Uncle Vanya

by Anton Chekhov

Adapted by David Mamet

from a translation by
Vlada Chernomordik

A Samuel French Acting Edition



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FOUNDED 1830

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(Name of Producer)
presents
Anton Chekhov's
"UNCLE VANYA"
adapted by
DAVIDMAMET
from an English translation by
Vlada Chernomordik

American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge, Mass.
presents



Uncle Vanya

by **ANTON CHEKHOV**
Adapted by **DAVID MAMET**
From a literal translation by
VLADA CHERNOMORDIK

Directed by **DAVID WHEELER**
Sets by **BILL CLARKE**
Costumes by **CATHERINE ZUBER**
Lighting by **THOM PALM**
Sound by **STEPHEN SANTOMENNA**

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UNCLE VANYA

CAST
(in order of speaking)

MARINA, *an old nurse*	**Bronia Stefan Wheeler**
MIKHAIL LVOVICH ASTROV, *a doctor*	**Christopher Walken**
IVAN PETROVICH VOYNITZKY (Vanya), *son of Mariya Vasilyevna Voynitzkaya*	**Daniel Von Bargen**
ALEXANDR VLADIMIROVICH SEREBRYAKOV, *a retired professor*	**Alvin Epstein**
ILYA ILYICH TELEGIN (Waffles), *an impoverished landowner*	**Tim McDonough**
SOFYA ALEXANDROVNA (Sonya), *Serebryakov's daughter*	**Pamela Gien**
YELENA ANDREYEVNA, *Serebryakov's wife, aged 27*	**Lindsay Crouse**
MARIYA VASILYEVNA VOYNITZKAYA, *widow of a privy councilor, mother of Professor's first wife*	**Priscilla Smith**
WORKMAN	**Marty Lodge**

STAGE MANAGERS	**Anne S. King, Abbie H. Katz, Spike Perry**
PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE	**Cynthia Peterson**

Guitar arranged and performed by Paul Sedgwick

ACT I	Early Afternoon, Late June
ACT II	Night, Early July
ACT III	Afternoon, Early September
ACT IV	Evening of the Same Day

The action takes place at Serebryakov's country estate.

There will be one intermission.

CHARACTERS

SEREBRYAKOV, ALEXANDR VLADIMIROVICH, a retired professor

YELENA ANDREYEVNA, his wife, aged twenty-seven

SOFYA ALEXANDROVNA (Sonya), his daughter by first marriage

VOYNITZKAYA, MARIYA VASILYEVNA, widow of a privy councilor, mother of the Professor's first wife

VOYNITZKY, IVAN PETROVICH, her son

ASTROV, MIKHAIL LVOVICH, a doctor

TELEGIN, ILYA ILYICH, an impoverished landowner

MARINA, an old nurse

A WORKMAN

The action takes place on Serebryakov's country estate.

UNCLE VANYA

ACT I

SCENE: A garden. Part of the house and veranda can be seen. Under an old poplar tree in the avenue, a table is set for tea. Benches, chairs; a guitar on one of the benches. Not far from the table, a swing. It is a little past two in the afternoon. Cloudy.

AT RISE: MARINA, a doughy little old lady of little movement, is sitting by the samovar knitting a stocking. ASTROV is walking about close by.

MARINA. *(Pours a glass of tea.)* Drink, Little One.

ASTROV. No. No thank you, I don't want it somehow.

MARINA. A little vodka...?

ASTROV. Not today. No I can't drink it every day. It's not good for me. *Nanny:* How long have we known each other?

MARINA. How long. Lord, let me see: you came here, when? Sonitchka's mother was still with us, then, and you were here the last two winters she was still alive. That's what? Eleven years. More.

ASTROV. How much have I changed?

MARINA. How much?

ASTROV. Yes.

MARINA. Very much. I think. Then you were young, and now you are old. I think your looks are faded...and you're drinking now...

ASTROV. I have become a "different man."

MARINA. That's true.

ASTROV. Why? *(pause)* Why? Overwork, simply. On my feet all day, every day. Every night I go to sleep in fear I'll be called out on a call. In the years you've known me I have not had one single free day. Do you know that? Then how can I help but to become old? You tell me: living such a life. In the midst of people, as you can see, and think of them as "characters..." Time passes, and you notice, bit by bit, you've become one of them. I ask you: look at this moustache. *Why?* To what purpose? I've become some jolly "type." Not *dead* yet, some enthusiasms, some "thoughts," but quite subdued. *(pause)* Dull, somehow. Nothing that I want, no one that I love...Nothing I need...well, I love *you,* of course...When I was young, do you know, I had a nurse who was exactly like you.

