

## Chapter Two

May 22, 1807. Gutstadt. For the first time I have seen a battle and been in it. What a lot of absurd things they told me about the first battle, about the fear, timidity, and the last, desperate courage! What rubbish! Our regiment went on the attack several times, not all at once but taking turns by squadron. I was berated for joining the attack with each new squadron. However, this was honestly not from any excess of bravery, but simply from ignorance; I thought that was how it was done, and I was amazed when the sergeant-major of another squadron, alongside which I was racing like a whirlwind, shouted at me, "Get the hell out of here! What are you galloping here for?" I returned to my squadron, but, instead of taking my place in formation, I went on riding around nearby. The novelty of the scene absorbed all my attention: the menacing and majestic boom of cannon fire, the roar or kind of rumble of the flying balls, the mounted troops galloping by, the glittering bayonets of the infantry, the roll of drums, and the firm pace and calm look with which our infantry regiments advanced on the enemy—all this filled my soul with sensations that I have no words to express.

I came close to losing my priceless Alcides. While I was riding around, as I said before, near my squadron and looking over the curious scene of battle, I caught sight of several enemy dragoons surrounding a Russian officer and knocking him off his horse with a pistol shot. He fell, and they prepared to hack at him as he lay. Instantly I rushed toward them with my lance tilted. I can only suppose that this scatterbrained audacity frightened them, because in a flash they abandoned the officer and scattered. I galloped over to the wounded man and stopped above him; for a couple of minutes I watched him in silence. He lay with his eyes closed and gave no sign of life; he obviously thought that it was the enemy who stood over him. At last he risked a glance, and I at once asked him if he wanted to get on my horse.

"Oh, be so kind, my friend!" he said in a barely audible voice. At once I dismounted from my horse and with great effort managed to raise the wounded man, but here the aid I could render him came to an end: he fell chestdown across my arm and I, barely able to keep my feet, had no idea what to do and how to get him onto Alcides, whom I was also holding by the reins with my other hand. This situation would have ended very disadvantageously for us both—that is, for the officer and for me—except that fortunately a soldier from his regiment rode over to us and helped me to seat the wounded man on my horse. I told the soldier to

send the horse to Recruit Durov in the Polish Horse regiment, and the dragoon told me that the officer I had saved was Lieutenant Panin of the Finnish Dragoons and that they would return my horse immediately.

The officer was carried off to his regiment, and I set out for mine. I felt at a complete disadvantage, left on foot among charges, gunfire, and swordfights. Seeing everywhere men either flying by like lightning or quietly galloping in various directions with complete confidence in their good steeds, I exclaimed, "Alas, my Alcides! Where is he now?" I deeply repented having so rashly given up my horse—and even more when my captain, after first asking me with concern, "Did they kill your horse, Durov? Are you wounded?" shouted at me in vexation, "Get away from the front, you scamp!" when he heard how I happened to be wandering about on foot. Quickly, albeit sadly, I headed for the spot where I saw lances with the pennons of the Polish Horse. The men I passed said with compassion, "Oh, my God! Look, what a young boy has been wounded!" Nobody who saw an uhlans on foot in a uniform covered with blood could think anything else. As I mentioned, the wounded officer had lain chestdown across my arm, and I have to assume that his was a chest wound, because my sleeve was all bloody.

To my inexpressible joy, Alcides has been returned to me—not quite the way I hoped, but at least returned. I was walking pensively through the fields to my regiment, when suddenly I saw our Lieutenant Podwyszański riding away from the enemy position on my horse. I was beside myself with joy and, without stopping to wonder how my horse had turned up under Podwyszański, ran over to stroke and caress Alcides, who also expressed his joy by frisking and neighing loudly.

"Is this really your horse?" asked the astonished Podwyszański.

I recounted my adventure to him. He too had no praise for my rashness. He said that he had bought my horse from Cossacks for two gold pieces. I begged him to return Alcides and take from me the money he had paid for him.

"Very well, but let me keep him today. My horse was killed, and I have nothing to ride in action!" And with this he spurred Alcides and galloped off on him. I was close to weeping as I saw my comrade-in-arms in strange hands, and I swore with all my heart never again to give up my horse as long as I live! At last this agonizing day came to an end. Podwyszański returned Alcides to me, and our army is now pursuing the retreating enemy.

May 24. On the banks of the Passarge. What a strange affair! We made so little haste to pursue the enemy that he managed to cross this little river, on the banks of which we are now standing, and met us with

gunfire. Perhaps I don't understand anything about it, but it seems to me we should have stayed on the enemy's heels and crushed him at the crossing.

*The same spot, on the banks of the Passarge.* We have been standing here doing nothing for two days now—and there is nothing to be done. In front of us jaegers are exchanging fire with enemy skirmishers across the river. Our regiment is stationed directly behind the jaegers but, since we have absolutely nothing to do, we have been ordered to dismount. I am perishing from hunger! I don't have even a single rusk. The Cossacks who captured my Alcides took from him the saddlebags with rusks, raincape, and valise. I got my horse back with only a saddle, and everything else was gone. I try sleeping to forget how hungry I am, but it doesn't help.

At last the uhlans who was assigned to supervise me and still holds a mentor's authority, noticed that my saddle was missing its bags and that my face was pale. He offered me three large moldy rusks. I took them eagerly and laid them in a hole filled with rainwater to moisten them a bit. Although I had not eaten for nearly two days, the rusks were so large, bitter, and green that I could eat only one of them.

We are still standing on the same spot. The skirmishers are exchanging fire, and so the uhlans are lying on the grass. From boredom I went for a walk around the hills where Cossack vedettes are posted. Coming down off a knoll, I saw a horrible scene: two jaegers, who had evidently wanted to take shelter from the gunfire or simply to drink their liquor at leisure, both lay dead. Death had found them in their refuge; they were both killed by a single cannonball which tore away the chest of the one sitting higher up, pierced the side of his comrade, who was sitting somewhat lower, ripped out his intestines, and lay there with him. Beside them also lay their canteen of vodka.

Shuddering, I left the dreadful sight of the two bodies. I returned to the regiment, lay down in the bushes, and went to sleep, only to be roused very quickly and disagreeably; a cannonball fell close to me, and a few more came flying after it. I jumped up and ran ten paces away from the spot, but I didn't have time to snatch up my cap and left it behind. It lay on the grass, and against the dark green its bright crimson color made it look like a huge flower. The sergeant-major ordered me to go pick it up, and I went, albeit rather reluctantly, because balls were falling thick and fast into the shrubbery. The reason for this sudden rain of fire onto us was our pennons: we had driven our lances into the ground by our horses. The multicolored pennons playing in the wind and fluttering in the air attracted the attention of the enemy. Suspecting from them that we were

in the woods, he directed his cannon fire there. Now we have been led farther off and ordered to lay the lances on the ground.

In the evening our regiment was ordered to mount. Until late at night we sat on our steeds and waited for orders to move out. We have become the rear-guard now and will cover the army's retreat. So our captain tells us. Since I was deathly tired from sitting on my horse so long, I asked Wyszemirski if he did not want to get down. He said that he would have dismounted long ago if he wasn't expecting the regiment to leave at any minute.

"We'll hear it and can be back on our horses in a flash," I said, "but now let's lead them across the ditch and lie down on the grass there."

Wyszemirski followed my advice. We led our horses across the ditch and lay down in the bushes. I wound the reins around my arm and instantly fell asleep. I heard my name repeated twice, I felt Alcides nudging me with his head, snorting, and pawing the ground, I felt the earth trembling under me, and then everything became quiet. My heart shrank. I understood the danger and made an effort to wake up, but I couldn't. Although Alcides, my priceless steed, was left alone, hearing his comrades in the distance and free because the reins had slackened and fallen off my arm, he did not leave me, but kept on incessantly pawing the ground and snorting, bending his muzzle to me. At last with difficulty I opened my eyes and got up. I saw that Wyszemirski was gone. I looked at the spot where the regiment had stood—it was gone, too! I was surrounded by a nocturnal darkness and quiet that under the circumstances was quite dreadful. The hollow reverberation of horses' hooves convinced me that the regiment was riding away at a trot. I made haste to mount Alcides, and justice demands that I admit that my foot was slow to find the stirrup. Seated, I loosed the reins, and my steed, my excellent, trusty steed, jumped the ditch and carried me right through the shrubbery at an easy, rapid run right to the regiment; in a quarter of an hour he caught up with it and took his place in the ranks. Wyszemirski said he thought it was the end of me. He said that he himself was very alarmed when he heard the regiment departing and, therefore, after calling me twice, he had left my fate in God's hands.

*May 29 and 30. Heilsberg.* The French fought furiously here. Oh, man is horrible in his frenzy! Then he combines all the qualities of the wild beast. No, this is not bravery! I don't know what to call this wild, bestial daring, but it is unworthy of being called fearlessness. Our regiment was able to play only a small active part in this battle: it was the artillery which pounded, and the victorious bayonets of our infantry which struck home. But we took some punishment anyway; we were covering the

artillery, which is a most disadvantageous situation, because the insult is taken without response—that is, no matter what happens, you must stand your ground without moving.

Even now I do not see anything frightening in battle, but I see many men as white as sheets, I see them duck when a shell flies over as if they could evade it. Evidently in these men, fear has more force than reason. I have already seen a great many killed and severely wounded. It is pitiful to watch the latter moaning and crawling over the so-called field of honor. What can mitigate the horror of a position like that for a common soldier? A recruit? For an educated man it is a completely different matter: the lofty feeling of honor, heroism, devotion to the emperor, and sacred duty to his native land compel him to face death fearlessly, endure suffering courageously, and part with life calmly.

For the first time danger was so close to me that it could not have been closer. A grenade landed under the belly of my horse and at once exploded. Whistling fragments flew in all directions. Stunned and showered with dirt, I barely kept my seat on Alcides, who gave such a leap to the side that I thought he was possessed by the devil. Poor Wyszemirski, who screws up his eyes at every bullet, says that such a violent caper would have thrown him. But the most astonishing thing is that not a single fragment struck either me or Alcides! This is so extraordinary that my comrades cannot stop marveling at it. Oh, it is clear that my father's prayers and my old grandmother's blessing are preserving my life amid these terrible, bloody scenes.

It has been raining heavily ever since morning. I am shivering; nothing I have on is dry. Rain streams unimpeded onto my helmet, across my helmet onto my head, down my face, under my collar, over my entire body, and into my boots. It fills them and runs in several streams onto the ground. I am quivering like an aspen leaf in every limb. At last we have been ordered to pull back; another cavalry regiment is going to take our place. And it is long overdue! We have been standing here almost the entire day. We are soaked to the bones and stiff with cold, we no longer look at all human, and, moreover, we have lost many men.

When our regiment took up a position beyond the range of enemy bullets, I asked the captain for permission to make a quick trip into Heilsberg, which is a verst away from us. I needed to get Alcides shod—he has lost a shoe—and, besides, I wanted to buy something to eat. I was so hungry that I even looked with envy at a chunk of bread one of our officers was holding. The captain permitted me to go, merely ordering me to return as quickly as possible, since night was falling and the regiment might change position. Alcides and I, both of us shivering from

cold and hunger, raced like a whirlwind to Heilsberg. I put my horse into the first wayside tavern I came across and, seeing blacksmiths there shoeing Cossack horses, asked them to shoe mine also. I went inside. In the parlor a large fire was burning in a kind of hearth or fireplace of unusual construction. I sat down at once in the large leather armchair standing beside it and barely had time to give the Jewess money to buy me some bread before falling instantly into a deep sleep. Fatigue, cold from my damp clothes, hunger, pain in all my limbs from long hours on horseback, and my tender age not yet conditioned to endure so many combined rigors—all this exhausted my strength and betrayed me defenselessly into the power of a sleep as untimely as it was dangerous. I was wakened by someone shaking my shoulder with great force. I opened my eyes and looked around dumbfounded. I couldn't understand where I was, what I was doing there, or even what I myself had become. Although my eyes were open, sleep was still stupefying my mental faculties. At last I came to my senses, alarmed beyond measure. It was already the dead of night, and everything around me was cloaked in darkness. There was barely enough fire left in the hearth to illuminate the room. By the light of the alternately flaring and dying flame, I saw that the creature shaking my shoulder was a soldier, a jaeger, who from my elegant epaulets took me for an officer and kept saying, "Wake up, wake up, your honor! The cannon fire's getting stronger. Balls are falling on the city!"

I dashed headlong to the spot where I had left my horse. I saw that he was still standing there and looked at his hoof—unshod! There was not a soul in the tavern. The Jew and Jewess had run away—there was no point even thinking of bread. I led Alcides outside and saw that it was not as late as I thought. The sun had just set, and it was a fine evening, the rain had stopped, and the sky was clear. I mounted my poor, hungry, unshod Alcides. As I approached the city gates, I was horrified by the numbers of wounded crowding around them. I was forced to a halt. There was no way I could penetrate that throng of men on foot and horseback, women and children. Disabled cannons and pontoons were being carried through also, and everything was so crowded and crushed in the gates that I was driven to complete despair. Time was flying, and I could not even begin to stir, surrounded as I was on all sides by a throng incessantly streaming toward me with no sign of letting up.

At last it became completely dark. The cannon fire died down, and everything around fell silent, except for the spot where I stood. There the groaning, whining, screeching, swearing, and shouting nearly drove me and my steed out of our wits. Had there been any space at all, he would have reared, but since there was not, he snorted and kicked at whomever he could. God, how was I going to break out of this? Where would I find the regiment now? The night was getting not just dark, but black. What was I going to do?

To my great good fortune, I caught sight of some Cossacks forcing path in some unfathomable way through that compressed mass of people, horses, and artillery. I saw them dashing adroitly through the gates and, a flash joined them and dashed through also, but only by badly bruising my knee and almost breaking my shoulder. Escaping into the open, I stroked Alcides' arched neck: *I'm sorry for you, trusty comrade, but there's nothing to be done for it; on your way at a gallop!* A light touch of my foot, and the steed took off at a run. I put all my faith in Alcides' instinct; I had no way at all of ascertaining the correct route; the night was so dark that it was impossible to see objects twenty paces away. I loosed the reins. Alcides soon stopped galloping and went at a walk, continually snorting and flicking his ears. I guessed that he was seeing or smelling something dreadful, but since I could not, as the saying goes, see my nose before my face, I had no way of avoiding any misfortune that might lie before me. It was evident that the army had changed position and I was left alone, blundering through unfamiliar fields surrounded by darkness and the hush of death.

At last Alcides began to climb such an extraordinarily steep slope that I had to clutch his mane with all my might to keep from rolling off the saddle. The darkness had gotten so thick that I couldn't see anything before me. I had no idea where I was going and how this journey might end. While I went on thinking and changing my mind about what I should do, Alcides suddenly began heading downhill at the same horrible steep angle at which he had gone up. Now there was no more time for reflection. To save my neck, I leaped hastily off my horse and led him by hand, stooping close to the ground to see where to put my feet and taking all the precautions necessary during such a perilous descent.

When Alcides and I stood at last on a level spot, I saw a dreadful and at the same time lamentable sight: countless numbers of dead bodies covered the field. They were quite visible: they were either totally stripped or wore only their shirts and lay like white shadows on the black earth. At a distance a number of fires could be seen, and the highway was right beside me. Behind me was the redoubt which Alcides had clambered up and I had descended in such fear. Having found out at last where I was and taking it for granted that the fires I saw were those lit by our army, I remounted my horse and began heading down the road toward the fire directly ahead of me; but Alcides turned left and took off on his own at a gallop. The route he chose was horrifying to me: he was racing among the dead bodies, jumping over them, stepping on them, leaping aside, stopping and bending his muzzle to sniff a corpse and snort over it. I could no longer bear it and turned him back to the road. My steed obeyed me with marked reluctance and went at a walk, continually trying, however, to head leftward.

After a few minutes I heard the hooves of many horses and men's voices

and at last caught sight of a group of mounted men riding directly toward me; they were talking about something or other and kept repeating, "Your Excellency!" I was delighted, taking it for granted that His Excellency would know which were the fires of the Polish Horse or, if he didn't, would allow me to join his suite. When they came close to me, the man in front—I assume it was the general himself—asked me, "Who goes there?"

I answered, "A Polish Horse soldier!"

"And where are you going?"

"To the regiment!"

"But your regiment is standing over there," said the general, gesturing in the direction that my trusty Alcides had so insistently tried to take, "and you are heading toward the enemy."

The general and his suite galloped off to Heilsberg, and, after kissing my priceless Alcides' ears several times, I left him at liberty to choose the way. Finding himself free, the trusty steed reared to express his delight, neighed, and galloped directly toward the fires glimmering to the left side of the road. There were no dead bodies on my route, and, thanks to Alcides' speed, in a quarter of an hour I was at home—that is, in the regiment.

The Polish Horse soldiers were already mounted. Alcides took his place in the ranks with a sort of quiet, amicable neigh. He had no sooner settled down than the command rang out: "To the right by threes, march!" The regiment moved out. Wyszemirski and our other comrades in my unit were delighted at my return, but the sergeant-major felt obliged to scold me: "You do foolish things, Durov! You won't keep your head on your shoulders. At Guttstadt, in the heat of battle, you decided to give up your horse to some wounded man or other. Are you really too half-witted to realize that a cavalryman on foot in the midst of combat is a creature bound to perish? At the Passarge you dismounted and went to sleep in the bushes when the entire regiment was expecting orders at any minute to go and go at a trot. Whatever would have become of you if you didn't have a horse who, no offense meant, is a great deal smarter than you are? They let you go into Heilsberg for half an hour, and you settled down by the fireplace and went to sleep, at a time when even to think about sleeping was impossible—that is, impermissible. A soldier has to be more than human. In this calling there is no question of age: he has to carry out his duties the same way at seventeen and at thirty and at eighty. I advise you to die on your horse and in the ranks, or else I warn you that you will either be taken prisoner in disgrace or killed by marauders or, worst of all, considered a coward." The sergeant-major fell silent, but his last phrase stung me cruelly. Blood rushed to my face.

There are, however, limits to human endurance. . . . Despite our sergeant-major's philosophizing about a soldier's obligations, I was drop-

ping from lack of sleep and fatigue. My clothing was soaked. For two days I had neither slept nor eaten, I had been constantly on the march, and even when we stopped, I was on horseback with only my uniform to wear, exposed without protection to the cold wind and rain. I could feel my strength slipping away by the hour. We were riding three abreast, whenever we happened upon a narrow bridge or some other obstacle that we could not cross as a unit, we went two at a time or sometimes even singly. At such times the fourth platoon was forced to stand motionless for several minutes in one spot. I was in the fourth platoon, and at each beneficent stop I would dismount in a flash, lie down on the ground, and instantly fall asleep. The platoon began moving, my comrades shouted and called me and, since a frequently interrupted sleep cannot be a deep one, I awoke at once, got up, and scrambled back onto Alcides, dragging my heavy oak lance behind me. These episodes were repeated at even the briefest of halts. My sergeant was losing his patience, and my comrades were angry with me. They all told me that they would abandon me on the road if I dismounted even once more: "After all, you can see that we do, but at least we don't get off our horses and lie down on the ground. Do it our way."

The sergeant-major grumbled in a low voice, "Why do these whelps wriggle their way into the army? They should stay in the nest."

I spent the rest of the night on horseback, dozing, sleeping, bending over Alcides' mane, and rousing in fright, feeling as if I were falling. I seemed to be losing my mind. My eyes were open, but objects kept altering in a dreamlike way. I took uhlans for forest, and forest for uhlans. My head was burning, but the rest of me was shivering; I was very cold. Everything I had on was wet to the skin. . . .

Dawn broke. We halted and were permitted to kindle a fire and cook kasha. Oh, thank God, now I could lie down and sleep by the fire; I could warm up and dry out.

"You can't do that," said the sergeant-major, as he saw me sitting down by the fire and rolling grass into a clump to put under my head. "You can't. The captain has ordered the horses fed on grass. Take the curb-bit out of your horse's mouth and lead him to pasture."

I joined the others and walked Alcides around the fields. He grazed the dewy grass while I stood sadly beside him.

"You're as pale as a corpse," said Wyszemirski, approaching me with his horse. "What's wrong with you? Are you sick?"

"I'm not sick, just cruelly chilled. The rain has soaked clear through me, my blood has turned to ice, and now I have to go walking around on the damp grass!"

"It seems that the rain soaked us all equally; why are we dry then?"  
"You're all wearing greatcoats."  
"And where's yours then?"

"The Cossacks took it, along with my saddlebags and valise."

"What miracle brought that about?"

"Have you forgotten already that I put a wounded dragoon officer on my horse and let it be used to return him to his regiment?"

"Well, yes, I remember. What about it?"

"This is what: when I found my horse again, he was already in Podwyszacki's hands. He bought it from Cossacks with just the saddle, and everything else had disappeared!"

"That's bad, comrade. You're the youngest of us all. You won't last long during these cold nights without a greatcoat. Tell the sergeant-major; he'll give you a coat left from those killed. They're sending huge piles of them to the wagon-train."

We talked for a while longer. At last the sun rose quite high, the day warmed up, my uniform dried out, and my fatigue passed. I would have been very cheerful if I could have hoped for something to eat. But there was no use even thinking of it; I had no share in the kasha that was on the fire. And so I began diligently searching the grass for berries. As the captain rode past the uhlans walking around the fields with their horses, he noticed my pursuit.

"What are you looking for, Durov?" he asked, riding up to me.

I replied that I was looking for berries. The captain must have guessed the reason, because he turned to the platoon sergeant and said to him in a low voice, "See that Durov and Wyszemirski get enough to eat."

He rode away, and the old soldiers said to his back, "If we have enough to eat, they should, too. They always think more about these whelps than about seasoned old soldiers."

"What fools you are, seasoned old soldiers!" said the sergeant-major, approaching us. "Who should we worry about if not children? I think you can see for yourselves that both of these recruits are scarcely out of their childhood."

"Come with me, children," said the sergeant-major jovially, taking us both by the arms. "The captain ordered us to feed you." We were given soup, roast meat, and white bread.

Seeing the horses grazing quietly and the uhlans asleep in the meadow, I decided there was no need for me to be the only one standing vigil. It was afternoon already, and the heat had become unbearable. I climbed down to the banks of the little river which flowed by our camp and lay down in the tall grass to sleep. Alcides was roaming around not far from me. My sound sleep was broken by a shout of "Curb your horse! . . . Mount!" and the tramp of uhlans running to their horses and with their horses into the ranks. I jumped up precipitately. The sergeant-major was already on his steed and hurrying the uhlans into formation; I looked around for Alcides and, to my horror, saw him swimming across the river,

heading directly for the far bank. Just then the sergeant-major galloped up to me, "Why are you standing there without your horse?"

There was no time to hesitate! I plunged after my Alcides, and we came out together on the opposite bank. In a minute I curbed him, mounted, and swam back; I was standing in place before the troops had finished forming ranks.

"Well, at least that was a plucky recovery," said the sergeant-major, looking pleased.

Schippenebil. Great God, what horror! This little village was almost completely incinerated. How many people were burned alive here! Oh, the poor wretches!

*June 1807. Friedland.* Over half of our brave regiment fell in this fierce and unsuccessful battle. Several times we attacked, several times we repulsed the enemy, and in turn we ourselves were driven back more than once. We were showered with caseshot and smashed by cannonballs, and the shrill whine of the hellish bullets has completely deafened me. Oh, I cannot bear them! The ball is a different matter. It roars so majestically at least, and there are always brief intervals in between. After some hours of heated battle, the remnants of our regiment were ordered to pull back a little to rest. I took advantage of it to go watch the operations of our artillery, without stopping to think that I might get my head torn off for no good reason. Bullets were showering me and my horse, but what do bullets matter beside the savage, unceasing roar of the cannons?

An uhlans from our regiment, covered in blood, with a bandaged head and bloodied face, was riding aimlessly around the field in one direction or another. The poor fellow could not remember where he was going and was having trouble keeping his seat in the saddle. I rode up to him and asked him which squadron he was from. He muttered something and swayed so violently that I had to support him to keep him from falling. Seeing that he was out of his senses, I tied his horse's reins to Alcides' neck and, supporting the wounded man with one hand, rode with him to the river to refresh him with water. At the river he came to his wits somewhat, slipped off his horse, and fell at my feet from weakness. What could I do? I couldn't abandon him—he would perish! There was no way of getting him to a safe place, and what place here was safe anyway? There was gun and cannonfire all around us, balls were skipping in all directions, shells were bursting in air and on the ground; the cavalry like a stormy sea was rushing forward and falling back, and amid this terrible upheaval I could no longer see the pennons of our regiment anywhere. Meanwhile, there was no time to lose. I scooped up water in my helmet and poured it over the head and face of the wounded man. He opened his eyes. "For God's sake, don't abandon me here," he said, making an effort

to rise. "I'll get on my horse somehow; walk me back behind the lines of our army. God will reward your human kindness." I helped him to mount his horse, got onto Alcides, picked up the reins of the wounded man's horse again, and we rode toward Friedland.

The city's inhabitants were fleeing, and regiments were retreating. Scoundrelly soldiers in large numbers, who had run away from the field of battle without being wounded, were spreading terror among the retreating crowds, shouting, "All is lost!" "We're beaten to the last man!" "The enemy is at our heels." "Flee! Save yourselves!" Although I did not completely trust these cowards, I couldn't keep from worrying as I saw entire platoons of dragoons riding at a trot through the city. I regretted wholeheartedly the curiosity that had lured me to watch the cannonfire and the evil destiny that had sent me the wounded man. To leave him to the whims of fate seemed to me base and inhuman in the extreme—I could not do it! The unfortunate uhlans, his face numb with fear, turned his alarmed gaze to me. I understood his apprehensions.

"Can you go a little faster?" I asked.

"No, I can't," answered the unfortunate man and sighed deeply.

We continued at a walk. Men were running and galloping past us, shouting to us, "Step it up! The enemy's not far off!" At last we came into a forest. I turned off the highway and rode through the thickets without letting go of the reins of the wounded uhlans horse. The forest shade and coolness revived my comrade's strength somewhat, but, to his woe, he put that strength to the worst possible use. He decided to smoke his pipe, stopped, struck a light, and took a puff of his repulsive tobacco. A moment later his eyes rolled up, the pipe fell from his hands, and he fell lifelessly onto the neck of his horse. I stopped, dragged him to the ground, laid him flat and, since I had no way of bringing him to his senses, stood beside him with both horses, waiting for him to recover. In a quarter of an hour he opened his eyes, raised himself, and sat up, looking at me with a crazed air. I saw that he was out of his wits. His head was covered with saber cuts, and the tobacco smoke had acted on him like liquor. "Mount your horse," I said. "Otherwise we'll get there too late. Get up, I'll help you."

He didn't answer me, but he did try to stand up. I assisted him to his feet. Holding the horses' reins in one hand and using the other to help him up into the stirrup, I came close to falling, because, instead of clutching the mane, the half-crazed uhlans put all his weight on my shoulder.

We rode off again. The crowds were still fleeing with the same shout, "Save yourselves!" At last I saw some passing artillery pieces. I asked my protégé whether he wouldn't like to stay with them: it would be easier for him lying on a caisson than riding horseback. He was obviously delighted by my proposal, and I at once asked the sergeant of artillery if he would

take the wounded uhlan and his horse under his care. He agreed willingly, and ordered his men at once to take my comrade off his horse, spread a few saddle blankets on the caisson, and lay him on it.

I quivered with joy at finding myself free and would have gone immediately to look for the regiment, if I could have found out from anyone where it was. I rode alone until nightfall, asking those who passed me, they knew where the Polish Horse uhlan regiment was. Some said that I was up ahead; others, that one part of the army had gone off somewhere to the side and my regiment was in that detachment. I was in despair. Night had fallen, and I had to give Alcides a chance to rest. I caught sight of a group of Cossacks who had kindled a fire and were cooking their supper.

I dismounted and went over to them, "Hello, friends! Are you planning to spend the night here?"

"We are," they replied.

"And how about the horses? Do you put them out to grass?"

They looked at me in astonishment. "Where else then? Of course, do."

"And they don't stray too far from you?"

"What do you want to know that for?" asked one old Cossack, staring intently into my eyes.

"I would like to let my horse graze with yours, but I'm afraid he'll go too far away."

"Well, take care of him then: hobble him with a tether and wrap around your arm. Then the horse can't wander off without waking you. We keep ours on a tether."

And with this, the old Cossack invited me to share their kasha with them. Afterwards they hobbled their horses, tying them on tethers and wrapping the ends around their arms, and went to sleep. I walked around after Alcides in perplexity: I too wanted to lie down, but how could I leave my horse free to roam all night? I had no tether. At last I got the idea of tying a handkerchief around Alcides' forefeet. It was a delicate batiste handkerchief from a dozen that my grandmother had given me back in Little Russia. Only one of the dozen was left intact, and it went everywhere with me. I was very fond of it and washed it myself every day wherever I had a chance—in a brook, a river, a lake, or a puddle. I used this handkerchief to bind Alcides' legs, allowed him to graze, and went to sleep not far from the Cossacks.

Dawn had already broken when I awoke. The Cossacks and their horses were gone, and Alcides as well. Mortally alarmed and saddened beyond expression, I got up from the grass on which I had slept so peacefully. The saddled horses of dragoons were roaming the fields all around me. With a heart full of bitter regret, I began searching among them at random for Alcides. I had been walking about in one direction

another for half an hour when I caught sight of a scrap of my handkerchief gleaming white at a distance. I ran over to it, and, to my indescribable joy, Alcides came running up to me, frisking; he neighed and rested his head on my shoulder. One end of the white handkerchief was still trailing from his right leg, but the rest was ripped to shreds and scattered about the field. His curb, snaffle, and reins had been taken. It was useless to ask the dragoons about them: who could make them tell me or, more to the point, give them back? It was a horrible situation! How could I appear in the regiment looking like that? This was an excellent opportunity to learn egotism: to make a firm resolution, always and in every case, to think more of myself than of others. Twice I had yielded to feelings of compassion, and both times I had been very badly rewarded. Moreover, the first time the captain had called me a scamp, and what would he think of me now? The battle was still in progress when I decided to go watch the cannons and suddenly disappeared. What a horrible thought! I was afraid to dwell on it. . . .

When the dragoons heard the reason for my distress, they gave me a long strap to use for reins and said that my regiment could not be very far ahead; it had spent the night where they did, and I could catch it still on the spot. As I tied the repulsive strap to the halter Alcides was still wearing, I felt extremely vexed with myself. Oh, my fine steed, I was thinking, you're in the hands of such a capricious fool of a girl! But neither repentance nor regret nor vexation saved me from woe!

I reached the regiment, and this time it was not the captain, but Kachowski, our general, who told me that my bravery was scatterbrained and my compassion witless; I rushed into the heat of battle when I was not supposed to, went on the attack with other squadrons, rescued anyone and everyone I came across in the midst of combat, and, giving up my horse to anyone who decided to ask for him, was left on foot among the fiercest clashes; he was out of patience with my pranks and was ordering me to go at once to the wagon-train. Me, in the wagons! Every last drop of blood drained from my face. In my worst nightmare I never imagined anything so horrible as this punishment.

Kazimirski, who loves me like a father, looked with pity at the change in my face. He said something under his breath to the commander, but the other answered, "No! No, we have to protect him." Then he turned to me, speaking now in a much kinder tone, "I am sending you to the wagon-train in order to preserve a brave officer for our native land in times to come. In a few years you'll be able to make better use of that daring which now threatens to cost you your life with no benefit to anyone."

Oh, how little those hollow words of consolation meant to me! They were mere words, and the truth of the matter was that I was going to the wagon-train. I went over to Alcides to get him ready for the shameful

journey. Embracing my trusty comrade-in-arms, I wept from shame and sorrow. My hot tears fell on his black mane and skipped and rolled down the saddle-frame. Wyszemirski is also being sent to the wagons, and why should that be? He is always in the proper spot, and he cannot be reproached for either witless daring or misplaced compassion: he has all the common sense and equanimity of an adult.

Everything was ready, and our funereal procession began: wounded horses, wounded men, and we two, in the prime of life and completely healthy, moving slowly, step by step, to our final resting place, to the damned wagon-train. There is nothing in the world I desire so fiercely as that Kachowski shall see no action for the rest of the campaign!

Tilsit. Here we were reunited with our regiment. Everyone with strength enough to hold a weapon is in the ranks. They say that we are going to Russia from here. And so the campaign is at an end, and my hopes and dreams with it: instead of splendid feats I committed scatterbrained pranks. Will I someday have a chance to make up for them? Napoleon's restless spirit and the uneasy crown on his head assure me of the possibility. Once again he will force Russia to take up its formidable arms, but will it be soon? And what will I be until then? Can I really remain a common recruit? Will they promote me to officer without proofs of my nobility? And how can I get them? My uncle has our charter if he would send it. But, no, he will never do so. On the contrary. Oh, God, God, why was my life spared?

I was so absorbed in these lamentable reflections that I failed to notice the captain galloping up to the spot where I stood. "What's this, Durov?" he said, touching my shoulder lightly with his saber. "Is this any time to be hanging your head and looking pensive? Sit alert and look cheerful. The emperor is coming!"

And with this he galloped off. Words of command rang out, regiments dressed ranks, trumpets sounded, and we dipped our lances to our adored tsar as, accompanied by a large suite, he dashed up to us on a fine horse. Our emperor is a handsome man in the prime of life; meekness and charity are expressed in his large blue eyes, greatness of soul in his noble features, and an uncommon amiability on his rosy lips. Our young tsar's kindly face depicts a sort of maidenly bashfulness along with his benevolent expression. The emperor rode past our entire formation at a walk, looking at the soldiers compassionately and pensively. Oh, how his paternal heart must bleed at the memory of the last battle! Much of our army perished on the fields of Friedland!

<sup>1.</sup> In the summer of 1807 Napoleon and Alexander I met for the first time on a raft in the middle of the Neman to begin negotiations. The resulting peace of Tilsit defined the French and Russian spheres of influence in Europe and freed both powers to wage war elsewhere (Napoleon in Spain; Alexander I in Finland and on Turkish territory).

## Chapter Three

### THE TROOPS' RETURN TO RUSSIA

When we got back to our native land, the army dispersed by corps, division, and even regiment to different areas. Our regiment, the Pskov Dragoons, and the Ordensk Cuirassiers are all in one camp. Our tents are as large as ballrooms; each of them houses a platoon. The captain sent for me and Wyszemirski. He told us that wartime, when we could all lie around together in the straw, was over: now we must observe meticulously all the formalities and obligations of service; we must come to attention for all officers, present arms to them—that is, draw our sabers—on sentry duty, and respond to roll call in a loud, gruff voice. I have been assigned on equal footing with the others to guard our hay at night, to clean with a spade the *placówka*—that is, the square where sentries assemble in front of the guardhouse—and stand watch at the church and the powder-magazine. Every morning and evening we lead our horses to water at the river, which is a verst away from us. Sometimes I have to lead two horses and ride a third. In this event I manage to reach the river without trouble, but from there to camp my three horses and I fly like a whirlwind, and in our flight I hear the curses of uhlans, dragoons, and cuirassiers scattering behind me. None of them can manage their horses after they have been seduced by the bad example of mine, who know that they will get their oats back at the picket line. They carry me impetuously, frisking, kicking, and trying to break loose as they run, and I expect to be ripped off Alcides' back at any minute. Each time my inability to restrain the playful horses earns me a reprimand from the sergeant-major and the duty officer.

At last we are in quarters. My life is spent in the routine occupations of the soldier. At dawn I go to see my horse and curry and feed him. Then, covering him with his blanket and leaving him under the protection of the duty-soldier, I go back to my quarters where, to my pleasure, I am quartered alone. My present hostess is a kind woman who gives me milk, meat, and good bread. The late autumn has made taking walks much less agreeable to me. How happy I would be to have books! The captain has many; I don't think he would find it odd if I were to ask him for permission to read them, but I'm afraid to risk it. I would be very ashamed if, against my expectations, he were to say that a soldier has other things than books to occupy him. I will wait. There'll be time for reading yet. Can I really remain a common soldier all my life? Wy-

szemirski has already been promoted to sergeant. True, he has a patroness, Countess Poniatowska. At the very start of the campaign she herself took him to Bennigsen and made him promise to put her nursing under his personal protection.<sup>1</sup> But I am all by myself in the wide world. Why should anyone worry about me? I can only rely on time and on myself. It would be odd, indeed, if my commanders could not distinguish me from soldiers taken from the plow.

Kresy: this is what the Polish Horse soldiers call the duty of carrying orders from headquarters to the squadrons. "To be on kresy" means to be sent out with such orders. Today it was my turn. Gałczewski, my platoon sergeant, announced it to me: "You're on kresy, Durov."

"Gladly!"

And in fact I am glad for any novelty. In camp it made me very happy to be ordered to clean the placówka. I worked with a will, scraping grass from the earth with a spade, sweeping it into a pile with a broom, and doing it as if that were the only thing I had ever done all my life. My former mentor was almost always present during these labors; he would pat me on the shoulder and say, "Zmorduiescie, dziecko! Pracuj po woli."<sup>2</sup>

In the evening an order was brought from headquarters, and Gałczewski told me to take it immediately to the captain, whose quarters are five versts away from our hamlet.

"I'll walk," I told Gałczewski. "I'd be sorry to exhaust Alcides."

"Exhaust him! It's only five versts. All the same, if you're sorrier for Alcides' legs than your own, go ahead and walk."

Off I went. The sun had already set, and the evening was fine. The road ran through fields sown with rye and in other spots wound in and out of shrubbery. Nature is captivating in Poland! At least I prefer it to our northern climate. At home even in midsummer we can never forget the winter cold: it is always so near at hand. Our winter is a real one, terrible and all-killing. But here it is so short, so indulgent. The winter snow leaves tips of grass exposed to our contented gaze, and the sight of this not quite concealed greenery gives our hearts a consoling presentiment of the earth's reappearance with the first spring wind: there's the grass, and here's warmth and spring. . . .

As I walked along daydreaming, storm clouds covered the sky, and a warm, fine drizzle began. I stepped up my pace and, since the village was

1. General Leontij Bennigsen, a native of Hannover long in Russian service, was the commander-in-chief whose sluggish pursuit of the French in the Prussian campaign puzzled Durova.

2. "You'll tire yourself out, my boy. Take it easy." (Polish)

in sight, succeeded in reaching it before the rain started in earnest. The captain read the order, asked me whether our quarters were all right, and then said, "Since it's night already, you can return to your platoon tomorrow, but for now go and spend the night in the stables."

This was the last thing I expected, and I felt ashamed for Galéra. Had he lost his wits? It's true that he could not in his wildest dreams guess who I am, but why send me to the stables anyway? A fine bedroom that is!

The rain had already ceased; there was only an occasional drizzle. I set out on the return journey. But in order to get home faster, I decided to go as the crow flies, heading in the direction where I knew our village to lie. This meant leaving the road and cutting across the grainfields, and I did so without a moment of hesitation. How could the direct route be longer than the usual road? Things went tolerably well as long as I kept to the outskirts of the rye field; the night was so light that I could make out objects clearly. Although the rain-soaked rye twined around me, my clothing was not wet clear through. At last the path began cutting into the middle of the field, and I came into tall, dense rye up to my shoulders. Burning with impatience to reach a clear spot as soon as I could, I began walking fast, no longer worrying about the dense rye which was depositing all its raindrops on my uniform. But no matter how I hurried, I couldn't see any end to the boundless flat fields of grain which undulated like the sea. I was tired, water was flowing off me in streams, and my rapid pace made me unbearably hot. I slowed down, consoled only by the thought that the night had to end sometime and in daylight I would at last see where our village was. Mentally resigning myself to the melancholy prospect of blundering through wet fields among the tall rye all night, I walked on quietly and cheerlessly. And what could be diverting about walking along up to my ears in rye with nothing but heads of grain to look at?

After half an hour of my forbearing journey and just when I had lost all hope of seeing anything resembling a village or a fence, I suddenly found myself at the village gates. Oh, how delighted I was! In a flash I opened them and tore, almost flying, to my quarters. Everyone was already asleep, the fire was out, and I fumbled around in the dark for a long time locating my valise, taking out clean linen, undressing, and changing. Then I wrapped myself up in my greatcoat, lay down, and fell asleep instantly.

Alcides! Oh, mortal pain in my heart, when will you be stilled? . . . Alcides, my priceless Alcides! Once so strong, indomitable, unapproachable, allowing only my infant hand to govern you. You who carried me on your spine so obediently in my childhood years; who passed with me across the bloody fields of honor, glory, and death; who shared my

rigors, dangers, hunger, cold, joy, and contentment! You, the only creature of the animal kingdom who loved me! You are no more. You exist no longer.

Four weeks have passed since this unhappy event. I haven't picked up my pen. Mortal anguish burdens my soul. I go everywhere with head lowered in dejection. I carry out the duties of my calling reluctantly and, no matter where I am or what I do, sorrow is always with me and tears continually well up in my eyes. On sentry duty blood rushes to my heart! When I am relieved, I no longer run to Alcides. Alas, I walk slowly to his grave. They distribute the evening ration of oats, I hear the cheerful neighing of our steeds, but the voice that made my soul rejoice is silent. . . . Oh, Alcides, Alcides, my joy is buried with you! . . . I don't know whether I have the strength to describe the tragic death of the unforgettable comrade of my youthful years and life under arms. The pen trembles in my hand and tears cloud my vision. However, I am going to write it. Someday Papa will read my notes and pity my Alcides.

The horses stood all together in one large squadron stable, and we took them to water as a squadron just as we had in camp. The bad weather, which did not allow us either to drill or ride them, caused our horses to become restive and impossible to manage on the way back from the waterhole. On the most ill-fated day of my life, to my eternal regret I decided to take Alcides by the reins. Before, I had always ridden him and led the other horses; now to my grief I did the opposite. As we were going to the river, Alcides frisked lightly without pulling at the rein; he kept rubbing his muzzle against my knee or nibbling playfully at my epaulets. But on the way back, when all the horses began frisking, rearing, snorting, and kicking, and some, breaking loose, started to play and squeal, my unfortunate Alcides was carried away by their example. He reared, leaped aside, tore the reins from my hands and, borne by his evil fate, took off like an arrow, jumping low wattle fences and hedges on the run. Oh, woe, woe to me, the ill-starred witness of my most horrible misfortune! I was watching Alcides' rapid gallop, I saw him jump . . . and a mortal cold swept over my body! Alcides jumped a fence which had sharpened stakes rising nearly three feet above it. My strong steed could jump that high, but, alas! he couldn't clear the stakes. The weight of his body dropped him directly onto the fence. One of the stakes plunged into his belly and broke off. With a cry of despair I set out at a gallop after my unfortunate friend. I found him in his stall; he was trembling all over, and sweat was streaming off him. The fatal fragment was still in his belly, a fourth of it visible from outside. Death was inevitable. I ran up to him, hugged his neck, and burst into tears. My good steed rested his head on my shoulder, sighed heavily and, at last, five minutes later fell and stretched out convulsively. . . . Alcides, Alcides! Why didn't I die there also? When the duty officer saw me embracing the lifeless body of my

horse and covering it with kisses and tears, he said I was behaving like a foolish child and ordered it dragged into the fields. I ran to the captain, begging him to order Alcides' body left in peace and to give me permission to bury him myself.

"What! Your poor Alcides is dead?" asked the captain with concern as he saw my tear-stained eyes and pale face. "What a shame! You loved him so. Well, what's to be done? Don't cry. I'll tell them to give you any horse in the squadron. Go on now, bury your companion."

He sent his orderly with me, and the duty officer gave up trying to prevent me from carrying out the sad task of burying Alcides. My comrades, moved by the extremity of my grief, dug a deep hole, lowered Alcides into it, covered him with earth, cut turf with their sabers, and used it to edge the high mound under which the only creature who loved me rests in eternal sleep.

When their work was done, my comrades returned to the squadron, and I stayed behind and wept on Alcides' grave until late at night. The philanthropic captain gave orders that for two days I was to be allowed to mourn and relieved of all duties. I spent almost the entire time at my steed's grave. Despite cold wind and rain, I stayed there until midnight; when I got back to my quarters I didn't eat anything and went on weeping until dawn. On the third day my platoon leader sent for me and told me to pick a horse; the captain had ordered them to give me any one I chose.

"I'm grateful for the favor," I replied, "but all horses are alike to me now; I'll take whichever one it suits you to give me."

When I was going to tend Alcides, I did it eagerly, but now I find this occupation very disagreeable. With a deep sigh, I led my new horse into the stall where Alcides died and covered it with the blanket which had covered him only three days earlier. I no longer weep, but I roam the yellowed fields joylessly. I watch the cold rain splashing on my Alcides' grave and soaking into the turf on which he frisked so cheerfully.

Every morning my first steps are to Alcides' grave. I lie down on it and press my face to the cold earth, and my hot tears sink into it along with the raindrops. I return in thought to my childhood years, recalling the many joyful hours this fine steed's rare affection and obedience afforded me. I recall those magnificent summer nights when I led Alcides up Startsev mountain by a path climbed only by goats. It was no effort for me to follow the path; my little footsteps fitted as neatly on it as the goats' hooves, but my good steed risked slipping and smashing himself to bits. Nevertheless, he followed me obediently, albeit trembling with fear at finding himself at such a dreadful height and over a precipice! Alas, my Alcides, so many woes and dangers passed you by without doing you the least harm. It was my recklessness, my disastrous recklessness, that brought you at last to your grave. This thought torments, lacerates my

soul. . . . Nothing cheers me now; the very shadow of a smile has vanished from my face. Whatever I do is done mechanically, from habit. I ride off to drill with a dead indifference, I come back in silence when it is over; I unsaddle my horse, return it to its place without even glancing at it, and go away without a word to anyone.

The commander-in-chief has sent a sergeant for me; I am wanted at headquarters. Whatever for? But I have been ordered to turn in my horse, saddle, lance, saber, and pistols to the squadron, so evidently I shall not be coming back here again. I shall go to bid farewell to Alcides.

I wept on his grave just as inconsolably as on the day of his death and, bidding him farewell forever, for the last time kissed the earth which covers him.

Polotsk. There is about to be some sort of major upheaval in my life. Kachowski asked me whether my parents agreed to my serving in the army or whether I enlisted against their will. I told him the truth at once: my father and mother would never have let me join the army; but, driven by an invincible propensity for arms, I ran away from home on the sly with a Cossack regiment. I may be only seventeen,<sup>3</sup> but I am experienced enough to realize at once that Kachowski knows more about me than he admits, because he listened to my answer without the slightest sign of surprise at my parents' odd way of thinking in refusing to let their son join the army, whereas the first choice of all the nobility for their children is a military career. He said only that I was to go to Vitebsk to see Buxhöwden with his adjutant, the honorable Neidhardt, who was also present.<sup>4</sup>

When Kachowski gave me my orders, Neidhardt at once exchanged bows with me and took me to his house. He left me in the drawing-room and joined his family in the inner rooms. A quarter of an hour later, one head and then another began peeping out at me through the half-open door. Neidhardt himself didn't come out; he dined, drank coffee, and stayed there for a long time, all of which I spent alone in the drawing-room. What odd people! Why didn't they invite me to dine with them?

Toward evening we left Polotsk. At post stations Neidhardt drank coffee and left me to stand by the carriage while the horses were changed.

Now I am in Vitebsk, staying in Neidhardt's quarters. He has become a

3. Twenty-four.

4. In late 1807 Friedrich Wilhelm Buxhöwden was the commander in charge of rebuilding the western army after the Prussian campaign. His adjutant, Aleksandr Neidhardt, was a general still on active duty when Durova published *The Cavalry Maiden* in 1836.

different man; he talks amicably with me and, like a courteous host, treats me to tea, coffee, and breakfast. In short, he behaves as he should have from the beginning. He says that he brought me to Vitebsk on orders from the commander-in-chief, and I am to report to him.

I am still staying with Neidhardt. We breakfast together in the morning; then he goes off to join the commander-in-chief and I stay in his quarters or go for a walk. But now it is deep autumn, and the mud is deep as well. Since I cannot find any place for a human to walk, I go to the tavern in which Neidhardt always dines. There I wait for him and we eat together. After dinner he leaves, and I stay on in the parlor of the mistress of the tavern. I always have a good time there; the tavernkeeper, a kindly, jovial woman, calls me *uhlan-panna*<sup>5</sup> and says that if I were to let myself be corseted, she would bet her entire tavern and its income against a *złoty* that there would not be a girl in all of Vitebsk with a waist as slender and pretty as mine. With these words she goes at once to fetch her corset. This makes her daughters laugh uproariously, because there is room in that corset for all of them and me together.

Five days have passed, and I am still staying in Vitebsk. At last this evening Neidhardt told me that tomorrow I am to see the commander-in-chief; he has been ordered to take me there at ten o'clock in the morning.

On the next day Neidhardt and I went to see Count Buxhöwden. Neidhardt led me into the count's study and left at once. The commander-in-chief greeted me with a kindly smile and began by asking me, "Why were you arrested? Where's your saber?"

I said that all my weapons were taken from me in the squadron.

"I will order them all returned to you. A soldier should never be sent anywhere without weapons."

After that he asked me how old I was and then went on to say: "I've heard a great deal about your valor, and I'm very pleased that all your commanders report only the best of you. . . ." He paused for a minute and then began again. "You are not to be alarmed by what I have to tell you. I must send you to the emperor; he wishes to see you. But I repeat, don't be alarmed. Our emperor is the embodiment of grace and magnanimity; you will learn that from experience."

It did alarm me, however. "The emperor will send me home, Your Excellency, and I will die of sorrow!" I said this with such deeply felt grief that the commander-in-chief was visibly moved.

"Have no fear of that. The emperor will refuse you nothing as a reward for your fearlessness and outstanding conduct. And since I was ordered to

5. Uhlan Miss. (Polish)

make inquiries about you, I will add my own report to the testimony of your regimental and squadron commanders, your platoon sergeant, and Captain Kazimirski. Believe me, they won't take away from you the uniform to which you have done such honor." With this, the general bowed politely to me as a sign to leave.<sup>6</sup>

Entering the anteroom, I found Neidhardt in conversation with Aide-de-camp Zass. They both came over to me, and Neidhardt said, "The commander-in-chief has ordered me to turn you over to M. Zass, His Imperial Majesty's aide-de-camp. You are to travel with him to Peterburg. And so, permit me to wish you a safe journey."

Zass took my arm. "Now you are to accompany me to my quarters. From there we'll send for your things from Neidhardt's, and very early tomorrow morning we are going back to Polotsk, because Buxhöwden has ordered your weapons returned to you without fail." The next day we left Vitebsk very early and soon arrived in Polotsk.

Polotsk. Zass went to see Kachowski and returned an hour later, saying that, to his surprise, Kachowski dined at noon and insisted that he stay, and so he had reluctantly eaten.

"Tomorrow we leave here very early, Durov. Getting up at dawn must be nothing new to you?" I said that I never got up at any time except dawn.

In the evening soldiers from my platoon came to see me and called for me to come out. I did so. What kind people! It was the platoon sergeant and my mentor, the man who had taught me everything that an uhlans needs to know on foot and horseback.

"Farewell, dear comrade," they said. "God grant you good fortune. We've heard that you're on your way to Peterburg; praise us there." "We praised you here when the general asked about you, particularly me," said my mentor, twirling his graying mustaches. "After all, it was me who Kazimirski ordered to be your nurse. The chief took me into his room and spent an hour asking me everything, down to the last detail, and I told him all about it, even how you cried and rolled on the ground when your Alcides died."

A deep sigh escaped me at this reminder. I bade farewell to my fellow soldiers, gave my instructor my year's pay, and went back inside in a most melancholy frame of mind.

At last we are on our way to Peterburg. Our open carriage barely moves; we drag along rather than ride. At each station as many as twelve horses are harnessed to it, and all together they are not worth two decent ones. They are more like calves than horses, and often, as they struggle

6. Buxhöwden's report to Alexander I is included in Appendix A.

hopelessly to pull the carriage out of the deep mud, they end up lying down in it themselves.

Something droll happens to us at almost every post-station. At one we were served bloody sugar with our tea.

"What's the meaning of this?" asked Zass, pushing away the sugar bowl.

The stationmaster was in the next room waiting to see the effect produced by the sugar. At Zass's question he put in an appearance and said on a note of triumph, "My daughter cut her hand chopping the sugar, and this is her blood!"

"Well, take away your blood, you numbskull, and order them to serve us clean sugar," said Zass, turning away in revulsion. I laughed wholeheartedly at this novel way of proving hospitable zeal.

At another station Zass started shouting at the stationmaster because he was drunk, said rude things to us, and refused to give us horses. The stationmaster's wife heard the loud voices and jumped out at Zass with fists flying and, capering with fury, cried piercingly, "What sort of lawless land is this? How dare they abuse the stationmaster!" The stunned Zass could find no way to free himself from this female satan until he thought of tweaking her nose. The remedy proved successful. The *megaera* ran off squealing, and the stationmaster went after her.

We waited half an hour for horses, but, when we saw that none were coming, we settled down to drink tea. Zass sent me as an envoy to the stationmistress to negotiate for cream. Our enemy was happy to make peace, and I returned with a cupful. An hour later horses were brought, and we parted very amicably from the stationmaster and his wife who, as she wished me in particular a safe journey, covered her nose with her apron.

#### MY FIRST VISIT TO THE CAPITAL

Peterburg. So this is our bright, clean, magnificent capital, a memorial to the invincible courage, great spirit, and heroic resolution of the immortal PETER!

We arrived three days ago. I am staying with Zass, and every day I go to look at the monument to Peter the Great.<sup>7</sup> How worthy he is of the appellation! Peter would have been great no matter what station in life he was born to. His majestic appearance corresponds fully to the vast genius once governed by his great soul.

7. Etienne Falconet's famous equestrian statue, erected by Catherine the Great (1766); in Pushkin's narrative poem "The Bronze Horseman" it is a symbol of progress and imperial might.

My fate has been decided. I have been with the emperor! I saw him and spoke with him. My heart is filled with a happiness so ineffable that I have no words to describe my feelings. The greatness of my good fortune stuns and enraptures me! Oh, Emperor! From this hour my life belongs to you. . . .

When Prince V.<sup>8</sup> opened the door of the emperor's study for me and closed it after me, the emperor at once approached and took my hand. He led me over to his desk, rested one hand on it and, continuing to hold my hand in his other one, began questioning me in a low voice with such a gracious expression that all my timidity disappeared and hope once again revived in my soul. "I have heard," said the emperor, "that you are not a man. Is that true?"

I could not immediately pluck up the courage to say, "Yes, Your Majesty, it's true." I stood for a minute with downcast eyes and remained silent; my heart was throbbing fiercely, and my hand trembled in the tsar's. The emperor waited. At last, as I raised my eyes to him and uttered my reply, I saw that the emperor was blushing; instantly I began to blush, too. I lowered my eyes and did not raise them again until the moment when an involuntary impulse of sorrow threw me to the emperor's feet.

After he had questioned me in detail about all my reasons for joining the army, the emperor greatly praised my fearlessness. He said that this was a first example in Russia; all my commanders had only the highest praise for me and called my courage peerless; he was very pleased to verify it; and, therefore, he wished to reward me and return me with honor to my father's house, giving—

The emperor had no time to finish; at the phrase *return home* I cried out in horror and fell immediately to the emperor's feet. "Don't send me home, Your Majesty," I said in the voice of despair. "Don't send me back! I will die there. I will surely die! Don't make me regret that there was no bullet marked for me in this campaign. Don't take away my life, sire! I wanted to sacrifice it to you of my own free will. . . ." As I said this, I was hugging the emperor's knees and weeping.

The emperor was moved. He raised me to my feet and asked in an altered voice, "What is it you want then?"

"To be a warrior! To wear a uniform and bear arms! That is the only reward you can give me, sire! For me there is no other. I was born in an army camp. The sound of trumpets was my lullaby. From the day of my birth I have loved the military calling; by the age of ten I was devising ways to enlist; at sixteen I reached my goal—alone, without help from anyone! I held that glorious post through my courage alone, without patronage or subsidy from anyone. And now, Your Majesty, you want to

8. Saks (19) identifies "Prince V." as Court Minister Petr Volkonski.

send me home! If I had foreseen such an end, nothing could have prevented me from seeking a glorious death in the ranks of your warriors." I said all this with my arms crossed as if before an ikon, looking at the emperor with tear-filled eyes.

The emperor listened to me, trying in vain to conceal how moved he was. After I finished speaking, he spent a minute or two in evident indecision; at last his face brightened. "If you presume," said the emperor, "that permission to wear a uniform and bear arms is your only possible reward, you shall have it!" At these words I began to quiver with joy. The emperor went on, "And you will call yourself by my name—Aleksandrov. I have no doubt that you will make yourself worthy of this honor by the distinction of your conduct and actions. Never forget for a moment that this name must always be above reproach, and I will never forgive you for even the shadow of a spot on it. . . . Now tell me, what regiment would you like to be enrolled in? I will promote you to officer's rank."

"In this matter permit me, Your Majesty, to surrender myself to your will," I said.

"The Mariupol Hussars is one of our most valiant regiments, and the officer corps comes from the best families," the emperor told me. "I will order you enrolled there. Tomorrow you will receive from Lieven as much as you need for the journey and for your uniform.<sup>9</sup> When everything is ready for your departure to the regiment, I will see you again."

With these words the emperor bowed to me. At once I went over to the door and, since I didn't know how to open it, took hold of the bronze knob and began twisting it this way and that. When the emperor saw that I would not be able to leave without his aid, he came over, opened the door for me, and watched me as far as the next door, which I managed by myself.

As I entered the anteroom, I found myself instantly surrounded by pages who vied in asking me questions: "What did the emperor say to you?" "Did he promote you to an officer?"

I didn't know how to answer them, but Zass came over to me along with another aide-de-camp, and the throng of imps retreated respectfully. The aide-de-camp who approached me along with Zass asked me, "Are you fifteen?"

I replied that I was already in my eighteenth year.

"They wrote us wonders about your fearlessness," he said with a polite nod.

Zass put an end to this conversation by taking my arm. "It's time we were going, Prince," he said to his colleague, and we left the palace.

9. Count Khristofor Lieven, Alexander I's counselor at Tilsit.

As we went down the stairs, he asked, "Durov, would you like to make the acquaintance of a relation of mine, the wife of General Zass?"<sup>10</sup>

I answered that I would be happy to.

"Well then, we'll go directly to her house for dinner, and afterwards all of us together will show you the Hermitage. You'll find much to interest you there."

Mme. Zass received me very courteously. After dinner we went to the Hermitage, where my attention was drawn foremost to the pictures; I dearly love painting. The general's wife said that it would take me at least a month merely to look at the pictures. "But just look here," she said, pointing out a bouquet made of rubies, diamonds, emeralds, and other precious stones. "Look, this is incomparably more interesting."

I don't agree with her. What are mere stones in comparison with a fine product of the brush which is imbued with life? I was very taken with four full-length depictions of two girls. In the first they were pictured in childhood and in the others, in youth, but in such a way that, when you looked at the grown girls, you immediately recognized the lovely children who had been so enchanting in their infant beauty. I looked at a depiction of Cleopatra. I sought in it the empress who chose death over humiliation and saw only a woman with a puffy, sallow face, in whose features there was no expression, not even one of pain. A leech was crawling up her bared arm, making its way toward her shoulder; this droll asp was unworthy to wound an empress. I would wager my head that no one in the world could recognize the Empress of Egypt in this depiction; I knew it was she only because Zass pointed her out and told me so. "That's the renowned Cleopatra!" Would he have had to tell me if the portrait were worthy of her?<sup>11</sup>

Today is Sunday. I dined with the general's wife. In the evening she, her young niece Jurkovskaja, Zass, and I went to the theater. It was evident that they were going only for my sake. No person of good taste goes to the theater on Sunday when they usually present a *rusalka* or some other such farce.<sup>12</sup> And, indeed, one of the parts of the *rusalka* was

10. Mme. Zass was most likely the wife of Aleksandr Zass's elder brother, the distinguished general Andrej Zass.

11. The Death of Cleopatra is by the seventeenth-century French painter Pierre Mignard. Of the paintings in the Hermitage in 1808, the ones most likely to be those of the two girls described by Durova are double portraits by Anthony Van Dyck: *Portrait of Philadelphia and Elizabeth Carey*, both girls under ten years of age, and *Portrait of Ladies of the English Queen's Court, Anne Kirke and Anne Dalkeith*. The family resemblance that Durova fancies she sees would be that common to Van Dyck's portraits. (*Gosudarstvennyj Ermitazh, Otdel Zapadnoevropejskogo iskusstva, Katalog zhivopisi*, t. II, [Leningrad-Moscow, 1958], 61.)

12. Although Durova speaks of it in generic terms, *Rusalka* (The Water Nymph) was a four-evening adaptation to Russian of the German operetta, *Das Donauweibchen*, which

playing today. The artist who portrayed Lesta did her best to mutilate the role. She had absolutely no understanding of the character she was playing; in the *chiton* of the *rusalka* she grimaced, put on airs, spoke haughtily, smiled ironically, and kept looking at the *parterre* with no concern for her Vidostan. I never spent a duller evening in my life; the play and the actress bored me to tears. When I got back into the carriage, the general's wife asked me what I thought of the performance. I answered frankly that the play seemed to me a compound of absurdities and the leading actress completely out of character in the role. My candor was apparently not appreciated. They replied stiffly that Peterburg actresses are considered the very best.<sup>13</sup>

Today a new effort was made to astonish, engage, and entertain me. Once again it failed, and all this from the strange means taken. They decided to show me *Chinese shadows*, but since I am neither a child nor a peasant woman, I stopped watching the contraption after the first scene.<sup>14</sup> It must be assumed that the general's wife gives me no credit either for good upbringing or good taste. Be that as it may, her kind intentions merit my gratitude.

I have seen the emperor again! His first words as he greeted me were, "They tell me that you saved an officer! Did you really rescue him from the enemy? Tell me what happened."

I recounted the incident in detail and named the officer. The emperor said that his was a famous name and that my fearlessness on this one occasion did me more honor than everything else during the campaign, because it was based on the greatest of virtues—compassion! "Although your deed serves as its own reward," the emperor went on, "justice demands that you receive that which is owed you by statute as well: the

despite Durova's grumbles, was one of the most popular musical plays of the time. (*Istoriya russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra*, vol. 2, 515-17).

13. The actress who usually played Lesta in 1807-1808 was Sofia Samojlova (*Letopis' russkogo teatra* Pimen Arapov, ed. [St. Petersburg, 1861], 172, 182). To be fair, her debut performance as Lesta (under her maiden name of Chernikova) was reported by one theater-goer as superior to that of her competitors in Berlin and Vienna (S. P. Zhikharev, *Zapiski: 1805-1807* [Moscow, 1891], 12.)

14. Shows featuring "Chinese shadows" were widespread throughout Europe in the late eighteenth century. They used the oriental technique of projecting "mobile paintings," cut out of cardboard or leather and illuminated from behind, onto a linen or oiled paper screen. The shows featured miscellaneous skits and such scenes as magicians working transformations, duck hunts, thunderstorms, battles, and the classic Chinese "broken bridge." See Charles Magnin, *Histoire des Marionnettes en Europe: depuis l'Antiquité jusqu'à nos Jours* (Paris, 1862), 182-86; and, for a description of a similar show in the Russian provinces in the middle of the nineteenth century, M. Semevskij, "Toropets," *Biblioteka dlia chitenija* (1863), 12:18-25.

Cross of St. George is awarded for saving the life of an officer!" With these words the emperor took a cross from his desk and with his own hands put it through the buttonhole of my uniform. I blushed bright red with joy and in my confusion seized both the emperor's hands to kiss them, but he would not permit it.

"I hope," said the emperor, "that this cross will remind you of me at crucial moments in your life." There is great significance behind these words. I swear that the adored Father of Russia will not be deceived in his expectations. This cross will be my guardian angel; I will cherish to the grave the memories connected with it, I will never forget the occasion on which I received it, and I will always—always!—see the hand which touches it now.<sup>15</sup>

I returned to Zass's apartment where I have been living ever since my arrival in Peterburg. I had not yet taken off my cartridge-pouch when I saw an old man entering after me and asking in a quavering voice, "May I see Recruit Durov of the Polish Horse regiment? I am his uncle." Hearing these words, I guessed that the man I saw before me was my father's younger brother, and my first thought was to flee.<sup>16</sup> Fortunately, I had no time to do anything so foolish. Zass responded to his question at once by pointing me out, and my uncle came over to me, embraced me, and said in a low voice, "Your mother is dead."

The words pierced me like a sharp dagger. I trembled and turned pale. I sensed that I was about to burst into floods of tears, and, unable to utter a single word, I took my uncle by the arm and led him out of Zass's apartment.

"Come home with me," said my uncle once we were out on the street. I got into his sleigh and rode all the way in silence, hiding my face and eyes in my greatcoat so that passersby would not see me crying.

At home my uncle told me that when my father received my letter from Grodno and learned from it that I had enlisted in the Polish Horse, he was alarmed by the singular step I had taken. Not knowing how to remedy it or what to do, he sent the letter to Mama. The consequences of this thoughtless act were disastrous. I had been so reckless as to write that it was my mother's excessive strictness which drove me out of my father's house and, in the event I was killed, I begged Papa to forgive me

15. Alexander I never could resist an impassioned appeal. For other young women who came under his patronage, see: Petr Bykov, "Russkie zhenshchiny-pisateli: A. I. Ishimova," *Drevnaja i novaja Rossija* (1878), 8:316-23; Xavier de Maistre, "La Jeune Sibérienne," *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1825); and, for a summary of the two stories, Mary F. Zirin, "Alexandra Ishimova and *The Captain's Daughter*: A Conjecture," *Pacific Coast Philolog.* vol. 15.2 (1980): 41-48.

16. According to Durova's later account ("All That I Could Recollect"), her uncle Nikolaj Durov was living in Peterburg to defend himself from charges of negligence which had cost him his post as a quarantine inspector in the Crimea.

the sorrow my death would inflict on him. Mama was confined to bed, dangerously ill and very weak. When this letter was brought to her, she took it and read it through; then, after a minute of silence, she said with a sigh, "She blames me," turned her face to the wall, and died.

I was sobbing like a five-year-old as I listened to this tale. How could I suppose that Papa would show her the letter? My uncle left me at liberty to abandon myself to my cruel grief and repentance and put off telling me the rest until the following day.

When my father got the letter back, he sent it to my uncle in Peterburg, asking him to find out whether I was still alive. My uncle showed the letter to some generals of his acquaintance and thus it reached the emperor who, they said, was moved to tears when he read it. He at once ordered inquiries made about me in the Polish Horse regiment and, if the reports proved favorable to me, my presentation to him in person. All my commanders showered praise on me beyond my merits and expectations. The result was the emperor's unprecedented grace: permission to dedicate my life to him in the ranks of his warriors.<sup>17</sup>

At last everything is ready for my departure. I have received a travel pass, regimental orders, and two thousand rubles for a hussar uniform and the purchase of a horse. My uncle is very angry because I won't say where I am going. I keep telling him that I am on my way home to Papa, but he does not believe me and says that sooner or later he will find out where I am.

17. Documents relating to the search for Durova are included in Appendix A.

last we stop to rest in some ramshackle little hut or other and eat ham which has such a disgusting salty taste that one bite is enough to make me spit it out and eat my bread without it. These hunters are people under a spell of some sort. Everything seems different to them than to the rest of us: they find the hellish ham which I can't even put in my mouth, a delicacy; the harsh autumn, a propitious season; furious galloping and headlong somersaults with their horse, healthful exercise; and low swampy spots overgrown with stunted shrubbery, a beautiful landscape. At the end of the hunt, the hunters' discussion of it begins, opinions and anecdotes in jargon of which I can't understand a single word.

Amusing scenes take place in the society of the gentlemen hunters! Among the most desperate of them are Dymchevich, Merlin, Soshalsky, and Wichmann. I think that even a dying man would burst out laughing if he could see Dymchevich when he hears hounds barking as they find the trail; he is deeply moved, weeps, and, wiping away his tears, says, "Poor hounds!" Not long ago he went for an outing by carriage with Pavlishchev's eldest daughter. When he caught sight of a hare running across the fields, he was so carried away that he forgot the presence of the lady, the absence of the dogs, and the absolute impossibility of chasing the little beast from an open carriage and began shouting at the top of his voice, "Tally-ho! Tally-ho! . . . Halloo, halloo!!" His sudden transports frightened the young lady, the coachman, and even the horses.

