

**When I Had Three Sisters**  
*a farce in four acts*

by Jason Pizzarello

**Originally developed in the  
The Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab 2010/2011  
(Sarah Benson, Artistic Director).**

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## **CHARACTERS**

The Sisters:

**DAISY**, the youngest sister. Earnest, but dim. Pretty. A redhead.

**VIOLET**, the middle one. Witty, but sad. Not as pretty as Daisy. Blonde.

**ROSE**, the oldest. Caring, but nervous. A widow perhaps. Brunette.

**GRAHAM**, their brother. Delusions of grandeur, but harmless.

**POPPY**, their grandfather. Dead?

**OFFICER TUSSLE**, a male cop

**DETECTIVE RIDDLE**, a female cop (played by the same actor playing Violet)

## **PLACE**

Upstate somewhere.

## **TIME**

Today.

“The greatest problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished.”

—George Bernard Shaw

“In life, one does not shoot oneself in the head, hang oneself, or declare one’s passion at every fencepost, and one does not pour out profound thoughts in a constant flow. No, mostly one eats, drinks, flirts, makes stupid remarks.”

—Anton Pavlovich Chekhov

## **ACT ONE**

*(A drawing room. Morning)*

*Rose crosses from behind the bookcase, carrying a tea cup ever so carefully. She barely fits in her grandma's old church dress.*

*Daisy walks in behind her stiff as in a funeral procession, also dressed in some ridiculous formal wear.*

*After a moment, Daisy stops and looks back.*

*Rose stops and looks back.*

*They wait.*

*They wait.*

*A GUNSHOT.*

*They jump. And Rose burns herself on the hot tea water.)*

**ROSE:** Ah!

**DAISY:** What was that?

**ROSE:** Duds' army rifle.

**DAISY:** It's loud.

**ROSE:** Yes, gunshots are loud.

**DAISY:** No wonder Mums didn't like him shooting it.

*(Violet enters with a little gun powder soot on her face.)*

**ROSE:** Was that you, Violet?

**VIOLET:** And if it was?

**ROSE:** Are you okay?

**DAISY:** What were you shooting at?

**VIOLET:** The sky.

**ROSE:** Not a bird or anything?

**VIOLET:** Last night I had a dream that I shot a hole through the sky and that it shriveled and collapsed like a punctured balloon. The blue elastic covered us all, everyone.

**DAISY:** And did we prop the rubber up to form thousands of tents? How resilient!

**VIOLET:** No, we suffocated.

**DAISY:** Oh.

**ROSE:** Try not to be depressed for Daisy's birthday.

**DAISY:** Do I look older?

During the night, I swear, I've aged five years. Yesterday I was twenty-two but today I'm twenty-seven. I'm still younger than you Rose, but now I'm older than you, Violet.

**VIOLET:** I always wanted to be the youngest sister.

**DAISY:** I'm wearing a smile and the tingle that comes with it feels foreign to me. Look at it.

*(Daisy smiles strangely. They study her.*

*Rose goes about setting a small table with tea cups and plates and proper settings.*

*Violet rolls a cigarette and smokes it.)*

**ROSE:** Last night I had a dream too. I dreamt that we left the front door unlocked and a strange man crept into my room and had his way with me again and again until the cock cockooed that it was morning.

**DAISY:** That's silly. We don't even have a rooster.

**VIOLET:** He must've brought his own.

**ROSE:** It was such a frightening dream. Why would a nameless man want to have his way with me?

**DAISY:** Again and again.

**ROSE:** Again and again.

**VIOLET:** *(to herself)* I wish he'd stopped in my room.

*(Rose drops a saucer.)*

**ROSE:** *(tearing up)* I've broken a saucer.

**DAISY:** It may bring luck.

**ROSE:** Yes, and dreams bring happiness.

Where's your tea cup, Daisy? You must have tea for a tea party.

**DAISY:** Sorry, Rose, I can't participate today.

**ROSE:** But it's a *birthday* tea party. I've already decorated. See the balloon.

*(She points to a single balloon tied to a chair.)*

**VIOLET:** If we invited guests, I'm sure they'd be thrilled.

**ROSE:** You never know who's going to stop by.

**DAISY:** I'm on my new detox diet. I'm only allowed to chew wood chips and redrink my pee. It's filtered.

**ROSE:** That's disgusting.

**DAISY:** Reusing your own urine is environmentally sound.

*(Violet has been fiddling with the balloon and it POPS!  
Rose drops a tea cup on the floor breaking it.)*

**ROSE:** Damn you! Damn this house! Damn this town!

*(Rose starts to shake. Daisy goes to her.)*

**DAISY:** There there Rose. It's only a tea cup.

**VIOLET:** And the house and the town.

**DAISY:** Yes, but it's just a house and just a town.

**ROSE:** It's the only town we know. It's the only town we'll *ever* know!

**DAISY:** Shhh. Shhhhhh.

*(Daisy guides Rose to sit in a chair.)*

**DAISY:** Soon we'll live in the greatest windy city of the East: Buffalo. Graham's says it's New York's Chicago. After Graham settles into his professorship he will send for us.

**VIOLET:** Yes, he'll send a carriage and it'll be shaped like a giant gourd.

**DAISY:** We'll all be there eventually. The four of us together like a family. Just like the olden days when Mums and Duds were alive. You believe me, don't you Rose?

**ROSE:** Sure I do, dear.

If only this broken factory town could return to the way it was. All the good industries have left.

**VIOLET:** So sad—we've lost the glorious assembly lines forever.

**DAISY:** It really is the best way to put something together. Teamwork is my favorite.

**ROSE:** I heard the Swiss might open a Japanese yogurt factory near the old railroad yard.

**DAISY:** Not Japanese yogurt, Chinese apple sauce.

**VIOLET:** Or maybe it's Koren leather tanning. Who cares?

*(Poppy has wandered in during their conversation. He wears a heavy wool blanket around his shoulders and carries a stuffed toy dog under his arm.)*

**POPPY:** You're both wrong. They French are gonna make soap. From Vietnamese shark fins.

**DAISY:** What was that?

**VIOLET:** It's just Poppy's ghost again. Ignore him.

**POPPY:** *Te odeo, interfice te cochleare.* [I hate you. Kill yourself with a spoon.]

**VIOLET:** Latin?

**ROSE:** Probably.

**VIOLET:** Impressive.

**ROSE:** Yes. He was a teacher or doctor or something. Before he died.

**POPPY:** I'm not dead! And I was a pharmacist.

**DAISY:** I miss him.

**VIOLET:** You do?

**POPPY:** You do?

**DAISY:** Sometimes. But I could be thinking of someone else.

**POPPY:** Forget this. C'mon Fredo, let's go eat some pie and take a poop. We'll prove to them we're alive by leaving some semi-hard evidence in a porcelain gift basket.

*(Poppy saunters off.)*

**ROSE:** I respect the dead... I just wish they'd respect us back.

**DAISY:** Maybe we have to sacrifice something to scare him off.

**VIOLET:** Not a bad idea. Perhaps a virgin would do the trick, Rose.

**ROSE:** What are you looking at me for? I've lost my virginity plenty of times.

**DAISY:** I plan on losing mine in the great city of Buffalo.

**ROSE:** Oh, Daisy...do you think you'll really leave?

**DAISY:** Of course I do. Graham has his professorship and all is right. A change is brewing inside me like a great storm. At first I thought it was undigested woodchips, but now I realize we are on the cusp of finding a truly meaningful life.

*(Graham enters and begins pacing back and forth.)*

**DAISY:** Isn't that right, Graham?

**GRAHAM:** Who knows. Isn't what right?

**DAISY:** What day do you begin your professorship in Buffalo?

**GRAHAM:** Buffalo?! Why would I want to go there?

**VIOLET:** Daisy says it's New York's Chicago.

**GRAHAM:** Buffalo?! Where the streets and windows and mouths are filled with horseshit?

**ROSE:** But what about your position at the University?

*(Graham's pacing becomes more intense.)*

**GRAHAM:** Those people wouldn't know taste if it raped them and confessed.

**DAISY:** They wouldn't?

**GRAHAM:** They don't know the first thing about...about...theater or anything else.

**ROSE:** But what about becoming Assistant Adjunct Professor of General Theater Studies. It's such a noble title.

**GRAHAM:** That position has been eliminated due to severe budget cuts. So I told them I wouldn't accept the position even if it existed.

**VIOLET:** So then what will you do?

**DAISY:** What will *I* do?

**ROSE:** What will *we* do?

**GRAHAM:** What will we do? What will we do?...

*(They watch him walk back and forth.)*

**ROSE:** What's he doing?

**DAISY:** Pacing I think. Isn't that what it's called when you walk back and forth?

**ROSE:** Yes, but what for?

**VIOLET:** Maybe he's practicing.

**DAISY:** For what?

**VIOLET:** Maybe that's what he's trying to figure out.

*(Suddenly he stops.)*

**GRAHAM:** I'll know what we'll do!

**ROSE / VIOLET / DAISY:** You do?

**GRAHAM:** We'll...we'll...we'll...

*(Graham clutches his heart and collapses.)*

*They gasp.*

*They rush to him.*

*He doesn't move and panic starts to set in.*

*Each sister slowly starts to back away from Graham.*

*Then suddenly he comes alive again. They gasp.)*

**ROSE:** Are you...okay?

**GRAHAM:** *(holding his heart)* I...I...

*(He jumps to his feet. The sisters gasp again.)*

**GRAHAM:** I have been born again!

**DAISY:** What do you mean?

**GRAHAM:** Hallelujah! I mean hallelujah that's what I mean.

**VIOLET:** Okay, but what do you really mean?

**ROSE:** Did you have a heart attack?

**GRAHAM:** I died. And then I heard God. And God quoted George Bernard Shaw, he said, "Without art, the crudeness of reality makes the world unbearable." And then I woke up. My old artistic life is dead and I'll start anew. I have a new purpose. And the world has a new purpose for me.

**DAISY:** Does this mean you're not going to Buffalo?

**GRAHAM:** I have no use for Buffalo or any of these cities. Or theaters in the cities or theaters in the towns. Or theaters anywhere!  
By the way, was that a gun shot earlier?

**ROSE:** Violet shot Duds army rifle.

**GRAHAM:** Well at least noone was hurt. Wait, was anyone hurt?

**DAISY:** She was just shooting at the sky. At the plain blue sky.

**GRAHAM:** Well I'm sure you hit it. What was I..? Oh yes...Real theater can exist anywhere. I don't need an opera house to make to art, to put on a show. Does the circus need a tent?

**VIOLET:** Kind of.

**GRAHAM:** No! It doesn't. Where the elephant harrumphs and the clown spills his milk—that is where the circus lives. And so it is with the theater. Where a performer sets down his hat and recites his soliloquy—that is where theater lives. Why it can live anywhere—on the streets in the alleyway, in the dumpster with the old Chinese food, broken glass and dead homeless people. That is where MY theater lives. The *people's theater*. By the people for the people. *On* the people if necessary.

**DAISY:** That sounds uncomfortable.

**GRAHAM:** They're already dead. Why should the dead have opinions?

*(Poppy has wandered back in, eating pie.)*

**POPPY:** The dead shouldn't have opinions if they're really dead, but if they're not really dead they should have the rights to all the opinions of the living. The dead's opinion could be that they're not dead. Of course that's just my opinion.

*(No response.)*

Opinion.

**GRAHAM:** I believe in art. In the possibility of impossible art.

**DAISY:** Maybe we can save up for season tickets to the Buffalo Repertory Theater.

**GRAHAM:** No! We're not going anywhere. We're staying right here.

**VIOLET:** You're right. Let's see what's on TV.

**GRAHAM:** No. We're gonna put on a play.

**ROSE:** Really? Where, at the town hall?

**GRAHAM:** God did not intend for bureaucrats and artists to shit in the same pot, Rose.

**ROSE:** I did not know that.

**GRAHAM:** Besides, we already have a space. We're going to perform Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. Right here in our living room.

*(The sisters exchange a nervous beat.)*

**VIOLET:** With this carpet? Maybe the color would work for *The Cherry Orchard* but *Three Sisters*, really?

**GRAHAM:** It's Anton's finest play. And we have it mostly cast already.

**DAISY:** With who?

**VIOLET:** He means with us.

**ROSE:** When?

**GRAHAM:** Tonight.

**VIOLET:** Tonight? Today's tonight?

**GRAHAM:** Yes.

**DAISY:** But that's tonight.

**GRAHAM:** That's right.

**DAISY:** But we haven't even rehearsed.

**GRAHAM:** That's what we have today for.  
Rose you always said you wanted to play Irina.

**ROSE:** Yes, that's true.

**GRAHAM:** But you're too old now. You'll play Masha.

**ROSE:** She's the oldest one! You might as well cast me as Anfisa the decrepit servant.

**GRAHAM:** Good idea. You'll play her too.

**DAISY:** And who will we play?

**GRAHAM:** You'll be Irina naturally. And Violet you're Olga.

**VIOLET:** I thought Olga was the oldest one.

**GRAHAM:** No, it's Masha. I think.

**VIOLET:** Maybe we should find a script.

**GRAHAM:** We don't have one. I already looked.

**VIOLET:** You looked before you had the idea?

**DAISY:** Maybe we can get one at that book borrowing building.

**ROSE:** The library? You know it burned down in the fire.

**DAISY:** Oh yeah. I thought they rebuilt it.

**ROSE:** They did. But then it drowned in the flood. Remember?

**DAISY:** Oh yeah. That was a lot of water.

**ROSE:** Yes it was.

**VIOLET:** How are we going to do the play if we don't have a script?

**GRAHAM:** We'll do it the old fashioned way—from memory!

**VIOLET:** That's the old fashioned way?

**GRAHAM:** It used to be. It doesn't matter! True theater is born from the soul and written with the blood of those who died before us.

**DAISY:** Still...don't you think it'd be easier to memorize our lines if we had a script.

**GRAHAM:** Probably.

**ROSE:** Perhaps I have a copy in my hope chest.

**VIOLET:** Yes, perhaps under the cobwebs.

*(Rose scurries off.)*

**POPPY:** And what about me? Who will I play?

**GRAHAM:** If only Poppy was alive he would be a perfect Chebutikin. Kinda crotchety but sweet.

**POPPY:** I am alive. I've always been alive. Ever since I was born anyway. I used to be a terrific actor. Once I was asked to play Mama Rose in *Gypsy* but I came down with the small pox and I nearly died.