MARINA. Eat.

ASTROV. No. Third week of Lent. I was called to Malitzkoye. Spotted fever. There were rows of huts, and people in the huts, side by side on the floor, lying in filth. Cattle living in the buildings with the sick. Young pigs in there, in the same room. All day, working with not a bite to eat. I come home, thank *God,* to lie down. To rest. And they bring in a switchman, hit by the train, and, and I get him on the table, I'm going to start operating, and he dies under the chloroform. Alright, at the moment when I least required it, my conscience chose to inform me that I

murdered him. I sat down and I closed my eyes, and thought: One hundred years from now. One hundred years from now: those who come after us. For whom our lives are showing the way. Will they think kindly of us? Will they remember us with a kind word; and, nurse, I wish to God that I could think so.

MARINA. The people won't remember. But God will.

ASTROV. Thank you. *(pause)* That was nicely said.

(Enter IVAN PETROVICH.)

IVAN PETROVICH. ...yes...yes...

ASTROV. Sleep well?

IVAN PETROVICH. Yes. Very. *(yawns)* I'll tell you; since the Herr und Frau Professor've come to visit my life's gone completely off the track. I'm sleeping days, I'm up nights, I'm served all sorts of *je ne sais quoi* to eat, and I don't think it's healthy...I'm drinking *wines*...Used to be, all day, each-moment-ordered: *work...this,* well, well, *Sonya's* still working, of course, but what am *I* doing? Eat. Sleep. Drink. It isn't good.

MARINA. Modern ways.

IVAN PETROVICH. That's absolutely right.

MARINA. Professor sleeps til noon. I keep the samovar boiling all morning. Waiting for him to get up. Before them we ate dinner at noon, eh? Little people everywhere. And now it's after six. He writes and reads all night. Two o'clock in the morning, there's a ring...and what is it? Excuse me: he wants tea. "Wake the house, please, put on the samovar." Modern ways?

ASTROV. And how much longer are they here?

IVAN PETROVICH. A hundred years. He wants to move here.

ASTROV. No...

MARINA. Now; see; here's two hours that the samovar's been on the boil. Where are they...? Outside walking.

IVAN PETROVICH. Well, here they come. Don't fret.

(Voices are heard. SEREBRYAKOV, YELENA ANDREYEVNA, SOFYA, and TELEGIN Enter.)

SEREBRYAKOV. Magnificent. Beautiful views. What a prospect.

TELEGIN. Beautiful, your excellency.

SOFYA. And tomorrow, I'll take you to the plantation, Papa. Would you like that?

IVAN PETROVICH. Ladies and gentlemen: the tea is served.

SEREBRYAKOV. Do you mind? Friends. Would you please send it to my study? I've a few things that I have to do.

SOFYA. ...I know you'll like the plantation. *(Exit YELENA ANDREYEVNA, SEREBRYAKOV and SOFYA.)*

IVAN PETROVICH. It's hot, it's sweltering, and our great scholar dresses for December.

ASTROV. ...Quite a careful man.

IVAN PETROVICH. But she? Magnificent, eh? Now that is a stunning woman. I don't think I've ever seen a more beautiful woman.

TELEGIN. I am so happy. Whatever I do, walk in the garden, look at this table, whatever I do, Marina

Timofeyvna, I do it, and I feel happiness.

MARINA. ...God bless you...

TELEGIN. ...The weather is enchanting, the birds sing, we live in peace and harmony...what else could a man want? *(She passes him a glass of tea.)* Thank you...

IVAN PETROVICH. ...and her *eyes*...

ASTROV. Ivan Petrovich.

IVAN PETROVICH. Yes...

ASTROV. *Tell* us something.

IVAN PETROVICH. What should I tell you?

ASTROV. Tell us something, something *new*...

IVAN PETROVICH. Something new, what's new? Everything is old. Nothing's changed...*I'm* the same...*no,* probably worse, for I have grown *lazy,* and *complain* all day. What's changed...? My Old Crow, my old Mother's still prating on of her dear "Rights of Women," one eye on the grave, the other in her books for the Secret of Life...

ASTROV. ...and our Professor...?

IVAN PETROVICH. The Professor goes on as before. He sits at his desk all day and half of the night and he writes.

"We strain our heart to write our odes,
The mark of it's found on our brow,
But here what praise for them or their progenitor?
No word."

I pity the paper. *(pause)* What is he *doing* there all day? What is he *working* on? Why doesn't he turn to some *magnificent* subject, like, his autobiography, God forbid. Now, *there's* a book: a worked-out academic, a salt cod. A learned *stick*...Gout, rheumatism, migraine, his liver inflamed from jealousy and envy, lives on the estate of his

first wife. From choice? Oh, no, because he's too damned cheap to live in town. And this man, constantly prates of his misfortunes. What *are* they? He *has* none. This man lives under a charm. The son of a poor deacon, eh? A scholarship student at the Seminary, gets a degree, he gets a teaching chair, and now he is "Your Excellancy." Marries the daughter of a *Senator,* and *so* on...And I say *forget* that, because *best* of all, this man is so *exceeding* fortunate to write and lecture for twenty-five years upon a subject of which he knows *less* than not-one-thing. Twenty-five years this wise man tells us about Art. Twenty-five years, he reads the works of other and prattles about *realism,* naturalism, specious nonsense which the clever have long known, and which the stupid *do not care about.* He has been going to a dry well with a broken bucket. And yet what self-importance. What pretension. Living in retirement. Not a living soul knows who he is, or cares; nor is he missed from a position which he held twenty-five years. Eh? For a quarter of a century, this man kept some more worthy man out of a job. Yet *look* at him: he walks on Earth like, "Yes, I'm here among you..."

ASTROV. You know, I believe you're jealous.

IVAN PETROVICH. Oh yes. I am jealous. *And* what a success with women...What a Don Juan is this man. Who is his first wife? My sister, a transcendent beauty, pure as the blue sky. Generous, noble, who had more admirers than this man had students, and who, *God* knows why, loved him as only the pure angels love. My mother, his mother-in-law, dotes on him to this day, and *to* this day, he inspires in her reverent awe. His *second* wife, this beauty whom we just saw, a perceptive woman, married

him, he was already old, and gave up to him her youth, her beauty, her freedom, her..."luster"...for what? Why? I ask you.

ASTROV. And she stays faithful to him...?

IVAN PETROVICH. Regrettable, yes.

ASTROV. Regrettably?

IVAN PETROVICH. Yes, and I'll tell you why. For a "fidelity" like this is false. From start to close. It is composed of rhetoric, but not of logic, eh? To cheat, to cheat on an old man who revolts you, that is immoral. But to stifle yourself in unhappiness, to willfully squander your youth, we can *commend* that, eh?

TELEGIN. Vanya, please. No, don't speak like that. No, someone who betrayed a wife, or husband, they could just as easily betray, betray...their *country!*

IVAN PETROVICH. Please. You're killing me.

TELEGIN. No, Vanya. Allow me. My wife ran off from me the day after our wedding. *(pause)* I think she didn't like me. Have I, but, did I forget my duty? No. To this day, I love and revere her, and to this day I stay faithful. And I support her all I can. That is, I give her all I have. *(pause)* So that she could raise her children *(pause)* which she got with the man that she loves. Have I given up happiness...? Yes. But I kept my pride. Now, what of her? Her youth is gone. Her beauty, as it must, has faded. Her lover has died. What does she have now?

(Enter SONYA and YELENA ANDREYEVNA, then MARIYA VASILYENA.)

SOFYA. Nanny.

MARINA. Yes.

SOFYA. You go talk to the peasants. I'll see to the tea. *(Exit MARINA.)*

ASTROV. You know, I came to see your husband. You wrote he was deathly ill, with rheumatism, complications, and it seems he's in the perfect pink of health.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Last night he was ill.

ASTROV. ...mmm...

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. He complained of his legs. Yes, though, today, you're right, he does seem fine.

ASTROV. He seems fine and I flat-out galloped twenty miles...oh, never mind. It isn't the first time. Alright. I'll stay here tonight, if you don't mind, then, at least, I'll get some sleep.

SOFYA. Oh, lovely, it's so rare that you stay the night here with us. I don't expect you've eaten. Have you?

ASTROV. No. Many thanks, and thank you kindly. No I haven't. No.

SOFYA. Well, then, you'll get your sleep and get your dinner. These days we're not dining until six. *(drinks tea)* Cold tea.

TELEGIN. Yes. The heat in the samovar has markedly decreased.

SOFYA. No matter, Ivan Petrovich, we'll drink it cold.

TELEGIN. Begging your pardon, madam, not Ivan Ivanych, but Ilya Ilyich, Ma'am.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. "Ilya Ilyich."

TELEGIN. Or, as some have called me "waffles," in referring to my pockmarked face.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Waffles?

TELEGIN. Some years ago I had the honor to stand godfather to our Sonetchka, and your husband, His Ex'lency, knows me very well. I'm living here, in the estate now, and you may have noticed, Ma'am, that I have dinner with you every day.

SOFYA. Ilya Ilyich is our Good Right Hand. Some more tea, darling...?

MARIYA VASILYEVNA. ...Ah...

SOFYA. ...Yes...?

MARIYA VASILYEVNA. I forgot to tell Alexander. I received a letter from Kharkohov today. Pavel Alexeyevitch sent me his new pamphlet.

ASTROV. Yes, and is it interesting?

MARIYA VASILYEVNA. Interesting, yes, but *strange.* He's now refuting the very things he defended seven years ago. How...how...

SOFYA. What?

MARIYA VASILYEVNA. How awful.

IVAN PETROVICH. Nothing awful in it. Happens all the time. Drink your tea, Ma'am.

MARIYA VASILYEVNA. No, I want to talk.

IVAN PETROVICH. We all want to talk. We've been talking, we've been talking the last fifty years. Fifty years we've been reading and writing pamphlets, and I say "enough."

MARIYA VASILYEVNA. Why is it you find it unpleasant to hear me speak? Excuse me, Jean, but you have changed so much in the last year I hardly know you now. You used to be a man of character, a man of fine opinions, an enlightened man. Now,

IVAN PETROVICH. Oh, yes. I was so enlightened, it's unfortunate I lit the way for no one. An enlightened man. What *worse* could you say of me? I am forty seven years of age. Up to one year ago I felt the same as you. I *joyed* to cloud my mind with this, this rank scholasticism...which we *all* hold so dear, and *not* to see real life. I knew that I was doing right. What a fine man! Now...excuse me, if you only knew...

MARIYA VASILYEVNA. ...How can we know if you don't tell us?

IVAN PETROVICH. ...my nights are spent in a vicious fury at the life which I've let slip away from me. I could have enjoyed everything in life. *Everything*. I enjoyed nothing. And now I'm too old.

SOFYA. ...Oh, Uncle...it's depressing...

MARIYA VASILYEVNA. You're blaming, are you blaming your former convictions? What you say is not the fault of your *convictions,* but it's *your* fault. It's your *own* fault. Your convictions by themselves are nothing. Like, like, paint in the palette. It's *you* should have been working, *you,* who should have been *using* them. Doing real work.

IVAN PETROVICH. ...Real work...

MARIYA VASILYEVNA. Yes.

IVAN PETROVICH. Not everyone is called, you know, like your Herr Professor, to go speaking, writing, spewing work forth like some *farm* machine...

MARIYA VASILYEVNA. What do you mean by that?

SOFYA. Grandmother...Uncle Vanya...please...

IVAN PETROVICH. I'm sorry. I'm done. I'm silent. Excuse me. *(pause)*

TELEGIN. What a *lovely* day today. Not too *hot*...

IVAN PETROVICH. Excellent weather for suicide.

MARINA. *(calling the chickens)* Chick chick chick....

SOFYA. Nanny, why have the peasants come...?

MARINA. Same old thing, the wasteland, again...chick chick chick.

SOFYA. Which one are you calling?

MARINA. Polkadot. Gone off with her chicks. Don't want to let the crows get them. *(Exits.)*

(TELEGRIN plays the guitar. A WORKMAN Enters.)

WORKMAN. Please, is the doctor here...? *(to ASTROV:)* Please, Mikhail Lvovitch, they're looking for you.

ASTROV. Who?

WORKMAN. From the factory.

ASTROV. Oh, fine. That's fine...well, I have to go. *Dammit... (pause)* What a shame...

SOFYA. Oh, I'm so sorry. Please come back for dinner.

ASTROV. ...Mmm...

SOFYA. ...after the factory.

