

**IVAN
TURGENEV**

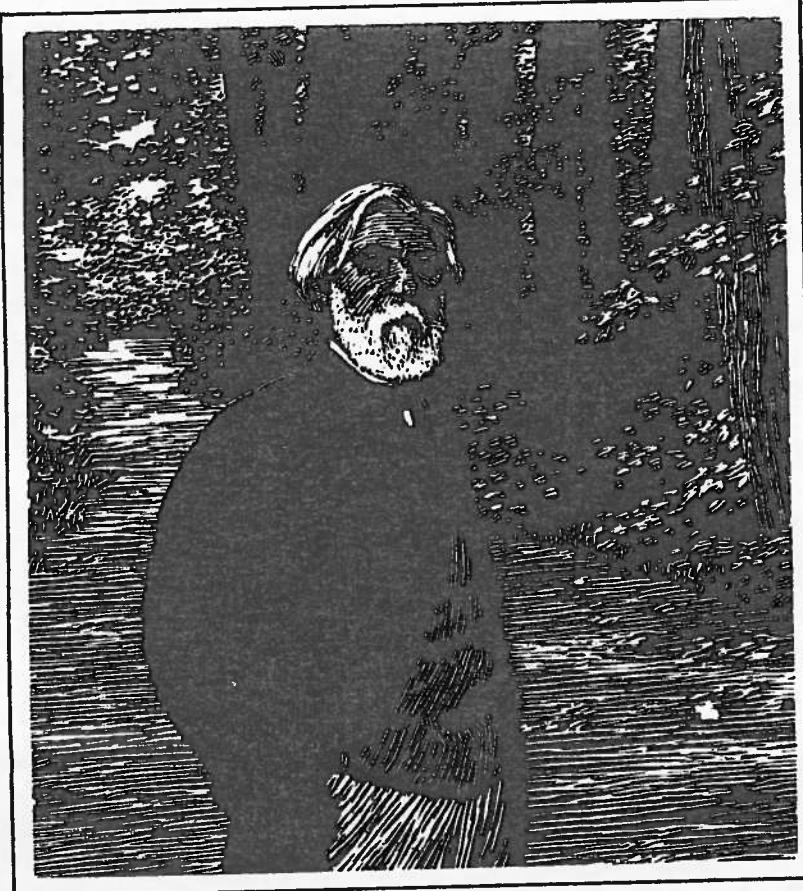
*Three Novellas
About Love*

Asya

First Love

Spring Torrents

Translated by *IVY* and *TATIANA LITVINOV*



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I

I was twenty-five years old then, began N.N., so you see all this is ancient history.¹ I had only just escaped from tutelage and was going abroad, not to "complete my education", as they used to say in those days, but simply because I wanted to have a look at the wide world. I was healthy, young, high-spirited; I had plenty of money and had as yet acquired no responsibilities—and I lived for the moment, did what I liked, in a word, it was the springtime of my life. It never even occurred to me then that man is not a plant and that his springtime is but a brief one. The young eat gilded honey-cakes, thinking that's what was meant by daily bread; but the time will come when they will be glad of a crust. There is no point in dwelling on this, though.

I travelled with neither aim nor plan, stopping wherever I liked and resuming my journey as soon as I felt a desire for new faces—and I mean faces. It was only people that interested me; I detested monuments, magnificent collections, and the very sight of a cicerone was depressing and hateful to me; I was bored to death in the Dresden Grüne Gewölbe². Nature affected me intensely, but I did not care for the so-called natural beauties, for impressive peaks, cliffs, or waterfalls; I did not like to have Nature forced on my notice, I would not brook her interference. But faces, living human faces, human speech, the movements and laughter of human beings—these were things I could not do without. I was always most happy and at

my ease in a crowd—I liked going where others went, shouting when others shouted, and at the same time was fond of observing how these others shouted. My chief amusement was to observe human beings ... and I did not merely observe them, I examined them with a kind of joyous, insatiable curiosity. But again I am straying from my narrative.

Well then, twenty years ago, I was living in the small German town of Z., on the left bank of the Rhine. I was in search of solitude, having recently been smitten by the charms of a certain young widow whose acquaintance I had made at a watering-place. She was extremely handsome and clever, and flirted with all and sundry, including my unworthy self, first encouraging me, only to wound me cruelly and abandon me for a rosy-cheeked Bavarian lieutenant. It must be admitted that the wound to my heart was not so very deep, but I considered myself bound to indulge in melancholy and solitude for a certain time—the young do indulge in such moods—and took up my residence in the town of Z.

This little town took my fancy because of its situation at the foot of two high hills, its crumbling walls and towers, old lime-trees and the high bridge over the sparkling river, a tributary of the Rhine, and most of all, by its good wine. The prettiest blonde German damsels walked up and down the narrow streets every evening as soon as the sun had set (it was June), greeting the foreigner with a pleasantly uttered *Guten Abend*; some of them did not even go in when the moon rose behind the steep roofs of the ancient houses and the small cobble-stones in the road lay clearly outlined in its still beams. It was then that I liked best to roam the streets of the little town. The moon seemed to be gazing steadily down at it from the pure sky, and the town felt this gaze and lay there serene and responsive, flooded by the moonlight, that tranquil light which is nevertheless so subtly disturbing. The weathercock on top of the high Gothic steeple shone a pale gold, and the same gold shimmered on the black gleaming surface of the river. Slender candles (the Germans are a thrifty nation!) flickered modestly in the narrow windows beneath slate roofs. Vines thrust out curling tendrils mysteriously from behind stone walls; something flitted by in the shadow of

the ancient well in the middle of the triangular town square, the drowsy whistle of the night watchman suddenly broke the silence, an amiable dog growled softly, and the air was so caressing to one's face, the lime-trees were so fragrant, that one breathed ever deeper and deeper, and the word *Gretchen*³ rose to one's lips either as between an exclamation or a question.

The town of Z. lies about a mile away from the bank of the Rhine. I often went to gaze upon the mighty river and sat for hours at a time on a stone bench beneath a huge, solitary ash-tree, forcing myself to brood over the fickle widow. A little statue of the Madonna,⁴ with a child-like face and a crimson heart stabbed through and through with swords on the exposed breast, peered sadly out from among the foliage. On the opposite bank lay the town of L., which was a little larger than that in which I had taken up my residence. One evening I was sitting on my favourite bench, gazing in turns at the river, the sky and the vineyards. Flaxen-headed urchins were scrambling over the side of a boat, hauled on to the bank with its tar-smeared bottom uppermost. Ships glided slowly downstream with slack sails; the greenish waves slipped by with faintly gurgling ripples. Suddenly I caught the sound of music; I listened more attentively. A waltz was being played in the town of L.; the double-bass boomed spasmodically, the violin poured out an indistinct melody, the flute whistled cheerfully.

"What's that?" I asked of an old man in a velveteen waistcoat, blue stockings and buckled shoes, who was just then approaching me.

"That?" he repeated, shifting the stem of his pipe from one corner of his mouth to the other. "It's the students from B. who have come here to hold their *Kommers*."

"I should like to have a look at this *Kommers*," I said to myself. "And I've never been in L., either." I sought out the ferryman and crossed to the opposite bank.

II

It may be that there are some who do not know what a *Kommers* is. It is a kind of solemn feast attended by all

the students from the same district or fraternity (*Landsmannschaft*). Almost all the participants in a *Kommers* wear the time-honoured costume of German students—short military tunics, high boots, and tiny caps with bands of the prescribed colour. The students usually assemble for dinner at which a senior presides, and feast till morning, drinking, singing their songs—*Landesvater, Gaudeamus*⁵—smoking, reviling the philistines. Sometimes they hire a band.

A *Kommers* of precisely this description was being held in the town of L., in a garden opening on to the street in front of the modest Sun Inn. Garden and inn were decked with flags; the students sat at tables beneath the clipped lime-trees; a huge bulldog reposed under one of the tables; the musicians sat a little apart, in an ivy arbour, scraping away valiantly, and occasionally refreshing themselves with draughts of beer. There were a number of people in the street, gathered in front of the low railings of the garden: the good people of L. were determined not to miss the opportunity of gazing at the visitors. I joined the crowd of onlookers. It amused me to watch the faces of the students; their embraces, exclamations, the innocent affections of youth, the fiery glances, causeless laughter—the best kind of laughter in the world—all this joyous surge of fresh, youthful life, this impulse to advance—anywhere so long as it was forward—this good-natured abandon touched and inspired me. I almost felt inclined to join them myself...

"Haven't you seen enough, Asya?" said a masculine voice just behind me, speaking Russian.

"Let's wait a little longer," replied a feminine voice in the same language.

I turned swiftly... My glance fell on a good-looking young man wearing a peaked cap and a loose jacket; he was holding the arm of a girl, not very tall, with a straw hat shading the whole upper part of her face.

The words: "Are you Russians?" slipped involuntarily from my lips.

The young man smiled and said: "Yes."

"I never expected ... in such a remote place..." I began.

"Nor did we!" he broke in. "But so much the better! Let me introduce myself—my name's Gagin, and this is

my..." he stumbled in his speech for a moment, "my sister. And what is your name, may I ask?"

I named myself and we got into conversation. I learned that Gagin, who, like myself, was travelling for pleasure, had drifted to the town of L. about a week before, and there he had stayed. Truth to say, I was not very anxious to make friends with Russians abroad. I could tell them from afar by their gait, the cut of their clothes, and especially by the expression of their faces. Usually complacent and contemptuous, frequently domineering, this expression would suddenly change to one of caution and anxiety; the stranger would all at once be on the alert, his gaze shifting uneasily. "Oh dear, I hope I haven't done anything foolish! They aren't laughing at me, are they?" his flurried glance seemed to say. A moment passed, and once more the majesty of countenance would be restored, with occasional lapses into blank astonishment. Yes, I avoided Russians, but I took an immediate liking to Gagin. There are faces which everyone likes looking at, faces which seem to warm and soothe, and Gagin's was one of these—pleasing, kindly, with large, mild eyes, and framed in soft, silky curls. And when he spoke, even if you did not see his face, you felt, from the sound of his voice alone, that he was smiling.

The girl he called his sister at once struck me as exceedingly pretty. There was something interesting and unusual in her round, olive-skinned face, with the small, fine nose, almost childish cheeks, and luminous black eyes. She was gracefully built but did not seem to have grown to maturity yet. She was not in the least like her brother.

"Will you come home with us?" Gagin suggested. "I think we've been looking at Germans long enough. Our students would certainly have begun breaking the glasses and chairs by now, these are awfully tame. What do you say to going home, Asya?"

The girl nodded assent.

"We live outside town," continued Gagin, "in a lonely house, in the middle of a vineyard, very high up. It's a nice place, you'll love it! Our landlady promised to have some sour milk ready for us. It will be dark soon, and you'd better wait for the moon to rise before crossing the Rhine again."

We set off. Passing through the narrow gates of the town (it was surrounded by an ancient stone wall on which battlements were still intact in places), we emerged in open country, keeping close to the wall for about a hundred yards till we came to a tiny wicket-gate. Gagin opened it and led us up a steep path between vines planted in terraces; the sun was just beginning to set, but a liquid crimson light lay on the green vines, the tall stems, the dry soil on which big and small flagstones were scattered, the whitewashed walls crisscrossed with black beams and four windows of a small house on the top of the slope.