Maybe I did.

**GRAHAM:** *(to his sisters)* Are we still ignoring him?

**DAISY:** Ghosts need tough love.

**POPPY:** This is neglect. I'm reporting you all. *(petting his stuffed dog)* C'mon Speckles.

*(Poppy wanders off.)*

**VIOLET:** Do you really think people will come to the show?

**DAISY:** Who will come?

**GRAHAM:** People will come.

**DAISY:** What people?

**GRAHAM:** *The People.*

**DAISY:** I don't know them.

**VIOLET:** Who's gonna pay to see this?

**GRAHAM:** No one. Not at first. But it won't matter because we won't be selling tickets.

**VIOLET:** Why wouldn't we sell tickets?

**GRAHAM:** Because that's not what it's about. We're doing our duty as artists. We're giving ourselves to our art and to the community.

**VIOLET:** Maybe we can use that as a publicity angle to get a review.

**GRAHAM:** Absolutely no reviews.

**DAISY:** Then how will people know whether it's good or not?

**GRAHAM:** They'll have to decide for themselves. We can't make reviews the reason we do theater. It has to be born naturally like a weak farm animal, and with the proper nurturing and support it will grow wings and swim deeper and faster through the currents with wind blowing through its hair and fur and feathers—

**VIOLET:** What kind of animal is this?

**GRAHAM:** That's not important.

**DAISY:** A cat, right?

**GRAHAM:** No advertising either. We won't even take out an ad in *The Gazette*.

**DAISY:** Not in *The Gazette*? But everyone reads that. Even me and I can barely read.

**GRAHAM:** No. Nothing.

**VIOLET:** But if it's not in *The Gazette* how will people know about it?

**DAISY:** And if people don't know about it how will they come?

**GRAHAM:** They won't at first. And maybe we'll have just one lonely soul in the audience. But that prophetic loser will tell his mother and next she'll come and then she'll tell her Mahjong friends and they'll come and so on and so on. If it's good enough, word will spread across the land infecting body and mind like a theatrical Swine Flu. Oh yes, the people will come. The people will come.

*(The doorbell rings.)*

**GRAHAM:** See—they're here already!

**DAISY:** But we haven't rehearsed. I don't know my lines. It's like that dream I have.

**GRAHAM:** At least you're wearing clothes.

**DAISY:** But not my costume!

*(The doorbell rings again.  
Daisy gasps and runs off.)*

**VIOLET:** What will we tell them?

**GRAHAM:** We'll just have to put them on the waiting list.

*(Graham goes to the door.)*

**GRAHAM:** Hello Officer, come on in.

*(Officer Tussle enters and takes off his hat.)*

**TUSSLE:** Thank you.

**GRAHAM:** I'm afraid we aren't ready to begin yet, but perhaps you'd like to put your name down on the wait list.

**TUSSLE:** Excuse me?

**GRAHAM:** I'm sorry, it's just that we aren't finished rehearsing. We didn't even start actually. And there aren't any tickets otherwise I'd sell you one.

**TUSSLE:** Are you putting on a show?

**GRAHAM:** Of course. I thought that's why you're here.

**TUSSLE:** No I didn't even realize this was a theater.

**GRAHAM:** It's not. It's a house.

**TUSSLE:** Like a haunted house?

**VIOLET:** No but it's funny you mention that. Hello. I'm Violet.

*(Violet shakes Officer Tussel's hand. There's a moment between them.)*

**TUSSLE:** I'm Officer Tussle. We received a complaint, a call, from an older gentlemen reporting neglect. Of course as soon as the call came in I dropped everything and came straight over. Nothing burns me up like abuse of the elderly.

**VIOLET:** I've never abused an elderly person.

**TUSSLE:** I'm pleased to hear that. Nevertheless, I'd like to see the old man. Where is he, in the basement?

**GRAHAM:** How strange. I'm the only gentlemen here and I'm not old at all.

**TUSSLE:** You don't look old.

**GRAHAM:** I'm not.

**TUSSLE:** And who is the owner of this house?

**GRAHAM and VIOLET:** I am.

**GRAHAM:** She is.                   **VIOLET:** He is.

**GRAHAM and VIOLET:** We are.

**GRAHAM:** Both of us. All of us.

**VIOLET:** From our parents.

**TUSSLE:** And where are they?

**GRAHAM:** They're not with us.

**TUSSLE:** Apparently not. Unless they're hiding. Are they hiding?

**GRAHAM:** No. They're not. They're not *with us* anymore.

**TUSSLE:** Retired, eh? Must be nice. A little retirement community. Someone to cut the grass and fix a leak, change your Depends, whatnot. The worry-free Golden years.

**GRAHAM:** No, they're not *with us anymore*.

**VIOLET:** He means they're dead.

**GRAHAM:** Also worry-free.

**TUSSLE:** I'm sorry to hear that. And when did they pass?

**VIOLET:** Mums and Duds died that really hot summer a few years ago.

**TUSSLE:** Yes, I remember it. It was so hot, you had a constant and unquenchable thirst for lemonade.

**VIOLET:** Mine was for iced tea.

**GRAHAM:** They were suffering from over-perspiration and drowned in a pool of their own sweat. They were never great swimmers; I always encouraged them to take lessons.

**TUSSLE:** How sad. Tragic even, you could almost say.

**GRAHAM:** Almost.

**TUSSLE:** And they left you the house?

**GRAHAM:** That's right.

**TUSSLE:** You and your sister.

**GRAHAM:** Three sisters.

**TUSSLE:** Oh, are there more?

**GRAHAM:** There are. I can find you one if you don't like the one you see.

**TUSSLE:** That's not it at all.

*(Officer Tussle and Violet stare at each other.)*

**TUSSLE:** Not in the least.

*(Daisy reenters wearing a Victorian hat and a green sash.)*

**GRAHAM:** That's number three. When she popped out she bumped her head on the hospital floor.

**DAISY:** But my friends call me Daisy.

**TUSSLE:** Hello.

**DAISY:** Good afternoon.

**TUSSLE:** That's a pretty sash.

**DAISY:** Why thank you.

**TUSSLE:** What is it?

**DAISY:** It's green.

**TUSSLE:** I thought so.  
And it's just the three sisters and you who live here?

**GRAHAM:** That's right.

**TUSSLE:** No husbands?

**VIOLET:** No.

**DAISY:** None that I can think of.

**TUSSLE:** And what about the other sister, where is she?

**VIOLET:** Lost in her hope chest no doubt. She's an old maid.

**TUSSLE:** A widow?

**VIOLET:** Perhaps.

**TUSSLE:** And no older gentlemen?

**DAISY:** Our grandfather used to live here. But not any more.

**TUSSLE:** Retired?

**VIOLET:** Also dead.

**TUSSLE:** And when did he pass?

**GRAHAM:** I'm not sure. Some time ago.

**TUSSLE:** You're not sure?

**GRAHAM:** But he definitely died. We're almost positive.

**VIOLET:** He's stuck in purgatory.

**TUSSLE:** Why do you say that?

**VIOLET:** His ghost haunts us.

**TUSSLE:** Like a poltergeist?

**DAISY:** Except not German.

**GRAHAM:** Actually he was German. But he's not anymore.

**VIOLET:** I thought he was Russian.

**GRAHAM:** Well he's not anything now.

**POPPY:** *(from offstage)* I'm Polish you assholes!

**TUSSLE:** What was that?

**VIOLET:** Probably Rose's tea. Would you like some?

**TUSSLE:** No, I shouldn't. I'm on detox.

**DAISY:** Are you doing the one where you drink your filtered urine?

**TUSSLE:** Um...no. But that sounds delicious.

**DAISY:** Not really. But it works.

**TUSSLE:** I bet.

*(Tussle and Daisy smile at each other.)*

**GRAHAM:** Is there anything else, Officer?

**TUSSLE:** I guess that's it. Must have been a prank call. Thank you for your time.

**GRAHAM:** Sorry for the confusion.

**VIOLET:** I hope you'll make it back for our show.

**GRAHAM:** Tickets are free.

**DAISY:** I thought you said there aren't any tickets.

**GRAHAM:** He knows what I mean.

**TUSSLE:** I do.  
Have a good day. Night. What time is it?

**GRAHAM:** Late morning, it seems.

**TUSSLE:** So many clouds today. Maybe there's a storm moving in. Anyway... *Ego vobis valedico.*  
—I say goodbye to you.

*(Officer Tussle tips his hat and leaves.  
Graham closes the door.)*

**VIOLET:** What a strange man.

*(Rose rushes in with a stack of loose pages.)*

**ROSE:** I found most of it, I think. Who was at the door?

**GRAHAM:** It was our audience.

**ROSE:** Oh, hello.

**VIOLET:** They're gone, Rose.

**ROSE:** Already?

**GRAHAM:** *(Grabbing the pages from Rose:)* Let me see.

*(Graham flips through the pages.)*

**ROSE:** We're missing a bunch from Act One. I think.

**GRAHAM:** That's alright. It doesn't matter. All we do is meet the sisters and listen to them yearn for city life. Then something about their brother Andrey and his unrealistic aspirations. And then Vershinin the soldier comes in and the house is different than he expected. And Masha begins to fall for him. Blah blah blah. And then the soldiers leave. We might as well just skip it and go right to Act Two.

*(End of Act One.)*

## ACT TWO

*(Graham and the sisters sit around a mess of script pages.)*

*Each sister wears something found that represents their character from Three Sisters: Olga, something blue. Masha, something black. Irina, something white.)*

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* It's just a year since father died last May the fifth, on your name-day, Olga. It was very cold then, and snowing. I thought I would never survive it. And now a year has gone by and we are already thinking about it without pain, and I am wearing a white dress and my face is happy. But I'm—

*(Daisy flips to the next page, lost.)*

I'm...I'm lost.

**VIOLET:** *(as Olga)* Why think about it, Irina!

**DAISY:** No, I think we're missing a page.

**GRAHAM:** Then just skip to the next one.

**DAISY:** Shouldn't we be true to the text?

**GRAHAM:** It's a leap of faith to perform a play. There's more faith in this room than anywhere else in the world.

**DAISY:** Okay.

**VIOLET:** My script smells like throw-up. What happened in your hope chest, Rose?

**ROSE:** Sorry. I hide in there sometimes. But claustrophobic places make me nauseous.

**VIOLET:** Then why would you hide in there?

**ROSE:** I like the darkness. And the quiet.

**DAISY:** What are you hiding from?

*(Daisy and Violet stare at Rose, expecting an answer.)*

**GRAHAM:** Can we get back on track please?

**ROSE:** Yes, please. *(reading from the script)* Tuzenbach, the baron enters.

**GRAHAM:** Okay, I'm playing your brother Andrey but I'll enter as Tuzenbach. For now.

*(He turns around and reenters the room as Tuzenbach. No noticeable difference. They continue.)*

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* I am wearing a white dress and my face is happy.

**VIOLET:** *(as Olga)* Oh why talk about it!

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* It's so warm to-day that we can keep the windows open... We rode out of Moscow eleven years ago. I remember perfectly that it was early in May and that everything in Moscow was flowering then.

*(Rose, as Masha, lost in a reverie over her book, whistles softly.)*

**VIOLET:** *(as Olga)* Don't whistle.

*(Rose stops, confused. She consults her script.)*

**ROSE:** I'm supposed to.

**VIOLET:** Let me finish.  
*(as Olga)* Don't whistle. *Masha.* How can you!

**ROSE:** Oh.

**VIOLET:** *(as Olga)* I'm always having headaches. Strange thoughts come to me, as if I were already an old woman. As if every day my strength and youth have been squeezed out of me, drop by drop. And only one desire grows and gains in strength ...

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* To go away to Moscow. To sell the house, drop everything here, and go to Moscow ...

**VIOLET:** *(as Olga)* Yes! To Moscow!

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* I expect Andrey will become a professor, but still, he won't want to live here. Only poor Masha must go on living here.

**ROSE:** *(Appealing to Graham)* That's not fair. Is that me?

**GRAHAM:** It's not you. It's Masha. Keep going.

**VIOLET:** *(as Olga)* Masha can come to Moscow every year, for the whole summer.

*(Rose, as Masha, is whistling gently.)*

**DAISY:** *(as Irina, looks out of the window.)* It's nice out to-day. I don't know why I'm so happy: I remembered this morning that it was my name-day—

**VIOLET:** You already did that part.

**DAISY:** No I didn't; this part is different.

**VIOLET:** (*appealing to Graham*) She already did that part.

**DAISY:** Did I?

**GRAHAM:** I don't think so.

**VIOLET:** She's talking about the window. You already talked about the window. And how nice it is out and your name-day.

**DAISY:** Did I?

**GRAHAM:** She's just repeating herself.

**VIOLET:** Of course we're repeating ourselves. You're saying what I just said.

**GRAHAM:** I'm agreeing with you.

**ROSE:** Why don't I have any lines yet?

**GRAHAM:** You're whistling. There's meaning in that.

*(Rose practices her whistling, as Masha.)*

**DAISY:** So should I start from the top?

**GRAHAM:** No, no. Just go to...where you left off.

**DAISY:** I think I left off at the top.

**GRAHAM:** Well then skip to the middle.

*(Rose is whistling very loud now.)*

**GRAHAM:** Not with so much meaning, Rose.

*(Rose is ashamed and whistles very quietly.)*

**GRAHAM:** (*to Daisy*) From "I suddenly felt glad..."

**DAISY:** (*finding her place, as Irina*) I suddenly felt glad and remembered my childhood, when mother was still with us. What beautiful thoughts I had, what thoughts! I feel younger than I was yesterday. I'm only twenty-eight. ...

**VIOLET:** *(as Olga)* All's well, but it seems to me that if only I were married and could stay at home all day, it would be even better. *(Pause.)* I should love my husband.

**GRAHAM:** As Tuzenbach. *(as Tuzenbach)* I forgot to say that Vershinin, our new lieutenant-colonel of artillery, is coming to see us to-day.

