

Drama

Twilight of a Crane – Yu Zuwa Junji Kinoshita

CHARACTERS

Tsu..... The name reads Tsu-u.
Yohyo..... The name reads Yohyo-o.
Sodo..... The name reads So-o-do.
Unzu..... The name reads Un-zu.
Children.

(A tumble-down hut in a field covered with snow. The setting sun is illuminating the western sky.

A children's song is heard from a distance:

“Jiyan Ni Kiseru Futo Nuuno
Bayan Ni Kiseru Futo Nuuno
Chin Kara Kan Kara
Ton Ton Ton.....”

The meaning of this song is:

“Let's sew a cushion for grandpa!
Let's sew a cushion for grandma!
Chin Kara Kan Kara
Ton Ton Ton.....”

*(In the interior of the hut Yohyo is seen taking a nap by the fire side.
The song stops. The children appear running in.)*

Children: *(in unison, as if singing)* Tsu- yan, Tsu- yan, let us sing!
Tsu-yan, Tsu-yan let us play ! Tsu-yan, Tsu-yan, let us sing !

Yohyo: *(awaken)* Hello! what are you doing here?

Children: Tsu-yan, let us play! Let us sing!

Yohyo: Looking for Tsu? No, she isn't here. She went out.

Children: She's gone, really? What ever shall we do? Where'd she go?

Yohyo: How do I know!

Children: Come on, Yohyo. Tell us where she went. When's she coming back? Soon? Yohyo, please.....

Yohyo: Be quiet! You're making too much noise! (*He stands up to his feet.*)

Children: (*scattering*) Yohyo is getting angry! Ha ha ! You're a bit teched! cross.

Yohyo: (*Laughing*) Ha, ha,ha! stay here I'll play with you.

Children: Really? What'll we play?

Yohyo: What'll we play?

Children: "Nen-gara"?

Yohyo: All right, "Nen – gara"

Children: Singing ?

Yohyo: All right, singing.

Children: Snow-ball fights?

Yohyo: Fine, snow-ball fights.

Children: "Kagome – Kagome"?

Yohyo: Yes, "Kagome- Kagome,"

Children: Run sheep run?

Yohyo: All right, run sheep run. Let's go! I'll tag you. Are you ready?

Children: Yes, Run sheep run ,run sheep run.....(*Repeating these words, they run away. Yohyo is also about to follow them, but stops.*)

Yohyo: Oh dear, I almost forgot! Cold soup is no good for my sweet heart ! (*He puts a kettle on the fire as Tsu appears from inner room*)

Tsu: My darling.....

Yohyo: Hello, my dear, where've you been?

Tsu: Oh, nowhere specially, but.....you, my dear, don't.....

Yohyo: (*giggling*) Nothing! Just going to warm up some soup for you. It's no good unless it's hot!

Tsu: Thank you, my dear, Now I'll make supper for you.

Yohyo: Thank you very much. I'll be back soon .Now we are going to play "Nen-gara"

Tsu: Really?

Yohyo: And snow-ball fights.....and then singing.

Tsu: And "Kagome-Kagome".....then,Run sheep run.....Isn't that the name?

Yohyo: That's right- Run sheep run , Tsu why don't you come too?

Tsu: I wish I could. But I have to prepare supper!

Yohyo: Forget the supper.Tsu, let'sgo (*He pulls at her hand*)

Tsu: No, no I can't.

Yohyo: Stop worrying about the supper.You have got to come. Let's play together!

Tsu: No, I can't Yohyo.I have got to(*With a smile, she is pulled off by Yohyo*)

(*Pause, A children's song is heard from a distance. Sodo and Unzu appear*)

Sodo: Is that (.....) is that Yohyo's wife?

Unzu: Yes, (indeed) Yohyo is the luckiest man in the world to get such a nice wife. Since she came here, he never does anything but, sleep by the fire-side all day long. How I envy him!

Sodo: How in the world could a stupid man like him get such a pretty wife?

Unzu: I wish, I knew! From somewhere and unnoticed she appeared like a wind. Since then, that lazy fellow has been coining money without lifting a finger over.

Sodo: Unzu! Are you positive about that story of the precious cloth?

Unzu: Of course, I am, It's true. my goodness, we could sell that cloth at 10 dollars yard in the town!

Sodo: Really? Did you say that that wife of his weaves the stuff?

Unzu: That's right – but there's queer thing – she won't let any one see her in the weaving room ! Yohyo told me, every time she goes to the weaving room, she says: “Don't look in to the room” And Yohyo is so foolishly honest that he never tries to peep. He goes to bed right away, and when he wakes up in the morning, there is the cloth all finished. It's a really wonderful cloth.

Sodo: You called it “Senba- Ori” didn't you?

Unzu: Yes that's what the town-folk call it! They say cloth of that sort cannot be seen unless they go to the “Ten jiku” (Heaven). It's as valuable as that.

Sodo: Unzu, you must be making a pretty good profit in your deals with that cloth.

Unzu: Well-INot too big but not so small either.

Sodo: Curse you, you wretched thief.....but, Unzu, if it is really a “Senba- Ori” it must be worth a lot more than a hundred dollars.

Unzu: Is it ?..... Then Sodo, tell me what on earth is the “Senba- Ori”

Sodo: Well, it's the fanciest cloth you ever did see! made of a thousand feathers plucked from a live hen crane

Unzu: I can't believe it? Well then, Where on earth does she get such feathers?

Sodo: Humph- is this the weaving- room? (*in spite of him self he goes up into house and looks into the adjoining room.*) Yes, it's true- there's a loom.....Oh, heavens!..... (*With surprise and curiosity he goes into the weaving-room*)

Unzu: Sodo, what's the matter with you?

Sodo: *(coming out of the weaving- room with two or three pieces of feather in his hand)* look! Unzu! This is a crane's feather !! Now I know you're right.

Unzu: You see? I never lie.
(Pause. Tsu, Who has been back unnoticed, comes out of the inner room)

Unzu: *(Surprized)* Oh, Heavens!

Sodo: *(Surprized, too)* God bless me! I I am sorry to have broken in while you- you were out.....

Unzu: Excuse me,Mis – but I- I am U - Unzu from the village over there. And- I –I am much- much obliged to Yohyo about –about the cloth - and –

Tsu:? *(She stands in silence inclining her head on one side like a bird)*

Sodo: Then, Mrs.- I've got an idea about the cloth which this low-fellow here told me you've wovenO,sorry! I should have told you who I am. I'm Sodo from the village over there And I'd like to have a little talk with you..... Well, now - I'm afraid I shouldn't ask you thing like this – but if you don't mind,would you tell me if it is a real "Senba Ori" ?

Tsu:*(She has been looking at them inquiringly with a puzzeled look,but suddenly moves away quickly into inner room as if she heard a sound.)*

Sodo:?

Unzu:?

Sodo: Unzu!

Unzu: How come..? she didn't seem to understand!

Sodo: Yes, she didn't realise what we were saying..... She acted just like a bird.....

Unzu: You're right ! just like a bird !
(*Dusk falls and fire in the hearth flickers.*)

Sodo: (*Looking upon the feathers which he picked up before*)
Didn't you ever hear of the story of a bewitched crane that married a man?

Unzu: What's that ! what did you say?

Sodo: How I begin to get it ! Here's the point
Yesterday a villager told me that a couple of days ago when he happened to pass by the lake in mountain in the evening, he saw a young woman standing on the beach..... And, can you imagine, while he was spying on her, she went in to the water and became a crane!

Unzu: Oh, Lord! is that the absolute truth?

Sodo: And, after having swum a bit, she became a woman again and disappeared!

Unzu: Oh, my God! (*he runs out of the hut.*)

Sodo: You crazy hoot-owl! stop your shouting! (*But he himself rushes out of the hut unconsciously*)

Unzu: Then, is she.....is his wife of the ghost of a crane?

