

# *A SEAGULL IN THE HAMPTONS*

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

FREELY ADAPATED FROM ANTON CHEKHOV'S PLAY *THE SEAGULL*

BY EMILY MANN

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[Excerpted from Act II]

*ENTER NICHOLAS AND NINA WITH HAROLD.*

NICHOLAS

*TO NINA, AS IF TO A CHILD:*

So are we having a good time finally? Are we happy for once now that Daddy and Step-Mommy have gone to the Big City? And we're free as a bird for three whole days?

*NINA PLOPS DOWN NEXT TO MARIA.*

NINA

Yes, yes, yes! I'm here where I belong!

MARIA

Yes! And nicely dressed, too—you see, Milly? Beautiful hair and pretty little dress and just a touch of... what is that dear—mascara? And do I detect a hint of blush?

NINA

Oh, I don't think so. I think that's all just me...

MARIA

I see... Well, we mustn't praise you too much or you'll get...hateful. Where's Philip?

NINA

He's down by the dock, fishing.

MARIA

Hmph. I'm surprised he isn't sick of it.

*PICKING UP THE BOOK:*

Now where was I?

NINA

What are you reading?

*SHOWING HER THE COVER:*

MARIA

Some French romance.

HAROLD

Oh, right. I haven't read it. It's on the summer best-seller list, isn't it?

MARIA

Yes. It's trash.

BEN

Actually it would do you good to read it, Harold.

HAROLD

Really? Why?

BEN

It might get your blood pumping --

HAROLD

Excuse me? I'm not sure what you're insinuating, but I am sure I don't—

MARIA

Stop it, you two! Well, the rest looks boring and it's obviously wrong. (*SHE TOSSES THE BOOK*) ... God, I'm so upset. What's the matter with my son? He's so depressed and I never see him any more.

MILLY

His heart's breaking.

*TO NINA:*

Will you recite something from his play?

NINA

*SHRUGGING:*

Why? It's so... weird.

MILLY

I don't think so. When Alex read it out loud, his eyes shone and the poetry just soared. It's magnificent. I think it's a brilliant play.

*NICHOLAS SNORES. HE'S FALLEN ASLEEP WITH HIS MOUTH OPEN.*

MARIA

Nicky!

*NICK WAKES UP WITH A SNORT.*

Are you asleep?

NICHOLAS

Of course not.

MARIA

It's the middle of the day! You should see a doctor.

NICHOLAS

I don't get any sleep with that f—damn dog ! That's all.

BEN

I've told you, you need to get a check-up. I want you to get your blood results if nothing else. You shouldn't be so exhausted all the time.

MARIA

I have a great idea! Why don't we all go to a spa together? Wouldn't that be just too fun? We could all get massages, and eat healthy food, and get mud wraps, and salt rubs and we'd all sleep... like babies!...

BEN

Sure we could all do that. Better yet, why don't we all just shoot ourselves?

MARIA

What is that supposed to mean?

BEN

Whatever you want it to mean.

HAROLD

Nicholas should just stop drinking so much. And smoking.

MARIA

*HURT:*

Nobody listens to me.

BEN

Because you are an impossible woman! I want your brother to go to a doctor. This isn't about you!

*CURT AND INJURED:*

MARIA

I see.

NICHOLAS

None of you understands that all I want to do is live a little! You've all had wonderful lives and I haven't!

MARIA

Oh, stop it!

NICHOLAS

No, really! If I drink some good wine, or have a whiskey before dinner or smoke a cigar after dinner, or even smoke a cigarette during the day, it isn't exactly drinking and smoking to excess!—and that's all the pleasure I have in my life, so LET ME HAVE IT!

MARIA

Okay!

BEN

To look back at your life at your age and piss and moan about what you missed is ... well...

MILLY

Must be time for lunch!...

*MILLY GETS UP AND STUMBLES.*

Oops! My foot fell asleep.