"This is our abode!" exclaimed Gagin as we approached. "And there's our landlady bringing us the milk. *Guten Abend, Madame!*.. We'll have something to eat in a minute, but first," he added, "look behind you—how do you like our view?"

The view was indeed beautiful. The Rhine lay far beneath us, silvery between its green banks; in one place it glowed with the crimson and gold of the sunset. The little town, nestling on the bank, showed all its houses and streets; the hills and fields around it extended far into the distance. It was lovely below, but above it was still more beautiful. The purity and depth of the sky, the radiant transparency of the atmosphere made a deep impression on me. The air was cool and light and vibrant as if it, too, felt freer at that height.

"You've chosen a wonderful place to live in," I said.

"Asya found it," replied Gagin. "Come, Asya," he continued, "give your orders. Have everything served out of doors. We'll have supper here. You can hear the music better. Have you noticed," he continued, turning to me, "how a waltz that is simply abominable close by, a mere jumble of coarse, vulgar sounds, is suddenly transformed and stirs all your romantic chords when you hear it from a distance?"

Asya (her name was really Anna, but Gagin called her Asya, and with your permission, I will do the same) went into the house and was soon back again with the landlady. They carried between them a big tray, on which were a jug of milk, plates, spoons, sugar, berries, and bread. We sat down and began to eat. Asya took off her hat; her black hair, which she wore rather short and brushed smoothly

over her head, like a young man's, fell in heavy locks round her neck and ears. At first she was shy with me, but Gagin chided her for this.

"Stop sulking, Asya! He won't bite you!"

She smiled and before long began speaking to me of her own accord. I have never seen a more restless creature. She did not sit still for a single moment; she was always jumping up, running into the house and back, humming, laughing frequently and strangely, as if she were laughing not at anything she heard, but at all sorts of thoughts which came into her head. Her great eyes looked straight ahead, brightly and fearlessly, but every now and then the lids contracted, and her glance became surprisingly deep and tender.

We chatted for nearly two hours. The day had long expired, and evening, first flaming and gradually subsiding to a serene crimson glow, in its turn growing pale and faint, melted, shimmering, into night, but our talk went on and on, as tranquil and peaceful as the air around us. Gagin ordered a bottle of Rhine wine which we drank at our leisure. The music still reached us, but its sounds now seemed sweeter and softer; lights came out in the town and over the river. Asya, her head drooping, her hair falling over her eyes, grew suddenly silent and sighed. She then told us she was going to bed, and went into the house; but I saw her standing for a long time without lighting her candle at the closed window. At last the moon rose, its beams playing over the Rhine; everything looked different, some objects were lit up, others were plunged in darkness, even the wine in our cutglass tumblers gleamed mysteriously. The wind dropped, as if folding its wings, and died down; a fragrant nocturnal warmth rose from the ground.

"Time to go home!" I cried, "or I may not find anyone to ferry me across."

"Time to go home," echoed Gagin.

We went downhill by the path. Suddenly the stones rolled down behind us—Asya was running after us.

"I thought you were asleep," said her brother, but she ran past us without a word. The last dim torches lit by the students in the inn garden illuminated the foliage from below, giving the trees a festive and fantastic aspect. We

found Asya on the bank of the river, talking to the ferryman. I leaped into the boat and bade my new friends farewell. Gagin promised to come and see me the next day. I pressed his hand and held out my hand to Asya, but she merely looked at me and shook her head. The boat put out and cut across the rapid stream. The ferryman, a hale old fellow, plunged the oars into the dark water with an effort.

"You've crashed into the moonlight pillar, you've broken it," Asya shouted after me.

I looked down—the water was heaving round the sides of the boat in dark waves.

"Good-bye!" rang out her voice once more.

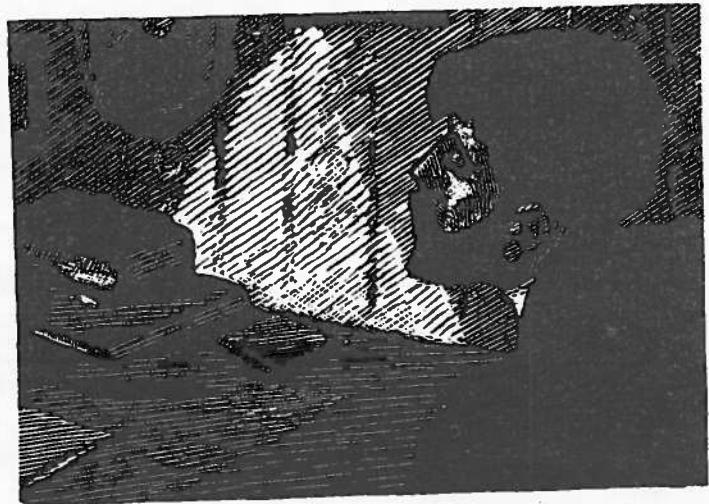
"Till tomorrow," called out Gagin.

The boat touched shore. I got out and looked back. There was no longer anyone to be seen on the opposite bank. The shaft of moonlight again stretched right across the river like a bridge of gold. The sounds of the old-fashioned Lanner waltz came to my ears as if bidding me farewell. Gagin was right, all the chords in my soul quivered in response to those insinuating strains. I walked home over the dark fields, slowly inhaling the fragrant air, and arrived at my room quite languid from the sweet exhaustion of vague, endless anticipation. I felt happy... But what was it that had made me happy? I desired nothing, I thought of nothing... I was happy.

I dived into my bed all but laughing from an excess of light, pleasing sensations, and was just about to close my eyes when it suddenly struck me that I had not once remembered my cruel beauty the whole evening. "What does that mean?" I asked myself. "Am I not in love?" But with this I must have fallen asleep immediately, like a babe in its cradle.

III

The next morning (I was already awake, but was still in bed) I heard the sound of a stick rattling against the window-pane, and a voice, which I immediately recognised as Gagin's, singing:



*And if thou sleep'st, I'll wake thee
To the strains of my guitar...⁶*

I hastened to open the door to him.

"Good morning," he said, coming in. "I've disturbed you early, but just look what a morning it is! The air's so fresh, dew everywhere, larks singing..."

With his curly, glossy hair, bare neck and pink cheeks he was as fresh as the morning himself.

I dressed; we went into the garden and sat on a bench, where we ordered coffee and began talking. Gagin informed me of his plans for the future. Having an adequate income and being quite independent, he planned to devote himself to art, and his only regret was that he had been so long making up his mind and had wasted so much time. I confided my own plans in him, initiating him, among other things, into the secret of my unhappy love. He heard me out indulgently, but as far as I could see my passion did not arouse much sympathy in him. Adding a few sighs to mine, out of politeness, he invited me to go home with him and look at his sketches. I readily consented.

We did not find Asya at home. She had gone, the landlady said, to "the ruins". A few miles beyond the town of L. were the ruins of a feudal castle. Gagin opened all his portfolios for me. There was a great deal of life and sincerity in his sketches, a certain freedom and breadth, but not one was finished, and I thought the drawing careless and feeble. I told him quite frankly what I thought.

"Yes, yes!" he exclaimed, sighing. "You are right. It's all very poor and immature, but what can I do? I've never really studied, and then there is the accursed Slav laxness. While you're pondering what you will do, you soar like an eagle, you feel capable of moving mountains—but when it comes to execution, you soon grow weak and weary."

I was about to make some encouraging remarks, but he silenced me with a wave of his hand and, gathering all the portfolios into a heap, dumped them on to the sofa.

"If I have patience enough, something will come of me," he said through his teeth. "If not, I shall remain a dunce. Let's go and look for Asya!"

We went out of the house.

IV

The path to the ruins wound along the slope of a narrow wooded valley; the bottom of this valley formed the bed of a rapid stream, making its noisy way over the stones as if in a hurry to merge with the great river that was gleaming tranquilly in the rift between the dark ridges of a mountain range. Gagin drew my attention to places which the light made especially beautiful, and his words showed that, though he might not be a painter, he had the soul of an artist. The ruins soon came in sight. On the crest of a naked rock rose a square turret, all black, still sturdy, but split in two by a diagonal crack. Moss-grown walls extended on either side of it, and here and there ivy clung to its stones; crooked trees drooped from the hoary battlements and crumbling arches. A stony path led to the surviving gates. Just as we approached them, the figure of a woman flashed by, ran swiftly over a heap of rubble and squatted on the ledge of a wall, on the very edge of an abyss.

"Why, it's Asya!" exclaimed Gagin. "What a crazy girl!"

We passed through the gateway and found ourselves in a small courtyard overgrown with crab apple-trees and nettles. It was indeed Asya on the ledge. Turning her face in our direction she laughed, but did not move from her perch. Gagin shook his finger at her, and I reproached her loudly for her recklessness.

"Leave her alone!" whispered Gagin to me. "Don't tease her. You don't know her. She'd think nothing of climbing the tower. Better observe and admire the common sense of the people here."

I looked round. In a corner, sheltered in a tiny wooden booth, an old woman sat knitting a stocking and peering at us through her spectacles. She sold beer, ginger-bread and seltzer water to tourists. We sat down on a bench and drank the cool beer out of heavy pewter mugs. Asya sat motionless on her ledge, her legs tucked under her, a gauze scarf bound round her head; her graceful figure was charmingly silhouetted against the clear sky, but I looked at her with a feeling of distaste. Already the day before I had noticed something tense, something not quite natural in her... "She wants to make an impression on us," I thought.

"Why does she do it? What a childish trick!" As if guessing my thoughts, she suddenly cast a rapid searching look at me, again laughed, bounded from the wall in two jumps, and went up to the old woman, whom she asked to give her a glass of water.

"Do you think it's because I'm thirsty?" she said, addressing her brother. "No—there are some flowers growing on the wall which simply must be watered."

Gagin paid no attention to what she said. Holding the glass in her hand, she began climbing over the ruins, stopping here and there, bending over with an absurd air of importance as she poured out a drop or two of water, which shone brilliantly in the sun. Her movements were charming, but I still felt annoyed with her, though I could not help admiring her lightness and agility. At one extremely dangerous place she gave an affected gasp, and then burst out laughing... I was still more annoyed.

"She climbs like a goat!" muttered the old woman, looking up from her knitting for a moment.

At last Asya, having poured out all the water, came down to us, swaying playfully. Her brows, nostrils and lips twitched with a kind of strange mockery, her dark eyes were narrowed half defiantly, half merrily.

"I know you consider my conduct improper," her face seemed to say, "but I don't care. You're admiring me really."

"Well done, Asya, well done!" said Gagin in an undertone.

She seemed suddenly ashamed and, lowering her long eyelashes, sat down meekly beside us as if she felt guilty. For the first time I had a good look at her face, the most changeable face I had ever seen. A few minutes later it turned quite pale and assumed an absorbed, almost sorrowful expression; the very features seemed to me to have grown larger, more austere and plain. She became completely subdued. We went all round the ruins (Asya following at our heels), admiring the view. The dinner-hour was approaching. Gagin paid the old woman, took another mug of beer and, turning to me, exclaimed with a knowing look:

"To the health of the lady of your heart!"

"Has he—have you really such a lady?" asked Asya abruptly.

