds of sobbing.*

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

(Says name of actress playing Mercedes)? Darling? Are you alright?

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

God. I'm so awful.

ACTRESS PLAYING PAULA

What?! No, you're not. She's not awful, is she, (name of actress playing Irene)?

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Well, you are going for it a bit, aren't you, dear?

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

God. You have no idea what it's like to stand on a stage and know you're acting horribly. Did you see the end of Act One? I stepped on (name of actor who's playing Ollie)'s feet.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Oh, sweetheart. Stop it. We've all been there.

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

You have?

ACTRESS PLAYING PAULA

Oh, yes.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Yes we have. And there's a very simple solution to it all.

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

There is?

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Yes.

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

What is it?

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

You just have to sacrifice a member of the audience to our Lord Satan.

*Pause.*

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

Uh... what?

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

My dear. It's a very well kept secret, but well known throughout the business that all actors worship the Prince of Darkness. Isn't that right, (name of actress playing Paula)?

ACTRESS PLAYING PAULA

All hail, Beelzebub.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

It's kind of expected, actually.

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

But I'm Episcopalian.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Well, that's a start.

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

Are you actually suggesting that I murder a member of the audience?

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Murder? No no no. Silly child. "Sacrifice". Just think of it as sending one of those piggies downstairs to serve our master.

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

But why?

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

It's very simple, dear. If we don't occasionally make a sacrifice, then the Dark Lord takes away our powers and we become the very characters we play. The author becomes our God. And, in this show, that's kind of a problem.

ACTRESS PLAYING PAULA

I'll say.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

We are artists! We ultimately decide what we do and what our fate is to be! Not the stinking playwright! We are in control... well, us and Satan, of course.

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

But how?

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

It's very simple. Just watch for my cue. The next time there's a blackout or any kind of opportunity, we'll go for the front row.

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

How will we choose which one?

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Whichever one looks the most Republican.

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

Won't they see us? I mean how can we get away with it?

*The other ACTRESSES laugh.*

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

What?

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Oh, darling. You have so much to learn. Even if they sense something is fatally wrong, they'll just sit there stupidly staring at us and smiling. As long as you entertain an audience, they're as docile and stupid as cattle.

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

Wow. Are we really gonna do this?

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

She's so cute, isn't she?

ACTRESS PLAYING PAULA

Very.

*The STAGE MANAGER clicks on to the sound system.*

STAGE MANAGER

Actors to places, please. Actors to places.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Alright. Let's go.

*Sounds of the ACTRESSES going out their door and down a hall.*

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Not until you see me make a move though, darling.

ACTRESS PLAYING MERCEDES

Okay.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Now don't turn your microphones back on until we get to the stage.

ACTRESS PLAYING PAULA

Our what?

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Your microphones. You did turn your microphone off when we left the stage, didn't you?

*Sound of clothes rustling as the ACTRESS PLAYING PAULA checks her microphone.*

ACTRESS PLAYING PAULA

Oh, yes. Uh... It's off. (It's not and she knows it.)

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Good. (to the men) Alright, let's do this, fellas.

ACTOR PLAYING OLLIE

Yep. Let's do it.

ACTRESS PLAYING IRENE

Oh, before I forget. We're sacrificing an audience member to Satan tonight.

ACTOR PLAYING BORIS

Oh, that's fantastic!

*General murmurs of agreement as the actors take their places.*

STAGE MANAGER

Ladies and Gentlemen. We'd like to apologize for the technical difficulties. Just a power problem that seems to keep bothering us in this building. Anyway. Thank you for your patience and please enjoy the rest of the show.

*Lights go back up. The actors are back in the same positions they were in when the lights went out... except now IRENE eyes the audience hungrily. MERCEDES watches her and glances at them as well. PAULA looks sheepish as she knows the jig is up before it started.*

MERCEDES

Love Zombie movies!

OLLIE

I wonder, Irene. Are we going to get back into that reading today?

IRENE

Oh, you know how to punish me don't you, Ollie. That was a travesty.

OLLIE

Oh, I don't know about that. I kind of liked it. And you were brilliant.

IRENE

Thank you, Ollie. But that... performance artist. Like a lead balloon.

OLLIE

Well, let's recast it.

IRENE

Please. Chance would have a fit. We'd be ignoring him. It's a lose-lose situation, Oliver, believe me.

OLLIE

Let's read something else then. Start fresh.

IRENE

Well, that's an idea.

OLLIE

You know, I had this thing I wanted to talk to you about, actually...

*SNORENSTEIN, PAULA and SIMON enter with DARSHAWN. They've been showing him around. DARSHAWN is unimpressed and noncommittal, but not rude. He has changed into some of CHANCE's clothing.*

SNORENSTEIN

And here we are back again on the back lawn. You make yourself absolutely at home and help yourself to whatever.

IRENE

My, aren't we hospitable today. So progressive of you, Peter.

SNORENSTEIN

Settle down, Irene.

IRENE

*(Playing innocent.)* I'm settled. *(To DARSHAWN)* My goodness, I had no idea you would wear men's clothes so handsomely. Tell me, how did you meet Chance? Oh, that's right. You don't speak.

OLLIE

Irene, come on...

IRENE

Is it platonic, your relationship with my son? Or something more...

MERCEDES

Why don't you read to us from "The Seagull", Miss Mutton.

IRENE

I think Ollie had a better idea. I think we should read something else. Do you know what my absolute favorite movie in the whole world is, Darshawn? You know this, Ollie.

OLLIE

Oy.

IRENE

"To Murder a Dodo Bird"!

MERCEDES

Oh, shit. Like one of those old black'n'white things? Classic, I mean.

IRENE

Well, it's a lovely film. Do you know what it's about? Of course not. You're so young and innocent and I'd never know if you did because you don't speak or acknowledge anything we say. Well! Beauregard Pelican is a southern lawyer assigned to defend a big, strapping *black man* who's accused of raping a white woman. Naturally, the town hates Beauregard for taking the case, and all the little children tease and taunt his little girl for associating with colored folks. That's what they called them back then. Well, Beauregard Pelican, he takes this as a challenge. He defends this black man... His name was Jessie or something... Anyway, he defends him like he's defending his own brother. He says... and I'm paraphrasing of course, but something like, "This is a trial not about race but about truth. Truth and the facts as to whether or not this man here, my client, actually did what he's accused of doing... " All white jury, by the way and they're looking at Jessie like he's some sort of alien. "Let's look into this case and look at what truth is. What it is not. What is real. What is not real." Ah. Brilliant acting. True acting. Then the man playing the other lawyer. Not so good. He said... Ollie, you do it.

OLLIE

Oh, I don't...

IRENE

Do it, Oliver!

OLLIE

*(Playing the other lawyer, replete with bad southern accent)* Uh... “I say he’s guilty as sin and sin’s pretty durn guilty!”

IRENE

Point. Go ahead.

OLLIE

*(Points at DARSHAWN)* “And this man here. He’s guilty. Guilty. Guilty!” Not bad, right?

PAULA

I wonder if the lawyer has a wife!

IRENE

And then the entire trial ensues. Oh, and they’re sweating because it’s the middle of the summer. And the strapping black man, he’s sweating more than anybody. You can see it glistening on his skin. Probably real sweat. You know, in films, they have to shine more lights on African Americans simply because they’re darker. Simple fact. And it must get hot under all those lights... So then Beauregard, he questions his big, black, defendant... Jessie... about his whereabouts that night and, you know what? Jessie can hardly talk he’s so nervous... he’s a disaster on the stand actually. *(She looks at DARSHAWN.)* Perfect. And then. Ooooh. Big, bad moment in the movie. The other lawyer, he swaggers up. Come on, Ollie...

*OLLIE, despite himself, starts trying to swagger and play the part like IRENE wants him to.*

IRENE

He swaggers up to the stand and he says...

OLLIE

“Jessie...”

IRENE

I’ll do it. “Jessie. Can you account for your whereabouts on the night in question? We’re all listenin’. Where was you on the night in question?!”

*DARSHAWN just looks at IRENE.*

IRENE

And, you know, that’s just exactly what Jessie said. So the lawyer, he sees he’s got Jessie just where he wants him. The dark, glistening hulk of a man is about to snap. “Well, that’s alright if you don’t want to talk, ‘cause we all know what happened. We know it like we know who we are. Who our children is. Like we’s lookin’ into our own hearts...” And then there’s an objection. *(She points to Ollie.)*

OLLIE

“Objection, your honor.”

IRENE

“... Don’t let them distract ye with fanciful arguments and philosophy and all this and all that. This is an open-and-shut case....”

OLLIE

“Objection!”

