

You could find someone again—someone like Alice. You could raise a family—here!

**BOBBY:** That's never going to happen, Norman.

**NORMAN:** Yes, it is.

**BOBBY:** She's dead. That's all there is to it. Alice got sick and died.

**NORMAN:** If you had gone ahead and gotten married . . .

**BOBBY:** Okay, Norman.

**NORMAN:** People die . . . but you can find other people, people to take their place.

**BOBBY:** Okay.

**NORMAN, crosses to shiva stool—sits:** Mama loved me more than she loved Pop . . . did you know that, Bobby? She loved me more than she loved Pop. Every day, for as long as I can remember, she would leave him at the store to come home and be with me. She was here before I got home from school almost always. We would watch TV upstairs . . . we'd sit together on the couch with only the desk lamp on in the room . . . and I'd make patterns with the cookies she had given me. From three o'clock to five o'clock. Every day. A little after five, she'd wake Jerry from his nap, and you and Phil'd get home from practice. And then I'd be the one to come down here and wait for Pop. I'd be the one. I'd stand by the window and say to myself, "The sixth car to come by going up the street will be Pop's." Different days I'd guess different numbers. I was right a lot, too. But I didn't tell him when I guessed it. Because Pop would laugh. He'd always laugh. At me . . . and at Mama. *Pause.* I did not kill her. I was home, and Pop wanted someone to take her to the store to pick up some things for dinner. *He* wanted something special for dinner. *Pause.* SHE loved me. She loved me more than she did Pop. *Long pause.* Bobby is moved but unable to reach out to him. I'll find something for us in the kitchen, okay? Some cake or something.

**BOBBY:** Sure.

## THE PRIVATE EAR

by Peter Shaffer

The setting is Tchaik's London apartment. (Tchaik is the nickname given to him by his friend, Ted, because he likes classical music, particularly Tchaikovsky.) Tchaik met a girl at a concert. Usually shy and awkward, he managed to invite her to his flat for dinner. Afraid he would not know what to talk about, he also invited his suave and smooth-talking friend, Ted. Ted has agreed to cook dinner. During the time between the concert and the dinner, Tchaik has built up his image of the girl into a goddess—pure, intelligent, cultured. A rude awakening awaits him. The excerpt below is the opening scene of the play.

*The curtain rises on Tchaik's flat. Music is playing: Mozart on the gramophone. The door bursts open; Tchaik rushes in, in bathrobe and slippers, towelling his head. Throughout the scene he displays agitation and indecision in his preparations. There is an iron plugged into the electric light. He throws the towel on the bed, takes trousers from wardrobe, places them on the table and begins to press them. No result. He tests the iron, realizes it is not hot, looks up at the hanging lamp which is off, puts the iron down on the trousers, runs to left of kitchen door and turns on the wall switch. He crosses to the armchair and picks up a paper bag in which there is a deodorant stick, throws bag in wastebasket upstage center and crosses to the dresser, dropping his robe around his waist. He opens the stick and applies it to his armpit—he sniffs it. Satisfied, he applies it to the other. He puts the top on the stick, looks around and sees the iron on his pants. Alarmed, he runs to the table, picks the iron up and gingerly feels it. It is still not warm. He sits in chair above table and looks at it. A transistor is heard through the Mozart and Ted enters from left carrying a shopping bag and a small transistor radio which is playing loudly. He pauses inside the door and looks at Tchaik. He crosses to the red armchair, drops his bag in it, then crosses to*



*the gramophone and takes the arm off it and switches off the gramophone.*

TED, *as he rushes to the gramophone*: Christ! D'you know what time it is?

TCHAIK, *seated behind table*: What?

TED, *switching off transistor*: Seven-twenty-two. What the hell have you been up to while I've been doing your shopping? Dreaming, I suppose, as usual.

TCHAIK: I haven't.

TED: You're marvelous! The most important night of your life, and you can't even get yourself dressed. All you can do is listen to bloody music. *He gets a small vase from dresser.*

TCHAIK: I wasn't listening. It was just on.

TED, *crossing to right of table*: I bet. And what are you doing now?

TCHAIK: Pressing my trousers. But it won't get hot.

TED: If she's on time you've got eight minutes. *Crosses to arm-chair and takes flowers from bag. I bought you some flowers. Throws transistor on bed.*

TCHAIK, *trying to press pants*: They're nice. Did I give you enough money?

TED, *takes vase and flowers into kitchen and fills vase with water*: Oh, they're on me. They'll provide that chic touch you're just a tiny bit in need of. *Off*: Did you have a bath?

TCHAIK: Yes.

TED: Did you use that stick I gave you? *He reenters from kitchen.*

TCHAIK: Yes.

TED: It's a hot evening. There's no point in taking any chances. *Puts vase on table. Did you take that chlorophyll tablet? Sniffing his breath.*

TCHAIK: Oh, for heaven's sake!

TED: Did you?

TCHAIK: Yes.

TED: I'll do that. *Takes iron and presses pants. You get your shirt on. Tchaik gets his shirt, which is hanging in the upstage window, puts it on and crosses to dresser. What are you wearing over that?*

TCHAIK: I thought my blazer.

TED: It's a bit schooly, but she'll probably like that. Makes you look boyish. You'll bring out the protective in her. What tie?

TCHAIK, *taking blue and white striped tie from dresser*: I thought this one.

TED: Oh yes, gorgeous. What is it? The Sheffield Young Men's Prayer Club?

TCHAIK, *holding it out*: Don't be daft. What's wrong with it?

TED, *takes tie*: You really don't know, do you? Look: that sort of striped tie, well, it marks you, see? "I'm a twelve-pound-a-week office worker," it says. "Every day I say, Come on five-thirty, and every week I say, Come on Friday night. That's me and I'm contented with my lot." That's what that tie says to me.

TCHAIK, *he has his shirt on—retrieves tie*: Well, you've got very good hearing, that's what I say.

TED: Where's that green shantung one I gave you last Christmas?

TCHAIK: I lost it.

TED: Typical.

TCHAIK, *putting on tie*: It isn't. I never lose anything.

TED: I think your subconscious would make you lose anything that was chic.

TCHAIK: That's idiotic. And so's that word.

TED: What? Chic?

TCHAIK: Yes. What's it supposed to mean?

TED: It's French for with it.

TCHAIK: "With it"?

TED: Yes, with it. Which is what you're not, and high time you were. You can't stay in the Provinces all your life, you know. I can't do a thing with this material. You'd better put them on. *Throws pants to Tchaik. Six minutes. Tchaik crosses upstage to right of bed and puts on trousers. Ted stands on chair and unplugs iron. You're not going to let me down tonight, are you?*

TCHAIK: What do you mean?

TED, *crossing to the kitchen, wrapping the cord around the iron as he goes*: You know what you're going to do this evening? I mean, you know what I'm expecting you to do, don't you? *Pauses in the door, turns off wall switch, puts iron in kitchen. Tchaik puts robe on bed. Ted appears in kitchen door. Eh?*

TCHAIK, *sits foot of bed*: Look, Ted, it's not that way at all.



TED: No?

TCHAIK: No, not at all.

TED, *takes shopping bag into kitchen*: Well then, I'm wasting my time here, aren't I? With all due respect, mate, there are rival attractions to playing chef to you, you know. Do you know where I could be tonight? This very night? *Takes out his wallet and selects a photo.*

TCHAIK: Where?

TED: With her! Look. *Shows Tchaik photo.*

TCHAIK: Goodness.

TED: How about them for a pair of bubbles? And that hair—you can't keep your hands off it. It's what they call raven.

TCHAIK: Raven?

TED: Raven black. It's got tints of blue in it. *He crosses center.*

TCHAIK: Where did you meet this one? *Puts on socks.*

TED, *left of table*: In the Whisky A Go-Go, last night, twisting herself giddy with some little nit. I sort of detached her. She only wanted a date for tonight, didn't she? But I said, "Sorry, doll, no can do. I'm engaged for one night only, at great expense, as chef to my mate Tchaik, who is entertaining a bird of his own. *Très special occasion.*" *(The second sock has a large hole in it, through which Tchaik's toes appear.)* Come on! *Ted has seen this and motions Tchaik to the dresser for a fresh pair. Tchaik crosses to dresser, gets another pair from the top drawer, and returns to the bed. Ted folds the blanket from the table and throws it in the wardrobe.* So be grateful. Greater love hath no man, than to pass up a bird like this for his mate. *Ted picks up photo from bed and leans it against vase on table.* Look at the way she holds herself. That's what they used to call carriage. You don't see too much of that nowadays. Most of the girls I meet think they've got it, ignorant little nits. That is the genuine article, that is. Carriage. Miss Carriage.

TCHAIK, *who now has socks and one shoe on—going into the kitchen*: What's her name?

TED: You won't believe me if I tell you. Lavinia.

TCHAIK: Lavinia?

TED, *sits armchair*: Honest. How's that for a sniff of class? The rest of it isn't so good. Botty. Lavinia Botty.

TCHAIK, *reentering with tray on which are three knives, forks, spoons, napkins, place mats, tumblers, and a pitcher of water and a salt cellar*: She's beautiful.

TED: Do you think so?

TCHAIK, *puts tray on chair above table*: Yes.

TED: She's going to go off fairly quickish. In three years she'll be all lumpy, like old porridge.