"Who hasn't?" parried Gagin.

Asya thought for a moment; her face changed again, and once more her expression became one of defiant, almost insolent mockery.

On the way back she laughed and gambolled with still greater abandon. She broke off a long branch, laid it across her shoulder like a gun, and tied the scarf round her head. I remember we encountered a large English family, fair-haired and stuffy. Each of its members, as if at a command, turned glassy stares of icy astonishment upon Asya, and she, as if to spite them, broke into a song. As soon as we got home, she went to her room, and only reappeared when dinner was served, dressed in her best frock, her hair neatly brushed, tightly laced, and wearing gloves on her hands. She bore herself soberly, almost primly at table, scarcely touching the food and sipping water from a wine-glass. She obviously wished to appear before me in a new role—that of a well-behaved, well-bred young lady. Gagin let her alone; I could see that he was used to letting her have her way in everything. He only cast an occasional good-humoured glance at me, slightly raising one shoulder, as if to say: "She's a child—be indulgent!" The moment the meal was over, Asya rose, dropped a little curtsey and, putting on her hat, asked Gagin if she might go and see Frau Louise.

"Since when have you begun asking my permission?" he replied with his invariable smile, which seemed this time to have a shade of embarrassment in it. "Are you so bored in our company?"

"Not at all, but I promised Frau Louise yesterday that I would go and see her; besides, I thought you'd be happier by yourselves. Mr. N." (she pointed to me) "can tell you more about himself."

She left us.

"Frau Louise," began Gagin, avoiding my glance, "is the widow of a former burgomaster, a worthy but empty-headed old lady. She has taken a great fancy to Asya. Asya has a passion for getting to know people in lower walks of life; I have observed that this sort of thing always springs from pride. She's certainly a bit spoilt, as you will have noticed," he added after a moment's silence. "But what's

to be done about it? I have never been able to be strict with anyone—still less with her; I have to be indulgent to her."

I said nothing, and Gagin changed the subject. The more I saw of him, the more I liked him. I soon summed him up. His was a true Russian nature, frank, honest, single-minded, but regrettably languid and lacking in tenacity and fire. Youth did not bubble up in him, it merely shed a quiet light. He had charm and intelligence, but I could not imagine what he would be like when he came to full maturity. Would he be an artist? To be an artist requires incessant, grinding toil ... and toil, thought I, looking at his indeterminate features, listening to his slow speech, is just what you will not do, you will never be able to drive yourself. But it was impossible not to like him, one's whole heart went out to him. We spent something like three or four hours together, now sitting on the sofa, now strolling slowly up and down in front of the house, and during these four hours we became close friends.

The sun had set and it was time for me to go. Asya had not yet come back.

"What a self-willed thing she is!" exclaimed Gagin. "Shall I see you home? We could look in at Frau Louise's and find out if Asya's there. It's not much out of your way."

We descended towards the town and turned into a narrow, crooked side-street, where we stopped at a four-storey house, only two windows wide. The second storey jutted into the street over the ground-floor, the third and fourth, jutted out over the second. Its crumbling stonework, the two thick pillars supporting the upper storeys, the steep tiled roof and the beak-like projection over the attics, made it look like a huge, crouching bird.

"Asya!" called Gagin. "Are you there?"

We heard the window of a lighted room in the third storey open and saw Asya's dark head. From behind her peered the toothless, blear-eyed face of an elderly German woman.

"Here I am!" cried Asya, leaning her elbows coquettishly on the window-sill. "I'm quite happy. Catch!" she added, throwing a sprig of geranium to Gagin. "Pretend I'm the lady of your heart."

Frau Louise laughed.

"N. is going home," said Gagin. "He wants to say goodbye to you."

"Does he?" said Asya. "In that case give him the flower, I won't be long."

She slammed the window and, I suppose, kissed Frau Louise. Gagin handed me the sprig silently. Silently I put it in my pocket, walked to the bank of the river and was ferried to the opposite side.

I remember that, as I was walking home, not thinking of anything in particular, but with a strange load at my heart, I was suddenly brought up short by a pungent smell, familiar to me but seldom met with in Germany. I stood still and saw a small bed of hemp by the side of the road. The smell instantly reminded me of my native steppe and I felt terribly homesick. I wanted to breathe Russian air, to tread Russian soil. "What am I doing here, why am I wandering about in a strange land, among strangers?" I exclaimed, and the dead weight at my heart suddenly turned into bitter, burning distress. I arrived home in a mood very different from that of the previous day, in a state of something like anger, which I was unable to shake off for some time. An anguish I could not understand was gnawing at me. At last I sat down to think about my fickle widow (every day ended in solemn recollections of this lady) and got out one of her letters. But I did not even open it, for my thoughts instantly took another turn. I began thinking about ... Asya. It came into my mind that in the course of the conversation, Gagin had hinted at some obstacle to his returning to Russia... "Come now, is she really his sister?" I said out loud.

I undressed, got into bed and tried to go to sleep; but an hour later I sat up in bed again, my elbow thrust into the pillow, and once more gave myself up to thoughts of this "capricious girl with the forced laughter". "...Her figure is like the little Raphael Galatea in the Farnese frescoes,"⁷ I whispered. "And I'm sure she isn't his sister..."

And the widow's letter lay quietly on the floor, white in the moonbeams.

V

The next morning I again ferried over to L. I told myself that I wanted to see Gagin, but I was secretly longing to see how Asya would behave, whether she would be up to her tricks again as on the previous day. I found them both in the sitting-room, and, strange to say—perhaps because I had been thinking so much about Russia that night and in the morning—Asya looked to me like a typical Russian girl, yes, just an ordinary girl, almost like a housemaid. In an old frock, her hair brushed behind her ears, she sat quite still at the window, working at an embroidery-frame as modestly and quietly as if she had never done anything else in her life. She hardly spoke and kept her eyes on her work, and her features assumed such an ordinary, prosaic expression that I could not help remembering our home-grown lady's maids, all those Katyas and Mashas. To complete the resemblance, she began humming a folk song: "Mother, dear mother!"⁸ Glancing at her sallow, wan face, I thought of my dreams of yesterday and felt a regret for I knew not what. It was a glorious day. Gagin announced that he was going out sketching. I asked him if I might accompany him, or if I would be in the way.

"On the contrary," he replied. "You can give me good advice."

Putting on a round Van Dyck hat⁹ and a smock, he tucked his portfolio under his arm and went out. I followed at his heels. Asya stayed at home. Before he left, Gagin charged her to see that the soup was not too thin. She promised to visit the kitchen. When Gagin reached the valley, now familiar to me, he seated himself on a rock and began to draw an old, hollow oak-tree with spreading branches. I lay on the grass and took a book out of my pocket, but I read no more than a couple of pages, and all he did was to spoil his sheet of paper. We chiefly talked, discussing, as far as I can judge, rather wisely and discerningly, how to work, what to avoid, what system to adopt, and the significance of the artist in our age. Gagin at last decided that he was "not in good form" today, and lay down beside me, and then our youthful discourse flowed freely, and we gave ourselves up to one of those discus-

sions so dear to the Russian heart—by turns ardent, thoughtful and ecstatic but almost invariably vague. We returned home, having chatted to our heart's content, with a feeling of satisfaction, as if we had really accomplished something. I found Asya exactly the same as she had been when I left her. Closely as I observed her, I could now find no trace of coquetry in her, no sign of her playing a part. This time no one could have accused her of affectation.

"Ah," said Gagin, "she is in sackcloth and ashes."

Towards evening she yawned several times unaffectedly and retired early to her room. I myself soon took leave of Gagin and went home, no longer weaving dreams, for it had been a day of sober sensations. While getting into bed, however, I remember I exclaimed involuntarily: "What a chameleon that girl is!" adding after a pause: "And, I'm sure she isn't his sister!"

VI

Two whole weeks passed during which I went to the Gagins every day. Asya seemed to avoid me, but no longer indulged in any of the freakish whims which had surprised me so much in the first two days of our acquaintance. She seemed to be secretly grieved or embarrassed, she even laughed less. I observed her with curiosity.

She spoke both French and German quite well, but everything about her showed that no feminine hand had guided her through the years of childhood, and that what education she had received had been strange and unusual—altogether different from that of Gagin himself. Despite the Van Dyck hat and artist's smock he exuded the mild atmosphere of a pampered Russian gentleman, whereas she was not at all like a young miss. All her movements were restless; this wildling had not long been grafted, this wine was still in a state of ferment. By nature bashful and timid, she was vexed at her own shyness and tried hard to be bold and independent, but the effect was not always successful. More than once I tried to get her to speak about her life in Russia, her past, but she always answered my questions reluctantly. I did, however, learn that

she had lived for a long time in the country before going abroad. One day I found her alone, absorbed in a book. Her head supported by her hands, the fingers thrust into her hair, she was devouring the printed page. "Bravo!" I said, going up to her. "How industrious you are!"

She raised her head and looked at me with solemn austerity.

"You think I can do nothing but laugh," she said, and made as if to go away.

I glanced at the title of her book—it was some French novel.

"I'm afraid I cannot applaud your choice," I remarked.

"What shall I read, then?" she cried, flinging the book down on the table, and adding: "I'd much better go out and have some fun." And she ran into the garden.

In the evening I read *Hermann and Dorothea*¹⁰ aloud to Gagin. At first Asya kept brushing past us, but a little later she came to a stop with her head on one side, sat down quietly beside me, and stayed there listening till the reading was over. The next day, once again I did not know her, until I guessed that she wanted to be staid and house-wifely like Dorothea. In a word, she was an enigma for me. She was excessively touchy and sensitive, but she attracted me even when she made me angry. Of one thing I became surer every day, and that was that she was not Gagin's sister. He did not treat her in a brotherly way—he was too affectionate, too indulgent, and at the same time he seemed to be under a slight strain in her company.

A strange occurrence confirmed my suspicion.

One evening, arriving at the vineyard in which the Gagins lived, I found the gate locked. Without thinking twice about it I made straight for a gap in the wall I had noticed before and got through it. Not far from this place, a little way from the path, there was a small arbour formed of acacia bushes. As I passed it I was startled by Asya's voice speaking with tearful intensity:

"I don't want to love anyone but you—no, no. I only want to love you—to love you forever!"

"Come now, Asya, calm yourself!" said Gagin. "You know I believe you."

Their voices came from the arbour. I could see them

both through the loose network of branches. They did not notice me.

"You, only you!" she repeated, throwing herself on his breast and sobbing convulsively, kissing him and pressing closer against him.

"There, there!" he repeated, passing his hand lightly over her hair.

I stood motionless for a moment or two... Then I gave myself a shake. "Shall I go to them? Not for the world!" flashed through my mind. I went back to the wall with rapid strides, jumped over it, and almost ran home. I smiled and rubbed my hands, marvelling at the incident so unexpectedly corroborating my conjecture (I did not for a single moment question its correctness), and at the same time there was bitterness in my heart. They certainly knew how to pretend! But why? Why should they want to fool me? I never expected it of him... And what touching avowals!