A new commander-in-chief, Meller-Zakomelsky, has arrived in the regiment. He immediately demanded that I come to headquarters. I had to leave the fine company of the reserve squadron, to which I have become extremely attached. Meller sent for me to tell me that I have been granted leave for two months and to find out why I had not applied through the command but directly to the emperor.

I replied that, since I had permission to do so, I made use of it only in order to get leave as soon as possible. Meller ordered me to go to see Count Suvorov in Dubno. He said that there I would find Komburlej, the governor of Zhitomir, from whom I must get my travel orders.<sup>9</sup>

Dubno. The count is making preparations to give a splendid ball tomorrow. He told me that I would not receive my travel orders until after the celebration and that I must dance at his ball—he is imposing it on me as a duty. I heard him out and then went to see his adjutant, Count Kachowski. There I found many officers of my regiment drinking tea. Shortly afterward Suvorov came in, too, wearing his dressing gown and

9. Baron Egor Meller-Zakomelskij was the son of one of Catherine the Great's generals. M. I. Komburlej governed Volhynia from 1806 until 1817; he had an estate in Zhitomir.

slippers. He lay down on Kachowski's bed and said that he was escaping from the unbearable bustle and dust raised by the sweeping, cleaning, and tidying of the entire house for tomorrow's festivities. Kachowski served him a glass of tea. Two hours later Suvorov went back to his own rooms, and an entire cartload of straw was brought into Kachowski's room, spread over the floor, and covered with rugs. Some morocco leather pillows were tossed on top of them, and this made up a spacious bed for his guests. I wished my fellow officers good night and went back to the tavern where I was stopping.

The innkeeper's daughter, panna Dobrowolska, unlocked for me the glass doors leading directly from the street into the parlor. "I've been waiting supper for you for a long time," she said. "There's nobody here today. Come into my room." We went into her chamber, where they served us hazel-grouse, apples, white bread, jam, and a half bottle of malaga, which we finished.

#### THE BALL

The spacious halls of Suvorov's house were filled with a brilliant society. Countless lamps flooded all the rooms with bright light. Music thundered. Lovely Polish ladies, waltzing, hung amorously on the elbows of our adroit, slender hussars. Suvorov has been extremely spoiled by the Polish ladies. They forgive him altogether too much for his handsome looks; he says anything that comes into his head—and the things that sometimes come into his head are marvelous! He noticed that I was not dancing nor even going anywhere near the ladies, and asked me the reason for this odd behavior. Stankovich, my squadron commander who is, as the saying goes, a dashing hussar, hastened to answer for me: "He's afraid of women, Your Excellency. He is shy of them, doesn't like them, and knows nothing of any relations with them."

"Really!" said Suvorov. "Oh, that's inexcusable. Come along, young man, you'll have to make a start." And with this he took my arm and led me over to the young and lovely Princess Lubomirska. He introduced me to the lady by saying, "A la vue de ses fraiches couleurs vous pouvez bien deviner qu'il n'a pas encore perdu sa virginité."<sup>10</sup>

After this recommendation, unique of its kind, the count released my arm, the princess, with a barely perceptible wry smile, rapped him lightly on the cuff with her fan, and I returned to my comrades. Half an hour later I left the ball altogether. It was now past midnight, and I am used to

10. "From his rosy complexion, you can see at a glance that he hasn't yet lost his virginity." (French)

going to sleep early. Moreover, I am not fond of gatherings where there are many women. Stánkovich was not in error when he said that I fear them; I really do. A woman has only to look fixedly at me to start me blushing in confusion. I feel as if she sees right through me and guesses my secret from my appearance alone. In mortal dread I make haste to hide from her eyes.

## Chapter Five

### HOME LEAVE

Three and a half years have passed since my father last saw me. I have changed a great deal: I am taller and I've filled out, my face has changed from pale and oval to swarthy and round, and my hair, which used to be light brown, has darkened. I think that Papa won't recognize me right away. I traveled alone by hired carriage, with nothing but my saber to keep me company.

Stationmasters, taking me for a green youth, often made difficulties for me on the road. They would wait six hours before giving me horses so that I would order something—dinner, tea, or coffee; then the horses would appear. When they presented the bill, it was accompanied by words like: "With your travel allowance, here is what you still owe. . . ." This was usually quite a considerable sum, but I paid it without a word. Sometimes they refused me horses altogether in order to force me to hire private ones at double my allowance. Oh, this journey has inspired me with both dread and loathing of post-stations!

I arrived home at exactly the same time of night I quit the paternal shelter—one o'clock in the morning. The gates were locked. I took my saber and valise from the sleigh and dismissed my coachman for the return trip. Left alone in front of the locked gates of the house where my oppressed, joyless childhood was spent, I experienced none of the emotions that are so often written about. On the contrary, it was with a feeling of sadness that I walked along the palisade to the spot where I knew there were four loose stakes; through this aperture as a child I had often gone out at night to run around the square in front of the church. Now I used it to enter! How could I have ever imagined when I used to crawl through this hole in my white coarse linen frock, looking around timidly and listening closely, shivering from fear and the cold night, that someday I would come back in through this same aperture, also at night, as a hussar?

All the windows of the house were locked. I went up to those of the children's room and tried to take hold of the shutters to open them, but they were fastened somehow from the inside, and I didn't want to knock because I might frighten my little brother and sister. I went over to the building where Mama's women-servants live. Our two dogs, Mars and Mustapha, heard me crossing the yard and rushed me with loud barks which turned at once to joyful yelps. The dear, faithful beasts began twining themselves around my legs, jumping up on my chest, and racing

impetuously in rapture around the yard and back to me again. After I had petted and caressed them, I climbed the stairs and began going from door to door, knocking lightly at each. For a quarter of an hour I had no luck. The dogs both followed me, and both scratched at each door I knocked on. At last I heard the door into the hall open, and soon afterward a woman's voice asked, "Who's there?"

I recognized at once that the person questioning me was Mama's maid Natalja. "It's me. Open up, Natalja."

"Oh, my God, the young mistress!" shrieked Natalja joyfully, rushing to open the door. It took her a minute or so of clanking away at bolts and locks before the door opened and I came in, holding my saber under my arm, accompanied by Mars and Mustapha. Natalja stepped back dumbfounded. "Oh, God save us! Is it really you?" She stood motionless before the door and wouldn't let me enter.

"So let me in, Natalja. What's the matter with you? Don't you recognize me?"

"Oh, ma'am, miss, how could I recognize you? If it weren't for the voice I'd never in my life recognize you." Natalja opened the inner door, helped me off with my greatcoat, and again gasped in surprise as she caught sight of the gold braid on my uniform. "What rich clothes you're wearing, miss! Are you a general, perhaps?"

For another quarter of an hour Natalja kept spewing nonsense and reaching out to touch my gold braid and the fur collar of my *mentik*, until at last I reminded her that I needed a bed made.<sup>1</sup>

"Right away, right away, ma'am. . . ." Then she added, talking to herself, "Maybe you shouldn't call her 'miss' anymore. Well, it'll take a while to get used to. . . ." She started out and then came back, "Would you like me to make tea? It'll be ready in two minutes."

"Please, dear Natalja."

"Oh, ma'am, miss! You're just as nice as ever." Natalja began talking again. "I'll make tea this very minute. But what do they call you now, miss? I can hear that you don't talk the way you used to."<sup>2</sup>

"Call me just what everyone else does."

"But what are the others going to call you, ma'am—sir! Excuse me. . . ."

"That's enough, Natalja. Go bring the tea." The chatterbox went and then came back to take away Mars and Mustapha. Both of them were lying at my feet, and they growled at Natalja when she called them.

"Chase them out, miss, they should be outside."

1. The *mentik* was the short hussar cape worn on the left shoulder as padding in combat.

2. Natalja is confused by hearing Durova's use of masculine grammatical forms for herself.

"Later, later, Natalja. Do me a favor, go get the tea. I'm deathly cold."

Natalja went running off, and I was left to reflect that scenes like this would be repeated not only with all our own household, but with my father's circle of acquaintances as well. Imagining it all, I almost regretted having come. A quarter of an hour later Natalja appeared with the tea and some pillows.

"What time does Papa get up?" I asked her.

"The same as always, miss, at nine o'clock." After this reply she began grumbling to herself again, "I'll never get used to it. . . . What are you to do?"

I gave Mars and Mustapha each a hard biscuit and ordered them out; they obeyed me instantly.

At seven o'clock the next morning I put on my white *dolman*. Our regiment changed uniforms a long time ago, with dark blue prescribed instead of white, but Stánkovich's squadron, I don't know why, must wear white for another year yet.<sup>3</sup> To avoid motley ranks, he asked us to keep wearing white uniforms also. I agreed more willingly than anyone, because I love the combination of white and gold. When I was dressed, Natalja looked at me with fresh surprise: "You've changed a lot, miss. Your papa won't recognize you."

I went to see my sisters. They were already up and waiting for me. Papa joined us that very minute. I embraced his knees and kissed his hands; it was beyond my power to utter a single word. My father wept, hugged me to his breast, and said, smiling through his tears, that no feature of my face looked the way it had before, that I resembled a Kalmyk woman. At last my little brother came in, wearing the uniform of the Mining Institute. He had spent a long time conferring with Nanny about the proper way to greet me: should he just bow or kiss my hand? When Nanny told him he should do whatever he wished, he came running at once and threw himself into my arms. I kissed him and said to Papa that it would be a pity to leave such a fine boy in the Department of Mines; in three years Papa should allow me to take him with me into the hussar regiment.

"No, no, God forbid!" said Papa. "You can be whatever you want since you've already chosen your path, but the consolation of my old age, my Vasinka, will stay with me."

I said no more, wholeheartedly regretting that I had been so thoughtless as to grieve my father with a proposal that was both mis-

3. The change in the uniform of the Mariupol' Hussars was made late in 1809. Previously the regiment wore the navy-blue *mentik* over a white *dolman*; now both were prescribed as navy-blue (V. V. Zvegintsov, *Russkaja armija*, part 4: 1801–1825 [Paris, 1973], 358–59).

placed and premature. Meanwhile, my brother clung to me and whispered in my ear, "I'll go with you."

Although I love my father with all my heart, the idle life, lack of society, cold weather, and constant questions of our provincials depressed me so that I was almost glad to see the dawn of the day on which I was to start back to the regiment. The return journey was considerably more difficult than the earlier one, but not where horses were concerned. Nobody played niggardly tricks on me this time, because I said to any stationmaster who started telling me that he had no horses, "I will note in your book how many hours I spend here, and you'll answer for it if I am late getting back." And so they gave me horses very promptly everywhere; but the winter road had begun to break up, my hired vehicle was beyond comparison more heavily loaded than it had been before, and it was a dreadful bother to haul all that by myself. I didn't take a manservant; and, of course, there was no way I could have.

Returning to my comrades and the pursuits I love makes me feel like the luckiest creature on earth. My days pass merrily and serenely. I always get up at dawn and at once go out walking in the fields. I return after the horses have been tended to—that is, about eight o'clock in the morning. At my quarters my horse is already saddled and waiting. I mount him and ride out into the fields again, where I drill my platoon for an hour and a half. Afterwards I go off to headquarters or the squadron commander's and stay there until evening.

I presented my worthless horse to Wicha in return for the riding lessons. He ordered him harnessed to a *drozhky*, and to our surprise he has become a fine steed. Thus shafts were the sphere for which nature intended him. I think it is the same way with human beings; they do well only once they have found their proper place.

I also gave Wicha a hunting horn made from a beautifully carved elephant tusk. Papa had given me this rare object for Count Suvorov, but for some reason I felt ashamed to present it to the count, and so I gave it to Wicha. I was instantly punished for disregarding Papa's wishes: Wicha took this rare object as coldly and negligently as if it were a cowhorn of tobacco.

Our battalion has gone with Meller-Zakomelsky to Galicia.<sup>4</sup>

4. In 1807, by the terms of the treaty of Tilsit, the Duchy of Warsaw was constituted under French protection from the areas seized by the Prussians in the late eighteenth century. The Russians picked up the Tarnopol district of Polish Galicia in 1809 when the French forestalled an Austrian attempt to mount a pan-Germanic campaign against Napoleon; the other Polish lands that Austria had held since the third partition were added to the duchy. The Mariupol Hussars were sent to guard the new border and prevent defections of Polish soldiers from the Russian army.

Stánkovich's squadron and all its officers are remaining here under the designation of reserves and, together with the supply troops, will be under Pavlishchev's command. Since I am one of the officers of Stánkovich's squadron, I am staying here also, although I am very eager to go abroad and see action again; but Stánkovich says, "Don't volunteer to go where they don't send you; where they send you, don't refuse! This is the guiding rule for men of proven valor." His advice and the excellent company of the officers who are staying here with me helped me to watch with less regret the departure of our brave hussars abroad. Fate has arranged for the most amiable lady of the regiment to remain here also. I avoid women in general, but not the wives and daughters of my fellow officers. I like them very much; they are the finest beings in the world—always kind, always obliging, lively, bold, cheerful; they like to go horseback riding or for walks, to laugh, and to dance! They have no whims or caprices. Oh, the women of the regiment have nothing in common with women from other walks of life, with whom I would not willingly spend a quarter of an hour. It is true that my regimental ladies never miss a chance to make me blush by calling me *hussar miss* as a joke. Since I am always with them, I am used to the appellation, and sometimes I make so bold as to ask them, "What do you find girlish about me?"

"Your slender waist," they answer. "Your little feet and rosy cheeks that any of us would be eager to have. That's why we call you *hussar miss*, and, by your leave, we can't help but be a little suspicious that we are correct in giving you the name."

Since I hear jokes like this almost every day, I am so accustomed to them that they hardly ever embarrass me anymore.

We are stationed on the Galician frontier in the little town of Kołodno. This is a land border, and our duty is to patrol and supervise the reliability of the Cossack cordon. Kołodno belongs to Szwejkowski, whose wife is a beauty brought up in Paris. A long chestnut lane, as dark as night, leads from the porch of the manor to a little whitewashed house planted all around with lindens. The overseer lives in this house with his kind wife and two merry, playful, sweet daughters, and we pass all our days there. I notice that my comrades spend more time there than with the proud and beautiful Szwejkowska.

Officer Wątrobka told us that on one of his horseback excursions across the border he met and got to know Baron Czechowicz. He said that the baroness has a beauty more ravishing than any he could ever imagine, but, fortunately for all her husband's friends, her limited intelligence and lack of modesty serve as a strong antidote to the destructive force of her contagion, and, despite all the fascination of her indescribable beauty,

purse, folded into eighths in order to fit. I pulled it out and gave it to the beggar at the ferry without unfolding it. And thus he received by God's providence the aid which I intended for him but nearly ruined by my satanic reckoning. Only a monster, however, would be capable of giving a poor man help which he can't be sure is valid. No, when I handed over the bill, I thought only that it would be redeemed for a much lower sum than it was worth, and at the stations they refused it because they saw that I had gold, and the Poles can't bear any currency except jingling coin.

Vitebsk. I am living at the house of commission-agent S. My leave is not yet over, and I will enjoy myself more here than in the squadron. His Royal Highness, Prince Württemberg, likes to have army officers gather at his house in the evenings, and I join them there.<sup>5</sup> We dance and play various games, and the prince himself sometimes joins in our diversions.

#### A DUEL

Today, at about ten o'clock in the morning, R. came to tell me that he quarreled with Prince K. and the prince called him a scoundrel.

"I congratulate you! And what did you do?"

"Nothing. I said that he was a villain, but apparently he didn't hear it."

"That's a fine thing! And you've come to boast that you were called a scoundrel? That's the first time in my life I've ever heard of anyone calling a nobleman that and getting away without being slapped."

We were both standing by an open window as we talked, and I had no sooner finished speaking when, as ill luck would have it, Prince K. walked past. R. called him over. I think K. must have mistaken R.'s voice for mine, because he bowed politely and at once headed for my room; but he was as greatly astonished as my host, two other officers, and I were when R. met him at the door with a question ("Was it me you called a scoundrel?") and a sudden slap.

S. asked us all to get out of his house. "Fight wherever you wish, gentlemen, but not here!"

We all left the town. A duel was inevitable, of course, but what a duel! I could never have imagined anything so comical as that which I now saw. It began with conditions: to avoid headwounds, and to fight until first blood. R. made difficulties over finding someone to act as second and a sharp saber. I immediately volunteered to be his second and handed him my saber, quite sure that we were in for nothing more than a good laugh.

5. Prince Alexander Württemberg (1771-1833), Alexander I's maternal uncle, was appointed governor of Belorussia in 1811.

At last the two scatterbrains joined combat. There was no way I could continue to look serious, and no reason to; from start to finish of this parody of a duel, I wore an involuntary wry smile. In order to observe the condition against head wounds and obviously in mortal fear of their own sabers, the two adversaries bowed down almost to the ground. Each stretched the saber-equipped arm as far out in front as he could and aimlessly waved it right and left. Furthermore, they avoided seeing the dreadful gleam of steel by not looking—and it seems to me that they could not have looked, because both men were bent almost double. The consequence of these measures and precautions to keep the first condition was exactly its breach. R., who could not see where and how he was waving his saber, struck the prince on the ear and cut him slightly. The adversaries were overjoyed that this made it possible to end hostilities. The prince, however, was inclined to make a fuss about the cut on his ear as a violation of the pact, but I quieted him by submitting that the only way to correct the error was to fight again. The two eccentric fellows went to the tavern, and I headed back to S.'s house.

