

not. (*Laughs.*) You see, my mother doesn't love me. Why should she? She wants excitement, romance and younger men, and here I am already 25. When I'm not around she's only 32 and when I am she's 43—she hates me for that. Also she knows I don't believe in The Theatre. She adores The Theatre; she believes she's serving both Mankind and the Sacred Cause of Art. As far as I'm concerned, Theatre today is boring and trite. The curtain goes up and inside three walls, lit by artificial light, our famous stars, those high priests of art, parade about, showing us how to eat, drink, love, walk and wear our clothes. And then the playwright tries to squeeze a moral out of it, some smug little moral, all cozy, perfectly fit for home consumption, and each play repeats this formula with only infinitesimal variation. That's why I have to run, like Maupassant who ran from the Eiffel Tower because he knew it would cheapen his mind.

SORIN. But we must have a theatre.

TREPLEV. What we need is a new kind of theatre, Uncle. We need new forms, and if we can't have them, let's have no theatre at all. (*Looks at his watch.*) I love my mother, but she leads such a stupid life, always fussing about that writer of hers, always getting her name in the paper. It's too boring. Maybe it's just selfishness but I wish I didn't have a famous actress for a mother. I'd be much happier if she were just an ordinary mortal. Can you imagine what it's like, life at home with her, Uncle, how I feel? The living room is always full of people, all of them famous, writers or actors, and the only nobody is me, and who am I? What am I? I am her son, and that's the only reason they put up with me. I left the University my third year owing to circumstances, as they say, beyond our control, I have no talent, not a kopeck to my name, and according to my passport, I am a "bourgeois of Kiev," that's my social position. My father was a "bourgeois of Kiev" too, only he also happened to be a famous actor. So whenever the famous actors and writers and musicians in my mother's living room noticed me, I felt as if they were measuring my insignificance. I imagined I could read their thoughts, and I was going through agonies.

SORIN. By the way, tell me, what sort of man is her writer? You see, I can't make him out. He never opens his mouth.

TREPLEV. He's intelligent, simple, rather melancholy; he seems decent. He's under forty and he's famous. He has everything he

wants. As for his writing—well, you can say it's charming and clever, but compared to Tolstoy or Zola it's not much.

SORIN. I love literary people, my boy. There were two things I wanted passionately in my life: to marry and to be a writer, but neither of those things happened. It must be very nice to be even a second rate writer, I mean, after all . . .

TREPLEV. (*Listening.*) I hear someone coming. (*He embraces his*

uncle.) I can't live without her . . . even the sound of her footsteps is beautiful. I'm wildly happy. (*Going to meet Nina as she*

enters.) My darling one, my dream.

NINA. (*Agitated.*) I hope I'm not late . . . I'm not late am I?

TREPLEV. (*Kissing her hands.*) No, no, no.

NINA. I was worried all day. I was so frightened. I was afraid

Father wouldn't let me come. He just went out now with my step-

mother. I raced the horse so fast. The sky's already red and the

moon will be up very soon. (*Nina laughs.*) But I'm happy now, I'm here. (*She takes Sorin's hand.*)

SORIN. (*Laughing too.*) You've been crying. I can tell by your pretty little eyes. Now that won't do. It really won't.

NINA. It's true. And you can see how out of breath I am. Please

let's hurry. I have to go in half an hour. I have to. Don't ask me

to stay longer because I can't. My father doesn't even know I'm

here.

TREPLEV. It's time to begin now anyway. I'll go call everybody.

SORIN. I'll go! I'll go right now! (*He goes off singing "The Two*

*Grenadiers," then stops and turns back toward them.**) I remem-

ber one day I started to sing that and an Assistant Prosecutor who

was standing near me said, "Your Excellency has a very strong

voice." Then he stopped and thought about it and said: "Strong,

but unpleasant." (*He goes out laughing.*)

NINA. My father and his wife won't let me come here. They say

it's Bohemia. They're afraid I'll become an actress. But I'm drawn

here, to the lake, like a sea gull. (*They are standing very close*

together.) My heart is so full of you. (*She looks around.*)

TREPLEV. We're alone.

NINA. Isn't that someone over there?

TREPLEV. No, no one. (*He kisses her.*)

NINA. What kind of tree is that?

* "To France we're returning, two Grenadiers . . ."