

The Seagull (Nina)

by Anton Chekhov

Scene Synopsis

Nina has returned to Sorin's estate. She was cast off by Trigorin after her beauty and innocence wore off. She finds her previous love, Treplev and breaks down.

Play Synopsis

Set in the Russian countryside, the cast of characters comes together desiring more than what they have. Some want love, some money, some a place in the world. Arkadina, an aging actress, comes home with her lover and begins a series of events that will ruin her whole family and those of the estate.

Nina says

Why do you say that you have kissed the ground I walked on? You should kill me rather. I am so tired. If I could only rest—rest. I am a sea-gull—no—no, I am an actress. He is there too. Ah, well—no matter. He does not believe in the theatre; he used to laugh at my dreams, so that little by little I became down-hearted and ceased to believe in it too. Then came all the cares of love, the continual anxiety about my little one, so that I soon grew trivial and spiritless, and played my parts without meaning. I never knew what to do with my hands, and I could not walk properly or control my voice. You cannot imagine the state of mind of one who knows as he goes through a play how terribly badly he is acting. I am a sea-gull—no—no, that is not what I meant to say. Do you remember how you shot a seagull once? A man chanced to pass that way and destroyed it out of idleness. That is an idea for a short story, but it is not what I meant to say.

(She passes her hand across her forehead)

What was I saying? Oh, yes, the stage. I have changed now. Now I am a real actress. I act with joy, with exaltation, I am intoxicated by it, and feel that I am superb. I have been walking and walking, and thinking and thinking, ever since I have been here, and I feel the strength of my spirit growing in me every day. I

know now, I understand at last, Constantine, that for us, whether we write or act, it is not the honour and glory of which I have dreamt that is important, it is the strength to endure. One must know how to bear one's cross, and one must have faith. I believe, and so do not suffer so much, and when I think of my calling I do not fear life.