*SNORENSTEIN pounds his pipe like a gavel.*

SNORENSTEIN

Sustained.

IRENE

“Someone! A man! Walked along behind them tenement houses and he looked in and saw the warm glow of a livin’ room... and he seen himself somethin’ sweet. And he wanted it. And he took it. And right after that, Mr. Robertson, you was seen runnin’ for your life along Edgefield Road. Wasn’t you? Now I will ask you, Mister Jessie Robertson, and we would like an answer please. What do you have to say for yourself?”

*PAUSE. DARSHAWN looks at her. He looks at the others. And then, without warning, he launches into the most profoundly brilliant beat-box anyone has ever heard. It is an act within itself, rising to crescendos, falling into melancholic valleys. It is angry; it is sad; it is bitter, impassioned and begging to be heard on a level that surpasses language. Finally, DARSHAWN’s beat-box ends. ALL stare at him, stunned. LONG PAUSE. No one knows what to say.*

*JAVIER runs in. He is covered in rancid, zombie blood and he holds a muck-covered gardening hoe. He is manic.*

JAVIER

Madre de Dios! It’s like they can smell our flesh. Our living flesh! We fight them back but they keep coming! They come, so many the number, they stand on top of each other and make a hill of zombie bodies! It threaten to rise above the compound walls and then they will pour in and eat us one by one! It is awful! To die by the hands of the living dead and be make into one of them. We will no go to heaven y nuestro Dios! We will become like walking evil and wander the face of the mundo for more flesh for to eat! Ay, mi Dios!

SNORENSTEIN

I say, Javier. If you need to take a day off you can just ask for it, man.

JAVIER

Como? The world, it comes apart and all you people no listen!!!

IRENE

This really is too much! All I ask for is a simple weekend with my friends and family reading a classic play and this is what I get. Some sort of downtown... mouth... performer, stilted acting...

OLLIE

Hey.

IRENE

... and servants who refuse to speak English. Fine! Fine fine fine fine fine fine fine fine fine finey fine fine. I'll just...

*Suddenly all the lights in the theater begin to dim and we hear the beep of the emergency power system. Quickly, IRENE reaches pulls a knife from under a set piece and begins walking towards the audience with murder in her eyes. MERCEDES follows her. PAULA puts her hands to her mouth. Just as IRENE is a few steps away, the lights go back up. IRENE quickly walks back, dumps the knife, takes her position and continues where she left off.*

IRENE

Fine! Fine fine fine fine fine fine fine finey finey finey fine fine. I'll just gather my things and go.

OLLIE

No...

SNORENSTEIN

Irene, don't be like that...

SIMON

Or like Jay-Z with a bigger fro!

IRENE

I'm going. Don't try to stop me.

JAVIER

But you can't go, Miss Mutton!

IRENE

Why ever not!

JAVIER

You can't go out there. They will attack you!

IRENE

My friend, I've dealt with the paparazzi in my time, believe me.

JAVIER

Miss Mutton, I no let you go!

IRENE

*(Fighting back tears.)* Well, this really is too much. First I'm upstaged by a... mouth... pop... locker... and now I'm taking direction from a Mexican. I might as well go inside where I can sit in my room and not bother anyone anymore!

*IRENE runs off to the estate house.*

OLLIE

Irene! I'd better go after her.

PAULA

Ollie! Where are you...? Wait for me!

JAVIER

I must go fight! *(To the workers in the distance)* Siga luchando, mi amigos!  
Continuaremos luchar en el nombre de Jesucristo!

SNORENSTEIN

Ah, actors. Passion! I love it. Just love it!

*ALL go off they're separate ways. Only DARSHAWN remains. MERCEDES comes back.*

MERCEDES

You're holding, right? Tell me you're holding. *(DARSHAWN looks at her.)* Okay, I hear you. Gotta make it last, right? *(Sitting next to him.)* I dated a black guy once. I liked it. He was aggressive. I told him to be. He liked it too. I'd like wear these costume bunny ears I had and I'd be all, "No no, don't fuck the bunny!" And he'd be all "I'm fuckin' dat bunny!" And I'd scream, "No, not this bunny!" And he'd be all "Yeah 'dis bunny... Bitch!" It was hot. *(PAUSE)* Do you like bunnies, Darshawn? *(Looks off.)* Fuck. Here comes Chance. Don't say anything, okay?

*CHANCE enters. He is dressed entirely in make-shift nineteenth century garb (which he has roughly hewn out of his own Versaci, Gucci, Ralph Lauren wardrobe) and carries a bright, neon water canon.*

MERCEDES

Hey, Chancey.

CHANCE

Go away, Mercedes. I need to talk to Darshawn.

MERCEDES

God, fine. Cut me out completely. I'm going to find Simon.

*MERCEDES exits.*

CHANCE

Darshawn. I need your help with something. I know. I know I said this was a one shot thing and you could go back to the squatters village but this is serious. And if you love me, you'll do it. You do love me, don't you? We're not going to get all caught up in society's idea of what's proper and what's not, are we? Who cares if we're not "gay". Our penises don't have to become aroused to be in love. That's so last millenium. I love you, and I respect you, and I need you to do this, okay? Good. Now... *(He looks off)* Here comes that asshole Knox. Just play along with what I'm doing, okay? I'll deconstruct his Method acting bullshit if it's the last thing I do.

*CHANCE reaches into his bag and pulls out a ridiculous looking stuffed animal, perhaps a duck, stained with catsup. He pretends that he is Vsevelod Meyerhold, the originator of the role of 'Treplev'. He overdoes it a bit.*

CHANCE

"I did an ugly thing today. I shot this seagull..."

*He presents it to a very confused DARSHAWN.*

CHANCE

My goodness. Comrade Stanislavski! You caught us rehearsing without you. I am so dreadfully embarrassed.

BORIS

Not at all, Vsevelod Emilevich. It is every actors right to craft their role in or out of the rehearsal process.

CHANCE

You would think that, wouldn't you.

BORIS

After yesterday's improvisation, I'm impressed you have the strength.

CHANCE

Shall we jump right in, Comrade Stanislavski? I've prepared some things and I'd love for you to see them.

BORIS

Well, if you think I'll be of some service, Vsevelod Emilevich.

CHANCE

Oh, I can't imagine you being anything else, Comrade Stanislavski.

BORIS

Wonderful. Continue what you were doing. 'Nina' you continue to react. Your words will come when they're ready. Go.

*CHANCE takes the stuffed animal from DARSHAWN and kneels before him.*

CHANCE

"Allow me to lay it at your feet."

BORIS

Gently. With symbolic meaning. Yes.

*DARSHAWN looks to BORIS, not knowing what to do.*

BORIS

Confusion, confusion. Yes!

CHANCE

"I will shoot myself the same way eventually. Your attitude towards me has changed. You stare at me coldly. My presence obviously makes you uncomfortable..." Now I have a question here, Comrade Stanislavski.

BORIS

Yes, of course, Vsevelod Emilevich.

CHANCE

*(Conniving)* If I am to feel denied by this young lady, would it not stand to reason by your very Method that I should find inspiration in my own experience?

BORIS

But of course, Vsevelod Emilevich.

CHANCE

Bit of a problem here. Never been dumped. *(Throws up his hands in exaggerated frustration).*

BORIS

Ah. My boy. Simply use your imagination. Imagine what it would be like for someone as dashing as yourself to be publicly rejected by a young actress. Wear that image on your breast.

CHANCE

Ah! My imagination! Of course. Thank you, Comrade Stanislavski.

BORIS

Not at all, Vsevelod Emilevich. May we continue?

CHANCE

But of course, Comrade Stanislavski. *(He returns his attention to DARSHAWN who is still holding the stuffed animal.)* “You think I’m worthless, mediocre, like so many others... *(Stamps his foot.)* How well I understand it, how well!”

BORIS

Harder with the foot.

*CHANCE stamps harder.*

CHANCE

“How well I understand it, how well!”

BORIS

Like you’re crushing your mother’s mirror! Again!

*CHANCE stamps his foot even harder.*

CHANCE

“How well I understand it, how well!”

BORIS

You crush your mother’s face! Go!

*CHANCE stamps his foot harder. He comes to a real, emotional place and is, himself, a bit surprised by it.*

CHANCE

“How well I understand it, how well! *(Gathers himself. Points to BORIS)* “There comes a real artist! Walks like Hamlet, and with his book, to boot! Goodbye, I won’t stand in your way.” *(Walks a few paces as if exiting.)*

BORIS

There it is. Excellent.

CHANCE

And now ‘Trigorin’, right? *(Hands BORIS his script.)*

BORIS

*(Refuses the script)* Already memorized, dear boy.