"Well, what happened? How did it turn out?"

I told him.

"You're a mad fellow, Aleksandrov! What got into you, goading R. that way? On his own he would never have dreamed of challenging anyone to a duel, much less slapping anyone." (It had really not occurred to me that I was goading him into an illegal action, and only now do I see that S. was right.) Remembering the scene at the door, S. burst out laughing.

I have to bid farewell to Prince Württemberg's drawing-room! I must leave Vitebsk and return to muddy Janovichi. The squadron commanders are howling for the return of the officers to their posts. There's nothing to be done; tomorrow I will go.

Janovichi. The mud here seems to be muddier than anywhere else in the world. The only way to get across the square to see a comrade is on horseback. True, it might be possible on foot, but only by sticking to the Jews' houses and making one's way along earth embankments, pressing right up against walls, windows, and doors, from which the voyager from different stock is deluged with steam and smells like vodka, beer, goose-fat, goat's milk, mutton, and so on. After making this repulsive detour, one can be sure of a cold in the head.

Vitebsk. When I arrived this time, old S., who had been alarmed by our rowdy scene, would not let me take quarters with him, and I was assigned to the house of a merchant's young and lovely wife. I had no sooner made myself at home there when Kherov, a friend of my brother's, came to see me. "Hello, Aleksandrov! Have you been here long?"

"I just got here."  
 "And your brother?"  
 "He's with the squadron."  
 "Where are you dining, at the prince's?"  
 "I don't know. I'll report to the prince. If he invites me, I'll dine there."  
 "Look what famous spurs I bought."  
 "Silver?"  
 "Yes."

We were both standing by the table, and I rested my elbows on it in order to take a closer look at the spurs. Just then Kherov trod lightly on my foot. I glanced around. My hostess was standing right next to me. "Aren't you ashamed, gentlemen, to use such words in a house where only women are living?"

This was novel! I assured my hostess that our words could have been spoken in the presence of angels, let alone women.

"No, no! You can't convince me; I know what I heard."  
 "It can't be. You heard wrong, sweet hostess."

"I ask you not to call me sweet and to conduct yourself better in my home." And with this she went off grandly to her own rooms, leaving us to think whatever we wished of her sally.

As Kherov was picking up his shako to go, his eyes fell by chance on my purse. He saw the glitter of gold in it and stopped. "Your brother owes me money, Aleksandrov. Won't you pay it for him?"

"Gladly! How much does he owe you?"  
 "Two gold pieces."  
 "Take them, please."  
 "What a capital fellow you are, Aleksandrov! For that I'll make you a gift of my silver spurs."

Kherov left, and I ordered the new spurs screwed onto my boots at once, put them on, and went to report to the prince.

I returned to my quarters at one in the morning. A bed had been made for me on the floor of my little room. The house was already quiet, and only in my hostess's chamber was there a light still burning. Supposing myself in complete seclusion and full mistress of my room, I undressed without the least misgiving. True, I would have liked to lock the door, but since there was no hook, I merely shut it and went to bed, and I must have fallen asleep. At least I didn't hear the door to my chamber opening. I woke to the sound of shuffling feet as someone moved around my room. My first impulse was to cover my head with the blanket. I was afraid that the wandering creature would strike my face with its foot. I don't know why, but I didn't want to ask who was walking around, and that was for the best; suddenly I heard a voice, asking not at all loudly, "Where are you?" It was my hostess; she repeated impatiently, "Where are

you" and went on shuffling across the floor, saying, "Where are you, anyway? Come and see what I have in my ears instead of earrings; something wicked. It seems there's a wicked thing hanging in each ear—a devil, that is. A devil in each!" And with this she laughed, a wild sort of laughter, but still quite soft.

I was horrified. There was no doubt that my hostess was mad, that she had crept away from her maids' supervision and come to see me, namely me, and that she would very quickly find me in a room that was barely ten feet on a side. What would she do with me then? God knows what turn her thoughts might take. Perhaps she would take me for one of the demons she thought were hanging in her ears instead of earrings. I have heard that crazy people are very strong and so, if she were to attack me, I had little hope of coming out of the ludicrous single combat with honor. Thinking about all this, I held my breath, afraid to stir, but I found lying with my head muffled unbearably stuffy. I tried to throw back the blanket a little, and with this motion I touched the candlestick. It fell with a thump. A joyful cry from the madwoman froze my blood! But fortunately that same cry roused her women, and, just as she, exclaiming, threw herself on me, they ran in and seized her already falling on me with outstretched arms.

Nature has given me a strange and disturbing trait of character: I like and get accustomed and wholeheartedly attached to the quarters where I live, the horse I ride, the dog I take in out of pity, and even the duck and the chicken I buy for my table: I immediately become sorry to use them for the purpose for which they were bought, and they live with me until they vanish somewhere by chance. Knowing that I have this comical weakness, I thought that I would regret muddy Janovichi when I was forced to part with it. However, thank God, no! We are off on the march, and I am extremely glad to be leaving this perpetual, never-drying swamp. It is the one place on the earthly globe to which I never want to return.

Polotsk. This morning as I left the Catholic church I caught sight of R. He was walking very fast and seemed to be worried about something. I'm always very amused by tales of his victories: he is the perpetual hero of some incident or other and comes out of each crowned with myrtle or laurel. In hopes that I might hear something of the sort now, I ran after him, caught up with him, came up beside him, and took his arm to stop him. "What are you so worried about, comrade? Do you need a second again? I'm at your service." My appearance seemed to make a disagreeable impression on R. This surprised me. "What's wrong with you? Where are you going in such a hurry?"

"Nowhere! I'm just walking. Papa sends you his greetings. . . . Forgive me, brother, I owe you an apology. I gambled away your money."

"What money?"  
 "The two gold pieces."  
 "I don't understand you."  
 "Didn't you get a letter from the rector?"  
 "No."

"Well, then you can't in fact know anything about it. The poor old man to whom you gave ten rubles found two gold pieces in the bill and, assuming quite sensibly that you had no intention of giving him such a sum, took them to the rector who praised the poor man's rare honesty and brought the gold pieces to Papa. I was there at the time. The rector recounted the story of the gold pieces and asked us to send them back to you. I undertook the commission, but, unfortunately, before we saw each other, I encountered a tempting chance to try my luck. I staked them on a card and—was left your debtor."

"My pleasure! Be so as long as you like. But why did your papa deal with the matter so misanthropically? The money should have been left to the person Providence designated to have it."

"Well, well, aren't you the philosopher! I could argue the opposite case, but God be with you, I haven't the time just now. I'm on my way to borrow a cordon and epaulets from the officers' supply. Goodbye!"

The scatterbrain ran off, and I went for a walk. I always walk very fast, surrendering myself totally to alluring dreams. Now I began thinking of the beauties of nature and of the many joys this world has to offer mankind! I also thought about the enigmatic paths which direct us toward some chance or other in life. I thought that the very best way to maintain our spiritual peace is by following humbly the Right Hand which leads us in those paths, without seeking to understand why this or that happens one way rather than another. My thoughts were now grand, now pious, now sad, now cheerful, and at last even cheerfully scatterbrained. The joyful supposition that someday I will have a fine house where I can accommodate my old father, furnishing his rooms with all the comforts and all the splendor of luxury; of buying him a calm saddlehorse; of seeing that he has a carriage, musicians, and a first-rate cook—this supposition so enraptured me that I began capering on the spot like a wild goat. Now I see how true to life Perrette is: the strong bodily motion dissipated my daydreams.<sup>6</sup> Once again I found myself an uhlan officer who wears all his silver and has none put aside. To make my dream come true will take miracles at the very least, and without them it is not to be. Having once more become an uhlan lieutenant, in that capacity I had to rush back to the squadron in order not to miss the time fixed to march. Lateness is sometimes harshly penalized.

6. Durova is referring to the Fontaine fable, "La Laitière & le Pot au lait," in which the milkmaid Perrette is so excited by dreams of multiplying profits that her capers spill the milk she is carrying to market.

## Chapter Twelve

1815

There is nothing remarkable about this march of ours except the reason for it: Napoleon somehow disappeared from the island which the allied monarchs deemed fit to hold, along with the man himself, his plans, objectives, and dreams, his talents as a great military leader, and his wide-ranging genius.<sup>1</sup> Now all of that has again broken free, and once more there is movement throughout Europe. Troops are on the march. Once more our pennons flutter in the air, our lances gleam, our good steeds frisk! There bayonets glitter, and the drum is heard. The menacing sound of cavalry trumpets solemnly wakes the still drowsy sunrise. Everywhere life is ebullient and movement never ceases. Here the cuirassiers advance in imposing ranks, there the hussars sweep past, beyond them the uhlan's fly, and now here comes our fine, disciplined, menacing infantry and the main defense, the powerful bulwark of our native land—the invincible musketeers! Although I love the cavalry madly, although I am a horse soldier from my cradle, every time I watch the infantry advancing at a sure, firm pace, with fixed bayonets and menacing drum-roll, I feel an emotion which has something of both reverence and dread, I don't know how to express it. All that comes to mind at the sight of a formation of hussars or uhlan's flying past is the thought of what gallant lads they are, how well they ride, how dashing they cross sabers! Woe to the enemy, and this woe usually consists of more or less dangerous wounds or captivity, and nothing more. But when columns of infantry rush toward the enemy with their rapid, smooth, disciplined motion, there are no more gallant lads, that's all over: these are heroes who bear inevitable death or go to inevitable death themselves—there is no middle ground. The cavalryman gallops up, gallops away, wounds, rushes past, turns back again, and sometimes kills, but his every motion is eloquent of mercy for the enemy: all this is merely the harbinger of death. But the infantry formation is death itself, dreadful, inevitable death.

Kovno. With no further adventures we arrived at the border and settled down in quarters in the vicinity of this small town. Sometimes one gets into devastating positions quite unexpectedly. Yesterday a most comical misfortune befell me. My brother and I went to dinner with a Kovno

1. Napoleon left the island of Elba on February 15/27, 1815 to raise an army and reclaim his empire.

squire, pan St-la, a hospitable Pole of the old school. Despite his sixty years, St-la is still a handsome, gallant fellow, one of those rare people who live long and never age until the day they die. He seems no more than forty. His sister and his niece, an ordinary looking girl of eighteen or so, live with him. It must be assumed that pan St-la took a liking to my brother and me, because he spared nothing to make our visit agreeable. After a sumptuous meal, delicacies of all sorts, coffee, ices—in short, everything to satiate us—he decided to crown his hospitality with what he considered the most elegant treat of all, his niece's singing: "Zaspiewaj ze, moja kochana, dla tych wałeczych żołnierzów."<sup>2</sup>

In vain the poor girl tried to persuade him that she could not sing, that she had a head cold and a sore throat. Her despotic uncle would hear none of it and persisted in his demand that she sing that very minute. She had to submit and start singing for the two young uhlans. She started singing! . . . A voice like that can never be forgotten! I haven't the heart either to describe it or draw a comparison. The girl was right to resist this fatal singing with all her might. As I heard the first sounds of her voice, I felt a shudder running through my body. I wished I could drop through the floor or be a hundred versts away from the singer, but instead I was on the sofa directly opposite her, and, to my misfortune, the spirit of temptation made me glance at my brother. He didn't dare to raise his eyes and was glowing as red as fire. I didn't know what to do with myself, I didn't know how to keep from laughing out loud, and at last I realized that my efforts were bound to fail and gave up trying. As the saying goes, I split my sides with laughter. The singer fell silent. And I, who had made an utter fool of myself in her eyes, sought in vain for some way to excuse that damnable laugh. Fortunately for me, she was singing a Russian song. In it there was some mention of a butterfly, a *babochka*, and the girl, being Polish and not knowing the correct pronunciation, called it a *babushka*. I put all the blame on this word and they all pretended to believe me, but nobody asked for the singing to continue. Having so well recompensed pan St-la for his hospitality and consideration, we rode back to Vilna, where our headquarters is located and where we will be stationed—until further orders.

K.'s squadron is stationed on the estate of Prince Bishop G. where his sister lives. There is nothing on earth she resembles less than what she is—that is, Princess G.

Yesterday I saw our major's young wife for the first time since her marriage. She has changed beyond all recognition; she has gotten taller

2. "Give us a song, my dear, for these gallant soldiers." (Polish)

and stouter. Looking at her, I couldn't believe my eyes. How could she, in such a short time, have become such a real *bogatyr Dobrynia*? I call her that, because K., enraptured by her height and weight, tells everyone who will listen to him, "My Sasha has gotten nicely stout."<sup>3</sup>

At midnight today, as I was returning from headquarters and riding past fields sown with oats, I saw something white flitting among the heads of grain. I rode over and asked, "Who's there?"

At this question the white object straightened up and answered loudly,

"It's me, your honor, an uhlans from the fourth platoon."

"What on earth are you doing here?"

"I'm trying, your honor!"

I ordered him to go to his quarters and never "try" again. These uhlans have found an amusing way of fattening their horses. They take bags into the middle of the fields and spend all night tugging up oats; this is what they call "trying."

It rained for three days straight, but today the sun finally came out. I took my platoon into the green meadows and flew around with it for two hours—that is, we practiced platoon drill. After that I sent the men home and went for a ride. I dropped in on V. and saw his divinité, who now wears woman's dress and looks astonishingly like a peg-top. From there I returned to my hamlet. As I rode up to my quarters, I thought I heard a whacking noise. At last I made out voices begging for mercy. Oh, God, that's at my place, someone's punishing the men with rods! Who on earth would dare?

I pushed my horse to a gallop, and, just as I raced into the yard, K. ordered the men to quit and came to meet me: "Excuse me, Aleksandrov. I was taking care of some domestic business for you. Your uhlans stole eighteen jugs of vodka from a Jew and hid them in the straw in your stable. They wouldn't let the Jew in to see you, so he came to me, and I've been sorting it out and punishing them. Don't be angry, brother; it was the only way."

"Why should I be angry? On the contrary, I'm very grateful to you." But vexation seethed in my heart. What damnable folk these uhlans are! Who would willingly be their commander when others come and beat them before my very eyes?

Our entire life here on the border passes to no purpose: some of us smoke tobacco, some play cards, shoot at targets, break horses, and jump

3. Dobrynia is one of the heroes (*bogatyri*) of Russian epic songs; Durova is making a pun on the root *dobr-* [good, nice] in that name and in the verb *razdobret'* [to put on weight].

ditches or obstacles. But what I find most comical are our evening gatherings at the quarters of one or the other of our officers. Of course, there are no ladies at these gatherings, but despite that, music blares and we dance by ourselves. Everybody dances, young and old—mazurkas, quadrilles, ecossaises. I find it all most amusing. What pleasure can they, especially the older men, get from dancing without ladies? I always take the lady's part.

We are returning to Russia through Vilna.<sup>4</sup> Day after day passes repetitiously, monotonously. One day is just like the next: dawn breaks, and the general-march is played; we saddle up, lead out the horses, mount, and ride out—and off we go, pace by pace, to our evening quarters. Nothing disrupts the tranquillity of our peaceful marches. Not storm—nothing that could rouse our sleeping march! We go, go, go—and get there. That's all there is to it.

This morning I was overjoyed! I should be ashamed of feeling it and ashamed to write it—but I was truly overjoyed to hear a plaintive wail somewhere near the major's quarters. At least it gave me a reason to spur my horse, gallop over, ask with concern, investigate. I took off at a full run to K.'s quarters and saw a scene at once comical and pitiful. I hastened to jump off my horse and stop the tragicomedy: the major was punishing the uhlans Bozier (whose comrades call him Bozia). At the first stroke the poor fellow set up a pitiful howl, stretching his arms to the heavens, "O mon Dieu, mon Dieu!"

"I'll give you *med'ju, med'ju*, you rascal!" said K., trying to look angry, an expression which was completely at odds with his comical face, however. But he really was quite vexed, and the poor Frenchman would have been forced to exclaim, "O mon Dieu, mon Dieu!" ten more times, and the honorable K. to repeat as often his, "I'll give you *med'ju, med'ju*," if I had not persuaded him to quit. "Well, you shirker, thank this officer, or I would have given you thirty strokes instead of three."

"What did he do, Major?"

"He won't obey anybody, brother! The sergeant ordered him to clean his saddle and equipment and get ready to serve as courier to the colonel, and he didn't do any of it."

"But did he understand the sergeant's instructions?"

"That's a fine thing! Did he understand? It's his duty to understand! It would have been useless to try to reason with K.; I simply asked him

4. The regiments' westward movement was cut short by Napoleon's final defeat by the English and Prussians at Waterloo in June 1815.

"to transfer poor Bozier to my platoon, and he readily agreed, saying, 'Take him, take him, brother. I'm sick to death of that German.'<sup>5</sup>

Velikie luki. We have arrived. We are at our post. These are our quarters, and it's all over! The enchanting scenes of foreign lands and foreign customs have vanished. The greeting of good-natured, honest Teutons will be heard no longer. There will be no more of those delightful, charming Polish evenings. Here everything is so pompous, so cold. Just try asking a peasant for a glass of water. It takes him a minute to stir from the spot, he goes lazily, barely moving; at last he gives you the water, and you've no sooner drunk it than it's: "Two kopecks for my trouble, sir!" Damn them all.