Sodo: Be quite, you shivering coward! only God knows!

Unzu: What shall I do? (*Groaning with hands over his head*)
Oh, God help me! I've cheated Yohyo out of a lot of profit!

Sodo: Forget it, Unzu! if it's a real "Senba Ori"- Gee we can sell it at a thousand dollars in Kyoto!

Unzu: A thousand dollars? Did you say a thousand dollars?

Sodo: Yes surely. Besides that, you said that lately Yohyo has been getting a bit sharper about money, didn't you?

Unzu: Yes, that's right. It's positively true.

Sodo: Well then, if that's so, the best idea is to get him on our side and get his wife to weave a lot more of the cloth!

Unzu: Yes..... I guess you're right.

Sodo: Look! Here he comes.

Yohyo: (*coming back absent-mindedly, singing*)Jiyan Ni
Kiseru Futo Nuuno, Bayan Ni Kiseru Futo
Nuuno,Chin Kara kan kan, Ton Ton Ton –why, I've
forgotten to boil rice for Tsu.

Sodo: Hello, Yohyo !

Yohyo: Yes.....?

Sodo: Don't you know me?.....I'm Sodo from the village
over there.....AndUh, Unzu- you tell him.

Yohyo: Oh,Unzu, you've been here again talking shop, haven't
you?

Unzu: Yes, right.If you'd turn out that cloth,you could make
as much easy money as you want!

Yohyo: Sorry, there isn't any more cloth!

Sodo: Why?

Yohyo: Tsu told me that's all there is!

Unzu: Don't be silly,Yohyo. You'd make a quick profit!

Yohyo: No,no..... I love Tsu.She is my darling!

Sodo: You do love her, don't you? Well, then why not save
up money for her by selling the cloth?

Yohyo: Yes, that sounds all right..... But every time she
weaves the cloth, she loses weight.

Sodo: What? She loses weight?.....Just a minute, Yohyo!
When and how did she first come to you?

Yohyo: You mean Tsu? Yes I've forgot when it was – but some
night when I was going to bed, she'd droped in and
said she wanted to become my wife. (*He smiles.*)

Sodo: Is that a fact!..... Yes, I see. Now then, have you – haven't you ever done something to help a crane?

Yohyo: Crane? You say a crane? Yes, I remember now! One day when I was working in the field a crane came down with an arrow stuck in its back. So I pulled the arrow out of its back and saved its life.

Sodo: Really?.....Humph.....Unzu, now I got it- don't you see?

Unzu:*(he is shuddering)*

Sodo: Well, if it's so, if that's true, we can still make a lot of money that's the whole point of this deal anyhow..... Yohyo, I want to have a little talk about the –that cloth I we –Yohyo ! you tell him the story.

Unzu: Yes, All right-that's a-no, you see, Yohyo, if you take the cloth to Kyoto, you can get-get a thousand

Sodo: You stupid fellow!..... why, Yohyo-it's possible for you to get hundreds of dollars this time! Then, get your wife to weave the fabrics- just once more!

Yohyo: What? Hundreds of dollars? Really! You say hundreds of.....

Sodo: Yes, hundreds of dollars.*(To Unzu)* Isn't that right?

Unzu: Yes, It's right. You can make hundreds of dollars.

Yohyo: Really? Really hundreds of dollars.....?

Sodo: Well, then, you might coax your wife again.....*(nothing Tsu who has been looking at them from inside of the house)* Yohyo, come here! I'll tell you privately the whole story.

(Pulling Yohyo by the sleeve, they exit.)
(Tsu, coming out, looks after them. and expression of embarrassment and trouble is written all over her face. before long, the children come running in.)

Children: (*severally*) Here's Tsu! Let us play now.why did you run away? Let us sing.— “Kagome” - Hide and seek – singing- Ring around the rosy.....(*They surround Tsu.*)Let us play, let us play!

Tsu: Dear children, it's already dark. I'll see you tomorrow.

Children: No, no dear-let's play, let's sing!

Tsu: (*absent-mindedly*) Singing.....?

Children: Hide- and –seek?

Tsu: Hide-and-seek?

Children: Ring- around – the rosy.

Tsu: Ring-around-the rosy?

Children: “Kagome-Kagome”

Tsu: “Kagome-Kagome”?

Children: Yes,all right-we'll play “Kagome-Kagome”! (*Forming a ring around Tsu, they move round singing*)

“Kagome,Kagome,
Kago No Naka No Tori wa
Itsu Itsu Deyaru,
Yoake No Ban Ni,
Tsuru, Tsuru, Tsubetta!(They stop)
“Ushiro No Shomen Dahre?
Ushiro No Shomen Dahre?”

*(The meaning of this song:
“ Here we go walking around a bird in the cage,
Walking round and round, round and round,
Until evening, until morning.
Now will you tell us who is behind you,
When the song stops”)*

Who's standing behind you? Who's standing behind you?..... Say, my dear, why don't you put your hands over your eyes? you crouch down, my dear Tsu!

Tsu *(having stood in deep thought,awaken)* Oh, I am sorry.
Yes *(She crouches down and covers her with
her hands.)*

*(The children continue to move round singing the same
song. The light quickly fades out,leaving Tsu alone in
its focus.)*

Tsu *(Slowly standing up)* Yohyo, my dear- what's
happened to you? You are gradually changing. I can't
understand why.
But you are moving to the other world where I can
never live. You are casting your lot with those
malicious,terrible people who shot me with an arrow.
You are becoming the same as those whose language I
cannot understand. What's happened to you, Yohyo,
my love? What shall I do?
What on earth can I do?.....

Yohyo,you've saved my life. You were once
so innocent and kind that you could take the
arrow out of my back solely through tender-
heartedness-and only out of sympathy for me. I was
deeply touched by it.

I was so glad to come to you..... And when I first
wove the cloth with my feathers, you were as pleased as
a child.Then, in spite of the pain, I wove them again and
again. But you- my dear, you exchanged it every time
for the thing called "money". But it's all right. I don't
mind if you like the "money"so much.....But now
you have money enough.

I'd like to live with you in this small house peacefully
and quietly without being troubled by any one. My
darling, you shouldn't be the same as they.You should
be a man of the world I belong to. I wished I might have
lived with you forever, setting up our world in the middle
of this field, playing with children and working on the
farm..... But still, you are going to leave me.You
are going farther and farther from me..... What shall I
do? Tell me, my dear, what can I do?.....

(The song has stopped unnoticed. The lights come up on the stage, but the children have already gone away.

Tsu looks away casually, and runs back into the house with fear. Sodo, Unzu and Yohyo come in.)

- Sodo:** You see, Yohyo? If she says she can't weave any more, you've got to threaten to leave her.
- Yohyo:** (*giggling*) Anyhow, that's a wonderful cloth Tsu has woven for me, isn't it?
- Sodo:** Yes, certainly. It's so wonderful that we can sell it for three or four times more than before! You see, it's worth that much more. So tell your wife this.
- Yohyo:** Yes, it's worth three or four times more than before –is that right?
- Sodo:** Yes, It's worth hundreds of dollars.
- Yohyo:** Hundreds of dollars- are you sure?
- Sodo:** Yes, I'm certain of it. Then, you have her weave it right away. (*To Unzu*) Don't you think so, Unzu?
- Unzu:** Yes, indeed, get it woven tonight, right away.
- Yohyo:** All right,..... but Tsu said she couldn't weave any more.
- Sodo:** You poor idiot! If you get a lot of profit from it, your wife'd be pleased, too.
- Unzu:** Right! I bet your wife'd be pleased, too
- Yohyo:** Maybe.....
- Sodo:** Then, too, we'll take you to see Kyoto. Don't you think, Unzu, Kyoto is a splended city?
- Unzu:** Yes, it's a wonderfully gay city!
- Yohyo:** I can imagine how fine it is.
- Sodo:** Can you? Good! You see, you can make a lot of

money, and on top of that you can see. Kyoto. Over there we'll take you to many interesting places as I told you. Or- say, Yohyo, don't you want to see Kyoto?