TCHAIK, *crosses to dresser, gets tablecloth*: I don't know how you do it. I don't, honest.

TED, *raising the upstage leaf of table*: Just don't promise them anything, that's all. Make no promises, they can't hang anything on you, can they? *As Tchaik lays the cloth, Ted picks up vase and photo, then replaces them on the cloth.*

TCHAIK: I wouldn't know.

TED: Well you're going to, after tonight.

TCHAIK, *protesting*: Ted!

TED: Here. I heard a good one the other day. The National Gallery just paid ten thousand pounds for a picture of a woman with five breasts. D'you know what it's called?

TCHAIK: What?

TED: "Sanctity."

TCHAIK, *not understanding*: Sanctity.

TED: Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq . . . *Tchaik crosses to kitchen door, puzzled. Turns to give a grin of comprehension and exits with tray.* What do you call this, laying a table?

TCHAIK, *reenters and picks up the other shoe*: What's wrong with it?

TED: We're all left-handed, are we?

TCHAIK: Oh, lord. *He hurries to re-lay the table. In his haste he upsets the vase.*

TED: Well, get a cloth. *Tchaik scurries onto the balcony to get it. You've wet my Lavinia. We'll have to dry you out, love. He crosses and puts her in the mirror. Tchaik crosses down and begins to mop the table.* You've got the pit-a-pats. Now look, Tchaik: If you get in a state, the evening will be a fiasco. So sit there and calm down.

TCHAIK, *sits in the armchair and puts on his other shoe*: I am calm.

TED, *crosses into kitchen*: After all, this is just a girl, isn't it? Even if you say she looks like a Greek goddess, she's still only flesh and blood.

TCHAIK, *looking at his watch*: What time do you make it?

TED, *takes wine from shopping bag and puts it in the icebox*: Seven thirty just gone.



**TCHAIK:** Do you think she's not coming?

**TED,** *reenters and stands at foot of bed:* Of course she's coming. It's a free dinner, isn't it? I hope you've put clean sheets on this bed.

**TCHAIK:** What for? Oh, Ted, I wish you'd stop talking like that. *Crosses onto balcony to replace cloth.*

**TED,** *takes out a pack of Gaulloises and lights one:* Look. Let's get things a bit clear. You go to hundreds of concerts. This is the first time you've picked up a bird and invited her home for fried chicken and vino, isn't it?

**TCHAIK,** *left of table—ties one shoe:* I didn't pick her up. She was sitting next to me and dropped her program.

**TED:** On purpose.

**TCHAIK,** *crosses downstage center:* Don't be silly. She's not the sort.

**TED:** Everyone's the sort.

**TCHAIK:** Well, she isn't. I just know. *To front of table, and ties other shoe.*

**TED,** *crosses to below stool:* Well what's so wrong if she did? She wanted to get to know you. It's just possible, you know, that someone might want to get to know you.

**TCHAIK,** *uncomfortably:* Don't be daft.

**TED,** *softer:* You might try believing that, Tchaik. *A tiny pause.*

**TCHAIK,** *pours himself a glass of water:* In any case, I didn't pick her up. That's a ridiculous expression, anyway. Sort of suggests weight-lifting.

**TED,** *sits on stool:* What did you do then?

**TCHAIK,** *crosses to dresser:* Well, I asked her if she liked music. It was a daft question really, because she wouldn't have been at a concert otherwise, would she? It turned out that she was on her own, so I asked her to have a coffee with me after. I could hardly believe it when she said yes. *Takes a drink.*

**TED:** Why not? Even goddesses get thirsty.

**TCHAIK:** We went to an Espresso bar in Kensington.

**TED:** And held hands under the table?

**TCHAIK,** *crosses center and sits in armchair:* Not exactly. As a matter of fact, I couldn't think of anything to say to her. We just sat there for a little while and then left.

**TED:** So that's why you asked me here tonight? To help out with the talk?

**TCHAIK:** Well, you know what to say to women. You've had the practice.

**TED:** There's no practice needed. Just keep it going, that's all. Bright and not too filthy. The main thing is to edge it subtly towards where you want it to go. You know. In your case you'll be able to start off with music. *He edges stool closer to the chair.* "What a nice concert that was." *Still closer.* "I do like Mozart so much, don't you?" Then if she's got any sense at all she'll say, "Oh, yes, he does things to me!" and you'll say, *(this time the stool ends up right next to the chair)* "What kind of things?"—and you're off to the races then, aren't you? *He rises and crosses center.* I'll give you a tip that usually works a treat. After a couple of hours, if she asks for a cigarette, don't give it to her; light it in your mouth and then hand it to her. *He demonstrates.* It's very intimate.

