

Krapp's Last Tape

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1.1

A late evening in the future.

Krapp's den.

Front centre a small table, the two drawers of which open towards audience.

*Sitting at the table, facing front, i.e. across from the drawers, a wearish old man: Krapp
Rusty black narrow trousers too short for him. Rust black sleeveless waistcoat, four
capaciou pockets. Heavy silver watch and chain. Grimy white shirt open at neck, no
collar. Surprising pair of dirty white boots, size ten at least, very narrow and pointed.
White face. Purple nose. Disordered grey hair. Unshaven.*

2.1

(briskly). Ah! (He bends over ledger, turns the pages, finds the entry he wants, reads.)

*Box . . . three . . . spool . . . five. (he raises his head and stares front. With relish.) Spool!
(pause.) Spooool! (happy smile. Pause. He bends over table, starts peering and poking at
the boxes.) Box . . . three . . . three . . . four . . . two . . . (with surprise) nine! good God! .
. . seven . . . ah! the little rascal! (He takes up the box, peers at it.) Box three. (He lays it
on table, opens it and peers at spools inside.) Spool . . . (he peers at the ledger) . . . five .
. . (he peers at spools) . . . five . . . five . . . ah! the little scoundrel! (He takes out a spool,
peers at it.) Spool five. (He lays it on table, closes box three, puts it back with the others,
takes up the spool.) Box three, spool five.*

3.1

Pause.

When I look--

*Krapp switches off, broods, looks at his watch, gets up, goes backstage into darkness.
Ten seconds. pop of cork. Ten seconds. Second cork. Ten seconds. Third cork. Ten
seconds. Brief burst of quavering song.*

4.1

Pause.

Past midnight. Never knew such silence. The earth might be uninhabited.

Pause.

Here I end--

Krapp switches off, winds tabe back, switches on again.

--upper lake, with the punt, bathed off the bank, then pushed out into the stream and drifted. She lay streched out on the floorboards with her hands under her head and her eyes closed. Sun blazing down, bit of a breeze, water nice and lively. I noticed a scratch on her thigh and asked her how she came by it. Picking gooseberries, she said. I said again I thought it was hopeless and no good going on, and she agreed, without opening her eyes. (*Pause.*)

5.1

Sat shivering in the park, drowned in dreams and burning to be gone. Not a soul. (*Pause.*) Last fancies. (*Vehemently.*) Keep 'em under! (*Pause.*) Scalded the eyes out of me reading *Effir* again, a page a day, with tears again. Effie . . . (*Pause.*) Could have been happy with her, up there on the Baltic, and the pines, and the dunes. (*Pause.*) Could I? (*Pause.*) And she? (*Pause.*) Pah! (*Pause.*) Fanny came in a couple of times. Bony old ghost of a whore. Couldn't do much, but I suppose better than a kick in the crutch. The last time wasn't so bad. How do you manage it, she said, at your age? I told her I'd been saving up for her all my life. (*Pause.*) Went to Vespers once, like when I as in short trousers. (*Pause. Sings.*)

PART TWO

1.2

Ten seconds. Loud pop of cork. Fifteen seconds. He comes back into light carrying an old ledger and sits down at table. He lays ledger on table, wipes his mouth, wipes his hands on the front of his waistcoat, brings them smartly together and rubs them.

2.2

To drink less, in particular. (*Brief laugh of Krapp alone.*) Statistics. Seventeen hundred hours, out of the preceding eight thousand odd, consumed on licensed premises alone. More than 20%, say 40% of his waking life. (*Pause.*) Plans for a less . . . (*hesitates*) . . . engrossing sexual life. Last illness of his father. Flagging pursuit of happiness. Unattainable laxation. Sneers at what he calls his youth and thanks to God that it's over. (*Pause.*) False ring there. (*Pause.*) Shadows of the opus . . . magnum. Closing with a -- (*brief laugh*)--yelp to Providence. (*Prolonged laugh in which Krapp joins.*) What remains of all that misery? A girl in a shabby green coat, on a railway-station platform? No?
Pause.

3.2

Spiritually a year of profound gloom and indulgence until that memorable night in March at the end of the jetty, in the howling wind, never to be forgotten, when suddenly I saw the whole thing. The vision, at last. This fancy is what I have chiefly to record this evening, against the day when my work will be done and perhaps no place left in my memory, warm or cold, for the miracle that . . . (*hesitates*) . . . for the fire that set it alight. What I suddenly saw then was this, that the belief I had been going on all my life, namely--(*Krapp switches off impatiently, winds tape forward, switches on again*)--great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the wind-gauge spinning like a propeller, clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality--(*Krapp curses, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*)--unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire--(*Krapp curses loader, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*)--my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side.

4.2

Let that go! Jesus! Take his mind off his homework! Jesus (*Pause. Weary.*) Ah well, maybe he was right. (*Broods. Realizes. Switches off. Consults envelope.*) Pah! (*Crumples it and throws it away. Broods. Switches on.*) Nothing to say, not a squeak. What's a year now? The sour cud and the iron stool. (*Pause.*) Revelled in the word spool. (*With relish.*) Spooooo! Happiest moment of the past half million. (*Pause.*) Seventeen copies sold, of which eleven at trade price to free circulating libraries beyond the seas. Getting known. (*Pause.*) One pound six and something, eight I have little doubt. (*Pause.*) Crawled out once or twice, before the summer was cold.

5.2

Pause. Krapp's lips move. No sound.

Past midnight. Never knew such silence. The earth might be uninhabited.

Pause.

Here I end this reel. Box--(*pause*)--three, spool--(*pause*)--five. (*Pause.* Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No, I wouldn't want them back.

Krapp motionless staring before him. The tape runs on in silence.