Yohyo: Why not! I could go!

Unzu: You want money, too, don't you?

Yohyo: Yes, I want it.

Sodo: (*noticing Tsu in the house*) Yohyo! Go ahead! If she says no, you tell her you're leaving, do you see?

Yohyo: Yes.....

Sodo: (*pushing Yohyo toward the house*) You're a good fellow, my friend. Best of luck! Unzu, we'd better hide ourselves to see what happens.

(*Sodo and Unzu go out. As soon as they disappear, Tsu leaps to welcome Yohyo*)

Tsu: Oh, my darling, come here now. Dear me! You've soaking wet! I'm afraid you'll catch cold! Come here, and warm yourself. Supper's ready. Thanks to you, the soup is boiling. Won't you eat supper now?

Yohyo: Yes. (*He sits down by the fire-side*)

Tsu: My dear. do start, please.

Yohyo: Yes. (*He eats*)

Tsu: What's the matter with you? Why are you so sad?.... You shouldn't stay outside so late. It's too cold..... You'll not go out anywhere, will you? You'll not talk with strangers anymore, will you?

Yohyo: No.

Tsu: Please, promise me..... My dear, I'll do anything for you. I'll do whatever you want..... Now you have got the "money" you like.....

Yohyo: Yes, I've got money. I've got a lot of money in that sack.

Tsu: Yes, you have. Then, from now on, won't you lead our life quietly as before? Won't you please enjoy a life of peace and happiness with me, together and forever?

Yohyo: Yes, I love you, my dear.

Tsu: My darling, I love you with my whole heart. Then you'll always stay as you are now, will you?

Yohyo: Yes, I love you deeply and dearly (*Pause*)

Tsu: Won't you have some more?.....Why? What's happened?..... Why aren't you eating, my dear?

Yohyo: Yes..... Aw nothing But, darling.....

Tsu: Yes.....?

Yohyo: You are lucky to have seen Kyoto so many a times. I really envy you.

Tsu: Do you? But I saw it just from the sky- (with a start she changes the topic) Why? Why don't you eat some more?

Yohyo: Yes, ah.....(*Hesitating and timidly*)..... My dear, listen.....

Tsu: Yes.....?

Yohyo: I say.....Oh, for Heaven's sake, I can't say it!.....

Tsu: Why? What's the matter?

Yohyo: Well, dearest.....(*Hesitating and giggling*)..... I just can't say it!.....

Tsu: Why? What's the matter? Why can't you say it?..... Then, shall I guess it?

Yohyo: Yes.

Tsu: Well..... You want buckwheat cakes again, don't you?

Yohyo: No.

Tsu: No?.....Well, then..... You want to hear my song, don't you?

Yohyo: No, it's not right..... of course, I like your song, but not today.

Tsu: That isn't it either?.....well, let me see.....Then, you want hear from me about Kyoto, don't you?..... Yes, I think I am right!

Yohyo: Yes,you're almost right,but also half wrong? Ha, ha,ha.....(*He laughs*)

Tsu: What do you mean-half right and half wrong ?..... Please, please, tell me what it is.

Yohyo: Darling,you won't be angry?

Tsu: Why should I get angry with you?.....What is it? Please, please tell me, my darling.

Yohyo: Well..... You see, Honey,I-I want to go Kyoto.

Tsu: Why!

Yohyo: To make a lot of money. So.....I want another piece of that cloth.

Tsu: (*in surprise and embarrassment*) You want some more of that cloth? But ,my darling! For God's sake.....

Yohyo: (*in hurry*) No,no, I don't need any more, dear.

Tsu: (*as if talking to herself*) I promised and you agreed that I wouldn't weave any more..... But you still want more.....

Yohyo: Yes, we agreed to that. I don't want any more. I don't need any more (*As if a child scolded, he is trying to keep back his tears*)

Tsu: (*Suddenly something occurs to her mind*) Oh, now I see! It's they- it's they who are pulling you away from me.Yes-those two who came to see you this evening- they are trying to convert you to their way of thinking.

Yohyo: Now, Darling.....Don't be angry.....Tsu.....

Tsu:

Yohyo: Tsuu.....my dear.....

Tsu: (*absent-mindedly*) Money.....Money.....Why do they want it so much?

Yohyo: Well.....Because if we have money,we can buy nice things we want.

Tsu: Buy? What's "Buy"? What's nice thing? What do you want beside me? No ,no please, don't want anything but me! I hate money, I hate "buying" too.Please love me,love only me. Love me forever,and let us live together always!

Yohyo: Yes, certainly, I like to live with you- I love you very much.

Tsu: My darling-please, my darling.....(she embraces him).....Please, live with me like this. Don't go away from me!

Yohyo: Why! Who on earth wants to leave you! My dear! My dear Tsu!

Tsu: In your arms.....I recall the days gone by..... Nothing bothered me- I was perfectly at ease in the vast sky, and..... My dream's come again. I am glad, my dear, I am happy- I am happy only if you are always with me, Please,be with me forever.....please, d o n ' t leave me.....please(pause,Suddenly, she thrusts him away) Yohyo, you are still thinking of Kyoto..... you are still thinking of "money"!

Yohyo: Yes-but, Tsu..... I can't help it.

Tsu: You are.....you are..... I see.....(*with a sudden intensity*) No,no,no don't go to Kyoto, please! You'll not return again! You won't come back to me!

Yohyo: Don't be a fool,dearest. I'll be back. I know I'll come back.I'll go to Kyoto just to make a lot of profit..... Oh, that's a good idea-we'll go to Kyoto together! (*pause*)

Tsu: Are you so terribly anxious to go to Kyoto?.....Are you so terribly anxious for money?

Yohyo: Yes, you see, Tsu no one can be indifferent to money.

Tsu: Are you so eager to get money? Are you so eager to go to Kyoto? You are not as fond of me as of money, are you? You are not as fond of me as of Kyoto, are you?

Yohyo: Tsu.....I-I dislike you putting it that way!

Tsu: Dislike? Did you say “dislike”?

Yohyo: Yes, I dislike you. I don’t like you. I’m not fond of you- you are a cross woman!

Tsu: Yohyo! How could you.....?

Yohyo: Weave the stuff right away! I’ll go to Kyoto! I’ll make big money!

Tsu: Dear, me! please, for God’s sake! Why on earth do you speak like that, my darling?

Yohyo: Weave the cloth. If you say you can’t, I’ll leave you!

Tsu: For the Good Lord’s sake! You said you’d leave me, didn’t you? my dear.....Darling.....How.....how could you say such a thing?

Yohyo: *(He keeps silence stubbornly)*

Tsu: My dear, my dear, please.....*(Shrugging his shoulders)*..... Are you in earnest? You say it in earnest? Please ,my dear.....

Yohyo: Yes, I’ll leave you- unless you weave the cloth.

Tsu: Oh,Heavens!

Yohyo: Weave the cloth! make the stuff! Right away! They say they can sell it at three or four times more than before –it’s worth hundreds of dollars!

Tsu: *(in tremendous astonishment and confusion)*What? What did you say now? “Weave the cloth! Make the stuff!”-following that, what did you say?

Yohyo: It’s worth hundreds of dollars. I said they can sell it for me at three or four times as much!

Tsu: *(She looks at him inquiringly, inclining her head on one side as if a bird does)*

Yohyo: You see, Tsu?.....This time they can sell it for more than three or four times what it brought before.....

Tsu: *(crying)* I cannot understand! I cannot understand what you are saying! It's just the same as those who came here this evening. I could see your lips moving and hear the sound of voices. But I couldn't understand what you were saying!.....Good gracious! You've also begun to speak their language- the words which I can't understand- the words which belong to the other world I can never join! Oh, Heavens! What shall I do? What shall I do? what should I do, dear Lord?