**VIOLET:** *(as Olga)* That's good. I'm glad.

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* Is he old?

**ROSE:** *(as Masha)* Is he interesting?

**GRAHAM:** *(as Tuzenbach)* He likes to hear himself speak. His second wife...tries to commit suicide every now and again, apparently in order to annoy him.

**ROSE:** *(reading from the script)* Solyony enters. Who's playing Solyony?

**GRAHAM:** I am, I guess.

*(Poppy is walking by and takes a seat. He opens a newspaper and begins reading it.)*

**GRAHAM:** On second thought, forget it. Just cut him.

**ROSE:** How can we cut him?

**POPPY:** There's not a thing in this paper that makes a single difference in the world.

**GRAHAM:** We can do whatever we want. It's a play. Plays are alive and malleable. It's art. Art grows, art dies, art changes, adapts, transforms. Soon... Soon...

**POPPY:** What does any of it matter? It doesn't.  
Why am I asking questions if I already know the answers?

**GRAHAM:** Soon...you'll see how different art will be. In 100 years you won't even be able to recognize it. You'll barely be able to name it. Define "art." Art will be an idea. It will be a mist, a cloud shifting in the sky. Art will be God.

**DAISY:** In 100 years we'll be old.

**GRAHAM:** Yes. Now, where were we. *(Consulting his script:)* Chebutikin enters. Reads the newspaper. "It doesn't matter." Let's skip that part.  
Okay, Vershinin is going to be here. And I'm already playing Tuzenbach and Chebutikin. And I'm only meant to play Andrey.

**DAISY:** We need more actors.

**ROSE:** Maybe we should have auditions.

**GRAHAM:** No. The play is cast.

**VIOLET:** But we don't have enough people.

**GRAHAM:** That shouldn't matter.

**DAISY:** I can play Vershinin.

**GRAHAM:** The middle-aged Lieutenant-Colonel?

**DAISY:** Sure.

**GRAHAM:** You're already playing Irina.

**DAISY:** That shouldn't matter.

**GRAHAM:** You're too young.

**DAISY:** What is "age"? Define it. How old is "love"? In 100 years—

*(The door bell rings.)*

**GRAHAM:** Not again!

**ROSE:** So who's playing Vershinin?

**VIOLET:** Doesn't Olga fall in love with Vershinin?

**ROSE:** No it's Masha.

**VIOLET:** No, Masha's married.

**ROSE:** It's an affair.

**DAISY:** I thought I fall in love.

**ROSE:** You do. With Tuzenbach.

**VIOLET:** Then who do *I* fall in love with?

**ROSE:** I think you fall in love with yourself.

*(The door bell rings.)*

**POPPY:** I'll get it.

*(Poppy exits in the opposite direction of the door.)*

**GRAHAM:** Why are we constantly being interrupted? *(to door)* We're trying to rehearse! Amateurs.

**ROSE:** You don't even know who it is.

**DAISY:** It could be *The Gazette*.

**ROSE:** We didn't invite *The Gazette*.

**VIOLET:** Maybe they invited themselves.

**DAISY:** I better go freshen up.

*(Daisy leaves.)*

**VIOLET:** It could be more audience members.

**GRAHAM:** I bet you're right. Word must have spread. Demand is building. But they'll just have to wait. We're making theater. Let blood pour in the streets.

**ROSE:** I don't disagree but whose blood are you—

*(Another door bell.)*

**VIOLET:** I'm just gonna answer it.

**ROSE:** No don't! What if it's the police again?

**VIOLET:** So what. We're not doing anything wrong.

*(Another door bell.)*

**GRAHAM:** I swear if I hear that door bell one more time...I'm going to lose it!

*(A knocking)*

**GRAHAM:** Now they're knocking.

*(Graham stomps over to the door and swings it open.)*

**GRAHAM:** *WHAT?!*

*(It's Officer Tussle at the door.)*

**GRAHAM:** Another officer? You folks really are thorough, aren't you? Or did you hear from that other officer about the show? I'm sorry, the house hasn't opened yet.

**TUSSLE:** No, it's me. Officer Tussle. I was here before.

**GRAHAM:** You again. What do you want?

**TUSSLE:** I heard shouting.

**GRAHAM:** You only heard shouting after you rang the bell.

**TUSSLE:** Don't get sharp with me. I'm a patron.

**GRAHAM:** I told you we're not ready.

**TUSSLE:** Is everything all right in there?

**GRAHAM:** Everything is fine. We're rehearsing.

**TUSSLE:** Oh are you on a break?

**GRAHAM:** No we're not.

**TUSSLE:** Is this part of the play?

**GRAHAM:** No.

**TUSSLE:** So you *are* on a break.

**GRAHAM:** Now we are!

**TUSSLE:** What are you putting on, a musical?

**GRAHAM:** No.

**TUSSLE:** Is it a play with music?

**GRAHAM:** Not really.

**TUSSLE:** No songs at all? What about a dance number?

**GRAHAM:** No. Nothing.

**TUSSLE:** And it's meant for audiences you say?

**GRAHAM:** Yes. It's a drama!

**TUSSLE:** Like a court room drama?

**GRAHAM:** No!

**TUSSLE:** Like a crime drama?

**GRAHAM:** No!

**TUSSLE:** Are you sure it's not a comedy? It probably should be.

**GRAHAM:** Maybe you should leave.

**TUSSLE:** Mind if I come in? It's getting cold out here.

**GRAHAM:** It's 75 degrees.

**TUSSLE:** There's a chill.

**GRAHAM:** Wear a scarf.

*(He tries to shut the door as Officer Tussle puts on a scarf and comes in. As he talks he snoops around.)*

**TUSSLE:** Actually we received another complaint, a call, a report, of neglect.

**GRAHAM:** *(shouting off:)* Daisy, come back out! It's not *The Gazette*.

**ROSE:** Another call? When did you get it?

**TUSSLE:** Almost as soon as I left, actually.

**GRAHAM:** We're gonna start again. *(to off:)* Daisy!

**TUSSLE:** I thought there were three of you.

**ROSE:** There are.

*(Graham exits after Daisy.)*

**ROSE:** There were.

**TUSSLE:** No I mean three sisters.

**VIOLET:** There are.

**TUSSLE:** Where's the third one?

**VIOLET:** Which one?

**TUSSLE:** The other one.

**ROSE:** I'm the other one.

**TUSSLE:** No. That was here before.

**VIOLET:** That was me.

**TUSSLE:** No, younger.

**VIOLET:** Oh. She died.

**ROSE:** Violet!

*(Graham sticks his head back in.)*

**GRAHAM:** She's not dead. She's Irina.  
Rose can you c'mere for a sec. Daisy's stuck in her sash.

**ROSE:** Again?

**GRAHAM:** Violet. Two minutes.

**VIOLET:** Thank you, two minutes.

**GRAHAM:** Rose. It's cutting off circulation.

*(Graham is gone.)*

**ROSE:** Excuse me.

*(Rose exits.  
Violet rolls a cigarette.)*

**TUSSLE:** It must be nice having so many siblings. I'm an *only*-child.

**VIOLET:** How peaceful.

**TUSSLE:** Sad actually. The only person I had to tease was myself.

**VIOLET:** *(Offering a cigarette to Tussle:)* Did you have problems sharing?

**TUSSLE:** (*Taking it:*) I still do.

(*Violet lights it for him. He coughs.*)

**TUSSLE:** Are all of your sisters actors?

**VIOLET:** All three of us. A theatrical upbringing. Mums and Duds were actors and occasionally re-enactors. They had a show at the (*whispering “playhouse”:*) playhouse every spring. *Flora and Dennis Paint the Town Rainbow.*

**TUSSLE:** Flora?

**VIOLET:** My mother.

**TUSSLE:** Yes. I—

**VIOLET:** That’s why my sisters and I are named after flowers. My father would come home and say “What a lovely garden I have.”

**TUSSLE:** How sweet.

**VIOLET:** We called him Narcissus.

**TUSSLE:** Your brother said they drowned. I’m sorry.

**VIOLET:** Yes, they drove their car into a bridge. By accident.

**TUSSLE:** *Off* a bridge?

**VIOLET:** No, *into* one. It was *up*. Like one of those boat bridges.

**TUSSLE:** Draw bridges?

**VIOLET:** Yes, it was drawn. For a boat.

**TUSSLE:** I’m sorry. So how did they drown?

**VIOLET:** No, drawn.

**TUSSLE:** Ah.

(*Pause. He puts out his cigarette.*)

**TUSSLE:** Well I guess I’ll be going.

**VIOLET:** Case closed?

**TUSSLE:** Chalk this one up to...

**TUSSLE:** No thank you.

**TUSSLE:** Yes.

**TUSSLE:** I'm allergic.

**TUSSLE:** Yes. Well...

**TUSSLE:** Yes, it's the leaves.  
Autumn is my least favorite season.

**VIOLET:** Of course. It must be a terror.

**TUSSLE:** But it's like they say...

*(Pause. They stare at each other.)  
(Tussle leaves.)*

*(Violet stares at the door.)  
(Pause.)*

*(Poppy reenters.)*

**POPPY:** *(reading from the newspaper)* "Nature only brought us into the world so that...we should love."

*(Violet continues to stare at the door.)*

**POPPY:** I went the wrong way before.  
I'll assume someone answered the door by now.

*(Poppy shrugs and sits back down on the bench and reads his newspaper.)*

*(Graham, Rose, and Daisy return.  
Daisy has been crying.)*

**GRAHAM:** Let's pick it back up, people. Get your scripts.

**ROSE:** Get *the* script.

**GRAHAM:** Yes, yes, get *the* script.

**DAISY:** *(through sniffles)* What did *The Gazette* say, Violet? Are they coming to review it? Or did I get stuck in my sash again for nothing?

**GRAHAM:** Where's Officer Tussle?

**VIOLET:** Gone.

**DAISY:** Officer Tussle works for *The Gazette*?

**VIOLET:** Officer Tussle *was* *The Gazette*.

**ROSE:** Did you at least offer him tea?

**VIOLET:** He's allergic.

**DAISY:** What did he say?

**VIOLET:** That's what he said.

**DAISY:** No, about the show.

**GRAHAM:** He hasn't seen it yet, what's there to say?

**DAISY:** Is he coming back?

**ROSE:** He seems to have a habit of it.

**VIOLET:** He does, doesn't he?

**GRAHAM:** I don't see why. The show doesn't start until eight.

**POPPY:** Perhaps he's investigating a crime.

**GRAHAM:** Okay, from the top.

**ROSE:** From the top? From the beginning?

**GRAHAM:** No from where we left off.

**DAISY:** I don't remember where I was.

**ROSE:** You were by the window, dear. And I was whistling.

**DAISY:** By the window? On which side? The outside or the inside?

**GRAHAM:** The *inside* side.

**POPPY:** Maybe that's it. I'm on the wrong side. Perhaps I'm only dead on the inside. But outside could be different.

*(to his dog)* Let's investigate, Junior. This way.

*(Poppy exits out the front door.)*

**DAISY:** This is where I get confused. Because if I'm Irina and Irina is inside looking out, how am I supposed to enter as Colonel-Lieutenant Vershinin from the outside? That's why I think if I'm already outside as Irina, and I'm outside as Colonel-Lieutenant Vershinin I can then enter inside as both of them. Don't you think that makes sense?

**VIOLET:** No.

**DAISY:** Yeah, but don't you think that makes more sense?

**VIOLET:** More sense than what?

**DAISY:** More sense than not.

**VIOLET:** Not what?

**DAISY:** More sense *blocking wise*?

**VIOLET:** It doesn't make *any* kind of sense.

**ROSE:** Maybe I should play the Colonel.

**VIOLET:** No you can't—you're in love with the Colonel.

**DAISY:** Well someone has to play the Colonel!

**GRAHAM:** Wait! I got it. *(he runs to the door, opens it, and shouts out)* Officer Tussle come back here!

*(Tussle immediately reappears in the doorway, takes off his hat and comes inside.)*

**TUSSLE:** Hello again.

**GRAHAM:** That was quick. Were you hiding in the bushes?

**TUSSLE:** Hiding? No. *(bowing his head)* Ladies. Nice to see you all together for once.

*(They each awkwardly curtsy.)*

**GRAHAM:** Do you happen to know any actors? We're looking for a young man, fair skin and build, with a decent speaking voice, perhaps baritone. But minimal training—I prefer to build my

actors from the bottom up. Fresh foundations. And preferably brown hair...like yours. Know anyone of that description?

**TUSSLE:** I don't think so. But I can ask around the station.

**GRAHAM:** Thank you very much. *(ushering him out.)* So long then.

*(Tussle tries to quickly tip his hat to the ladies before Graham shuts the door on him. The sisters curtsy again.)*

**GRAHAM:** Wait! I got it.

*(Graham opens the door and ushers Tussle back in. The sisters are not quite finished with their last curtsy before they're curtseying again now.)*

**GRAHAM:** You're not Equity are you?

**TUSSLE:** No I'm Protestant.

**GRAHAM:** Perfect! Well not *perfect* but you know what I mean.

**TUSSLE:** I guess.

**GRAHAM:** Do you by any chance own a samovar?

**TUSSLE:** Own one or known one?

**GRAHAM:** Forget it. Come inside.

*(He already is.)*

**TUSSLE:** What's this about?

**GRAHAM:** Only the role of your lifetime my friend.

**TUSSLE:** Are you still casting?

**GRAHAM:** Sort of. Some minor parts.

**VIOLET:** I'm sure there's nothing minor about his part.

**ROSE:** Violet?

**DAISY:** What do you mean?

**TUSSLE:** What kind of part is it?

**GRAHAM:** Well you don't have it yet.

**TUSSLE:** Do I have to try out?

**GRAHAM:** Audition.

**TUSSLE:** Audition. Right.

**GRAHAM:** Just a quick monologue would do. Something classical. Whatever that means.

**TUSSLE:** I don't know what that means.

**VIOLET:** Does he really have to audition?

**GRAHAM:** Maybe he wants to.

**TUSSLE:** Do I have to audition?

**GRAHAM:** Unless you don't want to.

**TUSSLE:** I'd rather just have the part. If it's so minor.

**GRAHAM:** It's not that minor. Every role is important.

**TUSSLE:** And I'd rather not audition if I'm not up against anyone.

**GRAHAM:** You're up against several people for the part.

**TUSSLE:** Like the mailman?

**ROSE:** No he's Equity actually.

**DAISY:** He is?

**ROSE:** Remember when we tried to cast him in *Claire de Lune* last summer at the Playhouse?

**DAISY:** Oh yeah. He was good.

**TUSSLE:** Can I ask you something?

**GRAHAM:** You can warm up in the corner.

**TUSSLE:** No, why are you performing in your living room instead of at the Playhouse?

**GRAHAM:** Because we don't work with hypocrites, amateurs, or morally bankrupt elitists.

**ROSE:** And we shouldn't use the same bathroom as them.

**GRAHAM:** That's right, Rose.

**VIOLET:** Just give him the part!

**TUSSLE:** Can I ask you something else?

**GRAHAM:** Rehearsal will last right up to the performance. They may even overlap. No breaks.

**TUSSLE:** Well I'm still on duty.

**ROSE:** When's your shift over?

**TUSSLE:** Not until tomorrow.

**GRAHAM:** Tomorrow?! You might as well just say never. Tomorrow is infinity.

**TUSSLE:** Tomorrow is tomorrow.

**DAISY:** Tomorrow's yesterday is today. And yesterday's tomorrow is today. So today belongs to yesterday and tomorrow.

**GRAHAM:** We know today exists and that's all we really know.

**ROSE:** We know yesterday exists.

**GRAHAM:** Yesterday *did* exist. It existed yesterday, when it was today. But *today*, yesterday is just a figment of our memory mixed with imagination and despair.