CHANCE

I'll just watch.

BORIS

Good! *(Prepares himself and switches into the character of 'Trigorin' and pretends to take notes.)* Trogorin sees Nina. "Good afternoon..."

CHANCE

Pardon me, Comrade Stanislavski. It's not really my place...

BORIS

No no no. We are all part of the People's Art Theater. Speak your mind, young sir.

CHANCE

I can't help but think that this role must be quite a stretch for you.

BORIS

For me? But Comrade Chekhov said he had me in mind specifically...

CHANCE

Yes, of course. Because you're such a brilliant actor. But I can only assume you are faithful to your wife.

BORIS

Of course!

CHANCE

Well, there you go. 'Trigorin' is a bit of a dog.

BORIS

Yes, I see your point.

CHANCE

Perhaps this is an area to employ your ingenious use of imagination?

BORIS

Indeed, I think so.

CHANCE

Stunning suggestion, Comrade Stanislavski.

BORIS

Thank you, Vsevelod Emilevich.

CHANCE

Oh, no. Thank you. Perhaps I might make a small suggestion in this regard, however. It is beyond my schooling, of course...

BORIS

No no no. I won't hear of false modesty. Each artist's mind is pivotal to the creative process of a theatrical company.

CHANCE

Very well. If I may be so bold... Perhaps an improvisation of sorts would be in order. But not as yourself or as 'Trigorin'. Perhaps you could pretend to be some other, fantastical figure.

BORIS

This intrigues me, Vsevelod Emilevich. Go on.

CHANCE

Well, perhaps if you imagine yourself to be something beyond normal comprehension, so as to have total freedom with the role. What if... and I know this is a crazy idea, but go with me... What if you imagined yourself to be a revered, yet not-so-talented, actor from the future!!!

BORIS

The future!

CHANCE

Yes! What if you were a self-serving, sychophantic actor who has become world famous through those new flicker films they have.

BORIS

Impossible.

CHANCE

For the sake of the improvisation, Comrade Stanislavski.

BORIS

Yes, of course.

CHANCE

And let's give this actor a name... hmmm... How about 'Boris'!

BORIS

*(Tasting the word)* Boris.

CHANCE

Yes. 'Boris Knox'. And you've only recently realized how utterly talentless and void of meaning your life really is. So you chase around older actresses who can give you a bit of press, and you seduce young starlets with your faux-misunderstood-artist-been-around-the-block-and-had-a-few-STDs-but-don't-worry-about-it-we'll-use-a-condom type of

attitude. You're so utterly bored with yourself that you have to suck the honey from others so as to get that slight sugar buzz which only lasts minutes. You don't care though. Because you're a fffffucking... asshole! And... begin.

*BORIS closes his eyes, mumbles something, shakes a bit, and opens his eyes having been transformed into... well, into BORIS.*

BORIS

What the fuck is going on? How'd I get here? Hey, aren't you Irene Mutton's kid? Why are you dressed like that? And who's that? (*meaning DARSHAWN.*)

*CHANCE isn't quite sure what to do or say. He didn't think his plan this far through.*

CHANCE

I... don't... know. Who do you think it is?

BORIS

Well, I don't fucking know. Last thing I remember I was doing an exercise with my sense memory coach.

CHANCE

Rrrriiiiight.

BORIS

Okay. Where's Irene? Are we at Snorenstein's? Shit, was there a party? Well, I hope I had fun. You got a smoke? Why the fuck am I wearing this?

CHANCE

I... have no idea, Boris. Why do you think you're wearing it?

BORIS

Is this for that Zombie movie I was doing with Michael Bay? I thought we finished re-shoots for that. You wouldn't have a bloody mary lying around, would you? (*Eyeing DARSHAWN*) Wussup, man? (*DARSHAWN just looks at him*) Hey, just treat me like regular dude, okay?

CHANCE

Zombie movie, huh? Sounds wonderful.

BORIS

Yeah. He promised me it would be a low maintenance gig. I get there, absolutely no security. I got like zombie extras all over me asking for autographs, trying to get a picture. Fuck. Couldn't even tell which chicks were hot. They were all dead! Ha!

CHANCE

Funny.

BORIS

Yeah, I slay me. What's this? *(He picks up a copy of "The Seagull")* "The Seagull".  
Never read this.

CHANCE

Oh, do tell.

BORIS

*(Reading from it)* "I assure you that sometimes I'm so afraid that at any moment they may quietly come up behind me, grab me and drag me kicking and screaming to a lunatic asylum." Hmm. Sounds like this guy's got problems...

*BORIS suddenly closes his eyes, reopens them and resumes his Stanislavski character.*

BORIS

No. I think not.

CHANCE

What?!

BORIS

This future-actor-man does not arouse my spontaneity. There needs to be a crux in my own experience, I think.

CHANCE

But...

BORIS

I thank you for the suggestion.

CHANCE

You're being an obstinate prick!

BORIS

Yes! Let us debate this point in character, Vsevelod Emilevich! Or shall I say, 'Treplev'.

CHANCE

I've had it! *(Ripping off parts of his own costume.)* I'm not putting up with this bullshit anymore! You're a hack! You've always been a hack! And you'll remain a hack as long as you insist on raping the art! *(Turns to DARSHAWN)* Let's go, Darshawn. *(No response)* Let's go, Darshawn. *(DARSHAWN just looks)* Look, Darshawn. Either it's him or me. Now let's go. *(No response)* Oh, I see how it is. You're enthralled with his fame, aren't you? You think he's somehow going to help you, is that it? Well, let me be the first to tell you, Darshawn, that it's pipe-dreaming. He's using you for his own purposes of 'preparation' and he'll chuck you to the gutter the minute he finishes. Or

maybe he likes the fact that you're a minority. That you have a hip 'look' to you. He'll use that too. He'll make sure you're standing next to him on the red carpet and you'll bump fists or something incredibly prosaic like that. Oh, maybe you'll get an 'assistant' position out of it on his next film, but an assistant you will remain. I hope you like fetching coffee, Darshawn. *(No response)* Alright, that's it. Goodbye forever!

*CHANCE leaves in a huff.*

BORIS

Excellent. I love how this rehearsal is going. Now. I must say here, my young sir... Darshawn, is it?... that I believe you to have extraordinary talent. But it remains raw, Darshawn. Unchecked. Yes? *(DARSHAWN looks at him.)* Yes. Now. A confession: I think we should be bold and cast you permanently as 'Nina'. I really do. Now, I know what you're going to say. This is untraditional. Well, my young fellow, the People's Art Theater was founded to *be* untraditional! All that matters is emotional truth. If you can find the experience of 'Nina' within you, then you will become the people's 'Nina'! Yes? Yes. *(He moves closer)* Now this also means, of course, that I, playing 'Trigorin', will have to seduce you, Darshawn... or you seduce me. It's an argument to be had later. But we must find a way of looking at one another with some kind of... longing. *(He looks deep into DARSHAWN's eyes.)* Do you think we can do that, Darshawn? Look into our separate memories of love and longing... for women, of course, and find a way to use that on each other? Visciously, even? *(Moves briskly away, as if hard-to-get.)* Of course, the only real question is: Who is it that's looking into your deep, brown eyes. Is it I, Stanislavski, your director and ostensible teacher? Or is it 'Trigorin'? *(Moving towards him again)* What do you think, Darshawn? Or should I say... 'Nina'?

*BORIS leans towards DARSHAWN who just looks at him. Just as we think BORIS is about to kiss DARSHAWN, CHANCE re-enters.*

CHANCE

Darshawn, I'm sorry... Oh, my God! What is the hell is going on?

BORIS

Now, Vsevelod Emilevich, it's not what you think. We were simply improvising.

CHANCE

Bull fucking shit! You're trying to take Darshawn! You and your stupid fucking Michael Bay Zombie movie which is probably the most preposterous, unrealistic piece of tripe I've ever heard of!

*Suddenly, Simon runs on screaming like a girl. MERCEDES and PAULA, having turned into ZOMBIES, run him down and bite into him. He struggles but eventually goes limp and falls into the bushes. They descend upon him, beginning to feast.*

CHANCE

*(To BORIS)* What the fuck are you?!!!

BORIS

My good man, I am a consummate professional and I allow the actors to improvise however they wish.

CHANCE

That's not acting!

BORIS

Now, don't be a critic, Vsevelod Emilevich.

CHANCE

No, I mean that's real!

BORIS

Of course it's real. It's emotional mastery.

