

Concordia Antaro

# TWO LIVES

Volume II

## Chapter 1

### The captain T.'s and Nal's escape from K. to London. The wedding

Having left uncle Ali's house urgently, Nal entered the captain T.'s house. She was accompanied by two servants, the young Ali and the captain T. She had never been there and she couldn't even imagine such a moment of her life. Having grown up in the contradictory surroundings, Nal was oppressed by all sorts of superstitions of harem. The only luminary for her were her uncle's efforts to educate her and to give her at least some theoretical knowledge about the civilized and cultured society, because Ali Mahomet used to violate all old laws of the women separation and closing in harems everywhere he could find the slightest possibility.

Nal always had some European clothes which Ali used to accustom her to, as though by offering new games for her, and by doing so he was making the old aunt, mullah and his fanatics indignant.

Thus, it wasn't difficult at all for the girl to change into the clothes which her uncle had prepared for her in this home. Jokingly, she wrapped up the young Ali Mahmed into the reddish wedding oriental robe and the sumptuous hijab. She separated with her cousin without any tears by winding her hands round his neck, although the tears were shining in the eyes of both of them.

"Try to be strong, Nal. Everything has happened not as I was expecting, but... Be happy, remember me from time to time and believe me: if uncle Ali told you this – then it has to be like this if he gave you to the captain T. – it means that your path is there, and your happiness depends only upon yourself. Don't be afraid of anything. Go with joy and try to understand till the end why uncle Ali is creating such life for you and sending you to it. Remember only one thing: one precept was given to both of us – loyalty till the end. Be loyal to the captain T. exactly as you are loyal to uncle Ali; and you will triumph everywhere."

The voice of the young Ali was trembling, his inspired face was wonderful, as though revived, and nothing within him reminded of that dead youth who was looking at Nal in despair when she handed the flower to the captain.

"It's time. Farewell, my sister. I will always be your loyal friend, and neither distance nor separation will exist between us."

Having taken the miniature Nal's shoes into his hand, wrapped up in her hijab, Ali moved out from home and disappeared in the darkness.

Exactly as it was so simple for Nal to change into European clothes, it was difficult for her to overcome the habit to cover herself with the hijab and to show her open face to men. When the captain T. knocked at the door and asked her whether he could come in and whether she was ready, Nal was frightened, and it was unusual for her to answer him "yes". Having seen the girl with the simple English costume and with her loose plait decorated with pearls, he was simply terrified.

Having understood how bad she looked and what an evidence her plait might be, not allowing the surprised captain even to come to himself, Nal cut her plait off till the trunk, rolled the remainder round her head and pulled the hat on her head firmly.

Having wrapped her in the light silky cloak, the captain told her.

“Nal, while we are taking away the wonderful recollection about Ali from here, we are husband and wife before him. Both of us submit to him, and we’ll stay loyal to him till the very end of our lives. We leave without him, but he is with us. If you keep walking without any fear, we’ll win and fulfil the task given to us.”

“Captain T., I don’t know any fear. I’ve never experienced it. I’m your wife before my uncle and before God, and my loyalty to God – that’s my loyalty to my uncle and to you,” Nal answered him calmly.

The servants put the small suitcases of the captain and Nal onto the couch. The horses broke into a fast trot instantly, and Nal began to get used to the darkness.

“I’ve never been in the street at night in my life, even behind the gates of the garden,” Nal whispered to the captain who was sitting next to her and whom she could hardly recognize in his civil clothes.

“Nal, let’s speak English. Now you are wife of the count, lord T. Try to conduct yourself nobly, as though you were reading about it in the English novels, and it doesn’t matter how foolishly it would look like. Here’s the dense net for you,” the captain helped Nal to gird the hat with the dark blue net and to pull it down on her face.

“I like it so much!” Nal gave a laugh. “I will avoid the boring discussions by pretending to be haughty lady.”

“Don’t forget to lean on my arm and to pretend to be haughty lady-icon till the departure of our train. Only three social levels of slaves in the world exist for you: me, your husband and your first slave whose worthy of your talk; your uncle who is like a secretary for you – he’s your second slave whom you still recognize to be a man from your elevation, and the servant, your third slave whom you only nod and wave. Solid ladies spend their entire lives like this. Try to live a few weeks like this, too, until we force our way through to the pure air, and the most boring part of our lives ends.”

In the meanwhile, the coach rolled up to the lit station, and Nal didn’t have time to answer him anything. Lord T. got out first, gave his hand to his wife and sent the secretary to take the tickets booked in advance. The train arrived in several minutes. The secretary and the servant settled their masters in separate compartments and went to their own places on the next coach.

When the train moved, the lord inquired and made certain personally that his wife was settled perfectly, he said good-bye to her and added that he would come to visit her in the morning. Everything was so strange and uncomfortable to Nal, her little face was so perplexed that when the lord was already going to the corridor he asked her whether his wife would need the secretary. Nal became glad of the possibility to stay with her uncle and asked him to send him to her immediately. The lord sent the conductor to invite the secretary, while he stayed in the corridor to wait for him.

“The countess cannot sleep, she would like to write several letters,” the lord said to the secretary who bowed low to him and entered the countess’ compartment.

The lord kissed his wife’s hand and whispered the imaginary secretary while closing the door of the compartment.

“Stay here until six o’clock in the morning. I will replace you in the morning, while you can rest in my compartment. Let Nal sleep. You keep watch.”

The captain came back to his compartment and went to bed by commanding himself – as he used to do it for many years already – to wake up at six o'clock, and he fell asleep instantly.

Nal was unable to sleep. Everything surprised her. Her uncle had to explain the equipment of the coach to her. He told her about their entire journey to Petersburg, how their hotel looked like if they had to be delayed in Moscow.

"I don't know if we stop there. I think that we must hurry with all our might and reach London as soon as possible," her uncle-servant was telling her.

"And how are we going to get there?"

"We'll board the steamer in the Neva quay. Now there's a direct service already. We'll be in London in seven days."

"How? Are we going to sail in the sea for seven days?" Nal was surprised.

"Yes, in the sea. It is a pity that I feel bad in the sea. The captain T. will have to protect his haughty wife himself on the ship," her uncle was joking. "But both of us have already overstepped the limits of the servant and his mistress, and in order for you to get used to this role, noble lady, change to the light dress which you will find in the suitcase and go to sleep. I will sit by the window for a while."

"No, uncle, it's impossible to sleep. I can go to bed, as you want me to do, but my head will explode from my thoughts if I'm unable to think out at least a half of them till the end."

When her uncle spoke to his niece after a while he didn't receive any answer. The old man gave a smile and began to read. There wasn't any trace of excitement on his serene and calm face of an old philosopher; it seemed that nothing was disturbing his balance. At this time, he was calm and able to work exactly like in his usual home surroundings, encircled with the vineyard where he left his big family. The book and the notes which he was writing in the weak candlelight made him not to notice the stations passed by, and he was even amazed when the captain entered the compartment silently.

"She told me that she wouldn't be able to sleep," the secretary told him in a whisper by smiling mischievously, "and now look, both the unusual jolt and the knock of the wheels is nothing for youth."

The secretary went to his master's compartment, while he sat down on the adjacent sofa before Nal.

Nal was still sleeping like a child with her hand put under her cheek. The captain fixed the crack on the curtain carefully, thought which the sunbeam was sneaking towards the curly hair on the pillow, and then he sat down in his place again. He could see Nal with her closed eyes for the first time. Her long, black eyelashes cast a shadow on her reddish cheeks, while her charming lips were smiling. This nearly childish life belonged to him. Even yesterday it seemed impossible to him not only to be united with Nal, but even to live his life not far away from her, and today he's going with her after he received her straight from Ali's hands. He's going with her in order to live and to work by loving her freely before the entire world.

"Is man happy if he's responsible for two lives?" the captain was reflecting.

Ali told him by giving Nal to him that the captain would be responsible for two lives, because Nal was still a child, while he was not only a man, but also her first friend and educator.

"Oh yes," the captain continued his thoughts, "nothing can be higher of such love when man is responsible for his beloved's life. Ali has entrusted a part of himself to me. I have to continue his started work and to help Nal to open all the strength of life within her."

"You know, uncle, I'm too lazy even to open my eyes, and I was boasting that I would think out a half of my thoughts," all of a sudden, Nal began to speak after waking up slowly. "And you know, I had a very strange dream. I could always see the captain T. in my dream, and not my uncle Ali, as I expected. It seemed to me that he was sitting here, and not you, that I was his wife and that we were married in a European way. It is funny, isn't it?"

"Not much, Nal."

Nal jumped up from the sofa. She was completely embarrassed.

"How did it happen that you are here, and I'm sleeping?" the distressed girl asked him.

"We didn't want to wake you up, while your uncle needed to rest. Don't upset yourself. You have to get used to pretend to be my wife. Don't forget that we are fugitives, and it depends on our self-control how perfectly we are going to play our roles and save our lives. We have to save not only our own lives, but also the lives of all the people who help us in many places at the same time. Nal, it is difficult for you to travel for the first time in your life, especially without any womanly help. Both of us will try to behave in such a way that everybody would consider us to be a loving couple of some haughty persons. Now try to comb your hair. I'm not suited to be a hairdresser, although I'm quite good make-up man, but I undertake to criticize your hairdo."

"Captain T., if you could sit by the window silently for a while, I will try to comb my hair in the way I saw it in the fashionable illustration at my uncle Ali's. Only don't look at me until I tell you to."

"I agree not to look at you while you comb your hair until you give me the signal, but I completely disagree with the fashionable illustration. Take all adornments from your hair and roll your plait round your head like yesterday."

"How? I have to take all adornments from my hair?! Aren't the European women wearing any adornments? This is very boring."

"Nal, they are wearing them, but they adorn their hair only when they go to feasts, dinner-parties, and they do it in a very subtle and moderate way. The adornments, as well as hats and furs, have their own laws in the women fashion. One hat is suitable only in the morning, another one – only after dinner, while there are such ones which simply ask for a coach."

"How should I learn everything, so that I wouldn't do any tactlessness and shame for both my uncle Ali and you, captain?" Nal asked the captain with her childishly ridiculous seriousness.

"I think that for you who have perceived such complicated spiritual tasks and mathematical truths it won't be difficult to understand the external rules of the conditional civilization, which has taken roots in that new nation where we are going to live. First of all, take all pearls out of your plait and hide all jewels from your neck and your ears. They are too valuable. Probably, you will find some small, not hanging earrings among your belongings, while they don't adorn their hair during their journeys at all."

"It is so strange. The women of our nation adorn themselves with all their jewels namely during their journeys."

The captain was sitting with his face turned to the window for a long time. He was thinking how difficult it would be for Nal to get used to the new life by meeting obstacles in her every step.

“Well, I’m finished,” he heard the voice behind his back.

Nal was standing in front of him with the white blouse and the bluish skirt. Her hair was parted in the middle and plaited tightly. It seemed that it was even difficult for this charming little head from that plait, and while Nal wasn’t used to the hairpins, she was always checking whether her plait was still holding. Her reddish body was translucent through the finest batiste. Her big eyes were joyous and trustful. There was neither a little cloud of doubt nor regret for the left home nor the slightest worry about the unknown future in this face, only her wish to hear the captain’s appreciation about her appearance.

Having made her certain that it was impossible to look better, the captain accompanied his wife to the washroom and remained there waiting for her in the corridor.

The thoughts about Lovushka – his only close brother in arms of his life and his journeys up to now – passed like a shadow through the captain’s heart. Lovushka who came back from the feast; Lovushka who was reading the letter; Lovushka who was stepping into his life without him for the first time...

“I’m responsible for two lives in this case, too,” the captain thought again.

Having accompanied Nal back to the compartment, the lord told the conductor to call his secretary for him. This man who had travelled and experienced a lot agreed about the breakfast and dinner during their entire journey instantly. Nal didn’t have to experience any inconveniences, they were bringing everything for the husband and his wife to their compartment.

When the first day of the journey was coming to the end, Nal got used to her new mode of life, and the surroundings stopped surprising her. She wasn’t amazed anymore at the women who weren’t wrapped themselves up in hijabs and who behaved so freely with men, but she refused to leave the compartment before the complete darkness, and when everything became calm. The travellers reached Moscow without any adventures by exchanging their watch by Nal. Here Nal didn’t ask a single question, and when they boarded the Petersburg train, she was feeling more free already.

The captain noticed that she was often reflecting upon something tensely, but he didn’t hinder her to solve her own questions.

All of them had to travel in the same compartment on the overcrowded Petersburg train, and Nal who had already gotten used to her opened face was very glad about it.

It seemed that she didn’t even notice her uncle’s anxiety in Moscow when he was whispering something to the captain. She remained restrained and calm in Petersburg, too, where two unfamiliar men met them and hurried them to board the steamer as soon as possible. She only uttered by being amazed at the grandeur of the city.

“Captain, it is a pity that we go past all this beauty and we don’t even look at a single building, isn’t it?”

“Nal, it is a pity to examine the buildings and galleries in a hurry, without getting to know the nation’s spirit, isn’t it? There still will be time, you will see so many nations and their beauty, you will get to know their mode of life and if you want to, you will be able to tie the thread of your activity and beauty in their lives yourself. Don’t hurry to experience everything at once. Now remember that you are a dignified lady, my wife. The life on the steamer with its table d’hôte will be more difficult for you than on the train.”

The travellers boarded the ship with the second siren. Only when the pier moved away, Nal noticed that the stern wrinkles on the captain’s face smoothed down and her uncle gave a lighter sigh.

"If my uncle Ali was here," Nal whispered to the captain, "he would have told everything to me and considered me to be the sincere helper of his troubles, while I would be only his niece and not his wife."

"Your reproach is hurting me, Nal. It is especially hurtful, because I, just like your uncle Ali, consider you to be my friend and helper, but until we meet Florentian and we marry, I cannot tell you anything, even where and why we are going."

"If you aren't telling me anything only because you have given your word to my uncle Ali, then I'm completely calm. I thought that you didn't love your little wife anymore, who didn't know anything, even how to behave on the steamer."

"Count, excuse me for interrupting your conversation with your wife," the captain of the steamer approached and apologized by addressing him in English and considering it to be absolutely understandable for the Russian count to understand his language. "It turns out that the places of yourself and your charming wife are separate," the captain cast a fascinated glance at Nal, bowed to her and continued, "but you are travelling together from the beginning till the end during the entire route, and I can offer the best cabin to you due to non-arrival of some travellers. If it's convenient for you, I will tell to find your secretary and show the cabin to him."

"I'm very excited with such an attention of yours. If it doesn't cause you trouble to settle us together and to let my secretary have my place, we will be very grateful."

"Have pity on me, I've offered this to you myself! I will be happy to serve everything I can for you and your wife during the whole journey," the captain of the ship answered them by bowing elegantly to Nal again.

"Captain T., how are we going to travel together in the same cabin?" Nal asked the captain by overcoming her excitement.

"Don't worry, my friend. You still don't know how you are going to feel because of the tossing. Your uncle can hardly bear it. If you felt unwell, it will be better if I am the trained nurse by your side, and not a stranger."

"It is terrible here for me. It is much worse here than it was on the train. And why is everybody looking at me like this?" Nal asked him silently by trying to conceal her embarrassment.

"It is impossible to be so beautiful, Nal. Even I cannot be angry with the people who – from sailors to the captain and from young to old – are looking at you like crazed. If I was in their place and if I only had the right to fling my eyes at you stealthily, and not to admire you openly, what I'm doing right now, then I would be acting exactly in the same way. That's why I cannot be angry with them."

Nal flushed, gave a smile and told him.

"To hear this from you now – that's a great help for me. I had to reconsider so much during these days. Our customs are different. Everything is different between the husband and his wife in our land. I thought that you were already unsatisfied because you left with me."

"You will tell everything to me when we get into the cabin and not here, in this windy place. Now, please cover yourself with the cloak, besides pull down the net of your hat, so that the wind which is unusual for you wouldn't harm your skin."

"Wouldn't an unusual jealousy ruin the heart of your husband?" the secretary approached the countess and told her by bowing low to her. "Lord, your cabin is already prepared and even decorated

with the flowers by the captain's order. Besides, your friends from K. were in time to send two chests with the linen and clothes for the countess, which are standing in the cabin already."

The captain of the ship, who by appearance was forty years old, good-mannered and who, apparently, possessed a good character, was already going to meet the couple which was turning everyone's attention to itself and accompanied them up to the cabin himself.

"Here's the handsome man," a turned-out lady let it out to her friend.

"I've lived my life, but I couldn't even imagine a beauty like this," a dandy with the monocle in his eye and the stick in his hand was speaking to his friend.

"What a bad idea," the lady contradicted. "Yes, her spouse is the real man! And where could such handsome man grow up? While his wife is nice-looking, like many others."

"How dare you to talk like this! Her height, her proportions, such hands and legs, such skin, while her eyes are the real heaven," the dandy continued.

As soon as the steamer cast off to the open sea, Nal felt unwell.

"Lie down quickly," the count told Nal by bringing her to the cabin on his hands and he called the stewardess. "Soon they will help you to lie down. Swallow these pills. Don't worry. We are going to avoid big troubles, but I doubt whether you will have a chance to enslave the hearts by the supper table. I think that in the best case you can ruin only the captain of the ship during some quiet days when you are sitting on the deck."

"Don't laugh at me, captain T. I'm so sad that you haven't yet looked at me a single time."

"On the contrary, Nal, I always catch myself looking at you and thinking only about you, while, the God can see it, I had to think about other things as well."

"Are you really going to that horrible table d'hôte and leave me alone?"

"Of course, not. I'm going to search for a charming robe in your chest. You will change, you can lie down and imagine that you are the princess hidden by Bluebeard, but first I'm going to order them to bring some oranges for you. And here the stewardess is coming to help you."

"Oh, I don't need any stewardess. I want oranges very much. I also want to take a bath and to lie down, but I gave a word to take off and put on my clothes always myself. I can see how bad it is to be accustomed to have seven nurses."

The captain sent the girl who came to bring some oranges, he opened the chest and, to the great joy of Nal, he found an excellent, warm robe there. The poor girl was suffering from the northern summer and the winds.

Although the medicine helped her a little, but Nal spent almost the entire journey lying in bed and only occasionally, during the sunny days, she used to go out on the deck and to sit there for a while.

"If you hadn't been next to me, I would have died from all those rains and mists. It is worse than a prison, but you are here, and everything seems to be cosy for me, even these sounds of the heavy shower," Nal was speaking to the count.

The captain was sitting next to Nal and, while holding her hands in his palms, he was trying to help her to bear the tossing.



"We'll meet one of Ali's friends, Florentian in London," once the captain explained to her.

"Florentian – who is he? Is this his name?"

"They call him like this, but neither I nor somebody else knows his real name. Nal, when you see him, you will understand what the real beauty is."

"It is very strange. My uncle Ali is handsome, Ali Machmed is even more handsome, while you are the most handsome," Nal blushed. "Can anybody be more handsome than you are?"

"I will ask you about this in London," the count gave a laugh, "after we meet Florentian."

Finally, Nal's suffering ended. In one chilly and foggy morning the steamer came to London by delivering completely sick Nal, the secretary and the servant who were exhausted with the sea-sickness and absolutely healthy count T. who was sitting by the patient in the cabin. She became so weak by the end of the journey that she was unable even to stand up, while the count's sunburn became brighter and therefore, the blond with the curly hair and dark, nicely bent eye-brows became even more handsome.

Having given the belongings to the porters and persuaded the secretary and the servant to stay in the steamer, the count was looking attentively at the crowd waiting on shore from the very edge of the deck. In the beginning, one could see nothing else, only stress and despair on his face, but when a half of the passengers had left the ship, the count's face suddenly brightened up and, having waved to somebody, he went to his cabin quickly. The count brought his secretary and the servant here, too, and went to say good-bye to the captain. He asked his permission for the sick secretary and the servant to stay here for fifteen or twenty minutes until he seated his wife in the cab and came back for the second time to take his weak patients who were unable to reach the hotel without his help.

The count received not only the captain's permission, but also his compassion and assistance. He wrapped his wife up in the cloak and brought her on his hands to shore.

"Hello, Nikolay. I'm very glad that you are in time, but no matter how I was hurrying, you had to wait for me anyway," Nal heard an English speaking, very pleasant, low voice of a gentle timbre.

"If you ordered me to wait for you here, then believe me, I would have waited here until the very end of the unshipping."

"That's completely in accordance with you! One can be certain always and everywhere that you will be fulfilling your order precisely," the same voice uttered again. "Don't worry about Nal, pass her on my hands and take your invalids. Can you see the green coach by the public garden? Take them right there."

Nal felt how other strong hands lifted her. It seemed to her that the stranger was much higher than Nikolay, how he called her husband. In the beginning, she wanted to protest, to tell him that she wasn't that much weak, so that he had to take her like this, but as soon as the stranger's hands touched her, Nal was embraced by an untold happiness, almost a bliss.

"Father," Nal whispered unwittingly.

His strong hands embraced her even more tenderly – as though the stranger had heard the whisper of her lips and her heart. Nal felt his faithful protection, exactly like in her childhood when she used to save herself on her uncle Ali's hands from the stupid cavils of her aunt. Now she didn't even need to see that person whose heart she had pressed herself to so trustfully – she was feeling merged with him stronger than with her uncle Ali.

Nikolay came back with his secretary and the servant, everybody took seats of the coach and rolled down the grey and boring streets full of smoke and mist. They were going like this for quite a long time until they turned to a wide and beautiful street, and stopped by the gates of the two-storied cottage, surrounded by the garden and flower gardens.

"Entrust your treasure to me to bring her inside," Florentian addressed Nikolay, "and you take your friends to two of their rooms which are prepared for them downstairs, on the left. Give them the medicine instantly, you will know which one and how much. They will be sleeping for three or four hours, then they can eat. Having put them to bed, go upstairs. When you hear our voices, go towards them."

Florentian climbed out of the coach easily, as though he had been carrying a doll on his hands, he told something to his servants in the language which Nal couldn't understand and began to go upstairs.

Nal was ashamed that he was carrying her like a doll, it was uncomfortable for her to cause trouble to somebody, and at the same time, it was an exceptional happiness and joy. Love which he felt for her father for the first time made her feel sorry that the stairs weren't endless, that soon there would be a room where she would be put on her feet.

Having laid her on the sofa, Florantian sat down next to her on the low stool, rolled the cloak off her head and told her tenderly with the smile.

"Now you should take a look at that person whom you've already recognized to be your father in your thoughts. Perhaps, when you see me, you don't want to utter this word anymore? Was your heart the first which guessed?"

"Oh, you are so charming, my father! Allah, Allah, how you are radiating!" Nal uttered by covering her eyes with her hand. "Oh, father, now I cannot live without you anymore! Allow me to kiss your hands. It seems to me that for the first time I understood what a happiness was. Here, next to you, one doesn't need anything anymore, only to fulfil your will."

Nal slid down from the sofa on the carpet and pressed herself to Florentian's hands.

"Rise, my baby, we are going to be together with you for a long time. I'm glad to respond with the whole completeness of my love to the call of your heart. Be my daughter, just like your husband Nikolay is my son for a long time already, and by calling me your father, you will only take that what you are entitled to. Here, eat this sweet and after a while you can run about as well as you were doing it in your uncle Ali's garden. Could you answer both to me and to yourself why you, being educated by your uncle Ali, you who adore him and who are loved by him, called me your father and raised a claim to it as soon as you touched me? You haven't called him to be your father for a single time, have you?"

"It is very strange, my father. Actually, everything what I have had in my life up to now – everything was from my uncle Ali, everything was received through his care, even through his fight and selflessness. Everything, everything," Nal was blushing while she was talking, "and... the captain T. whom you call Nikolay and even meeting you, my father, everything was only from him, my uncle Ali. Only I doubt whether I will be able to tell you why my love to my uncle Ali was woven as though with some fear. He is so strong, so unreachably high that I could never feel so simply with him as with you. I was always feeling that a big mountain of light was standing between him and me, and that I was unable to get over it, but when I saw you, my father, I felt how it was simple and easy for me with you. If you left me now, then I couldn't live anymore. Even Nikolay's love, if he loved me," Nal gave a deep sigh, "wouldn't stop me on the earth without you."

"If Nikolay loved you? My daughter, what does it mean? What are your doubts?"

"No, my father, I don't have any doubts. If my uncle Ali has sent me here, then exactly here my life and destiny is. I met you and now I understand that my uncle has sent me to you. Only he told me that me and Nikolay were husband and wife, but to all appearance, he couldn't send me to you in any other way."

"But who told you that you wouldn't get married, that Nikolay didn't love you?"

"Nobody told me this. But you see, when I became a fiancée, then before the wedding feast, my aunt was always explaining to me how the husband was behaving with his wife if he loved her, but..."

"My baby, laugh at all the superstitions of the world, and especially at that outdated understanding which you have taken away from the harem surroundings. Just a little time will fly past, and you will understand the whole power of Nikolay's love and his devotion to you. You will find out what sacrifices Nikolay has made to you. Be as simple and honest with him as you are with me now. By doing so, you will help both me and your uncle Ali. First of all, your and Nikolay's help for us is that new, liberated family which both of you have to create. And here's your husband. Come here, Nikolay."

Having lifted the portiere of the door, Nikolay appeared on the threshold.

"Well, of course, Florentian, I don't even doubt that Nal will recover instantly from your miraculous closeness. She's radiating so much that I don't even have to ask anything."

"My father told me to call you Nikolay. I wanted to call you somehow differently, like Lovushka was calling you, but in honour of my father and for the perpetual memory about him, I will be calling you as he is doing. Every time when I utter "Nikolay", two voices will be heard in my ears – his and my own one."

Florentian gave a laugh, while Nikolay was surprised.

"Everything is all right, my daughter, we'll still have time to talk about everything, but now you have to take a bath, change your clothes and go downstairs for breakfast. I will find the housemaid for you. She had never done this job, but life has forced her to. She must support her old mother and to send her brother to study, who's still an absolute child, and it is impossible to find a job in London that one woman could support two persons. I accepted her by hoping to give her some job. Now I can see that I won't find anything better for her than you. She knows many languages, the requirements of etiquette and she has an excellent taste. This woman will be useful for you. I will bring her in a minute."

Florentian disappeared so fast that Nal didn't have time to answer anything to him. In the meanwhile, the host's servant came to Nikolay to ask him for the instructions on how the belongings brought from the dock had to be put in order.

Having gone downstairs, Florentian entered a wonderful room which was papered with the green, silky wallpaper and moderately furnished with the antique furniture. The bookcases and the writing-table were made of the bright, golden hue wood with the pearl inlays of turtles. Having crossed the room, he went out to the balcony and called.

"Doria, come to me immediately!"

Hasty steps were heard in the garden, and a tall woman emerged on the little walk. She entered Florentian's room straight through the balcony.

"Sit down, Doria. You asked me to help you. You know yourself how much Ananda did for you and with how much joy, and how you stuck in the feelings of vexation, anger and bitterness, although you had taken the pledge of impartiality and promised to give up jealousy. You know how difficult life for you is now by always forcing you to be a dependent and insignificant person. Life is pulling all hooks of jealousy and suspicions out of you in your every step."

"Yes, my life was difficult when I lost my master Ananda. I was suffering and I'm suffering up to now when I comprehended what a blow I had struck with the arrows of my passions and jealousy to my compassionate Teacher who has vouched for me. My life in your home is more than happiness. My heart is pure. There's neither jealousy nor partiality nor people's condemnation left in my heart anymore, and I'm only waiting for you to believe in my loyalty till the end and to show me that job which you have promised to me. By serving to you, I will prove my new perception about happiness to live and I will remove Ananda's responsibility for me off his shoulders."

"Are you sure that you will be doing every job which I will give to you with joy? Won't your pride and humiliation awaken within you again? Won't your jealousy for another's wonderful and luxurious life crawl out again?"

"I am sure of it. I believe not in myself or in my new qualities, but I believe in the real love for man which has awakened within myself."

"If I offered you to become the servant of a young woman who is charming like a dream? To be her housemaid and her nurse, because she's inexperienced like a baby. You should teach her manners and to dress in good taste insensibly, because she came here straight from Asia and she doesn't know our society and the European way of living. Would you like such job?"

"By serving to her I would serve to you. By serving to you, I would pay off my sin against Ananda and I would come back to him."

Florentian was looking at Doria for a long time, for so long time that the woman's breathing even became more rapid. His look penetrated as though to the very bottom of her heart and it was reading not only her current state, but also the entire woman's future and her chances. Finally, he stood up, smiled and told her.

"Let your word uttered now be your signature for centuries. I give you my own signature under this new pledge. That person whose supervision I entrust to you is not only my own, but also many others' hope. I don't know whether she will be benevolent to you from the beginning and later on."

"I will be kind-hearted to her. Bless me, Florentian. I think that I won't slip again, it doesn't matter in what form the evil would try to get into me."

Doria fell on her knees, pressed her lips to the wonderful Florentian's hand, he put his second hand on her head.

"Let's go, she's waiting for us," Florentian told her by helping her to stand up.

Doria wiped her tears and seemed to be amazed.

"Yes, she's here, in my house, and you don't have to go anywhere."

"What a happiness!" Doria gave a joyous shout.

Florentian turned towards the door, turned his face to her on the threshold and told her with the smile.

“Get used to your role of a servant housemaid and learn only to follow your masters.”

When they entered Nal’s room, he took Doria to her and told her.

“My daughter, here’s the housemaid whom I’ve promised to you. Her name is Doria.”

“Oh, what a beautiful name, it is no less beautiful than you yourself,” Nal got up from the sofa and put her hand on Doria’s shoulder.

Doria kissed the hand of her new mistress and told her that she would try to serve her as loyally as she was able to.

“Oh, Doria, how you’ve upset me! Why did you kiss my hand? I give my kiss back to you,” and nobody had time even to come round when Nal kissed the hand of confused Doria. “Doria, I’ve never been in the fashionable society, but my uncle Ali has taught me to understand that in life there weren’t any servants and masters, that there were only people whose blood was of the same red colour. You won’t be my servant, but you’ll be my friend and teacher in those thousands of new things which I don’t understand at all. Father, I’ve already had time to see the rooms which you gave to me. Why are there so many of them? May Doria live in this charming, corner room which goes into the garden? I wish so much that it would be easy and joyful for her with me.”

