Whose Fault?

SOFIYA ANDREEVNA TOLSTAYA

PART I

I

IT WAS A SPLENDID, CLEAR, MAGNIFICENT DAY. A real celebration of the peak of summer. The bright azure sky, the warm rays of the sun, and the many noisy colorful birds in lush trees and flowering bushes were all so dazzling and cheerful! In the distance the deep blue lake brilliantly reflected the sky as well as the bright, abundant, verdant vegetation along its shores.

The two young women running along the path from the lake to the large white stone house had the same festive, vigorous, radiant appearance. They were both barefoot, holding their shoes in their hands; wet towels were draped around their shoulders and their hair was unbraided. Their little feet, still pale and unused to the path, stepped timidly and lightly on the dewy trail, as if shuddering from contact with the ground, and the girls were laughing loudly.

"Be careful, someone might see us," said one.

"So what? Is it embarrassing?" the other asked, opening her eyes wide in surprise. "You know country women go barefoot."

"It's prickly and it hurts to walk."

"Never mind. It's easier if you run!"

The slim dark-eyed girl took off toward the house with such speed that when she found herself on the balcony, flushed, agitated, and gasping for breath, she suddenly looked around and came to her senses; feeling deeply self-conscious, she stood stock-still.

"What's wrong, Anna?" her mother asked sternly and in surprise, examining her flustered daughter from head to foot.

"Natasha and I were swimming and . . . and . . . we tried walking home barefoot. We didn't know," Anna said, hiding her feet.

Out of the corner of her eye she glanced at the outstretched hand of the male guest who had stood up from behind the tea table; then she looked directly into the eyes of the man who was offering his hand; smiling guiltily, she extended her own.

"I didn't know you'd come. Hello, Prince. . . . I'll be back in a moment."

The girl disappeared. The other one, without even pausing, darted after her.

The man who had extended his hand to Anna was their mother's old acquaintance Prince Prozorsky. He was about thirty-five years old and from time to time called on the Ilmenevs en route to or from his distant estate. He had known the children since their births; he loved the simple, delightful family ways of this entire household and often watched the growing girls with pleasure.

When both girls, one after the other, had vanished behind the doors, he continued smiling for quite a while. He hadn't visited the Ilmenevs for some time and, as often occurs, in the time he had spent abroad, something had happened to these girls. They had stopped being girls and suddenly had become young women.

Without completely realizing it, the prince felt this vaguely, and in his mind recalled again and again the image of Anna's graceful bare feet, her dark unfastened hair on her head tossed back, and her strong, agile figure beneath her loose white morning dress.

"My goodness. How nice it is here!" said the prince, glancing at the door where the girls had vanished; he experienced some youthful, invigorating surge of strength. "How pleasant, how cheerful! Ah, youth!" he added with a sigh. "Our youth has passed, Olga Pavlovna, but no one can keep us from admiring it."

"Well, if we remained young forever, then we we'd never appreciate it. . . . Do you think they notice it or value it? Not in the least," Olga Pavlovna said calmly.

After chatting a while longer, she excused herself, saying that she had to attend to some household chores, but that everyone would reconvene for breakfast.

"Meanwhile, Prince, you may read the newspapers; there's an interesting article about the unrest in France."

Olga Pavlovna left and both sisters soon returned. They had changed into dark, very conservative dresses, smoothed their hair, and had assumed an especially formal appearance.

"It's too bad you've changed your clothes," said the prince. "Now you've become proper young ladies; you were prettier and more natural before."

"This is more appropriate," said Natasha, pouring herself some coffee.

"That's all prejudice," Anna observed curtly. "Whatever people have grown accustomed to is appropriate," she added, nibbling some berries from a small plate, one at a time, just like a little bird.

"Are you feeling happy?" asked the prince.

"Terribly!" Anna replied. "Natasha and I are so very busy. Now I'm reading philosophy and writing a story. Natasha says it's good: every evening I read her what I wrote that morning."

"What kind of philosophy are you reading?"

"Dmitry Ivanych has lent me some Büchner and Feuerbach.[1] He says they're necessary for beginning my development. Now everything's become so clear to me. After seeing such clear proof I understand how one can become a materialist."

"How old are you?"

"I'll be eighteen soon."

"Toss away your Büchner and Feuerbach; don't ruin your innocent soul. You can't understand them and you'll only get confused."

"By reading philosophy? No, never! On the contrary, I'll come to understand myself and all my doubts. I've read your articles, too; but they're difficult. I really can't understand them very well yet."

"What's your story about?

"It's all about *how* one should love. You won't understand it. Natasha does perfectly."

"It's not hard to understand, but Anna's very sentimental. She dreams about a kind of love that should be pure and ideal, almost like a prayer," said Natasha.

"How does one reconcile that with materialism, Anna Aleksandrovna? Now you're caught . . ."

1. Friedrich Karl Christian Ludwig Büchner (1824–99) was a German philosopher, physiologist, and physician who became one of the principal exponents of scientific materialism. Ludwig Andreas von Feuerbach (1804–72) was a German philosopher and anthropologist. He was politically liberal, an atheist, and a materialist, and his book *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) initiated the quest for the historical Jesus.

"Oh, there's the butterfly Misha was hoping to add to his collection," Anna cried suddenly and unexpectedly; with her strong, nimble legs she hopped onto the balcony railing, trying to catch the large dark butterfly.

The prince blushed at the sight of Anna's graceful figure flashing in front of him as she jumped down from the balcony railing with the butterfly in her hand.

"Let's go for a walk," Natasha proposed, "a very long walk, and take Misha along."

Everyone agreed, went to fetch their hats, summoned little Misha, and set out for the neighboring village to visit Misha's former wet nurse.

The road led through the field; it was dusty and hot. Everyone ambled along lazily, and the conversation didn't go well. Anna led the way; the prince caught up to her, smiled, and said:

"Everything's so clear and simple in your life! No matter how hard you try to pose questions to yourself, there really aren't any and can't be any! You—your youth, your simplicity, and your faith in life, you yourself—you're the answer to all these doubts. God, how I envy you!"

"No, don't. I have so many doubts, and . . . I'm so immature," she replied gloomily. "When I understood that everything in the world is only movement and an association of atoms, I began to doubt whether God exists. Take Dmitry Ivanovich: you know him, he's a student who visits us from Sosnovka—he says that God's a fantasy, there's no such thing as the will of God, and that it's all the laws of nature. These are only the words of an unbeliever. He may even be right, but I don't understand. Sometimes I feel so much like praying—but to whom?"

"Don't listen to anyone. Dmitry Ivanovich confuses you, and that's not good," said the prince, scrutinizing the transparent skin on Anna's temples, beneath which her fine blue veins were pulsing.

Anna blushed.

"It's true he confuses me. But he's trying so hard to improve me. Misha, Misha, where are you going?" Anna cried suddenly.

But it was already too late. Misha, about whom they had forgotten entirely, wasn't walking along the bridge with everyone else, but was circling around, right through the marsh, and was stuck up to his knees. The prince extended his walking stick and pulled him out. But Misha was now soaking wet. Natasha, who had been off collecting flowers to dry, came running up and began to dry Misha off with grass and her scarves, scolding him in an angry voice. Anna laughed. But now it didn't make sense to continue their walk and they decided to return home.

Dmitry Ivanovich also arrived that evening from a neighboring estate; he was a pale, blond student with glasses and casual manners. Unembarrassed by anyone's presence, he never left Anna's side the entire evening. They sat together on the terrace stairs reading some book; Dmitry Ivanovich, constantly pausing, was enthusiastically explaining Darwin's system to Anna.

Since Natasha wasn't in a good mood either, and for some reason was reluctant to converse with the prince, he was left willy-nilly to have tea with Olga Pavlovna, who cast sidelong glances at Anna and her interlocutor.

The prince left late that evening, saying that he would definitely call on the Ilmenevs again on his way back to the country from Petersburg. As he said goodbye, he looked spitefully at Dmitry Ivanovich and, as if inadvertently, avoided shaking his hand.

"Yes, youth is to his advantage," thought the prince, after he had left the Ilmenevs and glanced at the starry sky, the darkened lake, and the mysterious distant woods lining its shores. It seemed to him that everything in the world had suddenly been extinguished, that all happiness resided somewhere out there, or behind him, or had drowned in this mysterious night, and he was filled with terror.

"This little girl, not long ago a mere child I carried in my arms, and I—no, it's impossible." He felt short of breath.

"It couldn't be! What? Is the same thing happening all over again? No, it's not the same: it's something new!" Once again he pictured Anna: in his imagination he mentally uncovered her graceful legs and her whole strong, supple girlish body.

"What eyes! Black as night, clear, truthful. . . . What sort of creature is she? Something very special. But when did all *this* happen? Why does it suddenly seem that I can't live without those clear eyes, that pure, sweet, cheerful look? Why, it wasn't all that long ago that I could regard these girls with serenity and delight. . . . And now? All of a sudden I've noticed that she's a woman, there's no one else but her, and that I must, yes, I can't do otherwise, I must possess this child . . ."

The blood rushed to the prince's head. He closed his eyes to call Anna to mind more vividly; his carriage raced on, swaying along the village road, lulling the prince to sleep, intensifying his feeling of voluptuousness and his need for experiencing pleasure that wonderful summer night . . .

2

The next day the two sisters were sitting at a table in a spacious, bright room on the upper floor. Natasha was sewing while Anna was reading her

story aloud with emotion in her voice. The large Italian window stood wide open; the air was noisy and stirring: frogs were croaking in the lake, nightingales were singing in the garden, and the sound of men's singing was coming from the village. Anna's voice was trembling slightly while she was reading.

"In a small, poorly furnished little room sat a young woman zealously sewing something large and white. From time to time she glanced up at the window and sighed, listening through the birds' singing above for footsteps on the street. The young woman had recently married and was waiting for her husband to come home after teaching his lessons. They were both poor; both worked, but . . ."

"Is this your ideal, Anna? Oh, don't make a mistake! One can't live by flowers and birds alone, especially not in poverty! There's also the prose of life: sickness, the kitchen, faults, and quarrels. . . . But you seem to avoid these things on purpose both in life and in your story."

"None of this has to be: one doesn't have to dwell on it. One must live through spiritual life alone, while everything else is incidental. I feel that I can elevate myself to such a level of spiritual development that I'll never even want to eat. Isn't a crust of bread enough to sustain life? It is, isn't it? Well then, it will be provided. You know, Natasha, sometimes it seems to me that when I'm running, if I go on just a little bit further, if I dig my heels into the ground, then one, two three—I'll take off flying. That's just like one's soul, yes, even more so; it must always be ready to soar off into the infinite. . . . I know this well and feel it deeply! How come no one else understands it?"

"But how can you live on earth with such an unearthly view?" asked Natasha. "Yesterday you said that you absolutely had to get married. Well, in marriage, with children and everyday worries, you won't be able to live on just a crust of bread and you won't be able to soar anywhere."

Anna became pensive.

"Yes, if I regard marriage as you all do, then it would be better not to marry. First of all you need love, the kind that's higher than everything worldly, a more ideal love. . . . I can't explain it; I can only feel it . . ."

"Well, enough of this, Anna. Let's go downstairs now. Dmitry Ivanovich has come. Do you love him, Anna?"

"I don't know. I like talking with him, but in the evening when I shake his hand and he squeezes mine in a special way, and his hand is moist with perspiration—it suddenly feels so unpleasant! But I do think he understands things as they are; he's educated, clever, and he has his own ideals."

The sisters went downstairs. There was no one on the balcony except Dmitry Ivanovich and Misha's tutor. They were chatting about university matters

and drinking tea. Anna asked Dmitry whether he had brought her anything good to read.

"What do you mean by good?" he asked, and took out of his pocket a collection of Tyutchev's poems.[2] "Here's what I happen to have in my pocket," he said.

Anna opened it and began leafing through it.

"I know this book. How I love his verse! 'Human tears,'" she read. "I know it by heart. 'Flow, you invisible, inexhaustible tears.'[3] Yes, those tears are the most agonizing; I'll have to shed many like that during my life."

"It always seems to me that you're someone who won't have to shed any tears. You're always so cheerful. But you're given to daydreaming, Anna Aleksandrovna. You can't live your whole life like that."

"How should I live it, then?"

"You should live more by social and earthly interests, live by participating in human affairs, and not bother about your inner frailties."

"What should I do?"

"Well, don't dwell way up in the clouds, but take action. Try to live more sensibly, Anna Aleksandrovna, without prejudices, and the main thing, without overly sentimental religious hypocrisy."

"I can try," Anna said gloomily. "But what do you mean by 'overly sentimental religious hypocrisy'? Don't you also have religion? Is it really possible to live without it? Tell me, do you believe in God?"

Dmitry Ivanovich smiled sarcastically and condescendingly.

"Why do you so like that word 'God'?"

"It's not the word, but the idea of a divine being that I find necessary. I won't surrender that, do you hear?" Anna said suddenly and with passion. "If there's no God, then I don't exist and there's nothing, nothing at all. . . . There's no life!"

Anna flared up, her eyes sparkled, and her voice trembled tearfully; she turned away and fell silent. Dmitry Ivanovich was about to smile again ironically, but, when he glanced up at Anna, he felt awkward and dropped his eyes.

Night fell. The moon had long since risen and had lit up a meadow near the lake that was not too far from the house. The contours of the dark greenery of the trees surrounding the meadow appeared even darker against the background of the bright sky. The light coming from behind the darkness was so enticing that after everyone had gone to bed, Anna stood on the terrace for a

2. Fyodor Ivanovich Tyutchev (1803–73), a Russian writer who was remarkable both as a highly original philosophical poet and as a passionate Slavophile.

3. A short lyric poem by Tyutchev composed in the autumn of 1849.

long time gazing at the meadow; the turmoil of thoughts that had occupied her of late as a result of her reading philosophy books and conversing with Dmitry Ivanovich, seemed to resolve quietly and fade away.

Some rustling from the garden caused her to shudder. Dmitry Ivanovich was emerging from it. He was coming from the wing of the house where Misha's tutor resided; he was planning to go home through the garden, but upon seeing Anna, he came up onto the terrace and drew near. She was annoyed that he had destroyed her mood; instead of glancing at him, she continued gazing at the bright meadow and farther into the depths of the lake.

"You had such an inspired look when you were talking about God, Anna Aleksandrovna!"

Anna stood in angry silence.

"You have so much fire and energy! You could be such a vigorous, splendid woman, if only you would believe in a more developed man, agree to accept his influence, and come to love him . . ."

Dmitry Ivanovich approached Anna quietly; taking her hand, he kissed it suddenly.

He never expected what happened next with Anna Aleksandrovna. This slim, tender girl turned into one of the Furies.[4] Her dark eyes hurled such a bolt of spiteful lightning at Dmitry Ivanovich that he stood rooted to the spot. She tore her hand away, turned up her palm in disgust, wiped it on her dress, and shouted:

"How dare you? Ugh, how disgusting! I detest you!"

Shame, despair, and spite at the destruction of her reverential, contemplative mood, squeamishness, and pride—all rose up in her. She ran straight into her mother's bedroom, threw herself down on the couch, and began sobbing loudly.

Olga Pavlovna, who was getting ready to go to bed, was terribly frightened.

"What happened? What's wrong?"

"Mama, how dare he? On the terrace just now, Dmitry Ivanovich kissed my hand. What filth!"

Anna seized a vial of cologne from her mother's dressing table and began washing away Dmitry Ivanovich's kiss, all the while continuing to sob.

"Where did you see him?"

"He . . . no, I was on the terrace, gazing at the moon; he came over to me; I was annoyed; he said something, but I wanted to be alone; and then, all of

4. Greek goddesses of vengeance usually characterized as three sisters: they are cruel but also known for being very fair.

a sudden, unexpectedly, he seized my hand and kissed it." Anna shuddered and wiped her slender hand on her dress once again.

"Well, it serves you right. What's a young girl doing out on the terrace all alone, when the whole house is asleep?" grumbled Olga Pavlovna. "Now, calm down," she continued in a gentler voice. "I'll write a note to Dmitry Ivanovich and ask him to cease his visits."

"Mama, please do!"

"Well now, go to bed. I really didn't care for your conversations even before this happened. Good night. Your sister went to bed a long time ago."

It took Anna a while to calm down. After going upstairs, she sat at the table in silence for a long time, trying to soothe her agitated heart; at last she picked up her diary and started writing:

"Yes, this love was a mistake, a trick of the imagination. What do I want? Why am I dissatisfied? Why is my heart aching so? Is it my youth begging for life, when there's no real life, or do I feel sorry for all those who are unhappy? But all egoists are happy. Where do people find happiness? From fate? But what is fate? The law of nature, the movement of the universe, the will of God. Yes, undoubtedly, it's the will of God. It's good to pray to God! But what if prayer is merely the plaything of bitter people? But I can't break it. I can't admit that everything on earth is just the movement of atoms, or that I'm good or evil just because the weather is fair or foul, or that people are moral just because their blood circulates more slowly and they're unemotional, or that a known combination of material particles produces upheavals in people and in their fates. . . . My God, there's such chaos in my head! Everything's so mysterious in this world; how pitiful I am, undeveloped, impotent, and perplexed. . . . My God, help me, enlighten me!"

Anna tossed her diary down on the table, fell to her knees, and prayed for a long time. She hadn't done so for a while. Such a state occurs in people during moments of severe grief or at times of great moral progress. Thus it was with Anna.

When she arose, exhausted and shattered, she felt that something had happened to her and that everything would be different from then on.

She lay down in bed; untying the pink ribbons of the white cotton bed curtain, she wrapped it around herself.

All was quiet; not a sound could be heard from the window. The pale summer sky looked sad, lit from one side by the moon that had just set, and from the other by the sun that had not yet risen.

Anna trembled in agitation, gazing out the window, and slipped into a troubled sleep.

3

An entirely new period in Anna's life as a young woman had begun imperceptibly. It was as if she had shaken off all searching, doubts, and those questions and mental worries that had been muddling her existence. Youth had triumphed. The carefree, cheerful Anna had begun to look God's world straight in the eye with such bold clarity, as if she had discovered joyful new aspects of it that had previously been concealed from her.

"Natasha, now I'm going to bring some order into my life," she said to her sister once, collecting her drawing instruments. "Before it starts getting too dark, I intend to paint with my oils absolutely every day this autumn. After dinner I plan to walk, read, and write in my diary. When you begin teaching in school, I'll help you."

"Well, I don't believe that. I know what your help is like: you'll run in for five minutes, chatter away, read something useless—and that's that."

"Ah, Natasha, you think all you need is arithmetic. In my opinion, moral development is even more essential."

"Well, the two of us won't really be able to accomplish that in only a few weeks. I won't be able to teach for more than two months before we leave for Moscow. If we're lucky, we'll just be able to start some reading and writing, but there's no way even to think about moral development."

"If only we could stay here all winter!"

"What does that matter? It's impossible. Mama's bored here and Misha's being sent to the gymnasium."

"When does school begin?" asked Anna.

"The older girls will come tomorrow evening. I promised to read to them. I'll open the school on Monday. I have to start it myself, get everything organized, and then hand it over to the teacher."

"Well I'm going, or else it'll be too late." Anna picked up a small canvas, a case with her oil paints, and an umbrella; she walked out into the garden and then headed toward the lake. After choosing a place that she had noted long ago as being particularly picturesque, she stuck the umbrella into the ground and set about work. She painted easily, cheerfully; a shaft of light in the blue sky in the overhanging tree branches came out so well that Anna admired her own work. She moved her hand quickly from the palette to the canvas and back again, so absorbed in her painting that she failed to notice the prince approaching from behind. Prozorsky, who was on his way back from Petersburg, had dropped in on the Ilmenevs once again.

"So, I find you out here," he said to Anna, greeting her. "You paint very well! I really didn't know how talented you are."

"Really? I plan to work a great deal. But if *you* say it, then I'll do even more. You understand everything," Anna added, looking into the prince's eyes trustfully and tenderly; since childhood she was used to regarding him in this way, though she herself never knew why. Probably it was because everyone in her house, including her old nurse, Olga Pavlovna, Misha—everyone had grown to love the prince, who was such a familiar and accustomed visitor in their household. He had been acquainted with Olga Pavlovna since childhood: they were neighbors. When Olga Pavlovna got married and received as her dowry the very same estate where she had lived since she was a child, the prince continued visiting her from time to time. Then she was widowed and for a long time didn't dare return to her estate. The prince had not seen her for several years and met her again only later, when the girls had grown up a bit and Olga Pavlovna had gotten old.

Prince Prozorsky was not as handsome as he was exquisitely elegant. A broad education and considerable means had opened doors for him everywhere. He had traveled widely and lived a stormy, carefree youth; now he was tired of everything, had settled in the country, and was busying himself with philosophy, imagining himself to be a great thinker. That was his weakness. He wrote articles, and many considered him very intelligent. Only sharp and very knowledgeable people realized that the prince's philosophy was in reality pathetic and ridiculous. He composed and published articles in journals without having anything original to say, merely regurgitating old, worn-out ideas from a whole range of thinkers, both ancient and modern. This rehashing was done so skillfully that the majority of the public read his articles even with considerable enjoyment; this limited success pleased the prince no end.

But this was not what compelled Anna to relate to the prince so trustfully and tenderly. She loved more his idiosyncratic, sympathetic congeniality in society, cultivated with great success, with which he related to all women and which attracted them to him. Natasha and Anna also succumbed to his charm, and the prince's visits were always a cause for celebration in the whole family. He knew, as they all said jokingly, how to *raise* interesting questions and conduct the most entertaining conversations. He knew how to assist Olga Pavlovna with her solitaire at just the right moment, to teach Misha how to make a collection of butterflies and beetles, to joke with the old nurse, and even to give generous tips to the servants.

"Have you been to our house already, Prince?" asked Anna.

"I was there just now, saw everyone, and came out to look for you; I was told to try here. Without you the house is like a lamp without light: it's dark and dreary."

"Do you really think so? What do you see in me?" she asked, blushing. It seemed such an unexpected happiness that this attractive prince, beloved by everyone, would talk about her in this way, an insignificant girl whom he had known as a child. She recalled how naughty she used to be, how mischievous, lazy, and irreverent. She also remembered how the prince used to interfere cautiously and gently in those cases when, with her usual liveliness and decisiveness, she would be saying or doing something extreme. Anna always thought that he despised her and approved of Natasha; yet now, all of a sudden, he had praised her picture and said it was dreary in the house without her. This unexpected happiness, completely unaccountable, engulfed her heart.

Anna continued to paint. She couldn't tear her eyes away from the wonderful weeping birch bent over the lake; its white trunk appeared unnatural on her canvas, but it was astonishingly beautiful against the background of variegated leaves that had already changed into their autumn colors. But she felt the prince's glance trained on her; her hand trembled and her heart was pounding.

"Enough, I can't go on," she said. "What's wrong with me? Why am I so agitated? Probably it's because of his praise," Anna thought. It began to grow dark and cool. She folded up her umbrella, gathered her things, which the prince immediately took from her hands, and they both headed back toward the house.

The prince walked behind and keenly admired, with the look of an authority on women, her easygoing, strong bearing, always indicative of a healthy inner organism; he admired the astonishing position of her dainty head on its delicate round neck, each curve of which was lovely and graceful; he admired her slender figure, her waist encircled with a ribbon. The wind blew her ribbons and dress back, which constantly revealed the shape of her legs; her fine, dark hair with a scarcely noticeable golden hue, imparted even more tenderness and paleness to her face and neck.

