

***The Cherry Orchard; A Comedy in Four Acts (1904) by Anton Chekhov (1860-1904)***

If this play is a comedy, it should speak to your head (your intellect) more than your stomach (your emotions).

**CHARACTERS: (5 Women and 7 Men + passerby, who could be crew)**

**Lyubov Andreevna Ranevskaya (Gayev's sister)**

Had married a lawyer ("a commoner") instead of a man from her own class; he died six years earlier because he was an alcoholic. She had two children, a daughter named Anya and a seven year old son who drowned in the river a month after his father died. She had also adopted Varya, a girl from the servant [ex-serf] class. According to her she had an affair with a man in Russia just before her son died. After the death of her son she left Russia and went to Menton where she bought a villa and nursed her evil lover for three years. Then the villa had to be sold to pay off their debts. They went to Paris where her lover stole her money and left her for another woman. She then tried to poison herself. While in Paris she didn't send any money home to support her daughter, step-daughter, and servants. It was also during this period that her and her brother's nana (wet-nurse) died. Once the family in Russia realized they were going to lose the estate because they were unable to make the mortgage payments, Anya was sent to Paris with her governess to bring her mother back home. When Anya found her she was living on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, in a place that was bleak and uncomfortable. Before they left Paris she took Anya up in a hot air-balloon. On the way back she spent money lavishly and seemed to have no understanding of the value of money.

In Act I she says, "If only I could forget my past!"

**Anya (17 years old; Lyubov's daughter)**

Had left home on the train at Lent to go to Paris with Charlotta as her companion to find her mother and is just now returning. She has no money, "not a kopeck."

**Varya** her step-sister says she looks like a nun. She has had the responsibility to keep the servants and family fed with very little money. Everyone assumes she is going to marry Lopakhin but he has never asked her. In fact, in Act II he says to her, "Get thee to a nunnery, Ophelia—Ophoolia." (It is not clear that he knows what the phrase means.) Her fantasy is to walk to Kiev, Moscow and other Holy places. Her terrified reaction to the drunken beggar in Act II shows that she couldn't walk alone around the country. According to her, the old servants are spreading the rumor that she only feeds them dried peas.

**Gayev Leonid (51) Lyubov Andreevna's brother** Makes moves as if he is playing billiards and such comments as, "Yellow into the corner. Then off the cushion into the middle pocket." Often sucks on fruit drop hard candies. He says his sister is, "depraved." He swears to everyone the estate will not be sold—that their aunt, the wealthy countess, will save them. He says he has the love and respect of the peasants and that, "You have to know your peasant!" (Obviously he lives in the past.) In Act II his sister angrily calls him an old woman.

**Lopakhin**: his father was a serf owned by Andreevna and Gayev's father

Everyone assumes he is in love with Varya, possibly because he comes from peasant (serf) stock, and plans to marry her. He hasn't proposed. Said to be very busy with a large estate.

**Firs** Very old and hard of hearing. Was a serf on the estate and when the serfs were freed; he stayed with the family as a servant. According to him, 50 years earlier the family knew how to dry the cherries, soak them, pickle them, make jam with them and sell them in Moscow and Kiev. The recipe has been lost and no one knows what to do with the fruit in the years the trees do bear cherries.

**Dunyasha:** Fyodor Kozoyedov's daughter. Anya's maid-servant, she is spoiled and acts inappropriately for her position. In the beginning she is so excited about Yepikhodov's marriage proposal that she completely ignores Anya's state of exhaustion. She is silly and ends up with a "crush" on Yasha. It is hinted that she loses her virginity to him.

**Trofimov [Pyetya]:** He is not 30 yet, but his hair is thinning and he wears glasses. He had been Grisha's tutor before the little boy drowned. Andreevna says he is ugly. According to him, women on the train said he was, "a mangy-looking gentleman." At the end of Act I he calls Anya his "shining sun", his, "life's springtime!" In Act II he begins to speak of how, "We have to stop admiring ourselves. We have simply to work." He has long speeches about what the country needs. (He seems to speak with pre-revolutionary ideas.)