“You are the little mistress of your rooms and Doria. Act as you wish. I’m afraid that soon you’ll enslave not only me and Nikolay with your Oriental charm, but also the entire home,” Florentian was joking. “But now don’t waste your time anymore. Smarten up and go downstairs for the breakfast when you hear the gong. It always rings fifteen minutes before the moment when we sit down at the table.”

With these words, the master of the house left by taking Nikolay with him.

“Doria, my dear friend, I cannot do absolutely anything and I don’t even know what in these chests are. They are opened, but I really don’t understand what I should choose, so that I would dress myself smartly and properly, according to your requirements.”

“Countess, don’t worry, the bath is prepared already, I will leave you there and choose the proper toilets, while you will put on the one which you’ll like the most. If you don’t like anything of them, put up with it temporarily, and then we’ll go to the city and buy that what you will need.”

“Doria, it isn’t accustomed in my country that servants would call their mistresses not by their names, but somehow differently. Please call me Nal when we are alone, as it is done in my country. If it is so accustomed here and you need to title me, then do it only in the presence of other people.”

Having left the bath, refreshed and charming like the flower of the spring, Nal was examining three dresses which Doria had prepared for her with the childish fascination.

“All of them are fit for the breakfast,” the housemaid was telling her by seating her mistress in front of the big mirror. “God, how beautiful you are,” she uttered by unplaiting the luxuriant Nal’s hair.

Somebody knocked at the door, Doria went up to it, and the servant who had an Oriental appearance handed in a packet to her, which was tied in the wonderful Persian silky shawl.

“This is for Nal,” he told her and left.

Nal unwrapped the packet, and two of her plaits fell out of it. They were decorated with pearls and had precious points at the tips, they were cut off in the captain T.’s room when they were running from K. A luxurious hijab was also here.

"What is it? The same curly hair as yours!"

"And they are mine. The hat didn't fit in on them, besides their length would have betrayed me. Even in my country where many people have beautiful and long hair, my plaits which reached the floor were amazing everybody. So I cut them off," Nal was talking calmly.

"And wasn't it a pity for you to cut off your hair of such rare beauty?"

"Ah, Doria. Beauty – this is such a broad concept. Up to this day, I was thinking that my husband was the most handsome man in the world, and today I understood that beauty might be divine, too."

"Yes," Doria gave a laugh, "I agree that you are heavenly beautiful and that you can bravely compete with the goddess of Olympus, but allow me to comb your hair politely, because we are going to miss all the gongs."

Doria wound her hair on the back of her head into the big knot, she let the small curls down from sides, fastened the whole hairdo with the big comb made of the turtle bone, which she found in one of the chests and pinned the same hairpins decorated with small brilliants. Nal began to choose the dress for herself.

"The girls from my country put many robes one upon another. Isn't it possible to put all of them on at once according to your custom? They are so beautiful..."

"No, you cannot do that in any way," Doria was laughing and throwing up her arms, "you have to choose one of them."

"It is such a pity," Nal uttered so seriously that Doria began to laugh again.

Nal assented to her, but finally, she put the golden hue dress made of the soft silk on, which was decorated with the knitting at the neck and the sleeves. The collar from the knitting, which didn't hide her charming, long neck, and the short sleeves – everything changed Nal simply beyond recognition.

"I can see, or to be precise I hear, how cheerfully you dress. May I come in?"

"Oh no! In no way!," having recognized Nikolay's voice, Nal gave shout by covering her bare neck with her hands and looking round what she could throw upon her dress in order to hide her bare hands.

"What do you mean I cannot come in? You are totally dressed, aren't you?" Nikolay was amazed when he came in and saw that Doria had finished her job already.

Nal was standing in front of him with her eyes full of tears, still trying to cover her neck.

"Nal, what has happened? Who has hurt you? What's wrong? I only wanted to say how exceptionally beautiful you are in this dress, but your tears have confused me, and I even forgot why I've come here."

"Well, I have already understood that nobody would manage without me here. My daughter, I came here to accompany you to the dining-room, so that the first breakfast would go merrily," Florentian came in and told them. He was dressed in the tail-coat and the open white waistcoat, and he was simply radiating with beauty. "You feel shy at home of your father whom you recognized and next to your husband whom you love, because of your bare hands and your open neck? Those are superstitions, my baby. Forget about them. No impure look or thought may stick to the pure woman and to her pure thoughts. You'll have to stay with your uncovered shoulders even in the crowd. Get used to it and remember this one thing: the

evil cannot bear the atmosphere of purity. He is running away from it. You have to possess the evil yourself, so that he could touch you.”

He took the case from Nikolay’s hands, opened it and took two big, pear form jewels – the emerald and the brilliant – out of it, which were strung on the elegant, small chain made of the same small jewels.

“Allow me to decorate your neck with these jewels. Your uncle Ali gives you the white one – the symbol of power, while the green one is from me. It signifies tact and charm, purity and one’s ability to adapt oneself to all circumstances of life.”

He hooked the chain up on the girl’s neck, and the jewels began to sparkle on the white knitting. Nal raised her cast down head. With the tears in her eyes and the smile in her lips, she looked like a little girl next to the grand figure of Florentian, next to the undisturbed peace which was reflected on his face.

“Take my arm, as Nikolay was teaching you, and let’s go to my room. You will meet two of my friends there. Don’t get confused if they are going to kiss your hand. If the number of the breakfast dishes perplexes you, if you don’t know how to eat them, look at me or Nikolay, both of us will try to show you all the tricks of fashion and etiquette, which are called politeness, and no one will even notice it, except yourself. By taking advantage of the right of the host, I will put the food for you myself, and when you understand how to do it according to the local requirements, if you want to, you can risk and do a service to me and your husband.”

When they went downstairs, Florentian took Nal into his green room.

“It is so wonderful here! Such a balcony! So many books! Almost as many as at Nikolay’s.”

“Many more. Here, a little further, there is one of the biggest personal libraries which one can find,” Nikolay explained to his wife.

The knock at the door was heard, and two youths entered the room one after another, whom the host greeted very sincerely, took their arms and brought them to Nal.

“Nal, allow me to introduce two of my friends to you. This is lord Mildrey, and this is an Indian, the student of the Oxford university, Sandra Satananda, for you – simply Sandra. He is still a chap, and most likely, he will be playing dolls with you. My daughter,” Florentian introduced her to them.

Lord Mildrey was thirty years old by appearance. He was a hefty and serious man, he was looking at Nal with his big, kind eyes and he was smiling to her pleasingly. He bowed low to her, kissed Nal’s hand respectfully, handed two roses to her and stepped back in silence. Apparently, he was simply stunned by the Nal’s beauty and by the fact that Florentian had a daughter about whom he didn’t know anything up to now.

Sandra had dark complexion, his eyes were black like coal, bright, sparkling and reminded Nal of Ali’s eyes. He was unable to restrain his laughter in any way when the dolls were mentioned and he was only flashing his teeth, which were as white as the snow.

“Forgive me, countess, but because of your father’s words all those rules of politeness which lord Mildrey has been teaching me so patiently and for so long simply vanished from my head. Be kind-hearted to the recluse of Oxford, who’s come here from India not so long ago, and forgive me for the first time,” Sandra kissed Nal’s extended hand so sincerely that she was feeling in an absolutely simply way with him.

The gong sounded for the second time. Florentian went up to Nal and invited her at the dinner table. Nal was trying to walk as steadily as possible. When she entered the dining-room she couldn't conceal her amazement: the walls and the ceiling were made of the dark woodcut here. Florentian accompanied her to the long table which was laid only by one of its ends and seated her in the place of the hostess. Having bowed to Nal, he sat down by her right side, Nikolay was by her left side, Mildrey sat down next to him, while Sandra – next to Florentian.

For the first time in her life, it was very uncomfortable for Nal to be seated in the company of men not only without a hijab, but also with her opened neck and bare hands. Only the perception that her loyal guardians were sitting next to her to whom she had entrusted her destiny voluntarily helped her to observe what and how they were doing and to learn to live in European way. She was trying to forget about herself and to think only about them, she was trying to adopt everything from them as soon as possible and to ease their care of her.

"Well, Sandra, how are the lessons of your education?" she heard Florentian's voice.

"Absolutely badly," Sandra was laughing by showing all his teeth again.

"Are you still running about in the streets, going upstairs three steps at the same time and don't remember from which cup one has to drink which wine?"

"Oh, it is much worse, lord Benedict," Sandra answered him by surprising Nal with such address to Florentian.

She looked at Nikolay inquiringly, who had told her not so long time ago that Florentian didn't have another name. The little sparkles of humour lit up in Nikolay's eyes, but she didn't receive an answer to her silent question.

"My abilities to learn some gallant manners drive my kind educator to despair. Wherever he takes me, I make a fool of myself and I don't even risk to appear there for the second time anymore," Sandra confessed by giving a sigh.

"But my young friend's abilities in studies are so stunning," lord Mildrey interfered, "that he managed to skip two courses instantly and handed over his work recently, which the whole board of professors recognized to be a work of genius."

"Count, I have to thank you for so many things," Sandra uttered by addressing Nikolay. "Both your books published under the pseudonym of the captain T., as well as your last brochure about the technical sciences and mathematics, about the mechanical movement's dependency on the inevitable laws of mathematics provided such fundamentals for my subject that now I'm ashamed to take all praises for this work upon myself. In the introduction, I refer to the source of my inspiration, that is to you."

Nal was so amazed that only the light touch of Florentian's hand sent her back on the earth.

"After the breakfast I will tell you about one young friend of mine, whose name is Lovushka, and I will explain to you why now you reminded me of him," Florentian told Nal silently, while Nikolay and Sandra were talking about the science.

Having taken advantage of the minute of silence, Florentian asked Sandra.

"Anyway, you haven't answered me why you weren't allowed to enter the decent house for the second time."



"Oh, lord Benedict, this is the whole tragedy. It seemed that lord Mildrey had just explained to me how I had to bow to ladies from the distance, how carefully I had to walk next to them in order not to tear the gathers or the knitting off their trains. It seemed that I had already understood everything, I accompanied my lady to her place, offered her a cup of tea and, as I saw it, I started the most suitable conversation in the aristocracy. However, her aunt decided that it wasn't an absolutely decent subject, and since she wanted to direct our thoughts into the fashionable direction, she sat down next to me by putting that ugly train of hers straight under my feet. And of course, when I stood up, her skirt came off her body. It was so ridiculous that me and everybody else burst out laughing. Am I to blame that her entire dress was holding only on to some push-pins?"

"You know, lord Benedict, he started talking about the hens and the calves with the girl," lord Mildrey interferred again, "but you understand yourself that..."

The ringing laughter of Nal melted in the joint joviality.

Nal stood up from the table and checked several times whether her own skirt was holding tight, and by doing so, she made Nikolay who noticed everything laugh. Nal went to the sitting-room which she hadn't seen yet and she was surprised that the golden wallpaper, furniture and the portiere with the brown fringe and the rims made of the white lilies had the same hue as her dress.

Florentian proposed Nal to hand the small cups of coffee to the guests. There was so much subtle elegance in Nal's movements, which was characteristic to her, that Sandra gave a shout.

"I swear to all Oriental gods that if lord Benedict hadn't stunned me today by introducing you to me as his daughter, I could have made a vow that you've come from the East."

"Now I will stun you even more," Florentian looked at Nal seriously and told him. "My daughter marries tomorrow. The wedding ceremony has to be simple, without any celebrations, crowd and publicity. You've mentioned to me that there was a pastor who was the worshipper of your wisdom. Could he register the marriage without asking anything and without demanding any banns called?"

"Have pity on me, lord Benedict! When have I told you that he was the worshipper of my wisdom? Simply, he's my good friend who forgives all my mistakes of etiquette. He is and especially honest and kind man who is ready to help everybody. I'm going to visit him immediately and I will bring his answer back to you."

Having drunk his coffee, Sandra got up to fulfil his master's want.

"In order to make it faster, take my carriage and if you can do it, bring the pastor here. Here he will be able to see the groom and the bride himself..."

"And he won't be able to resist the bride's charms," Sandra interrupted Florentian, while he was laughing. "I leave and I promise to bring the pastor here."

Sandra bowed to everybody and left.

"Lord Mildrey, maybe you would agree to be a witness at my daughter's wedding?" Florentian asked another of his guests.

"I will be happy to participate at the marriage of such beautiful people. I think that even if I managed to live ten lives, I wouldn't see such a wedding anymore," lord Mildrey answered him.

"You make Nal feel shy," Florentian gave a laugh.

Nal was lost in thought and a little bit sad. It seemed that she didn't even hear what the others were talking.

"Father, I would like to write a letter to my uncle Ali. Of course, he won't receive my letter until tomorrow, but I would like to write him anyway."

"In others words, you want to leave us until the pastor arrives. Well, however kind your charming company is, let it be so, we will suffer those couple of hours of separation with you. Take your time. The pastor is living in another end of London, and it'll take at least forty minutes to reach him."

With these words, Florentian accompanied Nal up to the door, bowed to her with the smile and opened it.

Having come back to her room and found Doria putting the chests in order, Nal was surprised at the abundance of the things that had fitted in them. But this time, having just cast a glance at the smart dresses, she shut herself in the boudoir and sat down to write the letter to Ali.

*My dear uncle Ali! Now I live in London, at home of the man whom I've never seen and known, and the real miracles are happening in my life one after another.*

*Now, my dear uncle, I'm going to tell you about the first and the greatest miracle which has happened today. I know that I won't be able to find any precise words to describe the miracle, but I also know from my early childhood that if I'm calling you from the bottom of my heart, you respond to me immediately. Ah, now, too, I can see your black eyes so clearly – such kind and blessing. Their beams as though penetrate through me and make me warm. And now I already know that I will be able to find the necessary words – you will understand everything what I certainly need to tell you.*

*Uncle, how could it happen that I, whom you've raised, educated, simply created, haven't called you my father for a single time? You and me – we are like one body, one spirit. I'm always and everywhere next to you, as though by your side. I'm a part of you. It is impossible to tear me off you, because my heart has become rooted into yours, while your image as though is shining between my eyes, as though I feel it rooted in my forehead.*

*Are you my father if I feel all of it for you? Father. Although I received everything from you, through you in my life, everything – since my very childhood and protection in it up to my love and my husband – I have never told this word to you, while here, today your friend Florentian whom I didn't know up to now just took me in his arms – and my heart, drowned in bliss, uttered "father" to him.*

*When I saw him, my lips repeated that word and revealed another secret hidden deep in my heart: now I can never live without him anymore, without that one whom I've uttered "father".*

*You aren't present here with me, but how clearly I can see you in the garden now, as though I was with you; and I come to life. I've left you, my uncle, with a heavy heart and anxiety, although your power – I can feel it – is pulsating within me in the same way as it used to do next to you, as it was pulsating from the very moment of our separation. I left with the man whom you gave to me. I was simply living, breathing and loving during all that time, but now, if life turned in such a way that that one to whom I've uttered "father" would disappear from it – I simply wouldn't have any strength to live anymore. Unless, my uncle, only next to you, next to that power which was pouring and now is pouring from you to me. I feel as though I've robbed you, as though I had taken a little piece of your life, stepped into it and given only a part of love back to you, but not the whole love till the end; but actually, it isn't like this, my uncle Ali.*

*You are everything to me, the whole essence of my life. If you left your life, I would leave mine, too; only not because of my heartbreak, but as the part of you, it wouldn't matter whether I would want it or not, whether I would choose such destiny for myself or not.*

*He is the most important matter in my current life. That one to whom I uttered "father". I don't know whether you'll understand me, because my words are so complicated. My father is radiating such charm, such joy is spreading from him, as though the path from the very light was stretching in front of and after him. And I don't need to cover my eyes with my hand and to tell him as I do to you: "Uncle Ali, take your light, it is dazzling me". His light doesn't disturb me, it gives me bliss. I used to fall down as exhausted from your power, while his power gives me truthfulness and safety. But that is not all, my friend, my idolized uncle Ali. You gave a husband to me, that one whom I loved mostly after you. I was going here easily, I was thinking that he also loved me, perhaps not so much as a woman from the East, but I thought that he loved me anyway. Only it isn't like this, uncle. Now my father told me that our wedding was tomorrow, and I'm not crying only because I remember how you've told me when we parted: "Your path is there".*

*Your power – oh, how clearly I can see you now, how tenderly you are smiling to me – has penetrated into me. I'm a little woman who doesn't know anything yet, but your power, your loyalty is living within me and it'll be living here till my death. Understand, uncle Ali, my uncle creator, that I'm not protesting, but I feel like being foisted off on my husband.*

*My father told me that my help to you, to him and to many others was hidden in that new and free family which me and Nikolay had to create. I know what the slavery of superstitions is. I remember that difficult atmosphere of an Asian family in which I was growing up myself. I think that I know how joyful and harmonious families have to be created, but two persons are needed for this purpose. A mutual love is needed for this, and Nikolay doesn't love me. He hasn't pressed me to his heart, embraced or caressed me for a single time, as though he was afraid of me and he tells me "You". Ah, uncle, inspire some confidence to me. I cannot doubt my loyalty and my precept to you – it is living within you, I'm deriving it from you, I'm a part of you. Only what is the meaning of carrying the loyalty within one's heart and not knowing how one has to act in such a way as it is needed in one's daily life...*

*I know already, I understand everything what you've told me now, uncle, I've heard everything what you were telling me! What a happiness that now I understand that you've sent me here to my father! Yes, yes, now I will know how to win my husband's love, how to create our family. He, my father, will teach me this, and you knew it. Oh, this takes the entire burden off my heart. I cannot tolerate any compromise or double-think anywhere and I was tormenting myself that you might think that I've betrayed you at least in the little corner of my heart.*

*There's still some sadness for Ali Mahmed hiding in my heart, but Allah can see it, I've never given any hope by anything to him. On the contrary, I entrusted the secret of my love to the captain T. to him. He didn't believe it and jokingly, he used to call the captain T. to be the prince of the fairy-tale. So long, uncle! I'm your happy Nal again. I won't torment myself anymore, I will try to be plain. Now when suddenly I've seen you and heard your words – I know how and where I should search for an advice if my father was unable to help me. It is easy for me, I know how to call you up. I will sit down to write the letter to you and I will see you in your garden, and then I will always be your happy Nal.*

Nikolay knocked at the door and entered the room to invite Nal to become acquainted with the pastor.

"My God, what's happened to you, Nal? As though you've been changed somehow. You left us so sad and now you look like filled up with the light and peace from the uncle Ali's garden."

"It is true. Uncle Ali has dispelled my childish sadness. His garden in which my thoughts stayed for a while has scattered that nasty fog, and if you allowed me to throw some shawl on my shoulders, then it would be both cosier and warmer for me. I always feel the cold here."

Nikolay called Doria. After a while, he was accompanying his wife who was wrapped up in the white shawl back to the sitting-room.

"Well, now both my children are in front of you," Florentian uttered by bringing the pastor to Nikolay and Nal.

"Oh yes, your children go well one with another. I admit that when my Oxford friend told me about the bride's beauty, I didn't believe him too much, because he told me this about the groom: "Only lord Benedict could find such scientist, handsome, wise and educated man for his daughter. One could think of such a couple only in a novel, and only in an Oriental, not an English one". Since Sandra is raving about the East, I didn't believe him very much. But now I'm ready to marry your children and to do it right now if you want me to."

The pastor was tall and grey, but his face was reddish and young. An exceptional kindness was felt in his blue eyes and on his intelligent face. He sat down in front of the youths, united their hands and told them.

"I'm sure that in twenty years, you will be firmly leading a plentiful family, you will be an example to your neighbours and you will still be loving each other."

Such a clear confusion appeared on Nal's face that this kind man looked at her attentively and asked her.

"Do you love your fiancé?"

"Oh yes, very much and for a long time already," Nal answered him, unhesitating.

"For a long time – that is since your childhood. You cannot be older than sixteen, although your clothes give you solidity. And how about you, do you love your fiancé?"

"Oh yes, very much and for a long time already," Nikolay was smiling when he answered him by precisely repeating Nal's words.

Nal glanced at Nikolay with lightning speed, blushed and turned pale suddenly which made the pastor fall to thinking for a moment. Sadness came to light on his kind face. He looked at great and honest face of Nikolay again, and all of a sudden, his own face brightened up.

"Lord, most likely your daughter doesn't have her mother? Would you allow me to talk to her without any witness for several minutes?"

"I will be very grateful to you. If you've noticed any confusion in Nal's heart, it'll be easier for you to marry her if you make sure yourself of her love to her future husband," Florentian answered him.

"No, lord, I don't doubt her, but when a woman is entering the marriage from love, she must be calm and trust both herself and her husband. I think that a childish fear is hiding here, which I will be able to dispel."

Florentian opened the door to the adjacent room, let Nal and the pastor enter it and then he closed the door again. As soon as they stepped over the threshold, both of them simply were struck with amazement and the exceptional sense of peace and bliss. The whole room was white: the walls were papered with the white material which was soft as silk and mat as suede; the floor was made of the white and golden tiles; the collapsible bed was upholstered with the same material like the walls, and there were a couple of furs on it; a high, green vase with the bouquet of lilies was standing on the white table.

"It is so wonderful here! Everything here is the same as my father himself," Nal whispered.

"You also have to be the same temple to your husband and to your children. Your husband is looking at you as at the sanctity, while you think that he doesn't love you. Go, my baby, the path of your life is like these lilies which you resemble with your purity and your beauty. Here and now, I marry your soul with your husband's soul. Take care of him. Many tests await him. Protect him. The heart which is carrying the burden of her beautiful wife through her life can rarely avoid jealousy and suspicions. Your husband couldn't bear a single moment of your unfaithfulness. Be honest till the end, be vigilant and kind. Everything else will come by itself."

"I understand you. I will be thinking about my husband and not about myself. My father and him will help me to create my family. Thank you. Now I know, I am calm."

As though by feeling that there was time to open the door already, Florentian met Nal and the pastor on the threshold. If Nal's face seemed to be changed for Nikolay when he went upstairs to her, now it was radiating so much that neither a moan nor a cry slipped out the expansive Sandra. Nal hung on Florentian's neck, he lifted her and pressed her to himself. Having put her down on the floor, he was smiling. He pointed at Nikolay and asked her.

"Aren't you going to embrace him?"

"Tomorrow," Nal answered him by nestling up to him like a child and wrapping herself up in the shawl.

All of a sudden, Nikolay's face turned deadly pale and strained. He became glad when the Nal's relative showed up, whom Florentian introduced to the guests immediately.

"Finally, I've come to life. The sea put me to bed, while this cold is making my blood freeze."

"It is easy to correct this," the host answered him pleasingly and commanded to light the fireside, which made Nal and Sandra glad, while the northerners who were hot already were surprised.

The pastor approached Florentian, agreed on the hour of the wedding, explained the precise address of the church, squeezed the groom's and the bride's hands and left, accompanied by the host.

Nal wanted to talk to Nikolay very much and to tell him about the wonderful Florentian's room, but she sensed instinctively that she had to entertain the guests until her father came back. She thanked Sandra for his care and she was surprised that such young student had such elderly friend like the pastor.

"All my efforts to find some friends in the university were unavailing. I don't admire any sports, even the boxing, because I consider the sports only to be necessary for tempering our bodies, while the sports are a part of their lives for my friends. Lord Mildrey's attempts to bring me into the society have failed as well. So what should I do? I'm searching for friends among scientists."

"But you don't think that one could talk to the girls only about hens and calves, do you? The truth is, I also don't know what subjects suit in the sitting-rooms," Nal gave a laugh, "but I can imagine that

you can enrich everybody with your conversation and give rise to new thoughts if you really are so intelligent as lord Mildrey was telling us.”

“Countess, the fact is that the little word tact also exists, which helps the people with the small mind in their everyday life,” lord Mildrey answered her benevolently, “while it prevents the clever person to get out of his constant mistakes.”

When Florentian came back, he thanked Sandra sincerely by telling him that he was in debt to him now. Florentian agreed with both witnesses that tomorrow they would come at twelve o’clock, he asked them not to worry about the coach which would be waiting for them here. After the church, everybody will go to the notary in order to confirm the rights of the real estate possessions of the husband and the wife, then they will go back here for the early dinner. There were no limits to Nal’s second uncle’s amazement.

“Florentian, my friend and brother Ali entrusted me to deliver Nal who had to become the captain T.’s wife to you, but I didn’t have any instructions to give her as your daughter to you.”

“But I had them,” Nikolay interrupted him. “I also have another Ali’s instruction for you – that is to take part in our wedding, then you have to go back home with your servant.”

“Glory to Allah, hence I won’t have to lead you to America or anywhere else?”

“No,” Nikolay answered him, laughing. “You can even go back via Paris. In this case you’ll have to cross only the strait with the steamer which you dislike so much.”

Florentian offered Nal and Nikolay to go for a short drive with him in the city till dinner. He gave a book to the trembling southerner relative, which he liked more than a child liked a toy. Three friends covered the old man who was sitting by the fireside with the plaid, changed their clothes and left to the noisy streets of London. Nal had never seen such a big city. Also in K. she knew only that part of it which she used to go by when she was going to her uncle Ali’s country garden, therefore, now she was so amazed that she was just turning her charming, little head to all sides in silence.

Florentian was naming the famous museums to her by telling her that soon she would visit them. He promised her to take her to the theatre about which she had read only in books. Now and then, he used to mention to whom one or another luxurious house or building of the newest architecture belonged.

Having turned to one street, all of a sudden, the carriage stopped by the small one-storeyed house. It was beautiful, although its architecture was old and unfashionable. It was surrounded with the small and well tended garden.

“The kind pastor is living here. He’s so well disposed towards us, and especially towards you, Nal. Do you want to pay him a return visit and at the same time to see the church in which you’ll register your marriage tomorrow?” Florentian asked her.

“Oh, I want to do it very much, but father, I cannot conceal it that I feel shy to enter the strange house for the first time. I don’t know how I should behave there.”

“Very simply. In such a way, as though you had visited your friends. If you are carrying kindness with all your heart – you won’t act tactlessly, and when you greet him, extend your hand to him, which you, my naughty child, have already learned to do very nicely.”

While Florentian was talking to Nal, he helped her to get out of the carriage and took her to the high porch with two entrances. Nikolay hit the door with the hammer, and a melodious sound was

heard, which also surprised Nal quite a lot. Hasty steps were heard behind the door, and an old servant let them into the spacious hall where high, wooden stands and Gothic chairs were standing along the walls, and many blossoming flowers were put on two windowsills. This house was smelling of tranquillity. The floor was covered with the strips of carpet; such cleanness and order were reigning here that not only Nal, but also Nikolay who was especially keeping order was amazed.

Having taken the visiting-cards from the guests, the servant invited them to the sitting-room which also was old-fashioned, with the big fireside, bulky sofas and armchairs, upholstered with the blue silk, with the curtains on three wide windows, which were made of the lace of the irreproachable whiteness.

"It is amazing how it is beautiful inside of European houses and how it is silent and peaceful there, not like in our Oriental families, father."

"You make your decision only according to this and my house, according to the single ones where you've been, but some day, my daughter, you will be able to take a look at houses in such a way that an exterior luxury won't be able to hide its inner wounds of break-up from your eyes."

The door of the adjacent room opened, and the pastor came in by greeting his guests and thanking them for the honour given to him with this visit.

"I wanted to make a little surprise for the bride tomorrow," the pastor uttered pleasingly. "Probably, it would be sad for every girl to wed only in men's company. I've been telling about the young bride to my wife and to my daughters so much that they decided to renew their white dresses instantly and to become the bridesmaids, while my wife would become the matron of honour according to our custom. But now, lord Benedict, having heard about your visit of courtesy, which is characteristic only to really high culture, my daughters and my wife don't want to miss the opportunity to become acquainted with you and your daughter in advance. Can you hear how impatient their waiting is? If you don't mind, I will invite them," the pastor was telling them by looking at Nal.

"Oh, how kind you are! You've understood my small, childish sadness correctly that there wouldn't be a single woman in my wedding. If it's possible, let us become acquainted as soon as possible."

The pastor opened the door, and three women with flowers in their hands were standing behind it. The eldest was about forty years old, she was a little stout, elegant, with big, black eyes and distinct, black eye-brows which were drawn peculiarly on her white and high forehead. Her distinct, curly, copper and parted hair were unusually luxuriant, it was done up in two wiry plaits behind her back. The woman looked still young and very beautiful.

"This is my wife, lady Katherine Wodsworth," the pastor uttered by bringing his wife to Nal. "My wife is descended from Venice," he added by addressing everybody. "And here's the number one, Miss Jenny Wodsworth, as you can see, she's not only like her mummy, but she's even an exact her copy. Here's the number two, Miss Alyssa Wodsworth, she's all like her daddy and, according to her hair colour, she doesn't have any possibility to claim her Venetian descent."

The girls and their mother were laughing, they also were getting out in jest of such a presentation of their father, while he kept telling the guests about their impatience with humour. He told them about his youngest daughter that today she had decided to run to the bride's house secretly from everybody in order to see it and to leave her a bouquet of flowers from her garden.

“Oh, father,” the girl was laughing infectiously, “you came back so in love with the beauty from oversea that even unwillingly you shook up all of us, but I agree that the cause of your fascination exceeds everything what one could imagine from your words.”

If Nal was the eye-striking beauty from the East, and it was difficult for one not to be amazed after seeing her, if the red-haired Jenny was catching everybody’s attention with her copper hairdo, her dark eye-brows and her eyes, if she was stunning everybody with the contrast of her alabaster skin, bright red lips and black shining eyes, then one had to take a good look at Alyssa in order to evaluate her beauty. Her ash-coloured, curly hair with the little golden hue wasn’t so luxuriant as her mother’s and her sister’s, but therefore, it was light and fuzzy, it was covering her face like the halo and it clearly disobeyed the comb on her temples and on her neck; her eyes were blue, dark like the sky of the South and a little puffed like her father’s. Her eyes and a certain sincerity, purity of her entire appearance, liveliness and elegance of her manners made her charming. She was radiating love and peace. It seemed that she was that little link which was connecting their family. Alyssa’s kindness used to enslave everybody, while the atmosphere of joy that was covering her used to create an ordinary relationship with the girl. Even now when the pastor’s wife and her oldest daughter were sincerely greeting the guests, they looked more like the society ladies who were accepting kind, but strange people with hospitality, while Alyssa embraced Nal immediately, she was standing in front of her fascinated, not comprehending her own beauty at all and, having clapped her hands like a child, she was talking.