Our squadron is quartered in a place called Vjazovshchina. What a sordid name! A rhyme, and a very suitable one at that, leaps to mind.<sup>6</sup> Honestly, I have become so bad-tempered from boring quarters, smoky cottages, mud, rain, and cold autumn weather that I am vexed with everything: the dirty peasants for being dirty, their women for being ugly, for dressing repulsively and talking even more repulsively—for example, "svetsa," "na petse," "sotsyla." Damnable woman! Who could guess what she was doing when she "sotsyla"? Not what you might think: she was looking for something.<sup>7</sup>

It is living death to be stationed in this Vjazovshchina, with no books and no company, lying all day on planks beneath clouds of acrid smoke, listening to fine autumn rain lashing at windows covered with isinglass or, what is even more vile, bladder. Oh, nothing could be baser. . . . No, God be with them, all the agreeable features of such quarters! I am going back to headquarters.

Velikie luki. At least here the smoke does not sting my eyes, and I can look at God's world through clean glass. Every day G. comes to visit me and reminisce about the happy days we spent in Hamburg. He tells me for the hundredth time about the unforgettable Josephine and the enchanting evening when she took from him a gift of one thousand *louis-d'or* he had won gambling and found him quite amiable for an entire week. But afterwards she locked her door against him forever, and he, like a

5. In Russian, the word is *nemets*. Its root meaning is "mute" and in popular speech it was applied indiscriminately to all foreigners. In the next paragraph, where Durova has "Germans" I use "Teuton."

6. The rhyme would be with the word for mud, *grjaz'*.

7. *Iskala*. The words are typical of northern and western Belorussian dialects. The Russian equivalents of the other words are *svecha* [candle] and *na peche* [on the stove].

lovelorn Spaniard, would bring his guitar before the house where this jewel lived. After a few romances, sighs, and other such tomfooleries, he would stretch his arms to the mute stone pile and exclaim like Abelard, "Retreat of Godfearing, honest maidens!" And he tells me all this completely seriously, with heartfelt sighs and tears welling up in his eyes. Oh, crazy, crazy G. . . .

#### 1816. TWO WEEKS ON LEAVE.

"Otto Ottovich! Give me leave to go to Peterburg for a week or two."

Stackelberg replied that it was impossible just now. The season for leaves was over, and, furthermore, His Majesty was in Peterburg. "But you could go on a commission, however," he said, after thinking it over for a minute.

"What commission, Colonel? If it's not something beyond my grasp, do me a favor and give it to me."

"The regiment has not managed to get from the Commissariat canvas, boots, scrap-iron, some kinds of weapons and harness, and about thirteen thousand in cash besides. If you undertake to receive it all and bring it back to the regiment, you can go. I'll give you authorization."

"Can I manage a commission like that, Colonel? After all, I don't understand anything about such things."

"There's nothing to understand. I'll give you an experienced sergeant and soldiers, they'll do everything. All you have to do is pick up the thirteen thousand from the Supply Depot. But to avoid misunderstandings, consult with Burogo. He's the paymaster—it's his department."

"Very good, Colonel. I'll go see Burogo right now and ask him. And if the duties of the commission are not beyond my grasp, then with your permission I'll leave for Peterburg tomorrow."

I couldn't get anything sensible from Burogo. When I asked him what I would have to do if I were sent to receive the supplies, he replied, "Observe the strictest honesty."

"How's that? Explain it to me."

"No explanations are necessary. Be honest! That's all there is to it. There's no other advice or directions I can give you, and no point in doing so."

"And those are of no use to me! I don't need your advice or directions in order to be honest."

"Don't bluster, brother. You're young yet, and there are situations you haven't met with in life. I know what I'm saying: be honest!"

Burogo is stubborn. I knew that once he started harping on the theme of honesty, he wouldn't have anything else to say. Well, God be with

After all, Stackelberg said that he would send me an experienced agent. I'll risk it.

Peterburg. I went directly to my uncle's apartment. He is still in the same place and as happy with it as ever. His tastes are droll. His apartment is on Haymarket Square, and he says that he always has the most lively and varied scenes before his eyes. Yesterday he led me over to the window, "Look, Aleksandr, isn't this a truly picturesque spectacle?"

Thank God my uncle did not call it beautiful. Then I could not have agreed without lying, but now my conscience is clear. I replied, "Yes, it's just like a picture," adding mentally, *but it's a picture from the Flemish school.* I can't understand how anything so disagreeable to the eyes can be considered nice. What is there diverting about watching a crowd of clumsy, coarse, badly dressed peasants surrounded by carts, tar, bast mats, and other such vile stuff? That is the lively picture in all its diversity that my uncle has been admiring for ten years now.

Today there is a concert at Philharmonic Hall. I will most certainly go. I think it will be enchanting: they say that the orchestra is made up of first-rate musicians. It's true that I don't know much about music, but I love it more than anything. It has an ineffable effect on me: as soon as I hear those sounds whose power I can neither understand nor explain, I feel that there is no virtue or great feat of which I am not capable.

I sat along the wall below the orchestra, facing the assembly. A dignified, noble-looking, middle-aged man wearing a black frock-coat was sitting next to me.

The hall was teeming with ladies. They all seemed to me beautiful and beautifully attired. I always enjoy looking at women's costumes, although I would not wear them myself at any price. Their batiste, satin, velvet, taffeta, feathers, and diamonds are seductively beautiful, but *my uhlans* *make* *it* *better!* At least it becomes me better and, after all, they say that one mark of good taste is to dress becomingly.

The ladies continued to arrive, and the rows of chairs kept moving closer to my neighbor and me.

"Look how close they are," I said, "Won't we have to give up our seats to them?"

"I don't think so," he said with a sardonic smile. "Our seats would be uncomfortable for them."

"Now they've added another row! One more, and they'll be right in our laps."

"Would that be so terrible?"  
I said nothing and once again began studying the costumes of the new

arrivals. A lady in a pink beret and dress was sitting directly opposite me. She was gaunt and swarthy, but her face was pleasant and her features intelligent. She appeared to be at least thirty. General Khrapovitsky was standing beside her armchair. Could she be his wife? I stared fixedly at her. Her appearance seemed to suggest something out of the ordinary.

At last I turned to my neighbor, "Permit me to ask, who is the lady in pink, directly opposite us?"

"Khrapovitskaja, the wife of the general who is standing beside her armchair."

"I heard something—"

My neighbor gave me no chance to finish. "Yes, yes, we haven't many heroines like that one!"<sup>8</sup>

This comment pricked my self-esteem. "It seems there was one—"

Again I was interrupted. "Yes, there was, but not any more. She died; she couldn't take it."

This was a novelty! I have had occasion to hear my own story many times with all possible additions and emendations, often absurd ones; but no one has ever before told me to my face that I am dead. Where did he get that? How can the rumor of my death be spreading when I am alive and known personally to the tsar? However, let them think so; perhaps it is for the best. . . . While these thoughts were flying through my head, I was looking at my neighbor—without seeing him, of course—but he was also looking at me and seemed to read my thoughts from my eyes. "You don't believe it? I heard it from people who are related to her."

I didn't reply. This sepulchral conversation alarmed me, and, furthermore, I was afraid that he might notice how personally I was taking it. I didn't say another word to him until the end of the concert.

Today marks a week since my arrival in Peterburg, and today I had to get down to business. I went to report to the colonel on duty, Dobrovo. The name suits him very well: he has a pleasant, good-natured face.<sup>9</sup>

"When did you get here?" he asked, as soon as I had finished the usual routine patter by which we inform our commanders who we are, where from, and for what purpose.

8. Sof'ja (born Dedeneva) Khrapovitskaja was one of the other "azamsons" of the Napoleonic era. Dressed as a page, she accompanied her husband, Matvej Khrapovitskij, throughout the 1812 campaign and received a medal "For the Taking of Paris" in 1814 (For Khrapovitskij, see [fon-]Frejman, O. P., *Pazhi za 183 goda (1711-1894)*, part 1 [Friedrichshamn, 1894], 99-101; his wife's exploits are mentioned in a memoir by M. M. Muromtsev, "Vospominaniya," *Russkij arkhiv* [1890], 1:68). A woman calling herself "Saltan" was arrested in Orlov in April 1815 passing for an uhlans lieutenant (*Istoricheskiy vestnik* [1894], 11:592-93). Yet a third amazon of the period was Vasilisa Kozhina, a peasant who organized a partisan brigade of boys and women in the Smolensk region in 1812 (*Bol'shaja Sovetskaja Entsiklopedija*, 2d ed., 21 [1953], 537).

9. This is another pun on the *dobr-* [good, nice] root.

I said I had been in Peterburg for a week.

"And you're just reporting? You deserve a good dressing down for that.

Have you reported to the prince?"

"Not yet."

"I've never heard the like! Come here at eight o'clock in the morning, and I'll take you to see the prince."

From Dobrovo I went to the Commissariat. Dolinsky, the manager, thought I was fresh from the cadet academy and was astonished when I and I had been in the army for ten years.

My uhlans are master thieves. I am not exaggerating in the least. Every day they tell me, "Your honor, today we made such and such economies. At first I didn't understand, but now I know: they take canvas to measure and steal it on the spot. What a queer fellow Burogo is! That must be what he meant when he kept on telling me to be honest. How amusing! What can I do about it? Am I really supposed to preach honesty to men who, like the Spartans, consider adroit theft a proof of gallantry? We tell uhlans, "Try to see that your horse has enough to eat." He interprets the order his own way by trying to steal oats from the fields. No, no, I really have no intention of bothering with all this nonsense; let them steal! Who told Stackelberg to give me a commission which is so totally beyond my grasp? He said he would give me an experienced sergeant. A great help that is! The pilfering has gone much more smoothly since the experienced sergeant arrived. Now they tell me that they will be able to economize enough canvas for the entire infirmary. I heard this as I walked past while they were tying up bales. Damn them anyway, with their canvas and their bales! All these unaccustomed pursuits—standing, watching, counting, and making reports—have given me a headache.

Today I was at my tedious duty by eleven o'clock, and, since I saw no great need for standing exactly where they were receiving things, I strolled through the passageways, sometimes stopping to rest my elbows on the railings, carried away in thought to places that bore not the slightest resemblance to the Commissariat. On one of these stops, a peremptory challenge rang out near me: "Honorable officer!"

I looked around. Behind me stood a tall, dried-up official with a German face. He was wearing a uniform with tabs on the collar. "What can I do for you?" I asked.

"What is your regiment?" I told him. "You're here to receive supplies, of course!"

"Yes."

"How dared you start taking them without letting me know? How dared you not report to me?"

Dumbfounded by this question from a man who looked to me like a

drozhky to Staff House, the least romantic place in the world, where I would be given some order or other in a dry and peremptory tone of voice.

"Please, make it faster! Is it a long way yet?"

"We're here," said the driver, halting his horse at the portal of a huge building over the doors of which was a black sign with the inscription, Staff House. I ran up the stairs and entered an anteroom in which there were quite a few infantry and cavalry officers. An adjutant was sitting at a desk writing something. There was a fire burning in the fireplace, and I sat down beside it to await the outcome. None of the officers were talking to each other; they were all silent, either walking around the anteroom or standing by the fireplace staring pensively at the flames. Suddenly the sleepy scene came to life. Zakrevsky came out.<sup>14</sup> "Gentlemen!" At this word the officers formed ranks. "The cavalry to the front, on the right flank!" At this all four of us—a cuirassier, two dragoons, and one uhlans—went to stand on the right directly facing Zakrevsky. He glanced at me once or twice very attentively while he was giving us his orders: "Report to Arsenev, the commander of the Horse Guards!"

At last it was announced to us in greater detail that in the Horse Guards our soldiers would be outfitted in uniforms with changes of some sort. We listened and left. The cavalrymen went home, and the obedient infantrymen set out directly to see Arsenev. I found this out because at the portal they were agreeing to go there and asked us, "And you gentlemen, are you coming with us?"

"I haven't time today," I replied.

I sent Raczyński to the offices of the Horse Guard to be measured for some sort of new uniform. When he returned, he told me, "Your honor is ordered to report there in person."

"Where?"

"To Major Shaganov, in the tailor shop."

I have had enough of these whims! I had a hard time freeing myself from them. I went to Arsenev's just once and told Shaganov that I would send an uhlans to him, there was no reason at all for me to be present at the time, and I had another commission altogether from my regiment.

And having said this I left.

Tomorrow I am returning to the regiment. My two weeks of leave are over. I spent them tediously: in uniform from morning to night, at attention, saluting, receiving summons to report here and report there. I will never spend a leave like that again!

<sup>14.</sup> Arsenij Zakrevskij was named Adjutant General of His Majesty's General Staff in 1815.

## Chapter Thirteen

### A JOURNEY TO THE IZHEVSK MUNITIONS FACTORY

I didn't know how to pass the time of my four-month leave. In provincial towns there are few ways of spending time agreeably, especially during the winter: boston, whist, whist, boston; pie, snacks, snacks, pie—these are the only ways of getting through the idle hour which falls to nearly all of us. None of them suits me: I don't like to play cards, and pies and snacks are good for only half an hour.

I got through a month without boredom, however, while I still had something to tell my father, brother, and sisters and while I still had forest paths to explore, now clambering uphill and now descending into ravines. At last, after I had become familiar with every spot for twenty versts around, talked over everything, the amusing and the scary, the grand and the ridiculous, and even re-read all the horrors of Mrs. Radcliffe, I realized that not just one, but all of my hours were becoming idle. My leave had two more months to run, and to leave before they were over would be odd, and a departure from custom as well. And so I decided to ask Papa to permit me to go somewhere for two weeks or so. At the first mention of it, my indulgent father consented. "You have a good idea there, my friend," said Papa. "There's a munitions factory in the neighborhood.<sup>1</sup> Go there. The commander, General Gren, is a good friend of mine. The society there is excellent, made up of educated, well-bred people. They have their own theater and music, and many of them have choice libraries. Go with my blessing. I'll permit you to stay there over the Christmas and New Year's holiday. When do you want to go?"

"Tomorrow, if you'll permit me."

"Certainly, but can you be ready by then? You'll have to get a sleigh; I have nothing roadworthy."

"Kazantsev has one ready; he just recently finished it. I'll buy it."

"What does he want for it?"

"Three hundred rubles."

"Ask them to bring it around; we'll have to look at it."

I sent for the sleigh. It seemed to Papa and me to be worth much more than the price Kazantsev was asking, and I paid for it on the spot.

The next day after breakfast I embraced and kissed all my family in

<sup>1.</sup> The factory at Izhevsk, fifty kilometers northwest of Sarapul, was founded by Andrej Shuvalov in 1760 to produce iron. It became a munitions factory in 1807 and a military facility in 1809.

turn. With emotion I clasped to my breast the hands of the kindest of fathers and kissed them. I said good-bye to everyone once more and jumped into the sleigh.

The troika, which had long been shivering from cold and impatience, reared and tore from the spot as one. The runners screeched, and the sleigh rushed like a whirlwind down a road smoothed and frozen solid by a thirty-degree frost.

It was eleven o'clock when I approached the gates of Colonel Tseddelman's house.<sup>2</sup> He was an old friend of my father. My inquiry as to whether I could stay with them was greeted by joyous shrieks from his wife's two sisters, young girls to whom I took a great fancy. They both leaped out onto the porch, snatched my greatcoat from my shoulders, tossed it into the man-servant's arms, and rushed me inside. It was a quarter of an hour before Tseddelman had a chance to embrace me, ask after my father's health, and offer his cordial hospitality. Natalia and Maria would not let go of me; either they both talked at once or interrupted one another, so I didn't know which to listen to.

"That's enough now! You'll deafen him," said Tseddelman, laughing and attempting to free me from their hands. "Give me a chance to greet him now. . . ."

At last my friends' joyful enthusiasm quieted somewhat; and since they had been at supper when I arrived, they invited me to join them and sat down at the table again. During the meal they took turns telling me about the everyday round of amusements at the factory, the chief of which was theater.

"But who are your actors?" I asked.

"The general's son and many other officials."

"And the ladies, do they act?"

"Not one of them."

"Then who plays the women's parts?"

"Sometimes apprentices; sometimes they choose someone from the general's office."

"And do they act well?"

"Well, it varies. The men's roles are performed very well indeed, because young Gren, Smirnov, and Davydov are actors such as one rarely sees on the stage, even in the capital."

"What sort of plays do they like to put on?"

"Comedies and operas."

"Operas?"

"Yes, and what operas! Such voices! Such music!"

"Honestly, I can't wait to see them. I'm delighted that I decided to come. Do your players perform often?"

<sup>2</sup>. At night.

"Twice a week."

"And young Gren, is he married?"

"Yes, and to a beauty."

After supper Natalia and her friend still had much more to tell me about various happenings in their little kingdom, but Tseddelman led them both away, saying, "Tomorrow! Leave it for tomorrow, not all at once. Let him see something for himself. . . . I hope you'll be our guest?"

"Until you tire of me."

"In that case you'll spend the rest of your life with us. This is your room. Sleep well."

I remained at the door until Tseddelman and the two girls had crossed the parlor and disappeared into the room opposite. Then I opened the door of my chamber and, expecting to find warmth and light in it, was astonished to find neither one nor the other: the cold of Greenland blew on me through the aperture, and in the darkness only the windows, covered with frost an inch thick, showed white. My consternation was instantly interrupted by the arrival of my servant with a candle in one hand and a brazier in the other.

"Is there really no warmer room? This one might as well be outdoors."

"What's to be done, sir? It's impossible to heat this room. It's always given to guests, not because they want to freeze them, but because it's the most suitable for them: separated from the owners' bedrooms, next to the parlor, with the best furniture and a separate entry. Its only fault is that on a winter night it's as cold as a dog kennel."

Listening to this nonsense from my man, I entered the room. A bed had been made up for me out of wolf and bear hides. The servant put down the brazier, and on it a small bowl of alcohol, which he at once lit. "Now, sir, you'll be warm for at least half an hour. That's long enough to undress and get into bed, and there you'll even be hot among that great pile of furs. . . ." And in fact the air did begin to warm up at once.

I wanted to take a closer look at my couch of wild skins, and, approaching the bed, I was surprised and delighted to see the sweetest little puppy, six weeks old, in the very middle of a wolfhide. He was sleeping, curled up into a ball. I turned to my servant to ask where the pretty little animal had come from, and, from the silly triumphant grin which I remarked on his face, I guessed immediately that it was he who had arranged this surprise for me. "Where did you get him?" I asked.

"On the street. Some boys had tormented him and abandoned him. He was already beginning to freeze and could hardly crawl when I saw him and at once picked him up. If you don't want him, permit me to keep him in my room."

"No, let him stay here with me."

I sent the servant away, undressed, and got into bed, after picking up the sweet little creature, gentle, defenseless, and endowed by nature with

a capacity for love that humans, notwithstanding all the subtleties of their sensations, will never attain.

My servant was right when he said that the furs would make me hot. I slept less than half an hour and was awakened by a yelp from the sweet puppy. He had fallen off the bed. I picked him up and put him back under my fur, but it had become unbearably hot for him as well as for me. He crawled out on top, stretching out on the skins and panting despite the extreme cold in the chamber. He was evidently thirsty, and, besides, the warmth of his natural furcoat and that of the hides made his fever unbearable. He would thrash around on the bed, fall off it, and wander about the floor yelping. Each time I got up, felt around under the bed for him, and lay down again. I ended up not at all happy with my acquisition.

In the morning I got dressed in my Lapland, shivering and hurrying faster than I had ever hurried in my life. In five minutes I was fully attired. I snatched up my little comrade and went to join the Tseddelman family. They were already gathered at the tea table.

"How charming he is!" cried the two girls as they caught sight of my little dog. "Where did you get him?" "Did you really bring him with you?" "Why didn't you tell us yesterday?" "Where has he been?"

"This is a homeless orphan. Yesterday he was condemned to death by your street urchins, but fate decreed otherwise, and so he turned up in my bed in the midst of the half-dozen furs of which it is composed."

"Ah, yes, speaking of furs, were you warm enough?"

"Amid the furs, lying down, of course it was not just warm but even sweltering. But there are no words to tell you how it felt when I had to get up and dress—it has to be experienced."

"What? But we ordered your room heated with an alcohol lamp while you were still in bed."

"Well then, evidently I didn't allow them enough time to carry out your order. I never stay in bed once I wake; I get up and dress at once."

Tseddelman brought our idle talk to an end by asking me whether I wanted to go with him to see the general.

"Most willingly, my dear Colonel, let's go!"

"And in the meantime I will take care of your handsome little fellow," said Maria and took the dog from my arms. "He needs a bath," she said as she carried him away.

A sledge was brought, the kind called here *poshevni*, a rather poor vehicle, disagreeable to the eyes, or at least to mine. On the box sat an angry-looking Tatar. He glanced at us both with an expression of hatred. We got in.

"Why is your coachman so gloomy, is he sick?"

"Oh, no, that's just the usual expression of his countenance. He only looks that way, but actually he's a very kind person. I like the Tatars!"

They are better folk than ours in many respects. . . ." Tseddelman was off on his hobby-horse; he has a kind of comical partiality for the Tatars and, once he began praising them, was in no hurry to finish his panegyric. In the meantime, we were riding at a very slow trot.

"That well may be, my esteemed Colonel, but why are we going almost as a walk? It is twenty-five degrees below freezing right now, so why can't we order a whirlwind flight instead of this ceremonial pace?"

"What are you saying? God forbid! Sharyn would be in despair, and he simply wouldn't obey. He loves horses more than anyone else in the world."

I said nothing. It was a long distance yet to the general's quarters, and the frost was unbearable. I decided to incite the horses to a run without the consent of Sharyn and Tseddelman. I started to make clicking and smacking noises, the way one usually does to liven up horses. The remedy worked. The horses stepped up to a fast trot, and the outrunner began arching like a hoop and bobbing up and down.

"What's this? What's this? Hold them, Sharyn! Hold them, I say, brother!"

I quit, but when Sharyn reined in the horses I renewed my tactics and achieved the same result.

"I don't understand what's wrong with my horses today! Why are they in such a rush?" said Tseddelman.

Sharyn was irritated and muttered something about a *shajtan*, not in the least suspecting that I was the demon in question. Neither Sharyn nor Tseddelman could hear me urging on their horses: the former was deaf, and the latter too heavily muffled. At last, clicking and smacking, cursing and marveling, frisking and arching, we flew up to the general's front door.

Old Gren received me with great kindness. He is one of those straightforward, indulgent, and at the same time stern men who render useful service to the state in all respects. They usually carry out their duties conscientiously and punctiliously, and they have broad knowledge of their department because they are indefatigable in penetrating every aspect of it. Their subordinates love them because they correct, punish, and reward them paternally; the government respects them because they serve as the solid support of all its dispositions. Old Gren was such a person, and, in addition, he combined with these virtues the qualities of a cordial host of the old school.<sup>3</sup> "Ah, greetings! Greetings, unprecedeted guest," he said, embracing me. "Is your father well? Aren't you ashamed of waiting so long to come and see me? Petja! Petja!" he shouted to his son. "What's on tomorrow at the theater?"

"An opera," replied young Gren.

3. *Khlebosol*, a bread-and-salt host.

"Which one?"

"Miller."<sup>4</sup>

"Have all the roles been taken?"

"Yes, they have."

"Too bad! I would like to see you join our troupe," said Gren, turning to me with a wry smile.

I replied that I would be willing to take a part in a comedy.

"Well, that's fine then! What play are we giving on Sunday?"

His son replied that they were performing *The Minor*.<sup>5</sup>

"Oh, there's a large cast in that one! You have a lot to choose from. . . ."

Young Gren very politely invited me to choose any role I wished. "I will order it copied for you, because it has to be memorized before the rehearsal."

I asked which he usually played.

"Kutejkin."

I could not help laughing as I imagined this handsome, stately young officer in a deacon's robes with his hair clubbed on the nape of his neck. "Well, I'll take Pravdin then." It was Gren's turn to laugh.<sup>6</sup>

When I returned to Tseddelman's house, my first concern was to inquire about my foundling. He had become such a charmer after his bath that I wouldn't have recognized him: his coat was long and soft and gleamed as white as snow, except for the ears, which were dark brown. He had a sharp little muzzle, big black eyes, and the rare charm of dark brows as well. They had just that minute taken him out of the furcoat where he had been sleeping all wrapped up; and since he was hot, he opened his little mouth wide to breathe more freely, and his rosy tongue, together with his black eyes, brows, and nose, made him such an enchanting creation that I could not stop admiring him and carried him around with me all day.

"What are you going to name him?" the two girls asked me.

"Cupid, of course. How could I call such a beauty anything else?"

I spent three weeks at Tseddelman's house, and all that time I was his most reliable stove tender. I slept always in the same cold chamber which, since they found it impossible to heat well, they had ceased heating altogether. Naturally, after getting up and getting dressed in the cold, I could never totally warm up all day, and therefore I spent all day

4. The performance was of Aleksandr Ablesimov's popular 1779 operetta *Miller, Sorcerer, Cheat and Matchmaker* with music by M. M. Sokolovsky and E. I. Fomin.

5. Denis Fonvizin's famous 1782 play about a domineering lady landowner and her bratty son.

6. Durova chose the role of an upright government official.

making sure that the stoves were well heated and closed while hot. The latter was strictly forbidden by Tseddelman himself; he always felt too warm, although his house was very cold, and even famous for that quality in all the other homes. The fact that his wife and her two sisters went around from morning to night in warm dressing-gowns proved it. It was amusing to watch Tseddelman going from one stove to the next, putting his hand to the damper, exclaiming, "Oh, my God, they're overheating!" and making haste to close it. I followed him around and opened it again immediately. Every evening he reminded the worker to heat less, and every morning the worker received from me a tip for vodka to heat more and, of course, the request and the money prevailed over the threat and the orders. Tseddelman said that he had no idea how to escape the heat, and he couldn't understand what demon possessed the worker who, no matter how he forbade it, heated his stoves not just for dear life, but to death.

During those three weeks, my pup grew a little and became even prettier. He went everywhere with me, of course, except to the theater and the general's house. Then I would entrust him to one of Tseddelman's maids and ask her not to pet or feed him while I was away. I wanted to be the only person with any claim on my Cupid's love, for that love to belong to me alone. I took my own precautions besides to keep my little dog from needing anyone else's indulgence: before leaving the house, I fed him as much as he could eat, played with him, petted him, and finally put him to bed, leaving him to Anisja's care only after he had fallen asleep.

With the end of the holidays, Christmas games, dances, rehearsals, and performances, the time came for me to return home. I fixed tomorrow for the day of my departure and rode over to spend the day with the general. "Why do you want to leave so soon?" the good-natured Gren asked me.

"Papa will be pining to see me after so long."

"Well then, go with God! I can't argue with that."

When we parted, the general added that he wanted to present something to me that he knew I would find very precious. At his orders a servant brought in a beautifully worked steel hammer. "Here it is, Aleksandrov," said the general, handing it to me. "I present you this hammer. You will agree that I couldn't find a more precious gift for you when you learn that it was made for Emperor Alexander—"

Without letting him finish, I seized the hammer, kissed it, and pressed it to my breast. "There are no words to express my gratitude to you for such a gift."

"Wouldn't you like to know how this object missed its purpose and, made for the mightiest of monarchs, now comes to his protégé?"

"Be so good as to explain, please. You are more gracious to me than I deserve, General."

"Well then, listen. His Majesty the Emperor decided to inspect all our factories. On these occasions the exalted visitor is usually shown all aspects of the work and takes a hand in carrying it out. We made the hammer for the emperor to use in striking a few blows to a red-hot bar of iron. Afterwards the hammer is stamped with a notation of the occasion and date, and it is then preserved for all times to come as a souvenir of the visit and the labor of the Most August Father of Russia. But since this hammer did not come out as well as it should have, I ordered a second one made, and so I had this one lying around until it came at last into the hands of a person whose love for our father the tsar is incomparably greater than anyone else's."

I thanked the general once again for the gift, the story, and his cordial hospitality and paternal love for me and bade him farewell—I have to assume, forever.

I found Papa busy dispatching the mail, and, although I knew that he didn't like being bothered just then, I couldn't resist laying the hammer down in front of him. Papa started from the unexpectedness of it and would have lost his temper, but, seeing that it was I, he contented himself by saying merely, "Eh, Uhlan, when will you ever learn? Is startling your old father a proper thing to do?"

"I never thought of that, Papa dear. On the contrary, I wanted to make you happy. Do you know what hammer this is?"

"You'll tell me later. I haven't the time to listen to you now. Go see your sister. . . ." I started out. "And take your hammer with you."

"No, Papa, let it lie there in front of you. It's precious! You'll find that out later."

Papa waved his hand, and I ran off with my Cupid to visit my sister and at once put him in her lap.

"Oh, how charming! What a pretty little dog! It must be a gift for me," said Kleopatra, petting the enchanting Cupid.

"No, sister dear, forgive me! I wouldn't give him up to anyone for anything in the world. He's going back to the regiment with me."

"You can't do that!"

"I can, and I will."

"Well then, take him away. There's no reason to show affection to anything that's not to be mine."

"Yes, and I don't advise it anyway; I'll be jealous."

"From you that's no novelty. You always want exclusive attachments."

"And who doesn't?"

My sister remained silent and a little sulky. I picked up my dog and went to my own room to await the end of Papa's bothersome business.

When he heard the story of the hammer, Papa took it for himself, saying that it was too precious an object for him to permit me to drag it about everywhere; he would keep it. I had to submit. I stroked once more the gleaming, smoothly polished handle which had once had such a lofty destiny, handed it to my father, and told him that I was very pleased to see it in his possession.

I get more attached to Cupid with every passing day. And how could I not love him? Meekness has an unconquerable power over our hearts even in an ugly animal, so how is it when the nicest, most faithful, and best of them looks into your eyes with meek humility, follows your every impulse, exists only for you, cannot be without you for even a minute, and would give his life for you? Even if you are unjust to him, thrash him for nothing, cruelly, even inhumanly, he will lie at your feet, lick them, and without the least resentment of your cruelty, wait only for a kind glance to throw himself into your arms, embrace you with his little paws, lick you, caper. Oh, best and most unhappy of animals! You are the only one who loves the way that we have all been ordained to love, and you are the one who suffers most from the blatant injustices people can inflict. There are actually men who, suspecting that their food has been poisoned, give that food to the dog to eat in order to confirm it. A dog grows old in his master's house, serving him in the way prescribed by nature; he exchanges it for a young one. And what does the man who took it in exchange do? He kills it, of course, for the hide! A borzoi is not a good hunter; hang it! And why is all this, why? The miserable lot of the dog has become proverbial, albeit it alone of all animals loves man. That noble beast, the horse, will smash its rider's skull with the greatest indifference; a cat will scratch his eyes out; a bull will never miss a chance to toss him on his horns, no matter how well he has been fed and petted. Only that peerless friend of mankind, the dog, for a stale crust of bread will remain faithful and devoted to the death. There have been occasions when, through some madness I cannot myself understand, I have punished my meek, forgiving Cupid. The poor little thing! How he wound himself around my feet, lying down, crawling, and at last sitting up on his hind legs and fixing his handsome black eyes on me with such an expression of submission and sorrow that I was nearly in tears as I reproached myself for my injustice. I took him in my lap, stroked him, kissed him, and he immediately began playing again. I was never parted from my Cupid even for a minute. No matter where I was, he always either lay beside me on the floor or sat on the windowsill, on a chair, on a

sofa, but without fail next to me and without fail on something belonging to me, for example, a handkerchief, gloves, or even my greatcoat. Otherwise he was not at peace.

One day I let him outside at dawn, expecting him to ask to come back in. When a quarter of an hour passed without his returning, I became very uneasy and went looking for him in the yard. He was nowhere to be found; I called him, no answer! Mortally alarmed, I sent a man out looking for him in the streets. A full hour passed in tormenting anticipation and vain searches. At last my little dog came and sat outside the gates. I heard his bark, looked out the window, and could not help laughing when I saw him, howling like a fully grown dog with his little muzzle pointing upward. But how dearly I paid for that laughter! My heart even now suffuses with blood at the memory of that howl. It was a presentiment. . . . I brought my runaway inside and, seeing that he was all damp from the dew, set him down on a pillow and covered him with my *arkhalukh*.<sup>7</sup> He fell asleep at once, but alas! his evil fate was wakeful. An hour later I got dressed and decided to go for my customary walk. Something told me I should go alone. But when do we ever listen to mysterious warnings? They are always so quiet, so gentle. I took the *arkhalukh* off my sleeping dog, "Let's go for a walk, Cupid." Cupid jumped up and began frisking. As we set out, he ran ahead of me.

An hour later I was carrying him, and he was pale and trembling in all his limbs. He was still breathing, but how! The breath was passing through two broad wounds inflicted by the fangs of a monstrous dog. Cupid died in my arms. . . . Since then I have often had occasion to dance all night and to laugh a lot, but there has never been any genuine merriment in my soul; it was buried in the grave of my Cupid. Many will find this odd or perhaps even worse than odd. Be that as it may, the death of my little friend can still force involuntary tears from my eyes amid the merriest of gatherings. I cannot forget him.

I am leaving today. As we parted, Papa said to me, "Isn't it time for you to be quitting the sword? I'm old; I need peace and quiet and someone to take over the household. Think about it."

The suggestion frightened me. I thought that I would never have to quit the sword, and especially not at my age; what will I do at home, condemned so early to the monotony of domestic occupations? But my father wants it that way. His old age! Oh, what else can I do? I will have to bid it all farewell: the gleaming sword and the good steed . . . my friends . . . the merry life . . . drill, parades, mounted formations . . . the full gallop and the clash of swords—all of it will come to an end. It will all fade away as if it had never been, and only unforgettable memories

7. A long belted tunic or caftan. The word is of Turkic origin.

will accompany me to the wild banks of the Kama, to the place where I spent my blighted childhood, where I worked out my extraordinary plan. . . .

To past happiness, glory, danger, uproar, glitter, and a life of ebullient activity—farewell!