

Introduction

Anton Chekhov was one of the greatest Russian masters of short story. His stories and plays highlight the tragicomic aspects of everyday life. In this story Chekhov portrays the selfish and cruel impulses in the human mind when it is lured by the prospect of sudden riches.

Ivan's contented life

Ivan Dmitriitch, a middle class man was living happily with an income of twelve hundred roubles a year. His wife Masha was a home-maker. The couple had a son and a daughter. One night, after supper, Ivan was reading the newspaper. His wife asked him to see the result of the lottery ticket she had bought. Though Ivan had no faith in the lottery luck, he consented to look at the list of winning numbers.

'Look and see whether the list of drawings is there'

- Masha

The possibility of winning

When Ivan checked, his eyes were caught by the serial 9499. Masha's lottery ticket also belonged to the same series. He told her that there was a probability of winning. Masha urged him to check the number of the ticket. The prize amount was seventy five thousand. It was a huge capital to buy anything without checking the prize winning number. Ivan started to daydream.

"And if, we have won, why it will be a new life, it will be a transformation"

- Ivan Dmitrievich

Ivan's dreaming

Ivan thought how he would spend the amount if the ticket had been his. He would spend the first twenty five thousand on buying a real estate. Then, he would spend ten thousand on immediate expenses like new furnishing, travelling abroad, paying debts and so on. The remaining forty thousand would be deposited in the bank for interest. More pictures came crowding on Ivan's imagination. Masha also suggested that they should buy an estate somewhere in Tula or Oryol provinces.

"Yes, that would be nice to buy an estate"

- Masha

Life in luxury

As a rich man, Ivan wouldn't mind anything

Including going to office he would do it surely. But, he felt afraid of sleeping. He would go to the hayfield or to the forest to collect the mushrooms or watch the farmers ploughing. He then imagined about his life during the autumn, the St. Martin's summer and the rainy season. Suddenly, Ivan expressed his wish to go abroad. He thought of visiting ^{if} the south of France or Italy or India. In the late autumn Masha also expressed her willingness to go abroad with him and asked him to check the ticket number.

"I should go abroad, you know Masha"

- Ivan Dmitrievich

The bitter reality

Ivan pondered over what would happen if Masha went abroad with him. She would come with a multitude of luggage. She lacked the novelty of enjoying abroad. She would always shut herself up in the hotel and not even let him go out of sight. Above all, she was stingy. For the first time, Ivan thought of the fact that Masha had grown elderly, plain and saturated with the smell of cooking, while he was still young, fresh and healthy though there was no use for

taking her abroad, she would definitely come because the prize winning ticket was hers

"The lottery ticket is hers, not mine!"

- Ivan Ametlich

vanishing hope

Ivan even thought of Masha's relations. They were all wretched. If they were given anything, they would expect more. If they were refused, they would swear at them and wish all kinds of misfortunes to them. Then Ivan thought of his own relations as repulsive and hateful.

Finally Ivan checked the prize winning number. It was 46 but Masha's ticket number was 26. They missed the chance of winning. Hatred and hope were replaced by disappointment. Ivan became ill-humoured and shouted at Masha that the rooms were never swept. He went out dejectedly saying that he would hang himself on the first aspen tree he would see.

"I shall go and hang myself on the first aspen tree"

- Ivan Ametlich