

talk
to
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

Moments

10. The Beggar

by

Anton Chekov

1. Summary

This story is set in Russia. It is about Lushkoff, a beggar, who was once a singer in a church choir. He was dismissed because of his alcohol dependence. After that he could not get work and had to beg on the streets. He was malnourished and weak because he did not have money to eat every day, or to rent a place to stay.

One day, he begged for money from an advocate who offered to employ him for menial jobs. The advocate hoped that he would be able to help the beggar earn money through his own work. However, the beggar was too weak to do any hard physical work. Unknown to the advocate, his cook was very sympathetic towards the beggar. She did all the beggar's work. The cook's kindness inspired the beggar to change completely.

The advocate saw that the beggar had reformed, and helped him get a job copying documents.

2. Alcoholism in Russia

Russia was one of the heaviest-drinking countries in the world. Vodka is the most popular drink; it has a high alcohol content. Russian alcohol consumption decreased by 43% from 2003 to 2016, a World Health Organization (WHO) report says. This is due to strong policies introduced by the Government.

Watch this video about alcoholism in Russia. Click on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCN5RQIUqXA>

3. Vocabulary

1. **Induced** – persuaded

They induced her to take the job by offering her a higher salary.

2. **Copecks** – a bronze coin of Russian currency, the 100th part of a ruble When I visited Russia, I collected many **copecks**.

3. **Lodging** – a room on rent or a temporary place to stay The student took up **lodging** on the college campus.

4. **Intrigues** – underhand, cheating ways (1), to make someone curious (2) Some films have many **intrigues** where the villain tries to get a lot of money by cheating others. (1) She **intrigues** everyone she meets by her mysterious ways. (2)

5. **Victim** – a person who is cheated or suffers from an illness or injury The **victim** of the violent robbery had to be admitted into hospital.

6. **Calumny** – a false statement to harm someone's reputation It is best to ignore **calumny** because the truth will eventually come out.

7. **Advocate** – a lawyer The **advocate** defending him in the murder case was his brother-in-law.

8. **Ragged** – torn The old man on the street wore **ragged** clothes.

9. **Fawn** – pale, very light brown colour The **fawn**-coloured dog had a beautiful red collar.

10. **Suppliant** – a petitioner who pleads humbly The **suppliant** sent a petition to the President to pardon his death sentence.

11. **Province** – state or region in a country Ravi lives in the western most **province** of the country.

12. **Mendicant** – homeless, poor, beggar Many fakirs live like **mendicants**.

13. **Obliged** – to be forced to do something or feel that you must do something
She felt **obliged** to accept the invitation as they had been very kind to her.
14. **Circumstances** – factors or events that make a situation the way it is
We can deal with the problem only when we know all the circumstances
15. **Overshoes** – coverings worn over ordinary shoes in order to protect them or keep them dry
We need to wear **overshoes** over our shoes when we walk in the snow.
16. **Expelled** – forced to leave a school, organisation or country
My brother was **expelled** from school for bad behaviour.
17. **Mumbled** – to speak quietly and in a way that is not clear so that the words are difficult to understand
The old man **mumbled** something, but I could not understand what he said.
18. **Flushed** – turned red in the face
When we accused him of stealing the money he **flushed** with anger.
19. **Expression** – the look on someone's face showing what they feel or think
I could tell from the **expression** on my mother's face that something serious had happened.
20. **Disgust** – a strong feeling of dislike at a situation, person's behaviour
We are protesting to show our **disgust** at the way the doctors have been treated.
21. **Swindling** – cheating
The shopkeeper was **swindling** his customers by overpricing the goods in his shop.
22. **Fiction** – an imaginary story
We knew it was a **fictional** film about ghosts, yet we were scared.
23. **Formerly** – previously, earlier
Formerly, he was the head of the police criminal department.
24. **Choir** – a group of people who sing together
When we entered the church the **choir** was singing a beautiful hymn.

