

"UNCLE VANYA"

SONYA

Mikhail Lvovich! You aren't asleep, are you? Can I talk to you for a minute?

ASTROV

At once! What can I do for you?

SONYA

You can drink, if it doesn't disgust you, but, I implore you, don't let my Uncle drink. It's bad for him.

ASTROV

Very well. We won't drink anymore. Signed and sealed. I was just leaving.

SONYA

It's raining. Wait till morning.

ASTROV

The storm is passing us by, we'll just get the fringe of it. I'm going.

SONYA

Won't you have a bite to eat?

ASTROV

Yes, perhaps.

SONYA

I like having a snack at night. I think there's something in the sideboard. Here, have some cheese.

ASTROV

I've had nothing to eat all day, only drink. You know, I don't think I could live in this house a month-I'd suffocate in this atmosphere... Your father, completely absorbed in his gout and his books, Uncle Vanya with his depressions, your grandmother, and, to top it all off, your stepmother.

SONYA

What about my stepmother?

ASTROV

She is beautiful, there's no denying it, but...you know, she does nothing but eat, sleep, walk about, and bewitch us all with her beauty. She has no duties, other people work for her... An idle life cannot be pure. However, perhaps I am too hard on her. Like your Uncle Vanya, I am dissatisfied with life, and we're both becoming grumblers.

SONYA

Are you really dissatisfied with life?

ASTROV

I love life, but our narrow, provincial, Russian life...I despise it with all the strength of my soul. As for my own personal life, God knows there's absolutely nothing good in it. You know, when you walk through a forest on a dark night, if you see a small light gleaming in the distance, you don't notice your fatigue, the darkness, the thorny branches lashing your face...I work harder than anyone in the district—you know that—and fate is continually battering me, there are times when I suffer unbearably, but for me there is no small light in the distance. I look forward to nothing. I don't like people...It's been a long time since I've loved anyone.

SONYA

No one?

ASTROV

No one. I love forests. That's strange; I don't eat meat. That's also strange.

SONYA

No, please, I beg you, don't drink anymore.

ASTROV

Why not?

SONYA

It's so unlike you! You are refined, you have such a gentle voice... And more than that, unlike everyone else I know, you are a beautiful person. So why do you want to be like ordinary people who drink and play cards? Oh, don't do it. You always say people don't create, but merely destroy that has been given them from above. Then why, why are you destroying yourself?

ASTROV

I won't drink anymore.

SONYA

Give me your word.

ASTROV

Word of honor.

SONYA

Thank you!

ASTROV

Basta! I've coming to my senses. You see, I'm quite sober not, and I'll stay like this until the end of my days.

SONYA

Tell me, Mikhail, if I had a friend, or a younger sister, and you found out that she... let us say...loved you, how would you feel about it?

ASTROV

I don't know. I probably wouldn't feel anything. I should give her to understand I couldn't love her...and that my mind is occupied with other things. However, if I'm going, I'd better go. I'll say good-bye, my dear, or we'll go on talking till morning.

SONYA

(Alone.)

He didn't say anything to me... His

heart and soul are still hidden from me... But why do I feel so happy? I said to him: you are refined, noble, and you have such a gentle voice..I wonder if that was out of place? His voice vibrates and caresses...I can still feel it in the air. When I said to him, about a younger sister, he didn't understand... Oh, how dreadful it is that I am not beautiful! And I know I am not beautiful...Last Sunday, coming out of church, I heard them talking about me, and one woman said: "She's so kind and unselfish, but it's a pity she's so plain." So plain.