*The others have begun to arrive. SNORENSTEIN, IRENE, PAULA, OLLIE, JAVIER. They are all ZOMBIES. They shamble towards CHANCE and BORIS. DARSHAWN watches.*

CHANCE

Will you wake the fuck up and stop pretending to be something you're not! It's blinding you to the fact that we're being attacked by Zombies!

BORIS

You mean that jibberish I uttered during the improvisation? *(Turns and sees zombies.)* Oh dear.

CHANCE

I think they want to eat us!

BORIS

Well, this does seem to put a crimp in rehearsal, doesn't it? Oh dear.

*BORIS once again goes through the transformation and wakes as himself.*

BORIS

Whoa. I blacked out again... *(Sees ZOMBIES)* Yo, what the fuck, man! Those are zombies!

CHANCE

I knew it!

BORIS

God, they will like not stop with the hounding. *(To ZOMBIES)* Okay, guys. Gimme a minute! *(To CHANCE)* Will you do me a favor? Will you have the valet pull my car around and have it waiting at the front. I want to make a B-line out of here, dude.

CHANCE

You really are crazy, aren't you?

BORIS

What?

CHANCE

Those are not your groupies! Those are zombies!

BORIS

Same difference if you ask me, Bra.

CHANCE

I mean they want to eat our flesh!

BORIS

Oh. Shit.

CHANCE

Let's split their attention. You try to go that way and I'll try to go... Darshawn! Come on!

BORIS

Whoa! We got a black dude on our side? *(To DARSHAWN)* Hey, go gettem, man!

*DARSHAWN gets up and walks toward the ZOMBIES.*

CHANCE

No, Darshawn! Don't do it!

BORIS

Shut up, man! Let him do his thing!

*DARSHAWN walks through the ZOMBIES who don't seem to notice him, up to the gazebo and begins preparing the microphone.*

BORIS

What the fuck, dude!

CHANCE

Darshawn! Come back!

BORIS

Yo, in the movie we did, if you just walk up to the Zombies and scream in a really high pitched voice, it hurts their ears! Cover me!

*BORIS runs up to the ZOMBIES and screams in a really high pitched voice. They attack him and begin to feed. CHANCE realizes he's trapped.*

CHANCE

Darshawn! Please. I can't live without you, Darshawn. None of us can!

*The IRENE ZOMBIE attacks CHANCE and begins to feed. As they're being eaten, BORIS goes through another transformation.*

BORIS

This future-actor-man doesn't seem to scare the cannibals either.

CHANCE

You fucking asshole!

*The IRENE ZOMBIE begins to lurch towards an audience member but CHANCE holds her back.*

CHANCE

*(soto voce)* No, we don't have time.

BORIS

I'm afraid we'll be eaten Vsevelod Emilevich. It was wonderful working with you, young sir!

CHANCE

I'm just glad to watch you die, you prick!

*DARSHAWN begins to perform an old romantic number; something like "These Arms of Mine" by Otis Redding. As the first notes rise into a beautiful vocal performance, the ZOMBIES stand and straighten, somewhat calmed by what they hear.*

BORIS

What's happening? Why are they stopping?

CHANCE

I don't know.

BORIS

Perhaps we're saved?

CHANCE

Yeah, so that we can become Zombies too.

BORIS

Oh dear. Are you certain?

CHANCE

Oh, shut u...

*CHANCE and BORIS quickly turn into ZOMBIES. They stand and join the others as they turn and stare at DARSHAWN. As he sings, all the ZOMBIES slowly raise their arms and begin to sway with the groove. As the lights fade, a member of the audience begins to sneak out. In the last dimness, the IRENE ZOMBIE sees this, breaks formation, runs across the stage, tackles the audience member into an unseen part of the house and begins to devour him/her.*

*CURTAIN.*

## ACT III

*A projection on the curtain:*

**In a letter sent by a fellow playwright: “Enough with the nonsense. Stop turning your actors into characters and encouraging them to kill the audience. Cut the zombies. For the love of God, this is Chekhov you’re fucking with! Your role is that of WRITER; not EXECUTIONER. Get it straight!”**

*The curtain opens on a large dining room of a resort in Pushkino which has been converted to suit the purposes of a long rehearsal process: tables pushed aside, costume pieces and props here and there. Several suitcases and hat boxes sit at center. Signs of a preparation for a journey.*

*CONSTANTIN STANISLAVSKI is having lunch. (Although played by the same actor, this is not the character portrayed by Boris; rather, this is the real deal). GALINA stands by the table.*

*This act should be played somewhat like a Chekhov vaudeville.*

GALINA

I’m just offering this to you as director, Mister Stanislavski.

STANISLAVSKI

Of course, Galina Alievna.

GALINA

You can use it in rehearsal if you like. I’ll be quite honest: If Vsevelod Emilevich had hurt himself badly, I would never have forgiven myself for not stopping him. But that doesn’t mean I don’t have courage. In fact, I’ve made up my mind to rip his love from my beating breast – rip it out roots and all.

STANISLAVSKI

May I ask how?

GALINA

By getting married! I’m marrying Yuri Semyanovich!

STANISLAVSKI

Our ‘Medvedenko’?

GALINA

The very one.

STANISLAVSKI

My dear, I don’t see any reason to go and do something rash like that.

GALINA

To stand on the stage and have to pretend that I'm pretending to love when, in fact, I'm *truly* in love and know that I will not be loved in return... It's too much! I can't bear it! You can use that in rehearsal. You'll use it, won't you?

STANISLAVSKI

Perhaps.

GALINA

Anyway, Yuri isn't that clever, but he loves me. And he loves my acting; my ability to use my real life, to filter it through my instrument as you so eloquently instructed us in school, Mister Stanislavski.

STANISLAVSKI

Well, I did what I could.

GALINA

You won't think too poorly of me for *using* this is my portrayal of Masha, will you?

STANISLAVSKI

Not at all. Just... perhaps you don't need to try so hard, Galina Alievna. Let it come more organically.

GALINA

Organically! That's brilliant! Oh, why do you have to leave us, Mister Stanislavski? It isn't fair!

STANISLAVSKI

Galina, you now as well as I do that our rehearsals with Vsevelod Emilevich have hit a certain... sticking point. I fear that I have become the focal point for his frustration with the role of 'Treplev'. Our friction has already cost us Maria Roksanova and we're without a 'Nina'...

GALINA

Yes, I wanted to talk to you about that...

STANISLAVSKI

And now Olga threatens to leave! Before it gets any worse, Comrade Danchenko will take over rehearsals and he's more than qualified. Perhaps, once our dear Vsevelod Emilevich calms down a bit and comes to terms with 'Treplev' we may be able to continue on together. For now, I must remove myself from the process and return to Moscow in order to search for our new 'Nina'.

GALINA

Mister Stanislavski. Don't you think it would be better to cast someone who is already familiar with the company's rehearsal process and who may already be familiar with the role of 'Nina'?

STANISLAVSKI

Who would you mean, Galina Alievna?

GALINA

Well... Me!

STANISLAVSKI

Oh... but then where would we get a 'Masha'? Galina Alievna, we need you in that role.

GALINA

Oh, but it's such a small role. Anyone can do 'Masha'.

STANISLAVSKI

Well...

*GALINA hands a manuscript of "The Seagull" to STANISLAVSKI. He starts to protest.*

GALINA

Look, I've been working on it. No no no. Just read. Seriously. I'm good. Seriously. Wait. Seriously. Just read. *(Indicating a place in the text)* From right there. I'll begin.

*GALINA prepares herself and then begins to perform as 'Nina'. She is excruciatingly bad, a truly horrible actress. She recites from memory, yet performs a series of disjointed, distracting and, at times, confusing gestures.*

GALINA

"I was trying to decide whether to run away and join the theater or not. I wish someone would tell me what to do!"

STANISLAVSKI

"I'm afraid that's something you'll have to decide for yourself."

GALINA

"You're going away and I don't imagine we'll ever see one another again!" *(She tries to access some idea of a deep emotion and, when it doesn't come, she manufactures it painfully.)* "I'd like you to take this little medallion of mine as a keepsake! I had your initials engraved on one side – and on the other side the title of your book: 'Days and Nights'."

*Hands him a medallion from around her neck.*

STANISLAVSKI

"What a lovely gesture...." Hmm... you actually printed something on here... What does it say?

GALINA

Keep reading! My faculties could falter at any moment!

STANISLAVSKI

Of course... "And such a prized gift."

GALINA

"Perhaps you will think of me every now and then!"

STANISLAVSKI

"I shall. I will think of you just as you were on that gorgeous day..." More lines and then he says, "We had a long talk and there was a white seagull lying on the seat."

GALINA

*(Puts her hands to her face and stares into space with wide eyes.)* "Yes, a seagull!"

*She swoons and has to hold herself by gripping the table. She acts as if she has poured all of her strength into the role.*

GALINA

Oh. Oh my. I apologize, Mister Stanislavski. I do believe I surprised even myself by the depths to which 'Nina' took me just then.

STANISLAVSKI

Impressive, Galina Alievna.

GALINA

Oh, I'm so pleased, Mister Stanislavski!

STANISLAVSKI

But I am a bit concerned that your feelings for Vsevelod Emilevich will get in the way of such a performance throughout.

GALINA

But...

STANISLAVSKI

'Nina' could care less for 'Trepnev' and you, unfortunately, are in love with Vsevelod Emilevich.

GALINA

Meyerhold? I only said that out of amusement. I would never let momentary feelings interrupt my work. I'm a consummate professional... *(Throwing herself at his feet)* Please let me play this role! It is the culmination of everything that I am. Please! We could work on it alone, if you like!

STANISLAVSKI

Galina Alievna...!

GALINA

The others are coming. Think on it. Don't answer now! We'll talk more later. Later, Mister Stanislavski! *(She acts as if she's having to flee from him.)* My, you are aggressive. Stop it and let me consider. No, no. Later!

*GALINA exits. At the same time OLGA KNIPPER, VASSILI LUZHSKY, in a frock-coat with a star of some order on it, followed by PAVEL busy with luggage, enter.*

OLGA

I really wish you'd stay, Vassili. No reason to leave on my account.

VASSILI

Nonsense! I won't hear of it! If one of our great ladies of the theater cannot work, then what is the point of continuing? I voice my discontent and I leave at once!

STANISLAVSKI

You will be staying, Vassili Vayanovich.

VASSILI

Alright.

STANISLAVSKI

And, Olga Leonardovna... I beg you to reconsider. You are the premiere voice of leadership to our actors. What will they do if you leave?

OLGA

Whatever they please. I hope it involves replacing that amateur! Whoever heard of shooting yourself in the head so as to identify with a character! I don't propose to teach you your own Method, Mister Stanislavski, but I should think that's taking an emotional gesture too far!

STANISLAVSKI

I understand your frustration. Believe me, I do. Even Pavel attempted to say something about it and you know how he plays his cards close to his chest.

*PAVEL stares off into space. He slowly manages acknowledgement.*

STANISLAVSKI

It is of the utmost importance that rehearsals continue, even in my absence. I'm convinced this play will put the People's Art Theater front and center on the Moscow stage. But we must work!

OLGA

I just don't understand why you're allowing yourself to be driven from your own production by an upstart with an attitude...

VASSILI

I agree!

OLGA

... And such ridiculous ideas about theater!

VASSILI

Ridiculous!

STANISLAVSKI

Please believe me, Olga Leonardovna. Vsevelod Emilevich's anger is what makes him genius. It is the life-blood of his character. He is only going through the same, hot, distilling process that so many young actors must go through. I remember a time when you, yourself, were likely to have a tantrum or two.... Before you matured, of course.

OLGA

*Mister Stanislavski!* I, at least, had the common sense and the decency to listen to my elders in the art.

VASSILI

Elders!

OLGA

And I bathed regularly with a sponge like a civilized person.

VASSILI

Bathed with... sponge rubbing... (*swaying*)... Uh-oh... afraid I'm gonna faint... and so forth...

OLGA

Vasilli!

STANISLAVSKI

My goodness!

*ENTER VSEVELOD MEYERHOLD with a blood-soaked, turban-like bandage on his head, followed by YURI.*

OLGA

He's going to faint!

*MEYERHOLD, YURI and PAVEL run to VASSILI. MEYERHOLD takes a glass of water from the table, fills his mouth and matter-of-factly spits it into the face of VASSILI. YURI and PAVEL help VASSILI into a chair and takes his pulse.*

VASSILI

Oh, it's nothing... nothing. Just a bit of gas.

MEYERHOLD

Nothing to be alarmed about. Just the body's response to creative imprisonment.

STANISLAVSKI

You should go and lie down for a while, Vassili.

VASSILI

Yes, yes. Perhaps you're right. Help me, Yuri Semyanovich.

YURI

Of course, Vasilli Vayonovich.

OLGA

Come. I'm help you.

VASSILI

*(to OLGA)* Oh, you're a dear. *(To YURI)* Probably hard for you to believe, boy. But I was as good looking as you once.

YURI

Oh, I believe you, Vasilli Vayanovich.

*VASSILI, OLGA, YURI and PAVEL exit. STANISLAVSKI and MEYERHOLD are left alone. An awkward pause.*

STANISLAVSKI

Are you feeling better?

MEYERHOLD

What's that supposed to mean?

STANISLAVSKI

I meant your head wound.

MEYERHOLD.

Oh. Pain is a song of the body.

STANISLAVSKI

I suppose you're right.

*MEYERHOLD sarcastically feigns a “shocked” look.*

STANISLAVSKI

Believe it or not, Vsevelod Emilevich, I take many of your ideas into serious consideration.

MEYERHOLD

Must we go through this again?

STANISLAVSKI

No, as a matter of fact. I will be leaving on the next train back to Moscow. *(He watches this land on Meyerhold.)* I feel it would be better for the company, at this point, to remove myself from the process for a short time.

*A PAUSE. MEYERHOLD tries to calculate the meaning behind this.*

MEYERHOLD

Only a short one?

STANISLAVSKI

Now, Vsevelod Emil...

MEYERHOLD

Have you taken advantage of the exercise classes they offer here at Pushkino? I haven't seen you in attendance.

STANISLAVSKI

I can't say that I have.

MEYERHOLD

Ah. Well, I am to assume that gymnastics and tumbling were a part of your training at the Conservatory.

STANISLAVSKI

Indeed, they were.

MEYERHOLD

Hmm. So at some point you stopped taking interested in, not only your own body, but the body's place within our theater?

STANISLAVSKI

On the contrary, Vsevelod Emilevich. Physicality is a fundamental part of what we do...

MEYERHOLD

Really! I find that marvelously...

STANISLAVSKI

We have roots in ballet and the circus...

MEYERHOLD

The circus no less!

STANISLAVSKI

And there is a memory rooted deep within the muscles which holds our entire experience. So, yes, I find your physical scores valid and of phenomenal importance.

MEYERHOLD

My "physical scores".

STANISLAVSKI

Yes.

MEYERHOLD

My Biomechanics are "physical scores" to you...

STANISLAVSKI

Vsevelod Emilevich...

MEYERHOLD

And every time I have an impulse or an idea...

STANISLAVSKI

... at a certain point we must begin to assimilate as a...

MEYERHOLD

Assimilate!

STANISLAVSKI

... cohesive unit. A hive whose functions are interwoven and dependent upon one another...

MEYERHOLD

That's what I'm trying to...!

STANISLAVSKI

... and which will be understood by an audience!

*A pause.*

MEYERHOLD

Oh. I see what this is about.

STANISLAVSKI

No...

MEYERHOLD

It's not enough that you levy your investment into producerial power; that you *insist* to also play one of the main roles while you direct...

STANISLAVSKI

We are striving to create...

MEYERHOLD

... but now we are also a business.

STANISLAVSKI

... the first rational, moral and public-accessible theater.

MEYERHOLD

What is "rational"?

STANISLAVSKI

I have no idea anymore, Vsevelod Emilevich.

*A PAUSE.*

MEYERHOLD

I simply wish you would allow me to show you...

STANISLAVSKI

We've done this...

MEYERHOLD

Excuse me! May I finish?

STANISLAVSKI

Please.

MEYERHOLD

I wish you would allow me to present to you some alternative ideas for the bandaging changing scene.

STANISLAVSKI

Vsevelod Emilevich. I truly believe I should step back from the...

MEYERHOLD

Why?

STANISLAVSKI

Because if I disagree you may shoot yourself again!

MEYERHOLD

Oh, that? That was simple actualization. Had nothing to do with our arguments.

*OLGA enters, sees what is happening and tries to escape.*

MEYERHOLD

Excellent timing, Olga Luksanaya. We were just talking about taking another shot.

OLGA

So to speak.

MEYERHOLD

I just want to show Comrade Stanislavski something I've been working on. Just to open things up a bit. *(He takes her by the hand and positions her.)* Now you just go through the scene as we rehearsed. Sorin has just been led off after fainting. Suddenly, 'Arkadinaya' and her son 'Treplev' are left alone. I've made some changes. Watch for my cues. Go.

*MEYERHOLD takes position. Not really trusting where this is going, but wanting to appease the enfant terrible, Olga just tries to get through it.*

MEYERHOLD

*(As 'Treplev')* "Please mother. Change my bandage. You do it so beautifully."