VII

I got up early the next morning after a bad night, shouldered my rucksack, told my landlady not to expect me back for a few days, and climbed up into the mountains, following the bed of the river on which the town of Z. is situated. These mountains form a part of the range known as Dog's Back (Hundsrück) and are very interesting from a geological point of view. Particularly noteworthy are the regularity and purity of the basalt strata, but I was in no mood for geological observations. I did not quite know what was going on within me, but one feeling was quite clear—I did not wish to see the Gagins any more. I assured myself that the only cause of my sudden dislike for them was anger at their duplicity. Who asked them to pose as relatives? For the rest, I tried to dismiss all thought of them. I roamed about at will, over hill and vale, sat in village taverns, conversing with hosts and guests, or lay on a flat, sun-warmed stone and watched the clouds float by, for the weather was marvellous. I spent three days in the leisurely manner, quite enjoying the pastime, though every now and then I felt a pang in my heart. The peaceful scenery of this part of the country was admirably

suited to the tenor of my thoughts.

I yielded myself up wholly to chance sensations, to the impressions of the moment. They succeeded one another quietly in my soul, forming, as it were, a single sensation, in which was merged everything I saw, felt, and heard during these three days—the faint smell of resin in the woods, the cries and tappings of woodpeckers, the incessant babbling of transparent brooks with speckled trout on the sandy floor, the gently undulating contours of the mountains, the sombre crags, neat villages, ancient churches and trees, storks in the meadows, cosy water-mills with busily revolving wheels, the friendly faces of the villagers in their blue smocks and grey stockings, the slow, creaking farm-waggon drawn by stout horses or kine, the young, long-haired pilgrims on the well-kept roads, lined on either side with apple- and pear-trees...

To this day I take pleasure in the recollection of all these impressions. Hail to you, humble patch of German soil, with your modest sufficiency, bearing all over you the stamp of industrious hands, of patient, unhurried labour... Hail to you, peace to you!

I returned to my lodgings at the end of the third day. I forgot to say that, in my anger with the Gagins, I made an attempt to revive in my heart the image of the flinty-hearted widow—but my endeavours were unsuccessful. I remember once, as I started to dream about her, my eyes fell on a little peasant girl of some five summers, with a round face and wide, innocent eyes. She was looking at me with such simple-hearted curiosity... Her clear gaze made me feel ashamed, I could not lie in her presence, and from that moment I abandoned the former object of my affections for good and all.

I found a note from Gagin awaiting me at home. He expressed his astonishment at the suddenness of my departure, scolded me for not taking him with me, and asked me to come and see them as soon as I got back. I read this note with displeasure, but went over to L. the next day.

VIII

Gagin gave me a friendly welcome, showering affectionate reproaches on me, but Asya burst into causeless

laughter the moment she saw me and, as usual, ran away at once. Gagin was embarrassed and, muttering that she must be mad, begged me to forgive her. I admit I was extremely vexed with Asya. I felt ill at ease as it was, and this affected laughter, these odd whims did not improve my spirits. I tried, however, to look as if I noticed nothing, and began telling Gagin all about my short excursion. And he told me what he had been doing in my absence. But the conversation lagged. Asya came into the room again, and again ran out, and at last I announced that I had urgent work to do and that it was time for me to go home. At first Gagin tried to detain me, but after taking an intent look at me he said he would see me home. In the hall Asya suddenly came up and held out her hand to me; I just touched the tips of her fingers and bowed ever so slightly. Gagin and I ferried across the Rhine, and when we reached my favourite ash-tree with the statue of the Madonna between its branches, we sat down on a bench to admire the view. And then a remarkable conversation took place between us.

We talked of this and that for a bit and then fell silent, gazing at the gleaming river.

"Tell me," said Gagin abruptly, with his usual smile, "what is your opinion of Asya? She must seem rather strange to you, I imagine."

"Why, yes," I replied in some surprise. I had not expected him to speak about her.

"You have to know her very well before judging her," he said. "She has a very good heart, but she is a madcap. She's hard to get on with. But she is not to blame, and if you knew her story..."

"Her story?" I interrupted him. "I thought you said she was your..."

Gagin glanced at me.

"Do you think that she isn't my sister? Oh, yes," he continued, taking no notice of my confusion, "she really is my sister, she is my father's daughter. Look here! I know I can trust you, and I will tell you all about it.

"My father was an extremely kind, wise, well-educated—and luckless man. Fate was not unkind to him than to many others, but he was unable to endure even the very first blow. He married young, for love; his wife, my moth-

er, died very soon after the marriage, when I was only six months old. My father took me to the country and stayed there for twelve whole years. He looked after my education himself and would never have parted with me if his brother, my uncle, had not come to the country to see him. This uncle lived in Petersburg, where he held quite an important post. He persuaded my father to put me in his charge, since nothing would induce him to give up country life. My uncle pointed out to him that it was not good for a boy of my age to live in complete solitude, that under the influence of such a dismal and taciturn mentor as my father was, I was bound to fall behind boys of my own age, and even my disposition might suffer. My father held out against his brother's arguments for a long time, but yielded at last. I wept when I said goodbye to him; I loved him, though I had never seen him smile; but once in Petersburg I soon forgot my dark and melancholy home. I was sent to a cadets' school, from which I went straight into a regiment of the Guards. I returned to the country every year for a week or two, and every year found my father sadder and sadder, more withdrawn, and pensive to the point of timidity. He went to church every day and had almost lost the habit of speech. It was on one of these visits of mine (I was over twenty by then) that I saw a little black-eyed girl of ten or so whom I had never before seen in the house. This was Asya. My father told me she was an orphan he had taken in to shelter and feed—these were his very words. I did not take much notice of her; she was as shy and agile and silent as a little wild beast, and whenever I entered my father's favourite room, the vast, gloomy chamber in which my mother died and where candles had to be lit even in the daytime, she would instantly hide behind his high-backed armchair or the bookcase. It so happened that my military duties prevented me from going to the country for three or four years after this visit. I received a brief letter from my father every month; he seldom mentioned Asya, and then only in passing. He was now over fifty, but still looked like a young man. Imagine, therefore, my horror when, all unsuspecting, I received a letter from the steward, informing me that my father was mortally ill and begging me to come as soon as possible if I wished to see him before he died.

I went at once and found my father alive, but at his last gasp. He was indescribably glad to see me, embraced me with his emaciated arms, looked long into my eyes with a gaze half searching, half imploring, and, making me promise I would fulfil his last request, told his old valet to bring Asya to him. The old man led her in—she was trembling all over and seemed near collapse.

"There," said my father with an effort, "I bequeath to you my daughter—your sister. Yakov will tell you all," he added, indicating the old servant. Asya burst into tears and flung herself face down on the bed... Half an hour later my father breathed his last.

"This is what I learned. Asya was the daughter of my father and my late mother's maid, Tatyana. I can vividly remember this Tatyana, her tall, slender figure, her handsome, severe, clever face, her great dark eyes. She was reputed to be a proud, inaccessible girl. As far as I could make out from Yakov's respectful understatement, my father had taken up with her a few years after my mother's death. At that time Tatyana no longer lived in the big house, but made her home with her married sister, who looked after the cattle.

"My father was greatly attached to her and after my departure from the country wanted to marry her, but she would not consent to be his wife, despite his entreaties.

"The late Tatyana Vasilyevna," Yakov told me, standing at the door with his hands behind his back, "was a model of discretion and did not wish to injure your father. "What sort of a wife would I make you? I'm not a fine lady." That is how she used to answer him. She said it in front of me too." Tatyana would not even move to our house, but stayed on in her sister's cottage, with Asya. In my childhood I only saw Tatyana at church on saints' days. She always stood among the crowd next to the window, a dark kerchief on her head, a russet-coloured shawl round her shoulders, her austere profile sharply outlined against the clear glass of the window, praying with meek dignity and bowing to the ground in the old-fashioned manner. When my uncle took me away, Asya was only two years old, and when she was eight, she lost her mother.

"Immediately after the death of Tatyana, my father

took Asya to live in the big house. He had expressed a desire to have her with him before, but Tatyana would not allow this either. Imagine what it must have done to Asya to find herself suddenly installed in the big house! To this day she cannot forget the moment when she was clad in a silk dress for the first time and the servants came up to kiss her hand. Her mother had brought her up very strictly; in her father's house she enjoyed absolute freedom. He was her teacher; he was her sole companion. He did not spoil her, or at any rate he did not fondle her, but he loved her passionately and allowed her to do whatever she liked. In his heart he considered he had wronged her. Asya quickly understood that she was the most important person in the house, she knew the master was her father; but she grasped no less quickly the falseness of her position. She developed an inordinate vanity and distrustfulness too. Bad habits took root in her, simplicity vanished. She once admitted to me that she wanted to make the *whole world* forget her origin; she was at one and the same time ashamed, and ashamed of feeling ashamed, and proud of her mother.

"She learnt and knew many things that girls of her age should not know, you see... But is that her fault? She was carried away by her youthful spirits, the young blood pulsed in her veins, and there was no hand to guide her. Complete independence in every way! No light burden, that! She was determined to be as good as other young ladies; she threw herself eagerly into reading. What good could come of all this? Her life, wrong from the outset, developed all wrong, too, but her heart was not corrupted, her mind remained unspoilt.

"And here was I, a young man in my twenties, left with a girl of thirteen on my hands! During the first few days after my father's death the very sound of my voice was enough to send her into a fever, my kindness made her miserable, and it took some time for her to get used to me. True, later, when she realised that I actually regarded her as my sister and was attached to her as a brother, she became passionately fond of me—there are no half-measures about her feelings.

"I took her to Petersburg. Painful as it was for me to part with her, it was quite impossible to keep her with

me, and I placed her in one of the best boarding-schools. Asya admitted the necessity of our separation, though she began this period of her life with an illness which almost proved fatal. But she gradually accustomed herself to the boarding-school, in which she stayed for four years. Contrary to my expectations, however, she came out of it quite unchanged. The head mistress was always complaining of her. 'There's no punishing her,' she told me, 'and she does not respond to affection.' Asya was exceedingly bright, and an excellent pupil, the best of them all, but nothing would induce her to conform, she was obstinate and sulky... I could not find it in my heart to blame her, in her situation she had either to cringe or rebel. Of all her class-mates, the only one with whom she made friends was a poor, plain, downtrodden girl. The others mostly came from good families, they did not like her, and needled and stung her for all they were worth; Asya paid them in the same coin. Once, when the Scripture teacher spoke of vices, Asya remarked in a loud voice: 'Flattery and cowardice are the worst vices.' In a word, she continued in the way she had begun. The only thing she improved in was manners, and even here she does not seem to have made much progress.

"And now she had her seventeenth birthday, and could no longer stay at the boarding-school. I was in a somewhat difficult position. Suddenly I had the happy thought of retiring from the service and going abroad for a year or two, taking Asya with me. And that is what I did, and here we are, she and I, on the banks of the Rhine, where I am trying to occupy myself with art, and she ... behaves as eccentrically and wildly as ever. I hope you will now judge of her more indulgently—you know, whatever she pretends, she does care for other people's opinion—especially yours."

And Gagin again smiled his quiet smile. I pressed his hand hard.

"That's all very well," he said, returning to the subject, "but I am having a hard time with her. She's so headstrong. So far she hasn't taken an interest in men, but when she does fall in love!.. Sometimes I am at my wits' end. What d'you think she took into her head the other day? First she declares that I have turned cold to her, and then goes on to say she loves no one but me and will

never love anyone else her whole life... And how she cried..."

"Oh, so that..." I began and checked myself instantly.

"Tell me," I asked (we were now talking quite frankly), "d'you mean to say she has never found anyone she could like? She must have met young men in Petersburg."

"She didn't like them a bit. No—Asya must have a hero, a remarkable person—or else a picturesque shepherd in a mountain pass. But I've kept you chattering on like this," he added, getting up.

"Look here," I said, "let's go back, I don't want to go home."

"And your work?"

I made no reply. Gagin smiled good-humouredly and we returned to L. When I saw the familiar vineyard and the little white house on the crest of the hill, I was aware of a sensation of sweetness—yes, sweetness—within me, just as if honey were trickling into my heart. I felt much better since hearing Gagin's story.

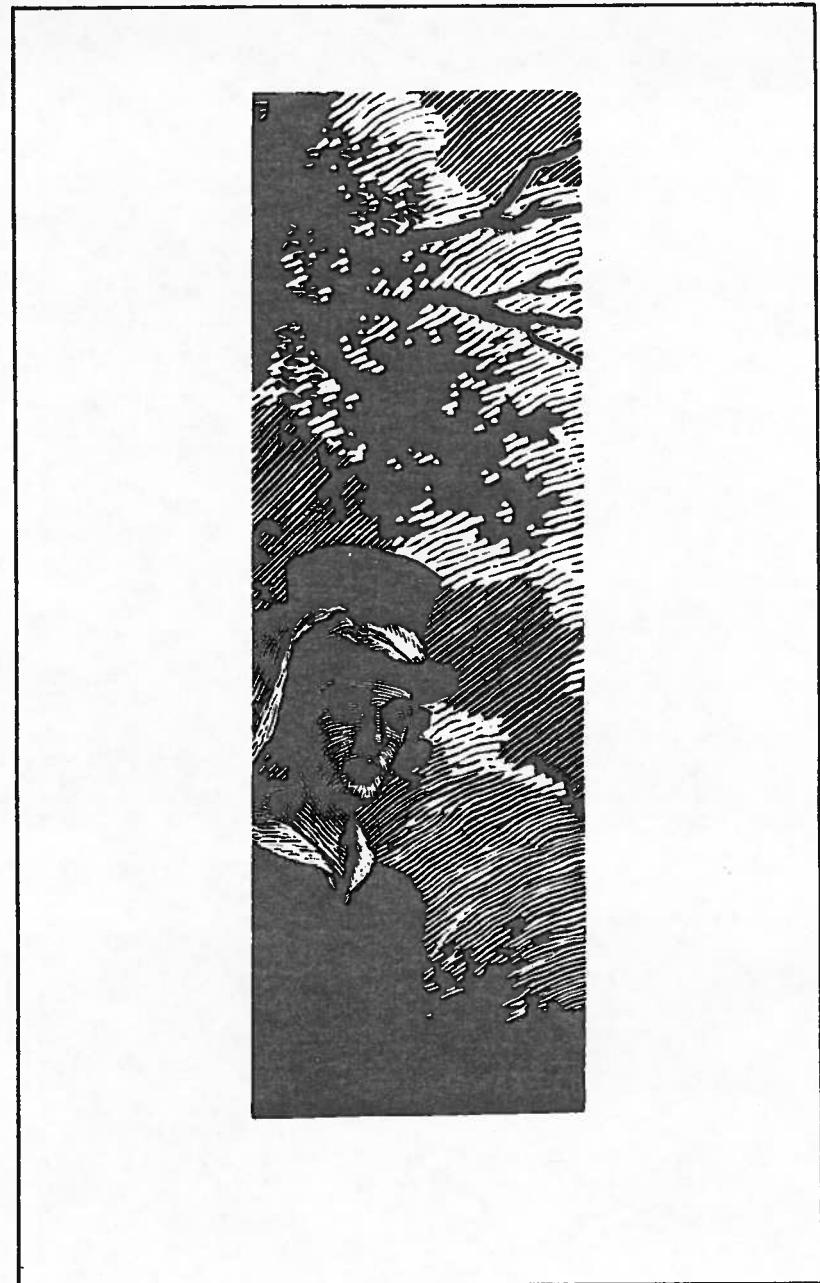
IX

Asya met us at the door; I was quite prepared for another burst of laughter, but she came towards us pale and silent, her eyes lowered.

"Here he is again," said Gagin, "and he offered to come himself, mark that!"

Asya looked at me questioningly. I myself now put out my hand to her and this time pressed her cold fingers heartily. I felt very sorry for her; I now understood much that had formerly puzzled me in her; her restlessness, her inability to behave properly, her desire to show off—all had become clear to me. I had had a glimpse into this soul—a secret urge drove her continually, her immature vanity gave her no peace, but she strove with all her being for truth. I realised what it was that had attracted me to this strange girl; it was not only the half-savage charm of her physical self, it was her soul I loved.

Gagin began rummaging among his drawings; I proposed to Asya a stroll about the vineyard. She agreed at once,



with gay, almost submissive readiness. Halfway down the slope we sat down on a great stone.

"And didn't you miss us a bit?" began Asya.

"Did you miss me?" I countered.

Asya cast a sidelong glance at me.

"Yes," she answered, and went on immediately: "Was it nice in the mountains? Are they very high? Higher than the clouds? Tell me what you saw. You told my brother, but I didn't hear anything."

"You chose to go away," I remarked.

"I went away ... because... But I'm not going away now," she added confidently. "You were cross today, you know."

"I—cross!"

"Yes, you!"

"Why on earth should I have been cross?"

"I didn't know, but you were cross when you came, and you went away cross. I was sorry you went away like that, and I'm ever so glad you came back."

"And I'm glad I came back," I said.

Asya hunched her shoulders, the way children sometimes do when they are pleased.

"Oh, I can always tell what people are feeling," she went on. "I used to be able to tell, just from the way Papa coughed in the next room, whether he was pleased with me or not."

Up to this moment Asya had never once mentioned her father to me. Her doing so now affected me strongly.

"Did you love your father?" I asked and suddenly, to my intense mortification, felt that I was blushing.

She did not answer, and blushed too. We both remained silent. A steamer sped down the Rhine, trailing smoke. We watched it.

"Why don't you tell me about the mountains?" whispered Asya.

"What made you laugh the moment you saw me today?" I asked.

"I don't know. Sometimes I laugh when I really want to cry. You mustn't judge me by what I ... do. Oh, by the way, how lovely the legend of Lorelei is. That's her rock over there, isn't it? They say she used to drown everyone at first, but when she fell in love she threw herself into

the river. I like that story. Frau Louise tells me all sorts of fairy tales. Frau Louise has a black cat with yellow eyes..."

Asya raised her head and shook back her curls.

"Oh, I'm so happy!" she said.

At that moment some monotonous, desultory sounds reached our hearing. A religious chant was being intoned by hundreds of voices—a crowd of pilgrims was moving along the road below with crosses and gonfalons.

"I wish I could go with them," said Asya, straining her ears to catch the receding bursts of song.

"Why, are you so pious?"

"I should like to go somewhere far, far away, to pray, to perform some difficult feat," she continued. "For the days pass and life goes on, and what have we ever done?"

"You are ambitious," I remarked. "You would like your life to pass not in vain, you want to leave a trace behind you..."

"And do you think that is impossible?"

My lips were going to frame the word "impossible" ... but looking into her luminous eyes I only said: "Try."

"Tell me," said Asya after a short pause, while shadows raced across her face, which was again pale, "did you like that lady very much?.. You know, the one my brother drank to in the ruins, the day after we first met."

I laughed.

"Your brother was joking. I've never liked any lady very much. There's nobody I like now, at any rate."

"And what do you like in women?" asked Asya, throwing back her head in her innocent curiosity.

"What a funny question!" I exclaimed.

Asya was a little embarrassed.

"I ought not to ask you such questions, ought I? Forgive me, I'm used to blurting out the first thing that comes into my head. That's why I'm afraid of talking."

"Talk away, for goodness' sake, don't be afraid," I said. "I'm so glad you've got over your shyness at last."

Asya lowered her eyes and gave a low, short laugh. I had never heard her laugh like that before.

"Go on," she pleaded, smoothing her skirt over her legs as if she meant to settle down for a long time. "Talk to me, or recite something, the way you read *Onegin* to us that time..."

She stopped speaking, and then said, under her breath:

*There in the shadow stands the cross,
Above the grave of my poor mother!*¹¹

"You've got it wrong," I remarked. "Pushkin speaks of his nanny's grave."

"I should like to have been Tatyana,"¹² she went on, as pensively as before. "But do go on!" she exclaimed with sudden animation.

But I was in no mood for talking. I sat looking at her, bathed in the bright sunlight, serene and docile. There was a radiance all around—below us, above us—the sky, the earth, the water. The very air seemed to be saturated with brilliance.

"See how beautiful everything is!" I said, involuntarily lowering my voice.

"Beautiful!" she replied, also lowering her voice, and not looking at me. "If we were birds, how we would soar, how we would fly... How we would plunge into all that blueness... But we are not birds."

"We might grow wings," I said.

"How?"

"Live and learn. There are feelings which raise us above the earth. Don't worry, you'll have wings one day yourself."

"Have you ever had them?"

"Well, it's hard to say... I don't think I've ever flown yet."

Asya was silent again. I bent slightly over her.

"Can you waltz?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes, I can," I replied, somewhat puzzled.

"Come on, then, come on! I'll ask my brother to play a waltz for us... We'll pretend we're flying, we'll pretend we have wings."

She ran back to the house. I ran after her, and a few minutes later we were circling the cramped sitting-room to the sweet sounds of a Lanner waltz. Asya waltzed beautifully, with inspiration. Something soft and feminine suddenly showed itself through the virginal austerity of her appearance. My hand retained the sensation of contact with her slender waist for a long time, and it was long before I could forget the sound of her rapid breathing so near me, the dark, still, half-closed eyes in the pale yet animated face, in curls.

X

The whole of that day passed in the happiest possible manner. We frolicked like children. Asya was very sweet and simple. Gagin was glad to see her like this. It was quite late when I left them. When the boat was in mid-stream I asked the ferryman to let it drift on the current. The old man stopped rowing, and the majestic river bore us on its bosom. I looked round, listening and remembering, and I suddenly felt a secret anxiety at my heart... I looked up at the sky—but even in the sky there was no peace; studded with stars, it was in constant motion and palpitation. I leaned over the water ... but here, too, in the dark cold depths, the stars shimmered and quivered. I could feel a kind of restless anxiety everywhere, and anxiety grew in myself, too. I leaned on the rim of the boat... The whispering of the breeze in my ears, the soft gurgling of the water round the stern troubled and stirred me, and the freshness rising from the waves did not cool me. A nightingale burst into song on the bank, infecting my blood with the sweet poison of its call. Tears welled up in my eyes, but they were not tears of vague ecstasy. What I was now feeling was no longer the mere sensation of all-embracing desire, causing the soul to expand, to sing, to feel that there is love and understanding in it for the whole of creation... No, it was the thirst for happiness that was now consuming me. I did not venture as yet to give it a name, but what I desired was happiness, surfeiting happiness... And the boat floated on, the old ferryman bending dreamily over the oars.

XI

As I set off the next day for the Gagins', I did not ask myself if I was in love with Asya. But I thought about her a great deal, her fate interested me keenly. I was glad we had at last drawn nearer to one another. I felt I had only begun to know her since the day before—up till then she had always turned away from me. And now that she had at last opened out to me, what an entrancing light illumined my image of her, how new this image was for

me, what secret bashful charms were latent in its depths!

I strode briskly up the familiar path, keeping my gaze fixed on the little house from the moment it appeared—a mere blur of white in the distance. Far from thinking about the future, I did not even think about the morrow—I was perfectly content.

Asya blushed when I came into the room; I noticed that she was again dressed up, but her expression did not match her attire—it was so melancholy. And I had come in such a jolly mood! I even thought that she had just been going to run away as usual, but had made an effort—and remained. Gagin was in one of those fits of artistic frenzy which suddenly come over amateurs when they fancy that they have contrived, as they express it, to "catch the landscape by the tail". He stood before his canvas, dishevelled and paint-stained, and nodded to me almost savagely, with a sweeping flourish of the paintbrush over its surface, stepped back, narrowed his eyes, and once more fell upon the picture he was working on. I refrained from disturbing him and sat down beside Asya. Her dark eyes turned slowly towards me.

"You're not the same as you were yesterday," I said after several vain attempts to bring a smile to her lips.

"No. I'm not," she answered slowly. "It doesn't matter, though. I slept badly, I lay awake all night, thinking."

"What about?"

"Oh, about all sorts of things. It's been a habit of mine ever since I was a child, ever since the time I lived with my mother..."

She brought out the last word with an effort, and forced herself to repeat:

"Ever since the time I lived with my mother ... I used to wonder why nobody ever knew what was going to happen; and why you sometimes saw misfortune coming but could not evade it; and why you could never tell the whole truth... And then I thought to myself—I know nothing. I must learn. I need to be educated all over again, I have been very badly brought up. I can't play the piano, I can't draw, I can't even sew properly. I have no accomplishments, I must be very poor company."

"You are not being fair to yourself," I told her. "You've read a lot, you're well-educated, and with your brains..."

"D'you think I'm clever?" she asked with such naive curiosity that I could not help laughing, but she did not even smile. "Brother, am I clever?" she asked, addressing Gagin.

He did not answer, but went on with his work, incessantly changing his brushes and raising his hand high in the air.

"Sometimes I don't know myself what there is in my head," continued Asya, with the same pensive look. "Sometimes I'm afraid of myself—really I am! I wish... Is it true that women ought not to read much?"

"Not too much, of course, but..."

"Tell me what I ought to read, tell me what I ought to do. I'll do everything you tell me," she added, turning to me with naive trustfulness.

I was at a loss for an answer.

"You won't find me dull company?"

"Heavens, no!" I began.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" she cried. "I was afraid you might."

And her small, hot hand pressed mine firmly.

Gagin called out to me at that moment. "Don't you think the background is too dark?"

I went over to him. Asya got up and left the room.

XII

She returned an hour later and beckoned to me from the doorway.

"Tell me," she said, "if I died, would you be sorry?"

"What strange thoughts come into your head today!"

"I keep thinking I shall die soon; sometimes it seems to me as if everyone were saying good-bye to me. Better die than live like this... You needn't look at me that way—I'm not pretending, truly, I'm not! I'll be afraid of you again if you do!"

"Were you really afraid of me?"

"It's not my fault I'm so queer," she continued. "Look, I can't even laugh any more..."

She remained mournful and preoccupied all day. Something was going on in her mind which I could not understand. Her gaze rested frequently on me; my heart seemed

to cringe under this enigmatic gaze. Though she appeared perfectly calm, I felt continually impelled to beg her not to be agitated. Watching her, I found a pathetic charm in her now pale face, in her irresolute, slow movements; and she, for some reason or other, imagined that I was out of sorts.

"D'you know what?" she said, when I was making up my mind to leave. "I can't help being worried by the thought that you consider me frivolous... Promise me you will always believe everything I say—and you must be frank with me, too. And I'll always tell the truth, honestly I will..."

Her "honestly" made me laugh again.

"Don't laugh!" she said eagerly. "Or I'll ask you today what you asked me yesterday: 'Why are you laughing?'" And she added after a pause: "Do you remember what you said about wings yesterday? My wings have grown, but there's nowhere to fly to..."

"Come, now!" I said. "The whole world is open to you..."

Asya looked me straight in the eyes.

"You're displeased with me today," she said, frowning.

"I? Displeased with you?"

"Why are you two so glum?" interrupted Gagin, addressing me. "Shall I play you a waltz, like yesterday?"

"No! No!" cried Asya, clasping her hands. "Not today—not for the world..."

"Nobody's forcing you—don't get excited..."

"Not for the world!" she repeated, turning pale.

.....

"Can it be that she loves me?" I wondered, as I approached the swift-rolling Rhine.

XIII

"Can it be that she loves me?" I asked myself the next day, the moment I woke up. I had no desire to look into my own heart. I felt that her image, the image of "the girl with the affected laugh", had taken hold of my heart, and

that it would not be easy to get rid of it. I went to L. and stayed there the whole day; but I only saw Asya for a moment. She was unwell, her head ached. She came downstairs for a moment, a bandage over her forehead, looking pale and wan, her eyes almost closed. Smiling faintly, she said: "It'll pass, it's nothing. Everything passes, doesn't it?" and went out of the room. I was left with a feeling of ennui and a hollow sadness. But I could not bring myself to stand up and go, and it was late when I at last took my departure, without having seen her again.

The next morning passed in a kind of trance. I tried to take up some work, but could not. I tried to do nothing and think about nothing ... but that was no good, either. I roamed about the town, went home again, and again went out.

"Are you Mr. N.?" I heard a child call me. I looked round—a small boy stood before me. "This is from Fräulein Annette," he said, handing me a note.

Opening it, I recognised Asya's swift, irregular handwriting. "I must see you," she wrote. "Be at the stone chapel on the road, near the ruins, at four today. I have done something very rash today... For God's sake, come, you will know all... Tell the messenger: 'Yes'."

"Any answer?" the boy asked.

"Say—'yes,'" I told him. The boy ran off.

XIV

Going back to my room, I sat down and gave myself up to my thoughts. My heart was beating violently. I read Asya's note again and again. I looked at the clock—it was not yet twelve.

The door opened and Gagin came in.

His face was sombre. He seized my hand and pressed it firmly. He seemed to be greatly agitated.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

He moved up a chair and sat down opposite me. "Four days ago," he said with a forced smile, stammering slightly, "I told you a story which surprised you. Today I am going to surprise you still more. I wouldn't dare to be so frank if it was anyone but you. But you are a gentleman, you are

my friend, aren't you? Now listen to me—Asya, my sister, is in love with you."

I started violently and half rose in my chair...

"Your sister, you say..."

"Yes, yes," he interrupted me. "She's mad. I tell you, and she will drive me mad. But luckily she is unable to lie—and she trusts me. What a heart that girl has! But she'll ruin herself, I know she will..."

"You must be mistaken," I said.

"Not a bit of it. Yesterday, as you know, she stayed in bed almost all day and would not eat, but she did not complain ... she never complains. I did not worry, though she became a little feverish towards evening. At two o'clock in the morning our landlady woke me up—'Come to your sister,' she said, 'she's in a bad way.' I hurried to Asya and found her not undressed, feverish, and in tears. Her forehead was burning, her teeth chattered. 'What's the matter?' I asked. 'Are you ill?' She threw her arms round my neck, imploring me to take her away as soon as possible if I did not want her to die... I couldn't understand a thing, and tried to calm her... Her sobbing became still more violent ... and suddenly, through her sobs, I ... in a word, I heard her say she was in love with you. I assure you, rational folk like you and me can have no idea of the depths of her emotions and of the violent form these emotions take with her. They overwhelm her as suddenly and irresistibly as a thunderstorm. Of course, I can see you are a nice person," went on Gagin, "but why she should have fallen in love with you like this, I confess is beyond me. She says she took to you at first sight. That's why she cried the other day when she assured me she wanted to love no one but me. She has taken it into her head that you despise her, that you probably know all about her. She asked me if I had told you her story. I told her I hadn't, of course. But her intuition is something terrifying. She only wants one thing—to go away, to go away this very minute. I sat with her till the morning. She made me swear that we would be gone by tomorrow, and only then she slept. I thought and thought and decided to speak to you. I consider Asya is right. The best thing is for us both to leave this place. I would have taken her away today if an idea had not come into my head which prevented me.

Perhaps ... after all ... you like my sister? If so, then why should I take her away? And so I decided, discarding all shame... Besides, I've noticed something myself... I decided ... to ask you..." Poor Gagin broke off in confusion. "Forgive me," he said. "I've never been in such straits before."

I took his hand.

"You want to know," I said in firm tones, "if I like your sister? I do like her..."

Gagin glanced at me. "But," he stammered, "you don't want to marry her, do you?"

"How do you expect me to answer a question like that? Ask yourself if I could, right now..."

"I know, I know!" he interrupted me. "I have no right whatever to demand a reply, and my question was the height of indelicacy... But what am I to do? You can't trifl with fire. You don't know Asya—she's capable of falling ill, of running away, of making a rendezvous with you... Another girl would be able to conceal everything and wait—but not she. It's the first time it ever happened to her—that's the trouble. If you had seen her today, sobbing at my feet, you would understand my fears."

I pondered. Gagin's words "a rendezvous with you" stabbed me to the heart. It seemed unworthy not to answer his frankness with equal frankness.

"Yes," I said at last. "You are right. An hour ago I received a letter from your sister. Here it is."

Gagin seized the note, ran his eyes rapidly over it, and let his hands fall onto his knees. The expression of astonishment on his face was extremely comic, but I was in no mood for laughing.

"I said you were an honourable man, and I say it again," he told me, "but what's to be done now? What? She wants to go away, and she writes to you, reproaching herself for rashness... And when did she find the time to write? What does she want of you?"

I calmed him and we began discussing as coolly as we could what was to be done.

And this is the decision we at last came to: in order to avert catastrophe, I was to go to the rendezvous and have a frank talk with Asya. Gagin undertook to stay at home and give no sign that he knew about her letter. And in the

evening we were to meet again.

"I count on you," said Gagin, squeezing my hand. "Be merciful to her—and to me. We'll go away tomorrow anyhow," he added, getting up, "because you're not going to marry Asya, are you?"

"Give me time till the evening," I said.

"Very well—but you won't marry her."

He went away and I flung myself on the sofa and closed my eyes. My head was spinning, the multitude of new ideas forced upon it had set my brain in a whirl. I was vexed with Gagin for his frankness, I was vexed with Asya, too, whose love both flattered and embarrassed me. I could not understand what had made her tell her brother everything; the necessity to come to a rapid, almost instantaneous decision was agonising...

"Marry a seventeen-year-old girl with a temper like hers?" I said, rising from the sofa. "How can I?"

XV

I ferried over the Rhine at the appointed hour, and the first person I met on the opposite bank was the same little boy who had come to me in the morning. He had apparently been waiting for me.

"From Fräulein Annette," he whispered and handed me another note.

Asya informed me of a change in the place of our rendezvous. I was to go in an hour and a half, not to the chaperel, but to Frau Louise's house, where I must knock at the streetdoor and go up to the third floor.