**Yasha:** Andreevna's footman. He is selfish, a womanizer, and doesn't care anything about his mother. (She walked to the estate and has been waiting over a day to see him but he is irritated at the news.)

**Yepikhodoc** is the estate clerk. In Act II he plays the guitar. He wears squeaking boots. Known as two-and-twenty-hard-knocks.

**Simeonov-Pishchik:** Wears a tight-fitting, long-waisted coat in a fine material, and wide, Oriental-looking trousers. He has come the first night in order to borrow 240 rubles from Andreevna. He is in a constant state of raising money to pay the interest on his estate. He has gout.

The estate is 13 miles from town and the railroad runs by the estate.

**Lopakhin's plan for Lyubov to save the estate:**

- 1) cut down the cherry orchard and pull down the old house and out-buildings
- 2) divide the land along the river into building lots and lease them out as sites for weekend homes
- 3) the rent would total at least 25,000 rubles per year (enough to pay off the debts so the family could keep the land and slowly regain some wealth)

**Why Andreevna does not accept Lopakhin's plan:**

- 1) the orchard is mentioned in an encyclopedia
- 2) the orchard represents the family's past glory
- 3) the river is where her little boy died
- 4) she can't make decisions
- 5) she can't believe that they can lose the estate
- 6) it's too sordid

**ACT I Interior** (A room still known as the Nursery.) **SPRING**

**May.** The cherry trees are in blossom. It is cold with a morning frost. Shortly before sunrise, there is predawn light. Almost 2:00 a.m. The train is two hours late. Lopakhin is sleepy and yawning. [Tempo is slow.]

During the scene the birds begin singing (which they generally do just before dawn and into dawn.)

**SYMBOLS:** *Spring*—season of new life and hope. Animals bear their young. Flowers bloom, symbols of fertility. Days grow longer; more light makes plants grow.

*Cold frost*—kills the blossoms, which means no cherries. *An empty nursery*; there are no young passionate lovers; no newlyweds, no fiancés. We learn one of Ranyevskaya's rooms is *white* and the other is *mauve*. Towards the end of the act, "A long way away, beyond the orchard, a SHEPHERD plays on a reed pipe." Note it comes from beyond the orchard...at this time the lambs would have been born and able to frolic about. A reed pipe is the type used by Pan.

During this scene a woman in middle age (40's) returns to her home. Her 17 year old daughter had to go on a train to Paris to fetch her irresponsible mother because the estate where Anya, Varya, Firs and servants live is in danger of being sold to pay family debts and the mortgage.

**ACT II Exterior**

**SUMMER**

The sun is just about to set.

In this act Andreevna begins to get telegrams from her lover in Paris begging her to return to him.

A drunken beggar asks for money and Varya becomes hysterical with fear and Lyubov Andreevna throws a gold coin at him to get rid of him. (Lopakhin has been giving her money.) Towards the end of the act, the sun sets. After a few more pages the moon rises. Trofimov and Anya want to talk; Varya wants to keep them apart so they run off to the lake.

*Sounds:* in the distance we hear the “famous Jew’s band.” [Four fiddles, flute, and double bass.]

Right after the sun sets, “Suddenly there is a distant sound, as if from the sky: the sound of a breaking string—dying away, sad.”

**ACT III**

**START OF AUTUMN**

**August 22<sup>nd</sup>**, the evening the estate is sold. Off-stage, the “Jew’s band” is playing.

*Setting:* a drawing room off the ball-room in the old house.

The height of absurdity, Lyubov Andreevna has decided to hold a dance and has spent money on food and an orchestra (money she has probably “borrowed” from Lopakhin). She can’t imagine what might happen at the auction and fends off her sorrow by dancing and chatting. Trofimov and she have a fight but forgive each other. We learn that Lopakhin has purchased the estate, Varya throws the house keys at his feet and Lyubov almost faints into a chair and begins weeping. Everyone exits to the ballroom and Anya and Trofimov enter; Anya attempts to comfort her mother.

**ACT IV**

**START OF WINTER**

**October.** *Setting* is the same as ACT I except mostly bare with furniture covered in sheets. Early in the morning (before dawn).

Everyone who used to live here is leaving.