**TUSSLE:** So how about I stay as long as I can and then leave when I have to.

**GRAHAM:** Deal.

**VIOLET:** So he has the part?

**ROSE:** Do we really have a choice?

**GRAHAM:** We should at least hear you read. Here. (*Graham hands Tussle pages.*) Read this.

*(Tussle looks over the pages.)*

**TUSSLE:** Wait—am I reading Tuzenbach or Vershinin?

**GRAHAM:** Both. Possibly.

**DAISY:** Tuzenbach is in love with Irina.

**TUSSLE:** And you're playing Irina?

**DAISY:** Yes.

**VIOLET:** And Vershinin is in love with Masha.

**TUSSLE:** And who's playing Masha?

**VIOLET:** I am.                      **ROSE:** I am.

**ROSE:** I am.                      **GRAHAM:** Rose is.

**VIOLET:** I should play Masha. You said it yourself.

**ROSE:** But we've already been rehearsing it this way.

**VIOLET:** Only since this morning. Besides, you always wanted to be the middle sister.

**ROSE:** That's true. Fine. But I still get to whistle.

**VIOLET:** Whistle away.

*(Rose starts to whistle.)*

**TUSSLE:** Why is she whistling?

**GRAHAM:** She's already in character.

**TUSSLE:** As Masha?

**VIOLET / ROSE / GRAHAM:** As Olga.

**VIOLET:** I'm playing Masha now.

**TUSSLE:** I see. *(to Daisy)* And you're playing Irina. And I'm playing Tuzenbach and Vershinin.

**GRAHAM:** Possibly.

**TUSSLE:** Possibly. *(to Daisy and Violet)* And my characters are in love with your characters?

**GRAHAM:** Exactly.

**TUSSLE:** Don't you think that'll be confusing?

**GRAHAM:** Only to you perhaps.

**VIOLET:** And only if you let it be.

**TUSSLE:** Perhaps you should cast another man.

**GRAHAM:** We can't hire more actors. It's not in the budget.

**ROSE:** I thought we don't have a budget. You're not paying the actors you have now.

**GRAHAM:** We can't afford to give away more comps. Actors always want comps.

**VIOLET:** But we're not charging for tickets.

**GRAHAM:** We might order a pizza later. At the cast party. And I'd rather not divide the slices unevenly.

**TUSSLE:** How many slices are in the pie?

*(Graham begins slashing lines in his script.)*

**GRAHAM:** Let's just combine the characters to make one soldier.

**VIOLET:** If there's only one soldier, which one of the sisters will he be in love with?

**GRAHAM:** I don't care. Flip a coin.

**DAISY:** He was in love with Irina first.

**GRAHAM:** Fine then it's settled.

**VIOLET:** What? No, that's not true. I...what about Masha—what about the coin flip?

**GRAHAM:** Don't be a child. These are serious times.

**TUSSLE:** And serious times call for...

*(Violet runs off.)*

**TUSSLE:** Was it something I said?  
Or was it something I *didn't* say?

**DAISY:** What didn't you say?

**TUSSLE:** I didn't say anything.

**DAISY:** That's what I thought you said.

**TUSSLE:** I only wish she heard me.

**ROSE:** Don't worry about her. She only hears what she wants.

**TUSSLE:** That's what I'm worried about.

**DAISY:** I hear you.

*(Tussle stares at her.  
She straightens her sash. But now it's crooked. Tussle fixes it.)*

*(Graham gives them their scripts.)*

**GRAHAM:** I've trimmed a few lines, snipped a couple of words, tightened some direction, but I think the audience will forgive me. If they notice. If they attend.  
*(pointing to the script)* Start here.

**TUSSLE:** You're Irina?

**DAISY:** I am. *(as Irina)* Where are you going?

**TUSSLE:** Do we have to go somewhere?

**DAISY:** I don't think so. *(to Graham)* Do we have to go somewhere?

**GRAHAM:** No, here is fine.

**DAISY:** Okay. *(to Tussle)* Here is fine.

**TUSSLE:** Okay.

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* Where are you going?

**TUSSLE:** I'm not going anywhere.

**DAISY:** I know. *(as Irina)* Where are you going?

**TUSSLE:** What?

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* Where are you going?

**TUSSLE:** I...

**GRAHAM:** Where the hell are you two going?

**TUSSLE:** I'm not going anywhere.                      **DAISY:** I'm not going anywhere.

**DAISY:** I'm reading my line.

**TUSSLE:** You're reading your line?

*(He finds it in the script. Daisy points it out.)*

**TUSSLE:** Oh. I see.

**GRAHAM:** Let's try again.

**TUSSLE:** Maybe we should try again.

**ROSE:** Why don't you try again?

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* Where are you going?

**TUSSLE:** *(finding his place, as Tuzenbach)* I must go into the town and then...see the others off.

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* Why are you so absentminded to-day? *(Pause.)* What took place by the theatre yesterday?

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach)* In an hour's time I shall return and be with you again. *(Kisses her hands)* My darling...

*(Tussle is really good actually, and the scene has become a little intense.)*

*(Violet is watching now from a doorway.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach, looking her closely in the face)* It's been five years now since I fell in love with you, and still I can't get used to it, and you seem to me to grow more and more beautiful. What lovely, wonderful hair! What eyes! I'm going to take you away to-morrow. We shall work, we shall be rich, my dreams will come true. You will be happy. There's only one thing, one thing only: you don't love me!

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* I can't love you! I've never been in love in my life. I used to think so much of love, I have been thinking about it for so long by day and night, but my soul is like an expensive piano which is locked and the key lost.

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach)* There is nothing in my life so awful as that lost key; it torments my soul. Say something to me...say something to me. ...

*(Pause.)*

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* What can I say, what?

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach)* Anything.

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* Don't go! Don't! *(Pause.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach)* It's curious how silly trivial little things, sometimes for no apparent reason, become significant. It's as if for the first time in my life I see these firs, maples, beeches, and they all look at me inquisitively and wait. What beautiful trees and how beautiful, when one comes to think of it, life must be near them! *(Pause.)* It's time I went. ...

There's a tree which has dried up but it still sways in the breeze with the others. And so it seems to me that if I die, I shall still take part in life in one way or another. *(Kisses her hands.)*  
Good-bye, dear. ...

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* I am coming with you.

*(By now, Violet has disappeared.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach, nervously)* No, no! *(He goes quickly to the door and then stops)* Irina!

**DAISY:** *(as Irina)* What is it?

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach, not knowing what to say)* I haven't had any coffee to-day. Tell them to make me some. ...

*(Tussle leaves out the front door, as Tuzenbach.)*

**GRAHAM:** Okay...that was decent. *(calling off)* Officer, you can come back in now.

*(No response.)*

*(With a huff, Graham goes to the door and opens it but there's no one there. Graham sticks his head out...Tussle is gone.)*

**GRAHAM:** He's gone. Ah. Well.

**DAISY:** He'll be back. I'm sure of it.

**GRAHAM:** This is why I don't lend scripts.

**ROSE:** That was an excellent reading. I wish I had tried out for Irina.

**GRAHAM:** Let's take five. See if he comes back. Find your sister.

**ROSE:** She's right here.

**DAISY:** She's right here.

**GRAHAM:** The one that ran off.

**ROSE/DAISY:** Oh.

**GRAHAM:** And I'll find Tussle.

*(Rose and Daisy go off.  
Graham exits out the front door.)*

*(Poppy enters and sits.  
Violet enters behind him.)*

**POPPY:** So you admit it—I'm alive.

**VIOLET:** I'm not saying you're alive, necessarily.

**POPPY:** Why talk to me then? If I might be dead.

**VIOLET:** I don't know. Stupidity. Love. Desperation.

**POPPY:** You always were an honest girl.

**VIOLET:** A small vial should do the trick. Not too much, not too little. Preferably the fast-acting kind. Do you have that sort?

**POPPY:** I don't see how poison will prove anything.

**VIOLET:** The dead cannot affect the living. If you *are* alive, this act will prove it. If not, well, there you go. A small act, to prove such a thing, really. Especially for a pharmacist. Like yourself.

**POPPY:** Retired. Okay, my curiosity agrees, but not my morals.

**VIOLET:** A funny little thing, they are.

*(Poppy sets down a tiny vial.)*

**POPPY:** There it lies.  
But only use a drop. The whole thing would kill a water buffalo.

**VIOLET:** Okay.  
Wait, how big is a water buffalo?

**POPPY:** Really big.

**VIOLET:** Bigger than—

**POPPY:** Just don't use it all. Jesus.

*(Violet smiles, takes it, and exits.)*

*(Poppy sits and strokes his stuffed dog.)*

*(Lights down.)*

*(End of Act Two.)*

### ACT THREE

*(Graham and Daisy stand beside a samovar and wait with empty tea cups.)*

*(Rose sits politely and waits with her cup.)*

*(Violet fills Daisy's cup first.*

*While the others are talking, she secretly takes out the vial and puts a drop in Daisy's tea.*

*She gives the cup to Daisy.)*

**GRAHAM:** Remarkable. It was up there all along?

**VIOLET:** Right next to the Christmas decorations.

**ROSE:** Truly decadent. It must have belonged to Aunt Ruth.

**DAISY:** Who was that?

**ROSE:** Mum's oldest sister. You're too young to remember. She was in an automobile accident. The same year duds won the slots from the Indians and the medical bills wiped the winnings clean.

**DAISY:** What's in this tea? It tastes like dust.

**VIOLET:** Must be from the attic.

**GRAHAM:** And after all dud's expenses and mum's constant caregivings, old Auntie Ruth healed up, but fell into a depression anyway and decided to put a noble end to things by jumping off the roof, only she got caught on the weathervane, and died up there of starvation. Everyone looked for her for weeks, but they didn't think to look up.

**ROSE:** And the poor dear would have yelled for help but she broke her trachea on a shingle. Just awful.

**DAISY:** You mean the weathervane with the rooster?

**ROSE:** 'Fraid so.

**DAISY:** I know that one.

**VIOLET:** Anyway, there's not much of a lesson to learn from it all, despite Dud's insistence to never take anything from an Indian—it only brings bad luck.

**DAISY:** I thought it was bad luck to give things back to Indians.

**ROSE:** No it's bad luck to let Indians take things back from you.

**GRAHAM:** No it's bad luck to give things to Indians and then take them back.

**VIOLET:** To clarify, we're talking about Native Americans.

**DAISY:** We are? I thought we were—...we were native—... *(Daisy is getting dizzy and sways.)*  
Aren't *we* native—? When did we get here?

**ROSE:** When did we get where, dear?

**DAISY:** Here.

*(Daisy collapses.)*

**VIOLET:** Daisy!

**GRAHAM:** Irina!

*(They stare at her on the ground. A delayed reaction from Rose: she drops her tea cup and it breaks.)*

**ROSE:** Oh dear.  
Why does everything keep breaking?

*(Graham shakes Daisy.)*

**ROSE:** Is she asleep? I mean did she faint?

*(Graham shakes her again. She's out.)*

**ROSE:** Is she breathing? Should I call an ambulance? Or a doctor? Or a hospital? They're going to ask if this is an emergency. Is this an emergency? I don't know, let me check. Is this is an emergency?

*(Graham listens for breathing. Nothing.)*

**GRAHAM:** Nothing.

**ROSE:** What?

**GRAHAM:** Nothing.

**VIOLET:** Nothing?

**ROSE:** What does that mean? Was it the tea?

**GRAHAM:** Anything's possible.

**ROSE:** Good thing I poured mine on the floor.

**GRAHAM:** Yes, good idea.

*(Graham pours his tea on the floor. Rose takes Violet's cup and pours her tea on the floor.)*

**VIOLET:** You're right, the sink wouldn't have worked.

**GRAHAM:** I've got it.

*(Graham sits Daisy up and slaps her back. He lets her go and she falls back down, limp.)*

**GRAHAM:** No, that's not it.

*(Graham gets up and paces.)*

**GRAHAM:** If only Poppy were alive. He was a doctor. I think.

**VIOLET:** He was a pharmacist. Maybe *is* a pharmacist.

**ROSE:** What should we do?

**GRAHAM:** I don't know. *(Looks at his pocket watch.)* This was only supposed to be a five minute break.

*(The doorbell rings.)*

**GRAHAM:** Shit! It's the police.

**VIOLET:** How do you know?

**GRAHAM:** Every time I open the door it's the police.

**VIOLET:** Then stop opening the door.

**ROSE:** Maybe someone heard the gunshot and called them.

**VIOLET:** You're right, it could be anyone.

**GRAHAM:** What gunshot?

**ROSE:** From before.

**GRAHAM:** This morning? That was hours ago.

**ROSE:** Was it?

**GRAHAM:** Good point.

**VIOLET:** Maybe it's a patron. For the show.

**GRAHAM:** Of course. Shit! We're down a cast member.

**ROSE:** She's probably fine.

**GRAHAM:** Who?

**ROSE:** Daisy.

**GRAHAM:** Oh. I meant Officer Tussle. Good point. Now we're down two cast members.

*(The doorbell rings again.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(from off)* Hello?! I can hear you in there.

