

In Anton Chekhov's story "The Lady With The Lapdog," two people through a tragic context via an extramarital affair, experience true love. The evidence of the trueness of their love can be found in each other's ability to change their inner selves for the happiness of their partner, the settling down aspect of their relationship, and most importantly their interest in fulfilling each other's needs, rather than merely their own as in vacation romances and most extramarital affairs.

In the beginning of the story, upon the main character Dmitry Dmitrych Gurov's first meeting with the lady with the lapdog, he thinks very little of her. She is plain, ordinary, nondescript and could be basically anybody, hence her lack of a real name, thus lack of strong individual identity. Later, in chapter two, her real name, Anna is revealed. Before this, Gurov reveals some of his first impressions of her while reflecting on their first meeting in his hotel room: "Lying down to sleep, it occurred to him that she was a high school student not too long ago, just as his daughter was now; he recalled how much timidity and awkwardness was still in her laugh, in her conversation with a stranger-this must have been the first time in her life that she was alone, in a situation in which she was followed and looked at and spoken with only thanks to one secret intention she could not help guessing. He remembered her slender, weak neck, her beautiful grey eyes. 'There is, after all, something vaguely pathetic about her,'..." Here, the initial relationship between Gurov and Anna obviously has the marks of a predator-prey dynamic or less aggressively, a father-daughter dynamic. Gurov is obviously the dominating male figure; he poses the questions, he initiates their continued conversation, he does not struggle to conceal his "secret" intentions. Most importantly and literally, he is old enough to be her father. Anna, on the other hand, is seen as weak and submissive, both physically and emotionally. The reader gets the impression that even if she wanted to reject him with his secret

intentions, she couldn't get out of a girlish servitude to charming men as long as expected of them. Thus, at their first acquaintance, the relationship appears to be a vacation romance, a slightly tacky and trashy affair on the sides of both parties, considering the huge age and mental difference.

An important scene that further characterizes this initial strong vs. weak relationship occurs when Anna sobs to Gurov right after they first have relations. As she bears her heart to him, all Gurov can manage to do is eat watermelon, and grow increasingly bored and annoyed by her emotional outburst, emotional to him only by her evidence of tears. Anna begins by voicing her concern that Gurov will no longer respect her after they've slept together. In reaction, "Gurov cut himself a slice [of watermelon] and began eating it slowly. At least half an hour passed in silence." After Anna makes a full confession of her painful position in relation to her husband, Gurov characteristically "was already growing bored listening. He was annoyed by the naïve tone, by this confession, so unexpected and unwarranted; if not for the tears in her eyes, one could have thought one was joking or playing a role." Thus, Gurov is clearly interested in satisfying his needs and any compassion or interest for Anna stops there. He wants to be with her so long as she can satisfy him; otherwise, she is an annoying hindrance that he distracts himself from by again, satisfying his needs, eating watermelon.

Lastly, the beginning of their relationship, when it exists as a vacation romance, is exposed through their initial departure from each other. When Anna boards the express train home to return to her ailing husband, she tells Gurov: "Don't think badly of me; we'll never see one another ever again. That's the way it should be because we never should have met." Here, if Anna truly was conscious of her love, or if real love existed at all, she would not have really felt that way. Gurov's reaction to their departure also supports the initial temporariness of their

relations: “And he thought how this had been one more affair or adventure in his life, and it too was already over, and now the memory remained... in his behavior, in his tone and caresses, there was a hint of light mockery, the coarse arrogance of a satisfied male who was, moreover, nearly twice her age... he had inadvertently deceived her.” Thus, Anna at this point has not seen Gurov’s true nature, which up to this point has been that of an arrogant satisfied male. This lack of understanding of each other cannot mean true love, but only a vacation romance. However, these initial episodes only serve to illustrate the drastic change that occurs between them, indicating an evolution from a vacation romance to real love.

A huge change occurs in Gurov and Anna’s relationship that clearly shifts their dynamic from a vacation romance to real love. Chekhov achieves this dramatic difference by repeating the scene of Anna’s sobbing, but this time contrasting it with a much changed, now undeniably in love Gurov. After Gurov makes his way to the hotel, he asks how Anna is doing: “She could not speak, because she was crying... ‘Well, let’s cry it out, and I’ll sit in the meantime,’ he thought, moving to an armchair. He rang for tea... ‘Now, stop it!’ he said... He went up and put his hands on her shoulders to comfort her, to cheer her up, and at that moment caught sight of himself in the mirror.” Here, we see a marked difference between Gurov’s former and current reaction to Anna’s sobbing. Before, he thought only of himself and thus ate watermelon and was only agitated by her whining. Now, he feels her emotions within himself to a point that makes him passionately ask her to stop it, as opposed to patronizingly asking her “What do you want?” at the first scene. Thus, a bond has grown between them that transmits each other’s feelings to each other, rather than each person existing in their own selfish orb. Secondly, an important detail exists in Gurov’s ringing for tea, a domestic, calming, sedative liquid in total opposition to juicy, satiating, youthful watermelon. It indicates a sense of habitude, domesticity, and consistency in

their relationship, characteristics which could not have had chance to live in a purely vacation romance. Lastly, he comforts her by putting his arms around her, instead of coldly waiting a half hour in silence as he did before. In short, the two are inextricably connected at this point and each cares for the other because they see themselves as one and the same. Their love is the union of the two of them and thus each are inevitably affected by the other's emotions and wants to ensure each other's happiness, albeit within their futile positions.

On the physical level, the two have literally grown old together and each has become less physically attractive throughout the course of their relationship. After catching sight of himself in the mirror, Chekhov writes: "His hair was already beginning to turn gray. And it seemed strange to him that he had become so old in the past years, had lost so much of his looks. The warm shoulders under his hands were shivering. He felt compassion for this living being, still so warm and beautiful, but probably already approaching the point of withering and aging, like his life." Though both are married, they've experienced the cliché growing old and grey together scenario with each other and not their true spouses. Thus, the acknowledgement of each other's impending death and the nevertheless permanence of their love for their lifetime show that they are truly in love. Thus, their real lives, including the inevitable decay of it are led with each other and not with each other's spouses, showing that societal constraints really have no ultimate bearing on love between two people. Each acknowledges each other's getting older, but their relationship has now taken on a spiritual and mental level that exceeds the physical temporal desires of a vacation romance. True love has no real beginning, middle and end and thus appears to live outside of the physical constraints of society and literally the human body, while anything else exists in the physical realm centered on sex, which has a beginning, middle and end.

Gurov is aware that the only real life he leads is with Anna, and time spent otherwise is only falsehood. He begins to hate every part of his life that doesn't consist of his meetings with Anna. After an ordinary conversation with his card partner, a civil servant, who apparently did not grasp the lofty passion of Gurov's love for a woman from Yalta, Gurov grows extremely agitated: "These words, so ordinary, seized Gurov with outrage; they seemed degrading and obscene. What vile manners, what people! What ridiculous nights and boring, pointless days! Compulsive card playing, gluttony, drunkenness, endless conversations about the same topics. Inconsequential matters and conversations about the same topics would eat up the best part of one's time and energy, and what remained in the end was a sort of abbreviated, uninspired life, a sort of trivia, and it was impossible to go away or escape, as if one were in a madhouse or on a chain gang!... He was sick of his children, sick of the bank, and he lost all desire to go anywhere or talk about anything." Clearly, Gurov's life, that is a real, heartfelt life, consists only in his relationship with Anna. A vacation romance serves its function as a vacation, to be ended with a healthy return to one's real life. In Gurov and Anna's case, their real life has become solely their life with each other, and the so-called real life only falsehood.

Gurov and Anna's relationship experience a transformation in which their vacation romance becomes their real, necessary, unbearable to live without, life and their former real life with their spouses and children a mere act of crippling and life-sucking falsehood. Thus, it is undeniable that the two experience real love and the permanence of their position is indeed akin to "two passing birds... who had been caught and forced to live in separate cages." However, though separated and in an excruciating position, there appears to be no visible end in sight.