“My father was right when he told us that Sandra couldn’t find any words to describe you.”

“But it seems to me that Sandra was also telling you something about us,” Florentian’s voice was heard behind Alyssa’s back, “and you, Miss Alyssa, don’t want even to look at us,” lord Benedict was bowing to the girl with the unique humour in his eyes and he introduced Nikolay to her.

Alyssa who was still as childish as Nal became embarrassed, she blushed, looked at Florentian and made a deep curtsy to both men.

“I cannot understand who of you is her father and who is her fiancé. According to me, both of you are grooms,” she uttered timidly.

“I don’t know to whom your words are a compliment, but both of us say thank you for them,” Florentian answered her, while everybody was laughing.

“Please take a cup of tea with us,” the hostess proposed. “According to the old custom of our forefathers, we drink the tea not in the sitting-room, but in the dining-room.”

Alyssa went up to Nal again and asked her to take her hat off. She did so with pleasure and looked even more beautiful. Florentian sat down next to Alyssa and asked her whether it was her initiative to be the bridesmaids in the wedding of his daughter tomorrow.

“No, it was my father’s idea. Everything what is the most honourable and generous always belongs to him, by the way.”

“As though two parties exist in your home: you and your father, your sister and your mother?”

“On a certain scale – yes, although we all are very friendly. Everybody is living as he wants to, and our opinions never differ so much that we would be dissatisfied one with another. I think that you understand me very well. You and your daughter are also absolutely different, but it is impossible to imagine that you could be dissatisfied one with another.”



All of a sudden, the joint conversation fell silent, and everybody heard how Jenny was talking about the newest captain T.'s books which Sandra had brought to her with enthusiasm. While the girl was praising the author, she couldn't even imagine that she could see him in front of her, she only wanted to parade her intelligence. Nikolay was joking and mocking at the girl's praising by pointing out the defects of the book, he was convincing her that the author could have developed his theses better and by doing so, he roused indignation of the Venice descendant, even her hot blood came into bloom in roses on her cheeks and in fire of her eyes.

"Count, she's our erudite," the pastor gave a laugh, "and most importantly, both sisters are such great admirers of Sandra that his authority has become almost like a law in this home. Some day, they will fall out with the critics who don't like Sandra. If this man of science has recognized the captain T.'s book to be a perfection – that's it, count, don't criticize it; but I must admit that the book has stirred me up, too. I would give a lot if I could see the Russian man of wisdom who has written it. He must be an old and grey man already."

"The captain T. is an old and grey man?" Nal gave a laugh, because she couldn't imagine Nikolay to be an old man. "He's sitting in front of you, and your daughter Alyssa couldn't answer who of these men was my fiancé a few minutes ago."

The pastor and all his family were looking at Nal. They were surprised and they couldn't see her joke.

"My daughter isn't joking. Captain T. – that's count T.'s pseudonym. He's the groom of my daughter and he's sitting in front of you."

Jenny was stunned the most. Now she felt shy with Nikolay whom she was praising herself, while Alyssa who could feel the humour everywhere told to Florentian.

"Lord Benedict, I think that you didn't tell us that count T. was the writer intentionally, because I'm sure that you are not only the writer, but... how to put it?" she fell to thinking. "You are not a magician, no, but you look like one with something anyway. You can do everything."

"Almighty God," the pastor gave a shout with the feigned horror, while all the guests were laughing merrily. "Alyssa, my daughter, you will ruin me. Mother, are those really the results of our education?"

"Sir Wodsword, your daughter is a charming baby, and I have understood her thought perfectly. I assure you that we'll become great friends with her," Florentian answered him by pressing Alyssa's hand.

"Oh, Lord," the pastor uttered seriously by shaking his head.

The guests said good-bye to the hosts freely and unconstrained. Florentian invited the whole family to his house for the early dinner tomorrow, after the wedding and added that his carriages would be waiting for the guests by the church. Having looked round the church which surprised Nal with its size, Florentian and his children came back home. Nal was deep in thought during the entire way back, and when Florentian asked her about it, she confessed that according to the Eastern custom, she should make a present to everybody, while she didn't have anything and she didn't even know what and to whom she should give.

"Don't think about it. Leave the whole external side of the matter and the troubles about it to me, while you should think about Ali and Nikolay. Go to your room, I've already told Doria to prepare white, Oriental clothes for you. Dress yourself with the clothes, decorate your plaits as you'd do it for an

Oriental wedding, wrap yourself up in your luxurious hijab. Imagine that your wedding isn't tomorrow where only its external ceremonies will take place, but that it is today, in the most secret little corner of your heart. Go downstairs to me in an hour, remain dressed for wedding and knock at that room where you were talking to the pastor.

Florentian gave medicine to the old uncle and told him to go to bed immediately, to dine there and to get up only tomorrow in the morning. Then he went to his secret room by taking Nikolay with him.

"My friend, my son. You've been living next to Ali for five years and you've acquired so much knowledge that he accepted you to the company of his closest disciples instantly. It seemed to you that your discipleship – that was your chastity first of all and your pledge not to marry. Now, when Ali has showed the path of family and marriage to you, you didn't protest, you accepted it, but you are still thinking that you've committed some crime, that you go out of the path of discipleship, which you aren't worthy of. And all of it is happening only because you marry the woman whom you faithfully loved for many years.

You fulfil Ali's instruction. You obey him unconditionally, but there's a pain in your heart. It seems to you that you are turning to the side. You've forgotten that the disciple is going in such a way as the Master is leading him. You've forgotten that the disciple is unable to take at a glance those widest plans which the Master's look is able to take in, no matter how wise the disciple is. The consecrations of the disciple depend not only on the levels of his personal growth, but also that power of help for his Master's plans are taken into consideration, which he has already matured to. Now you can serve not only to the great Ali's plan, but also to my plans, and to the plans of many others who sacrifice their lives and activities to the bright welfare of mankind.

The general decadence of culture is closely connected to the decline and decay of families. The people who are constrained by passions and thousands of small superstitions are unable to help the society to revive. Therefore, many very high disciples are charged to create new, joyful and free families. Only those who have lived purely till their wedding and gained wisdom are able to become the real educators of the people of the new generation whom the Master needs.

Two genii among five talented children have to incarnate in your future family. You need not to grieve because you are changing that form of your path which you've chosen yourself, but you have to be a happy and devoted disciple – a doubly happy one, because you can realize that task which your Master has chosen for you. Create a harmony under your roof. Create a decent family where fairness and loyalty would prevail. Create the atmosphere of kindness, so that your Master could always come to you and invite you to follow him."

"I've been suffering not because Ali has ordered me to change the form of my path – I will accept any of it unconditionally, - it seemed to me that when Ali saw my love to Nal, he gave in to my weakness; but God is the judge – I've never given any pretext to the girl by anything not even to think about that infinite power of love which has obsessed me."

"And by doing so, you disappointed the poor girl quite a lot," Florentian gave a smile. "I repeat: forget your thoughts about connivance of your non-existent weakness. The Master's work needs only strong, non-trembling hearts, and he can send his calls only to them. His call to you – that's your family. Come in," Florentian answered the knock at the door.

Nal entered the room. She was dressed in an Oriental style, wrapped up in an expensive wedding hijab. Her white clothes went so well with this white room that she looked like a part and parcel of this whiteness.

“Sit here, my daughter,” Florentian seated Nal on the low sofa next to himself, “and you, my dear Nikolay, will find a white robe in my cloak-room, the same as Ali had sent to you on the feast day. You will find long clothes of the disciple. Put it on and come back here.”

Florentian was left alone with Nal. He pressed her to himself and told her.

“When God calls a man, he gives two paths for him – the path of joy or the path of sadness. There isn’t any middle path. Both you and your husband are the happy chosen ones, because he has chosen the path of joy for both of you. Your uncle Ali was preparing you for your high spiritual life since your early childhood. This is a rare happiness. Usually, man is wandering through his life for a long time until he reaches the source of wisdom. Don’t grieve that now you have to leave everybody and everything what you’ve been accustomed to, to leave your uncle Ali and to come to me. After many years when you become tempered, you’ll come back to Ali, to the path of his power, the power which is oppressing you now, and therefore, you are unable to reveal all your talents next to him. Now you’ll be walking along the path of tact and charm. By charming people with your beauty, you will attract them to their high spiritual paths with your purity. Remember: the evil won’t be able to touch you until fear, unfaithfulness and lie touches you. The evil cannot bear the atmosphere of purity, he runs away from it. Only when at least the slightest crack of doubt arises in your heart – only then the evil will be able to touch you. Everything exists in man himself. And not the external life oppresses him or revives him, but man is creating his life. He’s carrying all his miracles within himself.”

Nal was sitting pressed to her father, wrapped up in her Oriental hijab. When Nikolay entered the room, he found them like this.

Florentian uncovered Nal’s face and helped her to put the same white robe as Nikolay’s on top of her clothes, which was made of the material, thin as paper, soft as silk and mat as suede.

“Stay together for a while. Extend your hands one to another and think for a while what a serious step you are taking. You give your loyalty one to another for your entire life and with this loyalty you have to follow your Master’s loyalty by creating your ordinary, undistinguished life with your kindness and fulfilling your life’s precept by doing so.”

Florentian left, and they remained alone. Nal extended her hands to Nikolay.

“Nal, forgive me, because I was hurting you and I let you think that I didn’t love you much. I didn’t dare to talk about love for you up to now. I thought that that happiness to press you to myself and to live my entire life together with you wasn’t meant for me. I thought that only solitude and not the joys of the family were meant for me. Now I understand what a great and undeserved happiness has visited me. I give my entire life to you as I’ve given it to everything what Ali had instructed me to, but I give it to you with such a happiness which I could never dream about.”

“Nikolay, I didn’t love anybody since my childhood, except my uncle Ali who was my entire life. As soon as I grew up I saw you and... I’ve never been free anymore. I was with you everywhere. You were inseparable from me. And if now they give you to me – then I’ve given myself to you five years ago. You are cut in my body, in my heart, in my spirit in the same way as my uncle Ali is. And if up to this moment I was thinking that I was thrust on you, then now I’m completely happy: I know that you also wanted to take me as your wife. And I cannot live in any other way as only to be your wife.”

The door opened, and Florentian came in. He was wearing white clothes with the embroidered bottom and cuffs. A belt with prominent emeralds girded his trunk, while his charming head was tied with a band with the same emeralds. He had a small, glowing stick in his hands. In the Eastern corner of the room, Florentian lifted a lid of the table (as Nal and Nikolay were thinking about it), and a little marble altar in which fire was burning opened below it. He brought the young couple to their knees before the altar and told them.

“Here, in that God’s presence, whom each of you are carrying within yourselves, in the presence of conscience, honour and beauty which are living within you, I unite you for ever. Keep the eternal memory about this moment. Love is burning within you not for satisfaction of your sensualities and voluptuousness – the fire of eternal purity is burning within you, and with that purity you give one to another for a great goal: you won’t become some blind parents who are attached to their children personally, madly and in a brutal way. You’ll be the keepers of those souls who will arrive through your bodies. You will create a peaceful world for them. Your pure home will be the harbour where they will be destined to be born, to stay with you for a while and to leave you in such a way, when and where Life will call them. Take care of the link one to another, me and Ali. Carry not the burden of life, the yoke of discipleship, but share the joy of your work with us.”

He raised both of his hands above their heads. He touched the fire that was burning in the altar with the little stick and then, while talking something in the language which Nal didn’t know, he touched the girl’s head with it. It seemed to Nal that the fire ran through her, penetrated into the bottom of her heart and that now she all would burst into fire, but Florentian turned to the altar already, touched the fire with his stick again and touched Nikolay’s head with it.

He gave a start – exactly in the same way as she did a moment ago, - but he also didn’t flame up, while Florentian turned to the altar again by touching the fire with both ends of the stick one after another. When both ends of the stick flamed up, he turned to the young couple again and put the stick on both of their heads at the same time. All of a sudden, Nal and Nikolay felt a big shake, like an electric shock. A warm flow of the new power trickled from the very bottom of both of their spines up to their heads. Florentian put the stick on the altar next to the burning fire, took the same rings from there – each of them was with a brilliant and an emerald – and put them on the fingers of the betrothed pair.

“Raise,” he uttered to the young couple. “Now you are husband and wife. Always remain so pure and wherever you may live, always feel that I’m with you. I take your lives which I’ve united with the bond of the marriage before this Eternal fire upon myself. Neither parents nor mothers nor children made of bodies and the blood exist before the Eternity. Only the fathers, mothers, children made of the spirit and fire exist for her. Let’s go, I will accompany you to your bedroom.”

He covered Nal’s face with the hijab, joined their hands, embraced both of them, pressed them tightly to himself and led them upstairs. From Nal’s room, he took them through the absolutely different door which Nal didn’t even notice on the wallpaper into a spacious bedroom with a white, wide bed. Everything was white in this room, even the carpet and the bear furs put next to each sides of their beds were white. Having taken Nal to the bed, Florentian told her.

“Your husband is as chaste as you are. Accept him not only as your husband, but also as your educator, your friend, your wise teacher who possesses much more knowledge than you have. See you tomorrow, my children. I will visit you at twelve o’clock sharp. Be completely ready and wait for me. Doria is instructed how she should dress you up, Nal.”

Having pulled down the bed’s curtain, Florentian left and closed the door behind him.

When Nal woke up in the morning, her husband was gone already, but she could hear the water splash in the adjacent bathroom. Nikolay showed up in several minutes, he was wearing a bathrobe. He was thinking that Nal was still asleep and he put her soft little shoes and her warm, silk robe next to her carefully. Nal gave a laugh by pulling the blanket over her head.

"Nal, my dear, get up, the bath is prepared already. Hurry up. I'm afraid that you might be late, because it is ten o'clock already."

He left the room hurriedly, while Nal ran to the bathroom where Doria was already waiting for her.

"Doria, how are you going to dress me today? My father told me that he has instructed everything to you. Many people are coming today, aren't they? It is important not to disgrace ourselves," Nal was telling her, while washing herself.

"Don't worry, whatever I would put on you, you will overshadow everybody anyway."

"There you are wrong. The pastor's daughters are so beautiful that such ones don't exist even in the fairy-tales. One of them is red-haired."

"Red-haired? What is so great about it?"

"I won't be able to tell you what it is, but she's exceptional. You know, somehow it is difficult for me to imagine that she could do some work. She's a lady. And the other one is absolutely ordinary, like me."

"Hence, she's a beauty? And her plaits are like yours?"

"No, she's curly, her eyes are blue, her hair is ash-coloured with the golden hue, and she's as kind as an angel. She's so wonderful! One cannot find a more beautiful as she is."

With that careless chatter, Nal was hiding her new treasure of life deep within her heart. She wouldn't have shared that happiness which had overflowed her entire soul with anybody for anything. She was carrying the cupful of love with both of her hands, as though being afraid of spilling it. Three images were shining clearly within her heart: her uncle Ali's, her father Florentian's and her husband's. Having sat down in front of the mirror, Nal gave herself up to the experienced hands of Doria, while in her thoughts she wandered into her uncle Ali's garden where she saw his smiling face so clearly again that she even moved her head and almost destroyed all Doria's efforts.

"What happened? Did I prick you?" Doria was distressed, and both the comb and the pins fell out of her hands.

"No, Doria. Excuse me! O Lord, now you'll have to start everything from the beginning, and I will be late," disappointed Nal told her.

"It's nothing, just give me a minute of peace, and I'll comb your hair again, and this is the most important."

"Nal, it's eleven o'clock. Are you ready?" Nikolay's voice was heard. "I'm waiting for you to have breakfast. Come with the robe, you can put your dress on later."

But Nal was so afraid of being late that she asked for her coffee to be brought here, to the room by saying that she would appear before her husband in an hour with her festive clothes.

When Doria brought the dress from her room, Nal even clapped her hands after seeing such a splendour. Doria had spent the whole evening and the morning by the dress, so that it would fit her mistress' figure. It was the dress made of the white brocade with wide Venetian laces around the neck and the sleeves, so Nal could say only this.

"Father, father, how can you spoil your daughter so much?"

Doria gave her the shoes made of the same brocade and decorated her open neck with the string of pearls with the emerald.

"Maybe it has to be like this, but I would like to have the modest dress and the smallest corner so much only if I didn't have to be among people today and to listen how they are talking about my beauty," Nal gave a sigh.

"Nal, if you don't show up immediately, you will make both of us blush before our father. We have ten minutes left," Nikolay's voice was heard again.

"I'm coming, I'm ready already."

And having taken the little handbag made of the same brocade with the handkerchief, Nal entered her room where Nikolay was waiting for her. His wife's appearance stunned him. The dress with the trail and the high heels changed Nal very much, she looked taller and slimmer. The looks which the husband and the wife exchanged told them that both of them had the same wish – to avoid people. Nikolay embraced his wife, kissed her tenderly and passionately, and told her.

"Nal, our lives don't belong to us. We must live on earth for the sake of the earth, for people. Don't loathe the noise and those people who will be next to us today. Think not about yourself, but about every person whom you'll be talking to.

Nal returned the kiss to him affectionately and answered him.

"My husband, I will try to think about that person whom I'll be talking to, but every time when I take a good look at a man, I can always feel that suffering and anxiety is living within him."

"And you – who are loved, happy and blessed – carry comfort and relaxation to every person whom you'll meet."

The light steps of Florentian were heard, so Nal hurried to open the door and to greet her father.

"I don't want to start this day with reproaches, but how one can order me to put this dress on? Doria told me that the queen had neither such laces nor such pearls."

"Ali gives them to you, as well as everything what you've found in the chests. He's been filling them for many years," Florentian was telling her by embracing the newly-weds. "Keep this dress, the laces and the pearls, and when you bring your first daughter at the altar, give everything to her. And now, let's go, our witnesses are waiting for us already."

They went downstairs, into the green room. Nal was rather surprised by Sandra's and lord Mildrey's appearance – they were wearing tail-coats and had glittering top-hats in their hands. Sandra was so serious that he didn't even smile when he bowed and kissed Nal's hand. One could think that his joviality had disappeared in one night. Lord Mildrey gave the bouquet of white lilies to Nal and told her, excited.

"Sandra gives the lilies to you by stating that he cannot even imagine that one could give you some other flowers. This is his business. Please accept this bracelet from me, which my grandfather gave to me before his death. He was rather an oddity, he was rich, but he was living like a recluse. He told me to give this bracelet to that woman who would be my wife or to that one who would be the purest and the most beautiful of all the women whom I would meet in my life. Since my time to get married has passed already – soon I'm thirty years old, – please accept this present from me. I heard that one Eastern sage gave this bracelet to my grandfather," and he gave the wonderful ware of a rare beauty made by the old masters with topazes and diamonds to Nal. "They tell that certain words are written from the script of these jewels, but the experts of languages whom I showed it to were unable to read the inscription."

"Countess, would you let me to shoot a glance at the bracelet? I'm linguist and I know about forty languages and dialects, while not long ago, your father gave a task to me to learn already dead Pali language. Perhaps, I will be able to read it," Sandra uttered.

"Here you are," Nal extended the treasure to him.

"Oh, of course, this is it, Pali language! It is written here: "Overcome by loving". The words can be read very easily and clearly."

"Sandra, it means that you've fulfilled my task in advance."

"Lord Benedict, did you have any doubts that I would dig it out of the ground, but find the way to fulfil your instruction in advance? This time, the pastor gave the grammar made by him and a key for it to me. He bought some ancient writings in that language from one strange man."

"Lord Mildrey, I still didn't say thank you, and... it is very strange, but it seems to me that you still will get married, you will marry being in love and you will be very happy. You'll still need this bracelet."

"Nal, accept the present. If you've guessed it, we'll be able to send the same bracelet to lord Mildrey," Nikolay uttered, at the same time thanking the lord sincerely for his attention to his wife.

Nal heard her husband's order for the first time and she understood unwittingly that she had to put the bracelet on her hand immediately and not to make the man who gave it to her sad.

The coaches arrived. The young couple with their father got into the covered coach, Sandra and lord Mildrey into the open one, while two empty coaches were rolling after them.

The church was shimmering with the lights. The pastor was waiting for the young couple by the entrance, while both his daughters and their mother were strewing flowers under their feet. The organ music met them, while they were still in the hall. Soon, the crowd of curious persons poured into the church, who were attracted here by the talk about the beauty of the young couple. Nal couldn't see anything. She was moved to tears by the music. She squeezed her husband's hand strongly, as though by asking him for his help. Nikolay leant towards her slightly, and such power flashed from his eyes, such fire of trust and love blew from his pale and inspired face that the whole Nal's excitement settled down, her tears got dry, and the smile brightened up on her charming and still half-childish face.

The wedding ceremony ended. They signed the church books in the sacristy and waited a little while the pastor was changing his clothes. Having left the church, Florentian seated everybody in the coaches: Jenny, Sandra, Alyssa and lord Mildrey; the pastor and his wife; he got into the coach with the young couple again, and everybody turned towards the notary.

The crowd that was left in the churchyard was put in a cheerful frame of mind by the large amount donated for the poor people and for the community of the churchgoers. In the meanwhile, having

settled the formally required statements of their property, the young couple and the suite came back to lord Benedict's home, accompanied by the congratulations and fascination of all employees of the notary office.

"And how about my uncle?" having entered the home, frightened Nal asked.

Nikolay felt uneasy, too, but Florentian answered them silently.

"He had the malaria fit again. Tomorrow we will send him with the copies of the documents and describe the wedding ceremony in such a way that he will imagine everything as if he had participated there himself. Now, Nal, think only about the guests and learn to be a charming hostess."

"Father, doesn't it seem to you that this isn't easy to do?"

"No, my daughter, you have such a husband and you can overcome everything."

Nikolay took his wife into the sitting-room which she hadn't yet seen. Florentian offered his hand to the pastor's wife and invited all the guests to follow the young couple. The champagne was prepared in the sitting-room. Nikolay whispered to Nal that after clinking glasses with everybody, she wouldn't drink the champagne, but only would touch the glass with her lips, as though she was drinking it. Having congratulated the young couple, everybody went to the dining-room. Florentian sat down in the host's place, the young couple – on his right side, Sandra and Jenny – next to them, while Alyssa, lord Mildrey, the pastor and his wife – on his left side.

A lively conversation began at the dinner table. Sandra, Nikolay, the pastor and Jenny exchanged their opinions about the latest achievements of the science. It turned out that the pastor's wife and lord Mildrey loved the theatre and paintings. Only Alyssa and Nal were looking one to another in silence.

"Countess, why are you looking at me like this? I can see such compassion and sympathy in your eyes, as though you could read a great sadness in my soul," finally, Alyssa uttered to Nal and smiled to her tenderly.

"I would like to be not countess for you, but simply Nal. I can see nothing else only an angelic kindness in your heart, but it seems to me that you aren't happy as you want to look like."

Florentian looked at both girls and told them.

"Why does one have to guess about tomorrow? Nal, you want to guess Alyssa's future, while you need to live only in today's joy. Is a grief really oppressing you, Alyssa, as Nal states?"

"No, lord Benedict. Everybody whom I love is living next to me in joy, and if there was a sadness, then it is inevitable, it is cut in my life. Therefore, it isn't even a grief, it is simply an inevitable component of my life."

"Alyssa, you've decided to accept that component and not to fight?"

"Maybe I don't have any right to talk like this, lord Benedict, but for example, it seems to me that there isn't any use to fight against death. It is inevitable. The same is with those inevitable things which are within man himself. It is like a cancer, a heart-failure – is there any sense to fight against them if they are rooted in a man's life, and only death is able to root them out? If I cannot change anything, I need to accept my life as it is, as the one which I received when I came into this world. It doesn't matter how much grief would be in life – it is still the life of my beloved people anyway, and without them – life is worthless for me."



"Alyssa, all quantities of nature's powers change into qualities. It is an inevitable law of this world in which we live. If today one characteristic in man's heart has already reached this limit, then tomorrow its quantity might still increase. And this characteristic which yesterday overflowed only one man's heart might pour out like a lake or even like a sea around him by drawing everything into its atmosphere on its way. This happens both with the good and the bad people's characteristics. If today the love in man's heart is single-sided, and he can understand happiness only by loving "his own" people, then tomorrow – for one or another reason – man's consciousness may expand, and he will embrace "the strangers", too, with his love. By continuing his path of improvement and knowledge, man perceives that there aren't any his own and strange people, that the same people as himself exist everywhere. This man was able to move forward and up. The other one could fall behind and remain in the stage of a biped, while the third one could move forward so far that you have even to screw up your eyes in order to look at him."

"Lord Benedict, I've never heard the Gospel truths taught in such an easy and simple way before. It has not only brightened up in my soul, but it seems to me that I can see a little crack in my heart, through which the excess of my love may start flowing. It threatens to jump over everything inside of me and to escape into the pure air," Alyssa gave a laugh, not taking her eyes off Florentian.

"Please take the ice-cream and take a look at it, what an artist my cook is. He puts seven scoops of different colours into the dish for each of you. You can see all colours of wisdom here, as the wisdom of the high antiquity was representing them. Here's the white colour – the colour of power; blue – the colour of self-control and science; green – the colour of charm, tact, adaptation; yellow – the colour of harmony and art; orange – the colour of science, technology and mechanics; red – the colour of love, and finally, the violet colour – the colour of rites and religious wisdom, and at the same time, it is the colour of the general movement of life and the universe.

Try to find any of these characteristics to be pure within you. It is impossible! All these characteristics are living within each man without exception, but all of them – while being the main light of man's path of life – are polluted with his egoism, jealousy, fear and passions. Man has turned them into passions from divine characteristics and features which he has brought with him on the earth by his birth.

The task of man's culture is to clean all his passions, to turn them not only into joy and peace of his heart, but into the atmosphere of his daily activity and his entire life. Then the unity with the people whom he meets during his day becomes not a conditionality of his mode of life, but beauty, cheerful assistance and energy – that energy which awakens everybody who's working next to him for creation."

The talks at the table had fallen down for some time already, and the guests were listening to Florentian's thoughts attentively.

"What a happiness is to become acquainted with you, lord Benedict," the pastor uttered. "Besides that I admire these two lives whom I have married, I also bless the Lord who's given the possibility for me to approach you. If it seems possible for you that my entire family would stay among your acquaintances, we will try to earn respect of your friends and yourself."

"Sir Wodsword, I'm not only glad, but I thank you very much for our meeting. Believe me, if my wisdom seems to be very deep for you, I've also found something to learn from yours. They say in India: "No one is a friend or a brother to you, but every man is a Teacher to you". The dinner is over. Dear guests, please let's go to the sitting-room, coffee is waiting for us there."

With these words, Florentian stood up, gave his hand to Alyssa who was looking at him as if he was a deity and invited everybody to go with them. Only the last couple, the newly-wed husband and wife, pressed one to another, exchanged the thoughts which excited them.

"No, Nal, we cannot have any unavailing, insignificant days. We won't stay here for a long time and we'll go to study. You will get to know the student's life. Our father will keep us here for as long as it will be needed for our perfect, external education, so that later on when we get into the wide society set, we wouldn't have to come back to it anymore. Besides, there are several gaps in your education: you absolutely don't know music, although you can sing your homeland songs perfectly; you've read Shakespeare, Schiller, Moliere, but you've never been to the theatre. By preparing ourselves for being the real parents and educators as much as it is possible, we must help each other to improve. We have to know the life of this place in order to understand what we need to avoid in our future family."

They joined the guests when all of them were sitting and drinking coffee already. Everybody felt something grand in this couple when both of them entered the sitting-room. If a painter was creating the illustrations for the fairy-tale "The King's Suite", then he couldn't have found a better model in his imagination. A whisper of amazement and charm met both of them.

"Countess and count, you absolutely don't fit in any earthly frames in my imagination," Sandra gave a shout with his southern temperament. "If I was a painter, not only I would paint both of you, one next to another, but also I would make the earth to be covered with blossoms under your feet."

"My new friend, it is already much honour for me to be titled the princess Lily by you. Both my husband, being the husband of the flower, and myself, turned into the flower, already have to diffuse their aroma, but it is unimaginable that also the flowers would grow around us," Nal answered him, laughing.

"And I think that the most noble and precious flowers – your children for whom it is worthy of living on the earth, will be growing around you, Nal, and around your husband," Alyssa uttered very seriously, excited.

"Oh, Alyssa!" the pastor's wife exclaimed with a reproach.

"What, my dear mother? Have I shocked you again? Well, this time forgive me kindly. We are among so great friends here and I assure you that they won't condemn me."

"Miss Wodsworth, personally I want to bow low to you," lord Mildrey uttered by standing up, and he really bowed low to her, "but not to condemn you in any way."

"And I want to kiss you so much, Alyssa, that I cannot do it otherwise, too," Nal let her husband's hand go, ran up to Alyssa, embraced and kissed her.

Two women – one of them with the royal brocade and pearls, the other one – with the modest white dress, one of them – dark-haired and dark-eyed, the other one – blue-eyed, with the halo of golden curls, much shorter, both slim, pure and wonderful in their seventeen years spring made such a contrast that even Sandra fell silent. Nal seated Alyssa next to herself and her husband, and moved the cup of coffee for her.

"It is a pity that some of my music talented friends aren't here," Nikolay uttered. "Now my heart is asking for the music so much."

"Oh, it is easy to correct this," Jenny told him with a little indulgence and with contempt. "Our Alyssa possesses all the symptoms of madness for the music. I don't know what pleasure she is able to give to the people who understand music, but she has ruined many hours of my mother and myself," Jenny continued by looking at everybody cunningly.

"Sister, it was so long time ago when my music used to bother you. Now, lord Benedict, my room and my piano are on the other end of the house where my father has built a penthouse especially for me. Don't believe her that I'm untalented, besides now, I'm not going to show my skills to anybody," Alyssa uttered by looking at Florentian pleadingly.

"Lord Benedict, my wife and my elder daughter don't like the music, while me and Alyssa dedicate our entire free time to it. I've gone through big drama in my youth, because I wanted to become an artist, while my father wanted me to walk the path of the priest. Alyssa has inherited not only my love for the art, she possesses a great musical talent, too, which should be improved in the school of the high mastery."