25. **Drunkenness** – the state of being drunk (under the influence of alcohol)
In a state of **drunkenness**, he fell down in the middle of the street and was run over by a truck.
26. **Skilled** – having the ability to do a an activity or job well
The **skilled** craftsmen carved a beautiful door for the temple.
27. **Hastened** – move quickly
The little boy **hastened** home when he found out that his grandmother had come to visit him.
28. **Scarecrow** – a model of a person dressed in old clothes and put in the a field of growing crops to frighten birds away
He was dressed in ragged and torn clothes and looked like a **scarecrow**.
29. **Shrugged** – raised and contracted the shoulders in surprise or arrogance
He **shrugged** his shoulders because he could not be bothered to answer my question.
30. **Perplexity** – a confused condition
The old man had a look of **perplexity** because he had forgotten his way back home.
31. **Irresolutely** – without a firm purpose, indecisively
The teenager looked **irresolutely** at the career counselor.
32. **Obvious** – easily seen or easily understood
There are dark clouds in the sky, so it is **obvious** that it will rain soon.
33. **Gait** – manner of walking
We are told not to stoop as it affects our **gait**.
34. **Consented** – agreed or permitted
Her parents **consented** to her joining the course, after her teacher explained its importance to them.
35. **Trapped** – caught, unable to move or escape from a situation
The old women died when she was **trapped** in the burning building.
36. **Undermined** – to attack by indirect means, to weaken or cause to collapse
I **undermined** my opponent's point of view in the debate, because I had very good examples to support my argument.

37. **Slightest** – not at all
Priya did not have the **slightest** interest in watching the cricket match.
38. **Inclination** – a tendency towards a certain condition, a preference, a bent of mind
I have an inclination towards science subjects.
39. **Toil** – hard and continuous work (1), to engage in hard word (2)
Sincerity and **toil** will always get good results. (1)
Tea pickers **toil** for long hours to pick leaves in the tea gardens. (2)
40. **Glared** – to stare with an angry look
When my friend was rude to his mother, I **glared** at him because I did not like his behavior
41. **Wrathfully** – angrily
The neighbours protested **wrathfully** about the music blaring from loud speakers.
42. **Companion** – a person with whom you spend a lot of time or who is travelling with you
Her **companion** was a bald man with a bushy mustache.
43. **Shoved** – pushed someone or something hard
He **shoved** his friend aside and started speaking to the policeman.
44. **Pseudo** – false, trying to be what you are not
Hari sounds like a **pseudo**-intellectual when he uses big words.
45. **Fists** – hands with fingers folded tightly into the centre of the palm
The boxer hit the man in front of him with his **fists**.
46. **Judging** – having an opinion or deciding about something or someone
Judging by what he said, it is unlikely that he will help you.
47. **Billet** – a short piece of firewood
My uncle took a **billet** from the fireplace and threw it outside the window for the dog to chase.
48. **Feebly** – weakly
After his long illness, Ram walked **feebly** as he had no energy.

49. **Wavered** – to sway to and fro, become unsteady, to feel doubt
Meera **wavered** in her response to the teacher because she hadn't prepared her lesson.
50. **Cautiously** – carefully, with alertness and wisdom
My grandfather told us to move around **cautiously** when there was no electricity at night.
51. **Vanished** – disappeared, especially in a sudden, surprising way
The magician waved his wand and the girl **vanished** into thin air.
52. **Menial** – lowly, slave like
We should respect **menial** workers who clean streets and clean our colonies.
53. **Labour** – hard physical work
In the West, machines are used for farming, thus reducing the need for **labour**.
54. **Announced** – to make something known or tell people about something officially
The government has **announced** that it will give free rations to migrant labourers.
55. **Rouble** – unit of money in Russia
I am a coin collector, so my father gave me some **roubles** when he returned from Russia.
56. **Waif** – a homeless child or animal
A **waif** on the streets began to dance and do headstands to attract attention and get money.
57. **Appearance** – to be present somewhere for a short time
The actress made an **appearance** at the function and then left after half an hour.
58. **Shovel** – a tool used for picking up and moving earth, snow, sand etc.
In winter we need to **shovel** the snow from the roads.
59. **Rugs** – pieces of thick heavy cloth smaller than carpets, used for covering the floor or for decoration
The floor was covered by hand-woven **rugs**.