OLGA

*(As 'Arkadinaya', mimes the gathering of iodine and bandages)* "The doctor is late today, is he?"

*As MEYERHOLD begins to perform, he takes on a very exacting kind of movement. It's as if he has only a series of pre-arranged shapes, forms and gestures that he moves into and out of at various rhythms. His athleticism is breathtaking but the application is ridiculous.*

MEYERHOLD

"Yes. He promised to arrive by ten, and now it's twelve already."

OLGA

"Sit down, my dear."

*Meyerhold leaps across the room and sits with militaristic exactness. He stares forward. Olga isn't quite sure what to do but she continues. She mimes taking off his bandage.*

OLGA

“You look as if you were wearing a turban....”

MEYERHOLD

No, actually take it off.

OLGA

I’m sorry?

MEYERHOLD

Take the bandage off. Actualize it.

OLGA

*(To STANISLAVSKI)* I am not taking his bandage off.

STANISLAVSKI

Yes, Vsevelod...

*MEYERHOLD detaches the end of his bandage and forces it into OLGA’s hand. Then he dances his way in a spiral to the other end of the space. The result is that OLGA is left holding a long, blood-soaked bandage, the last loop of which is caked to MEYERHOLD’s head. His stance threatens to undo it entirely. OLGA and STANISLAVSKI are scared senseless, not daring to move an inch.*

MEYERHOLD

Continue please.

OLGA

*(Barely keeping it together)* “Your wound has almost healed. Just a bit of scab left. You won’t go do anything so stupid while I’m away, will you?”

MEYERHOLD

“No, mother. I did it in the moment of my deepest despair, when I had lost control of myself. It won’t happen again. Only why, mother...” I’m skipping ahead. “... are you so infatuated with that man?”

OLGA

Uh... “He’s one of the most honorable men I’ve known...”

MEYERHOLD

“An honorable man! He’s probably in the drawing room laughing at us and broadening Nina’s mind.”

OLGA

“You’re jealous. Mediocrities who cherish lofty ideas of themselves will naturally dismiss men of real genius.”

MEYERHOLD

“Men of real genius! I’ve got more genius than any of you and I’ll prove it!”

*MEYERHOLD tears himself from the bandage, quickly covering the bullet hole with his hand. STANISLAVSKI and OLGA gasp. MEYERHOLD keeps going, one hand pressed firmly to his head and continuing his ridiculous gesture sequence as best he can.*

MEYERHOLD

“You purveyors of stale ideas have fought your way to the top of the art heap and, according to you, only your own work is legitimate and genuine! You stifle and revile everything else. I don’t acknowledge your authority!”

OLGA

“You submissive, you...”

MEYERHOLD

“Go to your precious theater and act in your miserable, third-rate plays!”

OLGA

“Parasite!”

MEYERHOLD

“Spendthrift!”

OLGA

“Hobo!”

MEYERHOLD

“Slut!”

OLGA

“Non... Entity!”

*MEYERHOLD ends the scene, grabbing a pillow and pressing it to his head. Soon the pillow begins to soak with blood and run down his face.*

MEYERHOLD

Well, that’s generally what I was thinking. Obviously could use some polishing, but that’s my idea of it at least.

STANISLAVSKI

Uh-huh.

OLGA

*(Genuine)* I have to say, Mister Stanislavski, I actually think I felt something near the end.

MEYERHOLD

Inconsequential.

STANISLAVSKI

Well... Vsevelod Emilevich... It gets the imagination working.

MEYERHOLD

Oh, that is such a condescending...

STANISLAVSKI

What did I say? I apologize.

MEYERHOLD

No, you don't. You think this is useless and derivative.

STANISLAVSKI

My good man, these... this... these are... you create symbols of vast significance.

MEYERHOLD

They're not symbols! They are forms! The same as pianos have notes of music or a painter has colors.

STANISLAVSKI

Well, alright.

MEYERHOLD

Please don't play dumb!

STANISLAVSKI

I do have a (train)...

MEYERHOLD

Let me read to you from your own directing notes which you had delivered to us before your arrival. *(He reads from the script notes)* "Arkadinaya crosses over to the table..." *(He motions for OLGA to do as he says. She follows along awkwardly.)* "... And drinks some water." *(OLGA drinks water.)* "... her hands shaking." *(OLGA begins shaking her hands so that the water goes all over her.)* "She wipes her face... and having calmed down... goes to Konstantin and strokes his hair."

*OLGA walks to MEYERHOLD and forces herself to stroke his bloody head.*

MEYERHOLD

Now what in the Saviour's name is that if not a "physical score"?

STANISLAVSKI

These are simply suggestions...

MEYERHOLD

Suggestions! Yes, for all of us. I see very few for your own character.

STANISLAVSKI

Because I don't often make notes to myself. That is all...

MEYERHOLD

Mm-hmm.

STANISLAVSKI

*(For the one thousandth time)* ... We are attempting to create a new kind of theater based in the truth of human experience.

MEYERHOLD

The truth of human experience!

*MEYERHOLD begins to read from the script notes and perform the actions with militaristic exactitude and no attempt whatsoever at finesse.*

MEYERHOLD

"Konstantin raises himself on his left elbow... blows his nose... and wipes his eyes... He cannot talk for whimpering and sobbing... He buries his face in the cushion... *(MEYERHOLD turns his face into the pillow and blood goes everywhere.)*... And sobs... Arkadinaya is stroking his head... *(again OLGA tentatively strokes his bloody head)*... Arkadinaya gets up... takes a glass of water... and drinks... Konstantin jumps to his feet... and picking up the bandage... runs out of the room.

*MEYERHOLD runs out of the room. OLGA and STANISLAVSKI each other for help. MEYERHOLD re-enters.*

MEYERHOLD

Now! There you go. There's your "notes" performed *exactly* how you wrote them! Was that what you envisioned?

STANISLAVSKI

Well...

MEYERHOLD

No! It wasn't! And do you know why? Because your Method is as full of unwritten rules and expectations as any other artistic pretentiousness that claims to have the answer! It encourages solipsistic actors to be further self-interested, further lazy, and

further willing to let our theater slide off into a steaming vat of excrement. It's so *completely* insulting to us that, as a principle, it will never survive! It is a Dodo Bird! And, if it does manage to hop and peck its way into the twentieth century, then God help any audience of the future which may be subjected to it!

*A grand PAUSE. STANISLAVSKI has given up.*

OLGA

Vsevelod Emilevich...

MEYERHOLD

Let him speak for himself...

OLGA

Meyerhold! That is quite enough. Your opinions have been noted. We will continue working with Mister Stanislavski's notes tomorrow morning. For now, go see the resort doctor and ask him to bandage your head again. Now.

*MEYERHOLD gives another glance at STANISLAVSKI and then exits.*

STANISLAVSKI

They've actually started wearing me down, Olga.

OLGA

"They"?

STANISLAVSKI

The younger ones. I think I'm doomed to being always misinterpreted.

*OLGA walks to him and sits beside him.*

OLGA

You are so talented, Constantin. So clever. You're the greatest of all our modern actors... the male ones, I mean. You are Russia's only hope for a People's Theater. And you will bring a newness, a freshness, a humor that has never before been expressed. Do you think I'm flattering you? Look into my eyes. You, of all people, should know if I'm lying. (*A PAUSE.*) You'll stay, won't you? You won't leave us?

*YURI and PAVEL enter.*

YURI

Vassili Vayanovich is sleeping. I think, perhaps, he's not used to the intensity of rehearsal anymore. We should be going, Mister Stanislavski. Your train arrives very soon.

STANISLAVSKI

No need, Yuri. I'm staying.

YURI

No. You're not joking?

STANISLAVSKI

I rarely joke.

YURI

Oh, such wonderful news. Wait 'til the others hear! *(Starts to leave.)*

STANISLAVSKI

Yuri!

YURI

Yes, Mister Stanislavski.

STANISLAVSKI

Perhaps we don't want to make it such an announcement. Let's let everyone have a quiet afternoon off. Alright?

YURI

Whatever you say, sir. I'll tell the cooks to add one more back into our number!

*YURI exits. Pause.*

OLGA

You're also a good man. I'm going to check on Vassili. Catch your breath. We'll get through this. All of us.

*OLGA exits. STANISLAVSKI is now alone. He gets up and pensively moves about the space. He picks up the copy of "The Seagull" and opens it. There is something deeply, truly felt about the moment for him. Perhaps it's the play he holds, perhaps it's the feeling of standing in a space and preparing for a role. Whatever it is, for the actor playing STANISLAVSKI, it is completely true. He adjust his stance, collects his breath, raises the script, and is about to utter a line of dialogue when...*

*GALINA enters.*

GALINA

So I've thought about it.