When they had approached the house, Anna glanced back at the prince and his gaze embarrassed her. "What's the matter with him?" she wondered. "He just praised me so politely, but now there's something strange in his eyes, something animal-like. . . . Why is that?"

Yes, why indeed? She was at fault only because her figure, her hair, her youth, her well-made dress, and her shapely legs—this whole temptation, unfamiliar to her childish innocence—had aroused this more experienced

bachelor;[5] he had sensed in this girl that rare type of woman who, beneath her innocent, childlike image, hides within herself all the qualities of an ardent, intricate, artistic, passionate female personality. And although as a counterbalance to nature, the highest values of religiosity and chastity were firmly and unconsciously established in this young girl's soul, the prince failed to appreciate these latter ideals of hers and didn't even notice them; but he certainly sensed the former traits with all his being, and for that reason he devoured her with his almost animal-like gaze that had so embarrassed and frightened Anna.

4

Although the prince was supposed to be heading home to his own estate and had even said that he was eager to see his mother, he was unable to leave; instead, he began visiting the Ilmenevs every day. He pretended to have business in the nearest district town and asked Olga Pavlovna's permission to come after doing his business and to relax with her warm family. Everyone was delighted with the presence of this beloved guest, and he started showing up daily. He sensed without question that there was no turning back. His passion for Anna intensified with each passing day and so overwhelmed him that he was unable to sleep at night; he was tormented by doubt; most of all, he feared provoking confusion on her side instead of love when he proposed to her.

He rented a dirty room in the little provincial town. He was bored; he pined and wrote letters to Anna, which he carried in his pocket, but couldn't resolve to take action. He spent two weeks like that.

Meanwhile, Anna continued living her simple, cheerful life, busy in her own way. What could possibly be happier than the free, girlish leisure time that clever, vigorous young women know how to enjoy, which is spent irritating the nerves of abnormal ones?

Anna was occupied by her painting; with the gardener and peasant girls she planted specially ordered rare bushes and trees that she wanted to introduce into her garden; she wrote in her diary, taught music to Misha, and studied Bach's difficult fugues. In addition, with Florinsky's textbook in hand, she frequently went into the village to visit the sick, straining with all her

5. *"In fact, it was only that her sweater suited her so well, as did her curls . . ."* This and all subsequent notes in italics are quotations from *The Kreuzter Sonata,* which Sofiya Andreevna wrote in the margins of her manuscript of the present work.

attention and strength to offset her own ignorance and inexperience in the field of medicine.[6]

Days were spent in an entirely constructive and joyful manner, but the constant presence of the prince and the vague awareness that he was admiring her provided Anna with even more energy and heightened her greater interest in everything. A day when, embarrassed to be there all the time, the prince didn't visit the Ilmenevs, seemed incomplete and dreary; every one of her activities somehow seemed to lose its meaning. She waited for him to share everything that had transpired during his absence; she fervently involved him in all her pursuits; she was deceived by his approval that hid his simple delight with her, unaware that everything was directed only at her appearance and her youth.

Natasha opened the school and gave reading lessons to the peasant girls every evening. She dedicated herself entirely to this activity, suppressing some envy that the prince preferred her sister, since she too loved him, just as everyone else did. She was surprised by the prince's delight with Anna's life and pursuits; Natasha regarded those activities with a certain amount of contempt and considered them useless.

It was Sunday and a dozen peasant girls were seated around a simple wooden table in the small wing of the house that was devoted to the school. Several of them earnestly and attentively read haltingly, pointing their fingers at the words in the book, while others industriously and skillfully copied out letters and mouthed words. The tall, attractive Lyubasha sat next to Natasha and boldly read aloud a story about the daily life of peasants. It was very cozy and proper in this bright, little room, but everyone seemed to be exhausted and bored. Natasha was working conscientiously, but was unable to infuse any vitality into the endeavor.

The door opened quietly and Anna came in. She walked cautiously to the corner, sat down, and began listening. The prince hadn't been there all day, and although she had been missing him, she didn't want to admit it to herself. The Gospel lay on the table; she picked it up and started guessing her fortune with it, posing various questions to herself.

While perusing the imagined answers, she became distracted by reading that Holy Book which provides the solution to all of life's most complex uncertainties.

6. Vasilii Markovich Florinsky (1833–99), well-known obstetrician, professor, and writer in Saint Petersburg, was the author of numerous medical textbooks published in the 1870s and 1880s. Real doctors were rare (and expensive) in the countryside, so gentry with some knowledge of basic first aid often treated sick or injured peasants on their estates.

Abruptly she decided to ascertain these girls' level of spiritual development. She recalled the prince's story about the sort of answers that peasant girls offer about the Holy Trinity and she asked them:

"Girls, what does the Holy Trinity consist of?"

"The Lord God, the Mother of God, and Saint Nicholas," Lyubasha replied boldly.[7]

"What are you saying?" the quiet, serious Marfa interrupted her. "The Trinity means: God the Father, God the Son, and the Virgin Mother."

"And the Holy Spirit," Natasha corrected her sternly.

"Have you read to the Gospel?" Anna asked.

"We've heard it read in church. Last year Natalya Aleksandrovna read to us, during Holy Week, about Christ's passion."

"Well, I'll read to you about the teachings of Christ."

Anna found her favorite place and began reading the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. Her clear, resonant voice with its natural sensitivity lent particular expression to that which touches people, their hearts most of all. When she had finished the chapter, she began explaining it. The girls surrounded her; some didn't understand her very well, but Anna's religious inspiration was communicated to these naïve listeners.

"More, more," they begged.

Then Anna read them about Peter's denial, the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Judas's betrayal. She showed them pictures, interpreted the words, and she herself became excited. Many of the girls wept. The thoughtful Marfa took Anna's hand gently and held it in her own; the fervent Lyubasha encircled Anna's slim neck with her arm and kissed her on the lips loudly.

At that moment the sound of an approaching carriage was heard at the porch of the main house. Anna jumped up: her face glowed with joy.

"It's the prince," said Natasha. "Go on; you've just disturbed us here. I thought he probably wouldn't come today. What's wrong with you?" asked Natasha, glancing at her excited sister.

"Je crains d'àimer le prince," Anna muttered rapidly, pressing her hand to her breast as if trying to stop her heart from beating so fast, and she ran out of the room.[8]

7. Saint Nicholas (270–343) was a bishop of Myra, later canonized as a Christian saint. Because of the many miracles attributed to his intercession, he is also known as Nikolai the miracle worker.

8. The French sentence means "I'm afraid that I love the prince."

Flushed, agile, and swift, she ran into the spacious hall, where the prince was taking off his coat; when he glanced at her, he was struck by this blushing beauty, with her excited look, a result of the agitation she had just experienced, and her dark, fiery eyes regarding him cheerfully and tenderly. For the first time he felt that she was glad to see him and that love might indeed be possible on her side as well. But at the same time he wondered whether this magnificent creature whom he had grown to know so well of late, with her poetic, pure demands of life, her religious inclination, and her noble ideals, would collide against his egotistical, carnal love and his spent existence.

"It makes no difference; there's no other way; let it be like this," prompted the voice that was always ready to speak that way to people used to thinking only about themselves and valuing only their own happiness and pleasure. "Mine, all mine . . ." the prince rejoiced inwardly as he kissed Anna's hand.

That evening everything that he had so desired was meant to be accomplished. He himself felt that and so did Anna. There was some general awkward tension; the resolution of everything that had weighed upon them all was anticipated.

They had tea in the dining room; then they all went their separate ways. Misha went to bed early, Natasha set about correcting her pupils' notebooks, Olga Pavlovna sat down in her usual place on the sofa in a corner of the living room, laid out a game of solitaire, and took up knitting one of her numerous afghans intended for relatives and friends.

The prince asked Anna to play something and followed her into the hall.

"I don't feel like playing," she said. "I'm very tired today."

"Never mind, please, play something." The prince was agitated and wanted to win a little time. "Here's one of Chopin's Preludes; you play them so well.[9] No one could instill the subtlest human feelings into music as well as he did."

Anna began playing almost mechanically. The prince's agitation had been communicated to her. He stood against the wall and leaned back his handsome head. Apparently some intense internal process was transpiring within him; he finally worked up his courage and said quietly, pausing incessantly:

"Anna, I must speak with you. I've been meaning to do so for a long time, but it's so difficult!" The prince fell silent. "Has it ever occurred to you that this old family friend could regard you in a way other than as a sweet, lovable

9. Chopin's *24 Preludes,* opus 28, are a set of short solo pieces for piano, one in each of the twenty-four keys, originally published in 1839.

young girl?" The prince's voice broke off. Anna shuddered. "That he could feel," the prince continued after a pause, "that without this young girl no life was possible for him, no happiness—nothing at all."

Anna was trembling all over; her long, cold fingers stopped obeying, and Chopin's prelude was cut short.

"Go on, play," the prince implored her.

Anna continued softly and nervously running her fingers over the keys, and Chopin's poignant melody sounded again.

"Here's the thing, Anna. I'm not demanding anything of you yet. I merely love you in a way that no one has ever loved before. You may be amused to see your old friend lying at your childlike feet. But it's not at all amusing to me! I've been tormented all this time, and in spite of that, I ask you just one thing: if you think you won't be able to love me after you become my wife, don't say anything to me now; just reject me. It'd be better to endure that suffering now, rather than later, after you've become my wife."

The prince fell silent. He was pale and his lip was twitching slightly. Yes, this was love, totally unlike any of those casual affairs he was used to. In it he experienced that cleansing when he could forget all the impurity of his previous sins. The prince rejoiced, but at the same time was horrified by this idea.

Anna stopped playing, glanced up at him, and thought for a moment; then she suddenly rose resolutely, straightened up, and approached him.

"Yes, I will be able to love you after I become your wife," she replied simply and quickly, extending her hand to the prince, looking straight into his eyes naïvely and tenderly. He understood that she could not lie, she simply didn't know how to lie, and that this virtuous girl would keep her word as steadfastly and simply as she had given it at that moment.

The prince seized her hands and began kissing them.

"Is it true? Is it?" he repeated. She didn't pull her hands away and regarded his passionate kisses serenely and joyfully, but her face expressed not one trace of distress in response to his unbridled passion.

When later that evening after this important event she lay alone in her own bed, she imagined her entire future life. She neither feared nor worried that she might be unhappy for any reason with this familiar, kind, sympathetic family friend who loved her so much, and who was so clever, educated, handsome, and elegant. She rejoiced that she would be entering his life; she was eagerly prepared to offer her entire self to assist him in all his activities that were undoubtedly very distinguished, useful, and splendid in all regards; she fell asleep with a peaceful smile of happiness on her face.

5

The next morning Anna told her mother and sister about the prince's proposal. Everyone had been waiting for it and reacted as expected. Olga Pavlovna began fussing about the dowry and planned to leave for Moscow as soon as possible to assemble it. She announced to Anna that in about five days she would also take her to Moscow to try on everything that would be made for her. Anna tried to object and asked to be spared that torment. But Olga Pavlovna became so upset that Anna decided to yield and promised to submit.

The prince spent entire days alongside Anna. He was terribly agitated all the while and tried to advance the wedding date, saying that no dowry was really necessary. When he remained alone with Anna, his agitation grew to such an extent that he couldn't think of anything to talk about; he kissed her hands in silence and sometimes didn't even hear what she was saying.[10] As before, Anna tried several times to tell him about her personal interests, how hard it was to teach Misha music because he had no ear for it, how she had helped a deaf girl, or how she had suddenly understood Shakespeare and had fallen in love with his work—but he was indifferent to everything.[11] There was only one thing that preoccupied him: whether she loved him and how soon their wedding would be.[12]

Friends, relatives, and neighbors called to congratulate Anna; she proudly and happily accepted their congratulations, without doubting even for a moment that her happiness would know no limits.

But one day an inadvertent, but irreparable blow landed on her, one that poisoned her happy state.

A neighbor lady, an old landowner, who for some reason didn't much like the prince, had come to congratulate Anna. Chatting with Olga Pavlovna, she indicated somewhat mysteriously, in vulgar terms, and in Anna's presence that the prince was a womanizer; then she whispered something into Olga Pavlovna's ear. Olga Pavlovna was disturbed, but waved her away saying: "Well, all men are like that before they marry."

Anna had never considered the possibility that the prince, before he had reached his current age of thirty-five, could have loved anyone else; she was terribly embarrassed and sobs arose in her throat.[13] She went to her room and sat at the window in silence for a long time, trying to calm herself down.

10. *"I can't recall it without shame! What an abomination!"*
11. Tolstoy had an intense and notorious dislike for the works of Shakespeare.
12. "*It was terribly difficult to talk when we were left alone. It was like the labor of Sisyphus.*"
13. "*. . . and when out of a hundred men there's scarcely one who's not been 'married' before . . .*"

The prince entered and leaned over to her quietly. She turned to him; taking his hand, she sat him down next to her.

"Why are you so very serious today, Anna? What's wrong?" he asked.

"I must speak with you. Tell me the truth, Prince, the whole truth. Did you love many women before me? How many?"

Her voice sounded tearful.

"Why do you ask, Anna? You're tormenting yourself and me. Of course, I can't bring to our married life the sort of purity I'd like to. I'm already so old, Anna; I can't go back and correct the past," he added as if with regret. "I can only vouch for the future. What happened before, I can assure you, was not love. I have never loved *anyone* as I love you. This is something new, unexpected, and magnificent. It's what I never even thought of or dared dream about."

She looked at him very closely, wondering whether it was all true, and shuddered.

The prince perceived her shudder, understood it, and moved closer to her. She retreated a bit, but the prince took hold of her hands and began kissing them passionately.

"You do love me, Anna, don't you?" he asked.

"Yes, I do," she answered softly.

The prince cautiously leaned over even closer to her face and for the first time planted a kiss on her lips.

Anna didn't move; she grew numb. A wave of passion such as she had never experienced ran through her body and cast her into a fervor. A bevy of diverse women whom he had loved before rushed into her tormented imagination. She suddenly wanted to seize him in her embrace and shout: "Don't you dare love anyone except for me!" Her head was spinning; she shivered as if in a fever and didn't understand what was happening to her.

But the prince understood; smiling, he released her slender, trembling little hands and moved away.

Anna sat there a few seconds, her head lowered, and said sternly and serenely:

"Leave me now; I'll come out soon."

When she entered the dining room for dinner, she sat down at the table languidly and gloomily and didn't touch a thing. After dinner everyone went for a ride to the neighboring farmstead. Anna avoided speaking with the prince all evening. She ran off to a forest grove, gathered late flowers that had bloomed a second time, and breathed in the fresh air. "How nice and easy it is here!" she thought suddenly. "But there's something heavy weighing down my heart! I must forget, forget!"

Two days later Anna's mother took her off to Moscow to be fitted for her trousseau. Apathetic toward everything, she let them do anything they wanted to her. Neither dresses, nor lovely items, nor her fiancé's presents interested her much. Her mother was genuinely concerned that her daughter was too serious and pale, refusing to eat. Anna felt ill at ease in Moscow and was in a great hurry to return home. The prince's presence had become a necessity for her; she would behave in a more animated fashion only if he were around. Now they had exchanged roles. He was very talkative, tender, and affectionate with her; it was as if he were protecting her, trying to soothe her nerves. She sat in silence next to him, listened to tales about his travels, his life in different countries where he had lived either for work or pleasure; his voice had a calming effect on her, subjecting her completely to her beloved's will. Sometimes, looking flushed and agitated, she demanded that he relate stories of his previous attachments. He avoided any direct answers, seeing how those questions upset her; he managed to escape with tender words and platitudes. But she always came back to the same thing. These conversations provoked in her the same feeling one gets when, at the first ache in a temple or a tooth, one presses hard on the sore spot and this new pain seems to relieve the old one, momentarily causing one to forget all about it.

This is how it was with Anna; she couldn't escape this pain all during her engagement.

6

At last they agreed on the date for the wedding. Anna recalled afterward that entire day as if it had been a dream. The prince's relatives gathered as did their own; various young women friends helped her dress; Natasha and Olga Pavlovna wept as they arranged her veil and flowers. The groomsmen flashed by sporting white flowers in their buttonholes. A large number of carriages arrived, drawn by three or four horses; the horses were decorated with colorful ribbons and the coachmen were formally attired. Anna's carriage arrived: Misha, who was wearing a white sailor shirt and carrying an icon, was seated with her; she climbed in together with her godmother, Olga Pavlovna's aunt, an elderly lady-in-waiting who had come from Petersburg for the occasion.

There was a large crowd in the church; Lyubasha and Marfa flitted past, as well as many familiar faces from the village. The wedding ceremony affected Anna only slightly; she felt too paralyzed, as if turned to stone.

At home the tables in the great hall were set, decorated with flowers and fruits; some unfamiliar servants were standing in attendance.

Just as her mother was giving her blessing before the ceremony, Anna suddenly came to for a moment and realized that something in her life was being torn asunder; something with which she had lived from the day of her birth was ending today, that very moment, and all of a sudden sobs arose in her throat and she threw herself on her mother's neck; sobbing, she cried, "Farewell, mama, farewell. It was so nice being at home! Mama, thank you for everything! Don't cry, oh, my God, please don't cry! You're happy, aren't you?"

At last everything was over. They brought around a large new coach and loaded her trunks; the prince's coachman jumped onto the box. Anna, newly attired in her traveling clothes and accompanied by her husband, was about to take her place in the carriage. Once more she heard her mother's grief-stricken cry and Misha's howl as he was led away. The carriage door was closed and off they went.

It was September. There was a light rain; the prince's team of six magnificent horses, which had been sent over from his estate, tramped loudly through the puddles on the broad country road; the carriage lamps were lit and their light was reflected in the muddy water; it was damp and dark. After the brightly illuminated house, so full of guests and pleasant familiar faces, this transition to the dark of night and the silence of melancholy rural nature was especially abrupt. Anna sat in a corner of the carriage and wept softly.

"I'm sorry, my dear, that our marriage has caused you such grief," said the prince, taking Anna by the hand and kissing it.

"Didn't it ever occur to you that I'd be sad to leave all those people?"

"Why are you addressing me *formally?* Don't you love me?[14] Do you still consider me a stranger, my dear?"

"I'll get used to addressing you *informally,* but for now it still doesn't seem natural."

"But say you love me," repeated the prince, leaning toward Anna in the darkness of the coach and kissing her chilled tender cheeks passionately.

"I think I love you," she replied meekly, recalling once more her mother, Misha's tears, the room she had shared with Natasha, along with all the poetry of her maidenly life; she also remembered that in several hours she would be at home in a new place and that would be forever.

All of a sudden she felt the prince cautiously embrace her and draw her near him; she saw his unnaturally excited face up close and felt his hot, irregular

14. Russian distinguishes between *vy* [you—polite] and *ty* [you—familiar]. Anna uses the former, while the prince uses the latter.

breath, with its odor of tobacco and cologne. A frightened and submissive Anna threw her head back and pressed herself into the farthest corner of the carriage. The prince embraced her and kissed her passionately.

"Yes, this is what's supposed to happen, just like this," she thought. "Mama said that I have to acquiesce and not be surprised by anything. . . . Well, so be it. . . . But . . . my God, how awful and . . . disgraceful, how disgraceful . . ."

The carriage continued on its way. It was about sixty versts to the prince's estate. A relay of horses had been dispatched about halfway, and they needed to make a prearranged stop at the empty wing of an uninhabited manor house. When the door of the coach opened, Anna hopped out quickly; wading through puddles, she ran up some unfamiliar stairs through an open door into a spacious well-lit room. Tossing off her cape, she sat down on a sofa, drawing her legs up under her and shuddering all over; she glanced at a table set with a samovar, the warming stove, and at all the strange surroundings.[15]

"Why are you so frightened? Make us tea, my dearest," said the prince, kissing her.

"Yes, right away," replied Anna, as if emerging from her torpor and raising her head, sunk in shame.

"Why do I suddenly feel so strange and uncomfortable with him?" Anna wondered.

"How dull and tedious that she's so afraid of everything," thought the prince. "What will happen in the future? And this is only the beginning of our much praised and extolled honeymoon! Could it be that besides trepidation and grim submission, I'll get nothing else from her?"[16]

And he didn't get anything else from her. It was committing violence to a child; this girl was not ready for marriage; the woman's passion that had suddenly been aroused in her out of jealousy subsided once again, suppressed by shame and her resistance to the prince's carnal love. All that remained was exhaustion, oppression, embarrassment, and fear. Anna noticed her husband's dissatisfaction but didn't know how to prevent it; she was subservient—but no more than that.

It was impossible to continue their journey that evening, and the prince couldn't bring himself to demand it. The pouring rain, the darkness, and the

15. A samovar is a heated metal container traditionally used to heat and boil water for making tea.

16. ". . . *and then the much praised honeymoon begins. Why, even its name is so vile!"* and ". . . *it's awkward, shameful, vile, pitiful, and, the main thing, it's boring, unbelievably boring!"*

poor road all delayed the newlyweds, so it was necessary to spend the night in this unfamiliar house.

7

The next morning the newlyweds arrived at the prince's affluent estate. The prince's mother, an old woman, greeted them with an icon, bread, and salt.[17] Anna immediately grew fond of the kindhearted, well-brought-up old princess. She sensed in her affectionate female support for her own future in this house, and she felt at ease.

Anna ran all around the luxurious, splendidly appointed, beautifully furnished old house; she got to know the servants, asked where her bedroom would be, and began unpacking her belongings and arranging her new residence. With her own artistic taste she decorated her room in such a lovely and original way with all the things she had brought and been given by the prince that he himself was struck by its new appearance. There were her childish playthings, books, portraits, sketches, an easel with an unfinished landscape, and vases with multicolored autumn flowers and leaves.

But the young woman now sitting in this elegant room was no longer her old self. Anna was unable to apply herself to anything: neither painting, nor books, nor even strolls through the wonderful gardens and woods of her new abode. She felt crushed, dejected, and unwell.

"Why do I seem to have fallen asleep?" she often asked herself. "I married for love; we used to chat a great deal and so agreeably; but now I'm afraid of him and don't even know what to talk about with him."

The prince noted Anna's condition with a lack of comprehension and a certain amount of irritation; he realized that of everything his depraved imagination had invented when he had dreamt about a honeymoon with his pretty eighteen-year-old bride, nothing had materialized but boredom—boredom, disenchantment, and the tormented state of his young wife. Not once did it ever occur to him that he had to cultivate that aspect of amorous life that he was so accustomed to finding in those hundreds of women of every sort whom he had encountered previously.[18]

He didn't understand that what distressed him so much now was in fact her main attraction and would guarantee his peace of mind with regard to her purity and fidelity in the future. Nor did he understand that the arousal

17. The traditional Russian welcoming ceremony: the icon, of course, is a religious image; bread and salt are symbols of hospitality.

18. "*. . . the spouses must school themselves in vice in order to receive any pleasure from it.*"

of her passion for him alone, even though it might come later, would always continue; that her shyness with her husband would develop into even greater shyness with others and would assure his honor and equanimity forever.

Meanwhile, Anna became more and more accustomed to her situation and grew more attached to her husband. She tried as much as possible to enter into his life and interests and to help him. She walked or rode around the estate with him, read his articles, and corrected any errors; in the evening the prince or Anna would read new books and journals aloud to the old princess in her room.

Sometimes Anna would get into a childish, playful mood, amuse the old princess, run around, jump, and, feeling a need for movement and youthful exuberance, search for some outlet, never finding it in her monotonous surroundings.

The prince was a good landowner and loved his work passionately. Marriage had distracted him for a while from the management of his estate; now, however, he hastened to make up for lost time. Work was going on everywhere. In the forest crowds of peasants were clearing dry places; all day long the sound of axes and the call of voices could be heard in the woods. The digging had all been done; trees and plants were being moved into the greenhouse. In the barn energetic threshing was taking place with a steam-powered machine. The prince himself spent the whole day planting a young forest, which was his favorite occupation. He oversaw the operation, measured the distance between holes, and hurried the day laborers.

"Look, put some sod at the bottom of the hole, like this, turn the dirt over and break it up," he said to one woman. "Wait, not like that," he said to another. "You're burying the roots too deep."

Forty women and girls were planting rows of young trees; the short day was already ending and it was time to release the workers.

Anna, who was waiting at home to have dinner with the prince, grew impatient and went to look for him. From afar he saw her slim figure wrapped in something white, and smiled happily.

"Have you come to fetch me, Anna? I'm sorry that I was late for dinner. We're just finishing. It's time to let the workers go home."

"Can't I help?" she asked, drawing nearer, trying to fathom what work was left to complete.

"Of course, you can. Look, we still have to plant those trees over there by the holes, or else by tomorrow the wind will have damaged them."

"I'll plant them myself," she said.

Anna took off her cloak, hung it up on a branch, tied her white woolen scarf across her chest, tossing back the ends, and began planting the trees.

The prince admired her lovely, agile movements; he sighed happily and crossed to the other side of the field.

Anna moved from hole to hole, working cheerfully and chatting with all the countrywomen with whom she was not yet acquainted. One of them, Arina, came up to Anna, looked her straight in the eye, and said boldly and impudently:

"Well, little Princess, your Excellency, they're no longer hiring me as a day laborer in the master's house. Yesterday Avdotya got to wash the windows, but she's no good at anything. I used to do everything myself. You've got to have the knack."

"I don't know anything about it," replied Anna. "It's not really my doing. The housekeeper, Pelageya Fyodorovna, takes care of all that. Talk to her."

"Such a young girl," continued Arina, folding her arms and scrutinizing Anna who was becoming uncomfortable.

"Go back to work; there's no time to chat," Anna said coldly.

The woman walked away and began planting again. Another one, working next to Anna, approached her and whispered:

"Ugh! What nerve to upset the little princess. She used to be the prince's lover. Now, most likely, she won't be coming around, the rascal."

Everything went dark before Anna's eyes.[19] Her hands dropped heavily, her heart started pounding so loudly that for a moment she thought she was dying. A spasm gripped her throat. "What? Right here, just now, was one of those women he'd made love to? And forever, she'll spend the rest of her life here, next to us, bumping into me, looking at me with that same insolent glance, and everyone will know that I, the prince's wife, was the successor to this Arina! And who'll swear that he won't go back to her?"[20]

All this flashed through Anna's head in a moment. She imagined Arina's rosy face with her dark temples showing under her red kerchief, her insolent brown eyes, and her small, bright, white, widely spaced teeth.

Anna stood up from the ground slowly, took her cape, and moved away from the women. She was reeling; as soon as she turned the corner of the old oak forest, she broke into a run. She wanted to get as far away as she could so that he, her husband, couldn't catch up with her, so that she would never have to see his face again, feel his touch, or hear his voice which at special moments

19. *"I recall her horror, despair, and bewilderment when she learned and understood. I saw that she wanted to leave me then."*

20. Sofiya Andreevna had a similar experience. Just before their marriage Tolstoy had had an extended affair with a peasant woman on his estate. His fiancée discovered this from his diary, which he forced her to read before their wedding.

had probably uttered the very same affectionate words to that Arina that he now said to her.

Her despair was overwhelming, beyond relief: that despair and horror couldn't fail to leave their mark on a very young soul for her entire life; they were the sort of wounds that a young child experiences the first time it sees a decomposing corpse.

With difficulty Anna had just become accustomed to having relations with her husband—and now, suddenly, those relations appeared to her in a new, hideous light. The idea of running away flashed through her head for a moment, to run away, to go home, back to her mother.

"Ah," she sobbed, "Aaahh!" Panting from her run, she yielded to wild despair.

She ran all through the forest and garden, to the pond, and finally sat down in exhaustion on a bench and continued weeping. It was already growing dark. After crying her heart out, until all her strained nerves were worn thin, as only children can cry, she lay down on the bench, folded her white woolen kerchief under her head, closed her swollen eyes, and lay still.

Meanwhile the prince, having finished his work at the other end of the field, went looking for her.

"Where's the princess?" he asked the women.

"She left a while ago," they replied.

"Did something happen?" he asked fearfully.

"She must have gotten tired."

The prince went back to the house hurriedly and anxiously. In the entry, he was met by the waiter, anxiously awaiting the master's return for dinner.

"Has the princess returned?" he asked, sensing that Anna was not yet back home.

"No, sir."

The prince ran back outside; almost at a gallop he returned to the forest next to the field where they were planting.

"Anna, Anna!" he called.

No one answered. The dry, but still firm leaves of age-old oak trees were rustling; the biting, piercing wind blew straight into his face. The prince ran into the garden.

"Anna, where are you? Answer me, for God's sake!" he shouted, now in despair, walking along the narrow road.

She heard his voice, but kept silent. Anna was glad that he was looking for her; she knew that he would come upon her soon, but her grief and agitation

had yet to subside; something alien and horrible had combined in her imagination with the handsome face of her beloved husband.

He finally drew quite close to where she was lying; suddenly catching sight of her, he looked at her closely in astonishment.

"What's wrong with you? Why did you leave?"

Anna was silent.

"Anna, my dearest, what is it?" he asked, now with trepidation.

Instead of replying, Anna burst into sobs once again. Her entire frail body shuddered; she pushed her husband away with her hand and was unable to speak for a long time. At last she said:

"Nothing, it's nothing. Leave me alone! Ah, what torment! Ah, aaahh!" she wept. "I'm dying!"

Anna lay face down on the bench again, sobs rocking her entire childlike body.

"I can guess," said the prince guiltily and gloomily. "Calm down, my dear, I'll do everything I can to reassure you. I can't bear to see you suffering. Anna, must you really do this? I love you more than anything on earth. Poor girl! Say something."

The prince lifted his wife up and wanted to sit her on his lap, but she escaped his arms.

"No, don't, I can't. . . . Go away, please, go away. I'll come soon, honestly, I will," Anna said, wishing only one thing, that he would love her even more and never leave her.

He understood this and stroked her, murmuring the most affectionate words. She wept quietly, listening to him, and gradually calmed down. The prince took her by the arm; asking nothing further, he led her slowly back to the house. She walked submissively along the path strewn with dry leaves, but her entire being was exhausted from the new sensations she had experienced.

The concerned old princess met them in the dining room. She hadn't heard anything, but glancing at Anna, she stroked her head and said softly, "*Pauvre petite!*"[21]

8

From that day forward Anna locked herself in her house and didn't venture out anywhere, even to take a walk. From afar even the sight of a homespun peasant skirt would cause her to shudder. She began seeking amusement

21. The French phrase means "Poor child!"

and finding the meaning of life in that limited, enclosed family milieu into which fate had cast her. She took up her favorite occupation once again—painting. She found two children with whom she created a charming group and painted from her models every morning. So that the children wouldn't be bored while posing, she had toys and sweets brought for them from town, and she herself would tell them stories and play games.

The old princess would sometimes steal quietly into Anna's room, go up to her, kiss her on the forehead, and encourage her to go out for stroll. Sometimes she would sit in an armchair and, smiling, survey Anna's work with approval. The prince took no interest at all in her art, and that grieved her very much. He rarely came into her room and merely pretended to praise her sketches with insincere and hypocritical comments, the way one encourages children. Anna saw that he hardly glanced at them from a distance and really noticed nothing.

Nowadays the prince went about his estate always alone and Anna sometimes waited for him with anxiety. Jealous thoughts entered her head frequently; as a result her relations with her husband became completely unnatural.

One evening, when it had begun to grow very dark and the prince had not returned from the threshing barn, Anna began to worry; then her anxiety started to devise jealous scenes; she thought about Arisha. Unable to wait any longer, she suddenly jumped up, quickly dressed, and ran off to the barn, taking a roundabout way so as not to meet anyone. Everyone had already dispersed; Anna was making her way quietly between the haystacks, listening and looking. But everything was quiet. She grew frightened and went running home. After circling the house, she climbed up on the stone terrace and peered through the illuminated windows of the study. She spied the handsome figure of her husband, who had returned home by another road and was calmly dressing for dinner.

"No, he's still mine!" she thought passionately. Her heart pounded unbearably and she felt ashamed of herself; circling the house, she returned to her own room unnoticed, through the servant's entrance.

"My God! Could I ever have believed that I'd act like this?" she wondered. "My dream was that my husband and I would be united in our first pure love! But now? I've been contaminated by the poison of jealousy and have no salvation."

Anna began to mourn the passing of her ideals and for a long time was unable to calm herself down. She was disconsolate all evening; after she

was left alone in her bedroom to which she had retired early, she felt like praying.

She took off her silk caftan, tossed it onto a chair and, remembering that her husband might come in at any moment, she hastened to kneel in prayer. She asked God for serenity of her soul and the courage to meet all kinds of adversity in life; she also asked Him to forgive her sins. Tears of emotional tenderness and compassion for herself flowed from her eyes. Her bare shoulders shivered, and she didn't see or hear the prince enter the room. At first he didn't realize she was praying; going up to her, he pressed his lips passionately to her bare shoulders.

Anna shuddered, grabbed her peignoir from the chair, quickly wrapped herself up in it, and sat down on the bed. Tears were still in her eyes. "Once again it's only that: it all leads to the same thing," the idea flashed dimly through her mind. But she didn't allow herself to dwell on this thought and immediately found a justification for her husband. "He didn't notice that I was praying; he loves me so much! It's a sign of his love," and so forth.

The next morning her models, the children, came again, but Anna didn't feel like painting. The bright sun was shining through the window; the first snow had fallen that night and she ran into the garden along with the children, rustling in the leaves mixed with frosty snow along the paths. She felt at ease, cheerful; she felt like a child with these children, carefree, pure, and beautiful, just like nature that surrounded her. For a minute she wanted to become just as she had been before: to forget her jealous worries, this latest episode of her husband's vulgar and fervent passion for her, and his indifferent attitude toward her afterward. She was lost in those reflections, even though that eternal, insoluble, and tormenting question continued stirring in her soul: "Why is he so tender today? Why does he see only the good in me, but tomorrow, after his importunate caresses, I'll suddenly be at fault for everything? He'll complain peevishly and wound me by saying something especially painful. How can I understand where I'm at fault? He's so clever, good, educated. . . . And I? Ah, I'm so undeveloped!"

Having run around to her heart's content, Anna was getting ready to go home, when her husband, cheerful, radiant, and elegant, appeared at the end of the lane. Anna was delighted to see him and ran to meet him.

"Where are you coming from?" she asked.

"I was at our neighbor's house; we talked about the factory we want to build together."

"Factory? What factory?"

"A distillery. It's very profitable."

"What? You want to make vodka?"

"Yes, indeed. Why are you so foolishly surprised?" asked the prince with the familiar tone of irritation he had adopted when speaking with his wife after the passionate episodes in his love for her.

"No, I'm not foolishly surprised; I simply don't understand how you can produce the one thing that so harms the common people."

"How many times have I asked you not to interfere in my business affairs," said the prince, hastening his step and moving away from his wife.

"Ah, excuse me, please. Don't hurry on ahead; let's walk together!"

Anna's lips were trembling and her eyes filled with tears. The prince looked at her in astonishment and noticed that she had grown less attractive lately.

"Are you feeling out of sorts today?" the prince asked.

"Me?" Anna replied with surprise, recalling her especially cheerful mood that morning.[22] She also remembered her husband's docile tenderness the previous evening and replied to him with a silent, puzzled look. She wondered, and it seemed strange to her, that this man whom she loved and whom she was prepared to help and support in any way, how this man could engage in the production of vodka for the intoxication of the common people! How on earth could she support that?[23] "And why is he so angry with me? What have I done?"

They didn't talk any more. A young countrywoman went past with healthy, brisk steps, gaily greeting the master and mistress, swinging her wide homespun skirt first to one side, then to the other, and disappeared from view. Anna shuddered. The prince followed the woman with his eyes; noticing his wife's curious and discontented glance, he smiled weakly and said guiltily:

"I can't get rid of the old habit of looking at every young woman from a man's point of view. It's only because of you that I'm becoming better and better."

"He even confesses this!" she thought in horror; flaring up in anger, she said:

"What? You can see a woman in that woman? Ugh, it's as if you had no other interests on earth."

"I tell you how things used to be; but all that's passed now."

22. "*. . . but it wasn't really a quarrel; it was merely the result of the cessation of sensuality revealing our true relationship to one another.*"

23. Tolstoy wrote a passionate treatise against the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other stimulants, "Why Do Men Stupefy Themselves?" (1890) and a peasant play on this theme, *The First Distiller* (1886).

"I don't believe it, I don't!"

"What's this, Anna? What a nasty character you have! It's unbearable!"

"Perhaps. But I hate salaciousness and immorality; I love purity, while you love the opposite."

"You have no right to say that."

"I do: I'm your wife."

"Ah, my God! This is awful!" exclaimed the prince. "Awful!"

"It's not awful for you, but it is for me . . ."

Their first quarrel continued for rather a long time and was very painful. The couple didn't see each other all evening. Anna went to bed and the prince didn't come to her room. She found these relations with her husband appalling and heartrending; besides, the maddening passion of jealousy at the possibility of the prince's betrayal once again overwhelmed her. She lay there, her eyes wide open, trying to ascertain whether her husband would come to her. But he didn't. Gradually the jealousy faded and she wanted to remain simply, unquestioningly friendly with him, so there would be no further rifts to diminish their happiness. She jumped out of bed, threw on her dressing gown, put on her shoes, and ran into her husband's study.

The prince was sitting on the sofa, gazing ahead silently and severely. When the door opened and he first saw Anna, his face assumed a malicious expression. She hesitated for a moment in indecision and was about to leave, but she found it so hard to be in her husband's bad graces, that she decided to try to reconcile with him.

"Why haven't you come to bed?" she asked.

"Is it really possible to sleep? My heart's still pounding from all these scenes! You'll make me have a heart attack . . ."

Anna frowned, but managed to control herself.

"I'm very sorry I upset you. Please, don't be angry."

She went up to him and sat down next to him on the sofa. He looked at her with bewilderment, but with greater affection. That heartened her and she took him by the hand and smiled. The prince drew her to him and kissed her.

When Anna realized that the reconciliation was proceeding in a different way than the one she had been hoping for, that there would be no communion of their souls, pure and genuine, but that it would be a reconciliation of kisses, she was overcome by horror and despair.[24]

24. ". . . *but sometimes . . . oh! It's vile to recall even now—after the cruelest words exchanged, all of a sudden—the silent glances, smiles, kisses . . .*"

"Ah, my dear, don't kiss me, please! I'm numb as far as *that's* concerned; after such spiritual pain, I can't be reconciled like *that*. I beg you to leave me alone and forgive me . . ."[25]

She freed herself from the prince's embrace, jumped up, opened the door, and ran out. The prince listened for a long time to the sound of the retreating footsteps of her swift and agile gait.

"What a strange and incomprehensible woman!" thought the prince. "And how plain she's becoming; one of her side teeth has already begun to turn yellow."

With each passing day Anna faded a little more. The old princess said that her eyes had turned inside, that "*la pauvre petite est souffrante*."[26] As a matter of fact, Anna's first pregnancy was very difficult for her. For the most part she lay ill in the old princess's room and felt oppressed, sick, and weak. The thought of her future child did little to cheer her up because she was so overcome by agonizing apathy.

The prince, who at first had spent almost all his time at home, now returned to his previous habit of constantly riding off into town, to neighbors, or on a hunt. Obviously he was bored and feeling burdened by his wife's condition.

Days followed one after another, as did winter and spring; summer was beginning. Anna never forgot this period in her life. Everything was beyond the strength of her young, undeveloped character: neither physically nor morally was she prepared for the difficult position of an expectant mother or for total loneliness. Demoralized by her constant state of ill health and her husband's indifference, she became impatient and irritable. If the prince was late returning, Anna was overcome by despair; she wept to the point of hysteria and reproached him for tormenting her. The thing that constituted her power over her husband—her physical beauty—had faded temporarily; since he, apparently, required nothing else from her, this too drove her to a state of impotent desperation. For his part, the prince felt oppressed by her erratic, excruciating moods; as a well-bred and self-possessed man, he was gentle with his wife, but the pretense and remoteness of his gentleness was obvious.

The presence of her mother and sister would have been a great consolation to Anna at this time! But they had gone abroad for a while after Misha's

25. ". . . *but in practice, love is something despicable, swinish . . .*"

26. The French sentence means "The poor child is suffering."

recovery from pneumonia, since he had been forbidden to spend the winter in Russia.

It was a hot July day. The gathering of the grain harvest was well under way in the fields; the yield was abundant, and the prince, who was bored at home, but was unable to leave his wife's side because she was expected to give birth soon, was busy with various domestic pursuits.

He spent whole days in the field or in the threshing barn; now, when the grain was being carted, he was present as the haystacks were being unloaded. He walked around the barn, thinking about his wife—so pale, thin, and disfigured, with her large, somber, dark eyes that often looked at him full of questions or reproaches; he couldn't help comparing her to the young, healthy country woman—ruddy and cheerful, standing in the cart that had just passed by. He knew that two weeks ago that woman had also given birth to a child; that the child had died, and that she, without shedding a tear, without any attack of nerves, regarded that event very simply; now she had cheerfully merged with nature and was back at work next to her young husband.

"And what about us?" wondered the prince. He frowned and lit a cigar. "Yes, I forbid them to smoke in the barn," he thought and turned down the path into the woods. From behind he heard hurried steps trying to catch up with him. He turned around to look.

"Please come now, the princess is unwell," said the maid, short of breath, and turned at once to return to the house. She knew that the prince would understand what was really happening. He thought for a moment, like a person who has to undergo an operation and who thinks, "Isn't it possible that it might not happen?" But gathering his strength, and feeling that there was nowhere else to go and that escape was impossible, the prince hastened his step and returned home.

The house was already in a commotion. Beds were being rearranged, something was being carried out, and an elegant baby carriage was brought in with a bed curtain of white muslin. A strange lady who had so irritated the prince of late by her presence, young and well dressed, but now with her sleeves rolled up and wearing a white apron, was giving orders. The housekeeper Pelegeya Fyodorovna was bustling about most of all. The old princess was worrying in silence; she kept going in to Anna, making the sign of the cross over her, and kissing her forehead. Anna herself, unaware of everything around her, was sitting in an armchair at the window, waiting for her husband, and harkening to what was transpiring inside her. Her flushed face was solemn and serious; wisps of wayward hair surrounded her face and, lit by a golden hue, curled on

her forehead and her temples; her large dark eyes looked without seeing, full of anxiety and fear.

When the prince entered, Anna rushed to meet him.

"You know it'll be soon, perhaps today. How strange and joyful it all is; *my* own child! What happiness! I'll endure it all; I feel very brave . . ."

She hastened to speak, but moaned again: "There it is, once again . . ."

She squeezed the prince's hand, her face distorted; she couldn't see anything, and her suffering became worse and worse. A few seconds later her face resumed its previous serene expression.

"It's passed," she said with a sigh.

"It's time to lie down, Princess," said the lady with the apron, whose presence had so unpleasantly grated upon the prince.

"You're not leaving? For God's sake, darling, stay with me," Anna implored her husband.

"Of course, I'm not leaving," said the prince. "Calm down. You're so agitated, my dearest," he added politely, pushing back the hair that was stuck to her temples.

Anna pressed her husband's hand to her warm cheek and thought with joy that perhaps the child she was expecting would draw her husband closer and eliminate the distance that had so tormented her of late.

Gradually Anna lost all ability to think or feel anything. The suffering became intolerable. It went on for a day and a night, and there was no end in sight. The doctor had been sent for from town some time ago; everyone was terribly worn out; the old princess lit votive candles in front of all the icons and prayed tearfully in her own room. The prince kept running out of his wife's room and throwing himself onto the sofa in the drawing room in exhaustion, feeling that his tiredness had driven him to the end of his rope.

Anna's terrible, savage cries hounded him everywhere. He couldn't get far enough away from her; she refused to release him for anything on earth; yet it was unbearable for him to be near her.

The second bright summer night arrived: after something savage and terrible in the confusion and in an effort of utmost exertion, there occurred the event for which everyone was waiting with such impatience. From Anna's room first came the sound of the inhuman, horrifying shriek of childbirth; afterward, as if unexpected and from another world, the unfamiliar, but somehow always delightful cry of the infant, this mysterious being from an unknown realm.

The prince sobbed and leaned over his wife. She crossed herself and said: "Praise be to Thee, O Lord!" She looked at her husband, extended her fore-

head to him, which he kissed, then let her head sink back onto the pillow in exhaustion.

When they handed Anna her washed and diapered son, she gazed for a long time at his wrinkled reddish little face, and bending over, kissed him. She didn't experience the joy she had expected, but it was something much more significant. It was pure happiness, the purpose of life, its true meaning; it was a justification of her love for her husband; it was her future responsibility; this would not be a plaything, as had seemed to her earlier, but once again a source of suffering and work.

Taking the child in her arms, Anna felt that she would be unwaveringly faithful to the obligations of motherhood, just as she had promised the prince when he proposed to her, that she would be faithful to the obligations of a wife.

When the prince looked at his son for the first time, he winced. He turned away squeamishly and said:

"Well, this is outside our sphere. When he grows up, it'll be different."

That was painful for Anna to hear. In no way had she expected such an attitude from a father toward his first son. "Is it really possible that he won't love him?" she wondered in horror, recalling her recent hopes that the child might eliminate the distance between them and reunite her with her husband through their love for him. She sighed and shed a tear.

PART II

I

Ten years passed. Anna continued living as before with her family in the country. The only change in her life was that the old princess had died three years ago, leaving only the very best memories in Anna's soul: she mourned her passing profoundly.

Anna herself had changed a great deal. From a slender girl she had developed into a strikingly beautiful, healthy, and energetic woman. Always confident, active, and surrounded by four charming, healthy children, she seemed happy and completely satisfied with her life. The prince had grown slightly gray, but remained the same elegant, handsome, well-mannered man and, apparently, still treated his wife well. But in the spiritual depths of these two spouses, also reflected in their external life, there was no longer anything much in common. The prince's love, which had led to his marriage, couldn't endure very long. It wasn't of that nature. He was a successful man; he needed a variety of sensations; that's what he had grown accustomed to. He found quiet family life in the country simply boring, and Anna felt that he was not to

blame for that. But his boredom frightened her. She loved her husband and was jealous, afraid of losing the love that he had yet to withdraw thanks to her beauty, cheerful character, and flourishing health. Anna felt that this love was not the kind she desired; she suffered frequently from that fact. To fill that empty place in her heart, she dedicated herself passionately to her children and their care. Her husband related to the children coolly; it was hard for Anna to get used to his indifference concerning that, which constituted the center of her life, both internal and external.[27] She had to endure everything alone: illnesses, doubts about her children's qualities and flaws, decisions regarding their treatment, upbringing, nurses, and governesses. She had to provide lessons herself; she considered it essential to spend more time with them so she could get to know them better. In conversations about the children's successes, character, and illnesses, the prince either remained silent or pretended to smile, replying as usual with his gentle, polite phrases, such as, he was very glad his son was such a good student, or he was sorry that little Yusha had been born weaker than the others, or that Manya looked so very sweet in her new fur coat. This Manya, an eight-year-old little girl, was the prince's favorite: she was very pretty and spoke French fluently, having acquired a genuine Parisian accent from her governess, and this amused him.

The prince's life hadn't changed much at all: he continued to manage the estate, go hunting, and write articles. But Anna noticed that he related to everything with languor and without energy. He was bored, unbearably bored. Family life oppressed him. No matter how much she tried to find amusements for her husband, no matter how often she accompanied him on visits to the neighbors, or rides into town, to the local elections, or to meetings of the zemstvo, and the like—none of these diversions lasted for very long.[28] Besides, the children distracted her so much; she was always busy with them, nursing one, pregnant with another, or giving lessons to a third. In the midst of her household chores and domestic affairs, Anna rarely found time simply to go for a stroll or a ride with her husband.

As always happens in such situations, people invent some need to change their circumstances to disguise their true feelings.[29] The prince began saying that he wished to collect all his articles scattered about in various periodicals and publish them in one volume. This project would require his presence in

27. *"Children are a torment and nothing more."*

28. The zemstvo was an elected district council, organ of rural self-government in the Russian Empire established in 1864 to provide social and economic services.

29. *"Just when the parents' life with each other becomes unbearable, it's necessary to provide the children with a city setting for their education. So the need arises to move to the city."*

town; he proposed to Anna that they spend several months in Moscow. She agreed immediately, seeing it as the only way to distract him. Of late she had noticed that he had begun to seek out and enjoy the society of young women. He began to take greater interest in his looks and became more concerned about his hair that was once so attractive and curly; now it was turning gray and growing thin. She was afraid that their home's external appearance of domestic propriety would be damaged; she decided to fight energetically to preserve it—primarily so as not to spoil the family status of her children.

It was decided that they would go to Moscow at the end of October. The prince said that he first wanted to go hunting for a while in a distant field, and then would turn his attention to his book.

On the first of September the prince's modest but splendid hunt was being organized in the courtyard. The children accompanied their father, admiring the horses and especially the dogs. Manya shoved a lump of sugar into Nochka's mouth, a handsome, lean English borzoi. Drakon, a piebald dog, brown as if marbled, strained on his leash and whined with impatience. White Milka was off leash and free to run, waiting for the prince.

At last the prince emerged, bade farewell to Anna and the children, mounted his own Kabardinian, and, saying that he would return in no sooner than three days, galloped quickly away from the porch.[30]

He rode across fields leading to the distant estate of some acquaintances; Anna knew that among the hunters there would be a neighbor lady who had lately been flirting aggressively with the prince. She was much talked about; it was even said that before his marriage he had been in love with her. All of this greatly disturbed Anna; she would have gone on the hunt with the prince herself, but was still nursing little Yusha; real life, serious life asserted its rights, and Anna dismissed these foolish thoughts, directing herself instead to the children's world, full of concerns, pursuits, and love.

Just after escorting her husband, she summoned her children to begin their lessons. Manya and her elder brother, the handsome Pavlik, were in the garden. They brought in a basket full of acorns and energetically recounted how they had found some baby squirrels in a hollow of a tree trunk. But looking at their mother, they were struck by her sad appearance and dutifully prepared their books and notebooks. The lesson lasted an hour; Anna still hadn't finished correcting their notebooks when the nanny's assistant came in to call her to the nursery to feed the baby.

30. The Kabardinian were one of the old saddle and packhorse breeds first produced in the mountains of the northern Caucasus by the Kabardin people.

The children, left alone, began running around the table. Anna went off to the nursery and, passing by the large mirror in the drawing room, glanced at herself. "Oh, my God, what do I look like? This baggy old jacket and my disheveled hair! I have to think more seriously about my apparel and order something nicer from Moscow! Yesterday my husband said so disdainfully that I was paying too little attention to myself and was 'letting myself go.' For what reason should I dress up here? It's tedious and I have no time. But apparently, I need to!" she thought, sighing.

The baby's impatient cry was already audible from the nursery. Anna hastened her step and began unbuttoning her jacket.

"Well, well, little one, you're all worked up. . . . I'm coming, I'm coming," she said, taking the child from the nanny's arms. The child fell silent and soon the even sounds of impatient sucking and the hurried swallowing of ample milk could be heard. Anna gazed around the nursery silently and languidly, this familiar, serene refuge, where all her children had grown up and where she had experienced so many joys and worries; here, sitting with a child in her arms, she had often wept, thinking about how unexpectedly indifferent her husband was toward their children.

She also recalled those nights when, having spent several hours in a row in the nursery, ministering to a sick child, exhausted, she had returned to her bedroom to rest, and how her husband, without even noticing her fatigue and chagrin, opened his arms to her to embrace her and, like a beast, demanded her passionate response to his advances; worn out both physically and morally, offended by his indifference, she wept unnoticed by her husband, yet yielded to him, afraid of losing the love of the man to whom she had pledged her life once and for all.

"Does a woman's calling really consist only in this," Anna wondered, "to go from serving the physical needs of a nursing infant to meeting those of a husband? Taking turns—always! But where is *my* life? Where am I? That genuine self which at one time aspired to the sublime, to serve God and my ideals?"[31]

"I'm tired and worn out, languishing. I have no life of my *own*—neither earthly, nor spiritual. But God has given me everything: health, strength, ability . . . even happiness. Then why am I so unhappy?"

Anna raised the tiny closed fist of her sleeping infant to her lips and kissed it. The startled child began to search for the breast with his little mouth, but

31. *"It's that the woman, contrary to her nature, must at the very same time be pregnant, and nursing, and a lover."*

Anna stood up, rocked the child gently in her arms, placed him back in his bed, and went in to see her older children. They were both sitting under the desk; having tossed all the papers out of the wastebasket onto the floor, they were looking for envelopes and tearing off the stamps.

"I'm making a collection of only foreign stamps," said Pavlik.

"I have an Egyptian stamp: papá gave it to me."[32]

"What's this? What a mess you've made here!" Anna said as she entered. "Have you reread what you've written?"

"Not yet."

"Then what are you doing? You still have to practice your music. Clean this up quickly."

The children made haste. The sound of a thump was heard in the hall, followed by a child's terrible howl. Anna ran out into the hall. The five-year-old Anya was in the arms of the English governess and crying desperately.

"Where does it hurt?" asked Anna.

"It's nothing," replied the governess in English.

Anna grabbed the little girl and went to fetch a cold compress to apply to the bump on her forehead that was turning red and quickly swelling. When she came back to the other children, they had already left; Manya was diligently practicing her scales in the corner room.

"Ah, she's not playing the flat!" Anna cried and went to correct Manya's error.

Then the maid came in and asked how to sew the little anchors onto Pavlik's sailor suit. Anna carefully pinned the anchors on, showed the maid where her mistake was; after sending her away, she sat down next to the window to read an old book taken from the library: Lamartine's *Méditations*.[33] Gradually she forgot about everything that had occupied her in the preceding moments and delighted in the elegant Frenchman's subtle poetry. But her enjoyable rest didn't last long.

"The teacher's arrived," announced the lackey.

"Ask her in," Anna replied wearily.

The schoolteacher entered, a quiet, agreeable girl with a surprisingly nice-looking, childlike face.

"Have you come about the books, Lidia Vasilievna? Have you made a list? Thank you. I'll order them at once."

32. When characters use the French "papá" or "mamá," it has been retained in the translation.

33. Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869), French poet, statesman, and historian, best known for his first volume of lyrical poems, *Méditations poétiques* (Poetic meditations, 1820).

"Here's the section for reading, and here's the one for instruction. I think, Princess, that I'll read these books to them myself, since I'll have to explain them as I'm reading. It's good that you've purchased a globe and some relief maps. They're very interested in those, and our geography lessons are going well."

"Well, then, I'm very glad."

"After you leave for Moscow, Princess, who will I have to turn to?"

Anna invited the teacher to stay for dinner, and by five o'clock the children, as well as the governesses and the steward, were gradually gathering in the dining room. Anna conversed amicably with all of them. The steward, much like the teacher, voiced his regrets that the entire family was about to leave for town; he had talked to the princess about the peasants' situation for the current year. Anna was not fond of business matters, but followed with interest his general account of the economic situation in the region and the condition of the common people.

When her busy day had finally ended and she remained alone in her own room, she felt depressed and lonely. "Well, even though I'm married, I have no soul mate. Even as a husband and lover he's drawing away from me. Why? What have I done?"

Anna approached the mirror and slowly began undressing. After taking off her dress and baring her lovely arms and neck, she glanced attentively at herself in the mirror. Then she lowered her cheek onto her shoulder and looked at her unusually beautiful breasts, so full of milk, and she sank into thought.

"Yes, *this* is what he needs . . ."

She recalled her husband's passionate kisses; turning away, she resolved that if her power resided in her beauty, then she knew how to use it. Having shattered at once all her ideals of chastity, having relegated to lesser importance her ideas of spiritual communion with her beloved, she resolved that not only would her husband never leave her, but that he would have to become her slave.[34]

She loosened her dark golden hair, curling on her temples and the nape of her neck, lifted it up, turned her head, and examined her own face for a long time. Then from the armchair she picked up a cloak trimmed with feathers that she had dropped there and held it up to her breast. The contrast of the whiteness of her breast and the dark feathers was striking.[35]

34. *"Therefore a woman's main task is to know how to captivate him."*

35. *"Her body is an instrument of enjoyment. And she knows this."*

Anna remembered the lady who at the present moment was out hunting with her husband, and her customary feeling of jealousy arose with unbearable pain.

From the nursery she heard a child's cry. Anna tossed aside the cloak, gathered her hair, threw her lovely Persian dressing gown over her shoulders, and ran into the nursery.

Taking the child in her arms, she pressed her lips warmly to his cheek; without thinking about what she was doing, she whispered passionately: "Forgive me, my little one, forgive me!"

2

About two days after the prince's departure Anna went for a walk with the children; along the road to town she saw a carriage heading toward her.

"Who could that be?" she wondered. The carriage came closer and drew even with her; the children became excited, started shouting, and admired the sound of the carriage bells.

When Anna peered inside the carriage, she saw a man's unfamiliar face; at her glance, he greeted her in a very polite, but formal way.

"I don't know who this could be," she thought.

The carriage climbed the hill, went down, then up again along a broad regular alley of old birch trees, and finally drove directly up to their house at a rapid pace.

The man got out and asked the servant who met him whether the prince was at home. He was very embarrassed when he found out that the prince was not expected until the next day; he paused in thought in the front hall. At that moment the entire noisy family returned from their walk and was approaching the house. Anna hurried to enter first and asked the stranger with whom she had the pleasure of speaking.

The embarrassed guest hesitated a few seconds, and replied with a barely noticeable foreign accent:

"I'm very embarrassed, Princess, that I so unexpectedly burst into your house; I'm an old friend of your husband. My name is Dmitry Bekhmetev. I haven't seen my good friend in some twelve years and I'm very sorry not to find him at home."

"So, you're Dmitry Alekseevich Bekhmetev? I've heard so much about you! I feel as if we've been acquainted a very long time. Come in, please, come in. My husband will be back tomorrow; today you can be bored together with us."

"I'd be glad to, Princess, if I won't bore you," said Bekhmetev in a very unnatural voice that Anna didn't like at all.

"He seems so artificial," she thought.

Entering her own room, Anna changed her dress, carefully straightened her hair, and went to join her guest in the drawing room, surprising him with her budding beauty and her particularly lithe step. He also noticed her small head, thrown somewhat back and framed by the dark trim of her mantilla, the light pink color of her face flushed from the fresh air, and her splendid, large dark eyes regarding him so affably and attentively.

"So that's the kind of wife my friend has," he thought with a slight feeling of envy.

Soon Anna found out from her conversation with Bekhmetev that for reasons of ill health he had been compelled soon after his own marriage to go abroad in search of a milder climate. He had been living with his wife in Algiers, but she grew bored there and moved to Paris. They didn't have any children, but he had grown to miss Russia and his relatives, and had decided to return to his homeland for an unspecified period. From his hints Anna understood very well that there was some discord with his wife, and she refrained from asking him any further questions about it.

Now Bekhmetev was intending to settle in the country with his sister, Varvara Alekseevna, whom he hadn't seen for more than ten years. His sister, now a middle-aged widow, had an estate about twelve versts from the prince's, and Anna used to visit her on occasion. She was a well-educated woman of subtle intellect, who had lost both her husband and her child in her youth and since then had devoted her whole life to the well-being of peasant children. She had educated almost three generations in her own model school; she had built a library, a children's hospital, and a shelter. She couldn't stand seeing any child sick, cold, or hungry; besides children, nothing else in the world mattered to her or interested her. In appearance she was stern, cold, and aloof.

Anna insisted that Bekhmetev stay for dinner. But dinner that day was stressful. The governesses, the steward, and the children all felt awkward in the presence of the new guest. Manya and Pavlik came down with a bad case of the giggles and were even threatened with having to skip dessert.

After dinner Anna invited Bekhmetev into the drawing room but didn't neglect her custom of gathering the children around her and playing with them before they went to bed. They brought in several albums, illustrated books, games, and work. Each became busy with his or her own pursuits. Manya was meticulously knitting a scarf for the old gardener; the little girl

was busy with her alphabet blocks looking for familiar letters; Pavlik sat down to draw. Anna also picked up an album and began sketching a likeness of the English governess who was sitting in the room with them.

Bekhmetev called Pavlik over and seating him alongside, began to draw in his book, telling him about Algiers and the dark-skinned people who wore large turbans; as he proceeded, he illustrated his tales in the album: Pavlik was thrilled. He seized the book and ran to show the drawings to his mother.

"Look, mamá, how Dmitry Alekseevich draws!"

"So you're an artist?" asked Anna, recognizing the technique of a skilled and experienced master.

"Yes, Princess, if you can call a man that who's spent his whole life painting, but who's yet to produce a single genuine work of art."

"At one time that was also my dream—to be an artist; but you see where my time and strength go these days."

She motioned with her hand around the table, indicating her children.

"Mamá knows how to draw, too," Manya cried. Taking hold of Dmitry Alekseevich's sleeve, she dragged him over to look at the landscape hanging on the wall.

Bekhmetev began to praise the painting in very sophisticated terms.

"He's behaving in an affected manner again," Anna thought.

"Why do you have such an accent? You sound like a foreigner," she observed.

"I spent my childhood in England, and then lived abroad for a long time. Is it really so noticeable?"

"I could even take you for a foreigner."

After the children had gone to bed and the others had dispersed, Bekhmetev was preparing to take his leave, but Anna insisted that he stay over until the following day, since the prince had promised to return home around noon.

In the morning Bekhmetev remained for a long time in the wing where he had spent the night, and Anna understood his tact. But the prince didn't return as promised, and as soon as it started to grow dark, Anna began to become agitated and planned to go meet her husband. She invited Bekhmetev to accompany her; first she went to nurse her child and then she got dressed.

Although worried, she paid careful attention to her apparel; she knew how much her external appearance mattered to her husband, especially in the presence of outsiders. Besides, the thought of that attractive, audacious lady who had gone on the hunt oppressed her and tormented her distraught imagination.

Two fine English saddle horses were brought around. Anna and Bekhmetev mounted and rode in silence along the lane up to the large road. The conversation that both of them tried to initiate simply didn't go well. Anna was too worried about her husband, and Bekhmetev realized that.

It was now completely dark. Anna was already intending to return home, fearing that her nursing child would soon begin fussing without her, when suddenly the clatter of horses' hooves, voices, and laughter could be heard.

Anna and Bekhmetev rode along the edge of the forest; a large party, headed by the prince and the lovely lady, was coming down the middle of the large road. Anna clearly heard the lady's laughter and then her words:

"*Non, jamais je ne me dèciderai d'entrer à cette heure et dans ce costume chez vous.*"[36]

"*Vous voulez mon dèsespoir!*"[37] the prince replied, half joking, but with real feeling.

"*Et que penserait votre vertueuse femme?*"[38]

Anna called loudly to the prince. He wasn't expecting to meet his wife there and was annoyed.

"I was so worried about you, my dear; you promised to be home this morning," Anna began.

"Who are you with?" asked the prince, glancing at his wife's escort who was riding toward him.

"It's your old friend, Dmitry Alekseevich. He arrived yesterday."

"Dmitry! Where from? What a surprise!"

"Direct from Algiers. I'm so glad to see you! And with a family, so happy . . ."

"Well, wait, this is all so unexpected; I'm delighted to see you, but first I must make my excuses to the party."

The prince turned his horse around and rode up to the other hunters; addressing a few polite words to them, and tossing off some elegant pleasantries to the lady, and saying his goodbyes, he went to catch up with his wife and his old friend.

Drawing even with his wife, he rode a few steps alongside her, then whispered spitefully:

"I'm very glad to see Dmitry, but it's most improper for you to be out riding around at night in a tête-à-tête with a man you've just met."

36. "No, I would never dare appear in your house at this hour and in these clothes."
37. "You cause me to despair."
38. "And what would your virtuous wife think?"

He turned to look at Bekhmetev, who was unable to cope with his horse that had veered to one side.

"And do you think it's proper to invite as guests, without your wife's permission, ladies who can't even be admitted to our house?"

Anna bit her lips and fell silent. Tears filled her eyes; she had been waiting in such agitation all day, worrying about him, and this was their meeting! In spite of the darkness and dampness, she struck her horse with her whip and galloped away from her husband. The prince and Bekhmetev galloped after her, calling loudly for her to stop.

"Anna, slow down! The horse will trip. Don't be insane!" the prince shouted after her in despair.

But Anna didn't heed anyone or anything. Arriving home, she hurried into the nursery and didn't emerge from her room all evening.

3

The prince spent the whole next day at home with his old friend, showing him the estate and recalling old times, those youthful years when they had become friends and lived the same kind of life. Bekhmetev left toward evening, and the prince, after bidding a cold farewell to his wife, went to catch up with the hunt. They had sent word to him that the whole group, hunters and dogs, would be spending the night at a neighbor's house, an old bachelor landowner, and they would expect him there.

Bekhmetev came back two days later. The prince was still away on the hunt, while Anna, in low spirits, was home alone.

She was very pleased to see her guest; she blushed and was somewhat surprised that she found Bekhmetev's presence so pleasant.

"Excuse me, Princess, for coming to see you again. Your cheerful family nook attracts a lonely man like me."

"We're very glad to see you, Dmitry Alekseevich," said Anna, "but we're occupied with things that must be so uninteresting for you."

"Very interesting," Pavlik intervened. "Look how splendid. Mama, show him."

Anna opened the album in which an impressive variety of dried flowers was beautifully arranged. There were bouquets, wreaths, and figures of the most unusual shapes and combinations.

"Incredibly lovely! It's obvious that you're an artist, Princess. Well, Pavlik, let's you and I make something amazing."

Everyone began working again, and the evening passed quickly and merrily.

When the children went off to bed, Bekhmetev picked up a book from the table and was surprised to see that Anna was reading such a classic author, Lamartine.

"Princess, why exactly did you decide to read his work?"

"By chance. I'd never read him before, and now I'm taking great pleasure in it. If you don't mind, read some aloud to me."

"Gladly, Princess. I've forgotten him altogether."

Anna took up her work and sat down next to a lamp, experiencing a strange feeling of happiness and serenity. She really didn't appreciate loneliness! On occasion she glanced up at the lean, earnest, beleaguered face of her guest, at the tightly stretched skin on his high forehead, and the sparse black hair on his temples, and she thought:

"No, he's not putting on airs, as it seemed to me earlier. He's unhappy and must be a very fine man."

Bekhmetev read: "*La nuit est le livre mysterieux des contemplations des amants et des poètes. Eux seuls savent y lire, eux seuls en ont la clev. Cette clev—c'est l'infini.*"[39]

"That's just where I stopped. It's in the commentary. I like it very much."

"And the relationship of night to the infinite, to *l'infini*—is astonishingly poetic. If one doesn't believe in this *l'infini,* it's terrifying to die."

"Why did you mention death?" Anna asked, and was surprised that her heart felt a sudden pang.

"Because for the last twelve years I've had to endure its threat, forced to live in foreign countries where it's warm; but now I've decided not to go anywhere else, to stay here, in Russia, in the country."

"We're going to Moscow for the winter. My husband wants to publish his articles."

"I've heard that, Princess, and I very much regret that this winter, when I'll be living here in your neighborhood, you'll be away in town. I'm always unlucky in all regards. Have you spent the entire year here before?"

"Yes, many years; in fact, even now I don't especially feel like going to Moscow. But it's time for supper; you had dinner early, and I won't let you go home without eating."

Anna rang for the servants and ordered that supper be served.

It was cozy in the dining room, bright and pleasant, as it was throughout the house. Anna sat at a small table with Bekhmetev, on which vases of flow-

39. "Night is the mysterious book of meditations for lovers and poets. Only they know how to read it, only they possess the key to it. This key is the infinite."

ers were placed alongside a cold supper. They chatted about what they had just read; Bekhmetev's carriage stood next to the porch and its bells were jingling.

The sound of an approaching carriage could be heard: one bell interrupted the other and someone entered the house. Anna and her conversation partner paid no attention to all these sounds and didn't even notice the prince enter the room. Anna was startled, jumped up, and asked:

"What happened?"

"Nothing, I simply reconsidered whether to continue the hunt," he said. "Hello, Dmitry, and good night. Excuse me, but I'm exhausted," he added, glancing unkindly at his wife and extending his fingertips to his friend.

"Aren't you going to have some supper?" Anna asked.

"No, I'm falling off my feet."

The prince left, and Bekhmetev, saying farewell to Anna, departed.

She ran in to her husband, seeing that he was upset. He was sitting on the sofa in his study, smoking. Suspecting the truth and knowing her husband's jealous nature, Anna sat down next to him and, in an unnatural voice, began inquiring what had made him come home so early.

"What made me return was that I knew you'd arrange this tête-à-tête. You still don't understand how inappropriate this is?"

"I didn't invite him, but I couldn't send him away."

"You didn't have to flirt with him. Don't you think I could see?"

"Flirt? Me? Enough of that, my dear. Aren't you ashamed to say that? If you only knew how bored I am without you, how glad I am that you've come back. Let's not quarrel, please!"

"She's certainly feeling guilty," the prince decided.

"Why did you look so startled when I came in?" asked the prince. "What was he saying to you?" He was becoming more and more agitated.

"I really don't remember," said Anna, fearing her husband's tone. She looked at his annoyed face: it was now distorted in anger. "We were reading Lamartine, and talking about his work . . ."

"No doubt taken with poetic feelings," said the prince ironically. "I don't believe a word of it. You won't tell me what you were doing or what you were talking about," shouted the prince.

He grabbed his wife's arm and squeezed it hard, just as the nanny suddenly knocked at the door and summoned Anna into the nursery.

Agitated and offended, she tore her arm away and ran to her infant. The child was screaming in impatience.

"These men: they are such egotists," she thought angrily. He's tormented by jealousy, while I sit here all alone and bored; now the baby will gulp down

my soured milk and won't sleep a wink! And again it's me who'll have to pay the price!"[40]

Anna couldn't calm down. A feeling of irritation, contempt for the man whom she had tried so hard to love and with whom she had bound her life, failed to subside in any way.

"He doesn't need anyone or anything: neither the children, nor me. He's not interested in our lives in the least. He wants me only as an object, so that his vanity won't be offended. Yes, *his* wife! Nobody can dare speak a word to her . . ."

Anna became more and more upset. "But if he decides to pursue someone else, then that's all right. My God, my God!"

A feeling of self-pity gave rise to tears in her eyes.

At that moment her child choked and began crying. Anna was frightened, and turned the little boy over onto his side; kissing him affectionately, she whispered to him:

"Calm down, precious, calm down."

She looked at the sleepy boy's little face and said to him softly: "It's not for your father who has insulted me, but for you, my dearest; I'd never do anything that would make you ashamed of your mother . . ."

After feeding the infant, Anna made the rounds of the beds of all her children sleeping in their rooms. She made the sign of the cross over each one in turn, and pausing at the last, began to pray. Everyone around her was asleep. She stood there a long time, her head bowed over the child, absorbed and solemn.

If in our everyday, humble lives there weren't these moments of profound, stern reckoning with conscience, of severe and concentrated attention paid to our inner lives, of this intimate scrutiny of one's own "I" in relation to God, then how would our existence be possible?

Anna valued these moments; now, feeling calmer, she went to her own room.

When her husband came in, he assumed a conciliatory tone. He approached her, smiled, and embraced her in silence. Anna regarded this truce serenely and unresponsively; at that moment she felt so spiritually alone, so remote from that which interested him, that when he extended his arms to embrace her, she didn't understand at first what he wanted. Only when it became clear why the prince sought to make peace so quickly, she suddenly found him repugnant. She quickly withdrew from his arms and cried:

40. "*'It's fine for you,' she not only thought, but even said, 'but I didn't get any sleep last night because of the baby.'*"

"No, I can't, not for anything!"

Everything about the prince seemed unpleasant to her: his handsome face seemed coarse and stupid; his yellowing teeth, graying hair, and passionate eyes—had all become loathsome.

She lay down, blew out the candles, turned her face to the wall, and pretended to be asleep. Having recited the "Our Father" quickly and inattentively, repeating it over and over to make it more conscious, she crossed herself and, with a tormented soul, fell into a troubled sleep.

The prince's jealous outburst soon passed. He wrote a note to his friend inviting him to dinner, and by the time Bekhmetev began visiting them once again, the prince had calmed down completely with regard to his wife. His friend's tranquil, noble behavior could in no way give rise to any suspicions. His chivalrous politeness, propriety, and respectful admiration of Anna lacked any traits that could arouse the prince's vicious feelings of jealousy.

Meanwhile, Bekhmetev completely yet imperceptibly entered Anna's familial and personal life. He took walks with her and the children, played with them, and spent time with them, recounting interesting stories or drawing. Sometimes he had them sing or dance; they became so attached to him that they were bored when he didn't visit often enough.

As for Anna, she had never felt so happy and her life had never been so full. An atmosphere of love indiscernibly enveloped her on all sides. There were no tender words, no crude caresses, nothing that usually accompanies love, but everything around her breathed tenderness and everything in her life was filled with affection and happiness. She constantly felt that a sympathetic eye was following her through life, approving everything, admiring everything.

In the evening, when everyone was gathered around the large round table as usual, Bekhmetev and Anna took turns sketching portraits of those present in the same album. They alternated reading aloud the books of Jules Verne and others, modifying or explaining those parts that were difficult or unclear to the children.[41] Once it happened that instead of an illustrated copy of *Around the World in Eighty Days* they had received a plain edition.[42] Bekhmetev took it upon himself to illustrate the most important episodes, and this produced such excitement in the children's world that they could hardly wait for him to return to continue reading and drawing.

41. Jules Verne (1828–1905) was a French author of numerous popular books of science fiction.

42. The classic adventure novel *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873) was one of Verne's most acclaimed works.

Bekhmetev's concern and attention to Anna's entire life were manifested in everything. She loved flowers—he filled the house with the nicest blooms. She loved reading aloud—he sought out the most interesting articles and books and spent whole evenings reading to her. Anna loved her school; as if to please the sweet, innocent teacher, he sent books, drawings, and various supplies.

Only such a caring and disinterested attitude to a woman could bring complete happiness to her life. Anna never gave herself a clear account of why everything that had seemed so difficult before, now seemed so easy. Why had everything that had previously angered or upset her now ceased to do so? All the trifles and disappointments of daily life became so unimportant; everyone seemed so kind. And what was most astonishing of all—but which undoubtedly also happened—was that she found her husband more pleasant. She was tender and affectionate to him, and that completely appeased his feeling of jealousy.

Thus passed autumn and when, at the beginning of November, the entire family was preparing to move to Moscow, no one wanted to part with this happy, quiet life in the country.

Only the prince was in a hurry to leave. Apparently, he was bored at home and was looking for excuses to escape to town and visit neighbors; he was always seeking diversions. This truly perturbed Anna. She saw that he was retreating farther and farther from the family, from her influence, and was showing his love less and less. She was afraid that he would leave altogether, and that the family she had tried to safeguard during these eleven years of married life would be destroyed. She resolved to use all her powers to retain her husband, to find ways and means by which she could attract him once again and keep him within the family. She vaguely knew what those means were; they were repugnant to her, but what else would work as well?

"If little by little I've lost my previous innocence and my maidenly ideals—then at least I can preserve the purity of the family ideal. I mustn't allow my husband, the father of my children, to abandon the family and find impure joys outside it."[43]

With these thoughts Anna gathered her strength and left for Moscow with the others.

43. *"Women, especially those schooled by men, know very well that talk about lofty matters—is just that, all talk, and that a man needs a woman's body and everything that shows it off . . ."*

4

On the evening of December 2 several carriages were pulling up to a large, well-lit, wealthy house on one of the cleanest streets of Moscow. Princess and Prince Prozorsky received guests every Sunday, and their living room was always filled with the most diverse visitors. Nowhere else was it as informal, cheerful, elegant, and stimulating as it was at Princess Prozorskaya's.[44] Always welcoming, smiling, and lovely, Anna knew how to bring together the kind of people who mingled easily; she always devoted herself completely to making sure that everyone around her was comfortable, happy, and attractive; the result was that in a very short time a pleasant and large society group had gathered around her.

The prince could not help but admire her: what had become of his previously retiring wife who so disliked society? It was as if she had been reborn: she received visitors, paid calls, dressed to the nines, and conceived the most entertaining amusements and activities in which she always involved her husband. "I feel bored or ill at ease when left alone," she would say, and the prince was always with her. He followed her with vigilance, observing the change that had made her so appealing, distinctive, and well loved in society. She startled him, having revealed this unexpected, completely novel side of her character and her charm.

That evening a well-known writer was supposed to read his new story; he had recently arrived from the provinces to publish his book. A large crowd had gathered. A lively conversation was in progress around Anna in the living room. An argument had arisen between two young women discussing the upbringing of children. One of them, Countess Velskaya, insisted that upbringing consisted entirely of exerting personal influence on one's children: the main thing, she said, was spending time with them, following the development of their characters and souls, and assisting them in their growth. The other party, the jovial and frivolous Baroness Innsbruck, maintained that the best thing would be to allow them to pursue what is innate in all children; upbringing does nothing for them, she argued; besides, it was best not to ruin one's own personal life. Everyone was quite animated, interrupting one another. One older general turned toward Anna and said:

"One should learn how to raise children from the princess. I've never seen more natural, healthy, and clever children than hers."

44. The feminine form of Anna's married surname.

"I think that one can bring up children only if you yourself know what's good and bad," said Anna. "You must develop the good and restrain the bad. For that reason I can only repeat Seneca's words: '*Les facultès les plut fortes de chaque homme sont celles qu'il a exercé.*'"[45]

"Where does all this come from?" wondered the prince. "What serene confidence! And those diamonds in her ears, how beautifully they sparkle, competing with the brilliance of her lovely, lively eyes!"

The prince knew that later that same evening his wife would let her dark golden hair down onto her bare shoulders, undress in front of the mirror, and turn to look at him as he entered the bedroom; recalling that such a moment was near at hand, he gladly stood to greet the famous author, who assumed that the prince's display of joy was due to his own arrival.

Anna also rose from the sofa to meet the celebrated guest. Rustling the silk-lined train of her gray dress trimmed with fluffy fur, she approached the writer and greeted him warmly:

"I know that this is hard for you—you don't like to read in public; therefore, I'm especially grateful to you," she said, seating the illustrious guest next to her.

The reading soon began. The story by the celebrated guest made a strong impression on everyone; a few praised his work timidly, others thanked him. But no one could convey the impression he had made more eloquently than Anna. She extended one hand to the writer and, with the other, wiped away her tears. He understood how deeply she had felt that which he had written while shedding his own tears, and he responded sincerely to her handshake.

When the guests had begun to depart, feeling that the evening spent in Princess Prozorskaya's home had been filled with interest and energy, Anna stopped a young man with sharply etched Armenian features and said:

"You promised to pose for me. Come tomorrow to sit and then we'll take the children skating. Agreed?"

"I'm delighted, Princess, and at your service."

"Don't worry: the sittings will be short and we can chat in the meantime. I really do need your type of face for the picture I'm planning. Well, good night."

When Anna was left alone with her husband, he asked sarcastically:

45. Seneca (c. 5 B.C.–A.D. 65) was a Roman Stoic philosopher, statesman, and dramatist. He served as tutor and adviser to Emperor Nero, who eventually obliged him to commit suicide. This quotation is from a French translation of his essay, *On Providence,* IV, 13: *id in quoque soldissimum est quod exercuit,* "The strongest faculties of each are those that he has developed."

"Where did you get the idea of painting that pup?"

Anna burst into loud laughter.

"A pup with a very typical face, precisely the kind I need; I'll definitely sketch him."

"But why go skating with him afterward?"

"Because out of his devotion to me he'll push the children around the ice on chairs, and I can skate alone."

What was it that was so sinister and strange in Anna's playful, cheerful tone? The prince couldn't identify it. He had never seen her before in high society, and her success and vivacity frightened him. Of late he had been entirely consumed by his wife. But she seemed to be slipping away from him; at the same time she had managed to arrange their life in town so that he was never bored and never sought out other pastimes.[46]

The next morning Anna received a note from an old acquaintance with the pressing request to escort her daughter to a ball. The event promised to be most enjoyable; the old friend was indisposed, but didn't want her daughter to be deprived of the pleasure. Anna had also been invited to the ball, but wasn't planning to attend. Now she reconsidered and wrote to express her agreement.

Until the last moment she hadn't told her husband about her intention to go; she knew he would be displeased, but she didn't want to disappoint her friend's daughter.

That evening the prince had invited guests to whom he was planning to read his articles. Anna already knew all these boring arguments, which she had copied so many times; there were so many incomprehensible, convoluted technical terms and expressions she had tried hard to fathom. She didn't attend the reading and spent time with her children. She involuntarily recalled Bekhmetev and the evenings spent with him in the country; she felt unbearably lonely and gloomy. After putting the children to bed, she began preparing for the ball. At about midnight, she stood in front of the pier glass dressed in something silvery with antique white silk lace and bright roses, her face made up and dazzling in her beauty. The maid, circling her carefully, blowing into a thin glass tube, sprayed her with perfume. The door opened and Anna shuddered. The prince came in; seeing his wife dressed to the nines, he stood there astonished and displeased.

"Where are you off to?" he asked.

"I'm taking Marusya Pavlovich to the ball at her mother's request, because she's ill," Anna replied serenely.

46. *"And she? But who is she? She's a mystery: as she was, so she still is."*

"Why on earth? And why didn't you tell me? A mother of a family—traipsing around at balls . . ."

"What a word! Traipsing! I wanted to do something nice for Marusya and her mother. Besides, I like going to balls. I love the radiance, beauty, and the delight of our young people. You know very well that I always sit with the older women at balls as if watching a performance.

"How should I know what you do there?" the prince replied petulantly, without taking his eyes off his wife. "I can't hide the fact that you look very lovely this evening," he added and left the room, slamming the door.

Anna followed him with her eyes full of contempt, and for some reason thought again about Bekhmetev, together with the endless expanse of melancholy, rural nature, autumnal haze, and her quiet, calm happiness.

Her arrival at the ball that evening produced a particularly strong impression. A small group of men was standing at the door of the large ballroom. One adjutant remarked: "Here's the royal entrance at the ball." Anna turned around. Always friendly and composed, the lovely Princess Prozorskaya showed no preference to anyone, as if promising it to everyone. As with almost all very beautiful women, she also had a kind, loving look that seemed to be a reflection of that expression with which people regard beautiful women, admiring them.

But that evening Anna's thoughtful and affectionate eyes, regarding this joyful, interesting crowd, imagined more and more often Bekhmetev's head bent over a book or a sketch, surrounded by her own beloved children; and she suddenly wanted to escape from the ball, away from the hustle and bustle of Moscow, and return to the familiar, simple, gentle peace and quiet of country life, the only place where she could really be happy.

The cheerful, sparkling Baroness Innsbruck came up to her and asked whether she was having a good time.

Anna laughed in surprise and asked what a ball could possibly do to make her happy.

"*Mais il y a dans cette toujours quelqu'un qui vous intèresse?*"[47]

"*Qui, il y a foule, mais pour moi il n'y a personne,*"[48]

"*Un seul être vous manqué, et tout est dépeuplé,*" the baroness declaimed a verse from Lamartine; then with a chuckle, she disappeared into the crowd,

47. "Isn't there always someone in the crowd who interests you?"
48. "Yes, there's a crowd indeed, but there's no one for me."

marveling at what it was that made Anna so happy, cheerful, and radiant.[49] She never danced or flirted with anyone—wasn't she bored?

But Anna wasn't bored because somewhere deep inside her burned a spark of genuine happiness, the ember of Bekhmetev's love for her, which fact she knew and which illuminated her entire life from within. She would never have acknowledged this to herself, but could not help feeling it. When she was admired, she saw at once how he admired her. Whether she was fulfilling her obligations or busy with some task, reading or drawing—she always thought about whether he would approve and how he would relate to her actions. If someone could have explained to her this condition of her soul, she would have replied with indignation and horror, considering it slanderous and an accusation of dishonesty. But this was indeed the case.

5

Life in town from day to day with the strain of attending to the tasks of keeping her husband from being bored and keeping him near her at home, combined with the effort of maintaining social relations, and the major responsibility for the children's upbringing—all this exhausted Anna to such an extent that she decided to leave for the country and spend a few days "collecting herself," as she put it. She was drawn to the peace and quiet, to nature, to recollections of her youth, and to the pure impressions of country life, while down deep in her soul, there stirred a vague desire to see Bekhmetev. She didn't let herself acknowledge that fact, but the image of this beloved man involuntarily merged with everything that drew her to the countryside.

Anna told her husband that she needed to return home to attend to some household matters; she said there were several problems in the school and she wanted to support and encourage the young teacher, who had been frightened by the inspector; last of all, she said that she was so tired of their city life in Moscow that she wanted to go to the country to gaze at the open sky, unimpeded by any houses, at the fresh snow, the forest covered in hoarfrost, and that if she didn't go, she would certainly fall ill.

All this seemed extremely bizarre to the prince, but he saw that it was useless to argue, that women make decisions that no one can possibly contradict,

49. Baroness Innsbruck's apt quotation is from a love lyric entitled "L'isolement" (Isolation) from Lamartine's *Méditations poétiques:* "Only one person is missing and besides him no one else exists."

and that if he were to try, he might come to grief, but she would never change her mind.

Anna packed a small suitcase with the help of a maid and, so as not to lose a whole day in transit, she left at night. As she said goodbye to the children, she was reluctant to leave them. She spent a long time making the sign of the cross and kissing little Yusha, who had recently been weaned, kissed her sleepy older children, and started to suffer pangs of conscience. But she couldn't remain at home—that would've been beyond her. The prince bade her farewell indulgently, but especially tenderly. For a long time afterward she felt the moist kisses of his lips and recalled his affectionate look, which of late had so often been fixed on her.

Anna had accomplished her goal: her husband had not left her. But at what cost? She recalled all that she had done to keep him: she felt repelled and disgusted with herself. And as for Anna herself? What had become of her? She had retreated farther and farther from the man who had destroyed the best side of her own "self," and she was horrified at that thought.

6

Anna sent word ahead that she should be picked up at the station. The old coachman greeted her especially warmly, bringing the familiar bay troika to the station platform.[50]

When she passed the gates, an unexpected feeling of ecstasy burst forth from Anna's breast. The morning was magnificent. The bright sun flooded the blindingly white, level fields with light. "Yes, this is the boundless, the infinite, *l'infini*—just what I've yearned for!" she thought. "I've been oppressed by walls, fences, and houses in that awful urban setting! Real life is out here, freedom, wide-open space, and God! Yes, I feel free as a bird; I'm my own mistress; I was born and grew up in the country; I can't live in town," she reflected. The troika raced along merrily over the snowy road, the carriage bells tinkling continuously; the sleigh, occasionally going over a pothole, tossed Anna from side to side, disrupting her joyful, thoughtful mood.

At last they entered the old birch-lined lane. The hoarfrost hung heavily on the branches of the age-old gnarled birches; sparkling with hundreds of little fires in the sunshine, it endowed all of nature with an especially triumphant and celebratory appearance.

"Ah, how fine, familiar, peaceful, lovely, and solemn it all is!" thought Anna, approaching the steward's cottage and glancing around at the large manor house.

50. A troika is a Russian cart or sleigh drawn by a team of three horses.

The steward was waiting with the samovar and tea that had been brewed with special effort. As Anna sat drinking her tea, served by an old woman, the steward's aunt, he delivered in an imposing voice a report obviously prepared in advance about the household affairs, the threshing, the livestock, and the tree-felling in the forest. He asked when she would like to examine the books.

"This evening; now I'll visit the threshing barn, the school, and the cattle yard."

"Shall I accompany you, Princess?"

"Yes, indeed."

Anna carefully made the rounds of the entire estate. Household affairs had served as the underlying justification for her journey home. She tried to be conscientious, but such matters interested her very little. She was simply happy, and everything seemed so novel to her in this old setting. She paid attention to the new calves and their mothers, and to the young horses in training. She saw how much grain was yet to be threshed, and insisted that it all be finished soon. She even inquired about the turkeys and geese, which had been of no interest to her before. But at least all this seemed natural and simple; it was nature itself, uncontrived and everlasting!

After releasing the steward, she went to visit the school. The young teacher, now thinner and paler, stood at the blackboard and was eagerly explaining a problem to a small lad who was looking at her with inquisitive, frightened eyes.

"Lidia Vasilievna!" Anna called to her.

"Ah, my dear princess! What brings you here? I didn't expect you. What joy!"

"Why have you grown so thin?" asked Anna, kissing the young woman.

"It's a very hard job, Princess. Then there was the unpleasant business with the inspector. I devote myself entirely to the work, but there's only carping: I'm not reading the right things or the textbooks aren't the best ones. The officials seem to want to keep the people stupid, instead of educating them."

Anna looked intently into the kind, pale face of the teacher, and it suddenly became clear to her how much better and nobler this unnoticed, unappreciated, self-sacrificing, and uncorrupted creature was than she herself; the teacher was devoting her entire young life to serving a cause in which she believed and which she loved more than anything, more than herself. While she? Never satisfied, wealthy, living in luxury, surrounded by her children—what was she doing that would be of some use to anyone else?

Anna felt disgusted with herself and wondered how this sweet young woman could be living her lackluster life without reward, while she was living her glittering life without punishment.

After surveying the school, Anna said a tender goodbye to the young teacher and went to call on the elderly former maid of the late princess; she was still living in retirement and now afflicted with paralysis.

The old woman was very glad to see Anna and began telling her endless tales, heard so many times before, of bygone days, of dogs the old woman had loved more than anything else on earth, the cow that had given birth at night, and how they had had to carry the frozen calf into the barn; how yesterday the Muscovy hen had laid her first egg and cackled about it all night; and many other things from the world of birds and animals. It was clear that her own lifeless existence was so filled with other lives, even though they were animals, that she was content.

"And so, my dear little Princess, I ask to buy some tea and so forth and a wax candle for Saint Nikola's day.[51] I light the candle to the saint and pray for the prince's good health, for his spouse, and for their offspring. As soon as I light it—I hear the steward, he's searching for the prince's hunting dogs. They've run off, those bandits, into the forest. I think: goodness gracious, they'll get lost, alas for the prince. So I start praying to the saint: Father, Saint Nikola, let my candle make up for the loss. Sinner that I am, little Princess! And then, all the dogs came back, damn them, real fast, too."

It was only with difficulty that Anna got away from the old woman; she returned home, had dinner with the steward and his aunt, and went off to wander all alone around her favorite, familiar places. It was frosty and astonishingly beautiful. Heavy hoarfrost hung everywhere on the trees, bushes, thatch roofs, and on all the grasses. Anna walked along the road to her favorite grove; to the left the sun was setting behind the young trees; on the right, above the old oak forest the moon was already rising. The white tops of the trees and all of winter nature were illuminated from both sides, mingling and combining the two reflections: the soft, pale light of the moon and the light pink glow of the evening sun. The sky was blue, and further off on the meadow, the white, white snow was shining brilliantly.

"Here's where purity lies! How beautiful it all is, this whiteness in nature, in the soul, in life, in morals, and in conscience! It's so beautiful everywhere! How I love it and how I've tried to maintain it in all places and at all times.

51. Saint Nicholas is honored twice in the Russian Orthodox Church calendar: December 19 and again in the spring, on May 22.

But for what? Who needs it? Wouldn't it be better to have memories of some passionate love, even if illicit, but real and full? Wouldn't it be better than this present emptiness and immaculateness of my conscience?" Anna shuddered. "Of course not! A thousand times no! Never!" she almost exclaimed. And suddenly, as if her soul were cleansed by this pure nature, she felt a surge of spiritual strength, such as she hadn't experienced in a long time. She returned to the house when it was already dark and distractedly set about inspecting the steward's account books. She made several remarks, dealt with the distribution of land to the peasants, and then, asking that the house be unlocked, went into her husband's study to fetch some books he had asked for. Entering his cold room, she shuddered and cast a glance all around. How many memories! So many experiences here, joy and grief and disillusionment! Anna sat down and began to finger her husband's things, his letters, papers, and diaries. Her cold, stiff fingers leafed through the pages of this familiar book, searching in vain for some trace of herself. Living in the country, the prince had related to his wife as if to a nonentity; she didn't interest him in any way whatsoever. But she came across her name: "Yes, he describes how I rode out to meet him—but there's only anger." There followed a description of the hunt and the attractive lady who participated. Anna's heart skipped a beat. She read it and was horrified at the salaciousness of her husband's language.

"Oh, how awful! How I've loved him and for so long!" Anna thought with a strange rush of tenderness, and tossed the diary onto the desk. The idea vaguely occurred to her that it was a good thing she had loved her husband according to the demands of her own pure, loving nature, and not for what he had given in return.

Anna went to bed still not knowing whether she would leave for Moscow the next morning, or visit Varvara Alekseevna's house in order to see her brother. She hardly slept at all that night. The bed was unfamiliar, and the steward's aunt who had ceded her featherbed to Anna and who slept nearby on the trunk, sighed and snored all night. At last the long December night came to an end. As soon as Anna had drawn back the curtain on the window and looked out at the brilliant frosty morning, she decided at once to visit Varvara Alekseevna. She gathered her things and had the horse harnessed. In her imagination she invented various pretexts for going to see Varvara Alekseevna. She had to inspect the school, to confer, or to find something out, and finally it would have been simply impolite not to call on her. But Anna's heart was pounding as she drove up to Varvara Alekseevna's estate. What would she say? There had never been any special intimacy between them. What excuse would she invent? And why exactly had she,

whose place was in Moscow with her husband and children, come here, to visit this woman who was not even a close friend? And what about Anna's children? What were they doing now? Manya and Anna's favorite, little Yusha?

But it was already too late to reason thus. The sleigh approached the porch and Anna walked into the front hall of Varvara Alekseevna's small country house anxiously and timidly.

There was an ominous silence in the house, as if no one lived there. Everything was still, neat, and clean in the entrance and the hall where Anna glanced. She already felt like leaving when the old servant appeared, stepping quietly; he took Anna's fur coat and invited her in. He reported that the lady of the house was at home and he would announce her.

Anna had to wait rather a long time. She heard footsteps; then an austere, solemn, and courteous Varvara Alekseevna entered the room. She was clearly surprised by Anna's arrival; she listened with suspicion to her words about wanting to confer with her about some school affairs and the peasant children's education, and then invited her to stay for lunch. She didn't say a word about her brother; when Anna asked how his health was, Varvara Alekseevna frowned and said:

"He's not well. He has a terrible cough. I tried to send him to the doctor in Moscow, but he laughed and said: 'I've been in treatment for over twelve years. It makes no difference—sooner or later—the end is the same.' He went out for a walk," she added.

Anna's heart constricted painfully. "'Sooner or later, the end . . .' Yes, that's how it must be," she thought. "Nothing was ever supposed to come to an end on the journey of my life or my conscience. Everything's for the best. . . . But how will I remain alive? What will I live by?" Anna's inner voice cried out in horror; no consideration of her obligation, her husband, or her children could divert her from the horror of Bekhmetev's death.

Just at that moment his voice could be heard in the front hall, asking who had arrived.

"Some lady, the princess; I've forgotten her name."

Bekhmetev didn't wait to hear the reply and hastened into the drawing room. He blanched when he saw Anna and hesitated for a moment; then the blood rushed back to his face and he regained control of himself.

Struck by the change that had taken place in him, Anna stared Bekhmetev gravely in the eye; in this silent exchange of glances was their first, earnest confession.

"Least of all did I expect to see you, Princess," Bekhmetev spoke first, greeting her. He didn't ask why she had come to the country; he understood everything from the first moment, understood by the ardent, distressed, grim expression of her lovely dark eyes fixed intently on him; both joy and pain overwhelmed him together.

Their conversation was wide-ranging. Anna talked about Moscow, her exhaustion from city life, and continually shuddered at the abrupt, harsh sound of Bekhmetev's coughing.

When Varvara Alekseevna went to fetch something, Anna suddenly changed her tone and asked in an anxious voice:

"You're ill?"

"Yes, something in my chest isn't right. It'll pass when summer comes."

"We're coming back in March," Anna blurted out involuntarily.

"That'll be very nice! I've heard rumors about you, Princess, that you're enjoying unprecedented success in society," said Bekhmetev.

"Who told you? If you only knew that I have no one there at all!" she said.

"While no one interests you, everyone admires you. You know that if anyone falls in love with a woman like you, it's dangerous; it's impossible to stop halfway on the road to love; it consumes you entirely . . ."

Bekhmetev turned pale; he gasped for breath and his face even became unpleasant as a result of the impassioned severity of his expression. Anna looked at him with apprehension. She found these unwonted words from such an ideal person extremely confusing. She was silent. Bekhmetev's pained face continued looking gloomy, and his restrained passion seemed to distort it even more painfully. Anna regarded him with a look full of suffering.

"So, that's what you think? But such demands of love kill it, just as every day people kill it . . ."

"How then, Princess, can love survive, that is, live for a long time?"

"Oh, of course, only by a spiritual connection. Such love is eternal: death does not exist for it."

"You think, a spiritual connection *exclusively*?"

"I don't know whether exclusively or not, but in any case it's *first and foremost,* and it's undisputed happiness."

Bekhmetev grew thoughtful.

"Perhaps you're right, Princess," he said softly. "It's better that way and let it be so," he added, coming up to her and moving a chair so he could sit closer to her.

He began to inquire sympathetically and tenderly about her children, her painting, and her life in general. She described everything in great detail, as one does to someone who's certain to be interested in absolutely everything.

Varvara Alekseevna returned and invited Anna to inspect her school. Anna tried to pay the greatest attention, but this proved to be difficult. After dinner she began to hurry, so as not to be late for her train.

"I'll accompany you, Princess. May I?" asked Bekhmetev. "I have to be in town tomorrow, and I'll take advantage of the opportunity to go to the station with you."

Anna made no reply, but when they brought the sleigh around, she said in parting:

"Dmitry Alekseevich, you wanted me to drop you off at the station?"

"I'm ready now, Princess."

They didn't talk along the way. It was overcast, and a damp warm wind was blowing; the dim sky hung low; it seemed as if it would snow, and there might even be a real blizzard.

"We seem to be heading into a storm."

"Be quiet, please; you mustn't speak when it's so windy," said Anna.

He fell silent, but his eyes, facing forward but seeing nothing outside, saw only his own inner happiness, the happiness of being next to the woman he loved more than anyone else on earth, without daring to tell her that or about the love he was feeling at that moment. Anna noticed his expression of happiness; for a long time, a very long time afterward, his glance at such a painful time glowed inside her.

They went farther and farther, both thinking about the same thing, without demanding from fate or from each other anything more, and experiencing amid this snowy, pure, limitless nature their own relationship to it, to God, and to the eternity in which one must live one's own life now, and afterward, and forever, in which it is possible to be happy and pure, and to love unselfishly and perpetually.

"There are the station lights," said Anna.

"Well, Dmitry Alekseevich, you'll have to spend the night here at the station," said the coachman. "The snowstorm's really picked up."

"We can do that. We've arrived, Princess."

They bade farewell at the station, simply shaking each other's hands.

Bekhmetev waited for her train's departure and stood for a long time watching the line of cars disappear, winding like a snake around the bend of the road, and vanishing under the arc of the bridge.

7

As always when Anna was approaching home, she grew more and more agitated wondering what she might find when she got there: were the children in good health? Her anxiety grew with every minute.

"Is everyone well at home?" she asked the coachman who came out to greet her.

"I don't know, Your Excellency, I haven't heard anything."

Her impatience and anxiety reached a painful level as she approached the house and the servant opened the door for her.

"Is everyone well?" she repeated her question.

"Yes, thank God. The nurse says only that the little one has a slight fever."

Anna's heart sank. "I knew it," she thought.

After warming herself by the stove in the hallway, she ran straight into the nursery. The older children welcomed her: "Mama's home, mama's home!" they cried as she entered.

"Yusha has a fever," Manya announced triumphantly, hurrying, like all children, to be the first to convey important news.

Anna ran to the infant's crib and picked little Yusha up in her arms; when he saw his mother, he began crying in distress.

Horror and despair seized Anna's heart and she was tormented by pangs of conscience. Her entire trip had been egotistical; her uncharacteristic weakness now seemed loathsome to her. She looked at the feverish, fussing child, and dared not even kiss him.

"Has the doctor been sent for?"

"No," the nurse replied. "The prince said to wait for your return."

Anna hastened to write a note to the doctor and then asked where the prince was.

"He's in his study, working."

"It's all the same to him whether Yusha's ill," she thought with bitterness.

The prince still hadn't emerged from his study when the doctor arrived. Anna inquisitively observed the expressions and movements of the professor, a well-known specialist on children's diseases; she realized that Yusha's condition was serious.

"It's too early to say anything definite, Princess. Tomorrow we'll know for sure. His temperature's very high. I think it may be the measles, and there may be complications," said the doctor.

The infant was having trouble breathing and was coughing hoarsely. The prince came in. He greeted his wife and the doctor, and then asked:

"Have you been home long?"

"I arrived about two hours ago."

The prince spoke with the doctor, contemptuously displaying his lack of confidence in medicine, and then bade him a cool goodbye.

"I'll look in on him tomorrow morning, Princess," said the doctor, addressing Anna.

"Please do," she said, returning the sleeping infant to his crib. "You have dinner, nanny; I'll stay here with him."

The prince also remained in the nursery and began asking Anna about her trip.

"Where did you spend the night?" he asked casually.

"In the steward's house, of course; our house isn't heated."

"How inappropriate and foolish."

"What?" she asked in surprise.

"*C'est un jeune homme, et je vous dis que ce n'est pas convenable; vous manquez toujours de tact.*"[52]

"I slept in the room with his aunt," Anna managed to say with some difficulty; then she fell silent and gazed gloomily into her sleeping son's crib.

"Were you anywhere else?" the prince continued his interrogation.

"Yes, I went to visit Varvara Alekseevna to see her school and I met Dmitry Alekseevich there. He escorted me to the station. He's not well and coughs persistently."

"What? That, too? You rode with him at night?"

"Not at night, in the evening."

The prince jumped up and paced the nursery.

"God only knows how you behave!" he cried.

"Quiet. You'll wake the child!"

"We can't live like this! It's outrageous!" cried the prince. "You have children, yet you're ready to throw yourself on the neck of anyone who flirts with you."

Anna remained silent, but tears flowed from her eyes. Overwhelmed by pangs of conscience and anxiety over her child, and offended by her husband's suspicions, she could find no way to justify herself; she merely looked at him unkindly from the side, then at her child, and whispered softly:

"Please, be quiet."

The prince fell silent. For a minute he doubted the fairness of his reproaches and realized that if his wife was in fact innocent of any wrongdoing,

52. "He's a young man, and I tell you that it's not proper; you always lack discretion."

it was not because of him, who had offended her so frequently by his jealousy, but rather it was thanks to this feverish, much-loved little boy.

He left. He paced his study for some time. Of late jealousy had been tormenting him more and more. His imagination pictured the most salacious and indecent scenes. First he saw the steward entering his sleeping wife's room at night; then he imagined Bekhmetev, his old friend, embracing her in the sleigh. And she? He didn't know her; he had never made the effort to understand the sort of woman she really was. He knew her shoulders, her lovely eyes, her passionate temperament (he was so happy when he had finally managed to awaken it); but was she happy with him, was she completely honest, did she love him or not?—he didn't know any of that and was unable to resolve it. True, she submitted to his periodic demands, but he could never fathom what was behind that.

Pacing the length of his study for the tenth time, he recalled his own amorous intrigues before marriage. How cleverly and subtly he had deceived those trusting husbands, as he stole their wives away from them! How natural and even cheerful was this endless courting, these clever devices for arranging trysts and troika rides; when unnoticed by other people, especially the husbands, he would squeeze those ladies' warm hands under their fluffy cloaks and, sliding his arm around their slender waists, he would draw them toward him. "Why wouldn't other men do the same with my wife? Why wouldn't Bekhmetev take advantage and flirt with such a beautiful woman who's practically thrown herself at him?"

The prince was more and more tormented by jealousy, while hatred of the woman whom he wished to possess alone increased with terrible force. Along with this hatred grew his passion, his unrestrained, animal passion, whose strength he felt, and as a result of which his anger grew even stronger.

The children really had come down with the measles. All four of them caught it. With little Yusha, his measles were complicated by pneumonia. Anna moved into the nursery and monitored her children's condition with painful anxiety. She kept vigil for whole nights or paced up and down the nursery with little Yusha in her arms. Bending over his little face that had turned blue, she was in agony over his labored breathing, blew into his little mouth, kissing him, as if wanting to transfer her life and health to him. Sometimes she stood over his crib and prayed as only a mother can. Her prayer was not an entreaty of God to save her infant; rather it was an acknowledgement of her powerlessness before Him and her entrusting herself to His power.

"Here I am, Lord, suffering, weak, and submissive. Have mercy on me, if it be Thy will, and save my Yusha!"

Her husband, evidently, was oppressed by this period of the children's illness. He said that she was exaggerating the danger and causing misery for everyone in the house. He avoided meeting the doctor, who came to call every day, and was angry with his wife for her complete confidence in his advice. But Anna paid no attention to her husband; she always anticipated this kind, clever man's arrival with impatience. He related to the children and to her own anguish attentively and sympathetically. With such kindness in his eyes he looked at this passionate young mother who was wasting away from grief.

"There's no need to despair, Princess," he said, placing a compress on the little boy's chest. "Look at how much life there is in him; he's feeling a little better and is already playing."

Anna, worn down with suffering to the last extreme, was grateful with all her heart to this man who, in addition to his medical assistance, supported and consoled her during this most difficult time of her life.[53]

Little Yusha and the other children recovered. Once again Anna grew lively for a while and her soul was at ease. The prince also cheered up. He was glad that life had returned to normal, that his wife had moved back from the nursery to the bedroom, and that the doctor had ceased his house calls. Anna understood all this; as a result, one more crack appeared in her love for her husband. She never forgot it and never forgave his indifference to the children's illness and his lack of sympathy for her anxiety.[54]

While everyone else was feeling better, Anna's own weakened and exhausted organism broke down and she fell ill. The excessive efforts of caring for the children, the sleepless nights spent carrying a heavy infant in her arms for hours at a time, her emotional anxiety—all this caused her to give birth prematurely, followed by a serious woman's illness. She had to spend six weeks in bed.

At first the prince was terribly frightened; he summoned the doctors, couldn't sleep at night, and foresaw the possibility of losing the customary comfort of having such a beautiful, young, healthy wife. One minute he would behave tenderly toward her, and then the next he would become nervous and agitated, or would get angry with some of his wife's careless actions,

53. *"But no one knows what he'll say, least of all, Ivan Zakharych, because he himself knows all too well that he doesn't know anything and he can't help in any way, so he merely hedges his bets . . ."*

54. *"Thus the presence of children not only failed to improve our life but poisoned it."*

reproaching her for not taking good care of herself. But when the danger had passed and Anna, pale and serene, lay there with a book or some work in her hands, the prince began to feel terribly bored and found all sorts of pretexts to leave the house. He would even display a certain hostility, which caused Anna to recall the proverb: "A husband loves a healthy wife . . . and loves to make her feel bad about her illness."[55]

Gradually Anna grew used to her husband's salacious attitude toward her and to her own loneliness. She often thought of her mother and sister, who could have consoled her now; but they had gone abroad long ago for little Misha's well-being; it turned out that he had scoliosis, and for several years they moved him from place to place to preserve his fragile existence.

Anna surrounded herself with her children and her books. But her children exhausted her and were kept away on doctor's orders. However, no one took away her books. Rarely in her life had she been able to enjoy her leisure as she could now. It used to happen that browsing through some philosophical works in her husband's study, she would be able to read only a little; lacking time to read more, she had skimmed through some others. Now she took these beloved philosophical works and read them carefully, copying out those passages she liked most of all. After two months or so, Anna looked at her notebook and was astonished to see that the question of death was the one that interested her most of all, not in the sense of disappearance from life, but in that there was no such thing as death. A new religious feeling took possession of her soul. Everything was measured by her faith in immortality. She suddenly perceived that point which has no limit in all earthly things, through which her spiritual eye beheld infinity and immortality, and she felt both peace and joy.

"I have everything here from our church teachings that's been recorded about this question—where it also speaks of immortality. . . . Yet here's Epictetus, a philosopher, a pagan, and a slave: he understood there's no such thing as death, that death is the absorption of the human mind into the universal Mind," Anna reflected, turning the pages of her notebook.[56]

"Yes, this universal Mind absorbs us, this divinity which we know with all our being, which we love, from which we emerge, and into whose will we offer ourselves!"

In this new blissful frame of mind Anna left Moscow at the beginning of April and moved back to the country with her entire family.

55. *"In me, at least, there often seethed a terrible hatred for her!"*

56. Epictetus was a Roman Stoic philosopher (c. A.D. 50–c. 130), born a slave.

8

Anna's new mood bothered the prince. There was something unnatural, tranquil, enigmatic, combined with something self-assured in all her being, something that she was safeguarding from him and not granting him any involvement. He had never really understood his wife very well, and now, least of all.

In the country Anna began to recover rapidly from her illness. The doctor treating her warned the prince that in spite of the improvement in her strength, if the princess were to be careless, her ill health could return, and not just once. "Swimming in the river when the weather turns warmer, peace and quiet, and no further additions to the family," he added delicately with a smile.[57] The prince frowned upon hearing those words and made no reply.

Anna also conferred with a woman doctor with whom she was acquainted; in spite of the prince's dissatisfaction, she decided to follow their advice to remain healthy, strong, and attractive.

And this she managed to achieve. The doctors' counsel produced results; Anna blossomed along with the beauty of summer; she revived, grew lovelier, and all her dormant energy emerged with such force that often it seemed that she could do anything, that all human capabilities had materialized in her all at once.[58]

After the move, she settled into her familiar country setting, and at first devoted herself to the joys of springtime impressions, freedom, and nature. The prince also cheered up and began to treat his wife more calmly and with greater affection. He frequently invited her to accompany him on strolls, chatted with her about his ideas regarding various articles and his newly published books, and tried to interest her in household affairs.

"Is rapprochement still really possible?" Anna wondered with joy. She was attentive and gracious to her husband, fulfilled all his wishes, and tried to draw him closer to the children. As often happens during periods of complete family well-being, Anna surrendered entirely to her own happiness; she put aside all questions, doubts, and anything else that could damage this general positive mood. How simply and willingly she returned to her former love of her husband; once more she believed that she could be happy with him, that their disharmony was only temporary, accidental. She related to

57. *"She was unwell, and those scoundrel-doctors ordered her not to bear any more children and they taught her how to avoid giving birth."*

58. *"The means prescribed by those scoundrel-doctors, apparently, began to work; she put on weight and grew prettier, like the late beauty of summer."*

him so trustingly, sympathetically. She tried to expel all thoughts of Bekhmetev from that holy of holies in her soul, where he had imperceptibly come to occupy so large a place.

But, just as before, the prince's loving, peaceful mood didn't last very long. It always had its limits.

In the middle of May, on a hot day, rare during springtime, Anna awoke unusually early and went out onto the terrace. Everyone in the house was still asleep. She sent to find out if Manya and her governess were awake, and if so, asked for them to be summoned. But they still hadn't gotten up. Then Anna set off alone to the woods. The morning was unusually lovely, as happens only in May when nature has not yet produced everything, but promises more and more beauty and blossoming, when everything is still fresh, bright, new, and there's no fear, as in summer, that soon, all this mature beauty will begin to wither and fade.

As an artist, sensitive to all beauty, Anna was taking enormous delight in everything and didn't even notice that she had approached the river that flowed by about two versts from the house.

"It'd be nice to swim," she thought, and entered the newly constructed bathhouse. She was reluctant to disrobe and enter the water alone, but the bright, still river seemed to beckon her with its freshness. She quickly undressed and waded into the water. When she heard some footsteps and voices, she emerged from the river and hastily dressed. She felt relaxed and cheerful. Her spontaneous nature had given itself over completely, passionately to this simple familiar, rural life; nothing, it seemed, could destroy it. She ran swiftly and easily along the road home and met the steward. She asked where he was coming from and where was he going. He said that he was circling the fields on foot because his horse had gone lame and now he was heading back home.

"The morning's so splendid!" he added. "And Your Excellency woke up so early."

Conversations about the household, the sprouting wheat, or the new machines purchased by the prince and brought from Moscow, didn't interest her very much, but her happy mood rendered her so kind that Anna didn't want to offend anyone; she paid attention and even took an interest in the steward's concerns.

When the road came to a fork, one way leading to her house, the other to the steward's wing, Anna said, "Goodbye." Then all of a sudden she noticed her husband walking toward her. From a distance she called to him with a cheerful and tender voice, but when she got her first look at his face close up, her heart sank. It was distorted with malice.

"Where are you coming from so early?" he asked.

"I took a walk and went for a swim."

"*Et que veut dire cette intimitè avec l'intendant?*"[59]

"*L'intimitè?* Why? He was merely returning from the fields, and I was coming from the bathhouse; we met and walked home together—the road's the same, isn't it?" Anna explained in detail and simply, with a slight laugh.

"You've always lacked all discretion and always will; this tête-à-tête is inappropriate, *c'est presque un domestique*," said the prince, choking with spite.[60]

"Oh, my God! Why do you always spoil our happiness?" said Anna.

"Now the sentimentality begins. *Je suis trop vieux pour cela, ma chère.*"[61]

"You're tormenting yourself and me for no reason," Anna continued. "I feel sorry for you. Look at me, look all around us, let's walk home together," she added tenderly. The prince was silent and rushed on ahead.

"Is it ever possible for you not to be angry? There's no cause for it! I may be indiscreet and foolish, but I feel sorry for you. I love you. I can't bear to witness this severity in you, this anxiety." She took her husband by the arm and pressed up against him, as if asking for his defense and affection. But the prince pushed her arm away and hurried home alone. Anna stopped; she looked at her husband with dry, despairing eyes, as if watching her last chance for happiness fade; sighing deeply, heavily, and loudly, she made her way home with quiet steps.

From that day forward the prince maliciously began to find fault with the steward and soon dismissed him without cause, depriving himself of an excellent manager.

Anna was neither capable nor did she wish to acknowledge her guilt in this humiliation of which her husband had accused her. She! It was she who placed her integrity above all else in the world; it was she, if required, who would sacrifice everything on earth for pure, happy family life!

And now, once more, her good relations with her husband were broken off. They became strained, distant, and unnatural.[62] Anna's heart ached severely; she hadn't been carefree and happy for very long. Her strength began

59. "And what's this intimacy with the steward all about?"

60. ". . . he's almost a servant."

61. "I'm too old for that, my dear."

62. *"At the time I didn't notice that these periods of anger in me corresponded quite correctly and regularly to those periods we called love. A period of love—then one of anger . . ."*

to fail again; trying to spare herself any anguish, she took up her old former pursuit—painting.

The next morning, packing a canvas, an umbrella, and her case, she left the house, planning to paint a landscape of the view on the edge of the pond. She was just ready to start when she suddenly heard the sound of a carriage. Glancing up at the road, she recognized Bekhmetev's coach and horses at once. He had been at their house only once since their arrival, when there had been a number of other people there, and she knew well why he had not come to visit more often. She had surmised that first and foremost his disinterested love didn't want to impinge on her family happiness or burden her honest soul; this noble trait elevated him even more in her eyes.

Bekhmetev recognized Anna from afar, stopped his horses, and climbed out of his carriage. After greeting her, he said:

"So you're here at work once again, Princess? I haven't painted anything for a long, long time."

"Let's paint something together and we'll see who's better. Shall we?" Anna proposed.

"I have nothing to paint with."

"I have enough materials for you. Go and greet my husband; then you'll find everything you need in the closet in the corner drawing room. There's the same kind of canvas, palette, and paints. I'll lend you brushes; I have lots of them here."

A half-hour later Bekhmetev returned with all the necessary items and began work.

"How's your health?" Anna asked, quickly and skillfully sketching the outline of the cottages.

"There's no change, Princess; it's not good. And you! How you've recovered, even blossomed."

"Yes, nothing seems to faze me. I'm too healthy."

"God's granted you everything: happiness, good health, family, and beauty."

"Do you think I'm *very* happy?"

"I can see it."

"Really?" Anna replied distractedly and despondently.

They continued to paint in silence.

"Working together motivates me," she said.

"And it draws us closer, connects us to each other—this mutual work," Bekhmetev replied softly.

"Let's translate something together. I'm reading Amiel's *Fragments d'un journal intime*.[63] It's remarkably good! I couldn't do it alone and you're so good at languages."

"That'd be wonderful, if you're in earnest, Princess."

"Me? Is there anything surprising about it? I love intellectual labor; you can help me."

They both fell silent. Anna suddenly recalled the evenings spent together last year, her happiness then, and her tranquility in this man's presence; joy, quiet, and good cheer suddenly lit up her entire being. She glanced at him and their eyes met inadvertently. In their exchange of glances there was no longer any harshness, or horror in the face of the possibility of a passionate, illicit outburst between them; there was only the acknowledged, joyful spiritual bond, which could injure no one, but would illuminate their lives with radiance, meaning, and endless bliss.

From that day on Anna became calm once again. Her vitality returned, as well as her faith in everything, and her gentleness. Everything that had seemed so urgent, all that had troubled her, now ceased to have any importance. She spent entire evenings occupied with translation; she was captivated by it. Bekhmetev visited almost every day; he helped her and, since even the prince was often drawn into this project, he too took an interest and related to his old friend amicably and trustingly.

Once after a prolonged session, Anna proposed as a form of recreation that they go for a horseback ride after dinner. She turned to her husband, asking him to accompany her. The prince willingly agreed; turning to Bekhmetev, he said:

"I hope that you, Dmitry, will also join us?"

"Very gladly."

Three splendid saddled horses were brought around. Anna looked astonishingly grand on her black horse with the bright color of her face and her black riding habit. The prince rode a pacer, and gave Bekhmetev an exceptionally valuable magnificent chestnut English mare.[64]

"I want to treat you to this horse; see what a beauty she is!"

"Yes, indeed, she's superb! And such a graceful gait."

They had ridden only a little way from home when they met a distant neighbor who was coming to see the prince on business.

63. *Fragments of an Intimate Diary* (pub. 1882–84), a masterpiece of self-analysis by the Swiss philosopher and writer Frédéric Henri Amiel (1821–81).

64. A pacer is a horse whose normal gait is a pace; an ambler.

"Oh, how annoying. I'll have to turn back," said the prince.

"What a pity!" Anna said with a sigh.

"Go on ahead with Dmitry; I'll catch up with you after I've spoken with my guest."

Anna showed a moment's hesitation and wondered whether to return home with her husband or to ride on with Bekhmetev. She suddenly felt afraid that the prince would notice her indecision; then she said with total simplicity and naturalness:

"Fine. We'll only circle the woods and you can meet us at the stream."

The road through the woods was very narrow. Bekhmetev and Anna rode along next to each other and kept silent. They couldn't speak about what concerned them both so deeply, and they didn't want to talk about anything else. The happiness of being together satisfied them completely. At last Bekhmetev spoke:

"What plans do you have for the coming winter, Princess?"

"I don't know yet. The printing of my husband's books is dragging out: he's upset and says that forwarding the proofs has delayed the whole affair. In the autumn it'll be necessary to move to Moscow again. He's bored here. But I can't even conceive of life in town. What are your plans?"

"I'll probably go abroad again. My health's really very poor. I have to seek a warmer climate."

"So you're leaving? For good or only a while?"

"I don't know, Princess. Besides, it's best for me to leave; you know that, as well . . . I don't dare seek happiness, and I'm losing my peace of mind."

"Have you tried seeking happiness?"

Bekhmetev didn't reply immediately; suddenly assuming a jocular, lighthearted tone, he began:

"Do you know your neighbor, Elena Mikhailovna? She's tried very hard to amuse me. She's so cheerful! Careful, Princess. You're not watching where your horse puts its hooves, and she may stumble."

"So, what about Elena Mikhailovna?" asked Anna.

"She used to host evening gatherings, large crowds; they were very lively, and she was most obliging. The time I spent with her was very nice . . ."

Anna remembered this presumptuous, brazen woman, Elena Mikhailovna, whom she had met with the prince on the evening of Bekhmetev's first visit, and of whom she had been so jealous over the prince's affections. This woman's house was the center of frivolous merrymaking for the entire neighborhood, but respectable women didn't associate with her.

"Do you like women such as Elena Mikhailovna?"

"I'm one of her great admirers," replied Bekhmetev with some malicious irony. "She's a cheerful and pleasant conversationalist . . ."

"What's happened to him?" wondered Anna. "He's teasing me."

But he wasn't. He could barely restrain from launching into the most desperate and passionate confession of love to this woman. He was choking with agitation; he felt weak and unhappy; he was muttering God knows what sort of inanities out of a feeling of self-preservation; he was ready to weep for having caused her pain, but he knew that he must not, dare not tell her that she was the only one on earth he loved; that he was here, amid this quiet, marvelous wooded nature, together with her, and had lost his head in happiness and despair; that he was unable to enjoy it and felt compelled to safeguard her peace of mind and her happiness with another man.

Anna stopped talking with Bekhmetev. She struck her horse hard with her riding crop and vanished into the forest grove. There was a stream along the road where the prince was supposed to meet them. Having spurred her horse on, she forgot all about the stream, and when she saw it, it was too late to stop her horse. But the quick English mare, coming to her senses, stopped suddenly. The horse's movement was so unexpected that Anna went flying over her saddle. Bekhmetev, who had caught up with her, saw it all and cried out. But Anna got up from the ground and recovered immediately.

"I took a little spill," she said, "but I don't even feel the impact."

"That's the way actors take falls on stage, Princess," said Bekhmetev, but his voice was shaking.

"Well, let's ride on," Anna said, trying to mount her horse.

"You won't be able to mount like that. I'll help you, if you'll allow me, Princess," said Bekhmetev, extending his hand so Anna could step on it.

She placed her small foot gently in Bekhmetev's hand. She felt his warm touch through her thin shoe and suddenly an unexpected tremor ran through her whole body. Her sight grew dim, and at the same time the image of her daughter Manya flashed through her mind. Several days ago, when Bekhmetev was spending an evening with her correcting her translation, the children came in to say good night. Manya glanced at Bekhmetev with angry eyes and absolutely refused to shake his hand. She never explained her behavior, and merely said, "I don't want to, I don't have to."

"My God!" thought Anna. "Poor, sweet Manya! Don't be afraid for me; I love you too much."

"No, you don't have to, you don't!" cried Anna. "I can't mount my horse that way, thank you. There's a tree stump over there; I can do it myself."

Bekhmetev led the horse to the stump, and just then the prince came riding up. Having dispatched the neighbor, the prince had caught up with his wife and friend. He was agitated all along the way. When he saw that Anna was not mounted, and that Bekhmetev was standing next to her, he experienced such terrible suspicion that he grew pale and couldn't think of anything to say. His lips trembled and he squeezed the reins tightly in his hand. His first impulse was to strike both of them with the riding crop in his hand. But he regained control of himself and listened calmly to the story of his wife's fall. He decided to take up the matter with her later and to put an end to Bekhmetev's visits.

After arriving home, Anna, without changing her clothes, threw herself on the bed and began sobbing.

"I'm a criminal, a miscreant, a pitiful, vile woman! I love him and I hate myself for it! Lord, help me! Children, my dear children, forgive me!"

Then she stood up, crossed herself as if disavowing this delusion, and began to change her clothes. As soon as she had taken off her riding habit, her husband came in. He had prepared his speech; he wanted to make a scene, but stopped, so struck was he by her beauty. The soft, dark folds of her riding habit spread around her; her lovely, strong arms were raised to twist her wavy, golden hair; her shoulders and neck, illuminated by the last rays of the pink sunset shining through the window, were radiant in their loveliness, just as her splendid dark eyes were flushed from tears and agitation.

The prince came up close to her and gazed into her eyes; noting her unusual expression, he asked:

"Do you feel all right?"

"Perfectly well," she said.

"Nothing hurts?" he asked, touching her back.

"No, no," she confirmed, freeing herself from his hands.

But the prince didn't leave. He walked away for a moment and locked the door to the room; coming up to his wife, he bent over and kissed her breast. Anna shuddered and retreated. But the prince pressed her to him and placed his lips passionately on her shoulder, her lips, and then embraced her. . . . She no longer resisted. Closing her eyes, thinking not about her husband, yet unaware of what she was doing, she trembled in his embrace. The prince was delighted by his wife's submissive, passionate response. She gave herself to him entirely . . . but her closed eyes saw only Bekhmetev; her imagination pictured him at the moment of his silent confessions and, together with him, she saw Manya's frightened, unfriendly little eyes, having understood in her innocent soul the grave danger her mother was in.

The next day the prince was very cheerful and inventive. His jealousy had abated for a time. He proposed various outings, drew up plans, joked, and was especially affectionate with his friend who came to inquire about any consequences of the princess' fall from her horse the day before.

9

For the first time in her life Anna's soul was experiencing inner turmoil. Steadfast, honest, and serene, she had always been self-confident and afraid of nothing. But now her strengths betrayed her. She knew that in August, Bekhmetev, already quite ill, would be leaving; she felt that the happiness that had sustained her all this time would soon come to an end. Then what? The house, her obligations, and her husband's apathetic egoism with his rude demands would remain, as well as her own inability to continue living the same way without the light of the love that had been nourishing her all this while.

"And the children? Have I really cooled toward them?" Anna asked herself with horror. "No, that's different; that love occupies an entirely different place in my heart. But I'm so tired! Awfully tired! And my husband? Where's my love for him? What's happened? Why can't I love both my husband and this other man who's loved me so unselfishly, so simply, so well, and for so long, without demanding anything for himself?"

In spite of all her thoughts of self-justification, Anna felt, and couldn't help feeling, that what had happened had to have happened in her life with her husband and her love for him, and not with any other man; and she felt that this must also happen in every good marriage.

Her soul had become attached to a man who had managed without any effort, without demands, without any rights, to illuminate her entire life with love; and when all this spiritual life had become full, the feeling of happiness and personal intimacy with this man awoke inside her. Why wasn't this man her husband? She had married with just such an ideal; she had idealized the first period of life with her husband; she had yielded to his influence for so long and so blindly, sensing only vaguely, though never admitting it to herself, that all this was not right, not right at all; she found painful his indifference to her whole inner life and to the children, and she considered degrading his interest only in the life of her flourishing beauty, her health, and her external success, all that which simultaneously gratified him and aroused his animal jealousy, as a result of which she had to suffer. "What will happen now? What sort of relationship will I have to my husband?" Anna wondered, like a drowning person grasping for a straw that could save her. And she was

drowning, drowning, completely aware that this straw would bend in her weak hands and be unable to rescue her.

But for a while fate intervened and deceived her, promising an escape from her difficult spiritual dilemma.

The prince, who had been very busy of late with household improvements, left for town to take possession of a new steam-powered threshing machine. It was damp and cold; in spite of Anna's request that he travel in the carriage, he still decided to go on horseback. It was late in the evening and already dark, and the prince had yet to return. Anna had begun to worry when a carriage pulled up to the house and the prince was carried in by several people. When she saw him, she screamed in terror and rushed to him. He smiled painfully, moaned as they lifted him up, but hastened to say:

"I seem to have broken my leg; it's nothing, don't be afraid."

"Your leg! Thank God! I thought it was worse. We have to summon the doctor immediately." She ran out to send for the doctor, then back into the room where the prince was, helped him lie down, and arranged the position of his leg in the most comfortable way. Then she quickly and skillfully filled a rubber bag with ice and positioned it on his leg. After doing all this, she sat down firmly and calmly next to his bed. He moaned and tossed about, demanding her attention incessantly. No one else could please him. Shooing away the others, Anna looked after her husband tenderly and patiently. She was glad of this unquestionable fulfillment of her duty that fate had imposed upon her.

"Come here," he called constantly. "Arrange my pillow; ah, not like that. I've worn you out, my dear," he said, moaning again.

Toward morning the prince fell asleep. Anna approached him quietly and began examining his face carefully. Her husband's handsome, tormented features had a strange effect on her. She was transported to the distant past, to the time when she had loved this man trustingly, blindly, and simply, without analyzing or criticizing him.

"If only that could be possible again! Everything in him is good; he's loved only me and never betrayed me; I'm the one who's foolish, not he. What do I really want?"

She leaned over and gently kissed his forehead.

"Yes, I've loved only him, and he's dearer to me than anyone else on earth," Anna concluded, and suddenly cut off in her soul any further analysis of her inner, most confidential, intimate secrets. She wasn't lying as she resolved the question of her love for her husband. The strength of that love—young, passionate, idealized, that she had given her husband in those first years of their

marriage—that strength was no longer there. How her husband responded to her love—that was a different matter, but that couldn't destroy it; her love surfaced at any convenient opportunity and grew fainter again whenever rebuffed.

Now the prince was asleep and Anna couldn't hear his voice that at times had offended her so rudely; she couldn't see his eyes that had regarded her—either angrily or tenderly—so unjustly; she saw only the man to whom she had pledged herself and her love entirely—and she loved him.

Every woman truly loves only once. She loves her love and safeguards it until the right moment. But, once she's bestowed her love, she protects it, preserves it, and closes her eyes to the faults of the one she loves. The recurrence of this feeling always develops on the basis of the past, the old ideals, and if it happens that a married woman comes to love another man, then her husband is almost always the one to blame; he has been unable to satisfy the poetic demands that a pure, young, female nature makes and dashes them, giving in exchange only the coarse side of marriage. Woe betide if another man manages to fill that empty place the husband's failed to occupy, and all that first, idealized love is transferred to another person.

The prince suffered terribly all that night: the doctor arrived only the next morning. He applied a bandage and prescribed complete bed rest for the patient.

Several terribly difficult days passed in the prince's illness. He was impatient, demanding, and impossibly suspicious. The fact that he couldn't move nearly drove him mad. He never let Anna leave his sight. The neighbors called in to inquire about his health. That distracted him for a time, but he was still terribly bored and pestered her constantly.

"Where were you?" he asked her after she had been away from his room for a little while. "What were you doing?"

"I went out for a walk with the children," she explained; or, "I wrote a letter"; or "I gave Manya and Pavlik their lesson."

The prince verified all these answers by interrogating the children and the servants, whom he asked unexpectedly leading questions about what their mamá was doing, or whether they knew where the princess was and what she was up to. He himself was unaware of what he suspected his wife was up to, or that it was something morbid, almost insane.

Bekhmetev called in only once to inquire about the prince's health. He himself was very ill and planning to go abroad. Anna didn't go out to meet him, pleading exhaustion. After the horseback ride with him, she harbored pangs of conscience, as if she had committed some unclean act. The feeling of

self-preservation on the part of her conscience was so strong that with all her spiritual powers she forced herself to forget the sensation she had momentarily experienced.

Amid the obligations of being a wife and a mother she had managed to achieve that. Besides, the whole material side of her life as mistress of the household always disrupted any deviations.

"Your Excellency," the housekeeper said, calling Anna away from the prince's room. "Please come and look: the upholsterer's asking whether the furniture is as you ordered it."

Anna went into the servant's quarters to take a look and exclaimed in horror. The expensive upholstery had been sewn together inside out, and the bright cross-threads of the fabric on the reverse were an eyesore.

"What on earth have you done? How could you? It's inside out!" cried Anna.

They had to tear it all off; the fabric was ruined and Anna was upset for the whole day. A few days later the servants called her again.

"Be so kind, Your Excellency, the cook's unmanageable; he's dead drunk; he was supposed to serve the prince his soup and won't let anyone else do it. He keeps on yelling."

Anna went into the kitchen and walked right up to the cook; loudly, commandingly, unquestionably, she shouted at him, "Get out, this instant!" The cook went flying out of the kitchen immediately as if he had been shot, and handed the soup to the waiter. When Anna returned to her own room, she was shaking and had tears in her eyes. The entire material side of her life was hateful to her and her rage was unbearable.

10

It was the end of August. Autumn could already be sensed in the fresh evenings: the leaves turning yellow and red, the melancholy of the bare fields and meadows, and the shorter days.

The prince recovered, although he still used crutches to get around and constantly called for the doctor, complaining capriciously about his slow recovery. Anna grew noticeably thinner, but had regained complete control of herself and returned to her strict family routine, without regret, without hesitation, but with the joyful awareness of her fulfilled obligation and with increased, intensified energy.

It was some time since she had heard any news about Bekhmetev; in the depths of her soul she was worried and didn't know how to interpret his prolonged absence.

Once she was sitting in her husband's study reading the newspaper aloud to him. The prince lay on the sofa looking serenely out the window, awaiting the doctor's arrival.

"You probably forgot to send for him, didn't you?" he asked.

"I sent for him some time ago. Why do you need him? He can't help you; everything takes time. And since when do you believe in doctors so much?"

"The bandage is too tight. I know that all doctors are charlatans, but this is a mechanical thing; it's what they've learned to do."

"Someone's just arrived."

In fact, a light carriage had driven up to the porch; it was a messenger from Varvara Alekseevna with a note.

When Anna took the envelope, she froze. The prince carefully scrutinized his wife and waited to see what she would say. In order to hide her face, Anna turned away from him, as if seeking better light. She skimmed the note quickly and then managed to say calmly:

"Varvara Alekseevna's invited me to call on her this evening. Dmitry Alekseevich is leaving and they're holding a farewell gathering for him; apparently there'll be festivities and guests."

"Show me the note."

Anna smiled contemptuously and handed the prince the note.

"Well then, will you go?"

"No, I don't want to leave you alone. Here's the doctor."

A man about thirty years old entered; he was of average height, ruddy, handsome, with a definite German, self-satisfied character, kind and calm.

"The bandage is bothering you; we'll fix that immediately," he said, after greeting the prince and princess rather informally.

He rolled up his sleeves, washed his hands, and set to work, while Anna attentively and skillfully assisted him.

"Your Excellency," the nurse called Anna softly. "Be so good as to come here for a moment."

After finishing her work with the doctor for her husband, Anna left the room.

The nanny had called her to ask the doctor to examine a little peasant boy whose face had been cut by a horse. It was terrible to see this little four-year-old lad, who had bits of skin and flesh hanging from his face, covered in dark spots of blood, some already clotted and others still oozing. The pale, frightened mother looked with imploring eyes, waiting for Anna to help her son. First she sobbed, then rapidly narrated some of her dreams:

"I dreamt of a red rooster, that's what! Then I saw some old man go into the hut; well, then, deary, he was calling me, and I felt stuffy and sick. Ohhh!"

"Call Aleksandr Karlovich right away," said Anna to the nanny, and ran to fetch all the necessary items from her domestic remedies for applying stitches.

They washed the boy's face, calmed him down, gave him some sweets, and Anna took him onto her lap, while the doctor set about conscientiously sewing stitches, carefully joining the skin together. The lad was remarkably patient; the procedure went well and was nearing its end. The prince, whose wife had absented herself for some time, grabbed his crutch and went out to see what she was doing. He pushed the door open hard. Anna shuddered and glanced up at her husband with fear.

"Ah, Princess: hold his head still, for God's sake," said the doctor in annoyance. "I almost tore a stitch." The doctor grabbed Anna's hand and showed her how to hold the boy's head.

The prince's face was livid.

"Hand the boy over to his mother and come to me. I need you now," he commanded sharply, imperiously, and maliciously.

"But we must finish what we're doing with this poor child," Anna said timidly.

"I beg you. . . . *Vous m'entendiez!*"[65] the prince shrieked suddenly, thumping his crutch on the floor.

But Anna ignored him and held the child, while the doctor continued his work diligently and conscientiously; his hands, adjusting the position of the boy's head, constantly and inadvertently touched Anna's hands and even brushed across her breasts, where the child's head was resting. The doctor didn't notice and didn't even hear the prince's words; he was totally absorbed by his work.

Suddenly the prince approached, seized the injured child in his arms—his crutch fell loudly—and thrusting the lad into the peasant woman's arms, pulled Anna away and dragged her into his study. The astonished doctor watched as they left and muttered, "He's mad!" He then set about his work once again, asking the nanny to assist.

Meanwhile the prince, still holding Anna by the arm, flung her down on the sofa, knocked over the armchair with a clumsy gesture, slammed the door, and began pacing the room, thumping his crutch, and muttering in his fury:

65. "You hear me!"

"When I ask you something . . . you humiliate me by your behavior with this German whippersnapper! That intimacy . . . It's intentional!" he shouted, beside himself with rage.

But this time even Anna got angry.

"You've completely lost your mind! Just listen to what you're saying! There's no place for such thoughts when faced with a suffering child!"

"Silence! Your excuses are even worse than your vile behavior! It's better for you to leave! Yes, go now!" shouted the prince, and pushing her out the door, he threw himself down on the sofa.

Anna left, still reeling. When she reached the living room, she grabbed her chest and merely whispered:

"There's a limit to everything! My God!"

She didn't cry. Her eyes stayed dry and her stare became blank and harsh. Entering the bedroom, she sat down in the armchair opposite the mirror and inadvertently glanced at her own face. She was ravishing in her rage: her pleasing, pale face breathed energy and purity, while her dark eyes seemed even darker and deeper from their embittered expression.

She didn't see her husband for the rest of the day. He didn't emerge from his study for dinner, and she remained alone with the children and the usual domestic servants. The children were talking about the kite they planned to fly after dinner, while Anna suddenly made up her mind to pay a visit to Varvara Alekseevna.

"Have the carriage harnessed with the team of four horses," she ordered loudly, so that her husband would hear. "And tell Dunyasha to get my white woolen dress ready."

"Mama, where are you going? Don't go!" the children protested.

"Where are you going?" Pavlik repeated. "Bring Dmitry Alekseevich back to us. He hasn't been here for such a long time."

Anna was glum all during dinner and scarcely answered their questions.

Afterward, without going in to see her husband, she went into the bedroom, changed her clothes, and left for Varvara Alekseevna's.

Her heart was pounding in excitement at the thought of seeing Bekhmetev again; she was angry at her own excitement, but the desire to see the man whose intimacy had touched her life so tenderly and which was so opposite to her husband's attitude grew so intense after the rude scene staged by her husband that she resolved to visit Varvara Alekseevna and see Bekhmetev, most likely for the last time—come what may.

II

By the time Anna entered the low but rather large hall in Varvara Alekseevna's house, a large group had already gathered. There were neighbors, old friends and relatives, two or three young women standing near the piano with a young man, and even the brash Elena Mikhailovna, who had been the cause of so much grief in Anna's life. Bekhmetev, who had grown astonishingly thin, wasted, and gloomy, sat alone; when he noticed Anna's entrance, he made his way over to her without pretending or concealing his joy.

"You declined, but then you came. What a wonderful surprise. I couldn't think of leaving without seeing you."

"Why didn't you come visit us?" asked Anna, extending her hand to him, which he kissed.

"Yes, of course, I'd have come to see you tomorrow, and I will drop in to say goodbye to my sick friend. But you see how weak I am; I don't know if I'll make it as far as the Aeolian Islands," he added with a gentle smile.[66]

Anna sighed heavily and went to greet Varvara Alekseevna in the living room. Bekhmetev followed her.