**GRAHAM:** See? It is the police.

**ROSE:** But that means we've gained a cast member.

**GRAHAM:** True. Things are turning around.

**ROSE:** Should I let him in?

**GRAHAM:** No! Not yet. Actually, lock it.

*(Rose goes to the door and locks it.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(from off:)* Did someone just lock the door?

**VIOLET:** Who's going to play Irina?

**GRAHAM:** I will.

**VIOLET:** No.

**GRAHAM:** You're right, that won't work.

**VIOLET:** I will.

**GRAHAM:** Yes.

**ROSE:** You will?

**GRAHAM:** And you'll play Daisy, too. We can't let Tussle know what happened to her. He could drop out of the show. Or suspect foul play.

**ROSE:** Why would he suspect foul play?

**GRAHAM:** Never trust the law. Violet, take Daisy out of here. —Quickly, go!

*(Violet takes Daisy off.)*

**GRAHAM:** Rose, unlock the door.

*(Rose unlocks the door.)*

**GRAHAM:** Act natural.

*(Rose opens the door.)*

**ROSE:** *(Very stiff:)* Hello Officer. Won't you please come in.

*(Officer Tussle comes in.)*

**TUSSLE:** Hello, Rose. Thank you.

**ROSE:** Would you like some tea?

**GRAHAM:** No!

**ROSE:** No you would not. Perhaps some other time.

**TUSSLE:** Fine. Let me know when that time arrives. Perhaps I'll be here. If you all decide to let me in.

**GRAHAM:** Rose gets confused with locks. Don't you, dear?

**ROSE:** Practically every time. I don't understand why they exist at all except to keep the wrong people in and the right people out. Ha, ha.

**TUSSLE:** Yes, well, *omnia oblivioni data sunt et omnia ignota sunt.* [all is forgotten and all is forgiven.]

**ROSE:** Was that Russian? How fitting.

**TUSSLE:** Yes... Sorry I had to run off earlier. Duty called. You understand.

**GRAHAM:** Of course. Ready to get started?

**TUSSLE:** Where are the other sisters?

**GRAHAM:** Changing. For the scene. Dress rehearsal.

**TUSSLE:** Do I need a costume?

**GRAHAM:** No, the one you're wearing will do.

**TUSSLE:** It's not a costume. It's a uniform.

**GRAHAM:** Uniform. Outfit. Costume. All's fair in love and war, very good. (*shouting off:*) Violet! Get out here! Officer Tussle is waiting and he's still a guest, technically. (*to Tussle*) Although, it bears repeating, all cast members will be treated equally.

**TUSSLE:** Did you say that earlier?

**GRAHAM:** Why, did I need to?

**TUSSLE:** No, but you said it bears repeating—

**GRAHAM:** Fine, I'll say it again. All cast members—

**TUSSLE:** Will be treated equally.

**GRAHAM:** Rose, go get your sister.

**ROSE:** Which one?

**GRAHAM:** Both. No! Either. The faster of the two. It doesn't matter.

*(Rose nods and exits.)*

**GRAHAM:** Tussle, you're a fine actor for such little training.

**TUSSLE:** I studied at Juilliard, actually.

**GRAHAM:** Did you, actually?

**TUSSLE:** I did, actually.

**GRAHAM:** Actually, actually.

**TUSSLE:** Hmm.

**GRAHAM:** And yet you're here, all the way upstate, so far from the proclaimed epicenter of fine art and the Broad-way. Why? Tell me something you dislike about New York City.

**TUSSLE:** I love the city.

**GRAHAM:** I'm sorry, what city? "The city" can refer to any number of cities.

**TUSSLE:** Oh, I'm sorry. *New York* City. I thought since it was already established that we were—

**GRAHAM:** And now you're a cop. Is that what they taught you at Juilliard—how to defend and protect.

**TUSSLE:** No. They taught acting.

I am now a Police Officer because... Because it was my father's dying wish.

And it would have most likely been my mother's dying wish too, if she were to ever die, but now it doesn't have to be, because I am one.

She can have a different dying wish. Perhaps it will be for me to return to acting.

**GRAHAM:** But you're doing that today.

**TUSSLE:** You're right. I am. Thank you.

*(Graham puts his hand on Tussle's shoulder.)*

**GRAHAM:** You're welcome.

*(Rose enters.)*

**ROSE:** She'll be out in a minute.

*(Violet enters as Daisy. She wears a red wig and the green sash.)*

**ROSE:** Er, second. Here she is.

**TUSSLE:** There she is.

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* You rang?

**TUSSLE:** No. I arrived.

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* I see.

**GRAHAM:** Daisy!

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* Yes.

**GRAHAM:** Very good.

**TUSSLE:** Where's Violet?

**VIOLET:** What?

**TUSSLE:** Violet? Your sister?

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* Violet is in the bathroom. She had the hiccups.

**GRAHAM:** What?

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* I don't know.

**TUSSLE:** So she went into the bathroom?

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* To scare herself. Cure herself, by scaring herself. In the mirror. It's a trick.

**ROSE:** I'll go check on her.

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* Please do.

*(Rose exits.)*

**VIOLET:** Perhaps we should get started on our scene.

**TUSSLE:** Oh. Yes. From before.

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* For the play. Tonight. It's still on, isn't it?

**GRAHAM:** Of course it is! Of course it is!

*(Graham grabs the nearest script pages and shoves it into Tussle's hands.)*

**GRAHAM:** Here, you two rehearse this scene.

**TUSSLE:** *(looking over the pages)* This is for Solyony.

**GRAHAM:** You're Solyony.

**TUSSLE:** I'm Tuzenbach.

**GRAHAM:** You're Tuzenbach and Solyony. Both. They're the same. We combined them, remember?

**TUSSLE:** But who's Solyony?

**GRAHAM:** He's you. You're him. Don't be afraid to jump in, here.

**TUSSLE:** Who's Solyony in love with?

**GRAHAM:** Violet. I mean Daisy. I mean Irina.

**VIOLET:** (*as Daisy*) That's me. The second two.

**TUSSLE:** Solyony is in love with Irina and Tuzenbach is in love with Irina.

**GRAHAM:** See why we combined them?

**TUSSLE:** But I'm also Vershinin.

**GRAHAM:** Yeah but not in this scene. He's not in this scene. So you can still be him if that's less confusing but it doesn't matter cause he's not in this scene.

**TUSSLE:** Okay.

**VIOLET:** (*as Daisy*) Maybe we should just start. I'm getting weary.

**GRAHAM:** Great. Give it a run through. I'm going to go check on Daisy, Violet.

**VIOLET:** *What?*

**GRAHAM:** What did I say? I meant I'm going to go check on Daisy, Daisy. I mean Violet, Violet. Who are you? I got it! Checking on Violet, Daisy.

**TUSSLE:** Is she okay?

**GRAHAM:** Who?

**VIOLET:** I'm fine.

**TUSSLE:** Violet.

**VIOLET:** (*as Daisy*) She's fine.

**GRAHAM:** Violet.

**TUSSLE:** Good.

**GRAHAM:** Yes.

**GRAHAM:** Good.

*(Graham exits.)*

**TUSSLE:** Your brother...

**VIOLET:** (*as Daisy*) ...Has a lot of passion, I know. He says he's a genius, but word hasn't spread like he'd hoped.

**TUSSLE:** I guess we should start.

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* Of course. Solyony and Irina.

*(The find their spots and begin.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(as Solyony)* There's nobody here.... Where are they all?

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy as Irina)* They've gone away.

**TUSSLE:** *(as Solyony)* How strange. Are you here alone?

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy as Irina)* Yes, alone.

**TUSSLE:** *(as Solyony)* Just now I behaved tactlessly, with insufficient reserve. But you are not like all the others, you are noble and pure, you can see the truth. ... You alone can understand me. I love you, deeply, beyond measure, I love you.

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy as Irina)* Go away.

**TUSSLE:** *(as Solyony)* I cannot live without you.

*(She moves away from him but he follows her.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(as Solyony, almost through tears)* Oh, joy! Wonderful, marvellous, glorious eyes, such as I have never seen before. ...

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy as Irina, coldly)* Stop it, Vassili Vassilevitch!

**TUSSLE:** *(as Solyony)* This is the first time I speak to you of love, and it is as if I am no longer on the earth, but on another planet. *(Wipes his forehead.)* Well, never mind. I can't make you love me by force, of course ... but I don't intend to have any more-favoured rivals. ... No ... I swear to you by all the saints, I shall kill my rival. ... Oh, beautiful one!

*(They look for more on the pages, but that's it.)*

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* That was incredible. Let's run it again except this time you get the girl.

**TUSSLE:** No. I'd prefer not to. It doesn't feel right.

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* What's wrong?

**TUSSLE:** I must confess...

**VIOLET:** *(as Daisy)* What is it?

**TUSSLE:** Your sister. Violet...

**VIOLET:** Yes?

**TUSSLE:** I'm in love with her.

**VIOLET:** You're in love with me?

**TUSSLE:** No, I'm in love with *her*.

**VIOLET:** Her? No me.

**TUSSLE:** No, not you. Her.

**VIOLET:** Not me?

**TUSSLE:** I'm sorry, Daisy.

**VIOLET:** Not me. Daisy. Oh. Not me. Violet.

**TUSSLE:** Yes. Not you. Violet.

**VIOLET:** I see. But when you did your scene...when *we* did our scene before... It was magical. There was such chemistry. It seemed like your, like *our* destiny had been sealed. As if the stars themselves had planned it.

**TUSSLE:** Perhaps I should go.

*(Tussle puts on his hat and heads for the door.)*

*(Violet follows him to the door. On his way out, he turns back.)*

**TUSSLE:** Maybe we'll meet again. Under different circumstances.  
Good bye.

*(And he's gone.  
As soon as the door shuts, Graham and Rose enter.)*

**GRAHAM:** Is he gone?

*(Violet is still staring at the closed door.)*

**GRAHAM:** Violet!

**VIOLET:** Perhaps for good this time.

**GRAHAM:** What? Why?

**ROSE:** Who's good this time?

**VIOLET:** What?

**GRAHAM:** That's fine. It doesn't matter.

*(Poppy has appeared at his bench.)*

**POPPY:** That's right. Nothing matters.

**ROSE:** Daisy is dead.

*(Violet stares at them. They stare back at her.)*

**VIOLET:** She's dead?

**ROSE:** Yes, dear.

**VIOLET:** She died for nothing.

**POPPY:** Nothing? Don't you realize what this means?...

**GRAHAM:** It means we're down another actor.

**VIOLET:** Office Tussle wasn't in love with her at all.  
He was in love with me. And I don't deserve a single drop of it.  
Oh, Daisy. I'm sorry.

*(Violet takes off Daisy's wig and sash.  
She picks up a script page and reads:)*

**VIOLET:** *(as Nina from "The Seagull":)* Like a captive in a dungeon deep and void, I know not where I am, nor what awaits me.

**POPPY:** No, this means...the vial worked. It means I'm alive.

**GRAHAM:** Then maybe we're *up* an actor.

*(Violet puts the script down and calmly walks to the samovar and pours herself some tea.  
She takes the vial from her pocket, puts in a drop, reconsiders and pours the whole thing in.  
She drinks.  
It's hot. She blows on it.  
She drinks the rest.  
She waits.  
She collapses.)*

**GRAHAM:** Nope, down.

*(Lights down.)*

*(End of Act Three.)*

*INTERMISSION*

## ACT FOUR

*(A little later.*

*Violet still lies motionless on the floor where she collapsed.*

*Poppy stares at her body, and drinks from a whiskey bottle.*

*Graham is going through the script. He hands some pages to Poppy.)*

**GRAHAM:** Act Four. Start here.

*(Poppy nods and takes the pages.)*

**POPPY:** *(Reading, as Chebutikin:)* They think because I'm a doctor I can cure everything, but I know absolutely nothing. I've forgotten all I ever knew, I remember nothing...

Devil must've took it.

Yesterday my patient—she died, and it's my fault that she died. Yes... I used to know a certain amount twenty-five years ago, but I don't remember anything now. Nothing.

**GRAHAM:** *(To offstage:)* Enter Irina!

*(Rose enters, a bit frazzled and dazed, wearing Daisy's wig and sash.)*

**POPPY:** *(as Chebutikin, continuing)* Perhaps I'm not really a man, and am only pretending that I've got arms and legs and a head; perhaps I don't exist at all, and only imagine that I walk, and eat, and sleep.

*(Graham starts to pull Violet's body offstage.)*

**POPPY:** *(as Chebutikin, almost crying:)* Oh, if only I didn't exist!

**ROSE:** *(as Daisy as Irina, to Chebutikin)* Hadn't you better be going to sleep, doctor?

**POPPY:** *(as Chebutikin)* I keep remembering the woman I killed yesterday ... and I can't get her out of my mind, and everything in it's become crooked and wretched. ... So I went and drank...

*(Graham has Violet off by now and begins to tidy up. He takes out a broom and sweeps the area where Violet was.)*

**ROSE:** *(Reading a line from the script:)* Well, in vino veritas, the ancients used to say. *(as herself:)* In wine there is the truth.

*(Graham hands Poppy a porcelain clock.  
Poppy takes into his hands and examines it.)*

**POPPY:** It says in the script I throw it on the ground, smashing it.

**GRAHAM:** Okay, but don't really break it. This is only a rehearsal.

*(Poppy, as Chebutikin, drops the clock which breaks to pieces.)*

**POPPY:** Huh.

*(A pause; everybody is confused.)*

**ROSE:** *(as Daisy as Irina, gathering up the pieces)* That clock used to belong to our mother.

**POPPY:** *(as Chebutikin)* Perhaps. ...Perhaps I didn't break it; it only looks as if I broke it. Perhaps we only think that we exist, when really we don't. I don't know anything, nobody knows anything. *(As himself, to Graham)* Perhaps this is a rehearsal. Perhaps it's not.