Yohyo: What's the matter with you, Tsu?

Tsu: "What's the matter with you, Tsu,? " you said that, didn't you " What's the matter with you, Tsu?- you said that, didn't you?

Yohyo: *(Astonished, he keeps looking at her face)*

Tsu: Did you?Did you? You said so, didn't you?..... Alas! You are going farther and farther from me.....My Heavens! What shall I do? what can I do ?..... Please, don't –don't entice my husband..... Please..... *(she goes out of the house)*.....Please.....For Heavens sake..... Where are you, dear villagers?.....I ask you.....I plead with you.....For Mercy's sake..... Please, Stop pulling my Yohyo away*(she walks up and down on the stage)* Please, for the Good Lord's sake!..... For Mercy's sake..... I ask you-I plead with you! Are you hiding yourselves? Come out, you cowards! Please..... You're silly- you're unfair! Please..... I loathe you! I hate you!.....Come out, you-..... I'm sorry I said I hate you. No, noPlease, dear villagers, for God's sake..... For Mercy's sake-I ask you- I plead with

you..... Please, for the Good Lord's sake.....
*(Her strength is gone little by little, and at last she
sinks down in the snow)*

Yohyo: *(coming out timidly and with fear)* Hey
What's the matter with you, Tsu? My dear..... *(He
embraces her.)*

Tsu: *(coming to herself)* Oh, my darling.....

Yohyo: It's cold-in the snow..... *(He takes her to the fireside
in his arms.)*

(They warm themselves for a while in silence.)

Tsu: You want so much-so much to go to Kyoto?

Yohyo: Yes, that's..... because.....
(Pause.)

Yohyo: They say Kyoto is awfully beautiful.....By this time
cherry-blossoms will be in full bloom, won't they?
(Pause.)

Yohyo: The streets are crowded with celebrities riding on ox-
carriages, aren't they?..... You used to tell me that
before.
(Pause)

Yohyo: Oh dear! I've become sleepy. *(He lies down.)*
*(Pause. Tsu lays a blanket on him and keeps looking
down at his sleeping face.*

*Abruply, she jumps to her feet and goes to a
corner of the room to take a sack. Opening the sack,
she pours gold coins into the palm of her hand. The
coins over flow to fall on the floor.She stares at the coins
motionlessly.*

*The light quickly fades out, leaving the figure of Tsu
and gold alone in its focus)*

Tsu: This is it..... This is it-everything comes from this
stuff..... Money Money..... I wove that
cloth only to show you its beauty..... I was so glad to see
you appreciate it joyfully.....for your pleasure for

the sake of your joy-I have woven it at the sacrifice of my weight..... But, now, there is no other means left to keep you in my arms than-weaving another piece of that cloth and having you make money..... Other wise, you'll not stay with me any more, will you?..... But..... Yes, that's all right- if you are so fond of money-saving up money, and-you are so anxious to go to Kyoto, and further if I can keep you in my arms by doing so-I will weave one more piece of cloth for you..... Will you forgive me with it?-that's the last one Because, if I go beyond it, I'm afraid I may not live any longer..... Pardon me, my darling.....But you may go to Kyoto to sell it-and, please, come back with the money gained!Please come back to me! You must come back! Please, swear to me to come back,my darling!And thereafter, we may live together forever, forever..... please, my love, promise me! Swear to me!

(The lights come up.)

Tsu: *(Shaking up Yohyo)* My dear.....My darling..... please.....

Yohyo: *(half-asleep)* Yah-aw.....blah,blah.....

Tsu: My dear-My Love.....I'll weave another stuff for you,is that all right?

Yohyo: Yes, aw.....What did you say?

Tsu: I say I'll weave that cloth for you again.

Yohyo: What? You say you weave.....? Is it true? Is it true, dearest?

Tsu: Yes, it's true. I will-only once more.

Yohyo: My dear! You're fooling me, aren't you?

Tsu: No. It's true. I'll weave it once more. Then you may go to Kyoto with it.

Yohyo: Really? May I take it to Kyoto? Can I? Are you sure?

Tsu: Yes. And-getting your precious money, you have to come back right away, you see? And then, after that , you and I

Yohyo: Really? You say you'll weave the cloth again for me? You say I can go to Kyoto?Oh, wonderful! How nice it is!..... Yes, I know I'll come back with a lot of profit-certainly, I'll earn a lot of money.Tsu, I'm happy.I'll.....

Tsu: *(having looked at Yohyo in the seventh heaven of his delight)*.....Well, now,here is the promise as usual – you mustn't watch me at all, you see?

Yohyo: Yes,certainly. I'll never peep at you.....Oh, thank God! You'll weave it for me!.....

Tsu: Please, Yohyo, never,never, never look at me. Please, swear before the gods..... If you should watch me,it'd be the end of our relationship, you see?

Yohyo: Yes, I see. I'll never look through. Yes- I'll go to Kyoto- I'm going to sell it four, five times more than before!

Tsu: Please,Swear never to look.You see, Yohyo? Please never break this pledge by any means.....*(She enters into the weaving room)*
(The sound of a loom begins to be heard. Sodo rushes out of his hiding place, followed by Unzu.)

Sodo: Fine! Look, Unzu. She's begun to weave.

Unzu: Yes.....But,having watched her from over there, I've begun to feel sorry for his wife.

Sodo: Stop, you foolish bastard!We're in the big business of money-making; what the hell will the pity and sympathy do! *(Rushing up into the house,he tries to look through the weaving room.)*

Yohyo: Holy Moses! You can't look into the room! Hey! You cannot.....

Unzu: Sodo, He says you can't look into that room.....

Sodo: Quiet stupid fool! Unless we see the weaving itself, who the hell can be sure whether it's a real "Senba-Ori" of the crane's feathers!

Yohyo: No,no,no- please! You cannot! Tsu will be angry Sodo, please.....!

Unzu: Sodo.....

Sodo: Let me go! Let me see! You stupid nit-wit! (*At last he peeps into the weaving-room, and surprised*)
Oh, Heavens!

Unzu: What's the matter?

Sodo: Look, Unzu! A crane- there's a crane-a crane's weaving on the loom.

Unzu: What? A crane?..... (*He also peeps into the room, and surprised.*) Oh, heavens! That's not the wife but only a crane!.....There's not a shadow of my darling! What's the matter?.....What's happened?..my dear, Tsu!.....No, she isn't there..... Heavens! What shall I do? She is not.....She is notShe is notGood God!.....(*He tries to open the door, but the door does not open*) Tsu! My dear! Darling.....Where've you gone?.....Mydear!.....Darling.....(*He goes out aimlessly, looking for Tsu in vain. The sound of the loom alone continues*)

FADE OUT

(*During the darkness a poem is read, doubling the continued sound of the loom. The meaning of the poem is as follows:*

Yohyo, Yohyo, where are you going?
Looking for your Tsu in vain.
In the midst of the dark, snow-blanketed field?

When the morning lights come up in the East,
You are still crying,
And your voice is hoarse.
Soon, it becomes noon,
But you are still crying;-
“My dear, my dear Tsu”.
Before long the dusk falls today,
And the evening glow again begins to burn
In the Western sky, as usual.....

*The lights come up on the stage,tinged with the sunset
glowing in the West.*

*The sound of the loom continues from the previous scene,
Sodo and Unzu are looking after Yohyo who has been
taken in their arms from the field where he was lying)*

Unzu: Yohyo! Keep up your nerve!

Sodo: That’s right. You’re so stupid to lie down in the snow.....
Why did you go to such a far corner of the field?

Unzu: If we hadn’t found you, you’d have been frozen to death
by now.

Yohyo: My dear, my dear Tsu.....

Unzu: Oh,have you come to yourself?

Sodo: Yohyo! Take courage!

Yohyo: My dear, my dear Tsu..... (Pause)

Sodo: Well..... I wonder how long will she last weaving the
cloth!

