

was really bad. that could well be, said turning away, but it does not excuse you. theres no one i know whod hold it against me, said the woman. him, who put his arms around me, hes been chasing after me for a long time. i mite not be very attractive for most people, but i am for him. ive got no protection from him, even my husband has had to get used to it; if he wants to keep his job hes got to put up with it as that mans a student and hell almost certainly be very powerful later on. hes always after me, hed only just left when you arrived. that fits in with everything else, said im not surprised. do you want to make things a bit better here the woman asked slowly, watching him as if she were saying something that could be as dangerous for as for herself. thats what i thought when i heard you speak, i really liked what you said. mind you, i only heard part of it, i missed the beginning of it and at the end i was lying on the floor with the student its so horrible here, she said after a pause, and took hold of k.s hand. do you believe you really will be able to make things better smiled and twisted his hand round a little in her soft hands. its really not my job to make things better here, as you put it, he said, and if you said that to the examining judge he would laugh at you or punish you for it. i really would not have become involved in this matter if i could have helped it, and i would have lost no sleep worrying about how this court needs to be made better. but because im told that i have been arrested and i am under arrest it forces me to take some action, and to do so for my own sake. however, if i can be of some service to you in the process i will, of course, be glad to do so. and i will be glad to do so not only for the sake of charity but also because you can be of some help to me. how someone was answering him he thought that he heard people muttering in the choir; but it was only the echo of his own voice, his own voice tossed from pillar to pillar and arch to arch, till it faded into a wail of sharnall, sharnall in the lantern. it was the first time that he had been in the church at night, and he stood for a moment overcome with the mystery of the place, while he gazed at the columns of the nave standing white in the moonlight like a row of vast shrouded figures. he called again to mr sharnall, and again received no answer, and then he made his way up the nave to the little doorway that leads to the organ loft stairs. this door also was open, and he felt sure now that mr sharnall was not in the organ loft at all, for had he been he would certainly have locked himself in. the pedal note must be merely ciphering, or something, perhaps a book, might have fallen upon it, and was holding it down. he need not go up to the loft now; he would not go up. the throbbing of the low note had on him the same unpleasant effect as on a previous occasion. he tried to reassure himself, yet felt all the while a growing premonition that something might be wrong, something might be terribly wrong. the lateness of the hour, the isolation from all things living, the spectral moonlight which made the darkness darker this combination of utter silence, with the distressing vibration of the pedal note, filled him with something akin to panic. it seemed to him as if the place was full of phantoms, as if the monks of saint sepulchres were risen from under their gravestones, as if there were other dire faces among them such as wait continually on deeds of evil. he checked his alarm before it mastered him. firmly on to the handle and looked down onto the square outside. the snow was still falling, the weather still had not brightened up at all. he remained a long time sitting in this way, not knowing what it actually was that made him so anxious, only occasionally did he glance, slightly startled, over his shoulder at the door to the outer room where, mistakenly, he thought hed heard some noise. no one came, and that made him feel calmer, he went over to the wash stand, rinsed his face with cold water and, his head somewhat clearer, went back to his place by the window. the decision to take his defence into his own hands now seemed more of a burden than he had originally assumed. all the while he had left his defence up to the lawyer his trial had had little basic affect on him, he had observed it from afar as something that was scarcely able to reach him directly, when it suited him he looked to see how things stood but he was also able to draw his head back again whenever he wanted. now, in contrast, if he was to conduct his defence himself, he would have to devote himself entirely to the court for the time being, at least success would mean, later on, his complete and conclusive liberation, but if