"Again—'yes'?" the boy asked me.

"Yes," I repeated and walked off along the bank of the Rhine. There was not time enough to go home, and I did not wish to roam the streets. Beyond the walls of the town was a little park with a covered bowling-alley and tables for beer-drinkers. I went there. A few middle-aged Germans were playing skittles; the wooden balls rolled noisily, and every now and then cries of admiration were heard. A pretty waitress with eyes red from crying brought me a mug of beer—I looked into her face. She turned away quickly and left me.

"Yes, yes," said a stout, red-cheeked townsman sitting next to me, "our Hannchen is very unhappy today—her sweetheart has enlisted in the army."

I looked at her—she stood huddled in a corner, cupping her face in her hands; tears rolled down her fingers, one at a time. Someone called for beer; she brought him a mug and went straight back to her corner. Her sorrow affected me; I began thinking of the rendezvous in store for me, and my thoughts were grave and anxious. I was going to this rendezvous with a heavy heart; it was not to yield to the delights of mutual love that I was going, but to keep my word, to fulfil an onerous duty. "You can't trifile with her"—Gagin's words had penetrated my heart like the barb of an arrow. And only four days ago, drifting with the current in the ferry-boat, had I not been filled with a yearning for happiness? Now this happiness was possible, and I hesitated, I pushed it away from me, I was compelled to push it away from me... Its suddenness had thrown me into confusion. And Asya herself, this attractive but strange being, so hot-headed, saddled with such a past, such an upbringing—I admit she frightened me. Conflicting feelings battled within me. The appointed hour drew near. "I cannot marry her," I decided at last. "She shall not know that I love her too."

I got up and, putting a thaler into poor Hannchen's hand (she did not even thank me), set off for the house of Frau Louise. The shadows of evening were already falling, and the narrow strip of sky above the dark street was crimson in the reflected glow of the sunset. I knocked softly on the door, which opened immediately. I crossed the threshold and found myself in utter darkness.

"This way," said an old woman's voice. "You are expected."

I took a step or two in the direction of the voice, and a bony hand grasped mine.

"Is it you, Frau Louise?" I asked.

"Yes," replied the same voice. "Yes, my fine young man, it is I."

The old lady led me up a steep staircase and stopped on the third floor landing. By the faint light filtering through a tiny window I could see the wrinkled countenance of the burgomaster's widow. Stretching her sunken lips in

a honeyed smile and screwing up her bleary eyes, she pointed to a small door. I opened it with an unsteady hand and slammed it shut behind me.

XVI

It was rather dark in the small room in which I now found myself, and I did not see Asya at once. She was seated in a chair at the window, her head turned away and almost concealed by the huge shawl wrapped round her, and she looked like a frightened bird. She was breathing fast and trembling all over. I felt an indescribable pity for her. I went up to her. She turned her head still further away...

"Anna Nikolayevna," I said.

She straightened herself and tried to look at me—but could not. I seized her hand; it was very cold and lay lifeless in my palm.

"I meant," she began, and she tried to smile, but her pale lips refused to obey her. "I meant... No, I can't!" she exclaimed, and said no more. And indeed her voice had failed her at every word.

I sat down beside her.

"Anna Nikolayevna," I said again, and I, too, could not go on.

A silence ensued. I sat there holding her hand and looking at her. She was huddled up in the shawl, breathing with difficulty and biting her lower lip in order not to cry, in order to keep back her rising tears. I looked at her—her timid stillness was pathetically helpless, as if in her exhaustion she had only just managed to reach a chair and had fallen into it. My heart melted.

"Asya," I said almost inaudibly...

She slowly raised her eyes to my face... Oh, a woman's glance at the man she loves! Who shall describe it? They implored, those eyes, they trusted, they questioned, they yielded... I could not withstand their charm. Thin flames tingled like needles in my veins—I bent over and pressed my lips to her hand.

A barely audible sound—something like a quivering sigh—came to my ears, and I felt a light touch, a hand trembling like a leaf, on my hair. I raised my head and

saw her face. How transformed it had become all at once! The expression of fear had vanished from it, the gaze seemed to have retreated deep within her, drawing me after it, the lips were slightly parted, the brow as pale as marble, and the curls thrown back as if tossed by the wind. I forgot all, I drew her to me, her hand submitted meekly, her whole body followed the hand, the shawl slipped from her shoulders, and her head lay meekly on my breast, to submit to my burning lips...

"I'm yours," she whispered almost inaudibly.

My hands slipped down to her waist... But suddenly the memory of Gagin flashed over me like lightning.

"What are we doing?" I cried, and started back. "Your brother... he knows all. He knows that I am seeing you..."

Asya sank back on to the chair.

"Yes," I continued, getting up and going over to the far corner of the room. "Your brother knows all... I was obliged to tell him all..."

"Obliged?" she repeated indistinctly. It was obvious that she had not yet come to her senses and could scarcely understand what I said.

"Yes," I said with inexplicable vehemence. "And it's all your fault! Why did you have to give yourself away? Who made you tell your brother everything? He came to me today himself and told me what you had said to him." I tried not to look at Asya and began striding up and down the room. "Everything has been wrecked now, everything!"

Asya made as if to rise from her chair.

"Sit down," I cried. "Sit down, please. You are dealing with an honourable man—yes, an honourable man. Tell me, for God's sake, what it was that upset you so? Did you notice any change in me? When your brother came to see me today, I could not conceal the truth from him."

"What am I saying?" I asked myself, and the thought that I was a callous deceiver, that Gagin knew about our rendezvous, that everything had been distorted, exposed, made my brain reel.

"I didn't send for my brother," came in Asya's terrified whisper. "He came himself."

"See what you have done!" I went on. "Now you want to go away..."

"Yes, I must go," she said as softly as before. "That's

why I asked you to come here, I wanted to say good-bye."

"And do you think," I said, "it is easy for me to part with you?"

"But why did you tell my brother?" asked Asya in puzzled tones.

"I tell you I could not do otherwise. If you hadn't given yourself away..."

"I locked myself into my room," she said simply. "I did not know the landlady had another key."

This artless excuse from her lips at such a moment made me almost angry ... and now I cannot think of it without being moved. Poor, honest, sincere child!

"And now everything is over," I began again. "Everything. Now we must part." I cast a furtive glance at Asya. She suddenly flushed. I realised that she had become ashamed and alarmed. I myself was moving and speaking in a kind of fever. "You wouldn't let the feeling that was just beginning to unfold itself to mature naturally, you have destroyed the ties between us yourself, you could not trust me, you doubted me..."

While I was speaking, Asya bent further and further forward, till she suddenly fell on her knees, dropped her head into her hands, and sobbed. I rushed over to her and tried to raise her, but she resisted me. I cannot stand the sight of a woman's tears, it makes me lose my head completely.

"Anna Nikolayevna, Asya," I repeated. "I implore you, for God's sake, stop crying..." Once again I took her by the hand...

But to my great astonishment she suddenly leaped to her feet, rushed to the door with the rapidity of lightning, and disappeared.

When, a few minutes later, Frau Louise came into the room, I was still standing in the middle of the floor as if I had been struck by lightning. I could not understand how it was that this rendezvous had ended so quickly, so ineptly, when I had not expressed a hundredth part of what I had to say, what I ought to have said, when I did not even know yet what the outcome might be...

"Has Fräulein Annette gone?" asked Frau Louise, raising her sandy brows till they almost touched the edge of her toupee.

I looked at her blankly and went away.

XVII

I made my way out of the town and walked on till I got to open country. I was devoured by furious vexation... I showered reproaches upon myself. How could I have failed to guess the cause which had compelled Asya to change the place of our rendezvous, to realise what it had cost her to go to this old woman? Why had I not prevented her from leaving me! Alone with her in that remote, almost dark room, I had found the strength, the gall, to repulse her, even to reproach her... And now her image haunted me, I implored her forgiveness. The remembrance of that pale face, those moist, timid eyes, the hair hanging limp on her bent neck, the light touch of her head on my breast, seemed to burn me. "I'm yours..." I heard the whisper again... "I obeyed the dictates of conscience," I assured myself... But it was not true. Was this the consummation I had desired? Was I capable of parting with her? Could I endure to lose her? "Madman! Madman!" I repeated bitterly...

In the meantime night was falling. I strode back to the house in which Asya lived.

XVIII

Gagin came out to me.

"Did you meet my sister?" he called from the distance.

"Isn't she at home?" I asked.

"No."

"Didn't she come back?"

"No. Forgive me," continued Gagin, "but I couldn't help it—contrary to our agreement, I went to the chapel. She wasn't there. I suppose she didn't come, then."

"She wasn't at the chapel."

"And you didn't meet her?"

I was forced to admit that I had met her.

"Where?"

"At Frau Louise's. I parted with her an hour ago," I added. "I was sure she had gone home."

"We'll wait," said Gagin.

We went into the house and sat down side by side.

Neither spoke. We both felt exceedingly awkward. We kept looking up, glancing towards the door, straining our ears.

At last Gagin rose.

"This is impossible!" he exclaimed. "I don't know what to do with myself. She'll be the death of me, really she will... Let's go and look for her."

We went out. It was now quite dark.

"What did you talk about?" asked Gagin, pulling his hat down over his brows.

"I was with her only five minutes," I said. "I told her what we had agreed upon."

"I'll tell you what," he said, "we'd better separate. We're more likely to come on her. In any case come back here in an hour."

XIX

I ran down the slope leading from the vineyard and rushed back to the town. I rapidly made the rounds of all the streets, looked everywhere, even into Frau Louise's windows, returned to the bank of the Rhine and ran along it... Every now and then I caught sight of a woman's figure, but Asya was nowhere to be seen. It was no longer vexation which devoured me, I was tormented by a secret fear, and it was not only fear which I felt—I now felt remorse, a burning regret, love—yes, the tenderest love! I wrung my hands, I called her name through the gathering darkness of the night, first under my breath, and then louder and louder. A hundred times I repeated that I loved her, I vowed never more to part with her. I would have given everything in the world to hold her cold hand again, to hear her low voice again, to see her before me again... She had been so near to me, she had come to me so resolutely in the innocence of her love, she had brought me her untouched youth... And I had not held her close to my heart. I had thrown away the bliss of seeing her sweet face brighten with the joy of ecstasy... This thought almost drove me mad.

"Where can she have gone? What can she have done with herself?" I cried in impotent despair... Something white suddenly appeared on the very bank of the river. I

knew this place; there, over the grave of a man who had drowned himself seventy years before, stood, half buried in the ground, a stone cross with an ancient inscription. My heart almost stopped... I ran up to the cross—the white figure had disappeared. "Asya!" I shouted. The wild sound of my own voice frightened me—but no one answered... I decided to go and see if Gagin had found her.

XX

As I rushed up the path through the vineyard, I saw a light in Asya's room... This calmed me slightly.

I went up to the house; the front door was bolted. I knocked. An unlightened window in the lower floor was cautiously opened, and Gagin poked out his head.

"Did you find her?" I asked.

"She's come back," he replied in a whisper. "She's in her room, undressing. Everything's all right."

"Thank God!" I exclaimed in unspeakable relief and joy. "Thank God! Now everything will be splendid. But we shall have to have another talk, you know."