Unzu: Yes.....Usually she’s through in a night. But this
time it takes all day long

Sodo: Yes.....Well,I’ll look again. (He is going to the door
to the next room)
(The sound of the loom suddenly stops)

Unzu: Oh, it’s stopped!

Sodo: She's coming!
 (They go out in a hurry to hide themselves in some nearby place. Tsu appears carrying two sheets of cloth. She seems to have become awfully thin)

Tsu: (shaking up Yohyo) My dear..... My darling.....

Yohyo: My dear.....my dear Tsu.....

Tsu: My dear.....My darling.....

Yohyo: Dear.....Dear Tsu.....(*He has come back to himself at last*)Oh ,my dear Tsu!(*He clings to her, crying*) Tsu, my dear, where have you been?You weren't here, I've..... I've.....

Tsu: Excuse me ,my darling, I am sorry to have kept you waiting. But.....Look, these sheets of cloth! I've just finished them. They're wonderful, aren't they?

Yohyo: Really! Oh, you've finished them! Thank you! Thank you, darling!

Tsu: (*She stares motionlessly at Yohyo who is in joy*)

Yohyo: Goodness! It's really wonderful! It's awfully beautiful! Thanks a lot, my dear! Oh, it's a pair, isn't it?

Tsu: Yes, it's a pair. That's why I've taken so long. my dear..... You may go to Kyoto with it now.

Yohyo: Yes,Certainly I'll go to Kyoto. Tsu, you will go with me, will you?

Tsu: (*She is weeping*)

Yohyo: Darling, we shall go together to look around the sights of Kyoto in blossom time, won't we?

Tsu: -My darling..... You saw me while weaving after all.....

Yohyo: Now, I'd like to go to Kyoto as soon as possible! My dear, these stuffs are pretty well finished- don't you think so?

Tsu: After all I had asked youAfter all you had promised faithfully.....Why- why did you look in at me? Why did you do it, my darling?

Yohyo: Well! What are you weeping for, darling?

Tsu: I wished I could have lived with you forever, forever..... But.....Please, my darling. I beg you to keep one of these –this one-keep it with you as a treasure.....Because I have woven it with my whole heart.....

Yohyo: Yes, this is really wonderfully done!

Tsu: (*Taking hold of his shoulders*) Please keep it with you..... Please treasure it always!

Yohyo: (*like a child*) Yes, I'll treasure it- of course I will! I'll always obey you by all means.Then, dear Tsu, you'll come with me to Kyoto, won't you?

Tsu: No, my darling, I can't..... (*She stands up to her feet with a sad smile.She seems to have become white suddenly.*)I've grown thin because of thisI've used up all the feathers I can possibly spare..... Now I have just enough left to fly..... (*She smiles sadly*)

Yohyo: (*sensing something unhappy*)My dear-dear Tsu.....(*He holds onto her- but in vain.His arms have just grasped the air*)

Tsu: My darling, Yohyo..... Good luck!..... Please, live long- forever.....

Yohyo: (*The children's song is heard from a distance*
"Jiyan Ni Kiseru Futo Nuuno
Bayan Ni Kiseru Futo Nuuno
Chin Kara Kan Kara
Ton Ton Ton.....")

Tsu: Alas! I have to say good bye to my children, too..... How many times I used to play with them, singing that old song.....My darling, Yohyo, please never, never forget me! I'll never forget you, eitherThese few days-its only a short time- I've been really happy-

wrapped up in your love, and singing and playing with the children.....I'll never, never forget these happy days- wherever I go –and forever.....

Yohyo: Tsu-darling.....Where are you going?

Tsu: Please, never put me out of your mind , my darling.....
And –please,keep the one piece of cloth with you as a treasure?

Yohyo: I say-my darling.....

Tsu: Good-bye, My love.....Good luck.....

Yohyo: Wait, Darling! just a minute! I'll go! I'll go with you!

Tsu: No ,no you cannot. I can no longer take the shape of woman.I have to go back again to the old sky by myself.....Good bye, my darling.....Good luck.....Good bye.....Adieu, my love.....(*she disappears.*)

Yohyo: My dear-dearest.....Tsu.....where are you going?
Tsu! Darling!.....Tsu.....(*Crying he goes out of the house*)

(*Sodo and Unzu rush out of their hiding place to hold him back.*)

Unzu: (*out of breath, to Sodo*) Say!.....

Sodo: (*out of breath,too*) Yes, she's gone!.....
(*Yohyo looks dazed in Unzu's arms. The Children appear running in*)

Children: (*in unison, as if singing*) Tsu-yan, Tsu-yan, let us sing.
Tsu-yan, Tsu-yan, let us sing.....(*A deep,long pause*)

Children: Are you not in, Tsu-yan?.....We'er sorry!.....(*To Yohyo*)Yohyo,where'd she gone? When's she coming back?

Yohyo: (*toward the interior of the house, timidly and fearfully*)
I say.....Tsu.....darling.....Here are children.....They want you to sing the song as usual.....

Tsu.....Darling.....

(A deep and long pause)

One of the children.*(pointing up at the sky)*Look! a crane!

A crane's flying!

Sodo: Oh! The crane!.....

Unzu: Goodness!.....

Children: Yes, a crane! There's a crane! A crane's flying! *(They run away following the shadow of the crane)*

Unzu: Yohyo! Look, the crane!

Sodo: It's flying crookedly! *(Pause)*

Sodo: *(half to himself)* Well, now, it's very nice to have got two pieces of the cloth-God bless us!*(He tries to take the stuffs off from Yohyo's hands, but unconsciously Yohyo does not let them loose.)*

Unzu: *(Following the crane with his eyes while holding Yohyo in his arms).*Look! It's flying away! It's becoming small!

Yohyo: Tsu!.....Tsu!.....My dear!.....*(He takes a few stambling steps as if to follow in the direction of the crane, and halts, grasping the stuffs tightly)*
(Sodo also turns his eyes in that direction, and all eyes are riveted on a distant point in the sky. The children's song begins faintly in the distance.)

CURTAIN

The Bear - Anton Chekhov

Translated by Julius West.

CHARACTERS

ELENA IVANOVNA POPOVA, a landowning little widow, with dimples on her cheeks

GRIGORY STEPANOVITCH SMIRNOV, a middle-aged landowner

LUKA, Popova's aged footman

[A drawing-room in POPOVA'S house.]

[POPOVA is in deep mourning and has her eyes fixed on a photograph. LUKA is haranguing her.]

LUKA.

It isn't right, madam.... You're just destroying yourself. The maid and the cook have gone off fruit picking, every living being is rejoicing, even the cat understands how to enjoy herself and walks about in the yard, catching midges; only you sit in this room all day, as if this was a convent, and don't take any pleasure. Yes, really! I reckon it's a whole year that you haven't left the house!

POPOVA.

I shall never go out.... Why should I? My life is already at an end. He is in his grave, and I have buried myself between four walls.... We are both dead.

LUKA.

Well, there you are! Nicolai Mihailovitch is dead, well, it's the will of God, and may his soul rest in peace.... You've mourned him--and quite right. But you can't go on weeping and wearing and mourning for ever. My old woman died too, when her time came. Well? I grieved over her, I wept for a month, and that's enough for her, but if I've got to weep for a whole age, well, the old woman isn't worth it.

[Sighs]

You've forgotten all your neighbours. You don't go anywhere, and you see nobody. We live, so to speak, like spiders, and never see the light. The mice have eaten my livery. It isn't as if there were no good people around, for the district's full of them. There's a regiment quartered at Riblov, and the officers are such beauties--you can never gaze your fill

at them. And, every Friday, there's a ball at the camp, and every day the soldier's band plays.... Eh, my lady! You're young and beautiful, with roses in your cheek--if you only took a little pleasure. Beauty won't last long, you know. In ten years' time you'll want to be a pea-hen yourself among the officers, but they won't look at you, it will be too late.