60. **Mattresses** – the part of the bed, made of strong cloth cover filled with firm material like cotton, foam, etc., that makes a bed comfortable to lie on
We covered the **mattresses** with clean bed sheets and lay down on them.
61. **Hauling** – pulling something heavy slowly and with difficulty
She was **hauling** the heavy trunk up the slope of the hill.
62. **Sober** – not drunk or affected by alcohol
In the morning after a good night's sleep he felt **sober** and alert.
63. **Gloomy** – unhappy and without hope
We all felt **gloomy** when we realised that India was going to lose the match.
64. **Wagons** – vehicles with four wheels, usually pulled by horses or oxen, used for transporting heavy goods, especially in the past
There were two covered **wagons** waiting for us at the railway station, to take us to the village.
65. **Pretence** – trick, hoax, deceive
He made no **pretence** about understanding the math problem.
66. **Shivered** – shook slightly because of cold, or illness, or fright
In spite of wearing heavy woolen coats, we **shivered** outside in the cold.
67. **Embarrassed** – felt ashamed or shy
I was **embarrassed** to tell the teacher that I had not completed the homework.
68. **Jeered** – to laugh or shout rude comments
The crowd **jeered** at the cricketer when he was bowled out.
69. **Idleness** – the state of not working or being used
He hardly worked and spent the whole day in **idleness**.
70. **Tattered** – badly torn
He wore a **tattered** shirt and torn trousers and looked very poor.
71. **Fancy** – decorative, expensive or complicated
They had spent a lot of money on the **fancy** decorations for the wedding.
72. **Objection** – showing or feeling opposition to or dislike of something or someone
If you have no **objection**, I will take this television to the workshop for repairs.

- 73. Employment** – to have a job
Sabeer was offered **employment** in the same office where his father worked.
- 74. Parting** – leaving or separating
She cried a lot and hugged her parents when she was **parting** from them.
- 75. Sealskin** – the skin or fur of a seal, a sea animal, used for making clothing
She was wearing a **sealskin** jacket.
- 76. Timidly** – in a shy or nervous way
She approached the teacher **timidly** to request leave from her class.
- 77. Gallery** – the highest floor in a theatre that contains the cheapest seats
We rushed up the stairs and were seated in the **gallery**, just as the curtains went up for the play.
- 78. Recognising** – knowing someone or something because you have seen or heard him or her or experienced it before
She had difficulty **recognising** her father because he had aged so much.
- 79. Notary** – a person authorized by the Government, to perform certain legal formalities, certify documents, etc.
A **Notary Public** can sign papers to prove that they are authentic.
- 80. Godson** – in the Christian religion, a child whose moral and religious development is partly the responsibility of two or more godparents
William was Mr. Jone's **godson** and he took care of William when his parents died in a road accident.
- 81. Roasting** – in this context, it means to criticize someone severely
I got a **roasting** from my Principal because I bunked school for two days.
- 82. Protection** – being kept safe from injury, damage, or loss
The shed provided little **protection** against the storm
- 83. Deeds** – actions
She was always helping people and doing good **deeds**.
- 84. Indebted** – very grateful to somebody
I am **indebted** to my friend for giving me the class notes.

85. **Strictly** – exactly or correctly
I have **strictly** followed all my teacher's instructions.
86. **Sot** – a drunkard
A **sot** was standing unsteadily on the street, shouting at people around him.
87. **Miserable** - very unhappy
Sujit was **miserable** when he did not get the job.
88. **Creature** – any living thing that can move independently
Blue whales are the largest **creatures** on this planet.
89. **Ruin** – state of being spoiled or destroyed completely
They let the ancient temple fall into **ruin**.
90. **Strain** – a particular type of quality
A religious **strain** runs through the story and is based on the life of Lord Krishna.
91. **Suffered** – to experience physical or mental pain
She **suffered** for a week from fever and body ache.
92. **Bowed** – bent over, here used as a polite way of bidding farewell
I **bowed** down with folded hands in front of the image of goddess Durga.
93. **Departed** – left, went away
The train **departed** one hour late from the New Delhi railway station.

4. Questions

1. Has Lushkoff become a beggar by circumstance or by choice?
2. What reasons does he give to Sergei for his telling lies?
3. Is Lushkoff a willing worker? Why, then, does he agree to chop wood for Sergei?
4. Sergei says, "I am happy that my words have taken effect." Why does he say so? Is he right in saying this?
5. Lushkoff is earning thirty five rubles a month. How is he obliged to Sergei for this?

6. During their conversation Lushkoff reveals that Sergei's cook, Olga, is responsible for the positive change in him. How has Olga saved Lushkoff?

5. Talk About It

How can we help beggars and abolish begging?

6. Suggested Reading

- 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' by Arthur Conan Doyle
- *The Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov