

CHERRY JAM

CHARACTERS

RANEVSKY, LYUBOV ANDREEVNA (**LOVEY**), landowner

ANYA, young and bright, Lovey's daughter

VARYA, less young and less exuberant, Lovey's other (adopted) daughter

LEONID **GAEV**, Lovey's bumbling brother

ERMOLAI ALEXEYEVITCH **LOPAKHIN**, a social climber, an animal

TROFIMOV, **PETER** SERGEEVICH, a student and a teacher

MYSTERIOUS FIGURE, doubles with LOPAKHIN

Setting: A small town upstate NY. in 1979.

NB: / indicates that the following line should begin. The setting is also for grounding, but this is not to be over exaggerated from a design standpoint.

ACT ONE

[The stage is littered with tree stumps. One large tree – the only one still intact – sits in the middle. It's the last of its kind and it's gorgeous. It's flowering. Blossoming. In full bloom.]

At top of show, lights go down. A few seconds of silence and darkness and the following lines are projected on the tree: "This orchard is the most beautiful place on earth. But it'll be sold on August 22nd if nothing is done." It's almost like the tree is speaking to us. We might even hear birds chirping... it's tranquil and lovely.

Then the sound of a chainsaw screeches through the theatre. A strong young woman, VARYA, drowns out the screeching chainsaw with an elongated:]

VARYA

FUCKKKKK OFFFFFFFF!

[She runs on stage as the house lights come up. Keys jangle from her waist.]

VARYA

Fuck! Off! Stop, you fuckers!! Get the fuck out of here! Go!

[She rages. The chainsaw sounds die away as LOPAKHIN enters.]

LOPAKHINz
What's going on?

VARYA
Chainsaws?! Are you fucking kidding me?!

LOPAKHIN
The wood is valuable! They're just trying to take a piece. They don't have anything.

VARYA
Well, I won't let them.

LOPAKHIN
I'm just saying. Who can blame them when it's the best / orchard in the country?

[Brandishing her keys.]

VARYA
I can. It's my mom's, not theirs.

LOPAKHIN
Is she here yet?

VARYA
Nope. Two hours too late. Everything about her is late.

[She calms for a moment.]

VARYA
Why are you here?

LOPAKHIN
Saying hello to Lovey. Oh, shit.

[He rushes out. She composes herself. He returns with an orchid. For a horrible moment, she thinks it's for her.]

LOPAKHIN

Left it by the door, completely forgot... Isn't it pretty? And you only have to water it every once a week. Almost impossible to kill.

VARYA

For... mom?

LOPAKHIN

Why? Is it too much?

VARYA

No, it's sweet.

[LOPAKHIN tends to the little flower. VARYA watches him.]

VARYA

You're in love with her, aren't you?

LOPAKHIN

In love with her? Not at all. I'm allowed to be curious, aren't I? Stop! She's been living abroad for more than five/ years, I only wanted to see if Paris changed her. To see if she's different.

VARYA

Six! Bullshit.

LOPAKHIN

It's true. 10 bucks says she over pronounces the word "Paris."

VARYA

I'm absolutely not making that bet. Besides, you just want to see if she thinks *you've* changed. If she notices your hundred dollar haircut.

LOPAKHIN

What's wrong with a nice haircut?

VARYA

Nothing. I cut my own hair.

LOPAKHIN

Maybe I do want to see if she notices a change in me. What's wrong with that? But I also want to see her.

VARYA

Okay.

LOPAKHIN

She means a lot to me. She was always generous and fun to be around. I hope the French haven't sucked that out of her.

VARYA

They'd have to try *really* hard. She is unrelentingly generous. And fun.

LOPAKHIN

Shame you didn't inherit those qualities.

VARYA

I'm adopted.

LOPAKHIN

Nature versus nurture.

VARYA

I can be generous!

LOPAKHIN

Not with me.

VARYA

Well the person has to earn it. But once they do, I'd move the world for them. There's a quiet kindness and gentleness in me that you don't seem to see.

LOPAKHIN

Your mother is something special. She is exceptional. When I was a teenager, my father punched me in the head a few times and she made / a huge impression.

VARYA

Oh my god, Lopakhin.

LOPAKHIN

It's not a big deal. At least not when you're from *the bad part of town*.

VARYA

My father drank too.

LOPAKHIN

I'd rather a father who drank champagne than one who drank whiskey.

VARYA

Fuck that. I'd rather a father who didn't drink at all. Fuck that! What good do fathers do, anyway?

LOPAKHIN

So, mine was a little drunk and he got carried away. He often did get carried away. Your mom happened to stop by, saw that I was bleeding, again not a big deal, and she washed it off and stuck on a band-aid. She was so gentle. And precise. And when she put it on, she patted me on the head and said, "Don't cry, little man. You'll feel better in time for your wedding day."

VARYA

For your wedding day?

LOPAKHIN

I may get married at some point.

VARYA

Alright. And Little Man?

LOPAKHIN

You got a problem with that?

VARYA

No. I like Little Man.

LOPAKHIN

Do you?

VARYA
Maybe.

[A bit of tension.]

VARYA
I wonder what she meant by your wedding day.

LOPAKHIN
Who cares? What do you think she meant by Little Man?

VARYA
It seems pretty innocuous to me. Weren't you short as a child? You're short now.