POPOVA.

[With determination]

I must ask you never to talk to me about it! You know that when Nicolai Mihailovitch died, life lost all its meaning for me. I vowed never to the end of my days to cease to wear mourning, or to see the light.... You hear? Let his ghost see how well I love him.... Yes, I know it's no secret to you that he was often unfair to me, cruel, and... and even unfaithful, but I shall be true till death, and show him how I can love. There, beyond the grave, he will see me as I was before his death....

LUKA.

Instead of talking like that you ought to go and have a walk in the garden, or else order Toby or Giant to be harnessed, and then drive out to see some of the neighbours.

POPOVA.

Oh!

[Weeps.]

LUKA.

Madam! Dear madam! What is it? Bless you!

POPOVA.

He was so fond of Toby! He always used to ride on him to the Korchagins and Vlasovs. How well he could ride! What grace there was in his figure when he pulled at the reins with all his strength! Do you remember? Toby, Toby! Tell them to give him an extra feed of oats.

LUKA.

Yes, madam.

[A bell rings noisily.]

POPOVA.

[Shaking]

Who's that? Tell them that I receive nobody.

LUKA.

Yes, madam.

[Exit.]

POPOVA.

[Looks at the photograph]

You will see, Nicolas, how I can love and forgive.... My love will die out with me, only when this poor heart will cease to beat.

[Laughs through her tears]

And aren't you ashamed? I am a good and virtuous little wife. I've locked myself in, and will be true to you till the grave, and you... aren't you ashamed, you bad child? You deceived me, had rows with me, left me alone for weeks on end....

[LUKA enters in consternation.]

LUKA.

Madam, somebody is asking for you. He wants to see you....

POPOVA.

But didn't you tell him that since the death of my husband I've stopped receiving?

LUKA.

I did, but he wouldn't even listen; says that it's a very pressing affair.

POPOVA.

I do not re-ceive!

LUKA.

I told him so, but the... the devil... curses and pushes himself right in.... He's in the dining-room now.

POPOVA.

[Annoyed]

Very well, ask him in.... What manners!

[Exit LUKA]

How these people annoy me! What does he want of me? Why should he disturb my peace?

[Sighs]

No, I see that I shall have to go into a convent after all.

[Thoughtfully]

Yes, into a convent....

[Enter LUKA with SMIRNOV.]

SMIRNOV.

[To LUKA]

You fool, you're too fond of talking.... Ass!

[Sees POPOVA and speaks with respect]

Madam, I have the honour to present myself, I am Grigory Stepanovitch Smirnov, landowner and retired lieutenant of artillery! I am compelled to disturb you on a very pressing affair.

POPOVA.

[Not giving him her hand]

What do you want?

SMIRNOV.

Your late husband, with whom I had the honour of being acquainted, died in my debt for one thousand two hundred roubles, on two bills of exchange. As I've got to pay the interest on a mortgage to-morrow, I've come to ask you, madam, to pay me the money to-day.

POPOVA.

One thousand two hundred....And what was my husband in debt to you for?

SMIRNOV.

He used to buy oats from me.

POPOVA.

[Sighing, to LUKA]

So don't you forget, Luka, to give Toby an extra feed of oats.

[Exit LUKA]

If Nicolai Mihailovitch died in debt to you, then I shall certainly pay you, but you must excuse me to-day, as I haven't any spare cash. The

day after to-morrow my steward will be back from town, and I'll give him instructions to settle your account, but at the moment I cannot do as you wish.... Moreover, it's exactly seven months to-day since the death of my husband, and I'm in a state of mind which absolutely prevents me from giving money matters my attention.

SMIRNOV.

And I'm in a state of mind which, if I don't pay the interest due to-morrow, will force me to make a graceful exit from this life feet first. They'll take my estate!

POPOVA.

You'll have your money the day after to-morrow.

SMIRNOV.

I don't want the money the day after tomorrow, I want it to-day.

POPOVA.

You must excuse me, I can't pay you.

SMIRNOV.

And I can't wait till after to-morrow.

POPOVA.

Well, what can I do, if I haven't the money now!

SMIRNOV.

You mean to say, you can't pay me?

POPOVA.

I can't.

SMIRNOV.

Hm! Is that the last word you've got to say?

POPOVA.

Yes, the last word.

SMIRNOV.

The last word? Absolutely your last?

POPOVA.

Absolutely.

SMIRNOV.

Thank you so much. I'll make a note of it.

[Shrugs his shoulders]

And then people want me to keep calm! I meet a man on the road, and he asks me "Why are you always so angry, Grigory Stepanovitch?" But how on earth am I not to get angry? I want the money desperately. I rode out yesterday, early in the morning, and called on all my debtors, and not a single one of them paid up! I was just about dead-beat after it all, slept, goodness knows where, in some inn, kept by a Jew, with a vodka-barrel by my head. At last I get here, seventy versts from home, and hope to get something, and I am received by you with a "state of mind"! How shouldn't I get angry.

POPOVA.

I thought I distinctly said my steward will pay you when he returns from town.

SMIRNOV.

I didn't come to your steward, but to you! What the devil, excuse my saying so, have I to do with your steward!

POPOVA.

Excuse me, sir, I am not accustomed to listen to such expressions or to such a tone of voice. I want to hear no more.

[Makes a rapid exit.]

SMIRNOV.

Well, there! "A state of mind."... "Husband died seven months ago!" Must I pay the interest, or mustn't I? I ask you: Must I pay, or must I not? Suppose your husband is dead, and you've got a state of mind, and nonsense of that sort.... And your steward's gone away somewhere, devil take him, what do you want me to do? Do you think I can fly away from my creditors in a balloon, or what? Or do you expect me to go and run my head into a brick wall? I go to Grusdev and he isn't at home, Yaroshevitch has hidden himself, I had a violent row with Kuritsin and nearly threw him out of the window, Mazugo has something the matter with his bowels, and this woman has "a state of mind." Not one of the swine wants to pay me! Just because I'm too gentle with them, because I'm a rag, just weak wax in their hands! I'm much too gentle with

them! Well, just you wait! You'll find out what I'm like! I shan't let you play about with me, confound it! I shall jolly well stay here until she pays! Brr!... How angry I am to-day, how angry I am! All my inside is quivering with anger, and I can't even breathe.... Foo, my word, I even feel sick!

[Yells]
Waiter!

[Enter LUKA.]

LUKA.
What is it?

SMIRNOV.
Get me some kvass or water!

[Exit LUKA]

What a way to reason! A man is in desperate need of his money, and she won't pay it because, you see, she is not disposed to attend to money matters!... That's real silly feminine logic. That's why I never did like, and don't like now, to have to talk to women. I'd rather sit on a barrel of gunpowder than talk to a woman. Brr!... I feel quite chilly--and it's all on account of that little bit of fluff! I can't even see one of these poetic creatures from a distance without breaking out into a cold sweat out of sheer anger. I can't look at them.

[Enter LUKA with water.]

LUKA.
Madam is ill and will see nobody.

SMIRNOV.
Get out!

[Exit LUKA]

Ill and will see nobody! No, it's all right, you don't see me.... I'm going to stay and will sit here till you give me the money. You can be ill for a week, if you like, and I'll stay here for a week.... If you're ill for a year--I'll stay for a year. I'm going to get my own, my dear! You don't get at me with your widow's weeds and your dimpled cheeks! I know those dimples!

[Shouts through the window]

Simeon, take them out! We aren't going away at once! I'm staying here! Tell them in the stable to give the horses some oats! You fool, you've let the near horse's leg get tied up in the reins again!

[Teasingly]

"Never mind...." I'll give it you. "Never mind."

[Goes away from the window]

Oh, it's bad.... The heat's frightful, nobody pays up. I slept badly, and on top of everything else here's a bit of fluff in mourning with "a state of mind."... My head's aching.... Shall I have some vodka, what? Yes, I think I will.