ASTROV. Well, it will be too late, won't it? How could I...how could I...look here, friend, get me a glass of vodka, will you...? *(WORKMAN Exits.)* How...how... *(He finds his cap.)* What's the Ostrovsky play about the man who has a big moustache and small abilities...? That's me. Well. Ladies and gentlemen, I have the honor... *(to YELENA ANDREYEVNA:)* If you should like to stop by some time, perhaps, with Sofia Alexandrovna here, I would be most delighted. There's not a lot to see. I only have the 30 acres; but if it interested you, *next* to me we have a model

orchard such as you won't see within 800 miles. The State Plantation; the overseer, the Old Forester, he's usually ill, you see, and actually I get to oversee the work myself.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Yes. They told me you loved the woods.

ASTROV. Yes.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. I suppose there's much good to be done there.

ASTROV. Much good.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. ...But my question is, doesn't that interfere with your real calling?

ASTROV. My real calling. God knows what our real calling is.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. The woods. You find it interesting.

ASTROV. Fascinating. Yes.

IVAN PETROVICH. ...Yes, fascinating.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. *(to ASTROV:)* You don't seem that old. What would we say, thirty six, thirty seven, so... *(pause)* How *interesting* can that be, really, alone in the woods all the time? I should think it quite monotonous.

SOFYA. Oh, not at all, no, it's quite interesting. Every year he plots new forests, or he makes a plan to conserve the old ones. He's received both a medal and a diploma for his work. And if you *listen* to him you'll see what he means. He says that forests *embellish* the land, that they instill in man a love of beauty, that they raise the mind. They moderate the climate; and, in countries with a milder climate, people struggle less with nature. So, in those lands man is milder, gentler. And the people in those lands are more supple and beautiful. Their speech

is more refined, their movements are more graceful. *(pause)* They cultivate the arts and sciences...there is joy in their philosophy...they treat women with nobleness...

IVAN PETROVICH. Bravo, bravo...Magnificent. But not convincing. *(to ASTROV:)* My dear, as I must persist in fueling my stoves and building with those same woods that you prize.

ASTROV. Burn peat in your stoves.

IVAN PETROVICH. Mm?

ASTROV. ...Build your barn of stones. You understand? Yes, sometimes we cut wood out of necessity, but why be wanton? Why? Our forests fall before the ax. Billions of trees. All perishing. The homes of birds and beasts being laid waste. The level of the rivers falls, and they dry up. And sublime landscapes disappear, never to return, because man hasn't sense enough to bend down and pick fuel up from the ground. *(to YELENA ANDREYEVNA:) Isn't* this so? What must man be, to destroy what he never can create? God's given man reason and power of thought, so that he may improve his lot. What have we used these powers for but waste? We have destroyed the forest, our rivers run dry, our wildlife is all but extinct, our climate, ruined, and every day, every day, wherever one looks, our life is more hideous. *(to IVAN PETROVICH:)* I see. You think me amusing. These seem to you the thoughts of some poor eccentric. Perhaps, perhaps it's naive on my part. Perhaps you think that; but I pass by the woods I've saved from the ax. I hear the forest sighing...I *planted* that forest.

And I think; perhaps things *may* be in our power. You understand. Perhaps the climate itself is in our control.

Why not? And if, in one thousand years, man is happy, I will have played a part in that happiness. A small part. I plant a birch tree. I watch it take root, it grows, it sways in the wind, and I feel such pride...

(The WORKMAN Enters with the vodka.)

ASTROV. Well... *(ASTROV takes the vodka. Drinks.)* Well...I must be off. And, of course, it's possible I'm just deluded. Thank you for the honor of your hospitality.

SOFYA. When will you come see us again?

ASTROV. I can't say.

SOFYA. ...But sooner than next month, I hope...? *(They Exit.)*

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. You, Ivan Petrovich, what, have you fallen in one of your "moods" again...?

IVAN PETROVICH. ...Excuse me...?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. You were being impossible.

IVAN PETROVICH. ...Was I...?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Well, yes, you *were*. Why are you baiting your mother...and, today, at breakfast you quarrelled with Alexander.

IVAN PETROVICH. Hmm.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Yes. Excuse me. How petty.

IVAN PETROVICH. Petty?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Yes.

IVAN PETROVICH. But if I "hate" him...?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. And why should you hate him? He's like everyone else. He's no worse than you.