*(Poppy staggers off.)*

*(Graham and Rose put their scripts down.)*

**ROSE:** Is that it?

**GRAHAM:** For now, I guess.

**ROSE:** So Poppy's alive?

**GRAHAM:** For now, I guess.

*(Pause.)*

You know you have to be Violet, and Violet as Masha now, too, right?

**ROSE:** I figured.

**GRAHAM:** And Daisy. And Daisy as Irina.

**ROSE:** Right. But, Violet was being Daisy, and Daisy as Irina. So do I play Violet as Daisy as Irina or can I just play Daisy as Irina.

**GRAHAM:** I think the latter is fine. Don't want to confuse our audience.

**ROSE:** No, of course not.

**GRAHAM:** Rose. Everything's going to be fine. We just need to focus on the show.

**ROSE:** I know.

**GRAHAM:** Life, without art, is meaningless. We must express ourselves. We must create.

**ROSE:** Perform.

**GRAHAM:** Let not their deaths be but all for naught.

**ROSE:** Alright. Wait, what?

**GRAHAM:** Let me read you something.

*(He grabs a nearby book and cracks it open.)*

**GRAHAM:** Robert Brustein. “The Theatre of Revolt.” *(reading)* “The modern dramatist is essentially a metaphysical rebel, not a practical revolutionary; whatever his personal political convictions, his art is the expression of a spiritual condition. For he is a militant of the ideal, an anarchic individualist, concerned with the impossible rather than the possible; and his discontent extends to the very roots of existence. The work of art itself—”

*(The doorbell rings.)*

**GRAHAM:** Shit! Go get changed.

**ROSE:** In to what?

**GRAHAM:** Probably safest to wear everything.

*(Rose runs off.)*

*(Graham goes to the door.)*

*(He opens it and in walks Officer Tussle. He takes off his hat and wipes the sweat from his brow.)*

**GRAHAM:** Is it getting hot out there?

**TUSSLE:** No, in here.

**GRAHAM:** But you just came in.  
What happened to your scarf?

**TUSSLE:** I lost it in the bushes. I need to talk to you. It’s serious.

**GRAHAM:** It must be, by the look of your brow. What is it?

**TUSSLE:** Something is wrong. Something is all wrong. And at first I couldn’t figure out what it was, but now I know and it needs to fixed or...or...I don’t know.

**GRAHAM:** I was afraid you'd catch on eventually.

**TUSSLE:** It was only a matter of time.

**GRAHAM:** You know that old expression, "there's an explanation for everything"?

**TUSSLE:** I'm afraid not.

**GRAHAM:** That's just as well because I was going to say in this case, it doesn't apply. We are, as the good Lord says, "nature's fabulous exception." Have a seat. Would you like some tea?

**TUSSLE:** No. Enough pleasantries, I think I figured out what we can do.

**GRAHAM:** Talk to me. I've been known to excel at compromises. On certain issues.

*(Graham begins to pace.)*

**TUSSLE:** Good. I've just been down to the police station and I discussed my concerns with some of my fellow officers. They're really quite perceptive.

**GRAHAM:** I'm sure they are. Gentlemen, too.

**TUSSLE:** Violet should be cast as Irina. Not Daisy.

*(Graham stops.)*

**GRAHAM:** This is a casting issue.

**TUSSLE:** I knew you'd understand.

*(Graham continues pacing)*

**TUSSLE:** Don't get me wrong, Daisy is...adequate. But Violet is...divine.

**GRAHAM:** Yes, I picked up a chemistry. I agree with your suggestion.

**TUSSLE:** You do?

**GRAHAM:** Yes. Consider the play recast. It's just as well. Daisy is...indisposed at the moment.

**TUSSLE:** Oh?

**GRAHAM:** Yes. Suddenly. Sudden and violent. A violent sickness.

**TUSSLE:** Cancer?

**GRAHAM:** No. Maybe. I don't know. Anything's possible. Anything goes.

**TUSSLE:** Have you called a doctor?

**GRAHAM:** Yes. Measles. Mumps. Scurvy. Pneumonia is what the doctor ordered. Diagnosed.

**TUSSLE:** Someone came here?

**GRAHAM:** Someone *is* here. I diagnosed her myself. I was considering going preMed. But my early ambitions were diverted to the stage. I was after the same thing either way, I suppose. I knew I wanted to be behind a curtain and I knew I wanted to play God.

**TUSSLE:** But there's not a curtain in here, is there?

**GRAHAM:** Only a curtain of the mind.

**TUSSLE:** So is she going to be okay?

**GRAHAM:** I...probably not.

**TUSSLE:** Oh.

Where are the others?

**GRAHAM:** Lunch break. Dinner break. What time is it?

**TUSSLE:** I was wondering that myself.  
(*he picks up a piece of the clock*) What is this?

**GRAHAM:** It's not anything now. What it *was* was...was...broken long ago.

(*Tussle puts the piece of clock in his pocket.*)

**GRAHAM:** And what are your feelings about Rose?

**TUSSLE:** I haven't done a scene with Rose yet.

**GRAHAM:** Of course not. Let me call her out.

**TUSSLE:** I'd prefer you'd call Violet out, actually.

**GRAHAM:** (*calling off*) Rose! Officer Tussle is here and he would like to see Violet. So...please send her out.

**TUSSLE:** Why wouldn't you just call for Violet?

**GRAHAM:** Because Rose is more responsible, that's why. And Violet can lose sense of time. Once, when we were little, she collapsed in the playground during recess. Turns out she hadn't eaten or slept in three days. See she hadn't realized three days had passed, she thought only one day had passed. What's your first name by the way?

**TUSSLE:** Charles. After my father.

**GRAHAM:** The one who died, from before?

**TUSSLE:** Yes.  
But you can call me Chuck.

**GRAHAM:** Chuck Tussle. Is that your stage name?

**TUSSLE:** It's both.

*(Rose enters, as Violet.)*

**TUSSLE:** Violet?

**GRAHAM:** Yes.                   **ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Yes.

**TUSSLE:** Nice to see you. How is Daisy?

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* She's fine. She's great.

**GRAHAM:** He means with her sickness. How sick she is.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Oh. You mean with that. She's recovered. She'll be out in a minute.

**GRAHAM:** Are you sure?

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Yes. No. Should I be?

**GRAHAM:** No, you shouldn't be.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Then I guess I'm not. One can never tell.

**GRAHAM:** No, and even if one could, one shouldn't. Better to play it safe.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Safe is safe, as they say.  
*(to Tussle)* I heard you called for me.

**TUSSLE:** Yes, I was just discussing it with your brother and he has decided to recast you as Irina.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* I thought I was playing Masha.

**GRAHAM:** No, Violet was playing Masha.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* I am Violet.

**GRAHAM:** Rose was playing Masha.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* No, Violet.

**GRAHAM:** You were?

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Yes, we recast it remember?

**TUSSLE:** Before?

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Yes.           **GRAHAM:** No.

**GRAHAM:** I don't know.  
*And deep breath.*

*(They all take a deep breath.)*

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Hello, I'm Violet.

**TUSSLE:** I'm Chuck.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* What?

**GRAHAM:** It's a long story.

**TUSSLE:** No, it's not. That's my name. Officer Chuck Tussle.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Well alright then, Chuck. Why don't we read a scene together. We're still doing a play aren't we?

*(Graham grabs the nearest pages without looking)*

**GRAHAM:** Here read this.

*(Rose and Tussle look over the pages.)*

**TUSSLE:** What's this?

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Who are these people? Anya and Trofimov?

**TUSSLE:** When does this scene happen?

*(Graham grabs the pages back and skims them.)*

**GRAHAM:** Yes, yes. Anya and Trofimov. It happens later. They're in love. The names are wrong. It must be a typo. It's these British translations. Let's just read it.

**TUSSLE:** *(as Trofimov)* To escape all the petty and deceptive things which prevent our being happy and free, that is the aim and meaning of our lives. Forward! We go irresistibly on to that bright star which burns there, in the distance!

**ROSE:** *(as Violet, as Anya:)* How beautifully you talk! *(Pause.)* It is glorious here to-day!

**TUSSLE:** *(as Trofimov)* Yes, the weather is wonderful.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet, as Anya)* What have you done to me? I don't love the cherry orchard as I used to. I thought there was no better place in the world than our orchard.

**TUSSLE:** *(as Trofimov)* All Russia is our orchard. The land is great and beautiful, there are many marvelous places in it.

*(Rose stops.)*

**ROSE:** *(to Graham)* Are you sure this from *Three Sisters*?

**TUSSLE:** I believe this scene is from *The Cherry Orchard*.

**GRAHAM:** I... *(looking over the pages again)* I... don't know. Does it really matter?

*(Rose shrugs.)*

**TUSSLE:** Don't you think the audience will be confused?

**GRAHAM:** I don't know, maybe, probably not. Are you confused?

**TUSSLE:** A little.

**GRAHAM:** Well you're not watching it. From the outside we get the idea. Think of your theatrical experience as a one-way mirror. The audience sees everything of you, your thoughts, your ideas, your hopes, dreams, etc. But you can't see the audience. Of course you can't! You didn't buy a ticket to watch them sit there. That would be boring. Understand?

**TUSSLE:** You're a fine director.

**GRAHAM:** Let's finish the scene.

*(They continue.)*

**GRAHAM:** With feeling.

**TUSSLE:** *(as Trofimov)* In order to begin to live in the present we must first redeem the past, and that can only be done by suffering, by strenuous, uninterrupted labour.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet, as Anya)* The house in which we live has long ceased to be our house; I shall go away.

**TUSSLE:** *(as Trofimov)* If you have the housekeeping keys, throw them down the well and go away. Be as free as the wind. I know that happiness is coming, Anya, I see it already. . . It comes nearer and nearer; I hear its steps. And if we do not see it we shall not know it, but what does that matter? Others will see it!

**GRAHAM:** ...And scene. Nice. Job.

*(The doorbell rings.)*

**TUSSLE:** That felt great! Let's run it again except this time I get the girl.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* We should probably get the door.

**GRAHAM:** I'll get it.

*(Graham goes to the door.  
He peeks out the window, out the peephole, etc.)*

**TUSSLE:** Violet.

**ROSE:** Huh?

**TUSSLE:** I love you.

**ROSE:** Are you sure?

**TUSSLE:** More than anything I have ever known.

**ROSE:** I...

**TUSSLE:** I love you.

**ROSE:** Uh.

**TUSSLE:** I love you.

**ROSE:** Oh.

**TUSSLE:** I love you.

**ROSE:** Ah.

*(Rose runs to Graham as he's about to open the door and pulls him aside.)*

*(The doorbell rings again.)*

**ROSE:** I can't do this.

**GRAHAM:** But you *are* doing it.

**ROSE:** Well I can't *anymore* then. He's in love with me.

**GRAHAM:** That's great Rose.

**ROSE:** But he thinks I'm Violet.

**GRAHAM:** So what's the problem?

**ROSE:** I'm not Violet.

**GRAHAM:** Of course you're not. But he doesn't know that.

**ROSE:** I know. That's what I'm saying.

**GRAHAM:** You're making this more complicated then it has to be.

**ROSE:** It's as complicated as it is. And that's too much...for me. I need to be myself again.

*(Rose exits to the bedrooms.)*

*(Tussle has been pacing)*

**TUSSLE:** *(to Rose)* Where are you going? *(to Graham)* Where's she going?

*(Now, a knocking)*

*(Graham opens the door.*

*Detective Riddle is there. Note: She's played by the same actor who played Violet.*

*She's dressed conservatively with her hair tied up.)*

**RIDDLE:** Good evening.

**GRAHAM:** Is it?

**RIDDLE:** You tell me.

**GRAHAM:** I would say 'Good Day.' What time does it change over?

**RIDDLE:** Are you the head of the household?

**GRAHAM:** In most ways.

**RIDDLE:** I'm Detective Riddle. May I come in?

**GRAHAM:** I suppose. Are you Equity?

**RIDDLE:** No, Aquarius.

*(Graham moves aside for Riddle to enter. She does.)*

**GRAHAM:** Are you here for the show?

**RIDDLE:** Show?

*(Tussle approaches.)*

**TUSSLE:** It was only a matter of time.

**RIDDLE:** Hello Charles.

**TUSSLE:** What are you doing here?

**RIDDLE:** What are *you* doing here?

**TUSSLE:** Rehearsing.

**RIDDLE:** What?

**TUSSLE:** None of your damn business.

**GRAHAM:** You two know each other?

**TUSSLE:** You got some nerve pissing in another man's garden.

**RIDDLE:** The station received another complaint from this house, so they went to send you out, but you were already out, *are* out, we didn't realize, still at this house, so they sent me over to check things out.

**TUSSLE:** Likely story.

**RIDDLE:** Where've you been?

**TUSSLE:** Nowhere.

**RIDDLE:** What have you got?

**TUSSLE:** Nothing.

*(A glass breaks off stage.)*

**RIDDLE:** *(looking off stage)* What was that?

**GRAHAM:** We have cats.

**TUSSLE:** Let me ask you this: was the complaint one of abuse made by an elderly man?

**RIDDLE:** Yes. It was a complaint of existential abuse.

**TUSSLE:** It's a dead end, Detective. I've been here most of the day.

**RIDDLE:** You have?

**TUSSLE:** Well, in and out.

**GRAHAM:** He's taken on a minor role. Several minor roles.

**RIDDLE:** I can take over from here.

**TUSSLE:** That's not necessary.

**RIDDLE:** You've done a fine job, Officer. But this is really my line of expertise. *(to Graham)* I'm a Detective, did I mention that?

**GRAHAM:** Yes, almost immediately.

**RIDDLE:** Protocol.

**TUSSLE:** This is my case!

**RIDDLE:** Not any more!

**TUSSLE:** I was here first!

**RIDDLE:** I'm taking over!

**TUSSLE:** That's not fair!

**RIDDLE:** Go home!

**TUSSLE:** I AM HOME!

*(Awkward pause.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(sheepishly)* I like it here.