[Yells]

Waiter!

[Enter LUKA.]

LUKA.

What is it?

SMIRNOV.

A glass of vodka!

[Exit LUKA]

Ouf!

[Sits and inspects himself]

I must say I look well! Dust all over, boots dirty, unwashed, unkempt, straw on my waistcoat.... The dear lady may well have taken me for a brigand.

[Yawns]

It's rather impolite to come into a drawing-room in this state, but it can't be helped.... I am not here as a visitor, but as a creditor, and there's no dress specially prescribed for creditors....

[Enter LUKA with the vodka.]

LUKA.

You allow yourself to go very far, sir....

SMIRNOV

[Angrily]

What?

LUKA.

I... er... nothing... I really...

SMIRNOV.

Whom are you talking to? Shut up!

LUKA.

[Aside]

The devil's come to stay.... Bad luck that brought him....

[Exit.]

SMIRNOV.

Oh, how angry I am! So angry that I think I could grind the whole world to dust.... I even feel sick....

[Yells]

Waiter!

[Enter POPOVA.]

POPOVA.

[Her eyes downcast]

Sir, in my solitude I have grown unaccustomed to the masculine voice, and I can't stand shouting. I must ask you not to disturb my peace.

SMIRNOV.

Pay me the money, and I'll go.

POPOVA.

I told you perfectly plainly; I haven't any money to spare; wait until the day after to-morrow.

SMIRNOV.

And I told you perfectly plainly I don't want the money the day after to-morrow, but to-day. If you don't pay me to-day, I'll have to hang myself to-morrow.

POPOVA.

But what can I do if I haven't got the money? You're so strange!

SMIRNOV.

Then you won't pay me now? Eh?

POPOVA.

I can't.

SMIRNOV.

In that case I stay here and shall wait until I get it. [Sits down] You're going to pay me the day after to-morrow? Very well! I'll stay here until the day after to-morrow. I'll sit here all the time.... [Jumps up] I ask you: Have I got to pay the interest to-morrow, or haven't I? Or do you think I'm doing this for a joke?

POPOVA.

Please don't shout! This isn't a stable!

SMIRNOV.

I wasn't asking you about a stable, but whether I'd got my interest to pay to-morrow or not?

POPOVA.

You don't know how to behave before women!

SMIRNOV.

No, I do know how to behave before women!

POPOVA.

No, you don't! You're a rude, ill-bred man! Decent people don't talk to a woman like that!

SMIRNOV.

What a business! How do you want me to talk to you? In French, or what?

[Loses his temper and lisps]

Madame, je vous prie.... How happy I am that you don't pay me.... Ah, pardon. I have disturbed you! Such lovely weather to-day! And how well you look in mourning!

[Bows.]

POPOVA.

That's silly and rude.

SMIRNOV.

[Teasing her]

Silly and rude! I don't know how to behave before women! Madam, in my time I've seen more women than you've seen sparrows! Three times I've fought duels on account of women. I've refused twelve women, and nine have refused me! Yes! There was a time when I played the fool, scented myself, used honeyed words, wore jewellery, made beautiful bows. I used to love, to suffer, to sigh at the moon, to get sour, to thaw, to freeze.... I used to love passionately, madly, every blessed way, devil take me; I used to chatter like a magpie about emancipation, and wasted half my wealth on tender feelings, but now--you must excuse me! You won't get round me like that now! I've had enough! Black eyes, passionate eyes, ruby lips, dimpled cheeks, the moon, whispers, timid breathing--I wouldn't give a brass farthing for the lot, madam! Present company always excepted, all women, great or little, are insincere, crooked, backbiters, envious, liars to the marrow of their bones, vain, trivial, merciless, unreasonable, and, as far as this is concerned

[taps his forehead]

excuse my outspokenness, a sparrow can give ten points to any philosopher in petticoats you like to name! You look at one of these poetic creatures: all muslin, an ethereal demi-goddess, you have a million transports of joy, and you look into her soul--and see a common crocodile!

[He grips the back of a chair; the chair creaks and breaks]

But the most disgusting thing of all is that this crocodile for some reason or other imagines that its chef d'oeuvre, its privilege and monopoly, is its tender feelings. Why, confound it, hang me on that nail feet upwards, if you like, but have you met a woman who can love anybody except a lapdog? When she's in love, can she do anything but snivel and slobber? While a man is suffering and making sacrifices all her love expresses itself in her playing about with her scarf, and trying to hook him more firmly by the nose. You have the misfortune to be a woman, you know from yourself what is the nature of woman. Tell me truthfully, have you ever seen a woman who was sincere, faithful, and constant? You haven't! Only freaks and old women are faithful and constant! You'll meet a cat with a horn or a white woodcock sooner than a constant woman!

POPOVA.

Then, according to you, who is faithful and constant in love? Is it the man?

SMIRNOV.

Yes, the man!

POPOVA.

The man!

[Laughs bitterly]

Men are faithful and constant in love! What an idea!

[With heat]

What right have you to talk like that? Men are faithful and constant! Since we are talking about it, I'll tell you that of all the men I knew and know, the best was my late husband.... I loved him passionately with all my being, as only a young and imaginative woman can love, I gave him my youth, my happiness, my life, my fortune, I breathed in him, I worshipped him as if I were a heathen, and... and what then? This best of men shamelessly deceived me at every step! After his death I found in his desk a whole drawerful of love-letters, and when he was alive--it's an awful thing to remember!--he used to leave me alone for weeks at a time, and make love to other women and betray me before my very eyes; he wasted my money, and made fun of my feelings.... And, in spite of all that, I loved him and was true to him. And not only that, but, now that he is dead, I am still true and constant to his memory. I have shut myself for ever within these four walls, and will wear these weeds to the very end....

SMIRNOV.

[Laughs contemptuously]

Weeds!... I don't understand what you take me for. As if I don't know why you wear that black domino and bury yourself between four walls! I should say I did! It's so mysterious, so poetic! When some junker [Note: So in the original.] or some tame poet goes past your windows he'll think: "There lives the mysterious Tamara who, for the love of her husband, buried herself between four walls." We know these games!

POPOVA.

[Exploding]

What? How dare you say all that to me?

SMIRNOV.

You may have buried yourself alive, but you haven't forgotten to powder your face!

POPOVA.

How dare you speak to me like that?

SMIRNOV.

Please don't shout, I'm not your steward! You must allow me to call things by their real names. I'm not a woman, and I'm used to saying what I think straight out! Don't you shout, either!

POPOVA.

I'm not shouting, it's you! Please leave me alone!

SMIRNOV.

Pay me my money and I'll go.

POPOVA.

I shan't give you any money!

SMIRNOV.

Oh, no, you will.

POPOVA.

I shan't give you a farthing, just to spite you. You leave me alone!

SMIRNOV.

I have not the pleasure of being either your husband or your fiance, so please don't make scenes.

[Sits]

I don't like it.

POPOVA.

[Choking with rage]

So you sit down?

SMIRNOV.

I do.

POPOVA.

I ask you to go away!

SMIRNOV.

Give me my money....

[Aside]

Oh, how angry I am! How angry I am!

POPOVA.

I don't want to talk to impudent scoundrels! Get out of this!

[Pause]

Aren't you going? No?

SMIRNOV.

No.

POPOVA.

No?

SMIRNOV.

No!

POPOVA.

Very well then!

[Rings, enter LUKA]

Luka, show this gentleman out!

LUKA.

[Approaches SMIRNOV]

Would you mind going out, sir, as you're asked to! You needn't...

SMIRNOV.

[Jumps up]

Shut up! Who are you talking to? I'll chop you into pieces!

LUKA.

[Clutches at his heart]

Little fathers!... What people!...

[Falls into a chair]

Oh, I'm ill, I'm ill! I can't breathe!

POPOVA.

Where's Dasha? Dasha!