IVAN PETROVICH. Oh, please, look at yourself, your face, look at the way you *move*...you are too lazy to *live,*

with your "torpor"...

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. "Too lazy to live..."

IVAN PETROVICH. Yes. You are.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Yes. I am. And too bored. Do you know? Everyone berates my husband. Everyone berates him. Everybody pities me. "Oh, the poor woman...saddled with such an old man..." They're so *concerned* for me. You must *excuse me, but it's quite disgusting.* Don't *you think so...?* Tell me. What has Astrov said? You cut down woodlands you cannot replace, and soon they will be gone. And *you* cut *men* down. Mindlessly. And soon it will be gone. True feeling...purity, fidelity, self-sacrifice. It will be *gone,* do you understand...? You cannot, you do not, why can you not look with indifference on a woman who is not your own? Why? Because the doctor is right, there is in each one of you a demon of destruction, which spares *nothing:* neither forests, birds, nor women, nor each *other...*

IVAN PETROVICH. Yes. You know, I don't care much for this philosophy. *(pause)*

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. He has a tired face.

IVAN PETROVICH. He?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Our doctor.

IVAN PETROVICH. Yes. He does.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. An interesting face. A nervous face, I think. Sonya finds him attractive. I think she's in love with him. *I* understand it... *(pause)* You know, he's been here three times since I came. And I haven't once spoken with him properly. What do you think? He must think we mean.

IVAN PETROVICH. Must he?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Yes. I've never shown him any kindness. Do you know why we are such good friends, Ivan Petrovich?

IVAN PETROVICH. No.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. ...it's because we are both tiresome people. Yes. We're both dull. Please don't look at me that way. I don't like it.

IVAN PETROVICH. How else can I look at you? I love you. I look and I see my life, my happiness, my youth and I see my life, my happiness, my youth. And I *know* the chances you reciprocate my feelings are nothing. But I want nothing. *(pause)* Only that you permit me to look, to hear your voice...

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Please. Someone will hear you.

IVAN PETROVICH. Only that you let me speak, to be *near* you...

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Oh, God, this is awful... *(They Exit.)*

(END OF ACT ONE.)

ACT II

SCENE: The dining room in Serebryakov's house. Night. A watchman can be heard TAPPING in the garden.

AT RISE: SEREBRYAKOV is sitting in an armchair before the open window, dozing. YELENA ANDREYEVNA is sitting beside him, dozing.

SEREBRYAKOV. *(waking)* Who is it? Sonya? Is that you...?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. It's me.

SEREBRYAKOV. Lenotchka. I'm in pain. Help me.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Your blankets fell. I'll close the window.

SEREBRYAKOV. No. It's *stifling* in here. I dozed off. And I dreamt my leg belonged to someone else. And I was woken by the pain. I don't, I don't think that it's gout. I think it's rheumatism. What time is it?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Twenty past twelve.

SEREBRYAKOV. In the morning please go to the library. Look for the "Batuishkov." I think we have him...

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. mmm?

SEREBRYAKOV. Look for... *(pause)* In the morning, please look for Batiushkov. I recall we had him. Why can I not breathe?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Two nights with no sleep... you're tired.

SEREBRYAKOV. They say Turgenyev developed angina pectoris from gout. Eh? And I'll get it too. *Damn* old age. Damn revolting, impotent old age. Damn it. I am old, and grow repulsive to myself, and I'm sure you, too, find it revolting to look on me.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Do you know, you talk of your age in a tone that suggests it's our fault that you've grown old.

SEREBRYAKOV. ...And I revolt you most of all. *(YELENA ANDREYEVNA moves farther away from him.)* And you're right, of course. I'm not stupid. I understand. You are young, you're healthy, and you're beautiful. You want to live and here am I, an old man, more than one foot in the grave. Isn't that right? Of *course* that's right. How *foolish* I must feel, eh, to be still living. But be patient. Soon I will set you all free. I give my word. A little longer...

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Oh, God, please, I'm ready to collapse. What must I do? *Please* be silent.

SEREBRYAKOV. Yes, Yes, Yes! Thanks to me, you're *all* ready to collapse. All of you. Everyone *bored.* ...Wasting their youth...*I'm* the only one content. I see it...

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Be still! You're *destroying* me.

SEREBRYAKOV. Oh, yes. I'm destroying *everyone*...of *course*...

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. What do you want from me?

SEREBRYAKOV. Nothing.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Well, then, be quiet. Will you please? I beg you.

SEREBRYAKOV. I'll tell you a most peculiar thing. Ivan Petrovich, that *dolt,* or Mariya Vasilyevna, they begin holding forth, it's *fine.* Everyone listens, everyone is rapt

attention. I say *one word* and the *world* feels utterly depressed. You understand? The mere fact of my *voice* they find repulsive. Fine. fine. Let us *stipulate: I am* repulsive. I am a despot. I am that sick egoist you all feel me to be. Have I not earned it? Have I not, *am* I not, I ask you, entitled to this, a peaceful old age? And the least modicum of consideration from those around me?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. No one disputes your right. *(pause)*

SEREBRYAKOV. I have worked my whole life for science. Respected and honored. I have felt the simple pleasures. Ones *study,* do you know, and the *lecture* halls...the warm respect of one's peers...And then I'm thrust. Thrust. For no apparent reason, in this tomb. Among the mindless. Every day, their prattle stuffing my ears. I want to live. I've worked for these things. For success, recognition, *action*...here I am in exile. Every waking moment. I can pine for the past. I can envy the success of others. Or I can fear death. And those three choices are my life. I cannot...I cannot...God. And they begrudge me even my old age.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Have patience. Five or six more years, I'll be old, too.

SOFYA. *(Entering)* Papa, you sent for Dr. Astrov, now he's here and you don't want him. Please what do I tell him now we've put him out for nothing?

SEREBRYAKOV. And what good can Astrov do me? The man knows as much of medicine as I do of beekeeping.

SOFYA. What am I to do, please? We sent for him.

SEREBRYAKOV. He's a fool, and I won't speak to him.

SOFYA. As you wish, then. *(sits)* Fine.

SEREBRYAKOV. What time is it, please?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Almost one.

SEREBRYAKOV. I can't breathe. Sonya, please. My drops on the table...

SOFYA. Just a moment... *(She gets the drops and hands them to him.)*

SEREBRYAKOV. Not these! The drops that I *asked* for...for God's sake...

SOFYA. Some may appreciate this peevishness. I don't. Please spare me. I don't like it, I haven't the *time,* I need my rest, tomorrow is a working day...

(Enter IVAN PETROVICH.)

IVAN PETROVICH. A storm brewing outside.

(LIGHTNING.)

IVAN PETROVICH. And will you look at that...! Helene and Sonya: off to bed, you are relieved.

SEREBRYAKOV. Don't leave me with him, he'll talk me to death.

IVAN PETROVICH. ...They need their rest.

SEREBRYAKOV. No.

IVAN PETROVICH. They need their rest. Two nights without sleep...

SEREBRYAKOV. Alright. Fine. The two of them to bed. And you, too. With my thanks. Sincerely. But I beg you, for our friendship's sake; please, leave me alone.

IVAN PETROVICH. For...?

SEREBRYAKOV. ...And we'll talk later.

IVAN PETROVICH. For our "friendship?" Our...?

SOFYA. Sssssshhhhhh, Uncle Vanya...

SEREBRYAKOV. *(to YELENA ANDREYEVNA:)* No, my dear. Don't leave me with him. I'm quite serious, I...

IVAN PETROVICH. Do you know, this is becoming *funny...*

(Enter MARINA with a candle.)

SOFYA. Nanny. You ought to be in bed. It's late.

MARINA. Well, fine. The *samovar* is on the table...easy to say "go to bed"...

SEREBRYAKOV. Everyone's up. Everyone is fatigued beyond measure. I alone am happy. I'm in ecstasy.

MARINA. *(to SEREBRYAKOV:)* What is it, Little Father...the legs...? My legs hurt me, too. I have the 'ralgia. 'Ralgia all the day. Your old complaint. I know. Vera Petrovna. Rest in peace. Sonetchka's sainted mother, took it so to heart when you hurt. You know that she did, she loved you so, that woman... *(pause)* The old are like the young. They want someone to pity them. But no one's ever sorry for the old. You go to sleep now, little one. I'll get your linden Tea. And I'll warm your feet, yes I will. And I will pray for you.

SEREBRYAKOV. *(pause, softly)* Oh, go on...

MARINA. ...I have the 'ralgia, too. I have it, too; a pain in my legs. Vera Petrovna would cry. Anyone's pain moved her. Sonetchka, then, such a little one. come along, my little father, now we're going to go to bed. That's right... *(SEREBRYAKOV, SOFYA, and MARINA Exit.)*

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. I've been so tired by him I can hardly stand.