LOPAKHIN
What if it's not literal?

VARYA
I'm a very literal person.

LOPAKHIN
I'm not that short, anyway.

VARYA
Stand up. Come on! Stand up!

[They stand right next to each other to gauge height differences. They're adorable when they get over themselves.]

VARYA
Oh no, I was wrong. You're a nice height.

LOPAKHIN
You're a good height. In those boots anyway.

VARYA
I always wear boots. Practical.

LOPAKHIN

Don't you think Little Man is condescending?

VARYA

It's not malicious though.

LOPAKHIN

But it is condescending.

VARYA

Don't indulge an inferiority complex if you can help it.

LOPAKHIN

Oh, I stopped doing that a long time ago. My family didn't have any money. No jobs, prospects, no social graces. But your mother believed in my potential. Isn't potential a funny thing? That's all it took. A little external belief. But! And here's the rub... you can't buy into that unless you also acknowledge that this means she didn't think very much of where I started. But now, I can say firmly that I have achieved success. I have exceeded any and all expectations that anyone could have placed on me.

VARYA

Is this a thinly veiled attempt at bragging about your money? / That's not a particularly attractive quality.

LOPAKHIN

No, not bragging. I'm appreciative!

VARYA

I hate bragging. Big egos make me sick. I get embarrassed for the person talking. / Feel all hot on the back of my neck.

LOPAKHIN

Earlier you were bragging about being generous.

VARYA

Only because I didn't think you could see me clearly. I don't think you see me clearly at all actually.

[Suddenly Lopakhin jumps up.]

LOPAKHIN

Is that them? I hear something.

[He leaves again.]

VARYA

I don't think so... Your haircut's nice by the way.

[He yells from offstage, not having heard her.]

LOPAKHIN

Just the wind on the door!

VARYA

Lopakhin?

LOPAKHIN

Yeah?

[Lopakhin is offstage for her speech.]

VARYA

Do you ever think about us? I mean, I'm basically the same as I was as a child. I like the same things, the same people light me up... Then there's you, spending more and more time in the city, flying first class, ordering martinis, knowing how to order martinis. I bet you know all about the market, how to grow a small pile of money into a big one. Meanwhile I can't get the dirt out from under my fingernails. You probably think I'm disgusting. Plus, adopted. A dirty brat of the earth. But I am generous. And fun. Sometimes. But I still feel tied to you. After all these years.

[Lopakhin re-enters, not having heard her.]

LOPAKHIN

The wind really picked up. It is an undeniably pretty flower, don't you think? It was the best they had.

VARYA

Did you hear what I said? / You're not listening to me.

LOPAKHIN

Wouldn't you rather a rich person who knew the value of money / and what it meant to work for it?

VARYA

This again! Jesus Christ.

LOPAKHIN

Take off all my fancy clothes, my nice watch, and I'm still poor on the inside!

VARYA

But just watch someone try to take your fancy clothes and nice watch. You'd kill them. Smear their blood on your front door. You'd take someone's else's last penny and not give it a thought. You've become the elite.

LOPAKHIN

I think what you're *trying* to say is that I'm ambitious.

VARYA

That too.

LOPAKHIN

But I do feel like a fuckin' pig in a suit sometimes.

VARYA

You're obviously not that either.

LOPAKHIN

For the love of god, can you please bring yourself to relate to me in some way? To validate what I'm saying? Why are you *such* a contrarian?

[She thinks.]

VARYA

Fine. No matter how adored and accepted I am, I still feel adopted.

LOPAKHIN

There you go! But I'm not sure it counts. Lovey adores you, just as much as she does Anya.

VARYA

I'm receptive to the familial closeness, but it doesn't change the fact that I'm adopted. It's how I feel. It's an insecurity, I guess.

LOPAKHIN

Don't indulge any inferiority complex...

VARYA

Fine.

LOPAKHIN

Did you sleep?

VARYA

Thank you for asking. But no. The dogs kept me up. I swear they can predict when she's coming home. Like an earthquake, the birds flock south.

LOPAKHIN

The trees are looking beautiful. All flowering. Is that unusual? Should they be flowering this time of year?

VARYA

No, they shouldn't be. It's terrifying. Nature is screaming at us. I was reading an article in the New York Times the other day. Do you know what's happening?

LOPAKHIN

About the gas shortage? Yeah, I'm getting fleeced.

VARYA

No, I don't care about that.

LOPAKHIN

Then what?

VARYA

Nothing, never mind.

[Projected on the tree is the line: "I'm not well. I've no strength left. Nothing left at all."]

LOPAKHIN

But the flowers are gorgeous. The cherry trees, I mean. Is it selfish that I like seeing them even though I know it's wrong?

VARYA

Depends what else you do about it.

[Shouts and squeals of an arrival.]

LOPAKHIN

There they are!

VARYA

An earthquake... Hide under a table.

[More shouts.]

LOPAKHIN

She might not recognize me! How's my hair?

[As they run out.]

VARYA

I said it was nice! Let's help with the luggage.

[And they're both gone. A moment of quiet. Then, projected on the tree is: "The mistress is home again. I've lived to see her! I don't care if I die now."]

[Enter LOVEY, ANYA and GAEV. They carry all their luggage and bits and pieces from travel. Their voices get louder as they come in. LOVEY is first.]

LOVEY