*(Pause. They stare at him.)*

**TUSSLE:** I'll go.

**RIDDLE:** *(to Graham)* Mind if I look around?

**GRAHAM:** In this room?

**RIDDLE:** Mostly.

**GRAHAM:** That should be fine.

*(Riddle lights a cigarette and starts to nose around.)*

*(Tussle puts on his jacket.*

*Graham quickly runs over to him. Whispering, aside:)*

**GRAHAM:** Get back here as soon as you can. We'll run the scenes you're not in.

**TUSSLE:** Of course.

And watch out for her.

**GRAHAM:** Does she have any acting experience?

**TUSSLE:** She's an actress all right. More like a manipulative trollop.

**GRAHAM:** So you have a history.

**TUSSLE:** She's my ex-lover as in I no longer lover her.

*(Rose returns, as herself. Tussle rushes to her.)*

*(Graham catches up with Riddle and looks over her shoulder as she looks around.)*

**TUSSLE:** Rose?

**ROSE:** Yes.

**TUSSLE:** Where's Violet?

**ROSE:** You made her cry. What did you say?

**TUSSLE:** Only the nicest things.

**ROSE:** It must have been the way you said it.

**TUSSLE:** Can I see her?

**ROSE:** That's not possible. At the moment.

**TUSSLE:** And where's Daisy?

**ROSE:** Daisy's dead.

**TUSSLE:** Dead?

**ROSE:** There you have it.

**TUSSLE:** When did she die?

**ROSE:** Earlier.

**TUSSLE:** Was it something I said?

**ROSE:** Probably.

**TUSSLE:** I better go.

**ROSE:** Yes, before you say something else.

**TUSSLE:** Tell Violet...tell her... To come back.

**ROSE:** I thought you were leaving.

**TUSSLE:** I am.

**ROSE:** So why would she come back if you're not even going to be here?

**TUSSLE:** Tell her...I'll come back if she comes back.

**ROSE:** And what about Rose? Who will come for her?

**TUSSLE:** You mean you.

**ROSE:** Yes, her. Me. Who's going to love me?

*(Pause.  
Tussle puts on his hat.  
Rose stares at him.)*

**TUSSELE:** I'm going to assume that was a rhetorical question.  
*(heading for the front door)* Goodbye.

*(And he's gone.)*

**ROSE:** *(to Riddle)* Who are you?

**GRAHAM:** This is Detective Riddle.  
This is my sister Violet.

**ROSE:** Rose.

**GRAHAM:** Rose. Of course. I get confused sometimes. They were twins.

**RIDDLE:** 'Were'?

**GRAHAM:** At birth. But they grew apart.

**ROSE:** So you're a detective? What do you detect?

**RIDDLE:** *(to Rose)* I solve puzzles. If I can. If I find all the pieces or most of the pieces—I put them together.

**ROSE:** And what about pieces of a person, or of a heart, ever deal with that? Or of a whole person, broken and spread about—of a life once lived? Would you be able to fit them together?

**RIDDLE:** Is there something you're trying to tell me, dear?

**GRAHAM:** I have an idea. Detective, what do you know of Anton Chekov?

**RIDDLE:** The tennis player?

*(Poppy walks out and sits on his bench, still a bit drunk. He immediately falls asleep.)*

**RIDDLE:** Who's that?

**ROSE:** That's our grandfather's ghost.  
*(to Graham)* Or is he alive now?

*(Graham shrugs.)*

**GRAHAM:** Ghost?

**RIDDLE:** Are you sure?

**GRAHAM:** Yes, yes ghost.  
Let's read a scene. What do you say, Rose?

**ROSE:** Fine, but I'm Irina now.

**GRAHAM:** You're whoever you want to be.

**ROSE:** Irina.

**GRAHAM:** Done.

**ROSE:** Thank you.

*(Grahams hands Riddle and Rose pages of the script.)*

**GRAHAM:** Here, look this over.  
Detective, you'll be playing Olga and Rose will be Irina. In this scene, you're attempting to comfort your younger sister who is in deep despair.

**RIDDLE:** Is this for a movie?

**GRAHAM:** This is a theatrical production of Anton Chekhov's masterpiece *Three Sisters*.

**RIDDLE:** Like a play? Where's the stage?

**GRAHAM:** You're standing on it. This living room is the stage of the Gods!

**RIDDLE:** I don't think I—

**GRAHAM:** Trust me. You're going to be marvelous.

**RIDDLE:** Well I suppose I can give it a whirl. When do you want us off-book?

**GRAHAM:** That's the spirit.  
Let me know when you're ready.

*(Riddle and Rose look over the pages.)*

*(Poppy sits up, hung over.)*

**POPPY:** Am I awake? Was I dreaming? What was a dream?  
I may be alive. But am I awake?

*(Poppy finds a loose page of the script and reads:)*

**POPPY:** *(as Vershinin)* I wonder: suppose we could begin life over again, knowing what we were doing? Suppose we could use one life, already ended, as a sort of rough draft for another? I think that every one of us would try, more than anything else, not to repeat himself, at the very least he would rearrange his manner of life, he would make sure of rooms like these, with all of these flowers...

**GRAHAM:** What are you reading? Let me see that.

*(Graham takes the script page from Poppy.)*

**POPPY:** *(as himself)* I'd rather be born again knowing *nothing*. Nothing at all from this life. Who says we have to be born again at all? I'd rather not've been born the first time!

**GRAHAM:** I can't find your place. Is that something you memorized?

**POPPY:** That's not from the play.

**GRAHAM:** *Cherry Orchard?*

**POPPY:** That was just me thinking.

**GRAHAM:** Huh. Well, stop. It's confusing.

**POPPY:** How am I to stop thinking? I'd love to.

**GRAHAM:** *(to Rose and Riddle)* Ready?

**POPPY:** Who's the new girl?

**GRAHAM:** Quiet on the set.

**RIDDLE:** How many people live in this house?

**GRAHAM:** And action.

*(They begin.  
Rose, as Irina is sobbing.)*

**RIDDLE:** *(as Olga)* What is it, dear?

**ROSE:** *(as Irina, controlling herself)* ... I can't work, I won't. I'm twenty-three, I have already been at work for a long while, and my brain has dried up, and I've grown thinner, plainer, older, and there is no relief of any sort... I'm going away from the real, the beautiful life, farther and farther away... I can't understand how it is that I am still alive, that I haven't killed myself.

**RIDDLE:** *(as Olga)* Don't cry, dear girl, don't cry ... I suffer, too.

**ROSE:** *(as Irina)* I'm not crying. ... Enough. ... Look, I'm not crying any more!

**RIDDLE:** *(as Olga)* Dear, I tell you as a sister and a friend if you want my advice, marry the Baron.

**GRAHAM:** *(Quietly, aside to Riddle)* That's Tuzenbach. Played by Tussle.

**RIDDLE:** Ah.

**GRAHAM:** Please. Continue.

*(Rose, as Irina, cries softly.)*

**RIDDLE:** *(as Olga)* It's true that he is not handsome, but he is so honorable and clean ... people don't marry for love, but in order to do one's duty. I'd marry without being in love. Whoever he was, I should marry him, so long as he was a decent man. Even if he was old. ...

*(Poppy perks up.)*

**ROSE:** *(as Irina)* I was always waiting until we moved Moscow, there I should meet my true love; I used to think about him, and love him. ... But it's all turned out to be nonsense, all nonsense. ...

*(Rose and Riddle lower their scripts.)*

*(During their scene, Daisy has appeared and stands near Poppy. They watch the scene; he does not notice her.)*

**RIDDLE:** How was that? I've never been so nervous.

**GRAHAM:** I'm going to be honest. *(to Riddle)* You are gifted.

**RIDDLE:** Really?

**GRAHAM:** There's nothing better than raw talent.

**RIDDLE:** *(to Graham)* Maybe I can read a scene with you.

**GRAHAM:** Sure, let me find something.

**RIDDLE:** Perhaps a scene with me as Irina and you as Tuzenbach.

**ROSE:** No, I'm reading Irina.

**RIDDLE:** Aren't you a little old for Irina?  
Perhaps you should play Anfisa the decrepit servant?

**ROSE:** I thought you didn't know this play.

**DAISY:** *(to Poppy, about Riddle)* Who's that?

*(Poppy shrugs.)*

*(They others turn and notice Daisy.)*

**RIDDLE:** Who's that?

**POPPY:** What are you doing here? I thought you were dead.

**DAISY:** I am?

**POPPY:** You are. You *are* dead. Aren't you?

**DAISY:** I don't know. Are you dead?

*(Poppy stares at her.)*

**POPPY:** I'm going to assume that was a rhetorical question.

**ROSE:** Daisy? Is that you?

**GRAHAM:** It's her ghost.

**RIDDLE:** Does this happen a lot here?

**GRAHAM:** Hauntings? It seems so.

**RIDDLE:** Maybe the house needs to be cleaned. Cleansed.

**GRAHAM:** She won't bother anyone.

*(Daisy sits on the bench, confused.)*

**DAISY:** I'm dead?

**ROSE:** Yes, dear.

**GRAHAM:** *(to Riddle)* She's always been confused.  
*(to Rose)* Don't talk to her, Rose. It'll only confuse her more.

I'd really like to solidify our casting; it'd sure be easier if everyone wasn't coming and going, and dying off and becoming ghosts, and suddenly appearing for no reason.

*(Tussle bursts through the front door.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(almost out of breath)* I'm not taking 'no' for an answer. I don't care what you say.

**GRAHAM:** Who's he talking to?

**DAISY:** Officer Tussle?

**TUSSLE:** I'm talking to you.

**RIDDLE:** To me?                      **DAISY:** To me?

**TUSSLE:** I thought you were dead.

**RIDDLE / GRAHAM / ROSE / DAISY / POPPY:** Who?

**TUSSLE:** Her. *(pointing to Daisy)* You.

**GRAHAM:** Yes.                      **DAISY:** I don't know.

**ROSE:** She's confused. She's a ghost.

**DAISY:** I guess I am.

**TUSSLE:** I see.

**GRAHAM:** Best to ignore them.

**TUSSLE:** Whatever's best.

**POPPY:** Ghosts need tough love, right Daisy?

**RIDDLE:** What question are you not taking "no" as an answer for?

**TUSSLE:** What? Oh. Yes. I'm in this play and I'm performing tonight and I don't care if you're on the case now, whatever case that is. I've got the training. I've already been cast. I've already been rehearsing...most of the roles. And this was going to be my mother's dying wish, probably. So, I'm staying. Give me a script.

*(No one does.  
Taking Riddle's pages:)*

**TUSSLE:** This one will do. Where's Violet?

**GRAHAM:** Violet is...feeding the cats.

**TUSSLE:** Cats? What for?

**GRAHAM:** Or else they'll die.

**TUSSLE:** I need to see her. Immediately.

**GRAHAM:** And let the cats starve to death? That's animal cruelty.

**RIDDLE:** I'd be interested to speak with her as well.

**TUSSLE:** Always on the job. Let it go already. There are more important things at hand.

**RIDDLE:** Like play acting?

**TUSSLE:** You conceited street urchin.  
One Tony nomination and you ride everywhere on your white horse.

**GRAHAM:** You were nominated for a Tony?

**RIDDLE:** I was a child. It was a long time ago.  
Charles always held it against me.

**GRAHAM:** That doesn't seem fair.

**TUSSLE:** I'm getting Violet.

*(Tussle heads toward the back room.)*

**RIDDLE:** Yes, bring her out, Charles.

**ROSE:** *(especially loud, and unusually forceful)* She's indisposed!

*(Tussle halts.)*

**TUSSLE:** Perhaps I'll wait.

**ROSE:** *(quiet)* ...At the moment.

**GRAHAM:** No reason to shout Rose.

**ROSE:** I'll get her.

*(Rose leaves to the rooms.)*

**GRAHAM:** She's got the opening night jitters.

**TUSSLE:** Ah.

**DAISY:** *(to Poppy)* Is this what it feels like to be dead?

**POPPY:** How do you feel?

**DAISY:** I don't know.

**POPPY:** That's exactly what it feels like.

*(Poppy hands Daisy his bottle of booze. She takes a swig)*

**RIDDLE:** How many sisters do you have?

**GRAHAM:** Three...or so.

**RIDDLE:** And you're the only brother?

**GRAHAM:** Ever since I was born.

**RIDDLE:** And do you always put on shows here?

**GRAHAM:** You ask a lot of questions.

**RIDDLE:** I'm a detective.

**TUSSLE:** She thinks it's her job.

**RIDDLE:** It *is* my job.

*(Rose reenters as Violet.)*

**RIDDLE:** Are you Violet?

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Isn't it obvious?

**RIDDLE:** Not immediately.

**GRAHAM:** Like I said, they were twins.

**TUSSLE:** Hello Violet.

*(Rose, as Violet, curtsies.)*

**RIDDLE:** Where's Rose?

**ROSE:** (*as Violet*) She's...taken on other duties.

**RIDDLE:** Feeding the cats? I have a cat. It doesn't take that long.

**GRAHAM:** Not for one cat, sure. But we have dozens. A herd.

**RIDDLE:** A *herd* of cats?

**GRAHAM:** Okay, break's over, folks!  
Let's pick it up from Tuzenbach and Irina.

**TUSSLE:** Great, give me a script.

**RIDDLE:** I think Graham should play Tuzenbach.

**TUSSLE:** Perhaps Riddle should play Natasha. You diabolical snake.

**RIDDLE:** Natasha?

**GRAHAM:** Yes, my love interest and later my wife.

**ROSE:** And a cunning viscous woman, who takes advantage of your kindness, and ends up running the household.

**TUSSLE:** How fitting.

**GRAHAM:** You can play Masha.

**TUSSLE:** I thought Rose is playing Masha.

**GRAHAM:** Except when Violet is here then she'll be playing Masha.

**TUSSLE:** Preposterous! I'll get Rose.

**ROSE:** (*as Violet*) No! She can be Olga.  
Let Riddle play Masha.

**TUSSLE:** Very well.

**GRAHAM:** Tussle you have to be Vershinin.

**TUSSLE:** With her? I refuse.

**GRAHAM:** Then I'll read Vershinin.

*(Graham and Riddle look at the same script together.)*

**GRAHAM:** From the noise in the oven.

**RIDDLE:** The noise or the line.

**GRAHAM:** Very good.

*(Graham rattles something)*

**RIDDLE:** *(as Masha)* What a noise in the oven. Just before father's death there was a noise in the pipe, just like that.