IVAN PETROVICH. Well. You're tired by him and I'm sick of myself. This is my third night without sleep. I'm tired to nausea. *(pause)*

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. This is not a happy home. Your mother loathes everything in this world except her dear pamphlets. And the Professor. The Professor mistrusts me. He fears you...

IVAN PETROVICH. ...He fears me...?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Yes. He does. Sonya is angry with her father. Pettish with me, hasn't spoken to me in the last two weeks...Not one word. And you hate my husband. You despise your mother and you make no effort to conceal it. I go around, twenty times a day. I'm on the edge of tears...one would not say this is a happy home.

IVAN PETROVICH. Let's drop this discourse, shall we...?

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Ivan Petrovich *(pause)* are you an educated man. A thoughtful man and I would expect you to see, or to accept, if you *thought* of it...

IVAN PETROVICH. ...I'm listening.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. That our world is worsened...not by *fires,* or *robbers*...but, you understand? By *hate.* Our world's destroyed by *hate.* By *pettiness.* And *your* job should be to be *strong* and *not* to carp at those around you. *Not* to grumble, but, simply, to *reconcile*...to make peace...to...

IVAN PETROVICH. I'd make my peace with *you*... *(He tries to kiss her hand.)*

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Stop it right now! *(pause)* I'd like it if you left now, please.

IVAN PETROVICH. And, yes, the rain is ending. Everything will be refreshed. The world exhales. But I shall *not* be refreshed by the coming and the passing of the storm. My whole life, day and night, I feel this. I've squandered my past on nonsense and my present is sunk in absurdity. Isn't that something? My one feeling is for you. Can I renounce it? My one feeling in life and it's dying like a ray of sun shone in a well. And I am dying.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. You speak to me of love. How am I to deal with that? I don't know. I'm sorry, but it's true. What do you expect? I'm sorry. Forgive me. I must say goodnight.

IVAN PETROVICH. ...Coincidentally, though, here by my side, another life is being wasted in this house. Whose could that be? What are you waiting for...? Eh? For your *life* to end? What stupid, pointless *principle* stands in your way? You *wastrel.* You *fool,* eh? Do you comprehend what I'm *telling* you...? *(pause)*

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Ivan Petrovich...are you drunk?

IVAN PETROVICH. It very well could be.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Where is the doctor?

IVAN PETROVICH. He's spending the night in my room. It could be. It could be, *anything* could be.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. And why have you been drinking?

IVAN PETROVICH. Why? Because it seems like "life." Don't scold me, Helene.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. *(pause)* You never used to drink?

IVAN PETROVICH. I drink now.

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. No, and you never "spoke" so much.

IVAN PETROVICH. I *didn't...?* Perhaps th...

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. ...Go to bed. You bore me.

IVAN PETROVICH. *Do? (kissing her hand)* My enchanted one, my darling...

YELENA ANDREYEVNA. Oh, *please,* oh *please. Oh, God, you disgust me... (Exits.)*

IVAN PETROVICH. Aha. *(pause)* Ten years ago, I'd see her at my sister's. She was seventeen and I was thirty-seven. I could have proposed to her and now she'd be my wife. And both of us would have been woken by the storm. The thunder frightened you. Sshhhh. No, no, no. I'm here. *I'm* here, and you needn't be afraid. And she...Why in the name of God am I old...? What's *happened* to me...? And with her damned pseudo-morality, her lazy, stupid "intellect," her jargon notions of "the ruin of the world"...Who the *hell* does she think she is...? They *cheated* me. I *worshipped* that man. That pitiful pox-ridden "academic," our Professor, and worked like a slave for him. Sonya... *(pause)* And we squeezed the last *dregs* from this estate, like slaves. We sold the *vegetable* oil...we sold the *curds,* the peas, we begrudged ourselves *food* to save half-kopecks, and sent *thousands* to him. Why shouldn't we? As proud as we were... *(pause)* To a man of genius. We basked in him. Now the man retires, and it's *screamingly* clear; what does he leave? As his legacy? This colossus? What *work?* What...what...? He leaves *nothing.* Not a single *page.* A *nothing.* Unknown. *(pause)* A fraud. A vicious failure, who cheated a man who loved him.