[Shouts]

Dasha! Pelageya! Dasha!

[Rings.]

LUKA.

Oh! They've all gone out to pick fruit.... There's nobody at home! I'm ill! Water!

POPOVA.

Get out of this, now.

SMIRNOV.

Can't you be more polite?

POPOVA.

[Clenches her fists and stamps her foot]

You're a boor! A coarse bear! A Bourbon! A monster!

SMIRNOV.

What? What did you say?

POPOVA.

I said you are a bear, a monster!

SMIRNOV.

[Approaching her]

May I ask what right you have to insult me?

POPOVA.

And suppose I am insulting you? Do you think I'm afraid of you?

SMIRNOV.

And do you think that just because you're a poetic creature you can insult me with impunity? Eh? We'll fight it out!

LUKA.

Little fathers!... What people!... Water!

SMIRNOV.

Pistols!

POPOVA.

Do you think I'm afraid of you just because you have large fists and a bull's throat? Eh? You Bourbon!

SMIRNOV.

We'll fight it out! I'm not going to be insulted by anybody, and I don't care if you are a woman, one of the "softer sex," indeed!

POPOVA.

[Trying to interrupt him]

Bear! Bear! Bear!

SMIRNOV.

It's about time we got rid of the prejudice that only men need pay for their insults. Devil take it, if you want equality of rights you can have it. We're going to fight it out!

POPOVA.

With pistols? Very well!

SMIRNOV.

This very minute.

POPOVA.

This very minute! My husband had some pistols.... I'll bring them here.

[Is going, but turns back]

What pleasure it will give me to put a bullet into your thick head! Devil take you!

[Exit.]

SMIRNOV.

I'll bring her down like a chicken! I'm not a little boy or a sentimental puppy; I don't care about this "softer sex."

LUKA.

Gracious little fathers!...

[Kneels]

Have pity on a poor old man, and go away from here! You've frightened her to death, and now you want to shoot her!

SMIRNOV.

[Not hearing him]

If she fights, well that's equality of rights, emancipation, and all that! Here the sexes are equal! I'll shoot her on principle! But what a woman!

[Parodying her]

“Devil take you! I’ll put a bullet into your thick head.” Eh? How she reddened, how her cheeks shone!... She accepted my challenge! My word, it’s the first time in my life that I’ve seen....

LUKA.

Go away, sir, and I’ll always pray to God for you!

SMIRNOV.

She is a woman! That’s the sort I can understand! A real woman! Not a sour-faced jellybag, but fire, gunpowder, a rocket! I’m even sorry to have to kill her!

LUKA.

[Weeps]

Dear... dear sir, do go away!

SMIRNOV.

I absolutely like her! Absolutely! Even though her cheeks are dimpled, I like her! I’m almost ready to let the debt go... and I’m not angry any longer.... Wonderful woman!

[Enter POPOVA with pistols.]

POPOVA.

Here are the pistols.... But before we fight you must show me how to fire. I’ve never held a pistol in my hands before.

LUKA.

Oh, Lord, have mercy and save her.... I’ll go and find the coachman and the gardener.... Why has this infliction come on us....

[Exit.]

SMIRNOV.

[Examining the pistols]

You see, there are several sorts of pistols.... There are Mortimer pistols, specially made for duels, they fire a percussion-cap. These are Smith and Wesson revolvers, triple action, with extractors.... These are excellent pistols. They can’t cost less than ninety roubles the pair.... You must hold the revolver like this....

[Aside]

Her eyes, her eyes! What an inspiring woman!

POPOVA.

Like this?

SMIRNOV.

Yes, like this.... Then you cock the trigger, and take aim like this.... Put your head back a little! Hold your arm out properly.... Like that.... Then you press this thing with your finger--and that's all. The great thing is to keep cool and aim steadily.... Try not to jerk your arm.

POPOVA.

Very well.... It's inconvenient to shoot in a room, let's go into the garden.

SMIRNOV.

Come along then. But I warn you, I'm going to fire in the air.

POPOVA.

That's the last straw! Why?

SMIRNOV.

Because... because... it's my affair.

POPOVA.

Are you afraid? Yes? Ah! No, sir, you don't get out of it! You come with me! I shan't have any peace until I've made a hole in your forehead... that forehead which I hate so much! Are you afraid?

SMIRNOV.

Yes, I am afraid.

POPOVA.

You lie! Why won't you fight?

SMIRNOV.

Because... because you... because I like you.

POPOVA.

[Laughs]

He likes me! He dares to say that he likes me!

[Points to the door]

That's the way.

SMIRNOV.

[Loads the revolver in silence, takes his cap and goes to the door. There he stops for half a minute, while they look at each other in silence, then he hesitatingly approaches POPOVA]

Listen.... Are you still angry? I'm devilishly annoyed, too... but, do you understand... how can I express myself?... The fact is, you see, it's like this, so to speak....

[Shouts]

Well, is it my fault that I like you?

[He snatches at the back of a chair; the chair creaks and breaks]

Devil take it, how I'm smashing up your furniture! I like you! Do you understand? I... I almost love you!

POPOVA.

Get away from me--I hate you!

SMIRNOV.

God, what a woman! I've never in my life seen one like her! I'm lost! Done for! Fallen into a mousetrap, like a mouse!

POPOVA.

Stand back, or I'll fire!

SMIRNOV.

Fire, then! You can't understand what happiness it would be to die before those beautiful eyes, to be shot by a revolver held in that little, velvet hand.... I'm out of my senses! Think, and make up your mind at once, because if I go out we shall never see each other again! Decide now.... I am a landowner, of respectable character, have an income of ten thousand a year. I can put a bullet through a coin tossed into the air as it comes down.... I own some fine horses.... Will you be my wife?

POPOVA.

[Indignantly shakes her revolver]

Let's fight! Let's go out!

SMIRNOV.

I'm mad.... I understand nothing.

[Yells]

Waiter, water!

POPOVA.

[Yells]

Let's go out and fight!

SMIRNOV.

I'm off my head, I'm in love like a boy, like a fool!

[Snatches her hand, she screams with pain]

I love you!

[Kneels]

I love you as I've never loved before! I've refused twelve women, nine have refused me, but I never loved one of them as I love you.... I'm weak, I'm wax, I've melted.... I'm on my knees like a fool, offering you my hand.... Shame, shame! I haven't been in love for five years, I'd taken a vow, and now all of a sudden I'm in love, like a fish out of water! I offer you my hand. Yes or no? You don't want me? Very well!

[Gets up and quickly goes to the door.]

POPOVA.

Stop.

SMIRNOV.

[Stops]

Well?

POPOVA.

Nothing, go away.... No, stop.... No, go away, go away! I hate you! Or no.... Don't go away! Oh, if you knew how angry I am, how angry I am!

[Throws her revolver on the table]

My fingers have swollen because of all this....

[Tears her handkerchief in temper]

What are you waiting for? Get out!

SMIRNOV.

Good-bye.

POPOVA.

Yes, yes, go away!...

[Yells]

Where are you going? Stop.... No, go away. Oh, how angry I am! Don't come near me, don't come near me!

SMIRNOV.

[Approaching her]

How angry I am with myself! I'm in love like a student, I've been on my knees....

[Rudely]

I love you! What do I want to fall in love with you for? To-morrow I've got to pay the interest, and begin mowing, and here you....

[Puts his arms around her]

I shall never forgive myself for this....

POPOVA.

Get away from me! Take your hands away! I hate you! Let's go and fight!

[A prolonged kiss. Enter LUKA with an axe, the GARDENER with a rake, the COACHMAN with a pitchfork, and WORKMEN with poles.]

LUKA.

[Catches sight of the pair kissing]

Little fathers!

[Pause.]

POPOVA.

[Lowering her eyes]

Luka, tell them in the stables that Toby isn't to have any oats at all to-day.

[Curtain.]

[The end]

Anton Chekhov's play: Bear