"This won't happen until I'm alive," the pastor's wife uttered clearly, angrily and rudely. "Windows are shaking from your and her singing. Moreover, I don't want Alyssa to disgrace herself and our entire family here, in lord Benedict's house."

All of a sudden, the pastor wife's face looked like a predatory animal's one, there wasn't any former kind-heartedness left in it anymore, while the pastor, looking sadly at his daughter, came up to her slowly, put his hand on her dishevelled head and told her silently.

"Stay calm, my child. God has many paths through which he's calling people. Lord Benedict told us that people were walking along the path of harmony and art, too. If God wishes to call you exactly in this way, then you will find this path, people are unable to resist the God's want."

"Lady Wodsworth, please allow your daughter to play for us today," the host addressed the pastor's wife. "If you don't like the music, you and your elder daughter may look round the sitting-rooms where you will find lots of albums with the pictures from all over the world and many interesting things which I have brought home from my distant travels. There are lots of rare flowers in the garden, also there is a hothouse where the plants that you've never seen are blooming now. According to your wonderful garden and your flower gardens, you love flowers."

"You are wrong, lord Benedict," Jenny interrupted him, "this is again my father's and Alyssa's mania, but Alyssa is the goddess of our family, we adore her so much that we tolerate all her fantasies."

"I wouldn't like Alyssa to play today, but if you want to hear her amateurish performance," the pastor's wife smiled crookedly, "then let Sandra accompany us to the hothouse. I hope that I cannot hear her playing and unbearable singing from over there."

Such clear disappointment appeared on Sandra's face that a laugh flashed in Florentian's eyes. He gave some special smile and told something to Sandra so silently that even Nikolay who was standing next to them was unable to hear it, although he possessed an especially subtle ear. Sandra gave an unnoticed sigh, squeezed Florentian's hand firmly and assured the ladies that he would try to take them so far away that neither the pastor's boss nor her daughter's soprano nor the host's tenor would reach them. Having heard about the host's tenor, the ladies as though had some doubts about their wish to go to the garden, but it was too late already. Florentian explained the way to the hothouse to Sandra and how they could come back straight to the yellow sitting-room through the left side of the house where they would find the albums. The host himself accompanied them up to the balcony's door to the garden, closed both balcony's doors and drew the thick portiere.

"Father, I feel shy," Alyssa pressed to her father and told him.

"My child, come on, you know perfectly that you need only to touch the keys and God awakens within you, you forget about everything, except Him. Play and sing as you always do, don't think

about any praise or reward. Think about what a happiness has smiled to you – to glorify God of these wonderful newly-weds with your music. Glorify them with all your heart by loving them and by wishing them to decorate the earth with flowers, as Sandra has told about it. Play and sing the song of joyous love to them. Not everybody is destined to sing his love song. Somebody has to sing it for others by opening his heart for a compassionate selflessness.”

The dew of tears began to shine in wonderful pastor’s eyes – and everybody understood why such grey hair were covering such young face. All of a sudden, everybody was able to see the tragedy of these two hearts with their spiritual eyes. The pain rippled away on Nal’s face, lord Mildrey turned away a little and mopped away a tear. Only Florentian’s and Nikolay’s faces remained full of calm, peace and infinite kindness. As though the bands of light stretched out from Florentian towards Alyssa and the pastor. The girl came up to the piano timidly, opened the lid and uttered.

“Of course, I’m not professional musician, don’t expect anything special from me, but I’m not a complete know-nothing, too, because I had two great teachers. One of them – my father, the other one – his recently dead friend who was known in all Europe, he was a famous pianist and composer. I will play Chopin.”

Everybody was expecting much from the girl, but nobody was waiting for that what happened. Her delicate figure and her childish little head – everything disappeared as soon as she touched the keys. Everybody was taken away by the whirl of sounds, they couldn’t see Alyssa anymore. Were those really the sounds of the instrument? The pastor was right: God had awakened within Alyssa. Not her hands were playing the musical piece, but her heart was creating the fascinating and charming world which opened something new in every listener’s soul.

Nal was crying. Lord Mildrey was strained like a string, he was following the musician, not even breathing. The pastor was radiating happiness, as though he was praying. Nikolay’s gaze was fixed on Alyssa, every hue of the sound was reflected on his face, while Florentian’s tranquillity reminded of a prophet.

“One more, one more,” Nal was pleading her when Alyssa stood up.

Alyssa was playing Beethoven, Handel, Shuman, and everybody was still crying “one more”. Suddenly, Alyssa gave a laugh and began to play an old English song. And she stunned everybody again. A high soprano of wonderful timbre with warm and soft tones was heard with such a power that it was impossible even to imagine by looking at this delicate creature. Having enchanted everybody with her performance, the girl uttered.

“Father, now let’s sing a duet, or I will stop.”

Per everybody’s request, the pastor came up to the piano. His daughter started the duet, but when her father joined her, everybody let out a scream unwittingly: the quiet and peaceful pastor performed his aria with such a stormy temperament, such a masterly artistry which nobody was expecting. His voice of a rare power and beauty didn’t muffle his daughter’s voice, but only made it more apparent.

“I have never heard such performance in any opera,” lord Mildrey uttered silently, “and I’ve been to all theatres of Europe.”

“Father,” Nal threw herself on Florentian’s neck, “aren’t you going to sing for me and my husband today, so that we could end the wedding celebration with your song as if it was a wish?”

Florentian stood up, consulted Alyssa and the pastor, and an old Italian duet began to sound. What was so special about Florentian’s voice and his singing? Everybody had just heard the high level

music, it seemed that the music performed by father and by his daughter had risen above all philosophies and above the entire knowledge. Now such power of the baritone tenor was echoing which didn't have the limits of any height, or any power of the word or any obsession. It was muffling everything what was earthly and human, and it was opening the heaven for everybody, it was inviting everybody to walk the different paths, into the different worlds, it was destroying all the obstacles of the matter, as though it had touched the bottom of everybody's heart.

Having come to himself after the silence which had become predominant all of a sudden, everybody saw Alyssa who was on her knees in front of Florentian, her face was hidden in his wonderful hands and she was sobbing. Having helped the girl to rise and wiped her tears with his handkerchief, he embraced both her and her father, and asked them.

"Would you like me to become your Teacher now, instantly?"

"O Lord, I answer both for myself and for my daughter. We weren't even dreaming about such happiness that you could lead us."

"Alyssa must answer for herself."

"Lord Benedict, by following you, I want to learn how to live, not only to learn the music."

"Father, I have to make a present to Alyssa," Nal asked Florentian. "I have to consider her to be my sister, because namely she prepared me for your singing, otherwise I wouldn't have endured it and I would have died."

"Everybody, please follow me," the host uttered.

He took Alyssa's and Nal's arms and took everybody to his green room. He brought his guests to a little table on which several cases were placed. He took a golden belt with big emeralds out of one of the cases and begirded Alyssa's trunk with it.

"This is Nal's present for her bridesmaid. And this is my present," and an emerald cross, sprinkled with small brilliants, began to sparkle on Alyssa's neck.

"Dear sir Wodsworth, please accept this from my daughter," and he gave a golden watch with the chain to the pastor, "and accept this ring from me," Florentian added by putting the big emerald with the brilliant on the little finger of his left hand.

"Lord Mildrey, please accept this bracelet personally from me in exchange for that one which you've given to my daughter. The only difference is that green jewels are here, while that one had topazes. I don't have any doubts that you've already understood that the most wonderful in your life is still ahead of you. And my daughter asks you to accept this ring from her," and the same ring as the pastor's one began to sparkle on lord Mildrey's hand.

"That's not all, Alyssa. My son-in-law asks you to accept the pearls in order for you to remember today's music, and he will give it to you himself.

Nikolay fastened the string of pearls quickly on embarrassed Alyssa's neck, it was the same as the Nal's one.

"Now we can invite our ladies who don't like the music," Florentian uttered, "and their cavalier, too. Alyssa, I hope that you won't refuse to reward the poor person in the future and that you will sing and play to him?"

“Lord Benedict, I’m your disciple, so I’ll do as you will order. Only...” she cowered, looked at her father who was looking down and continued silently in a sad voice, “when I play to Sandra, Jenny is jealous, while my mother is vexed.”

“We’ll try to avoid these unpleasant circumstances,” Florentian gave a laugh and left to invite the ladies.

They entered the room with sour faces and they frowned even more when they saw so adorned Alyssa and the pastor. Florentian took the biggest case from the table, opened it, went up to the pastor’s wife and gave a wonderful string made of opals and brilliants, the same earrings and the fastener to her.

“Accept this present from my daughter,” the host bowed to her and told her.

“But this is a royal present! How should I thank you, lord Benedict?”

“I’ve nothing to do with it. My daughter gives it to you,” the host answered her especially pleasantly, but coldly.

The pastor’s wife went up to Nal, showered the words of thanks on her by assuring her that opals were her most favourite jewels. Nal helped her to adorn herself pleasingly. In the meanwhile, Florentian gave the same belt as the Alyssa’s one to Jenny in the name of his daughter, only it was made of sapphires, while from himself, he gave the fastener made of pearls and brilliants to her. Jenny was radiant no less than her mother, but when she saw Alyssa’s string of pearls, the fire of jealousy sparkled in her eyes instantly.

“Well, Sandra, now it’s your turn. Here’s the watch for you from Nal, which you’ve been dreaming about.”

“Is it really striking the hours?” Sandra gave a childish naïve shout by making everybody laugh.

Florentian pressed the watch-spring, and the watch struck six times with such a melodious sound that Sandra couldn’t hold anymore – he jumped up, turned a somersault and kissed the watch. Nal was shouting with laughter, Alyssa was clapping her hands for Sandra’s acrobatic feat, the pastor sat down on the arm-chair from laughter, only Jenny and her mother felt shocked for the second time this evening.

“Sandra, that’s not all yet. Here’s the ring for you from me, and this is,” he took the same emerald cross as the Alyssa’s one, “for your diligence by fulfilling all my tasks and of course, for Pali language,” and he hung the cross on the youth’s neck.

It seemed that Sandra had forgotten about everything. His face changed completely – all of a sudden, he became earnest, calmed down, as though he had become older. He pressed himself to Florentian, kissed his hand and told him.

“I will try to justify your confidence.”

“Don’t worry, my son. Only try not to give any pretext to the people to think falsely about you. Behave carefully with women. You are sincere and friendly, but your friendliness may be understood wrongfully, and this may become a complicated and unbearable drama both for you and others.”

“Lord Benedict, your words will always be my command.”

"Lord Wodsword, your watch also strikes the hours as Sandra's does. Let me show you how to press the watch-spring," the watch struck three times and then one more time in an absolutely different sound.

"Oh, it strikes the quarters as well," Sandra couldn't bear not to give a joyous shout and make everybody laugh again.

An unpleasant and repulsive expression in the faces of Jenny and the pastor's wife who were standing one before another was flashing. The dark-red spots stood out on the pastor wife's face, which ruined her still young-looking appearance. Jenny who looked so beautiful at the dinner table now was standing angry, sullen and puffed up, she despised everything and everybody in this room where the poor girl was rewarded in such a royal way.

"Dear Alyssa," Florentian's voice was heard, "today my son-in-law gave the pearls to you for the joy and the rest which your music has given to us. Your father agreed, and I accepted you as my disciple. Every day, at twelve o'clock, I will send a coach for you, and you'll stay here, in my house until the evening. In the evenings, your father will come to take you, we'll dine all together, and then you'll go home. In order to remember our first musical meeting, accept this bracelet and the ring personally from me. Wait for my coach tomorrow, at twelve o'clock," and he gave the bracelet and the ring to Alyssa, which were made of the same emeralds as the belt.

"Lord Benedict, Alyssa has her mother, too, who also has the right to decide her daughter's destiny," the pastor's wife uttered sharply. "I need Alyssa at home. She has enough of sciences already."

"No, lady Wodsword. According to the English laws, daughter depends only upon her father if her mother doesn't possess any personal capital. This is a legal law, and you don't have any right to decide your daughter's destiny. Also other laws, the ones of God which are written in man's heart exist – that's mother's love. Unfortunately, your love manifested itself only in this that you've sent your daughter with her music into the former barn where it is still moist and cold. You make her sew, dress you and your elder daughter, bake cakes for you, put your chests and wardrobes in order, while you are lying in bed during the entire days with a novel in your hands, or you and your elder daughter are paying visits and visiting theatres."

"I always felt that this little snake would still disgrace me. This lazy girl, spoilt by her father has deluded you with her complaints, lord Benedict."

"Oh, mother, how could you think that I could tell anyone at least a part of that what lord Benedict has just told you now!" and the tears began to pour out of sad Alyssa's eyes in streams.

"Well, then your ideal father, your idolized pastor has turned out to be hypocrite and gossip," the pastor's wife continued by hissing with fury.

Florentian's look cast upon the woman tamed her instantly like an enraged lioness. Apparently, she had lost all the limits of comprehension of decency and wanted to spill many barrels of her anger on the innocent pastor's head, but she didn't dare to do it, or simply she was unable to utter a single word. The always changing brilliance of the jewels on her neck seemed to be nothing in comparison with the sparkles thrown from her eyes. Nal who had never seen such enraged woman only pressed herself to her husband, as though she was looking for protection from the pouring anger.

The pastor came up to Alyssa by trying to calm her down with his tender caress and he took her to Florentian to say good-bye.

"Dear lord Benedict, forgive us for this nasty evening, or to be precise, for its end which we've forced you to experience. Probably, I was, I am and I will be an incorrigible dreamer. Also today I still believed that by associating with you my wife and my elder daughter would understand their mistakes which I was trying to overcome with my love in vain during my entire life. I didn't overcome them, but today when I was marrying your daughter I was observing your exceptional face, lord Benedict, and I was thinking that your charm and your power which nobody could resist would overcome Katherine and Jenny. I was hoping that finally, they have met that power to which they would have to submit."

The impudent Jenny's laughter stopped all of a sudden. She choked with her saliva and began to cough intensely.

"Sir Wodsworth, don't worry about anything," Florentian answered him. "Tomorrow when you come to take Alyssa, I will have an opportunity to talk to you about your future life. Now you'll find a two-seater calash for you and Alyssa at the gate. Sandra and lord Mildrey will accompany your wife and Jenny with the big coach. So long, lady Katherine and miss Jenny! You won't hurt Sandra with a single word on your way home. Besides, I command you..." Florentian raised his hand and extended it towards both women, as though by putting it on their heads; everybody next to him seemed to be small, so his height, charm of his manners and his grandeur made an impression of an unalterable law to everybody, while lady Katherine and Jenny as though cowered, affected by the magical power of Florentian's hand. "I command you not to disturb Alyssa's and the pastor's lives at home anymore. You've turned their own house into the prison by knowing that that house where you lived belonged to Alyssa according to her grandfather's testament. By knowing that Alyssa was the hostess in that house, you've turned her into your servant. Now both of you will strain for your father and Alyssa in such a way as they were doing it for you up to now. And be sure that there isn't a single argument in your home till the very death of the pastor. Go and remember what I've told you now, otherwise an irretrievable disaster summoned by your own created evil is going to happen in your life, in which neither me nor anybody else will be able to help you. Remember that you must work and toil – or the evil will obsess you."

Both women turned towards the door, accompanied by their attendants. They didn't say good-bye to anybody and they were pressing their cases firmly to themselves, as though being afraid that the host might change his mind and take back his gift jewels. Their eyes were burning with hatred when they looked at Nal who was wishing them good night. They were afraid of raising their eyes to Florentian and Nikolay, but they felt Florentian's look again and again, as though they cowered on the door threshold.

The pastor and Alyssa came back earlier than her mother and her sister, they exchanged their kisses and went to their own rooms.

"Alyssa, we've found that what we've been searching for during our entire life. Now I can die in peace."

"Oh no, father, I'm much bigger egoist than you are thinking. Not only I want to be happy in my new path myself, but I want to enjoy your happiness along the path for a long time as well."

Being exhausted by difficult and multiform experiences, but happy with their new acquaintance, they fell asleep quickly and easily, not even hearing how the women came back home.



## Chapter 2

### The pastor's prayer. Jenny's thoughts. Inner fight of lady Katherine

Nal's and Nikolay's days were passing easily, diversely and joyfully. In the mornings, they had time to see those places of London which Florentian used to point to them in the evening, and at half past twelve Alyssa used to come, and everybody used to have breakfast. Usually, only here the young couple used to meet Florentian for the first time on that day. They attached to this great friend and surrendered to his charm more and more.

After the breakfast, Alyssa, Nal and Nikolay used to learn with Florentian for a couple of hours regularly, he led everybody's education. Then Alyssa used to teach music to Nal, and she turned out to be a gifted student. When the lesson was over, everyone of them used to set to their own work again. In such a way, creative silence used to prevail at home until five o'clock – the hour of tea drinking. The sounds of the piano were heard in the big sitting-room from time to time. Alyssa was learning and reflecting on her musical compositions there. If Nikolay wasn't occupied in the library, he always used to work next to Florentian. Everybody used to come together for tea drinking. Young couple used to walk, ride on horseback or rest at their own discretion till dinner. The pastor used to come for dinner, he used to spend another hour in Florentian's study and then take his daughter back home.

The whole new world opened for both young and elderly Florentian's guests between their visually so monotonous life. Sandra and lord Mildrey became regular dinner guests, because Florentian was inviting them insistently. They united with all inhabitants of lord Benedict's house into one strong and friendly family.

Not only musical talent, but also an extraordinary mind was hiding behind the external pastor's modesty. The greatly educated scientist was surprising the temperamental Indian so much with his knowledge and memory that he used to skip, gesticulate and stamp his foot with fascination. Having made everybody laugh sufficiently, having felt the reproving lord Mildrey's look, Sandra used to calm down, glance at Florentian ashamed, and say with a childish despair and his hands put comically.

"Lord Mildrey, I won't do this again, probably I did this for the last time," by doing it, he used to make Nal and Alyssa laugh even more.

"Count Nikolay, if I could envy, then I would envy everything from you. Your calmness, your refined, somewhat military manners have the features of aristocracy which I didn't notice in other people; but what else separates you from other people – I don't know that. If I wanted to describe it picturesquely, I could only add that you don't belong to that environment where all of us are living, but you belong to that one where lord Benedict is living."

"Sage of Oxford, are you going to title Nikolay as count for a long time yet? It seems to me that it's time for all of you to stop using these title appendages and to call one another by name. All of you are my children."

Nevertheless, it's true, lord Benedict, that Nikolay as you told us to call him has some special characteristics," the pastor interfered, "and if all of us are your children, then he is the oldest of us and he looks like father for the most part."

"My friends, thank you for such high opinion of yours, but actually, this is only your childish fantasy. Simply, I'm a little more reserved and calmer than you are, but my distance to our father is the same as yours to him. Perhaps, we should part earlier today, because I can see the signs of tiredness on the pastor's face," Nikolay noticed.

Alyssa turned pale, anxiety appeared on her face.

"In any case, I've already noticed that my father began to grow worse during these days. He's ill, but he doesn't want to confess it. Lord Benedict, I want to report him to you. If I manage to catch him unawares, then he's so deep in his thoughts that he cannot see me instantly and he doesn't even understand what I'm telling him. And his appearance is unearthly. If my mother saw him like this, most likely she would decide that he's talking to the angels, as she was reproaching him many times before by wishing to convince us that our father had some fits of madness. I'm worried about something new within him for some time already, about some breaking loose, alienation from this earthly life," Alyssa was uttering by going down on her knees and embracing her father's knees.

The pastor lifted his daughter tenderly and seated her next to himself. The smile was shining on his kind face, while his eyes as though were sending the blessing of his entire heart to his daughter.

"My child, we shouldn't trouble lord Benedict. People cannot live forever. Already after our first meeting with the kind-hearted host of this house I told you that finally, we've found the real path and that I could die in peace."

"Father, father, my heart is bursting. To whose guardianship are you going to leave me? Why are you frightening me?"

"I was trying to foster strong spirit within yourself. Only you didn't disappoint me. You know my loyalty to God, you know that death doesn't exist, that I will go to the eternal life, and that this isn't terrible at all. If in the last moment of my life I hadn't met my happiness in lord Benedict's person, I couldn't stay calm when such evil surrounded you, and I wouldn't be able to leave in such a way as it was suited to the loyal son of his Father. But now I know that you stay with strong protection and that evil won't touch you."

"Oh father, father, don't leave me," Alyssa was crying. "I haven't yet repaid you for your care, joy and love, for that wonderful life which you've created for me; I won't stand parting with you, I will go after you."

The host gave a sign for all guests to leave the room. Nikolay took crying Nal with him, while lord Mildrey took distressed Sandra to his house. When father and his daughter were left alone, Florentian gave the cups with medicine to them and soon the pastor's face was cheerful and serene again. Alyssa's cry felt silent, although her grief still remained in her eyes. When they calmed down completely, Florentian took their arms and told them.

"Life's cry has different forms. Often it reveals itself as an early death as well, but mostly – as the cross suffering. Sometimes, while man is carrying this cross, all his previous characteristics and their power die, and he begins his new life, as if a life after his death, because all his personalisms which were holding him captive, all his passions and desires – everything died within him and liberated his spirit. Only his previous external form remained, filled with the new, purified spirit, so that through it the highest love would be able to get into the world's vanity and its sins. There are such places on the earth – difficult, stiff and stinking with the atmosphere of their passions, sorrows and evil – which the people who are free from passions, who have stepped high and forth are unable to get into anymore. Selfless conductors who have

done away with everything what was personal within themselves are needed there, through whom we could pour and bring help to those who perish in that darkness of evil.”

Florentian took the father and his daughter into his secret room.

“Lord, I’m here for the second time and for the second time I’m here as before the God’s altar,” the pastor whispered.

“And you are right, my friend. You are before the God’s altar,” with these words, Florentian opened the lid of the white table, and their eyes saw a marble altar on which a high, green cup was standing, as though it was hollowed out from the single emerald.

Having brought his surprised friends to the altar, Florentian stood behind their backs, put his hands on their heads and told them.

“You see the unfading Fire of Life before you. The entire power of the earth is in it. The whole life of the earth is holding with its help. Everything what is alive is deriving inspiration for one’s creative work from it. It is the fire of the sphere of the Earth which exists in every man. It is also the fire of the Sun – those are two Origins of the whole human life on the earth, the Origins of one’s body and spirit which are indissolubly connected. When man finishes his earthly life, this fire changes its form. And it changes it in every man as much as he was able to tie the Light of the sun into his path.

Not a single animal exists on the earth, which would possess both Origins within itself. Every animal possesses only the fire of this sphere; but there are millions of the people in whom the fire of the sphere of the earth is developed up to a very high or even the highest level and in whom the Light of the sun is either not developed at all or it is smouldering like a hardly noticeable little sparkle. Such people possess great knowledge of the nature powers, they can even control those powers, but the Light of the sun, the Light of Love and Kindness isn’t burning within them. They are devoted to the darkness of their egoism, only passions and desires are burning within them, only the power of will and persistence. Their dark power is bringing disharmony and irritation to everything. Their motto is “Overcome by controlling”, while the motto of the children of Light is “Overcome by loving”.

Persistence of their will – is the weapon of evil. They draw everybody in whom they can find any possibility to arouse their desire for honour and riches into their complex nets of evil. The poor people who are hanging on the hooks of these two conditional and temporary wealth are turned into their servants and slaves. In the beginning, they spoil them, they offer an imaginary freedom to them, and then they surround them with the frenzied passions so much that sometimes, when they want to escape, the poor ones don’t have any strength to escape from those sticking paws anymore. If your hearts are ready to serve the enlightened mankind, if you want to live with the motto “Overcome by loving”, if desire to carry love and assistance of higher brothers to the grieving hearts that still aren’t steeped in evil hopelessly is burning within you, then I will show you how and where you should do that influence in your ordinary working days. Think not about death, but about life that is happening right now. Try not to pray for the future, but to search for joyful love within yourself, so that only your heart which is creating kindness would be reflected in it in every moment.”

“I want to live in such a way as you are calling me to,” Alyssa uttered.

“I want to serve my Father during my whole time left for me on this Earth, although I was trying to do that so imperfectly up to now during my entire conscious life. Now I recognize that great meeting in you, that Teacher on the Earth about whom I was always dreaming and I say thank you to my Creator who has sent him to me.”

Father and then his daughter bowed to the altar by sending their silent prayer up. Their faces were so calm, as though they had never known any suffering. Florentian blessed them, embraced each of them and said good-bye till tomorrow by asking them to keep their new path of work and love as a complete secret.

Having come back home, as always they didn't meet their family members, because they were spending their evenings in theatres or on a visit. Father and his daughter sat for a while and went to their rooms. Their overfilled hearts longed for solitude in spite of their close friendship.

Having opened the room's window to the garden full of wonderful scents, the pastor was looking at the star-lit sky for a long time, but there wasn't any peace on his face. It seemed that he was meditating upon his entire life. He remembered his first meeting with his wife in Venice. Lady Katherine was eighteen years old, he was twenty-one years old. He had started his singer career perfectly and he didn't even think about any wedding. Even the first meetings with his future wife didn't make a strong effect on him. Lady Katherine was very beautiful back then, she was living at her friend's, the daughter of one known and respectable seignior. Lady Katherine was descended from a noble, but impoverished provincial family. She had experienced a fiasco of painful, romantic love history, she had to marry somebody quickly and she decided to marry the first proper foreigner in order to leave Italy with him. In her opinion, lord Wodsword seemed to be such a person.

Having elicited everything thoroughly about his family from the naïve Englishman, lady Katherine understood that she could win him only with love and kindness, and she played to be so hopelessly in love with him that the poor lord bit the hook, and imperceptibly, always feeling for the girl, he fell in love with her so much that he gave his heart to her forever.

It cost him many efforts and trouble to overcome his father's resistance and to get his approval for marriage. His stubborn father agreed only under one condition that his son would become pastor. For doing this, he promised him the house with full furnishing and the garden in London, but under another condition – this house would belong to his youngest daughter. The family jewels that belonged to the pastor's grandmother were to be inherited by him, her beloved grandchild; but his grandmother died suddenly without any testament. She had time to tell her will about her youngest grandson to her son by telling him to give a small amount of money and all brilliants to him, but his father allocated it at his own discretion. Money – for the elder daughter, the house and the jewels – for the youngest one.

The young lord was sharing his thoughts about his artist career, about his love for the music with his beloved, and he was very surprised when she started persuading him to obey his father, to become pastor and to marry her immediately. None of the young lord's arguments worked, the girl didn't believe in his artistic talent, she didn't believe in his skills for the science and she was afraid of becoming the wife of an unprovided singer or of even the worse scientist. The house in London that was promised to him as soon as he agreed to become pastor already seemed to be of some value to her, while the money and the jewels seemed to be more reliable than the public's adoration or the scientist's laurels.

Her persistent persuasions grew into stormy supplications to save her and into such scenes that the poor youth sacrificed his dreams and married the girl whom he was discrediting and shocking with his behaviour, as she was explaining now.

"What has my whole family life turned into?" the pastor was pondering in the silence of the night. His every day was bringing only inner disasters to him. Ill-bred, disorderly and greedy Italian submitted to the internal and external education of the pastor with much difficulty. Only his final decision which was as hard as the rock and challenged tremendous lot of lady Katherine's scenes and hysterical fits, made her regain consciousness and acquire some decency features which were necessary for her class in

the English society. The pastor stated categorically that she would be introduced neither to his father nor to his brother, she wouldn't be brought into their family and at the same time she wouldn't get into her so dreamed of high society until she learned to put the house in order, to manage the household and to behave with people.

This fight was going on for many years. The pastor's wife gave birth to their daughter earlier, while some grey hair appeared on the pastor's head. Little by little, marching into the society next to her husband, lady Katherine mastered the external aristocracy, but she remained greedy and petty bourgeois inside of her.

The pastor's wife used to attract the people's hearts easily by taking advantage of her beauty, but nobody would be friends with her for a longer time. The pastor had to experience many bitter moments when they would come back to their silent house from his father's and his brother's rich palace. Dazzled by the brilliance of luxury, lady Katherine used to talk only about his brother's weak health, that there weren't any other heirs, about their wonderful future when the pastor got all the riches.

The pastor remembered the birth of their youngest daughter, too. Insults and jeers were always falling on the poor baby's head, because her blue eyes like her father's and her blond curly hair irritated her mother. So Alyssa was growing up like this, seeing how her mother valued only her elder daughter. But the obedient girl who always admired both her mother and her sister accepted the Cinderella's fate as inevitable. Her kind heart that didn't know any jealousy was always searching for the smallest possibility to serve them, and she was always exploited so much that sometimes it would affect even her health. The the pastor put his veto again, which his wife knew well already.

While the pastor was reconsidering all of it, he was trying to comprehend how much he was to blame against God and against himself for this failed life. He rose from the arm-chair, closed the window and went down on his knees at the little table with the Gospel.

"God, only man himself is to blame for everything in his life. I know that soon I will leave. Accept my prayer for You: Lord, forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us... I understood too late that the most important thing in one's life, not only in one's family was the peace of one's heart. I was trying to carry it to everybody, but I failed to introduce it in my own family. I was trying to raise everybody's spirit, to comfort him and to cheer him up during every day of my life. I wanted that everyone who was brought to me in solitude would leave me with joy that he had acquired a friend. Only in my family I failed to create neither harmony nor even purity with my whole energy of kindness. Lord, I understood all the suffering of the earth with my hurt heart, I raised and I blessed it. Protect my baby with the power of your blessed love, because my heart is unable to withstand the contradictions and to beat in compromise anymore.

I knew the only path of man on the earth – the path of selfless devotion to You, but the joy of this path, poisoned with the daily lie and hypocrisy in my family, didn't bring me into the circle of Your blessed servants. Today, by the Divine Fire I comprehended and I saw the new path of love. I know that it is late already, that I leave the earth already – accept me in peace and don't leave my baby without any protection."

The pastor's face brightened up. Florentian's image rose before his eyes clearly, and at the same time, his faith in help came. It became easy and peaceful in his heart. His family life which he had spent so unsuccessfully ceased to worry him, it seemed already to be plunged in the past, distant and strange. As though not his dreams and expectations, closed and buried in his broken heart, had cost him the deadly fight. As though not him was fighting in order to understand and finish his path – the path of

comfort for every man whom he met, - but another man about whom only the memory remained to himself now.

His entire current life, his youth, science, music, his beloved daughter, the blossoming nature – it seemed to him that everything lasted only for a moment. His renunciation that was living like an inconsolable suffering in his heart for so long, now all of a sudden, became the joy of his liberation. Nothing was oppressing his spirit anymore. He understood that his entire life was only the single moment of Eternity, that man's life on the earth ended when his creative strength was exhausted and when he didn't need the earth as his constant working place, as the place of his spiritual growth anymore. It is possible for man to die when he's still absolutely young, and it happened only because neither man's heart nor his consciousness was unable to do anything anymore under the conditions provided for him on the earth. Another environment and another body was needed for him, so that man's spirit and his creative skills could rise even higher.

The pastor stood up, went up to the window, opened it and sat down on the arm-chair by the window. It was dawning already. His thoughts came back to Alyssa, but now there wasn't that anxiety for the future of his daughter in his heart anymore. He understood that everybody was able to live only his own life. It didn't matter how one could try to tread the path of life for one's children, life would turn it in such a way and at that time how man himself, and only he alone, would tread it for himself. You were unable to walk even a span of the path of his life.

When in the morning Alyssa went out to water the flowers and saw her father dressed already and sitting on the arm-chair by the window, she became glad and ran up to him, but soon anxiety changed her joy.

"Oh, father, are you ill? What has happened to you? You are so changed, you've become worse, pale. I must call the doctor immediately."

"Don't worry, my child, it's only sleeplessness. Old people cannot be always healthy. I've told you many times: young people may die, while the old ones won't escape the death. Why should you worry? Love me, but love me calmly, no matter in what form I would be; feel me next to yourself wherever I would live – next to you or far away from you. Love's loyalty doesn't acknowledge any separation."

Tears were ready to pour from Alyssa's eyes, but her kind heart overcame her pain bravely, so that she wouldn't excite her father.

"Father, do you want to go out in the garden?"

"No, my child, it is so well for me to sit here."

"I will bring you some chocolate in a moment. Rest until I come back, because today I will force you to eat," Alyssa was talking by trying to appear happy, but as soon as she turned round the house corner where her father was unable to see her anymore, she sat down on the bench, buried her face in the prop and began to weep bitterly.

"Why are you crying here?" Jenny asked her rudely by turning over the balcony of her room. "Have you broken your doll? Or perhaps, you want to appear in the shape of a suffering victim before your new friends?"

Alyssa wanted to tell Jenny about their father's illness, about her worry for him, but she looked at unfriendly eyes of her sister and told only this to her.

"Jenny, you keep joking, but it seems to me that a disaster is hanging over us, but you don't want to see it."

Jenny gave a laugh and continued with the same rudeness and even derision.

"For how long have you been registered as a sage? You were fool when you were sixteen years old and all of a sudden, you've become lord Benedict's clear head. Is it an honour for his foresight or your cunning?"

"Jenny, you can call me as you wish, but if one more time you say something disrespectfully about lord Benedict, you will leave this home, so that you wouldn't come back here anymore. And remember what I've just told you – this is my house, and I don't want to hear a single word without deep respect about lord Benedict in this house!"

That expression of her father's eyes when he used to utter his exceptional, but final "no" glittered in Alyssa's eyes. Unusual resolution and iron strength of her voice – that was so unexpected and sudden from Alyssa who always used to be so obedient and tender that Jenny understood instantly: Alyssa didn't threaten her, and she really would be left without a shelter if she violated this prohibition. Jenny knew that nobody was able to change her father's decisions. Now she recognized this feature of her father's character as easily as she had found her mother's features within herself a long time ago. Until Jenny who was like thunderstruck came to herself from amazement, Alyssa prepared breakfast for her father.

Not only the pastor had spent the sleepless night. Jenny and her mother came back in the evening angry one with another, they shut themselves in their rooms, not being reconciled before their sleep. Mother and her daughter were unhappy one with another not for the first time lately. They were surprised about it themselves, because up to now they were living by loving one another very much, they were living in concord and were never cross one with another. Lazy egoists who used to flare up quickly would give vent to all their moods on Alyssa, and it seemed to them that they were dissatisfied with Alyssa and not one with another. When they were irritated they tried to be next to Alyssa unconsciously, they used to surrender to her meekness, her childish love, her usual desire to calm both of them down and to cheer them up, although they considered her to be a fool anyway.

Now Alyssa and the pastor weren't at home during the entire days. All work that Alyssa used to do fell on them. Alyssa used to wash, iron, sew during the entire days, so that Jenny and her mother could be well-dressed; while Alyssa's piano would wait for her during the entire weeks, because when they would leave the house they used to give her instructions on how she had to dress them for tomorrow, on what to sew and what to clean, never thinking that perhaps Alyssa had too much work to do, and they were hiding such behaviour of theirs from the pastor. Now, being always irritated, somehow they were putting their toilets in order and they were cursing that day and that hour in their hearts when the lord Benedict stepped over the threshold of this house.

In the evening, shut herself in her room, Jenny was raging. She was sick of the frequent quarrels with her mother, her intemperance, her never-ceasing curses for the pastor and Alyssa. Only now she could evaluate her mother's lack of culture and her father's nobleness, who would never show any dissatisfaction with their mother in a single word when being next to his daughters. The pastor hadn't uttered any word in a raised voice to her mother during the entire Jenny's life and he hadn't allowed a single bad act to himself with respect to her. He was fair to both of his daughters, and there wasn't any difference when he used to spoil them, while her mother would always spoil only Jenny. Now Jenny was ashamed to remember how often she used to get her sister's sweets; her mother also used to take the

things given to Alyssa from her and to give them to Jenny; and how Alyssa used to give the best that she had to her by smiling joyfully and she never told her any word against her.

Jenny remembered her first ball at their grandfather's, too. Her mother told Alyssa to ask her grandfather for her brilliants, so that Jenny could adorn herself with them. Her grandfather was always strict, but he was unusually tender to Alyssa, so this time, too, he refused to fulfil her request very tenderly. Having lifted her little face with his beautiful hand, he told her.

"Not Jenny and her mother, but you are going to adorn yourself with my mother's brilliants. They are given to you and they will be sent to you on the eve of your first ball."

"In this case, most likely nobody is going to adorn himself with them, because my first ball will never take part."

"Why, my granddaughter?" her grandfather was laughing by embracing her, what nobody else could get from him, too.

"Nobody is bringing any fools to the ball. Besides, I would like to hear the wonderful, and not the ball music. Ah, grandfather, how you have upset me. Jenny is such a beauty, isn't she? How is she going to go to the ball with the bare neck?"

"If it is not enough for her that she possesses her neck, she can either cover it or not to go to the ball at all."

"So I should tell her this?"

"Yes, tell her this."

The girl's little face became sad. Alyssa was trying to explain to her father for a long time that he shouldn't have hurt people like this, and she made him laugh by doing so. He even burst out laughing several times, but anyway, he took her home in his coach with the candy box, but without any brilliants. Jenny remembered that day and her little, lost and sad poor sister who was standing under the flow of her mother's reproaches and stating sadly that she was asking her grandfather as ardently as the God himself, but probably, neither one nor another didn't hear her because of her sins. The pictures of the past were changing in Jenny's memory one after another – and then the young scientist, her father's friend Sandra showed up in their house.

Already in the first evening when Alyssa was playing and singing, Jenny caught the guest's look that was full of fascination. Since that time Jenny was trying not to allow Alyssa to come nearer to the piano when Sandra was visiting them, but he would manage to act through her father, and sometimes Alyssa used to play and to sing to him by completely destroying the poise of unmusical and jealous Jenny. Jenny was gifted and she possessed retentive memory, so she used to perceive the essence of every book easily. She was rather educated, although she didn't want to work according to her father's proposed program. Her acquaintance with Sandra and her desire to draw his attention to herself made her study seriously, and she – which was beneficial for Sandra, too – sometimes used to drive him into the corner with her arguments, but he would reconsider everything at home, bring even more books and prove to Jenny that she was manipulating the facts with her purely womanly logic. Jenny was forced to read many volumes of some serious books in order to be convinced of everything herself. That used to irritate and exhaust her, because no matter how she was trying to attract Sandra with her mind he used to submit to her only until Alyssa appeared. As soon as she would step through the door, his entire erudition would go clean out of his mind. Sandra used to turn into a small child and he used to spend the time with her sister so joyfully, they used to laugh so happily that Jenny was unable to achieve that with any charms of her



coquetry. Jealousy was tormenting her, but she was unable to reproach her sister with anything. When Sandra used to visit them, Alyssa used to hide and she never uttered his name in any other way, only as one of Jenny's admirers.

It became stifling for Jenny in this atmosphere of evil and permanent irritability. She understood that she loved her father, her sister and that she wanted to be with them. She valued their culture, only she didn't know how she could approach them, how she could escape from this ambiguous situation. It seemed to be so simple – she only needed to ask Alyssa to take her to the lord Benedict's herself. She would get an advice there on how to find a way out and how to come nearer to her father and her sister without challenging her mother's jealousy. But... how should she ask her sister? How should she tell her? Lord Benedict? Should she address him? It is impossible – it is both a shame and terrible for her. Jenny decided to address Nikolay and to ask for his advice and help.

*"Count, - she was writing. – I have to address the stranger and the man whom I don't know well for the first time, but you aren't just a man, you are scientist and philosopher, so I dare to address him. I was walking through my life very firmly and with confidence in my own strengths up to now. My success of every kind showed me that I was living truthfully and exactly in such a way as I needed. Some disagreements in our family seemed like the consequence of my father's and my sister's unreal and childish naivety. Now there's a hell in my soul. Some doubts have broken into it. I can see many things differently as it seemed to me up to now. And I cannot find the way out of it in any way, I cannot find at least a little peace. I get irritated more and more, and the clearer I understand that my vicious mood only shows that I'm really wrong, the more I'm vexed and I can see myself how the snakes are hissing and raising their heads within my heart.*

*Count, why am I telling everything to you? Because you and lord Benedict's images always emerge before me. Only while we were staying in your home, I understood that life could step forward with kindness. It is strange, but I didn't feel your and his influence in such a special way when I was in the lord Benedict's home. Even when lord almost turned me out of his house, I was only laughing at this angrily during the first days by trying to poison my father's and Alyssa's lives. Only when the time goes by, I begin to see your faces clearer, and it becomes sadder in my heart.*

*Please let me talk to you. I don't dare to ask for an appointment with the lord Benedict, I can still remember his strict and especial face in the last minute of our parting. His grandeur fetters me. Understand me correctly, I'm sure that this is the reflection of his soul and not his external manners. I don't dare to address him and I cannot even imagine how to open the wounds of my heart to him.*

*I will ask Alyssa to give this letter to you, but I will never make up my mind to step over the threshold of the lord Benedict's house and I cannot ask you to come to my house. Don't refuse to meet me tomorrow, at three o'clock in T's public garden and to talk to me.*

*Accept my sincere and deep respect.*

*Jenny Wodsworth*

This letter cost much pain and reflections for Jenny. The proud girl didn't want to give in to weakness as it seemed to her in any way, and only her really big mind helped her to see her mistakes and to put them into words in her letter. Having finished her letter, Jenny drew a sigh of relief. She really took a decisive step. It seemed to her that she had closed the door of the dark and unpleasant larder within her heart and that now she could not cast looks on it for several hours. One more unpleasant matter was left – to ask her sister to give the letter to Nikolay. Actually, it turned out to be more difficult to do than in her thoughts. While she was writing the letter, her heart relaxed, as though it opened up to Alyssa, but... as soon as Jenny heard Alyssa's conversation with her father, his voice full of kindness and tenderness, her consciousness was able to drag out to the surface only the scene under the balcony, which was painfully clear and alive. She remembered Alyssa's words which had shaken her so much that she dashed at the letter and wanted to tear it up into little pieces, but instead of doing it, she only covered her face with her hands and burst into bitter, childish tears.

Jenny, proud Jenny who was thinking so much about her beauty, who was protecting her face from the faintest blowing of the wind, who had never mopped a single tear in order not to damage the skin of her face, now was crying, having forgotten about everything, except the bitterness of her heart. Somebody's tender hand embraced her, somebody's hot lips were kissing her hands and her breathing made her warm. This warmth penetrated into her heart, as though it was pulling a splinter out of it.

"Jenny, my dear sister, forgive me, you know how silly I am. I even didn't know how to put my thoughts into words, so that you, so clever, would understand me."

Poor Alyssa was stunned by so unusual tears of her sister, which she could see for the first time. She was ready to give up her life, only if she could soothe her sister, and at the same time she comprehended that she wouldn't tolerate any insult for lord Benedict at her home. Everything what was related to him was more precious than her life. Alyssa could die for her sister, but she couldn't renounce him, because he was the whole essence of her life. Jenny didn't answer anything to her sister, but she calmed down from her kindness and all of a sudden, she felt like a little girl who was snuggling up to her kind nurse.

Jenny was silent and she was still getting her eyes closed at intervals, but as though smiling already when she gave her letter to Alyssa. She took a hasty glance at the address, kissed Jenny tenderly again and, having hidden the letter behind her corsage, left the room. Jenny felt gratitude for her sister and regret for that distance which separated them for the first time.

The pastor's wife who was so spoilt that Alyssa's prepared abundant breakfast, certainly with several hot Italian dishes were already waiting for her in the dining-room at twelve o'clock, now was getting irritated always more and more every day, and one could hear her loud argument with the cook who was unable to please her in any way in the entire house. The pastor's wife was pierced through every time when Alyssa would get into the elegant coach at half past eleven and leave the house, quite often with her father. She was nagging the pastor during his entire life by trying to prove to him how they needed to have their own coach, but she had to submit to him when once she heard his veto again. Of course, she didn't give up and she was trying to find the different ways on how she could get the coach out of her father-in-law. He answered her that he would give it to her with pleasure, but that his son had forbidden him to do that and that he didn't want to be cross with his son. Then she addressed her husband's brother, but she received the same answer from him.

The unhappy woman began to fight, but she was fighting not against her own desires, but against the pastor and against his every want. By not admitting it to herself, but understanding it well for a long time already that she had ruined her husband's career and had chosen the careless life of the modest pastor's wife and not the one of the famous singer, she used to pour the whole bitterness of her mistake

and her anger on her husband's head by always searching for the new ways to hurt his heart. By not knowing the English laws, lady Katherine intended to divorce, to demand and obtain half of their property, and to leave abroad. But in this case, everything was against her, too, and the woman couldn't bring herself to stay beyond the limits of society. So her life was passing like this, completely alienated from her husband who moved to live in his study once and for all, and when Alyssa was born, he didn't step the threshold of their joint bedroom anymore.

Although the pastor's wife was searching for some diversions in foreign parts, in other people's opinion, she was living an irreproachable life, and her reputation wasn't spoilt. The pastor was supporting the opinion of all people living in the neighbourhood about his happy family life and he would never miss any opportunity to stay with his wife where etiquette demanded it. His kindness and his courtesy of a gentleman for his wife seemed as the real happiness to everybody, and whom a thought could have occurred to that one could be unhappy with one's family life when one was married to one of the famous scientists, the man with great musical talent and pure soul.

Since the pastor's wife didn't have any constant hobbies, often she used to change the objects of her love, but she was hiding these flights of hers carefully from the members of her family. Jenny was also convinced that her mother was the victim of her father's tyranny, so she was trying to love her doubly, so that she wouldn't feel the coldness of her husband so much. But not so long ago, Jenny's eyes began to notice something what the pastor's wife didn't want to reveal to her at all. Although she was trying to educate Jenny in her own way by persuading her that in Italy people were living in an absolutely different way with respect to their feelings, but once Jenny was terror-struck when she met her mother covered with the thick veil in the street unexpectedly, who was leaving the strange house, and she also had time to see a strange man in the doorway. They didn't utter a single word one to another till their home. Jenny went straight to her room silently when they were at home, although the pastor's wife was trying to ask her about something. When they were having their dinner with her father and Alyssa, Jenny was controlling herself and trying to answer her mother in her usual tone, but there wasn't that altar in her heart left anymore, on which her mother was standing up to now. The thrown down idol stopped holding her in its power. Jenny wasn't crying or moaning. She grew cold instantly, and the pastor's wife understood that she was losing her beloved baby, but anyway, she wasn't fighting against herself and her mistakes – on the contrary, she wanted Jenny to accept her mode of life as the only possible and true in the society.

There weren't any limits for her mother's rage when she understood the silent contempt of her daughter. She burst with the real Italian scenes, she was jealous for her father and Alyssa; now she was pleading now she was threatening and she brought Jenny to such condition that she threatened her to complain to her father of such impossible life.

The furious pastor's wife, who wasn't used to any contradictions of her daughter and who was spoilt with her attachment, was unable to put up with her solitude in the family and she decided to tempt her daughter with the great project of her marriage. She had spent many sleepless nights by reflecting on the current situation, she was investigating all young men and elderly lords of the capital thoughtlessly, everybody whom she knew and whom she didn't know. At dawn, she used to calm down that she would find the rich and famous groom with the great position for her daughter anyway and that she would win her back by doing so.

The pastor's family members used to spend all their days like this, and nobody of them, except their father himself, didn't know that death had already found the way to their home.

## Chapter 3

### Jenny's letters. Her disappointment and struggle

Alyssa was late for the breakfast for the whole twenty minutes. Lord Benedict, Nal and Nikolay gathered in the host's room and they were waiting for the guest who had become the dear and beloved member of their family during those two months which had flown by like one day. Nal was worried mostly, because her uncle Ali, Florentian and Nikolay had infused her with simply perfect punctuality and orderliness. She was persuading her father and her husband that probably Alyssa was taken ill.

"I doubt that she was detained by an illness. I think that soon she'll be here, and that there is absolutely no need for you to worry, my daughter, but if you cover her even more with your care and try to show even more love and attention to her, then you'll act rightly. A big test is waiting for the poor girl soon, and it will appear to her that she won't have anybody left to care for her in the entire world anymore, not a single close heart, except the three of us."

"Father, it is so easy for me to do everything what I can for Alyssa. I love her like my closest sister, and is it possible not to love her as soon as you see her, but I was shaken by your words. Is her father really so ill?"

"He could still be living with such health of his, but his energy with which he's fighting against the evil surrounding him will soon be exhausted, while the energy within his wife is accumulating. He will leave this life, and his own bright power of love for which he was always serving will save him, because the power of evil which is coming nearer to his house would demand much more energy and knowledge from the pastor than he could have reached."

With these words of lord Benedict, a light knock at the door was heard. The servant announced that Miss Alyssa Wodsworth had come. Nal ran to meet her friend, while the men went straight to the dining-room.

Alyssa was apologizing for being late and blaming only herself. She didn't mention a single word about her father's illness or discord in their family, but her eyes red with weeping and her grief-stricken face were talking themselves about that what the girl wanted to pass over in silence. She put Jenny's letter so imperceptibly next to Nikolay's set of instruments that even Nal didn't understand how it got here. Having noticed the letter received not by the post, Nikolay darted a glance at Alyssa, put the letter into his pocket, and it seemed that the incident had ended like this.

"Why did Jenny choose you to be the postwoman?" all of a sudden, lord Benedict asked Alyssa. "If she asks you to give a letter to someone again, refuse to do it. Tell her that no one has closed the way to our place for her, and if your mother asks you to give her a lift somewhere on the way, if she asks you to give a letter or some other thing to us or somebody else, or if she asks you to retell her words – don't agree to do it categorically both now and in the future. Your entire current life – that's your father, your care for him and us. Do you accept this condition, Alyssa?"

"Do I accept it? Do I have a choice to accept or to refuse any of your instructions? My heart isn't alone. The new person has stepped into it without asking for any permission. Everybody who was living in my heart before remained there, but the new lord has brought the new life into it. Everybody whom I love will leave me," Alyssa's voice began to tremble, she could hardly control her tears, "and I know that I will stay to live my life. I will be living my life in a deep grief, perhaps in a terror, but I will be living it."

But, lord Benedict, if your image left my heart, if that light of yours was out in it, then my life would leave my heart itself. You can see everything yourself, so there's no need to talk about it. I took Jenny's letter without knowing anything what was written there, but I know that she can find rescue for herself only here."

"Cheer up, my dear. You still are going to find out how it is difficult and sometimes even impossible to help people if they are idlers, if they are completely slovenly, if they don't want to work and if they see their entire happiness only in riches and pleasures. Everything what you can do with your little knowledge and strength in order not to challenge an even greater evil – that's to avoid any contact with your mother and your sister. When you are back home, spend those several hours only next to your father. If tomorrow your mother wanted to go somewhere on the way in your coach, remember my prohibition. By the way, I will warn your father, too."

Lord Benedict rose from the table, the breakfast was over, and everybody was busy with his own work.

Alyssa was unsettled by Florentian's words. She didn't understand what an evil he was talking about, why she wasn't allowed to give her mother a lift on the way, although she was asking for it several times already, why she wasn't allowed to take the poor Jenny's letters if she was suffering so much that she even burst into tears for the first time in her life. She was unable to understand the essence of these prohibitions, but it didn't even occur to her to disobey. No one in the world could have forced her to act against Florentian's will. The girl considered even the smallest violation of his instructions as treason and unfaithfulness for her friend. In this moment, while not comprehending why she had to act like this and not otherwise, she could perceive intuitively that a deep meaning or even a salvation of her relatives was hidden in Florentian's demands. While she was grieving for them and even more for her father, she sat down at the piano, her loyal friend and helper in all difficult moments of life.

Having read Jenny's letter, Nikolay went to lord Benedict. He read it, was silent for several minutes and asked him.

"What are you going to do?"

"It seems to me that we could still save the girl. She's very talented, she could seriously devote herself to science and overcome her passion for the external goodness."

"She would need to work for real in order to do that. She would need to choose a field of science and devote a half of her life to it. She isn't ready for any big work. She won't be able to live at least a year in the narrow circle according to the strict daily routine, to understand that she has to become the lady for herself and to control her passions. You've already reached that level when man is walking his path independently by orientating himself in all his matters and meetings of that day. You can act in such a way as you think yourself it is needed."

"No, my father, it seems to me that this case is distinguished for its complexity. I still don't understand how, but I know for sure that the thread of evil is winding from Jenny towards Lovushka, or to be precise, from the pastor's wife. When I was reading the letter I could clearly see Lovushka who managed to avoid some dangers related to the pastor's wife and how you were saving Jenny and Alyssa from them. I came to ask you to show me the exact limits of my actions, because I can feel that in this case I'm unable to discern the path clearly."

"My son, if you want to act in such a way as I can see all of it, then don't go to the public garden to meet Jenny and don't write to her. Only dictate a short letter to Nal with which you will tell her

that you have talked to the lord Benedict and that he would be glad to see her at his home on the Sunday morning, at eleven o'clock if she wanted to talk to him about something important."

"I'll do exactly like this, my father. Only haven't you forgotten that you invited the pastor and Alyssa to your estate on the weekend? You expected that all of us would return to London only on Monday, before breakfast."

"You are absolutely right. We will leave and come back to London all together, but it takes only a little more than an hour to get to the country, doesn't it? I will be in London till five o'clock on Sunday, and not only because of Jenny. I will be in time to get back to you for dinner. We have to do our best, so that the pastor would gain strength in the country, Nal's and Alyssa's faces would burst into bloom like the roses again, while you need to rest. By the way, visit lord Mildrey. Of course, Sandra is taking care of him. Give this medicine to the lord, and he will be up again in two days. Invite both of them to come to the country for the weekend. Of course, it won't take long for the Indian to give a philosophically sporty somersault to you, while the lord will brighten up and he won't be able to find any proper words in order to express his joy. Send the letter to Jenny through one of our servants right now."

Nikolay left to dictate the letter to Nal and then he left to visit the lord Mildrey, while Florentian sat down at his writing-table and wrote several letters with deep concentration.

Having sent her letter with Alyssa's help, Jenny didn't have any doubts that in the evening her sister would come back with an answer that Nikolay would be very pleased to see her right now. She was still dressed with the ordinary house dress when she began to create her upcoming conversation with Nikolay by reconsidering every word in her thoughts. She wanted to show to the count how quick his mind was, how subtle her feelings were, how she needed a completely different life, and that she needed only that path and then she would successfully reach the invisible distances herself. Then Jenny began to think how she would dress for the count tomorrow when they meet in the public garden. Having come up to the wardrobe, she began to take one of her holiday clothes after another. She threw off the blue one as too ordinary, the green one which emphasized the hue of her skin and hair perfectly as too bright for the serious meeting... Soon, a pile of clothes grew up on the sofa, while Jenny still didn't know which one to choose. If "the fool" was here – as Jenny was always calling her sister in her thoughts – the question would have been solved in a couple of minutes. Anyway, "the fool" had some refined taste and such sense of tact that Jenny used to submit to her opinion. Life had forced her to take her sister's taste into consideration, because only then she used to arouse everybody's admiration when she would listen to Alyssa's advices.

Jealousy and vexation were bothering her again, because now Alyssa was sitting in the aristocratic house, while she, Jenny, had to take pains over her dresses here. That was irritating her again, while the time was passing and it brought nothing but only indignation to her as to why Alyssa and not she, the nice beauty, has become the lord Benedict's favourite. And now Jenny bound herself to turn Nikolay's head. She had tried the power of her beauty on men many times already: she didn't love anybody for a single time, she was interested only in flirtation, and she was loved passionately several times.

Finally, Jenny picked out the costume made of the dark grey silk with the dark green buttons and fell to thinking about the hat. All of them seemed to her to be either not good enough or too bright. Her appearance would have made one smile: she was dressed with the light, green-coloured house dress and with the hat on her head, while the other clothes were in her hands, on her knees, on chairs, on the floor...

All of a sudden, the pastor's wife didn't enter, but came running into the room, she also had only robe on and was uncombed. She began to pour a hundred of words per minute, and Jenny understood only that the lord Benedict's servant had come and brought them a letter. The pastor's wife was

demanding him to give the letter to her, but the servant stated that he was told to give it only to Miss Wodsworth personally. Lady Katherine's curiosity reached the highest point. She was scolding both the servant and his master who had given such an instruction that mother was unable to read the letter that was dedicated to her daughter, so now she was hurrying Jenny to go quickly to her scolded servant.

"Mother, first of all, please tell me if you at least shot a glance in the mirror? Just look at yourself! When did you wash your robe? My father was telling you a ten, a hundred times that when the strangers were knocking at the door, the lady didn't have to rush out into the hall without any special reason. Not only you rushed yourself at the lord Benedict's servant when there were even three servants in our own house, but you've disgraced me, too. What is the servant going to tell lord Benedict when he comes back home? And it is even more unpleasant that he will tell his friends and cooks about your dirty robe and your screams."

"What are you talking about here, Jenny? As I noticed you've been following your dad's good tone for some time already. Only I don't recommend you to go over to your father and Alyssa, I'm creating some great plans for you, too."

"Mother, you've been creating great plans during your entire life, only that they would fall down like the houses of cards. Please go to your room and let me dress. I cannot appear before the lord's servant like you, dressed like this."

"Since when your mother began to trouble you?"

"Not so long time ago, to my great regret and sadness, my opinion began to differ from yours."

Seeing that her mother was still standing in one place, the girl threw on her black cloak, put the hat on and she looked like the lady who was ready to leave. Jenny forbade the pastor's wife to follow her categorically and went to the hall. On the way, she was trying to perceive how the lady should behave before the man-servant from the aristocratic house, but since she didn't have any understanding about it, she entered the hall without deciding anything. She saw the perfectly dressed man here, whom she would have considered to be the real gentleman in the street. He bowed politely, gave the letter to her, bowed again and left instantly without uttering a single word. Jenny was taken aback! She was already about to smile, to ask him to wait until she was writing her answer, but she was left to stand alone, as if nobody had dropped in at this place. Jenny sensed instinctively that this man looked at her from above. Although he was the man-servant, he was a young man who could at least notice that the beauty was standing in front of him and that it was a great chance for him to admire her, but he didn't even look at her!

Having observed everything through the keyhole impatiently, the pastor's wife broke into the hall, she couldn't understand why Jenny wasn't reading the letter. Jenny was unable to control her fury anymore. She could see clearly that there was a beautiful, not yet completely formed womanly handwriting on the envelope. Jenny gave vent to her anger on her mother by accusing her of being rude and vulgar with the man-servant, that's why he dashed out from their house like a bullet. She told her mother everything about her listening behind the door and looking through the keyhole. The more Jenny was able to understand that the cause of her fury wasn't her mother, but herself, the more furious she was. Now, for the first time she could feel that feature of her mother within herself, although it never seemed to her before that she could be so furious. Only when she saw the horror in her mother's eyes she understood how ugly she was now and, having covered her face with her hands, she ran to her room. She slammed the door and turned the key.

She fell down onto the arm-chair and she was sitting like this for a while, motionless, without any strength, not being able to perceive anything and to read the letter. Finally, she threw down the cloak and the hat, rubbed her temples and her neck with the cologne and took the letter into her hands. She was a little surprised by the certain peculiarity of the paper – most likely, it wasn't an English one – and the monogram with the dark green, gilded crown of the count. Having opened the envelope carelessly and hastily, first of all Jenny inspected the signature. There was written: "Nal, the countess T."

*Dear Miss Wordsword, I'm writing to you by order of my husband. He asks me to tell you that lord Benedict will be waiting for you in his house on Sunday morning, at eleven o'clock. My father himself asks me to tell you that his time is allotted in a very precise way and that he spares it to you with great love and joy, but regretfully, only from eleven to twelve o'clock.*

*Sincerely*

*Nal, the countess T.*

Jenny was filled with wrong, humiliation and indignation. She was mocking herself that she was picking out her clothes like this, that she was dreaming to turn Nikolay's head, and here it was – the letter from Nal. That irritated the girl. Everything got confused into some mess, and she experienced the fit of fury again. This time her annoyance and disappointment weren't directed to her mother, but to her fool sister who probably failed to give the letter to the count in such a way that the countess wouldn't find out about it. Most likely, she made a scene to her husband and since she was afraid of the competition of the beautiful Jenny, she wanted to reply to her personally.