Varvara Alekseevna hastily exchanged greetings with Anna, thanked her for coming, and then returned anxiously to the task of making arrangements for the picnic that was scheduled for later that evening.

"Dmitry, do you still insist on going to the lake for tea?" she asked her brother. "You know, it's too damp for you there."

"No, now more than ever. I want to show the princess those wonderful places that I'll probably never get to see again." He smiled once more.

"It's as if the idea of inevitable and imminent death cheers him up," thought Anna.

They sat down near the window in the living room, and Bekhmetev, pointing to his chest, quietly and earnestly said to Anna:

"Something's gone very wrong in here, Princess; I feel ill."

"You'll recover again after you've gone abroad."

"What for? Better to go away completely, into eternity! It's become too cramped for me here."

It seemed to Anna that while saying this Bekhmetev didn't see her at all; rather, his eyes were gazing far off into limitlessness, and she felt like going there, too.

66. The Aeolian Islands make up a volcanic archipelago north of Sicily.

Many carriages were drawn up to the house. Varvara Alekseevna decided who should sit with whom, and left herself room in the coach with her brother, to protect him and shield him from the damp.

But Bekhmetev went up to his sister and said softly, but firmly:

"Varenka, I shall ask the princess to do me the honor of accompanying me."[67]

Anna wanted to object, but Bekhmetev looked at her so sternly, imploringly, and decisively, that the words died on her lips and she fell silent.

Bekhmetev chivalrously offered Anna his arm and, after seating her in the coach, sat down next to her, wrapping himself in his coat and draping his legs with a blanket.

All the carriages started off.

"Turn right," Bekhmetev ordered suddenly, and his coach proceeded along a narrow, shady road into an old pine forest.

"We'll take a different route," he said. "It's so beautiful!"

When they were left alone, Anna felt pangs of conscience at this intimacy. Bekhmetev's proximity upset her terribly; his failing appearance drove her to such despair that she was afraid she might not be able to restrain herself and would burst into tears at any moment, begin screaming, or do something extreme. She tried closing her eyes or looking to the side silently, pressing her hands to her breast and heart, as if trying to stifle the life within her.

Is death—that destroys the everyday aspects of life—ever magnificent, beautiful, and significant? That day, August 22, was for her the time of the solemn, splendid, and silent death of everything—around her and inside her. The harsh, transparent, autumnal air reminded her of the imminence of fall—the death of nature. Her dejected, emaciated companion on this excursion reminded her of the proximity of death. Her aching heart had lost its life force. Death, death was everywhere, right here, nearby—it was horrible; Anna felt afraid, as if it would also grab hold of her . . .

They entered the old pine forest. The age-old trees, immobile and dark, scarcely admitted the rays of the bright red setting sun, casting special light on the meadows where they sometimes used to ride.

"This is our *last* excursion together ever," thought Anna, looking at Bekhmetev. He sensed her glance and said:

"It's lovely here, isn't it?"

"Yes, astonishingly beautiful. But why did you come here? It's so damp and cold today."

67. Varenka is a diminutive form of the name Varvara.

"No, it's nothing, let's go on farther. Ah, how nice it is! It's never been so delightful," he affirmed. "Look at the forest above the lake; we'll *never* be here again. Take a good look. I love these places so much: forests and lakes. What could be lovelier?"

"Yes," Anna thought, "soon you'll be *nowhere;* you'll never be anywhere again!" She grabbed Bekhmetev's hand with an involuntary gesture.[68]

"Are you cold? What cold hands you have!"

"Is he really dying? We'll never be able to say another word to one another; thus, loving each other with this pure, innocent love, both of us—he, dying, while I—alas—continue living—we must both sacrifice our happiness, even though it's only by means of it that we have been able to say how dear we've been to each other these last few years; how we mutually consoled each other and how each forced the other to forget his own unhappiness in the atmosphere of love in which we've spent every moment of our constant spiritual communion."

Was it worthwhile sacrificing that questionable coldness, that egotistical, sensual attitude she constantly encountered in her respectable, handsome husband? "Should I preserve my chastity for *anyone*?" Anna continued to wonder. "No, not for anyone in the world; it's false. . . . I've preserved it because I've *loved* it; I've valued it more than anything else; if this man is so dear to me, it's only because he's also like that."

As if answering her own thoughts, Bekhmetev suddenly said:

"This outing, Princess, is our final farewell. I'm leaving tomorrow, and in all likelihood, we'll never see each other again." He fell silent.

"I wanted to tell you," he began again, haltingly, "that in my entire life, the brightest spots were my visits . . . no, I must tell the truth . . . my friendship with you."

Anna wanted to say something, but she couldn't. A spasm gripped her throat.

Bekhmetev continued:

"I've never met a woman with such an aura of purity, lucidity, and love for everything sublime as yours. Come what may, Princess, may God grant you one thing: to remain just as you are."

The coach rolled gently along the forest road; it grew dark and Bekhmetev looked so serene, so happy, just as he had a year ago when he and Anna were returning from town in a carriage full of children whom they had taken to

68. In her thoughts Anna switches from referring to him with the formal pronoun *vy* to the informal *ty*. When she speaks again, she reverts to the formal.

the photographer, and when both of them understood it was possible to be happy, to love, and also to love and rejoice over a clear sky, splendid summer nature, and the happiness of being together; but then it was impossible to say all this, impossible to do anything that would awaken even the least pangs of conscience in the presence of those innocent, sweet, loving children; it was even impossible to confess to *themselves* the joy of love, pure love, chaste, never expressed, love that now, on this magnificent August evening, was dying together with him, together with these ideal relations with a person who had aroused the noblest and best parts in Anna's soul.

"Now I'll return home and my husband will look at me distrustfully, suspecting the most despicable and immoral things, while at the same time he'll be kissing my bare shoulders and arms. And all day, like two criminals who commit their crimes at night, we'll be silent with each other, he with his haughty contempt and indifference to my life, and I with my fear in the face of his suspicions and my lonely world of the children, my cares, and my struggle with the fading feeling of love for my husband and the burning feeling of love for another man . . ."

They continued their drive. Bekhmetev wrapped himself up and kept coughing; the evening chill was penetrating with its unpleasant dampness. This ride through unfamiliar places seemed to Anna to be leading them together to an unknown eternity, to a place that would never part them again . . .

The sun had set. "It, too, has died!" she thought. The last rays of the sun suddenly lit up the tops of all the trees in the garden they had approached. "Soon all nature will die," she thought again. "And so will he. No, it's impossible! How on earth will I go on living? Where will that pure happiness be from which I can draw my strength, become better, cleverer, and kinder. . . . No, it's not possible!" Anna almost exclaimed.

"We've arrived," Bekhmetev said softly, taking Anna's hand in silence, giving it a prolonged and tender kiss. In an even softer voice he said: "Farewell, dear Princess."

Anna leaned forward and kissed his forehead. The spasm, suffocating her all the while, seemed to resolve into a soft, painful moan. Tears flowed from her eyes; something had burst in her heart and died—forever. Yet another side, *this* side of her life, was cut off forever. *It* was over.

But she had to live, and had to live well . . .

A large, noisy crowd had already gathered in the spacious, round gazebo lit by colorful lanterns. The servants were busy with refreshments, tea, and

fruit; they were arranging wooden boards as benches, hanging the last lanterns in the garden, building a bonfire, and seeing to the other pointless, but inevitable appurtenances of a picnic.

Bekhmetev was afraid to stay late and went home alone, after bidding farewell to everyone there. Anna was planning to stay until the end; when the evening drew to a close and she was sitting all alone in her carriage under the steel-blue cold moonlight of a bright August night, her spiritual solitude became particularly distressing, and sobs suddenly burst from her chest. She wept long and hard, as if mourning the loss of someone else's life as well as her own life that had ended. It was a wail of wild desperation; with such tears her grief had to pass, and so it did, receding further and further. By the time she approached her own house, she had regained complete control of herself; her courage and energy for life had returned.

The pain of a broken heart at her parting with Bekhmetev swiftly receded into the distance; it was as if, after crying herself out, she had dispensed with it forever; it was not characteristic of her energetic nature to pine for a long time. She felt dishonest in front of her children and her husband at this pain of separation from another man. She felt guilty for going, having left her husband disgruntled and indisposed at that. She recalled how Pavlik had asked her to stay—the whole world of her family surrounded her on all sides. Little Yusha seemed especially active with his tender, clever little face; lively Manya had her quick, categorical, and unexpected pronouncements about everything. Anna remembered her children's lessons, and all her ideas about the importance of education for the next generation; by the time she had reached her house, her spirits had already lifted; she entered with an awareness of her obligations, and felt as if renewed.

She took off her cloak and went first into the nursery; then she quietly approached the door of her husband's study, where he was still awake.

12

Meanwhile the prince, as soon as he was sure that Anna had left the house, without even stopping by his room, became terribly agitated; the wildest ideas entered his head. "Perhaps she's gone forever and will never return," he thought.

He shrank from the spiritual pain at the recollection of having shoved his wife. He had never done anything like that before. "Ah, ah!" he moaned to himself; but suddenly he recalled how, with his very own eyes, he had watched that greasy German doctor, with his white hands, while repairing the skin on the little peasant boy's forehead, pass his hands over Anna's

breasts. "Over *her* breasts! Probably on purpose! What was she feeling at that moment?"

Before his eyes the prince pictured clearly that splendid, full bosom—the one that had made him so often forget the whole world and become a slave to that woman!

In the depths of his soul he was aware that perhaps he was mistaken; that Anna's truthful eyes, her pure, almost childlike look, in spite of her thirty years of age, could never tell a lie; but pangs of jealousy tormented him all the more. "And now, why did she go over there?" he wondered. "Bekhmetev's there. . . . Who knows, if it's not the doctor, then perhaps my so-called friend is embracing her this very minute somewhere in the woods. I don't really know her; she's a mystery and more incomprehensible to me now than anyone. There's something she's hiding and it always escapes me."[69]

The prince tried to read, went in to see the children, looked at his watch, but could find no peace.

The nanny brought in his two youngest children—the little girl and tiny Yusha to say good night. He looked at the little girl as if she were a stranger; he reached for her little hands and began inspecting them.

"Who knows, perhaps this child isn't even *my* own daughter! Ugh! Yes, people say she has my hands, my way of holding a fork, of wiping her hands with a towel. . . . That's all true."[70]

He looked at the little boy; drawing him near, he gave him a kiss. He never had any doubts about that spit and image of himself.

Manya and Pavlik came in a little while later, also to say good night. He cut out some paper dolls for them and showed them how to blow on them and make it look as if they were fighting. The children laughed, but their laughter only annoyed him.

"Well, go on, off to bed. Is Yusha asleep?"

"He fell asleep a long time ago. He cried and asked for his mama to say his prayers."

"Good night, good night," said the prince, growing more and more annoyed.

"He called for his mama to say his prayers, while she's off wearing her white dress and flirting with that evil Koshchei."[71]

69. *"I don't know her. I know her only as an animal."*

70. *"Perhaps she's been carrying on with the footmen and bearing their children who are considered mine."*

71. In Russian folklore, a bony emaciated old man, rich and wicked, who knows the secret of eternal life.

The prince lay down on the sofa, lit a cigar, and began thinking about his relations with his wife: "How nicely and patiently she looks after me! Surely it's because she's feeling guilty. And what if she really is guilty?" he wondered with terrible clarity and certainty regarding his wife's guilt over her illicit love for Bekhmetev.

He jumped up, opened the window, glanced out at the round, bright moon that seemed so impudent, and began listening to the night sounds. He heard the gallop of horses and the sound of an approaching carriage. It was getting closer and closer.

"That's her," he thought. But it was the doctor heading home from the picnic; seeing the prince standing by the window, he stopped his horse.

"You're still awake, Prince? That's not good for a patient."

"Drop in for a minute. Tell me about Varvara Alekseevna's ball."

"Forgive me, Prince. I can't. I have to perform an operation in the village early tomorrow morning; I need to get up early and feel fresh."

"Is the princess on her way home? Did you see her there?"

"Yes, of course! Well, I don't envy her. They sat her in the carriage with that consumptive Bekhmetev. He took her off to show her some picturesque spots; he wouldn't listen when I said it was too cold and damp. Picturesque spots, indeed! That fellow's a goner. He's got about three months to live."

"Well, good night, doctor. It's chilly. Thank you," the prince said suddenly in an irritated tone and slammed the window shut. His face assumed a terrible expression. He had no further doubts: Anna was in love with Bekhmetev and having an affair with him! The prince began gasping for air. He stood there at his desk, nervously shifting objects around, moving his books and papers from one place to another, listening to the sounds.

Soon he heard Anna's coach approaching on its soft, rubber tires; it stopped at the front porch. The prince heard his wife enter the house, take off her cloak, go in to see the children, and then approach his study door with light, almost inaudible steps. The prince stood there stock still.

"Are you still awake?" Anna asked softly.

"The foul deceiver! She's still pretending!" thought the prince; he fingered the small, spherical handle of the heavy white marble paperweight lying on his desk.

Anna opened the door and went up to her husband.

"What's wrong? Are you feeling worse?"

"Not only am I feeling worse, but either my heart's about to burst or I shall have a stroke. I can't tolerate your behavior any longer."

"My behavior? What have I done?"

"You dare tell me that you're not in love with Bekhmetev?"

Anna flushed and said:

"I love Dmitry Alekseevich very much and . . ."

She fell silent.

"Perhaps you'll deny that you went for a ride with him, just the two of you, all evening, in front of everyone, to God knows where!"

"He's leaving tomorrow, and I feel very sorry for him . . ."

"You love him, and you've been his lover for a long time!"

"Be quiet, for God's sake!"

"I'll kill you . . . you vile slut. . . . I've had all I can take; I won't let you . . . My honor and my family's honor . . ."

The prince was choking with malice and distress.

"Your honor! Oh, you can rest assured about your honor," Anna said in her own defense. "Calm down, for heaven's sake, it's not good for you."

She came close to her husband and took him by the hand, but her touch maddened him even more. He grabbed the heavy paperweight off his desk, raised it up, and shouted:

"Get out of here! Or I'll kill you!"

"But for what? Could it be that you still don't know me? Calm down, for heaven's sake. Could there really be anything to it?"

"You lie all the time. . . . Be quiet! I can't vouch for myself. Get out!"

He was shaking all over; he lowered the paperweight, then he raised it again.

Anna tried once more to take the prince by the hand, but he turned away and shoved her aside; just after she ran behind the desk, he hurled the heavy paperweight at her. It sailed across the top of the desk, struck Anna's temple dully and harshly, and then fell to the floor heavily and loudly.

Like a wounded bird lowering its white wings and somehow folding clumsily in half, Anna collapsed behind the large desk into the soft white folds of her dress. A brief muffled moan emerged from her chest and she lost consciousness.

The prince rushed to her. A thin stream of blood was flowing from her blue temple, staining her white dress with little red spots. Her face was deathly pale, her lips open, her eyes rolled back, her arms bent in an awkward position.

"Anna! Anna!" cried the prince, trying to lift her up. But the crutch and his painful leg hindered his every movement.

He opened the door and called for the servants. The nanny and lackey came running in.

"The princess has fainted. Send for the doctor at once."

The nanny ran to Anna and screamed:

"Oh, my God, she hurt herself and fell! Good Lord!"

"No, she didn't hurt herself. I killed her," said the prince.

The shocked nanny looked at him, crossed herself, ran up to Anna, and cried:

"He's completely out of his mind and doesn't even know what he's saying."

She took some water from the prince's washbasin and began to wipe Anna's temple and sprinkle water in her face. She tried to lift her up, but couldn't. She called for the footman and the two of them somehow managed to drag Anna over to the sofa and lay her down there. Then the nanny called for some ice.

The maids, housekeeper, and English governess all came running—wearing the most amusing and varied sleepwear. The frightened Manya, roused by the noise, scampered in barefoot wearing only a nightshirt; she stood at a distance and screamed:

"Nanny, did mamá hurt herself? Will she die? Nanny, dear, where's papá? Is the doctor coming? There's a hole in her temple. It's bleeding! Ah! Ah!" Manya cried.

The poor little girl was trembling so much that her little body was bobbing up and down.

"Go and lie down, Manichka; the doctor's coming soon; it'll pass.[72] Mama stumbled and fell; it's nothing at all," said the nanny to console her. But Manya could see from the nanny's face that it wasn't "nothing at all." Nanny pressed the ice to her mother's temple and looked at her mistress's pale, lifeless face with a hopeless expression.

"I won't leave, nanny. I'm afraid. I'll stay here," said the little girl and jumped onto a large armchair. Folding her legs under her, she squatted and stared at her mother and her nanny. She was still shaking and her teeth were chattering.

All the while the prince was out of the room. He was sitting in the living room, waiting for the doctor.

"It's a fainting spell," he kept trying to console himself. "She'll probably come to in a minute. I hear someone talking about it in there. . . . So this is what her behavior's led to!" he said, trying to justify himself. "I can't risk any stain to my honor, can I? Yes, to the honor of my ancestors! We've never had any immoral women in our family! I'm a man and my behavior's always been beyond reproach. . . . It's a disgrace to the children that their mother's a debauched woman! And the possibility of having a child who's not mine?"

72. Manichka is an affectionate diminutive of the name Manya.

The prince was convulsed with pain, his face distorted by horror; he tried to stand up, but after making weak fists, he slumped back into his armchair.

"Well, fine. That's the way it had to be," he decided.

A bowl of plums stood on the table; he took one and began eating it. The old English clock slowly and deliberately sounded the hour with its resonant chime: two in the morning. The roosters started crowing in the village. The prince looked out the window. Bright stars were twinkling somewhere high in the dark sky; the moon had set; it was cold and he suddenly wanted to go to sleep.

"What was it all about?" he wondered all of a sudden. "Has she really not recovered yet?"

The prince ran into his study; the doctor arrived at almost the same moment. He went right up to Anna, removed the bag of ice, listened to her heart, felt for her pulse, and his face became darker and darker.

"What happened?" he asked.

"A blow was inflicted with this paperweight," said the prince, picking up from the floor the heavy object that hadn't been noticed by anyone up to this point.

"The blow was well aimed. Her pulse is very weak, as is her heartbeat."

The doctor reached for his medical bag and took out various bottles and medical instruments; after asking the nanny for assistance, he went back to Anna.

Her beautiful, pale head rested high on the leather pillow of the sofa. Her black hair with its golden sheen and its fine curls framed her face like a halo. The expression on her face was frightened and stern. Blood was still oozing from the deep, dark wound to her temple, dripping down her pale cheek onto her white dress.

The doctor tried to revive her, but none of his efforts could bring her out of her deep faint. The nanny led away Manya, who had begun to sob loudly.

The prince went up to his wife and glanced at the doctor with an inquisitive look. The doctor didn't say a word and continued his work.

Around ten o'clock Anna began to come to. The doctor sent everyone away, fearing too great a shock for the patient. A bandage was applied to the wound and it gave Anna a strange, pitiful appearance. At last she opened her eyes and looked around wildly.

"Call the prince," she said softly and closed her eyes again.

The prince came in and bent over her. Anna opened her large black eyes; as if exerting great effort, she began speaking in a weak, muffled voice:

"It had to be. . . . Forgive me. . . . You're not to blame. . . . But if I die, I have to tell you. . . ."

She hesitated and closed her eyes.

"What? What? Say it, for God's sake! Hurry up and tell me now," the prince implored, expecting a confession of her guilt.

"I was never unfaithful to you; I loved you as much as I could, and I will die chaste before you and the children. . . . But it's better this way! Oh, I feel so tired!" she sighed and fell silent.

"Anna, I'm guilty before you. Anna, my dear, forgive me . . ."

The prince began to sob, took her hand, and placed it against his cheek. Her hand was growing cold.

"Where are the children?" she asked suddenly and raised herself up slightly. "Quickly, quickly, call the children!"

Anna slumped in exhaustion and closed her eyes. She opened them a few moments later but by that time they weren't looking at anyone. Her eyes were serious, her gaze directed far away, beyond anything earthly.

"I wanted a different kind of love. One like . . ." Anna raised her eyes to her husband and, as if recognizing him with effort, added, "You're not to blame. . . . You couldn't understand that . . ." She hesitated and added with difficulty: "What's *important* in love . . ."

They brought in the children, frightened and weeping; Anna kissed them and wanted to make the sign of the cross over them as she did every evening when saying good night, but her arm drooped.

They took away the children; something ominous, quiet, and terrible floated into the room in their wake and hung there like a heavy cloud.

"It's finished," she muttered softly. "*Cette clef—c'est l'infini* . . ." she muttered even more softly, as if delirious, for some reason recalling Lamartine's words that Bekhmetev had read aloud to her a long time ago.[73]

The doctor drew near. He nodded his head slightly and signaled to the prince. The prince sobbed softly. Anna never recovered consciousness again. She died at exactly noon; by 7 P.M. that evening she lay on a table in the large hall attired in an elegant light-colored dress, so unpleasantly striking because of the contrast between the frivolous apparel and the seriousness and gloom of the pale, stony, deathly face with its pierced temple.

There was something terrible in the prince's despair. It was the feeble hysteria of a child lost in the woods. He slammed into walls, shouted, moaned, and threw himself down on sofas and armchairs, asking everyone to kill him, to send him to jail, to shoot him. He didn't eat, didn't drink, and didn't sleep.

73. The French sentence means "This key—is the infinite."

His friends and relatives shook their heads and said that he was losing his mind. Seeing his appalling condition, no one raised the question of how her death had occurred, and no one listened to the prince.

"She fell and seriously injured herself," they all said.

The despondent children grew thin and wandered miserably through the rooms, as if searching for something. The older ones wept to the point of exhaustion, so that people started to worry about them. On the table in the living room stood a sewing box and there lay—with a carefully inserted needle—Anna's work. On the windowsill stood roses that she had watered with the children just yesterday from her small watering can. On the floor lay some cardboard soldiers with which she had been playing with little Yusha, making him knock them down. They had both laughed when the prince came in. . . . On the desk was an unfinished letter to her sister Natasha; on the armchair lay her white cloth wrap, bordered with dark feathers, as if it had just been tossed off her shoulders. It seemed as if she might return at any moment . . .

But not only did she not come back, but, on the third day, amid great weeping, they carried her out of the house and lowered her into that terrible, deep hole that would forever instill horror, and from which one always hopes to retrieve, even if only for a moment, the beloved creature who's been lowered into it on long canvas strips, and then sprinkled with clumps of dirt landing on the coffin lid.

Now she had merged with nature that she had loved so much and passed into eternity with it . . .

The prince finally understood that she was no longer alive, that he not only had killed her with that piece of white marble but had murdered her long, long before by not knowing her and not appreciating her. He understood that the love he had given her was the kind of love that had killed her, and that it was not the way he should have loved her. . . .[74] And now, only after her body had disappeared, had he begun to understand her soul. . . . More and more he came to value the pure, tender, loving soul that had left him, and that had for so many years enlivened his life and that of his children so cheerfully and colorfully; all the more did he want to join his soul with hers . . .

The prince's friends and relatives said that he had become a desperate spirit and they feared for his mental faculties.

A month after Anna's death came news of Bekhmetev's death abroad.

74. *"During the trial I was asked how and with what I killed her. Fools! They thought I'd killed my wife then, with a knife, on the fifth of October. I didn't kill her then, but much earlier. Just as they're all now killing, everyone, all of them . . ."*