STANISLAVSKI

Oh, dear God.

*CURTAIN.*

## ACT IV

*A projection on the curtain:*

**In an email from a co-producer: "... But what is my involvement in this? Co-creator? Choreographer slash actor? Producer slash whatever? I like the idea of you having the 'God hand', but I have to ask you here: what is my role? Who... or what... am I?"**

*There is an interval of forty years between the third and the fourth acts.*

*The curtain opens on the main stage of the Moscow Art Theater. A set is under construction for a production of "The Seagull". A rehearsal of the fourth act has happened earlier in the day and those set pieces are still in place. In addition to the drawing room furniture there is a make-shift stage (resembling the gazebo from the first two acts) which sits towards the upstage wall - and is made up to look as if it's falling apart. To the left and right are passages or doorways to other parts of the theater.*

*Evening. Winter. A wind blows outside. A ghost light shines in the center of the stage.*

*PAVEL walks through the theater, making preparations for a late rehearsal: checking props, adding lights, etc. YURI and GALINA enter.*

GALINA

Vsevelod! Vsevelod! Oh. It's you, Pavel. Every minute Mister Stanislavski keeps asking: "Where is Vsevelod Emilevich? Where is Meyerhold?" As if he won't go on living without him.

YURI

Time becomes more precious. (*Listening*) What terrible weather! It's been like this for two days. Perhaps... You don't think the rumors about...

GALINA

What?

YURI

Well, you know that it's been bandied about. I can't imagine what he must be thinking, if at all...

GALINA

Please, Yuri. It's of no concern...

YURI

Well, it's pure senility!

GALINA

Stop it.

YURI

Let's go home, Galina.

GALINA

You only just got here.

YURI

But you've been here constantly and I feel like I haven't seen you in weeks.

GALINA

Mister Stanislavski wants to work and so I work.

YURI

But it's the middle of the night.

GALINA

You quit the theater some time ago, Yuri. But have you actually forgotten about Mister Stanislavski's all night rehearsals.

YURI

Oh, yes. And all of that devotion for the grand total of a few hundred copecks a year.

GALINA

Yuri, you've been asked to take part and help Mister Stanislavski refresh his memory because you were a part of the first production. If you don't want to be here, then please go home.

YURI

Fine. I'll stay.

*ENTER OLGA with ALEXANDER VISHNEVSKY and ELENA RAYEVSKAYA from the street.*

OLGA

Hello? Hello?

GALINA

Oh, my!

OLGA

*(Seeing GALINA and YURI)* Look at you, Galina Alievna! As I live and breath! And you... Yuri.

ALEXANDER

I told you they wouldn't have changed a bit. You love birds, still together!

YURI

We wouldn't have it any other way.

ELENA

I would say I can't believe my eyes, but I'm tearing up, so...

GALINA

We all are, Elena Ivanovna.

OLGA

Simply unreal!

YURI

How are you, Alexi?

ALEXANDER

Stiff around the hips this time of year, I can tell you. It's cold as sleeping death out there...

STANISLAVSKI

*(From off)* What's this? What's this I hear?

ALEXANDER

The booming voice of your Doctor Dorn!

*STANISLAVSKI enters in an invalid chair being pushed by PAVEL.*

STANISLAVSKI

My friends! My friends!

ELENA

Mister Stanislavski!

ALEXANDER

Comrade, you old dog. How are you?

STANISLAVSKI

"My friends, it is so good to see you. Look at you. Olga. "Take me away with you, carry me off, only for heaven's sake..."

*Several OTHERS finish the line with him.*

STANISLAVSKI/OTHERS

"...don't let me out of your sight for a single moment!"

OLGA

“Oh, my darling, my dearest love, my master!”

*STANISLAVSKI feigns a swoon. Laughter.*

STANISLAVSKI

So the work has started already.

OLGA

Oh, it never stopped.

STANISLAVSKI

Have we seen our intrepid ‘Treplev’ yet?

GALINA

No. Not yet.

STANISLAVSKI

Well... I suppose he’ll be along, do you think?

OLGA

The ice is thick tonight, Constantin. We were lucky to get here ourselves.

STANISLAVSKI

Ah. Well.

ELENA

We saw a car and driver outside.

ALEXANDAR

Elena, I highly doubt Vsevelod Emilevich would be capable of coming by chauffeur.

ELENA

Well...

OLGA

It was a government car.

YURI

The government?

GALINA

Mister Stanislavski, you don’t think it could be...?

STANISLAVSKI

No. Not likely. That man travels with more than a driver, believe me. Most likely a member of the Party's Arts Ministry though. I suppose I expected it.

ALEXANDER

So it's true what we've been hearing? About Meyerhold. How you plan...?

ELENA

Expected what...?

*A knocking is heard.*

BUBNOV

*(from off)* Hello?! Comrade Stanislavski?!

STANISLAVSKI

Galina, why don't you take the others into my study and try to find enough copies of "The Seagull" for us to do this.

*Stanislavski begins pulling himself up from his invalid chair. Galina and Yuri help him.*

GALINA

Of course.

ALEXANDER

Is everything...?

STANISLAVSKI

You just warm up your voice, Alexander, or I'll be forced to upstage you.

ALEXANDER

Oh, really.

OLGA

Yell if you need us.

*GALINA, YURI, PAVEL, OLGA, ALEXANDER and ELENA exit to the backstage area. STANISLAVSKI is alone. He attempts to achieve some image of stature and strength. COMMISSAR ANDREI BUBNOV enters from the street.*

BUBNOV

Comrade Stanislavski?

STANISLAVSKI

Yes? May I help you?

BUBNOV

Oh. Um... You'll have to excuse me, Comrade Stanislavski. I'm somewhat of a fan of yours. Andrei Bubnov. I am with the Ministry of Arts and Education. I saw you several times as a boy. Once as... *(he makes a crude attempt at a characterization)*... and again as... *(a different character)*...

STANISLAVSKI

Uh-huh.

BUBNOV

*(clarifying)* That was "Hamlet" and then "Othello".

STANISLAVSKI

Ah, yes. Of course. Very convincing.

BUBNOV

"Othello" is the one I returned several times for. And always to see your performance.

STANISLAVSKI

Oh. Well...

BUBNOV

It seemed to me each performance, each night, was completely different. Amazing.

STANISLAVSKI

I thank you, Comrade...

BUBNOV

Bubnov

STANISLAVSKI

Bubnov. Yes. Inspector?

BUBNOV

Commissar, actually.

STANISLAVSKI

Oh. You're new.

BUBNOV

Very. Commissar Lunacharsky took an early retirement. Comrade Stalin thought it best that I should begin serving in his place. How could I refuse?

STANISLAVSKI

Of course. How could you? Well, we're honored by your presence, Commissar Bubnov. If we can ever provide you with tickets, do not hesitate...

BUBNOV

Oh, we worked out a reserve with your box office some time ago.

STANISLAVSKI

Really?

BUBNOV

Yes. They were quite generous.

*Slight pause.*

STANISLAVSKI

Good. So how may I be of service to you, Commissar Bubnov...?

BUBNOV

*(indicating the stage)* I'm sorry. May I?

STANISLAVSKI

Of course.

*BUBNOV briskly walks up the steps to the stage. He looks around in awe.*

BUBNOV

I've always wondered what it was like. You know, as a boy I read many plays. Went to many shows, always demanding money from my father for the tickets. I had some odd fancy of becoming an actor.

STANISLAVSKI

Well, why didn't you?

BUBNOV

*(laughs)* Yes.

STANISLAVSKI

Commissar Bubnov, if you don't mind...

BUBNOV

Yes, I apologize. My reason for coming. I... well... There have been some rumors.

STANISLAVSKI

Yes?

BUBNOV

Rumors that you, perhaps, intend to hand the directorship of the Moscow Art Theater to a successor quite soon. (*He waits for acknowledgement from STANISLAVSKI, who looks at him stone faced.*) And that you plan to give this directorship to Vsevelod Meyerhold.

STANISLAVSKI

I don't often deal in rumor, Comrade Bubnov.

BUBNOV

Of course. But I'm sure you can understand how this has been of some concern to Comrade Stalin. He is, it seems, a bigger fan than I. Perhaps your greatest.

STANISLAVSKI

Yes, he is in regular attendance. We are only too pleased to serve the people in this capacity.

BUBNOV

So...?

STANISLAVSKI

So.