"Another time," he said, drawing the window-pane gently towards him. "Another time. And now good-bye."

"Till tomorrow," I said. "Everything will be settled tomorrow."

"Good-bye!" repeated Gagin. The window was closed.

I was on the point of tapping on the pane. I wanted to tell Gagin there and then that I was asking him for his sister's hand. But it did not seem the moment... "Till tomorrow," I thought. "Tomorrow I will be a happy man."

Tomorrow I was to be happy. But happiness knows no morrow; nor has it any yesterday. Happiness forgets the past and takes no thought for the future. It knows only the present—and that not a day, but a moment.

I do not remember how I got back to Z. It was not my legs that carried me, nor a boat that bore me—broad powerful wings wafted me across. I passed a bush on which a nightingale was singing, and stood for a long time listening to its song. It seemed to me it was singing of my love and of my happiness.

XXI

As I approached the familiar dwelling the next morning, I was startled by the fact that all the windows were wide open, and the door, too. Some bits of paper lay about in front of it; a maid-servant with a broom appeared in the doorway.

I went up to her...

"They've gone," she called out before I had time to ask her if Gagin was at home.

"Gone?" I echoed. "What d'you mean? Where have they gone?"

"They left this morning, at six o'clock and they didn't say where they were going. Wait a minute—aren't you Mr. N.?"

"Yes."

"They left a letter with the mistress for you."

The maid went upstairs and came back holding a letter. "This is for you."

"It can't be... How..." I blurted out. The girl looked at me blankly and resumed her sweeping.

I opened the letter. It was from Gagin—not a word from Asya. He began by telling me not to be angry with him for his sudden departure. He was sure that, on mature reflection, I would approve of his decision. He had been unable to find any other way out of a situation which might have become difficult and dangerous. "Last night," he said, "while we both sat in silence waiting for Asya, I became finally convinced of the necessity for a separation. There are certain prejudices which I respect. I understand that you could not marry Asya. She told me all. I was obliged to pacify her by yielding to her repeated, earnest requests." He finished up by expressing regret that our friendship had ended so quickly, wished me luck, assured me of his regard, and begged me not to try and find them.

"What prejudices?" I exclaimed, as if he could have heard me. "What nonsense! What right had you to take her away from me?" I clutched at my temples...

The servant called out loudly to the landlady; her alarm forced me to take myself in hand. One idea consumed my whole being—to find them, to find them at all costs. I

could not submit to the blow, could not reconcile myself to such a solution of the problem. I learned from the landlady that they had gone aboard a steamer at six in the morning. I went to the ticket-office. There I was told they had taken tickets to Cologne. I rushed home, intending to pack my things and take the next boat after them. My way lay past the house of Frau Louise... Suddenly I heard my name called. Looking up, I saw the burgomaster's widow at the window of the very room in which I had seen Asya yesterday. She smiled her revolting smile and called to me. I turned away and was just going to pass on when she called out that she had something for me. These words brought me to a stop and I went into the house. How shall I describe my feelings on finding myself in that room again?

"I was only to give you this," began the old woman, showing me a small note, "if you came to me yourself, but you're such a nice young man. Take it."

I took the note.

On a tiny scrap of paper the following words were hurriedly pencilled:

"Good-bye, we shall never meet again. It is not out of pride that I am leaving—but because it is the only thing I can do. When I wept in front of you yesterday, if you had said one word to me, just one word, I would have stayed. You did not say it. It must be that everything is for the best... Good-bye forever!"

One word... Oh, how mad I had been! That word... I had uttered it with tears the day before, I had lavished it on the empty air, I had repeated it in the open fields... but I had not said it to her, I had not told her that I loved her... but I could not have uttered that word then. When I met her in that fatal room, I was not yet clearly aware of my love for her. It was not aroused even when I was sitting, in blank stupor and strained silence, beside her brother... it had only sprung into irrepressible life a few minutes later when, terrified that a tragedy had occurred, I began searching for her, calling her... but it was too late then. "But that's impossible!" you will tell me. I do not know if it is possible, but I do know it is true. Asya would never have gone away if there had been the slightest shadow of coquetry in her and if she had not found herself in

such a false situation. She could not endure what any other girl would have endured—I had not understood this. My evil genius had checked the declaration on my lips at my last meeting with Gagin in front of the dark window, and the last straw, at which I might even then have clutched, had slipped from my hands.

That same day I returned to the town of L. with my luggage and took the steamer to Cologne. I remember, just as the steamer got under way and I was taking a mental farewell of those streets, of all those places which I was never to forget, I caught sight of Hannchen. She was sitting on a bench on the bank of the river. Her face was pale but not sad. A handsome youth stood beside her, telling her something and laughing. And across the Rhine my little Madonna peered as wistfully as ever through the dark foliage of the old ashtree.

XXII

At Cologne I learned that the Gagins had gone to London, and I followed them there. But in London all my efforts to find them were futile. I persisted in the search for a long time, refusing to reconcile myself to failure, but at last had to give up all hope of ever finding them.

And I never saw them again—I never saw Asya again. Vague rumours about her brother reached me occasionally, but she had disappeared from me forever. I don't even know whether she's alive or dead. A few years ago, when I was abroad, I caught sight of a woman in a railway carriage whose face vividly brought back the unforgettable features. But no doubt I was deceived by a chance likeness. In my memory Asya remains the girl I once knew in the happiest time of my life, the girl I saw for the last time huddled up in a low wooden chair.

I must, however, confess that I did not grieve for her so very long. I even found that fate had done well in not uniting Asya and me. I consoled myself with the thought that I should most likely not have been happy with a wife like her. I was young then—and the future, really so short, so swift, seemed infinite to me. "Could not the same thing happen again," I asked myself, "and be

still better, still more beautiful?" I have been intimate with other women, but the love which Asya aroused in me—that ardent, tender, profound love—has never repeated itself. No other eyes have ever replaced for me those which were once fixed on me so lovingly; to no other heart which has rested against my breast has my own heart responded with such sweet, joyous pangs. Doomed to the solitary life of a lonely bachelor, I am living out the tedious years, but I preserve as sacred relics her notes and a withered spring of geranium—the flower she once threw to me out of the window. Till this day it retains a faint perfume, and the hand which gave it to me, that hand which I was able only once to press to my lips, has perhaps long been mouldering in the grave. And I—what has become of me? What is left of me, of those blissful, tumultuous days, those winged hopes and aspirations? The faint exhalations of an insignificant flower have survived all the joys and sorrows of a human being, and may survive the human being itself.

1857

ASYA

The novella was first published in issue No. 1 of *Sovremennik* (The Contemporary) journal for 1857.

1... "all this is ancient history" ...—The first line of the poem by the Russian poet, Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), *Ruslan and Ludmilla*, which later became a popular saying.

2...in the Dresden Grüne Gewölbe...—(Literally, "Green Cupola")—the Dresden Gallery of Jewels, containing a rich collection of jewelry, including the coronation regalia of the Saxon monarchs.

3...and the word "Gretchen"...—In the draft manuscript the separate note for "Gretchen" has the abbreviation 'NB' beside it. It underlines the significance of this word in the text associating Turgenev's Asya with the heroine of Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Faust*.

4 A little statue of the Madonna, with a child-like face and a crimson heart stabbed through and through with swords on the exposed breast...—symbol denoting the suffering of the Virgin Mary.

5... "Landesvater", "Gaudeamus"...—old student songs, the first in German, the second in Latin. Literal translation: "The father of the people" and "We will rejoice."

6...And if thou sleep'st, I'll wake thee
To the strains of my guitar...—a song written by the Russian

composer Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857), to the words of a poem by Pushkin, "I'm here, Inezilya".

7...*Her figure is like the little Raphael Galatea in the Farnese frescoes...*—frescoes by the Italian painter Raphael (1483-1520) in the Villa Farnesina, in Rome.

8 "*Mother, dear mother!*"—a popular song by the Russian composer Alexander Gurilev (1803-1858), which came to be perceived as a folk song.

9 ...*Putting on a round, Van Dyck hat...* — i.e., in the style of the Flemish painter Antony van Dyck (1599-1641), the traditional dress for French artists.

10...*I read "Hermann and Dorothea" aloud to Gagin...*—"*Hermann and Dorothea*" (1797), an epic poem by Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), written in 1787.

11...*There in the shadow stands the cross,
Above the grave of my poor mother...*—from *Eugene Onegin*, the novel in verse by Pushkin. In Pushkin the line reads "Above the grave of my poor nurse" (Chapter 8, stanza XVI).

12...*I should like to have been Tatyana...*—the heroine of Pushkin's novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*. In the draft manuscript there were more comparisons, direct and hidden, between Asya and Pushkin's Tatyana.

FIRST LOVE

The story was published in the March, 1860, issue of the *Biblioteka dlya chteniya* (the Reader's Library) journal with a note of dedication to Pavel Annenkov (1813-1887)—the Russian literary critic and memoirist, who was a friend of Turgenev's and wrote many articles on his work.

13...*Kaidanov's History...*—I. Kaidanov, professor of history at the Lycée at Tsarskoye Selo from 1811-1841. He was the author of history textbooks which were republished many times. The reference here is to his textbook *A Guide to a Universal Political History*.

14 *The rank of Princess did not impress me much: I had just read Schiller's Robbers.*—The drama by the German poet, Schiller (1759-1805), containing a protest against tyranny which had a strong influence on Russian youth in 1820-1830.

15...*dance the Kazachok...*—Kazachok, a Russian folk dance.

16...*could break in the most savage horses long before Mr. Rarey displayed his skill...*—Rarey, the author of the book, *The Modern Art of Taming Wild Horses* (1858), came from America and possessed "an extraordinary talent for breaking in mad horses".

17 "*The Hills of Georgia*"—a poem by Alexander Pushkin (1829), the last line of which reads: "For not to love is quite beyond its (the heart's—Tr.) powers".

18...*and my friend Tonkosheyev, in his Spanish novel El Trovador...*—an indirect reference to Tonkoçheyev (Turgenev has slightly altered the surname), the author of an anonymous novel, *El Trovador, or Vengeance for Vengeance. A true story from Spain 1826. Composed by a Russian*" (1833).

19 *And we all, like Polonius...*—a reference to the dialogue between Hamlet and Polonius. (W. Shakespeare *Hamlet*. Act III, Scene 2). Polonius agrees thrice with Hamlet who compares one and the same cloud first with a camel, then with a weasel and finally with a whale.

20...*Freytag vouches for one...*—Freytag—a well-known racehorse trainer in Moscow in the 1830s and the owner of a riding-school.

21 *I remembered the picture of Malec-Adel bearing Mathilde away...*—A reference to the characters in the novel by the French author Marie Cottin (Sophie Ristea), *Mathilde ou Mémoires tirés de l'histoire des Croisades*, (1805). (The novel was translated into Russian in 1806 and republished several times).

22 "*'Twas not the white snow...*"—an old Russian folk song.

23 "*I await thee, whilst the playful breeze...*"—a song to the words of a poem by poet and critic Pyotr Vyazemsky (1792-1878), "I'm waiting for you" (written in 1816).

24...*I began shouting out Yermak's address to the stars, from Khomyakov's tragedy...*—the tragedy in verse *Yermak* written in