This thought made her happy, and Miss Wordsword began to come to herself, but anyway, she decided not to show the letter to her mother. Jenny tore the text out by leaving the salutation and the signature next to the envelope on the table and burnt the letter down. Little by little she calmed down, decided to dress herself, to eat something and when she went to the bath she left the door of her room opened. As she expected, her mother slipped into her room immediately. Jenny gave her enough time to admire the crown of the count and the signature, and she came back from the bath completely settled down after the fit of her anger. Now she couldn't believe herself that only an hour ago she had lost her self-control so much. It was even disgusting to perceive that she had stepped into that vulgarity herself which she was disgusting so much when she was looking at her mother. Now Jenny was disgusting her experienced fit of fury for the first time so much that she was unable to stay with herself anymore. She even became glad when her already dressed mother came in as though nothing had happened, and offered her to breakfast at home and to go for the tickets to the theatre where a celebrity had come.

They didn't touch any of the morning events during their breakfast, only they were discussing about the question that Alyssa should be left at home for the weekend. They planned precisely her entire future work for preparing the dresses for Jenny and her mother for the upcoming horse-race. Alyssa's daily departures when she was leaving their house always earlier and coming back home always later were already threatening them to be a disaster for the whole house economy. Mother and her daughter were reconciled one with another while reflecting on these thoughts and decided to go to the city, but the pastor's wife recommended Jenny to write the letter to Alyssa immediately and to leave it in the visible place, because they might come back from the theatre late and Alyssa might not see it till the morning.



Having forgotten that Alyssa wasn't that little girl stooge to whom her sister used to give instructions as if she was a servant-slave, in her letter Jenny ordered her to put her room in order, especially her hats, to iron her blouses and costumes which became creased due to lying on the sofa. Then she indicated her exact instructions which clothes she had to prepare for the upcoming horse-race. So she didn't need to go to the lord Benedict's during these days at all where generally speaking she was representing only a lodger of the young countess by disgracing both her mother and herself. "It is time to end this nonsense", - Jenny ended her letter for her sister like this.

Having stuck down the envelope, she left it in the hall where it was simply impossible not to notice it. Finally, both ladies who were very pleased with themselves left the house. On the way, Jenny was amazed at the countess Nal's oddness to invite her for breakfast on Sunday when the whole self-respected London would be in the horse-race. Having exchanged their opinions about lord Benedict's house, mother and her daughter met some acquaintances, and they spent their time till the dinner imperceptibly. During the dinner they met some other acquaintances and, having dined together joyfully, they went to the theatre. The waves of jealousy and bitter indignation for Alyssa were always raging in Jenny's soul: how that fool was able to fascinate the lord Benedict when during her entire life, everywhere Jenny used to appear, no one would pay any attention to Alyssa. All of a sudden, she remembered Alyssa's tears in the garden and the nasty scene under the balcony. Jenny was absent-minded, and her cavaliers who were used to see her to be only dreamy were surprised by this.

The further the worse Jenny was feeling. She remembered how in the letter she wrote about Alyssa's presence in the lord Benedict's house in a rather tactless and disrespectful way. She even gave a shout with fear when she remembered the shining Alyssa's eyes when she forbade her to speak disrespectfully about the lord and how she threatened to leave her without a roof over her head. Although Jenny was smiling to everybody, she was feeling like a grass-snake in the frying-pan.

And Alyssa's day at the lord Benedict's house began and was passing as always in a joyous, easy and simple way. Everybody adored the kind and modest girl – starting with Nal and Doria, and ending with the cook's children who had an indignation for her if only they would meet her in the garden or in the yard.

On that day the pastor came earlier than ever to the lord Benedict's house and he was walking with his daughter in the garden where Florentian joined them. Having invited both of them to his estate on the weekend, he added that today he wouldn't allow them to spend the night at home. Right here they decided that Doria would visit the old pastor's servant Arthur and bring his belongings here, while Nal had already prepared all Alyssa's clothes in a proper way. Nal was happy, because Alyssa would stay here to spend the night, and together they would go to the country in the early morning.

In the evening, one of the lord Benedict's coaches took Doria to the pastor's house with the letter for the old servant. He opened the door himself and was very surprised when he saw the strange lady instead of the pastor and his daughter whom he was waiting for. He read the kind letter with the instructions on what things he had to send. The letter ended with the friendly pastor's words dedicated to him personally, "to my old friend and loyal brother in arms of my entire life". The whole Arthur's face brightened up and he kissed the letter of his idolized master. In his letter, the pastor was sorry for not being able to take him with himself this time, but he was hoping not to separate with him next time when he visited lord Benedict, while now he asked him not to be sad and to visit his relatives near London during these days. The pastor gave his consent for this himself. If Arthur leaves today in the evening and comes back on Monday in the morning, then he will make his relatives very happy, because they were dreaming about it for so long time, and the pastor himself would be very pleased. "I won't be able to be happy if I

rest alone, and you will stay in the city”, - the pastor ended his letter. Having read the letter, the servant mopped away the tear.

“Did lord Wodsword write something sad to you?” Doria was worried.

“Oh no, milady, can my dear master make anybody sad? He’s an incarnated angel, as well as Miss Alyssa. I’m crying because the pastor cannot leave to rest alone without thinking about me. He was offering me insistently to visit my relatives, but could I leave him alone here, in this hell? He would have stayed hungry and thirsty; if Miss Alyssa isn’t present here, then he’s not allowed even to take a nap. Believe me, milady, I sit down right here, on this chair, I lock the door from the lord’s side to the corridor and I don’t let in lady Katherine and Miss Jenny. Every time I have to bear their impudence and abuse, but only by doing this, I am able to preserve that little hour of silence and peace for my master when the mistress is at home. Nobody respects his creative work and his illness here.”

“Don’t call me milady, I’m the same servant as you are, only I serve to my young countess. The young master, count Nikolay asked me to give this letter to you. The pastor must have told him that he let you to go to visit your relatives for the weekend. The count whose soul is of rare kindness asks me to give this greeting to your relatives, while I’m ordered to take your master’s belongings and to take you to the station.”

The servant who didn’t feel the ground under his feet with joy prepared his own and the pastor’s belongings in a flash, he told the cook that their master and Alyssa would come back home from the lord Benedict’s estate only on Monday evening, while he, by the pastor’s order, was leaving London and coming back only on Monday morning. The fat and indifferent Irishwoman shook her head with jealousy, but she liked the kind Arthur, so she wished him luck and even gave him some food for his journey. She was irritated by the constant faultfinding and she thought with malicious joy about the future unpleasantness for the pastor’s wife and her elder daughter to stay alone in the city and to nag one another, while her master and Alyssa would enjoy their rest without their “wonderful” company for the first time. Having locked the outside door, the cook gave the cold snack for her mistresses’ supper to the housemaid and went upstairs to her small, cosy and sunlit room. Although lady Katherine was arguing with the pastor that he was spoiling and pampering their servants by giving the master’s rooms to them, although she was trying to prove to him that the housemaid and the cook could live in one room, because she didn’t have any place to settle the dress-maker, - she met the pastor’s veto.

The pastor’s wife and her daughter came back home joyless, because Jenny was completely uncommunicative. All her thoughts were concentrated on Alyssa, on the ways and possibilities how she could take her sister out from the sphere of influence of the lord Benedict. The first arrow – the most effective one, as Jenny was thinking, - was already shot to Nal who began to envy her her husband. Judging by herself, she was hoping that Nal who hated Jenny would try to make Alyssa leave their house. She was hoping to break down the fool by pretending to be missing, loving and sad because of separation with her, but she was afraid of hearing his father’s veto, she would have to play before him that it was Alyssa’s caprice.

First of all, they were surprised by the deadly silence in the whole house. Usually, no matter how late they used to come back, the pastor’s and Alyssa’s music used to meet them, which used to fall silent as soon as they would step inside. Although left alone at home, father and his daughter always tried to prepare something delicious for their supper. The truth was that lately the usual home order had changed, but their principal habits of their lives weren’t destroyed anyway. Jenny had already prepared her tender embrace and smile for her sister, she was going to tell her that her music was better than the one in the theatre where they were bored tonight. She was also hoping to enslave her father in a very sly way, as it seemed to her, by asking him to do a little work with her for a couple of hours, because she was unable to

perceive much without his help. Her mind had made the whole plan how happy her father would become that finally, his elder daughter decided to follow his footsteps in science and he would agree to stay at home with joy, while Alyssa who would melt from her compliments for her music and from tenderness of her sister also would stay at home and would be in time to sew everything what was needed till the horse-race.

Jenny received the first blow when she saw her letter still placed in the hall.

"Isn't Alyssa at home yet? How do you like that, mother?"

"This is absolutely intolerable! If I don't put an end to it, then the girl will become completely spoilt. I will have to take some urgent means."

Both of them entered the dining-room. The housemaid apologized and went to sleep. The supper seemed to be tasteless to them, they didn't want to warm the food themselves, so they were eating it in silence by reflecting on their tomorrow's plans. Jenny was firmly resolved to accomplish her plan as soon as her father and sister came back home.

"I don't understand," all of a sudden, the pastor's wife uttered, "where did that idiot Arthur disappear? He's always sitting like a statue in the hall until 'His Highness lord the pastor' comes back, but now he isn't here, exactly when the pastor is inadmissibly late."

She rose, went up to the stairs up and gave a cry.

"Arthur, go downstairs instantly!"

She waited a little, but she didn't hear any answer to her cry, so she climbed up some steps, repeated her order in a more commanding way and she was ready to get into a rage already. She didn't hear any answer this time, too. The furious pastor's wife ran upstairs, and since she didn't have any idea in which of the three rooms here the old servant was living, she began to hit the nearest door with the "courtesy" that was characteristic to her – and it was the cook's room. In general, the Irishwoman was calm and she used to react to her mistress's abuse in a rather cool way, but she liked to sleep calmly, conveniently and she couldn't bear if somebody disturbed her sleep. Now, being awoken by the door hitting and the mistress's cry to get downstairs immediately, she got wild, she opened the door with the night hood on her head and dressed with the long nightgown, put her arms akimbo and gave such a cry on the whole house that Jenny came running to the cry instantly. The women were crying one another down. Jenny was frightened that the night scandal might draw a watchman's or a policeman's attention, or even worse, that her father might come back at the height of the scene. Then all her plans would come to naught. The frightened housemaid stepped out of her room and she was trying to tell something several times, but nobody was listening to her. With difficulty, but she managed to explain to Jenny anyway that the pastor and Alyssa wouldn't come back till Monday evening, while the pastor let Arthur go to visit his relatives till Monday morning. Now the inventive Jenny received the second blow which nearly made her fall down. She was so beaten morally that she was standing in silence.

In the meanwhile, the Irishwoman outvoiced the mistress and snapped out her strictly.

"The pastor and Miss Alyssa escaped such wife and mother. Now they are in the lord Benedict's villa where you cannot reach them, but when the pastor is back, I will tell him everything about you and I will ask for my bill. I don't want to live in such disgraceful house anymore. The pastor forbade you to disturb your servants' rest, but you have violated his order. In truth, what it means to you to violate his order if you go to rendezvous stealthily from him. Oh, I know everything! My acquaintance is serving at

mister B.'s and he told me how you behave there. I kept silent. I don't care a damn for your behaviour, but when you dared to disturb my sleep – no, now I won't take pity on you."

Jenny got dizzy, she was sickened, she began to stagger and she would have fallen down if the strong hands of her mother hadn't caught her; but as soon as her mother touched her, Jenny gave a start, stretched herself and pushed the lady Katherine away.

"Thank you, mother, I'm all right already. Please go downstairs. I will follow you."

The special Jenny's voice and her appearance made all three women become silent. The Irishwoman sniffed angrily and shut the door of her room, while the pastor's wife was going downstairs in silence. Without uttering a single word, both mother and her daughter went to their own rooms. Jenny felt pain, a physical pain of her heart. She entered her room where her clothes tumbled in the morning were still rolling and she decided to spend the night in her sister's room, because it was beyond her powers to stay in this mess. Jenny was very surprised that she couldn't get into Alyssa's room, even the corridor was locked, which connected that side of the house where her father's and Alyssa's rooms were. She decided that it was the old fool Arthur who was always protecting her father's peace, who had forgotten to open it. She tried to get into the same corridor through the hall, the sitting-room, the dining-room and through her father's study, but her father's study was also locked.

No matter how Jenny was fallen apart, but anyway, she flared up with anger again by abusing the old Arthur who had allowed too much for himself. It didn't even occur to the poor girl that he was acting according to the pastor's instruction: to lock all the doors and not to open them until his and Alyssa's return, no matter who would demand to do it. Lord Benedict gave this instruction to the pastor himself, so it was given to the old servant in a very precise and strict way, too.

Jenny understood that she wouldn't spend the night in the tidy and cosy room of her sister, which was reconstructed from the barn. She remembered with reluctance how she was tormenting Alyssa for her music until she evicted her from the house. Her father added the stone barn and built the soundproof wall, too. Alyssa's meekness, her sorrow that her sister's nerves were suffering because of her music were pricking Jenny's heart like needles. She came back through the hall, seized her letter and she was crumpling it until it turned into a deplorable pack. The longer she was crumpling that ill-fated letter the bigger her irritation became. Having taken the robe and the pillow from her room, Miss elder Wodsworth decided to spend the night on one of the sofas in the sitting-room. When she was passing her mother's room, she heard a snoring, and her face was distorted with the grimace of contempt.

Having entered the sitting-room, she threw off her holiday clothes and began to walk about the room. Sleeplessness was tormenting her for the first time in her life. She ran across her entire life in her thoughts and she understood that all her up to now experienced troubles didn't prevent her a single time from sleeping as fast as her mother was sleeping now, but today it seemed to her that her life was starting a new way, and that everything was set on stake. She was unable to perceive why it seemed to her like this. Her gaze stopped on the vase by accident, in which once Sandra brought some flowers to Alyssa and he told her that his soul gave these flowers to her for her music.

"For her music, for her music," it was tapping in Jenny's head. Alyssa was rewarded for her music in the lord Benedict's house, too. Was Alyssa really so talented? Then why didn't she, Jenny, evaluate it properly? Oh, how often Alyssa was disturbing her lately. Only now she could understand what a charm and what a whole, firm character Alyssa possessed. Jenny was unable to bear it anymore when she tried to imagine her father and Alyssa enjoying the aristocratic company, associating with intelligent and talented people, while she would be sitting at home sad and lonely. She didn't doubt that Sandra would be in the country, too, and the pain was breaking her jealous heart even more. However long she was walking from

one corner to another one across the big sitting-room, her sleep was running away from her, but it didn't even occur to her to go to her own room and to put it in order. Little by little, her thoughts concentrated on one perpetrator of all her misfortunes – at least it seemed to her like this – lord Benedict. Is she going to visit him on Sunday? The horse-race starts at one o'clock. She would be in time to come back home; since her father was gone, she could order the carriage for the whole day, and everything would be settled easily. Only... what could she talk about with him? She won't be able to lie to him and to play the hypocrite – she could feel it with all her nerves. It was impossible to complain of her destiny to him when her father and Alyssa were treated with such respect there. To ask him for help to fight her way to an independent life? Lord Benedict will tell her again that life on the earth is work and that man's happiness in his life is the joy of his favourite work; while Jenny wanted to live in luxury and she simply hated work.

The more she was thinking about her present and her future, the clearer she could see the only way out – to marry somebody perfectly. Having seen Nal, she understood that she never was the real beauty, that she possessed neither such regular features, nor such exceptional harmony of her body lines, nor such irreproachable beauty of her hands and legs as the young countess. Jenny was always irritating the eyes of others, just like her mother was. It took much effort of her will to throw down those thin coatings of vulgarity with which her mother was shocking her.

Jenny's thoughts came back to the lord Benedict. Jealousy and fury used to overtake her again and again. Day was breaking. Jenny looked at her sallow face with horror, but with the dawn her decision came, too: she won't come to see the lord. However she wanted to find a more honourable reason for this before herself, she comprehended that the lord Benedict who had grasped her in their first meeting already, this time would read all her brought lie exactly in the same way. She decided not only to avoid the lord himself, but to do everything what she could in order to poison every Alyssa's trip to that detestable house and to make her refuse the trips. Finally, exhausted Jenny lay down on the sofa, but as soon as she lay down, her thoughts began to flow about her father's worsened health and about the fact that the house would become the property of underage Alyssa, that her mad father might nominate the lord Benedict as her guardian, - and Jenny felt a burning hatred for her sister by considering that ill-fated fool to be the perpetrator of all her misfortunes.

Jenny was boiling in the riot caused by the fire of her passions during the entire day and evening, while the festive lights were on in the lord Benedict's house. Lord Benedict organized an evening-party in his wonderful villa and presented the count and the countess T. to the chosen members of the high society for the first time. Several coaches were already flocking by the gate, while the new ones were still rolling down by bringing over dressed up cavaliers and ladies.

Nal and Alyssa were warned about this event a long time ago and both of them were pleading lord Benedict to liberate them from that suffering. The lord was laughing and mocking at their shyness, he didn't liberate them from it, but made both of them and Nikolay attend some dance lessons and acquainted them with the conditional future requirements of etiquette.

"Independence and an absolute liberation must live in your hearts. If man's heart is free from fear and jealousy, then nobody from exterior is able to crush it. Those or other external frames, those or other aggravating circumstances – all of it is only an illusion. A futile man who doubts everything, who doesn't perceive that he's carrying everything within himself and that he's creating his day with his inner strength which depends only on himself – only such ignorant man can complain about his circumstances and be ashamed of other people or customs. You need to understand not only that nobody may oppress you, but that you need to control yourself in such a way that you wouldn't lose your inner strength of peace and freedom, of your self-confidence and calm in any circumstances. Nal, you need to forget about harem and to comprehend yourself not like a woman from the East or West, but like a human being. Look

at everybody in the same way and see everybody as that man sent to you to whom you have to be an example of calm and light. Forget about fear. Today learn to be among people for ever, try to observe the conditionalities of etiquette of nowadays society with your exterior by giving a drop of the eternal beauty to everybody with your interior.

And you, Alyssa, play today by keeping the external etiquette of a well-bred lady, while pouring the sea of sounds and drawing everybody to their great liberation with your interior. The great beauty of your artistry which accompanies the sounds will melt the ugly patches of sadness, jealousy and passions within people's hearts. You, too, forget about fear for ever. Especially, the fear to play and to sing. On the contrary – invite everybody to their spiritual tension, action, heroism and fight with your music.”

Having kissed both his daughters and joked with the pastor that he took away his youngest one from him, he said good-bye to them till the evening and explained that Doria would know how to dress them.

And then the evening and that moment came when the hosts had to show up in the sitting-room. Florentian dropped in himself to accompany Nal. Once again with her white brocade and pearls, this time she was so charming next to Nikolay that her father smiled and announced them beforehand to be the legend of the sharp-tongued persons during the whole season of the London's balls. When Alyssa came in rushing and saw all three of them, she only clapped her hands and assured them that she didn't know whom of the men she had to put the laurels of the winner of beauty and charm, but that Nal today had come down straight from Olympus – she didn't doubt it at all. Alyssa was absolutely unable to perceive her own charm: she was the real muse with the light, white dress, her big, radiating eyes and the halo of her golden hair.

All of them went downstairs where the pastor, Sandra and lord Mildrey met them. They were deprived of speech from their beauty. As soon as the host entered the sitting-room, the guests began to gather together.

The evening for the young hosts and Alyssa passed perfectly. Alyssa was playing perfectly, both of the women were reaping laurels and compliments, invitations were pouring on their heads like from the horn of plenty, and when the guests were gone, both of them fell themselves on their father's neck.

“Thank God, finally it's over!” this made not only their fathers, but also Sandra and lord Mildrey who stayed overnight laugh.

Everybody went to their rooms, they were exhausted, but happy about tomorrow's trip to the country.

## Chapter 4

An important event in count T.'s family.

Conversation in the balcony of Nal's room.

### The pastor's testament

A wonderful, warm and sunny August's morning made all inhabitants of the lord Benedict's house who were ready to leave glad. After early breakfast, not wasting their time, they boarded the coaches, soon reached the station and then continued their trip to the lord's estate on the train. Nal's and Alyssa's cries of fascination used to accompany every stoppage, everything was fascinating them: the fields where work was in full swing, tidy farmyards, herds of cattle and the children who were running about their houses. It seemed that they forgot their friends, one could only hear: "Look, Nal!", "Look, Alyssa!"

Nal was making herself familiar with the country for the first time and she was surprised by absolutely everything. Everything was so different from her homeland; it always seemed to her that here, a silhouette of a donkey or a camel would flash, without which she couldn't even imagine the country-people's lives. Although Alyssa knew the English country-side, but she used to be there very seldom. She had seen the nature only through the window of the carriage, because the pastor's wife couldn't bear such trips. If the pastor used to make his wife to take the girls from the city, she would take them to the sea where they would spend all their time by searching for acquaintances in the high society. That's why Alyssa who loved the nature so much, but who had never been there, accepted this trip to the lord's estate as the tour round the world. One hour and twenty minutes which they spent in the carriage of the train seemed to pass like an instant to her, and when lord Benedict announced that they were getting out on the next stop, the girl became very dispirited.

Alyssa, probably you would like to travel for several days with the train or ship?" the pastor asked her.

"Oh yes, father, I would like to do it very much with you and everybody present here, although it is probably very terrible to do it with the ship."

"There's nothing terrible," Nal uttered, "but it is so nasty, it sickens you so much that I feel sick when I remember it. Oh, I remembered the ship and I felt so unwell!"

Nal turned pale and swayed. Nikolay held her and joked of such lively Eastern imagination of hers, while the lord Benedict quickly gave a box with small sweets to her.

"Take one and swallow it quickly. That will make you forget about the ship."

Nal did it with quite a lot of difficulty and hung her head on her husband's shoulder again. Alyssa was worried about her friend and she was surprised when she saw the completely calm pastor's face, although he was always worried about every man's illness. She didn't notice any signs of anxiety on the lord Benedict's face, too. Only Nikolay was paying attention to and taking care of his wife, but she couldn't see any anxiety in him, too. Alyssa couldn't remain unmoved by Nal's condition anymore, she shrugged her shoulders with vexation and gave a sigh.

"Oh, those men!"

That was so unexpected and comical that everybody gave a joyful laugh. Nal who had fallen ill so suddenly and recovered even faster was laughing the most cheerfully. While everybody was laughing like this, they got out in the station where coaches were already waiting for them. The travellers were going through the fields and woods for forty minutes until they reached Florentian's estate. Having driven in through the gates, the coaches were rolling down the long and wide lane of oaks, in the end of which one could see the palace. Having driven up to the buildings, both the guests and the young hosts who had never been here were expressing their fascination to Florentian.

The house was standing on the high hill, while the old and shady park with old lime-trees, ash-trees, oaks and buckeyes was going down its slopes in terraces to the very pond. Here and there, one could see the little patches of fir-trees and lawns, as well as the flower gardens and the lanes of roses – everything was done in an especially artistic and harmonious way.

"Oh, father," Nal rushed at Florentian, "I was thinking that the more beautiful garden than my uncle Ali's didn't exist, but it turned out that such great gardens existed in the world. Oh father, I feel dizzy and I'm sickened again."

Florentian gave a sweet to Nal again and told Nikolay to take his wife to their rooms. There she had to lie down for at least an hour, while he would visit them during that time.

"Since the young hostess feels unwell, then Alyssa you will have to do all her duties and to take her place at the table," Florentian stopped Alyssa who wanted to follow Nal.

"But lord Benedict, Nal might need my help. Let me sit down next to her for a while. We've seen how unwell she was, haven't we?"

"She was rocked in the train and she will recover in an hour. She will recover instantly when she lies down for a while in that beauty. At the moment, only her husband's help is enough for her. Perhaps the time will come when your help is needed as well."

"It'll be a great happiness for me to help Nal. I wish so much that Nal was healthy."

"Here, Doria is waiting for you. Hurry up to your room, change to a light dress and go down to the terrace in a quarter of an hour where the breakfast table is already prepared. While everybody is putting their belongings in order, we will have some time to take a walk in the park."

Alyssa was worried about her friend, but she derived consolation from the thought that lord Benedict was calm, she hurried upstairs after Doria and she was very glad when she saw that her father had settled in the adjacent room. She ran up to him, kissed him and whispered him how happy she was, because she could spend several days with him in such a wonderful place. She asked her father to rest till breakfast and told him that she would go for a walk to the park with Florentian. She was begging Doria to give a light dress to her, as Florentian had told her to do, and she didn't even look what dress was given to her.

"Miss Wodsworth, why are you so indifferent to yourself?" Doria was asking her, while buttoning up the wonderful lilac dress with white laces. "You are beauty, don't you understand that?"

"Doria, my dear friend, my dear sister, both Nal and me are tired of asking you to call us only by name when we are left alone. If you don't fulfil this request ever again, you will upset me to tears. Do you really want that?"



“No, Alyssa, I don’t want to upset you at all. You have penetrated so much into my heart – like my real daughter. Some day I will tell you the sad history of my life about my great guilt before people – and you yourself will help me to do this duty obediently.”

Alyssa kissed Doria by being upset that she had to hurry up and that she was unable to share her heartache now.

“If I was a man, I would marry you today,” Doria was telling her by binding the violet band of the white lace hat.

Alyssa laughed joyfully, she ran to the terrace where Florentian was already waiting for her. He also had time to change into a light, grey suit and a white hat. Having seen the laughing, charming girl with the light dress without any sleeves and with open neck, he lifted his hat elegantly a little and told her, smiling.

“If we were in Florence, then the crowds of your admirers would set a trap for me everywhere, and I could hardly escape sound.”

“Luckily, we are in England, I don’t have any admirers, and there’s no trap for anybody.”

“Is it really so, Alyssa? Don’t you really have any admirers? Wasn’t anybody whispering to you about your beauty?” Florentian showed a sanctified face and wisecracked cheerfully.

“No, lord Benedict,” Alyssa was laughing irrepressibly. “Only such women like Nal, Jenny enchant men. They always have lots of admirers, because they are beauties. But Doria has just told me that she would marry me instantly if she was a man,” she kept laughing and leant upon Florentian’s offered hand.

While they were going deeper into the park, Alyssa was simply enchanted by the nature’s quiet and majesty which she experienced for the first time; the birds were warbling in all possible voices round them, the squirrels were jumping, and the sunbeams were playing on the paths.

“My God, how wonderful life is!” the girl gave a shout when Florentian took her to the very top of the hill from which the distances of several miles opened up for them. “And what a silence is here! I would like to stay here.”

“Unfortunately, we cannot live our lives as we wish to, but we can live them only in such a way as life is leading us. We come to the earth and leave it already being chained with those threads which our own love and hatred have woven for us. Alyssa, the evil isn’t living on the earth alone, separately. If it befalls on us, then it happens only because we ourselves have invited it with the activity of our hearts. If we remain pure, it won’t touch us. Sometimes we cannot understand why it has befallen on us, but once we’ve created it ourselves and now we are unable to melt it in the fire of our love. You are worried about Nal, but there’s no need to worry about her. You can only be glad. She will have a baby, and the beginning of her pregnancy will be rather difficult for her. Your friend will need your help very much if you yourself don’t marry soon.”

“Me? Marry? O Lord, what do you mean, lord Benedict?”

“If you want to listen to my instruction – don’t marry now. Don’t leave our family, on the contrary – move to our place for ever. Your influence to Nal, your kindness and purity will help her sense of maternity to be born within her and help her baby to walk its first steps on the earth by finding the kind fairy – its aunt Alyssa.”

“Lord Benedict, I understand the significance and the great importance that is coming to the world and, God knows, I don’t know any greater happiness as serving Nal and you, but...” Alyssa lifted her eyes full of tears to Florentian, “the new life that is coming will have the loving father, mother and such exceptional grandfather like you, while my father who is leaving us doesn’t have anybody except me, but I will act as you will tell me to. I only want you to take into account how lonely and unhappy my adored father was and is now. Meeting you – is the first happiness in his life, while I am his only comfort.”

“Alyssa, I can hear voices. Your admirers and your father are coming here. We’ll continue this conversation later on. Only know that neither you nor I won’t leave your father until his death. Wipe your eyes and take this pill. Recover your self-control, overcome your pain with your will-love. The essence isn’t you, but your father’s life which you have to see off easily by not showing the suffering of your separation with him for a single time. Think only about every passing minute of his life and try to be his light and joy.”

Three men emerged at the bend. Florentian pressed the girl to himself, looked at her eyes with such power and love that Alyssa calmed down and controlled herself instantly. Sparkling in the sun, she looked differently than in London with her big, new calm radiating eyes. One of the approaching men separated from the others and started running towards Florentian and Alyssa by waving his hat and shouting.

“Hurrah! That’s me who has found you, lord Benedict! My reputable companions were persuading me that one needed to search for you in the hothouse. Miss Alyssa, you become prettier with every hour, not with every day. I don’t know how that is going to end,” Sandra was talking to them by joining his friends.

“Sandra, you are incorrigible,” Florentian smiled. “Lord Mildrey will be disappointed again from your manners to tell compliments to the girls.”

“And I’m ready to sign and confirm his compliment,” the pastor uttered silently by embracing his daughter and taking her arm. Since my Cinderella is spending her time at your house, she has turned into princess. As a matter of fact, she’s prettier and prettier. Alyssa, today you fascinated even your old man.”

“Lord Wodsworth, let’s leave her to fascinate these kind youths, while I would like to talk to you. Would you like to sit down on that bench? The view from here is really charming; you also need to rest, while the young people will take a walk in the park till breakfast.”

And Florentian took the pastor along the side lane to the precipice.

“Lord Benedict, I enjoy every moment next to you. The more so because I can feel absolutely clearly how little of that earthly time is left for me to live. My thoughts about what is going to happen to my family, to Alyssa when I close my eyes are the most difficult for me.”

“My dear lord Wodsworth. Isn’t it clear to you that Alyssa has found the second home of her parents in my family. Your thoughts about her shouldn’t worry you. Two lawyers are coming here today in order to do some business of Nikolay and Nal. You can write your testament and designate me as your daughter’s guardian in case of your death. This legal part isn’t complicated at all. If you really feel unwell, I wanted to offer you to go on leave and to move here, to the country where we will spend August and September. By doing so, you and Alyssa will make us all so glad. My plans were a little different, but Nal – I think that you’ve noticed it as well – is pregnant. She has to stay in this quietness not only because of her health, but in order for her to perceive that event completely for which she’s getting ready.”