BUBNOV

Yes...? (*pause*) Comrade Stanislavski, I'm sure you are also aware of the State position on aberrations of realism.

STANISLAVSKI

Are you suggesting there is something about my work that is not realistic, Comrade?

BUBNOV

No! No. Of course not. It is the height of realism, to be sure. If anything your theater is an example to the world of Soviet strength in all areas. But Meyerhold... I don't have to tell you about his theater complex being halted in the middle of construction, the investors pulling out.

STANISLAVSKI

Yes, some say to government pressure.

BUBNOV

Oh, Comrade Stanislavski. I can assure you that is entirely baseless. If anything, it is Meyerhold's blatant subversive stylistics that eventually undermined investor confidence. I'm sure you know as well as I. His blaspheming of this theater alone...

STANISLAVSKI

I am aware of Comrade Meyerhold's statements.

BUBNOV

So you agree. He's a bit off the deep end, that one. Always has been. He knowingly associates with subversives from Europe. He develops plays written specifically to denounce the State. And I'm sure you've heard of his "Bio-mechanics". Ridiculous! A joke that embarrasses Russia. Comrade Stalin has been very clear on this issue: subversion of reality is an attempt at subversion of the State. If it is allowed to grow unchecked it's weeds will choke out the garden of reason.

STANISLAVSKI

And so you have come here...?

BUBNOV

To make recommendations.

STANISLAVSKI

My young man. I began this theater some time before you were born with investments from my family's estate and I have since grown that investment significantly...

BUBNOV

Of course...

STANISLAVSKI

... in commerce as well as art...

BUBNOV

Commerce is owned by the people, Comrade Stanislavski. *(pause)* Your world-wide significance is greatly respected by the regime. But it is a star that shines too brightly to be ignored. Meyerhold must not be given control of the Moscow Art Theater. We demand that you consider the wishes of the people.

STANISLAVSKI

Tell me again your Christian name, Bubnov?

BUBNOV

My Christian name?

STANISLAVSKI

Yes.

BUBNOV

Well, it's Georgi.

STANISLAVSKI

Georgi. I am an old man. A very old man with a... still... very bad sense of collaboration. I am most likely going to die before I see the next winter. I know this. There is very little you could do, Georgi... to scare me. So get the devil off my stage.

*Pause. BUBNOV begins to slowly descend from the stage.*

BUBNOV

I apologize, Comrade Stanislavski. I would never attempt to scare you. Comrade Stalin and I respect you far too much. And it is best, I think, that your theater remains in the hands of the company... and not the State. What would I do if I was suddenly told to leave the office so I could begin playing 'Solyony'. I've missed my time, I'm afraid. Just as well. I'd probably be an embarrassment...

*MEYERHOLD enters from the street.*

BUBNOV

Ah. And you have company. I will remove myself and let you discuss things of artistic importance which I would probably never understand. *(To MEYERHOLD)* My regards to your wife, Mister Meyerhold. I saw some pictures of her today on my desk. Very attractive. Good night, Comrade Stanislavski! It was a dream come true!

*BUBNOV leaves. A pause.*

STANISLAVSKI

I had a feeling you'd come.

MEYERHOLD

Shall I lock the doors behind him?

STANISLAVSKI

He won't come back...

MEYERHOLD

I'd feel better.

STANISLAVSKI

Alright.

*MEYERHOLD locks the doors. Then looks around the theater.*

MEYERHOLD

Warm. Nice. This used to be....

STANISLAVSKI

In all this time you've never come here? I always hoped that perhaps...

MEYERHOLD

Oh, I've walked by the front doors many times but I could never bring myself to come in. I felt, perhaps, it would best left...

STANISLAVSKI

I understand.

MEYERHOLD

And so you're famous now. I hear you went to America for some time.

STANISLAVSKI

Oh. Yes, they seem to have developed some idealized notion of me that's far from the truth.

MEYERHOLD

You or your Method?

STANISLAVSKI

Both I think. But I've certainly been hearing about you as well.

MEYERHOLD

Declamatory things, I'm sure.

STANISLAVSKI

No. Far from it.

MEYERHOLD

Well, I haven't done anything in a bit. The authorities have made it hard and... well, that's all an excuse, isn't it? Truth be told, there's an energy that's gone out of me in the past couple of years. I'm not sure if you know what I'm talking about...?

STANISLAVSKI

That will pass.

*A pause.*

MEYERHOLD

Do you have any water?

STANISLAVSKI

Over there.

*MEYERHOLD pours himself a glass of water and drinks it eagerly.*

MEYERHOLD

I know. I understand now that in our calling - whether we act or direct - what matters is not fame, nor glory, nor any of the silly things I used to dream about. No. What matters is knowing how to endure.

STANISLAVSKI

Well, you've found your calling, Vsevelod Emilevich. Enduring. I, myself, have lost touch with that talent, as you can see. Some would say I'm beginning to go the way of the Dodo.

*A pause. They slowly begin to laugh. Inevitably it slows.*

STANISLAVSKI

You know why I've asked you here, don't you Vsevelod Emilevich.

MEYERHOLD

Yes.

STANISLAVSKI

And what do you think?

MEYERHOLD

What I think is I am without a theater, completely destitute, and universally vilified amongst our kind.

STANISLAVSKI

Yes. So what do you say?

MEYERHOLD

I am beyond flattered, Comrade Stanislavski. But I wonder, 'why me'? Why the man who has publicly denounced your Method as well as the very theater to which you offer me keys. The man who has devoted his life to symbolism and new forms?

*A pause.*

STANISLAVSKI

Do you know, I came to see "33 Fainting Fits"?

MEYERHOLD

You did?

STANISLAVSKI

Yes. I came in late and sat in the back.

MEYERHOLD

And... what did you think?

STANISLAVSKI

Hated it. It was excruciatingly athletic, it ignored the emotional nuance of Chekhov's world, and still had nothing new to say... But at one point I looked into the wings and I saw you standing there. You were absolutely bug-eyed watching your actors. All of the

emotion they missed was there... in your eyes. I remember you were sweating even though it was quite cold in the theater. I watched you... and I watched them... and, for the first time in years, I felt something while in a theater. *(a pause)* Meyerhold, at some point I moved beyond the crazy, boyhood impulse I once had to step on a stage in the first place. And by the time I looked back, it was too far away to see. Do you know I had a dream the other night in which I was an actor in the future attempting to do an impression of myself? It was awful...

MEYERHOLD

But what about your Method?

STANISLAVSKI

Hell, my own Method is a Frankenstein roaming the globe. The theater is full of people who want to imitate me, Vsevelod Emilevich. You, I know, will not.

MEYERHOLD

I think... Comrade Stanislavski... It is only proper that I tell you... that I think... I think they may come and kill me for my work.

*A pause.*

STANISLAVSKI

And your point? I thought I was talking to the same young man who shot himself just so he could relate to 'Treplev'. If they come, they come, Vsevelod Meyerhold. That is no concern of ours. Ours is only to tell the truth, regardless of the technique. I'm going back to gather the others. We're trying to remember how we staged the final scene from "The Seagull". I was hoping you'd stay and help. We're missing our 'Nina' though. Seems as though we're doomed always to be without her. Think it over, my friend.

*STANISLAVSKI exits. MEYERHOLD is alone. He looks around the theater and seems to slowly breathe it in. Something about this moment should resemble STANISLAVSKI's private moment at the end of ACT III. He stands on the stage and looks out.*

MEYERHOLD

"I hope no one sees her in the garden and tells Mother. It might upset her."

*He smiles to himself. He takes his hat and exits toward the street. At the same time STANISLAVSKI re-enters with YURI and PAVEL helping him. Following are OLGA, ALEXANDER, GALINA, and ELENA. They all hold scripts.*

STANISLAVSKI

... And you would begin, Olga.

OLGA

"Put the claret and the beer for Mister Trigorin here on the table, please. We can drink while we play. Come and sit, everyone. Please."

ELENA

“Bring the tea, Yakov.”

*She lights candles. STANISLAVSKI looks about for MEYERHOLD. The others sit. YURI retrieves something from a prop case.*

OLGA

We sat over here, Constantin.

YURI

Here’s the thing I mentioned to you before... *(presenting STANISLAVSKI with a stuffed seagull)*... Your oder, sir.

STANISLAVSKI

Don’t remember. Don’t remember.

OLGA

Oh, this is when the shot...

*A SHOT sounds from off toward the street. They all look off toward where the shot sounded, past the audience. Hold. The lights slowly fade. As our characters fade into the darkness, one light lingers in the house, illuminating one spectator for a brief moment. It is DARSHAWN and he watches as the play ends. Silently.*

END OF PLAY