*EXITS, WEAVING, TOWARDS THE HOUSE. THEY WATCH HER.*

BEN

She's going to knock off a couple more drinks before lunch, don't you think?

NICHOLAS

The poor thing. She's miserable! just like I was at her age, and chances are it's not going to get any better.

BEN

Oh, for Christ's sake, Nick!

*ALEX WALKS UP-STAGE OF THEM. MARIA SEES HIM.*

MARIA

Alex, darling! Come here.

*HE KEEPS WALKING. PAUSE, THEN:*

Oh, God it's hot! And it's so quiet! I can't stand it! I'd so much rather be home in the City or in a hotel room anywhere in the world and be working, or preparing, or going over my lines before a performance, or anything but this! I HATE VACATIONS. I don't know how to take them and I hate them. I'm very bad at relaxing! I don't like to do nothing. I don't know HOW!

NINA

Yes, yes! Me, too! I'm just like you.

*MARIA LOOKS AT HER.*

MARIA

Really...

NICHOLAS

We all know you're happier in the City, Maria, but this gives you time to be with your family. In the City you may have meetings, and theatre and rehearsals and WORK, but here you have the ocean, and the beach, and well, US! Don't you care about us, at all? Just for a few weeks a year, let it all go!

*LORENZO ENTERS WITH PAULA FOLLOWING, UPSET:*

LORENZO

Who says they want me to drive them into the City today?

*WAVING HER FINGERS:*

MARIA

Me! I want to take your daughter in to have an appointment with my stylist immediately. (*LAUGHING*) Yesterday if possible. He'll see her today once I explain it's an emergency.

LORENZO

Well, it's impossible today, Maria.

MARIA

Pardon me?

LORENZO

I'm swamped with work! I can't possibly drive you in, wait for your beauty appointment and drive you back out at rush hour. The pool man is coming today—we are planting the front garden just as you requested—you have no idea how difficult it was to find the exact varieties and colors you asked for—the tent man is coming to inspect the grounds for the party, and—

MARIA

Well, have Jose ...greet the tent-man and the gardeners, or whatever needs to be done with them.

LORENZO

Jose is doing work for me in the kitchen. We've just finished making lunch and we are starting the preparations for the evening.

MARIA

Oh, really! You're just making this up! You're saying this... just to make me crazy! And don't you care about your daughter at all? This hair appointment could save her life!

LORENZO

*A SLOW BURN:*

...The best I can do to have you... chauffeured into New York is the beginning of next week. And since I, myself, am not a chauffeur I will have to arrange it so that Jose can be freed to drive you. But not today. Today is impossible, as I've explained. Jose is fully booked!

MARIA

I--I can't believe how I am being treated. Nothing I want seems to matter around here! Well... That's it! You have insulted me, just as you'd hoped. I'll go back to New York on the train, or I'll take the *JITNEY!* for God's sake! And I won't ever come back!!

LORENZO

Fine. In that case, I quit. Find someone else to abuse!

*HE EXITS.*

MARIA

Oh, God, oh, God, oh, God!!! I hate this!! It's the same thing every year. Why should I have to put up with this? I'm never stepping foot in this house again as long as he's here!

*SHE EXITS TOWARDS THE DOCK.*

NICHOLAS

Oh.... This is just outrageous. I am fed up with these people.

PAULA

I'm so sorry, Nicholas. I don't know what I can do. He's an impossible man. He always has been. Think of what I have to put up with every day!

NICHOLAS

He's leaving? Just leaving?—in high season?! And before our party? He can't do this to us. I'll just march right up there and insist that he stay.

BEN

Oh, good going, Nick. Show some back-bone.

NICHOLAS

*TO NINA:*

Come on, let's go find Maria and beg her to stay.

*BEN GROANS.*

NINA

Oh, yes, let's! I just can't believe anyone would dare speak to... to Maria like that!