**TCHAIK:** I don't smoke.

**TED,** *crosses upstage center onto balcony:* Well, you'll have to work out your own style, of course.

**TCHAIK:** What's it matter? She's not coming anyway.

**TED,** *sarcastic:* Of course not.

**TCHAIK:** I mean it. Look at the time. It's nearly quarter to. She's thought better of it, I bet you.

**TED,** *on balcony:* Oh, don't be silly. Most girls think it's chic to be a little late. They think it makes them more desirable. It's only a trick.

**TCHAIK:** No, that's not her. She doesn't play tricks. That's why all that stuff is so silly—all this plotting. I say this, and she says that. I think things should just happen between people.

**TED,** *crosses downstage center to right of Tchaik:* Oh, yes. And how many times have they just happened with you?

**TCHAIK:** Well, that depends on what you want to happen.

**TED:** You know bloody well what you want to happen. *Crosses to stool, kicks it back to its original position, and sits.*

**TCHAIK,** *urgently:* I don't. I don't. I don't. This isn't the sort of girl you can make plots about. It would be all wrong. Because she's sort of inaccessible. Pure—but not cold. Very warm. **TED:** And you know all this after ten minutes' silence in a coffee bar?

**TCHAIK,** *rises and puts glass on table:* You can know things like that without talking. She's not a talker—she's a listener.



That can be more profound, you know. And she's got a look about her—not how people are, but how they ought to be. Do you know when I said that about a goddess, do you know who I was thinking of? Her.

TED: Venus?

TCHAIK: She's got exactly the same neck—long and gentle. That's a sign.

TED: What of?

TCHAIK: Spiritual beauty. Like Venus. *Crosses to shelf downstage right for book and back again to center:* That's what the picture really represents. The birth of beauty in the human soul. My Botticelli book says so. Listen. *Reading from a Fontana pocket book:* "Venus, that is to say humanity, is a nymph of excellent comeliness, born of heaven. Her soul and mind are Love and Charity. Her eyes, dignity. Her hands, liberality. Her feet, modesty." All signs, you see. "Venus is the mother of Grace, of Beauty, and of Faith."

TED: And this bird of yours is the mother of all that?

TCHAIK, *sits armchair:* No, of course not. Stop trying to make me into a fool. What I mean is, that look of hers is ideal beauty.

TED: It means she's got grace inside her. Really beautiful people are beautiful inside them. Do you see?

TED: You mean like after taking Andrew's Liver Salts?

TCHAIK, *rising and replacing book downstage right:* Yes, that's exactly what I mean.

TED: Oh, Tchaik, now seriously, come off it. That's all a lot of balls, and you know it. There's a lot of dim, greedy little nitty girls about who are as pretty as pictures.

TCHAIK, *puts Mozart record in sleeve:* I don't mean pretty. I mean . . . well, what you called carriage, for instance. What your Lavinia's got. It's not just something you learn, the way to walk and that. It's something inside you. I mean real carriage, the way you see some girls walk, sort of putting the air around them like clothes—you can't practice that. You've got first to love the world. Then it comes out. *Puts sleeve in record jacket.*

*Tiny pause.*

TED, *rising:* You poor nut.

TCHAIK: What do you mean? *Puts record jacket on shelf.*

TED: Nut. Nut.

TCHAIK: Why?

TED: Oh, dear for you.

*The doorbell rings.*

TCHAIK: God! There she is.

*Tchaik rushes to the wardrobe for his blazer. Ted picks up towel, robe, and slippers from the bed. Tchaik crosses to door—Ted to wardrobe—they collide upstage center. Ted throws towel, robe, slippers into the wardrobe. He turns and sees the tags on the blazer, runs to Tchaik and rips them off.*

TED: Now listen. Last swallow of coffee and I'm away. Cleaning tag! Nine thirty you'll see me. Nine thirty-one you won't. Work to do at home—get it? *Tchaik exits.* Oh, hey—where's the bottle of Dubonnet? *Tchaik reenters speechless.* It's the one thing I left you to do.

TCHAIK: I know. I forgot.

TED: You nit! Now you've nothing to give her for a cocktail.

*The bell rings again.*

TCHAIK: What am I going to do?

TED: Well, there's nothing you can do, is there? Just don't mention it, that's all. Say nothing about it. She comes from the suburbs. She probably won't expect anything. Wine at dinner will impress her enough.

TCHAIK: Oh, hell.

TED: Why don't you leave her standing there. She'll go away in five minutes. *He pushes Tchaik out of the door.*

## DEATHTRAP

by Ira Levin

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ACT II, SCENE 1

*Deathtrap* is a comedy thriller that twists and turns its way from shock to laugh to shock and back again. Sidney is a mystery playwright living with his wife, Myra, in Connecticut.