**GRAHAM:** *(as Vershinin)* Are you superstitious?

**RIDDLE:** *(as Masha)* Yes.

**GRAHAM:** *(as Vershinin)* That's strange. You are a splendid, wonderful woman. It is dark in here, but I see your sparkling eyes.

**RIDDLE:** *(as Masha, moves to sit on another chair)* There is more light here.

**GRAHAM:** *(as Vershinin)* I love you... I love your eyes, your movements, I dream of them. ...

**TUSSLE:** *(Knocking the pages out of their hands:)* Enough!

*(They stop.)*

**TUSSLE:** This is pathetic. *(to Riddle)* You're awful. It's all wrong.

**RIDDLE:** I thought it was—

**TUSSLE:** Where did you train?

**RIDDLE:** At the academy.

**TUSSLE:** Figures.

*(to Graham)* Let Violet play Masha again. And I'll read Vershinin.

**GRAHAM:** She's already playing Irina.

**TUSSLE:** That didn't stop us before.

**RIDDLE:** Violet can play Masha if I can play Irina.

**ROSE:** What? No!  
That's my part!

**DAISY:** That's my part!

**GRAHAM:** Of course it is.

**TUSSLE:** No one would believe you as Irina you disgusting pigfoot.

**RIDDLE:** A pig foot? You mean a hoof?

**TUSSLE:** You're a baboon. A viper. A toothless weasel. A leech. You reptilian goat. You spineless dragon.  
Get out!

**RIDDLE:** What?

**TUSSLE:** You're ruining the play! You're not an actor. It's as though you've never been on stage. You don't even know—what if I said to you, move upstage, where would you go?

**RIDDLE:** We're in a living room.

**TUSSLE:** Amateur.

**RIDDLE:** I don't get it.

**TUSSLE:** Exactly!

**GRAHAM:** Let's not be too harsh. We're all playing our parts.

**TUSSLE:** *(to Graham)* You are a God in this room, sir! Don't you understand that? Demand perfection! Assemble your artistic standards, sir!

**GRAHAM:** Perhaps a break is in order.

**TUSSLE:** *(to Riddle)* Get out. I was here first. GET OUT!

*(A beat, then Riddle leaves out the front door.)*

*(Everyone stares at Tussle.)*

**TUSSLE:** We have a history.

**GRAHAM:** Let's take five. Smoke 'em if you got 'em.

**TUSSLE:** No! Let's continue.

**GRAHAM:** I'm the director.

**TUSSLE:** Then act like it.

*(Pause. Graham stares at Tussle.)*

**GRAHAM:** From Tuzenbach's scene with Irina.

**DAISY:** That's our scene.

**GRAHAM:** *(to Rose)* You're Irina.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet)* Naturally.

**TUSSLE:** *(to Rose)* From you.

*(They begin reading)*

**ROSE:** *(as Violet, as Irina)* Why are you so absentminded to-day? *(Pause.)* What took place by the theatre yesterday?

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach)* In an hour's time I shall return and be with you again. *(Kisses her hands)* My darling...

**DAISY:** This is our scene.

*(They continue to ignore Daisy.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach, looking her closely in the face)* It's been five years now since I fell in love with you, and still I can't get used to it, and you seem to me to grow more and more beautiful. What lovely, wonderful hair! What eyes! I'm going to take you away to-morrow. You will be happy. There's only one thing, one thing only: you don't love me!

**ROSE:** *(as Violet, as Irina)* I can't love you! I've never been in love in my life. I used to think so much of love, I have been thinking about it for so long by day and by night, but my soul is like an expensive piano which is locked and the key lost.

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach)* There is nothing in my life so awful as that lost key; it torments my soul. Say something to me...say something to me. ...

*(Pause.)*

**ROSE:** *(as Violet, as Irina)* What can I say, what?

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach)* Anything.

**ROSE:** *(as Violet, as Irina)* Don't go! Don't!

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach)* It's as if for the first time in my life I see these firs, maples, beeches, and they all look at me inquisitively and wait.

There's a tree which has dried up but it still sways in the breeze with the others. And so it seems to me that if I die, I shall still take part in life in one way or another. ... *(Kisses her hands.)*  
Good-bye, dear.

*(Daisy mouths the words along with Rose, with great feeling.)*

**ROSE:** *(as Irina)* I am coming with you.      **DAISY:** *(as Irina)* I am coming with you.

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach, nervously)* No, no!

*(He goes quickly to the door and then stops.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach)* Irina...

**ROSE:** *(as Violet, as Irina)* What is it?      **DAISY:** *(as Irina)* What is it?

**TUSSLE:** *(as Tuzenbach, not knowing what to say)* I haven't had any coffee to-day. Tell them to make me some. ...

*(Tussle leaves out the front door, as Tuzenbach.)*

**ROSE:** Tuzenbach!

*(Tussle immediately reenters.)*

**TUSSLE:** Yes?

*(Rose takes off her wig  
Tussle stares at her.)*

**TUSSLE:** Rose?

**ROSE:** I'm sorry.

**DAISY:** What happened to Violet?

**GRAHAM:** Violet is dead. Just like you.

*(Pause.)*

**TUSSLE:** *(to Rose)* Rose. *(Slight pause.)* I haven't had any coffee to-day. Tell them to make me some. ...

*(Tussle leaves.  
Rose stares after him.)*

**GRAHAM:** Let's keep going.

*(Immediately reading from a script)* They say that Solyny is in love with Irina and hates the Baron. ... That's quite natural. Irina is a very nice girl. She's even like Masha. And Olga, too.

**ROSE:** *(still trying to find her place)* Is that me?

*(reading, as Irina)* Everything seems to frighten me today. *(Slight pause.)* I've got everything ready. The Baron and I will be married to-morrow and a new life begins.

**GRAHAM:** *(as Kuligin)* Somehow or other, all this doesn't seem real. As if it was all ideas, and nothing really happening.

*(Poppy is watching, eating some popcorn now.)*

**GRAHAM:** *(as Andrey)* The town will grow empty. It will be as if they put a cover over it.

*(Slight pause.)*

Something happened yesterday by the theatre. The whole town knows of it, but I don't.

*(Graham hands Poppy a script, but he doesn't take it.)*

**GRAHAM:** Here, read for Chebutikin.

**POPPY:** But I'm not alive. Or may not be.

**GRAHAM:** I don't care. I've lost my male lead.

*(Graham drops the script at Poppy's feet.)*

**DAISY:** I can read someone.

*(They ignore her.)*

**GRAHAM:** *(to Rose:)* You're Masha, too.

*(Rose nods.)*

**GRAHAM:** *(as Andrey)* Something happened yesterday by the theatre. The whole town knows of it, but I don't.

**POPPY:** Ah, what the hell. (*Reading, as Chebutikin*) It was nothing. A silly little affair. Solyny started irritating the Baron, who lost his temper and insulted him, and so at last Solyny had to challenge him. (*Looks at his watch.*) It's about time, I think. ... This is his third duel.

**ROSE:** (*as Masha*) Whose?

**POPPY:** (*as Chebutikin*) Solyny's.

**ROSE:** (*as Masha*) And the Baron?

**POPPY:** (*as Chebutikin*) What about the Baron? (*Pause.*)

**ROSE:** (*as Masha*) I say it ought not to be allowed. He might wound the Baron or even kill him.

**POPPY:** (*as Chebutikin*) The Baron is a good man, but one Baron more or less—what difference does it make? It's all the same!

**GRAHAM:** (*as Andrey*) In my opinion it's simply immoral to fight in a duel.

**POPPY:** (*as Chebutikin*) It only seems so. ... We don't exist, there's nothing on Earth, we don't really live, it only seems that we live. Does it matter, anyway!

**GRAHAM:** Okay, gunshot here. (*Reading:*) A gun shot is heard. Then Olga enters. That's you, Rose.

**ROSE:** Yes.

**POPPY:** (*as Chebutikin*) Olga!

**ROSE:** (*as Olga*) What is it? (*Pause.*) What is it?

**POPPY:** (*as Chebutikin*) Nothing... I don't know how to tell you...

*(Poppy whispers in Rose's ear.)*

**ROSE:** (*as Olga, frightened*) It can't be true!

**POPPY:** (*as Chebutikin*) Yes...such a story... I'm tired out, exhausted, I won't say any more.... (*Sadly*) Still, it's all the same!

**GRAHAM:** Okay, Rose just go with it.

*(For each sister, Rose puts on a new wig or sash, and takes on their character.)*

**GRAHAM:** (*whispering*) Masha. Go.

**ROSE:** *(as Masha)* What has happened?

**GRAHAM:** Olga. Go.

**ROSE:** *(as Olga)* This is a terrible day... I don't know how to tell you, dear. ...

**GRAHAM:** Anfisa the decrepit servant. Go.

**ROSE:** She's not in this scene.

**GRAHAM:** ...And Irina. Go.

**ROSE:** *(as Irina)* What is it? Tell me quickly, what is it? For God's sake! *(Cries.)*

**POPPY:** *(as Chebutikin)* The Baron was killed in a duel just now.

**ROSE:** *(as Irina, cries softly)* I knew it, I knew it. ...

*(as Masha)* There, there.

*(as Olga)* A time will come when we will all know what this is for...

*(as Masha)* If only we knew, if only we knew...

*(as Irina, crying)* I knew it, I knew it. ...

*(A real gunshot is heard from the front.)*

**ROSE:** What was that?

**GRAHAM:** What was...that?... I don't know.

*(Riddle enters.)*

**GRAHAM:** What was that?

**RIDDLE:** What was what?

**GRAHAM:** That gunshot?

**ROSE:** Was it...?

**DAISY:** Oh no. Was it?

**RIDDLE:** I don't know how to tell you.

*(Riddle whispers in Graham's ear.)*

**DAISY:** *(to Rose)* What was it, Rose?

**ROSE:** I don't know. She whispered in Graham's ear.

**DAISY:** Oh yeah. What was it, Graham?

**GRAHAM:** *(to himself, marking it in his script:)* Down an actor. A good one, too.  
*(as Vershinin)* Everything comes to an end.

**DAISY:** What does that mean?

**POPPY:** The Officer was killed in the duel just now.

**DAISY:** I knew it, I knew it...

*(Daisy begins to cry, softly.)*

**GRAHAM:** *(to Riddle)* Was it a duel with you or a duel with himself?

**RIDDLE:** He drew his weapon and there was nothing I could do.

**DAISY:** *(still sniffing)* Maybe if I was still alive, Officer Tussle would have loved me, and maybe...that would have been enough.

**ROSE:** But he didn't love you when you were alive; he loved Violet. And Violet loved him.

**DAISY:** So then why did Violet kill herself?

**ROSE:** Violet thought Tussle loved you.

**DAISY:** Maybe he did.

**ROSE:** Maybe, dear. We'll never know.

**DAISY:** Enough. ...I'm not crying.  
Rose, promise not to ignore me anymore.

**ROSE:** Okay, I promise.

**POPPY:** And promise to go back to ignoring me. I'm exhausted.

*(Poppy sits on his bench with his dog)*

**RIDDLE:** *(to Graham)* For what it's worth. I'm sorry.

**GRAHAM:** Here. Take this.

*(Graham gives Violet's wig to Riddle. She tries it on.  
Everyone stares at her.)*

**GRAHAM:** It was Violet's.

**RIDDLE:** Was it?

**GRAHAM:** You look just like her.

**RIDDLE:** I shouldn't wear it.

*(But Riddle keeps it on.)*

**ROSE:** I thought life was supposed to get less confusing as time went on... When we were little everything seemed so complicated, I remember thinking, "if only I could be older sooner so I can have everything figured out"... And now that I'm older, the opposite is true. Adults are even less certain about their lives, and children have things easiest.

*(Rose has the vial from before. She lifts it above her mouth to pour the contents in, but it's empty.  
Rose begins to whistle loudly.)*

**RIDDLE:** Why are you making that sound, Rose?

**ROSE:** I'm whistling...with meaning...

*(Pause.  
Rose whistles softly now.)*

*(Graham reads from a script. As he does, he relies on the script less and less, until he seems to have it memorized.)*

**GRAHAM:** *(as Andrey)* What has become of my past? I used to be young, happy, clever, I used to be able to think and frame ideas, the present and the future seemed to me full of hope. Why do we, almost before we have begun to live, become dull, uninteresting, lazy, and unhappy... This town has already been in existence for two hundred years and it has a hundred thousand inhabitants, not one of whom is in any way different from the others. There has never been, now or at any other time, a single leader of men, a single scholar, an artist, a man of even the slightest eminence who might arouse envy or a passionate desire to be imitated. They only eat, drink, sleep, and then they die ... more people are born and also eat, drink, and sleep. And so, as not to go silly from boredom, they try to make life interesting with their drinking, gambling, gossip. The wives deceive their husbands, and the husbands lie, and pretend they see nothing and hear nothing, and their evil influence irresistibly oppresses the children and the divine spark in them is extinguished, and they become just as pitiful corpses and just as much like one another as their fathers and mothers. ...

*(During his speech, Daisy, Rose, and Riddle have gathered around Graham. They are huddled together, forming an embrace and looking out.*

*Poppy reminds behind on his bench with his dog.)*

**POPPY:** Oh, why worry about it? What difference will that make?

**ROSE:** What about the theatre?

**GRAHAM:** What *about* the theatre?

**ROSE:** Anyway, we're together, aren't we?  
Most of us, that is.

**RIDDLE:** See, it's a happy ending.

**POPPY:** "How unbearable at times are people who are happy, people for whom everything works out." Nothing matters...

**DAISY:** What about performing *Three Sisters*?

**GRAHAM:** Eh, close enough. Just smile and bow.

*(They do.)*

*(Graham hears applause.  
The others hear a faded recording of applause.)*

*(A distant sound is heard, as if from the sky, of a breaking violin string, dying away sadly.)*

**End of Play.**