*AS THEY GO:*

NICHOLAS

Yes, isn't it awful, but he is not going to get away with it this time. I plan to give that man such a piece of my mind!

*THEY'RE GONE.*

BEN

When did Nick turn into such a big baby?

PAULA

... Wasn't he always a big baby?...

*BEN LAUGHS.*

BEN

...You're right. Nick should have fired your husband on the spot, but you know what's going to happen. Nick and Maria are going to end up crying and apologizing to HIM! and then they'll beg him or pay him tons more money to stay...

PAULA

God, I really can't stand anymore. Can't you take me home with you? Let me leave him today and be with you. How many more years do we have to wait? What time is it, Ben?! We're getting old.

BEN

You're right. And now I'm too old to change.

PAULA

*STIFLING A SOB:*

Wh—...I know you have other women. I understand that... It's alright! I'll put up with it as I always—

BEN

What?

PAULA

I'm sorry...I'm sorry I didn't realize... after all these years you're tired of me. Of course you are. I—

BEN

No, no...

*NINA APPEARS PICKING FLOWERS NEAR THE HOUSE. BEN WATCHES HER.*

PAULA  
You were with Maria all morning, weren't you?

BEN  
*IRRITATED:*  
Well, yes, I was with Maria all morning. So?

PAULA  
I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. I just get so jealous. It's killing me.

BEN  
I'm not tired of you, Paula.

PAULA  
Really?

BEN  
Really.

PAULA  
*SOBBING:*  
Oh, thank God...  
*WHISPERING, CHOKED:*  
If you have to be with other women, just don't let me see it, alright?

BEN  
I'll do my best.

*NINA APPEARS WITH A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS.*

How's it going up there?

NINA  
Maria is crying and Nicky is having an asthma attack.

BEN  
Oh... right... So...I'll go up and see what I can do.

*NINA GIVES HIM THE FLOWERS.*

NINA  
These are for you.

BEN  
Ah! *Muchas gracias, senorita!*

*BEN EXITS TOWARDS THE HOUSE.*

NINA  
*GIGGLING:*  
*De nada.*

*PAULA FOLLOWS.*

PAULA  
What pretty flowers! Let me see them.  
*NEAR THE HOUSE IN A LOW VOICE:*  
Give me those flowers!  
*SHE TEARS THEM TO PIECES AND DUMPS THEM AS THEY EXIT INTO THE HOUSE.*

*ALEX ENTERS WITH A DEAD SEAGULL.*

ALEX  
You're alone...

NINA  
Yes.

*ALEX PUTS THE DEAD BIRD AT HER FEET.*

What's that supposed to mean?

ALEX

I was heartless enough to kill this bird...instead of myself. I lay it at your feet.

NINA

What's wrong with you?

ALEX

I'll kill myself like this, too. One day soon...

NINA

Where did you get a gun?

ALEX

Lorenzo keeps one in the kitchen. I took it.

NINA

I don't understand who you are anymore!

ALEX

I feel the same way about you. Who are you? You're cold, you hate being around me.

NINA

It's because you act so crazy. You talk in these...symbols. And this seagull! I mean, really. I'm sorry, but I just don't understand. I must be too stupid to understand you.

ALEX

It's not hard to understand, Nina. It all began the night my play... failed. Women don't forgive failure. Well...you'll be happy to know I tore it up, all of it. And then I deleted the file. It no longer exists. Oh, Nina, you can't imagine how miserable I am! I'm so unhappy! I can't believe you stopped loving me! And I still adore you! My play was a disaster and now you despise me. You think I don't have any talent and I'm just pathetic and worthless... Oh, God, losing your love is so awful, it's so unbelievable, it's like I woke up one morning and the ocean had dried up or disappeared! Nina, Nina. I understand it all perfectly! Perfectly! and it's like a nail is being driven into my brain. The pain is unbearable! I adore you and you can't stand me...I'm dying.

*[End of excerpt.]*