Because the irresponsible and selfish servant Yasha has not done his job and also lies about it, Firs is accidentally locked in to die—the old system of feudalism will finally be dead. The aristocracy has lost its power and its land. The child of serfs (slaves) now owns the property where his ancestors worked for hundreds of years. His hard work will transform non-productive land into useful property. His vision is that someday the people who live on the property will begin to work their own gardens.

The final image is Firs lying on a piece of furniture as we hear the axes cutting down the cherry trees.

**ACT I (animals & plants mentioned + selected)**

Pig	Pippin
Dogs	Milk soup
Tender plant	Dried Peas
Real bouquet of flowers	Pig
Cherry trees in bloom	Bird
Frost	Heron
Real little dog	Owl
Lopakhin bleats like a goat	Birds Singing
Bumble-bee brooch	
Pippin (a type of apple)	

**ACT II**

Enormous Spider	Starlings are chattering
Cockroach	Candle
Small, old chapel (on a post)	old headstones

**ACT III**

Horse (multiple times)	Hungry dog
Tea	A flower
Insect	A stick
Brandy	Anchovies
Kerch herrings	Like the setting sun at the evening hour



**THROUGH TEARS/CRYING/WEEPING:**

**ACT ONE (in Nursery)**

Lyubov's first line: through tears  
Lyubov's second speech: Weeps.  
Varya: through tears  
Varya: through tears  
Dunyasha: through tears (broke a saucer)  
Firs: weeps from joy.  
Lyubov: through tears  
Gaev: through tears (speech to honored bookcase)  
Varya: through tears (Petya arrives)  
Varya: weeps (Petya arrives)  
Trofimov: through tears (comforting Varya and Lyubov)  
Lyubov: weeps quietly (talking to Petya)  
Varya: weeps (If only God would help.)  
Gaev: through tears (to Anya)

**ACT TWO (Exterior)**

Lyubov: wipes away tears (during life story)

**ACT THREE (in drawing room)**

Varya: is weeping (quietly as she dances)  
Varya: in a gentle tone, in tears  
Lyubov: weeps (mentions death of son)  
Trofimov: through tears (to Lyubov)  
Gaev: wipes away his tears (as he enters)  
Lyubov: in tears (tell me, for God's sake!)  
Lyubov: weeping bitterly  
Lopakin: in tears (speaking to Lyubov)

**ACT FOUR (in Nursery)**

Dunyasha: weeps (Yasha is leaving her)  
Pishchik: through tears (learns they are all leaving)  
Varya: quietly sobs (Lopakin does not ask her to marry him)  
Varya: through tears (looking at the old galoshes)  
Gaev: breaking into tears (before saying goodbye)  
Lyubov and Gaev: sob quietly (saying goodbye)

*[Numbers may be off slightly . . . taken from the Bristow translation]*

Character	ACT I speeches	ACT I lines	ACT II speeches	ACT II lines	ACT III speeches	ACT III lines	ACT IV speeches	ACT IV lines
<b>Lopakin</b> 309	27	103	30	67	8	56	32	83
Dunyasha 75	20	41	7	18	5	11	2	5
Yepikhodov 65	3	15	7	28	6	19	3	3
Anya 123	27	66	10	16	4	15	13	22
<b>Lyubov</b> 351	31	110	31	91	29	105	18	45
Varya 159	41	78	7	9	15	49	14	23
Gaev 178	32	107	22	37	1	6	12	28
Sharlotta 55	3	5	3	21	10	22	2	7
Pishchik 100	13	22			15	42	5	36
Firs 65	10	19	7	17	6	19	1	10
Trofimov 192	6	10	20	96	20	38	17	48
Yasha 54			8	15	9	14	11	25
Passerby			3	8				
Station master					1	1		

**CAST SIZE:**

**Women**

Lyubov 350 +  
 Varya 150+  
 Anya 120+  
 Dunyasha 75  
 Sharlotta 55

**Male**

Lopakin 300+  
 Trofimov 190+  
 Gaev 170+  
 Pishchik 100  
 Yepikhodov 65  
 Firs 65  
 Yasha 50+

Passerby/station master (same actor?)  
 People at the party--- are they needed?