"If not this meeting with you, that happiness, then there wouldn't be anything to mention in my life. Alyssa from her very childhood up to this day and my old servant, my loyal friend – that's all what was and is bright in my home. Having experienced all suffering of the earth, I found the meaning of life and its light in serving God and my beloved ones. My personal tragedy was tormenting me only during my first years, but when I was immersed in the ocean of people's passions and misery – soon I forgot about myself. Now when I leave and go to my Father by reliving my entire life again, I understand that I wasn't his loyal servant, because I leave such bad family of mine on the earth. I was unable to do anything in my own family, although I was teaching my parishioners during my entire life by comforting and encouraging their families for nobility round them. I was unable to root out the seeds of evil and lewdness which Katherine was sowing."

The pastor's face was pale and sorrowful, his eyes as though were already saying good-bye to the world, his figure was stooped – everything was telling about such heartache which in truth man was already unable to endure, from which the strings of his heart had to break.

"Lord Wodsworth, man who has dedicated his life for serving people and who has served them in such a way as you have done isn't just a citizen who has created one degenerated family from a million. You are the harp of that God whom you were serving by loving people. Don't blame yourself that your kindness has become your punishment, that only because of it you married unsuccessfully and got into the trap of evil by saving the pure creature as you were thinking. You have justified your life with activity and you were a pure servant of God. You were carrying the light and you leave it on the earth as Alyssa. You have weakened the trap of evil which your wife was weaving and she's still doing it. You have stopped those powers of darkness for many years which were making their way through to her and to which she was forcing her way through herself. Leave to my will that what will happen after your death and believe me that I will protect Alyssa. In order to make the poor girl's fight against her mother and sister easier, move her to my house for ever immediately, while you are still alive. If my company is pleasing for you, move here to the country yourself, too, together with your servant. I still have to impart many things to you until we part."

Florentian embraced the pastor's shoulders and extended a small green box to him where several reddish sweets were placed.

"My dear friend, eat one of these sweets and you will come to life. Don't fall to despair. If you think that you are leaving the earth already, then you need to leave it fearlessly and wisely, with your thoughts about Eternity and with the complete perception of the great happiness: the Only One is both in yourself and everywhere else. And here's the gong for the breakfast. I will show the shortest way to you."

The pastor was feeling better. He didn't look like in such a way anymore as though his heart was bursting: his pale cheeks reddened a little, as though he looked younger and he was walking absolutely easily.

"Lord Benedict, if such words existed, I would express that relief which you've given to me, but I cannot find any proper words. I can tell you only this: I was already thinking that I wouldn't be able to stand before my Father with an absolute peace of mind. Now I know that you've reconciled me with life and that I would leave peacefully by blessing and accepting all my circumstances. I will be carrying this entire life till the end like a sacred thing, as well as this temporary form of mine, this body in which I had to live without fail in order to clean myself and to become free."

"Oh father, you look so well! You remind me of my former father who could walk with me for so long."

“Yes, my child, only add the fact that associating with the lord Benedict makes me such happy like never before.”

Florentian asked his guests to wait for several minutes until he visited Nal and found out whether she would come for the breakfast. In the meanwhile, Sandra told the news from the newest American scientific magazine to the pastor, while lord Mildrey was explaining to Alyssa how the whole London was raving about the upcoming horse-race where the especial royal estate horses were going to run onto the tracks. All the members of the royal family were going to participate, so the tickets for the boxes were bought up quickly.

“However, I managed to buy one of the best boxes. As I was told, neither the countess nor you, lady Wodsword, have ever participated in the horse-race. I will be very glad if you see it. If the lord Benedict agrees, we could leave on Sunday morning and we would be back here for dinner, after the horse-race.”

Florentian came back alone and told the guests that Nal was feeling well, but he recommended her to lie down for a while and after breakfast, all of them could go for a walk. After the breakfast, the lord Mildrey gave the ticket to the box for the host by asking him to allow the whole company to visit the horse-race on Sunday morning. Florentian agreed pleasingly and told him that he had some business to do on Sunday morning in London, while it would be useful for Nal and Alyssa to see another sport where the torment of horses and the people’s passions were revealed in an especially nasty way. Sandra had never been to the horse-race and he decided that he could feel insulted, because the lord Benedict didn’t mention him among those, in whose development in the society he was taking care of.

“Sandra, I didn’t mention your name only because I was afraid that another couple of legs would grow for you during the race and that you wouldn’t start running on the race-track with your temperament. So please, sit down next to me like sewed on along the way and in the horse-race.”

The breakfast was finished. Everybody went to the pond, laughing. Nikolay and Nal told them that they wouldn’t join them for a walk. The physical Nal’s health was excellent, but her spiritual health was so broken that she didn’t want to see anybody – not only her friends, but Alyssa, too. As soon as Nikolay helped his wife to go upstairs and put her to bed in the balcony, Nal took Florentian’s drops and soon she was feeling quite well.

“Woman is an amazing creature. We were sailing on the ship under the same conditions, you’ve already forgotten about the tossing a long time ago, while it has turned everything upside-down so much in my organism that it’s enough for me only to remember about it and it makes me sick so much that I become a patient again,” Nal was complaining to her husband who was sitting next to her.

“My dear, in my opinion the tossing has nothing to do with it. Much more important tests are waiting for us. Both that nausea and that dizziness – all of it only shows that the new, our joint life has appeared inside of you.”

Nal blushed up to the roots of her hair and asked him with her cast down eyes.

“How could you guess? I wanted to hide everything from everybody and to do it in such a way that everybody would find out about it when the baby was born.”

“Nal, my beloved friend, my love. The new tests are waiting for you. Although Ali was preparing you for these surroundings where we are living now, although our dear friend whom you’ve chosen to be your father yourself was expanding your spirit by pouring his kindness and wisdom into you by hardening you for your new family – still there are thousands of other things which you can and have to

overcome only yourself by overcoming your superstitions. None of us are free from them. Often we imagine that we are doing our sacred duty for life and by doing so we enslave ourselves with those duties and responsibilities so much that in reality we don't have enough time to meditate about the grandeur of the moment of this life and the real wisdom in an attentive and broad way. As long as we are living on this earth, we can live only according to its laws and only according to them. If today you understood that you would have to become mother here, on the earth, you already have – before the future life, before your uncle Ali and before your father Florentian – to find that great power of love within yourself in which all trifles, all superstitions leading your spirit to despair and not to creativity would be drowned.

If you really love me, if you love your parents, if you want to be useful both for them and for people, if you want to create the new, liberated and light family, then all the tiny circumstances which are restricting you must be drowned in your love. You will overstep the limit of conditional shame and go to see the doctor in order to find out if the new life is developing safely and correctly within yourself. You won't be ashamed of your future external appearance. You will fulfil all doctor's instructions, all requirements of hygiene, because you will forget about yourself and you will be thinking only about the future baby, about its health. Being led by love, you will overcome all conditional obstacles and you will create a harmonious dwelling for the developing life within yourself. The future baby isn't a despot who is ready to take hold of your entire life, it isn't an idol for whose honour you would renounce the whole world and create a secluded, narrow, little cage of family for it, which would be based only on your personal interests – love for "your own people". The baby – that's the new bond with the entire world, with the entire universe. It is the liberated love of its father and mother, in which not "our" or "our own" kid will be growing up, but the spirit given to us to protect. And we will protect this treasure in unselfish, honourable and noble way, as high as our love may rise up to these qualities, so that the baby could develop and mature in a total harmony. Nal, my baby, I know that many things will be difficult for you; but I also know how much strength you possess, what an infinite devotion is hiding within yourself, what unshakeable loyalty that doesn't know such concept as "treason" is burning in my wife's heart."

Nikolay kissed his wife, and it seemed that he put his entire heart into this kiss of his deep and pure love.

"Oh, Nikolay, how wrong I was when I was creating my dreams about happiness when I was back in the East that "well – I'm your wife", - how childish it was. The superstitions of harem that were soaked into me were broken like the clay jugs which they use to carry water in my motherland. They absolutely don't fit in this civilized world; but with the jugs also my gods that I was worshiping were broken. Now I see them only as the clay jugs, too. You are right – I was really imagining our baby to be the idol of our family – of the family where they love and resect only "their own ones". Lately, when Alyssa, Sandra and lord Mildrey got into my heart so easily – and not so long ago only "my very own ones" were living there – I understood that I could turn the strangers into my own ones, I could accept them into my family without violating my loyalty to my uncle Ali and you."

Nal settled on her husband's knees, wound her arms round his neck and kept on chattering childishly.

"Of course, the most difficult for me will be the doctor. I would give a lot in order not to see the doctor."

"That's exactly why you will become doctor, so that you could ease the motherhood period for many women. You are prepared so well while you were studying that I think they would accept you to the second course of the medical faculty immediately, but we would still have time to check the program. This is the easiest thing, because your memory and your talents help you to overcome any obstacles. In the meanwhile, our spiritual growth and improvement cannot stop at least for a moment. Look at this

wonderful view in front of us. Our father who has seen the whole world says that this is one of the most beautiful views on the earth. How happy is that one who's getting ready to come through you, my dear. Your eyes have the possibility to see the greatest beauty of the world in the very first months of its life. Your heart is able to feel the nature's harmony and the harmony of such grand man as your father Florentian. Now, can't you feel yourself to be the little part of the entire universe? Can you feel yourself separated from me, from these cedars and maples, from the sun and the rippling lake? Oh, Nal, life and death – everything is oneness. Our current life is only the temporary from of the eternal life. Everything what we both know firmly and unchangeably is that we are protectors of life. You will become mother. You will give our two lives to the new form which you will be protecting until life calls her to one or another creative work and independent activity. We have to create such conditions of liberated existence in our family for the little parts of the Universe which are coming through both of us that nothing could oppress them and that the poison of our superstitions and passions was unable to penetrate into them."

"Nikolay, I would be scared of this responsibility if you weren't next to me and if you weren't leading the creation of our family. You know, once the pastor stunned me with his observation. On that day when my father let me and him into his secret room, the pastor told me: "Your husband wouldn't bear your unfaithfulness at least for a moment". And I understood that I was tied with you till our death and that not only an image of any other man could emerge between us, but even a thought about unfaithfulness couldn't occur. And now I started to understand why my uncle Ali and my father Florentian needed our family – so that the chain of loyal disciples and joyous servants wouldn't break..."

After being silent for a while, Nal added.

"The pastor and Alyssa worry me. The pastor is so weak, and Alyssa cannot see it."

"No, Nal, Alyssa not only can see it, but she's often crying because of her father. But this angelic creature is smiling to everybody by forgetting about herself. She's afraid of disturbing somebody with her distressed appearance, she's hiding her grief and the external separation with her father as she calls death, although she understands perfectly what awaits her."

"But that's a tragedy! The new life is coming to the earth through me, while he is leaving the earth after marrying us. Can't he really stay with us to rest and to live happily for a while?"

"Nal, we are still unable to perceive the man's paths completely. Man is living until he is able to develop. He's fighting, he experiences defeats of his searching and faith, but he doesn't lose his courage, the consistency of his searching and faith, he's living and he wins the victory. His heart and his consciousness expands, he's still able to bring some creativity into his day, he's still able to give out his sincere kindness – that's why he's living.

It happens that man is living entire decades without any obvious external use. Simply an egoist or a town-dweller is living like this. He becomes an old man whom doesn't need anybody and he's still living. Great and wise Life still can see the possibility of his spiritual awakening. And Life is waiting for this by giving hundreds of tests to man, only if he could recover his sight spiritually. And on the contrary, there are some people who are giving out their kindness and creative energy of their hearts every day so generously that the whole power of their hearts grows into the bright light. His physical body is no longer able to hold this light within itself, it breaks down and burns in the whirls of those new vibrations of wisdom into which his consciousness was able to penetrate. Nal, these people leave the earth, so that they could come back to it purer, more joyful and taller. Find such tenderness of love and friendliness in your charm, so that you could comfort Alyssa not with your tears of sympathy, but in such a way that you could inspire courage and strength for her. Embrace her and try to see your uncle Ali in front of you, so that his power through you would help Alyssa to submit to the will of Live peacefully.

Always comprehend that all the months of your motherhood and then probably the years of our joint family life, - that's the happiness to serve mankind, the happiness to work for it, not choosing where it will be easier or more pleasant, but to work in such a way and where your uncle Ali and Florentian will tell us. A day spent by associating with them – what higher happiness one could dream of? Nal, no separation with your uncle exists for you. Whatever you do, wherever you go – always hold his hand in your thoughts."

Both friends, the husband and wife, didn't feel any time. They lapsed into silence and they were admiring the coming sunset. They could see the carts that were coming back from the fields in the distance, chimneys were smoking. They were feeling as united with this whole life, with the whole nature by seeing how the whole valley was coming to life slowly. Their hearts were beating peacefully and evenly, each of them carrying the note of that joint life that was characteristic only to them in their own way.

The voices were heard downstairs, and soon they heard light steps of Florentian and Alyssa on the stairs. Nal kissed her husband again, she went up to the door and opened it sooner than Alyssa's bent little finger had time to give a knock. The girl's extended hand touched Nal mechanically, and both of them started laughing. Florentian was laughing, too.

"Nal, I missed you so much!"

"My daughter, don't try to believe this frivolous creature. Now the nightingale is juggling, but can you imagine this little goat racing with Sandra? I almost died with laughter when the shapely and grand lord Mildrey almost started running after her in order to help her to outrun Sandra."

Lord Benedict changed, lifted his leg, pulled his neck a little, turned his head, bent his shoulders - and everybody was bursting one's sides with laughter after instantly recognizing the kind lord Mildrey.

"Well, my daughter, I can see that you are laughing merrier and louder than others, hence you are healthy, so please dress yourself and go downstairs to the dinner table. Alyssa has already given the bill for the duties of the hostess that don't belong to her to me during the breakfast. If this continues, then the bankruptcy is waiting for me."

"Lord Benedict, you can tell whatever you want to!" Alyssa clapped her hands.

"Nal, you can hear it yourself, she utters this phrase to me already for the second time today. Alyssa, let's be reconciled," Florentian went up to Alyssa, untied her hat, fixed her hair and continued. "Well, isn't she beauty, our Alyssa?"

"Well, father, she's not only beauty, she's the real queen of beauty, and if you are going to harm her..."

"Then most likely, her admirers will harm me. My daughters, I'm glad that your admirers are so noble and that they are not going to be cross with me. I can announce a happy news about Lovushka. Nikolay, your brother didn't disgrace you during the most terrible storm in the Black Sea and he deserved the reputation of a bold spirit. Having arrived to B., he became acquainted with sir Vomi and he found out from him that you were writer. Sir Vomi gave both of your books to him and now he asks you to send them to him from here. I think that you will fulfil this request of his yourself."

"Lord Benedict, who is that sir Vomi?" Alyssa asked him.

“My little goat, he’s one of my friends, a great wise man with the blue eyes like yours; but let’s go, both of us need to change our clothes, while Nal, as I can see, is impatient to have a walk until dinner.”

Florentian went to his room, while Alyssa dropped in at her father’s. Now her father seemed to be tired again. He was sitting on the deep armchair in the balcony. His face really seemed to be tired, but his eyes were radiating an undisturbed peace and joy which were seldom to see lately.

“My daughter, I’m so glad that you visited me. You look absolutely different in this palace, in this beauty and peace of nature which we aren’t accustomed to. Only here and in the lord Benedict’s house in London I was able to reconsider and evaluate that who you are and were to me during my entire life and how much I owe you.”

Alyssa sat down on the low bench next to her father’s feet, snuggled up to him and took both of his hands.

“Well, my dear, the curtain of the last action of my life will soon come down. I did many things in my life not as I wanted them to do. I didn’t do even more of them at all. I’m to blame before you as well, because I was unable to provide the joy of happy and careless childhood for you. I was unable to protect your independence and I leave you to be a stranger for our family. Alyssa, Alyssa, you will be right if you call me a careless father.”

“Father, why are you contradicting the obvious truth? You know that you were the best father about whom one could only dream of. You have lit up my life for myself and you showed what the divinity in man was with your own example. You were the best father whomever Jenny could have as well. And if Jenny was admiring only the brilliance of the external life while she was growing up and if she rejected your infused spiritual values – then there wasn’t your fault. Not with your words and sermons, but with your everyday life you were showing us that man had two paths, that the paths of spirit and body were inseparable; and if Jenny wanted only luxury mode of life and rejected spirituality as a free and unnecessary addition to all of it – then there wasn’t your fault. Why now should we talk about that what will happen when the curtain of your life comes down. Now it is raised, father. We are alive. We are living next to such man who has turned our life into a fairy-tale.”

“And that man has sent you to change your clothes, my baby, while he himself is standing behind the door and knocking for the third time, waiting for your invitation to come in,” father and his daughter heard the lord Benedict’s voice, who was standing on the threshold.

Confused Alyssa jumped up from the bench, the pastor also wanted to stand up and give a chair to the guest, but Florentian stopped him on the armchair, took the chair himself and sat down next to him.

“Here’s one more sweet for you, lord Wodsworth. How do you feel? If you were feeling better after my first sweet, then this one should help you even more. I cannot praise you, lady Wodsworth. You are a real coquette if you want to dinner with this dress. Here’s the gong already. Ask Doria at least to comb you.”

Alyssa ran out, while lord Benedict and the pastor went out to the terrace without haste where the whole company were gathering before going to the dining-room. It was merry and lively at the dinner table. They were arguing about the horse-race. Nal and Alyssa weren’t interested in demonstration of the high society clothes and the society itself at all, they were worried that the horses would probably be beaten and they didn’t have any especial desire to go there. The pastor would have rather agreed to read a



book in the silence of the park. Sandra was burning with a desire to go. Lord Mildrey and Nikolay kept silent. The host didn't agree with such disunity and proposed everybody to go together.

"Girls, you certainly need to see the horse-race. You need to understand the nation where you are living. In order to understand the nation, you need to see not only palaces and museums, you need to understand the nation's language, you also need to observe its customs, to feel the people's temperament. Friends, you will have an opportunity to observe not only the boxes of the high society, but also the full stands of the ordinary people. You'll see the coiling, boiling threads of passions both in the boxes and in the stands, with which people have shackled themselves by imagining that they were representing the highest civilization of the whole cultured world. Besides, personally you, lord Wodsworth and Alyssa, will have to take away another lesson of life from the horse-race. You'll understand that evil is dragging man after itself not because it surrounds him outwardly, but only because the boiling crater has already opened in his heart, to which the evil only pours its oil by exciting the powers of passions of the evil.

A kind man's heart is the crater of love, while his oil is joy. The kind man's heart is free from jealousy, that's why his day is easy. It is difficult for the irritable man, because the passions that are burning in his heart don't allow him to rest. He's always irritated, the path is always opened for evil in his heart. It is never easy for such man, he doesn't comprehend his independence from his external circumstances. They are oppressing him and they become his master little by little. We'll go all together. Dear and skilful Doria will create clothes suited for the horse-race for our ladies. We'll send her to London tomorrow already, while ourselves will leave on Sunday morning, with the half past ten train. I can hear the rumble of the coach, my lawyers are certainly here. Alyssa, play something for the whole young company, while I and your father will do some work for a couple of hours with the intolerable, but inevitable experts of the law."

Having put his personal business in order quickly, lord Benedict proposed the pastor to work out the new testament. With the new testament, lord Wodsworth confirmed his grandfather's will to leave the house and the jewels to Alyssa, and the money to Jenny. The pastor left the interests from the untouchable capital for his wife, which will be split in equal parts for his daughters after his death. He designated lord Benedict as the guardian for underage Alyssa. Then it was indicated in the testament that Alyssa had to live in the lord guardian's house until she was of age, and if he left anywhere from London, she had to go with him. When Alyssa is of age, she has the right to use the house and the jewels as it seemed necessary for her.

Her entire property until her full age had to be at her guardian's, lord Benedict's disposal, and neither her mother nor her elder sister had any rights to Alyssa or her property. A special clause of the testament indicated that the part of the capital which was in the indicated bank belonged to the pastor's sister Cecilia Wodsworth who had left her grandfather's house with this name and disappeared. The pastor was searching for her during his entire life. If neither she nor her inheritors show up in ten years after the pastor's death, this capital will be spent on charity at the lord Benedict's discretion, and until this happens the interests of this capital which will make quite a large sum will go to his wife, lady Katherine Wodsworth.

The testament was signed by the pastor, the witnesses and the lord Benedict. Lord Wodsworth asked the lawyers to keep the testament secretly until his death and to bring it to his wife and his elder sister on the third day after his death. The lawyer had to bring it to the pastor's house personally and to open it only there, in the presence of his wife and his daughter. Alyssa will find out about her father's will earlier, from the letter that will be left for her.

Having settled the business and seen the guests off, Florentian and the pastor joined the young people where the music was changed by the scientific argument between Sandra and Nikolay. Nikolay pointed two Indian's mistakes, and this time Sandra who was always full of energy was boiling with

some exalted enthusiasm. The clever youth was sparkling with joy that he hadn't yet published his scientific work and that he was able to correct it.

The pastor was especially tender and kind to Nal who was pressing herself to him. As though she was trying to repay him for every minute of his life with her love and tenderness. Alyssa who could see everything saw both this special Nal's attention to her father and something new within her father as well. As though he was radiating after throwing down his burden, as though he started living in an easier and freer way. Only she was unable to guess what burden her father had thrown down off his shoulders.

Those two days flew past like a dream, and when Florentian warned them on Saturday evening that tomorrow they had to get up earlier in order to be in time for the horse-race, everybody was surprised and distressed. It seemed to them that Sunday had come too soon, but at half past seven in the morning they were already sitting in the coaches, ready to go to the station.

## Chapter 5

### The horse-race

On the way to London lord Benedict asked all his friends to take the horse-race seriously and to go there not as to some distraction or show where one could search only for pleasures. He reminded everybody to concentrate their attention, because when man is going to the crowd he always has to be prepared to bring the greatest nobility in any possible meeting.

Since Alyssa knew her mother's and sister's passion for the horse-race, she was always thinking about them, about their laziness and inability to dress elegantly without her help. The girl's heart forgot about the wrongs and about the fact that they never took her to the race, because she was a fool to them. She used to make their clothes during the entire weeks before the race, without sleeping much. Neither Jenny nor her mother had ever held a needle in their hands and they didn't even think of helping her, but there were no limits to their anger when her indignant father used to order to stop working for Alyssa and to go to rest to the garden. The scenes of the past were arising one after another in Alyssa's memory. All of a sudden, as though she began to see things in a new way and understood that she had never had any family, that she had only her father, while the temporary and indifferent to both of them travellers were living next to them.

"My daughter, even if I hadn't observed you so attentively," the pastor went up to his daughter next to the window and told her, "I would have read all the thoughts on your face anyway. You are thinking of how your mother and Jenny are going to manage without you before the horse-race, aren't you? And how do you imagine their future life? Will you be able to pull the immovable cart of two people, loaded with the burden of their lives alone?"

Comprehend the great wisdom of life in a deeper way: everyone is able to live only one's own life. No matter how you love people, you won't be able to live their lives for a single moment. Don't pick the duties and obligations on your shoulders, which nobody has loaded upon you. Go with joy. Bless your new, dawning day when you wake up in the morning and promise to accept everything that it'll bring to you till the end. Creativity of man's heart is hiding in his daily routine. It manifests itself in such a way that it accepts all the circumstances of that day as inevitable, as the only ones and cleans them with its love and compassion. Only that doesn't mean that you have to bend your back and let the evil ride over you; that means that you have to fight and to learn to control yourself, to fall down and to rise again, to bridle the obstacles and to overcome them. Perhaps you won't always succeed to overcome them outwardly, but you always have to overcome them with love inside of you. Try to raise your relations with people from the rubbish-heap of pettiness and conditionality up to the Eternal Fire. Respect God and His commandments everywhere.

Remove the barriers arising between you and other people. By using the greatest tact, search for the possibilities to understand with your whole consciousness the situation of that person with whom you are associating and you'll always find the way out on how to overcome the superstitions arising among people in such an absurd way, how to open everything what is the best within you and how to get into the temple of another man's heart. Only in some exceptional cases, your meeting with absolutely angry people won't bring you any victory of your love. Alyssa, this is my spiritual precept for you. Only when you see a completely obscured consciousness – it is horrible even to utter it: as Jenny's and your mother's, - go past her. Bless and forgive them, but never touch them. Don't try to lead them out to the

path of truth, this is impossible. I was always trying to do it and I only made both my and your lives more difficult by being of no use for them at all. On that day when I'm not here, you won't come back home anymore, you'll stay at the lord Benedict's home where your real family is. Accept this as my last will, too."

"Oh father, father, your every word was, is and will be a law for me, but why should we talk about death? You got so well during these days. Lord Benedict mentioned to me that you will spend the next couple of months in the country together with all of us. Can you imagine this happiness? We will be walking, reading, and nobody can express their dissatisfaction about our idleness. If now you were able to get so well during the three days, what will happen in two months?"

Alyssa's cheeks flushed; her eyes were shining with energy; she was radiating joy and she was so charming that the pastor whispered her tenderly.

"I never understood how beautiful you were, my dear girl. I'm afraid that your hopes about my recovery won't come true; I'm afraid that I can cause you troubles instead of the walks and pleasures, that you will have to sit down next to your leaving father instead of the rest."

"Father, then I will make your will come true: I will accept that what life will send to me firmly and peacefully; but please – don't break your heart with your thoughts about the past and the future. I'm so happy that now you are with me, that you are healthy, cheerful and that you look great. You've guessed my anxiety about my mother and Jenny, but your words have taken a great burden off me. What will be will be – let the God's will happen by leaving my heart to beat if we have to part. I give my word to you. Don't think about me anymore, leave peacefully if it is fated so, don't torment yourself about me."

The train stopped at the platform. Florentian gave his hand to Alyssa, looked at her attentively and told her.

"My dear, you will be going with me. I want to talk to you. Don't worry about your father. He will be safe with Nal and Nikolay."

As soon as Florentian and Alyssa got into the coach, he took her hands, squeezed them lightly and told her.

"Alyssa, every person is carrying his own cross of life. We've already talked about it. Now the time has come when you have to summon up all your strength and to show the loyalty of your love with your daily, active actions. Your father has told you his last will, he mentioned his death to you. I confirm that his death is close already, closer than you expect it. Summon up all strength of your loyalty and love, and see your father off to his distant road with complete calm. You are the only one whom he has created as something really brilliant in his life. You are the only one who has flowed into the world with that effective power that will continue his activity of ages for people's wellbeing. Now you can reward your father for his entire life of suffering and fight with your calm and self-control, he will leave settled down by comprehending that he didn't live his life in vain.

This is one of the sides of the matter where you and your father can flow together into one harmony and where your role is sacred. To see a man off by illuminating his last days with joy and not with tears of sadness – it means to enter into the new relation with him for your future life of ages.

The second side of the path of your cross is more difficult, but I'm going to help you here. Take my hand, lean upon it and don't part with me in your thoughts and your actions. You won't come back to your home anymore. The external bond with your mother and your sister is still real, but it'll break in

your spirit today. According to your father's testament, you won't leave my home anymore until you attain your majority, but your mother and your sister will do everything in order to get you back.

Today you will see them in the horse-race. You will see and you will be surprised by their humiliation when they try to compete with you. You aren't interested in such things as where you will be sitting, what you will wear, while they've even fallen into decay from vexation that their clothes won't be stunning, although your mother is head over heels in debt and she doesn't know how to get out of it. They will be surprised when they see you and your father together with us, while their hearts will be overflowed with angry jealousy and vengeance from which neither you nor me nor we all together will be able to drag them out. Do you have any doubt in your heart about that path which me and your father have indicated to you?"

"No, lord Benedict. No doubts had even come nearer to me. I can only blame myself of that giddiness of happiness to be next to you, while I didn't ask any help for Jenny from you."

"And here you can settle down. Jenny has taken care of herself in her own way, but she made a request for Nikolay, not me. You won't be able even to make sense of all complicated intrigues of that soul. You remember how I told you that if man recognized another man to be his leader, then he must submit absolutely independently to the demands of his Teacher in those questions which the disciple is unable to understand himself at that time, when he is unable to know as much as his Teacher knows. If you want to follow me, to become a member of my family like Nal and Nikolay, here's the task for you for today and for the future: don't accept any letter or a parcel from your sister and your mother. Don't go to any meeting with them. You can give your thoughts and wishes about how you would like to help them to me, but don't have any doubts that everything will be done to help them – and much more than you can even imagine. Unfortunately, one can take a drowning man out of the water, but one cannot take a man out of the net of evil, because he's weaving this net himself. Here we are. Swallow this reddish pill, and I believe that you will have enough strength for everything."

It was five minutes before eleven when all the dwellers of the lord Benedict's house finished their breakfast and went to their own rooms in order to rest and to change their clothes before the race. The host of the house went to his room and sat down in order to go through the letters. Although Florentian was exchanging letters intensively, he was managing his correspondence and all his business himself, without any secretary's help. Lately he was attracting Nal, Nikolay and Alyssa to do this job. Nikolay was doing the most part of it, while the women were reproaching Florentian jokingly for making Nikolay his favourite.

This morning, concentration flashed several times on Florentian's face. As though he was inviting somebody from the distance or he was sending his thoughts to somebody. Then he continued his work.

Alyssa and Nal went to Doria to find out about their clothes. The thoughts about the pastor were oppressing their hearts, but none of them uttered anything about their sadness. This time Doria surprised both of her ladies-friends: an orange-coloured dress with the white-laced cape and a charming white hat were prepared for Nal, while a white dress with the black silk cape and a black-laced hat were prepared for Alyssa. When Nikolay with the light grey suit accompanied his ladies downstairs, everybody's joint fascination and approval made them laugh.

"Well," Nal uttered. Indeed, she was stunning everybody with the combination of her tender skin, green eyes, dark hair and the orange-coloured dress with fine white laces, "both of us were expecting that you would condemn these colours, Alyssa was trying to convince me that they were too bright and that you would consider us to be some cockatoos, but suddenly you were fascinated. Be truthful at last and

give some flowers or a box of sweets to our dear, unselfish Doria. Me and Alyssa didn't raise a finger, Doria did everything alone."

"And this wonderful woman," Alyssa interfered, "who has adorned us like princesses is staying at home to clean out our mess for all her selfishness, although she has never seen any horse-race. How unstable everything in life is, how worthless all of it would be if you hadn't another happiness and some other values within yourself. I wish Doria to be my sister so much, so that we could sit in the race with her, lord Benedict. How could it happen that so well-bred, very beautiful Doria is our servant?"

"Perhaps, you'll find out about it from her some time, and now it is time to get to the coaches. Nikolay with his wife, you Alyssa and Sandra with me, while lord Mildrey will go with the pastor."

Sandra was very elegant this time and he was trying to behave in a solid way up to this moment, but then he didn't hold out and performed one of his entre-shows by making even the respectable lord Benedict's servants laugh. The whole company took seats in the coaches according to the lord Benedict's instruction and left to the horse-race.

Although Jenny hadn't been sleeping during the entire night, she was still unable to solve the question up to now – to visit the lord Benedict or not. Now it seemed to her that it was meaningless to go, because she wouldn't hear anything new from the lord, except his banal morals, now she wanted to enslave this man and to make him serve her even more than he was trying to do it for Alyssa. Her thoughts were flashing that he was single, and what a victory would be for her to become his wife, to have him and his entire estate at her disposal, not only Nal and Alyssa; but as soon as she remembered his look from the power of which she had squatted down nearly to the ground when she was leaving his study, all her fantasies used to scatter, it was terrible for her to feel that look again which would read her like a book instantly. Jenny was reflecting upon Alyssa and her life again. To be so diligent like her sister, to sit down by the piano or with a book in her hands for hours – Jenny was horror-struck from such perspective of regular work. She decided not to visit the lord Benedict one and for all. Her irritability summoned by her peppery envy for Alyssa was growing inside of her with even greater power. There wasn't any compassion or regret left for her sister in her soul for the wrongs done to her from the very childhood. "It serves the fool right, both she and her father are imbeciles," – Jenny was thinking. She didn't have any doubts that her sister was sitting in the country and making clothes for Nal. The bitterness in her heart was growing not from compassion for her sister who had become the lodger of the countess as Jenny was thinking, but because the talented dress-maker and hard-working housemaid was taken from her. Jenny went up to the mirror and she didn't like herself very much: her skin was somehow dried up, there were some tracks of tiredness on her face, her eyes weren't shining so much, even her lips weren't as red as always.

She opened the window and in the daylight she examined the costume sent by her dress-maker yesterday evening. It seemed to be too bright for her, it was even irritating her eyes: it was intensively violet with the silver laces and the same hat. When the sunbeam lit up the material, its brightness was glaring her eyes. The dress-maker was offering a completely different combination of colours to her by telling her that Jenny herself was striking, that she needed not a clothing, but only an elegant frame for her beauty, but being afraid of disappearing in the crowd with the clothing made from elegant hues, Jenny didn't give in to the dress-maker's persuasions. Now she regretted it, but it was too late already. The pastor's wife also didn't accept the dress-maker's proposals to dress in black and chose green colours. However hard Jenny was talking her out of doing it, she ordered the green dress and even not black, but green hat for herself. What is more, her mother adorned herself with the jewels given to her during Nal's wedding. Only when her daughter declared categorically that she would change her clothes immediately and stay at home, the pastor's wife had to take off the jewels and to button her stout neck up.

“Mother, haven’t you noticed that nobody was wearing any jewels or sitting with their bare necks in the horse-race, although you were going there for so many years?”

The stout pastor wife’s figure looked as though squeezed into a green and rather tight case. Her beautiful forms had already lost their resiliency and charm a long time ago, but lady Katherine who was used to be a beauty remained the same for herself, and her easy and temporary victories were confirming this to her. Jenny was apprehensive ahead of time that too bright clothes from the colours that didn’t suit between themselves, the impudent lady Katherine’s appearance and the stacks of red hair might attract some unpleasant attention from the crowd, the more so, as they would be sitting not in the box, but rather high in the stands. Now Jenny understood how badly, vulgarly and not according to their places they were dressed, but again it was too late. Her mother’s friends were already waiting for them. Jenny took a sad peep at the deplorable, hired carriage. The elegant coach which used to come for Alyssa every day rose in her thoughts, Jenny thought that her sister and her father were in the country now, and this time she felt better because of it.

The pastor’s wife looked more charming than her daughter for herself. She loved and adored her daughter very much, but now Jenny was boring and sullen in her eyes during all these days. Since that evening when neither Alyssa nor her father came back home, Jenny and her mother didn’t mention a single word about it, although both of them knew that their thoughts about Alyssa were imprinted in their mind and hearts. Having decided that only she was embellishing this company, the pastor’s wife was chattering like a little bird during the entire way to the race, while Jenny was burning with shame and vexation because of such tactlessness and stupidity of her mother. She was glad when finally they drove up to the racecourse. Having gotten into the long line of coaches, finally they reached the building itself. The stands and the boxes had different driveways, and Jenny felt a strong heart-stroke to be separated from the high society. This time the destiny had pity on her, and Jenny didn’t see how Alyssa’s and her father’s coaches drove up to the boxes and how they were greeting that selected society which Florentian had brought them into. Nevertheless, Jenny forced a smile to the cavalier who gave his hand to her. She made sure instantly that she feared not in vain: although the crowd of many thousands was flickering in bright, summer colours, their red hair and the impudent colours of their clothes were challenging some indecent remarks from the audience. Somehow they managed to find their places in the eighth row, sat down and began to examine the audience. Their cavaliers directed their attention to their places which were located almost in front of the royal box. The high society didn’t hurry to take their boxes, and only the greatest fans were already sitting there. Jenny didn’t know her cavalier well, but he turned out to be a very competent horse expert. He explained to her in which trotters His Majesty the King was interested mostly, and which ones were provoking the most arguments and hopes. He didn’t play himself, but he proposed to Jenny to stake for one of the horses by persuading her that she would succeed today. Jenny refused to do it categorically, but it was impossible to stop the pastor’s wife. She took her cavalier’s advice and staked even for several horses.

Finally, the spectators began to gather in the boxes, but the royal box and the ones on both sides of it were still empty. But then the buzz of voices was heard in the stands, the wave of excitement rose through the crowd, and everybody was telling each other that the king had arrived. The door of the royal and of the both adjacent boxes opened at the same time, and everybody’s attention was directed to the royal couple who were received with great ovation of the crowd. The king greeted the audience, gave a sign, and the race began.

Jenny and her mother were examining the dresses of the queen and her ladies. They made sure once again that their dress-maker was right: their clothes were irritating the eyes even in the mixed crowd of the stands. Having directed her binoculars to the boxes, all of a sudden Jenny let out a scream, turned pale and cast down the binoculars.

"What has happened to you, Jenny?" the pastor's wife was worried.

"I hit my finger with my binoculars," Jenny uttered carelessly, "but the pain is gone already."

The race was going on as usually, but Jenny didn't see or hear anything else anymore, except that one box. She didn't even notice that her cavalier was watching her attentively. He followed that box according to her look and directed his binoculars there. The box that interested Jenny so much was next to the royal one. Mister Tendly, such was Jenny cavalier's name, was inspecting two women of rare beauty sitting in that box, he also saw the great and charming lord Benedict behind them, about whom people were talking so much in London during this season and he was rather surprised when he saw his friend Sandra next to the lord. It seemed to him that Sandra was only talking so much about his acquaintance with the lord, but now it turned out to be the truth. He didn't know Nikolay and the pastor, but he saw lord Mildrey with Sandra several times and he knew that they were great friends.

"Miss Wodsworth, in whom are you so interested in the lord Benedict's box?" he asked his excited lady. "Perhaps you know Sandra?"

Jenny would have given a great deal, only if she could get back her lost self-control and not tell the secret that was breaking her heart to the strangers. Her thought that her mother will see her father and Alyssa, and that she will blurt out everything what she was thinking about them with tactlessness that was characteristic to her, became unbearable. Her irritability was growing together with perception that she herself drew her cavalier's attention to the lord Benedict's box. In this moment, it even seemed to Jenny that the lord's look reached her. Jenny was surprised, because she wasn't feeling worse from that look, on the contrary, she was vivified with the stream of the pure and cool air. The pastor's wife heard Sandra's name from mister Tendly and asked him.

"Is Sandra really here? Do you see him, mister Tendly?"

"No, mother, mister Tendly was simply telling me about Sandra," Jenny answered her mother by looking at Tendly expressively.

In the meanwhile, as ill luck would have it, the Indian stood up and stooped forward, because he wanted to give a box of sweets to Alyssa. His appearance was especially exotic, because he was always distinguished among the northerners, besides he was wearing a bright suit and he was next to two charming women, so he was drawing attention to himself for a long time already. Hundreds of binoculars were directed to Sandra, including the one of the elder lady Wodsworth.

"Oh, so that's how our timid creatures are joking! Well! We are sitting here, in the stands, and they are in the best box! Well, Alyssa, you will suffer a great deal for this!"

The pastor's wife flew into a rage. Her hat slipped sideways, her cheeks got blotchy, her eyes sparkled. It was terrible to look at her. Jenny knew from her experience that now nobody was able to hold her mother within the limits of decency and she was thinking how she could take her from the stands now and bring her home until she didn't make a racket. Lady Katherine was already prepared to rise from her place, to run to the lord Benedict's box and to scold her daughter and her husband, but she only felt that some power as though pinned her to the bench and she didn't have any strength to utter a single word anymore. She understood whose look was restraining her and who was holding her within the limits of decency.

The trotters and the jockeys were changing one another. The people's passions, their greediness and stinginess now were going out now were running high again, while the fire of anger and envy were burning Jenny's and the pastor wife's hearts without a moment's respite.



"Alyssa, it seemed to you that the colours of our clothes were irritating the eyes, but look at the violet and the green ones over there. Well, that's the colours! They would be too bright even in Spain. You won't find such robes even in Asia, in my country," Nal was laughing.

Alyssa and then Sandra, lord Mildrey and the pastor directed their binoculars to the Nal's indicated direction. "Oh!" slipped out for everybody at the same time. Alyssa's face which was always calm turned deadly pale.

"What has happened to you, my dear?" Nal asked her. She recognized neither Jenny nor the pastor's wife with those bright clothes from so far away.

Instantly Alyssa thought not about herself, but about Nal's health, she controlled herself, gave a smile and told her that the dresses of those ladies were really irritating the eyes and that it was a rather instructive example. And soon she directed her talking by asking Nikolay why he was so concentrated and silent.

"This day is teaching me a lot. As well as you, Alyssa. If I ever have a daughter, I will call her Alyssa in honour of this day, so that I remembered for ever how one needed to carry one's suffering," Nikolay bent towards the girl and told her silently.

The break began. The doors of the lord Benedict's box were closing and opening repeatedly by letting in the lord's friends and aristocrats who didn't forget to give flowers or a box of sweets to his ladies – so then Nal and Alyssa decided that their cavaliers would become carriers on their way back home. The break was over, and the race continued. Famous trotters ended their race, too, and the royal couple were still sitting in their places, so the whole high society didn't allow itself to leave earlier than they did, but lord Benedict looked at two bright spots in the stands attentively again and whispered to his friends that they had to leave the box.

Alyssa who could bear the suffering with more and more difficulty followed the lord Benedict instantly and hurried to the exit with Sandra. Soon the doorkeeper's called coaches rolled up to them. The departure hadn't yet started – ladies loved departure very much, because exactly here they were demonstrating their dresses as though by waiting for coaches.

Alyssa's strength was exhausted, but wonderful, kind, full of love and tenderness Florentian's face bent to her and covered her with the wave of joy and calm. Sandra was unusually silent. His face had lost its childishly benevolent expression and seemed to be older because of the suddenly appeared wrinkles. Alyssa saw such Sandra for the first time and she was surprised how man could change like this. It seemed to her that Sandra could become like this only in twenty years.

"What are you so thoughtful about, wise man?" all of a sudden, Florentian's voice was heard.

"I keep thinking about the pastor. Miss Alyssa, it seems to me that your kindness, your behaviour and your quietism are impossible on the earth. You are sent on the earth for comforting the sinners. I'm thinking about that happiness which your father has found in you, about the confidence which he has to feel by leaving himself and leaving such pearl like you on the earth," Sandra was talking always with the same austere face by not looking at his interlocutors and as though by listening attentively to his every word.

"In other words, you cannot separate them in your heart, both of them have fascinated you equally," Florentian was joking. "Now your life is losing its attractiveness without Alyssa and the pastor."

"Yes, lord Benedict. That day when I cannot hear my dear friend's voice, when I cannot see his wonderful and kind eyes, when I cannot open all my petty grievances to his heart, will oppress me with

its pain. The example of his daughter, of the young woman, who is carrying these days of great pain in the same way as only a grey sage would be able to do, put me to shame many times. I must admit that now I'm weak, and that every meeting with the pastor who is falling into decline right in front of our eyes is tearing me apart; and today, during the race, the whole life of this dedicated man has opened up for me. I understood how often I was stupid, rude and tactless at his home."

Sandra was looking through the window, but he didn't see anything. His black eyes as though dimmed, they were looking inside of him, while the tears were rolling down his cheeks.

"My son, my friend. You are suffering in this moment. You are thinking about your friend who is leaving his life, about yourself and how you will be suffering without your loyal friend, but you've forgotten your bemoaned pastor's daughter who is sitting in front of you, although you've reckoned her among the angels of heaven. The young woman is made of blood and body, and her heart is suffering more than yours, thousands of needles about which you don't even know are stuck into her suffering. Do you consider yourself to be very tactful with respect to her?"

"No, lord Benedict, I understand that I'm not only tactless, but I'm even cruel. But if I hadn't told everything to you, I would have died from pain which my heart is full of. I haven't yet learned to live in such a way that the power of love could carry me through all daily obstacles easily."

"Sandra, take my hand. Years will pass by, you will become head of your family yourself, you will become famous scientist, you will be chief of the university, but you will never forget this moment when you were weaker than woman. That storm of protest against death which now is raging within yourself will never repeat in your life. You will find out that death doesn't exist; that there's only an eternal and renewed power of love of the universe; that there's only a wise beauty that opens the gates to new joy of living and creativity for everybody. You shouldn't cry for the pastor, but give your strength and fortitude to him, so that he could leave this place by taking the last gift of our love from everyone of us. Your love is weak if you see your friend off with tears."

The coach came back home, and soon everybody was sitting at the dinner table. The host cheered up all of his guests so much with his exceptional tact that the distressing mood of the race was soon faded from their memory. The house became empty instantly after the dinner again, because all of its inhabitants came back to the country.

As soon as Jenny and the pastor's wife saw that lord Benedict's box was empty, the race itself made no sense for them anymore. Jenny was surprised that now she was feeling lonely and sad. It seemed to her that when her father and especially when her sister was gone, it had to become easier for her, but suddenly Jenny felt like an orphan. She wanted to escape this place as soon as possible, but their empty house was standing in her eyes, so she was ready to go anywhere, only if she hadn't to stay together with her mother. She would have given a great deal if she could find her father and Alyssa playing the piano when she was back home. Now it seemed to her that the life itself was reflected in the sounds of Alyssa's music. The sounds lapsed into silence, a dreary silence that wasn't filled with anything became predominant, from which one wanted to escape... Jenny was thinking about her coming back to that heavy silence with horror.

"Miss Wodsworth, would you like to try to force your way through to the exit?" she heard mister Tendly's question.

"Oh yes, I would like to get out of here very much, but it seems that it'll be rather difficult to do it."

"If you want to get into the main lane where the demonstration of fashion will begin now, then of course, it would be difficult to force your way through there, but if you aren't interested in those airs, then we could get down to our drive easily through this emergency exit."

The pastor's wife didn't want to lose the pleasure to observe people and to show herself to them, but her daughter looked at her in such a way that she felt silent from half word and turned towards the modest emergency exit through which nobody was going yet. Mister Tendly found their carriage quickly, and they left along the lane that was still unoccupied when the race wasn't even finished.

The cavaliers proposed their ladies to dine at some restaurant. The pastor's wife agreed willingly, while Jenny was rather inclined to go back home – although she was loathing the empty house – than to stay in the company of her mother and her cavalier whom she didn't like. Categorical Jenny's refusal drove the pastor's wife wild and she was mocking at her daughter's desire to stay alone by hardly keeping her decency. She got out at the first passable restaurant together with her vulgar cavalier. Mister Tendly stayed alone with the girl and saw her suffering, so although he was unable to perceive the cause of her suffering, he was trying to dispel her gloominess in every possible way and partly he succeeded to do it. This man's kindness and his exceptional tact drew Jenny's attention unwittingly. An extraordinary mind of the youth, his education and considerable erudition opened up for her while they were talking one to another.

Jenny looked her interlocutor up and down attentively and met his big and grey eyes which were looking at her thoughtfully and curiously. Mister Tendly had curly, light-brown hair, he was tall and well-built, sunburnt blond, and of course, he was an unusually interesting man.

When they drove up to the pastor's house, he helped Jenny to get out of the coach and lifted his hat for saying good-bye. The girl's heart was breaking. Now she will stay in that silent house alone with her thoughts which she wanted to escape, and probably such sadness and doubts were reflected on her face that they passed to this kind man who wanted to dispel that sadness.

"Lady Wodsworth, would you like," he uttered with the voice full of respect, "to become my student today? We could dismiss the carriage, you could change into an external student of the university, and we could go to the park with the omnibus for a dinner."

"I would like to accept your proposal very much, but..."

"But you don't know how to coordinate it with etiquette. You don't have to pay attention to it. First of all, you've already transgressed etiquette several times today, and secondly, the park is so big that you hardly risk to meet any acquaintances there at all. Thirdly, you always have to choose not conditional and external, worthless things, but deep values which are hiding inside of you. They are the only ones that are worth of man's care and attention, and sometimes they especially force us to lend our ear to their demands, not to heed attention to exterior and to comprehend well of what is going on in our consciousness. In those cases, the new surroundings might light up some unclear flights for us."

"I agree with you," Jenny answered him silently. "Now that silent house looks like a coffin to me."

Having dismissed the carriage, the young people entered the hall. Jenny accompanied her guest to the sitting-room and offered him to turn over some of the newest science magazines. She gave a lenient smile to the surprised guest's look and explained to him that her father was thinking to become a great singer during his entire life and even a greater scientist, although actually he was and he is only a modest pastor.

"How!" mister Tendly shouted with distorted face, "So I got into the house of that famous philosopher and scientist whose book would be published by the printing-house not today, but tomorrow, and the scientists of the entire world are already talking about it. I've been told that he's not only erudite, but the man who possesses some exceptional characteristics. So he is your father?"

"My father didn't tell me anything about his book," Jenny answered him in a cool and arrogant way. "Don't you confuse him with some other Wodsworth, there are more of them, aren't there?" she was talking to him with concealed vexation.

"Pastor Wodsworth, the author of the famous work may be only one, lady Wodsworth. Your father's name is Andrew, isn't it?"

"Yes, but we didn't know up to now that head of our family was such a leading figure, as you say it. My father is very reserved and he doesn't like to talk about his business. By the way, he and Sandra used to apply themselves to reflect often."

"Sandra is fortune's favourite! And how did he manage to become acquainted with your father? Of course, he met lord Benedict with his friend lord Mildrey's help."

"You are so wrong. Sandra and lord Benedict are close for a long time. He knows the lord from India and their bond reaches Sandra's childhood. He took lord Mildrey into the lord Benedict's house, while my father was searching for young talents during his entire life and he was taking care of them. With your permission, I leave you, mister Tendly, and I will try to become a modest student."

Having entered her room, Jenny threw the unbearable, bright costume off, put the ordinary, black one and the same hat on. Now she liked herself more than with that clamorous, violet colour. Her thoughts became confused. The stranger calls her father a leading figure and a famous scientist, while she and her mother were considering him to be an oddity who was inclined to insanity up to now. Why didn't her father mention a single word about his book? In truth, he was creating something during his entire life, while Alyssa was always rewriting something, but all of it seemed only like some distraction of the original man to Jenny, because he had bad luck in his life and he found comfort in the scientific activity due to lack of activity. The unlucky wretches are always full of all sorts of ideas, and suddenly... the book and her father's glory, while she is far away from him and she doesn't even know whether he'll be back home tomorrow.

Having come back to the sitting-room, Jenny found her guest absorbed in some article. Mister Tendly was so interested in reading it that he didn't even comprehend instantly where he was and who was standing in front of him. Having come to himself, he was laughing merrily and apologizing for such absent-mindedness in a very polite way.

"Probably," he was repeating, "all people who are passionate about science are equally absent-minded. Forgive me kind-heartedly, miss Wodsworth. I would get stiff with that book, having forgotten about everything in the world."

The young people left, but being used to her beauty always emphasized, Jenny felt insulted. Mister Tendly was so immersed in reading that he didn't even look at her and appraised how the black silk made her beauty clearer after the violet one. And what is more, she caught his glance that he cast at the book regretfully, from which he tore himself away with so much reluctance.

That brought her thoughts back to her father and Alyssa again, and jealousy was restored to life in her heart. Jenny felt the new fit of irritation and frowned from the thought of how her new acquaintance would behave next to her sister. Her companion had to do his very best in order to make her

smile. The dinner in the park diverted Jenny's attention from her experiences of this day a little. Many things about which mister Tendly was talking to her surprised her. A lot of things were new and unexpected to her. And anyway, Jenny didn't think a single time about the youth and what kind of a man he was. She asked him neither about his life nor about his destiny.

She wasn't thinking about him, but only about her fear of solitude and accepted his company as the prescription for this day, which she could throw away tomorrow, because she wouldn't need him anymore. Having come back home earlier than her mother, Jenny locked herself up in her room and went to bed, only if she didn't need to think about anything.

This is how this troubled and sad day ended for our heroes.

## Chapter 6

### The pastor's illness and his death.

#### His testament

Having reached the country along the moonlit road, somewhat tired lord Benedict's friends dispersed to their own rooms instantly. Only the pastor remained downstairs, in the host's study. Both of them sat down on armchairs in the terrace.

"Probably this is one of the last moonlit nights when I'm still walking and I can appreciate the beauty of the earth which I always loved so much. I've been leading people to the Father's throne for so many times and I could see the real people's faith and knowing so rarely, I was trying to overcome the people's fear in their last hour so often. Now when I'm going to my Father myself I understand that people are oppressed not by fear, but by perception of their lives which they lived uselessly and fruitlessly, by perception that they weren't faithful enough to the precepts of love, that they lived their lives not honestly enough."

"My dear friend, death doesn't exist. In that moment when the last man's breath leaves him, his spirit has already left its form in which the man was living on the earth. Both those who die and those who are born are living on the earth only in order to make progress in their path of improvement. Man sucks in so many superstitions with the modern education that he doesn't even understand that life – the whole great life – is moving and boiling around him and inside of him. If there wasn't that Light within your heart which now covers both of us and everything around us – you couldn't have reached that high purity which you are and were living in. Those qualities of Life of the Only One return to life one after another in man's heart, which correspond to his development. Having reached the full development, man's qualities grow into an active, always alive power. They stop being only the qualities of the man, they flow through his veins like the blood, like the radiant matter of love and finally, they open in him like the revived aspect of his eternal Life. Everything what man was able to develop till the end inside of him has become the aspect of his divine spirit, the fire of his inner creativity. When man's physical form has become tight for such revived spirit of his, when he's grown out of it like a childish clothing, then man changes his form, while we call this death. Your life, however strictly you estimate it – is irreproachable. And our meeting – it isn't some coincidence, but a great joy given to both of us. My loyal, devoted friend, I owed you up to now."

"Lord Benedict, I don't understand you. Although really, it is true that I feel great closeness to you – as though I knew you for a long time –, but... that one who meets you is unable to feel differently next to you. Your kindness and charm enslaves everybody."

"You've never reflected on a man's life on the earth as the eternal life, not only as the segment between his birth and his death. And this is the sequence of lives on the earth during the entire centuries. There's no place for the rest in heaven. Everybody who is alive in heaven is working in the same

way as on the earth. We leave this place, we are working, we are living in lighter forms, according to other laws exactly as on the earth; we can live only according to the laws of the earth.

You've already been on this earth many times and you met me many times, but those were only short meetings where every time I was left indebted to you. You saved my life during our last meeting. Now I was searching for you for a long time, because I wanted to repay you for all the good done for me. Only a few months ago when I was in Moscow I found out that you were in London, that you were the pastor. I found everything about your life from my friends. They lost your tracks in Venice and followed the wrong way by looking for you among the artists.

As soon as I received the news about you, I changed my plans, came here and found you immediately. Now accept all my services for you and Alyssa as my debt of ages that I repay to you, and let's not touch this side of life anymore. Everything is bright, everything is shining here. I can tell you only this about another side of your family: I will do everything what will be possible to do in order to save Jenny and your wife. I'm afraid that there won't be any use of it, but I will do it anyway."

"Lord Benedict, I feel so strangely. As though I become light and I really remember our old friendship. A wonderful calm and tranquillity is descending into my soul, and it happens not because of your words, but because of your presence here, because of your especial kindness, because of your nearly superhuman power and fortitude which you are simply radiating. Accept the blissful gratitude of the leaving soul for that calm and lucidity which you've been pouring to it during the last period of my life on the earth. Thanks to you my parting with the earth is full of grandeur. And concerning my wife and Jenny – my God, how much strength I've spent in order to protect them from evil. Now you've set me at ease, and I leave them with your protection. I could see clearly how their constant irritability and desire for luxury and amusements were plunging them into the contacts with liars and even dishonourable people more and more. I could see how they were drowning in their petty thoughts and feelings, how their endless rages were pushing them away from all higher and noble powers of human love and throwing them into the constant, egoistic concentration only on themselves; but I couldn't find any hooks of kindness in their hearts, with the help of which I was able to pull them out of their narrow-minded stupidity."

"Now stop thinking about them, my dear lord Wodsworth. The time that is left for you on the earth belongs only to you. I've come to you during the last days of your current incarnation to give that knowledge to you which you've been searching for during your entire life and you've trampled the path to it with the feet of those people who were searching for your comfort and who left you not only consoled, but also perceiving that they found a friend; who were searching for peace from you, but who left not only calmed down, but also carrying joy, because they perceived their right to life, happiness and work.

Cast all fetters of any conditionality off yourself, which are restricting your consciousness and preventing you from associating with the spirit and fire. All the tears, pain and passions which your heart has gathered into yourself like into some cup are already burning not only in your heart, but also in mine, and in the hearts of all those people who have dedicated themselves to the goal of the general prosperity. Neither a conditional love nor the fetters of superstitions are left within yourself anymore. Live all those days until you leave this earthly form in the same way as you were living by getting rid of everything what is personal for you. Live with courage and wisdom in the unquenchable love of the Great Mother – Life by blessing your every day.

Not only for your daughter Alyssa, but also for your young admirer Sandra and also for Mildrey who's suffering so much secretly, and for my children Nal and Nikolay – leave the great lesson of a wise man for everybody on how one needs to leave the earthly life with peace and joy before starting or to be precise, by continuing the activity of one's eternal life. Let the Light that was pouring from you onto your earthly roads every day, the Light that now opens for you as an eternal memory about the only one Life and

that has already descended together with you into the earthly form, remain for ever in the memory of all their lives as the most ordinary knowledge: to fall into a doze with wisdom, with the thoughts about the Eternal, with perception of happiness and the entire only one Life within yourself and everywhere. Look at your remaining days as your deserved and careless rest and pick the fruit of love which you were pouring on the earth yourself like a handful of jewels.”

Florentian accompanied the pastor upstairs, to his wonderful room where behind the opened door he could see the moonlit park and the distances opening behind it.

“Lord Benedict, I didn’t deserve this happiness and I couldn’t even dream about such beauty which I’m living in now. If you are talking about your debt to me, then what am I supposed to tell you? I was praying for my Father so that I could die in peace, only I could never find it. You helped not only peace to open in my heart, but also an absolute joy. What a wonderful life is! How powerful and great the sprout of this life in man is if he’s changing his form during the entire ages and then he lives again! Only now I was able to understand it till the end. Then why is the church teaching us to bemoan one another’s death? Why is it teaching us to rest in peace in the kingdom of heaven if we can find it only within ourselves? And I also understood that you can find it only if you are living with Light. Until man is alive, we need to teach him how he should live in Light and not how to rest in peace.”

“Good night, lord Wodsworth. Here’s one more pill for you, which will bring you sleep.”

Florentian squeezed the pastor’s hand firmly, wished him a good night again and went downstairs to his study. The pastor sat for a while in the silence of the night, but soon he wanted to sleep so much that he fell asleep as soon as he took his clothes off.

It seemed that the whole house that was plunged in silence was already sleeping, but the host was sitting at the writing-table and writing a letter by taking a good look at some distant spot now and then. The door to the terrace was opened, and the aroma of the flowers of the night was spreading across the room. From time to time the gust that happened to come was making the flame of the candle burning on the table quaver, it was forcing it to flutter and to change the reflections on the golden curls of the man who was writing at the table. All of a sudden, Florentian lifted his head, listened attentively to something, nodded his head and uttered silently.

“Alyssa, Alyssa, I was hoping that you would have much more strength today. Come here if it is so difficult and dismal for you. I thought that you already understood how you had to support your father and to turn his last days into the earthly heaven, but you have devoted yourself to sadness by thinking only about yourself. Stop crying and come here.”

Having come back from the race, Alyssa went upstairs to her room immediately, threw the robe on her shoulders, opened the door of the balcony, pulled the armchair to the door and got stiff on it by perceiving with pain that separation with her idolized father was inescapable. The scenes from the very childhood were drawing up in her memory. She had never seen her father irritated. He had never come back home without a smile. Whatever pain used to press his heart, her father always used to enter their home by carrying a tender word for everybody at the same time. Many things that Alyssa didn’t understand in her childhood were cleared up only now.

The child’s little heart guessed the drama of her father, and her entire life, her every day – everything was the only aim: to protect her father from any troubles, not let him notice something distressing, to direct one or another blow away from him.

Two hearts, two lives – the ones of father and his daughter – had merged into the one whole. And now... a part of her heart had to break away from him. Not her father was retreating from life,



but he was tearing a part of herself from her heart. A day without her father... Alyssa was exhausted by this suffering. As though she was drowning in the pool of blood that was oozing from her heart. She was sitting crushed and constrained by her pain, without any thoughts, without any hope and as though she could hear how the blood was dripping from her heart and how the whole lake of blood was already lying around her.

All of a sudden, some power like an electric current ran across her body. The girl remembered Florentian's words which he told her when they were coming back home. She remembered his conversation with Sandra and everything what lord Benedict was telling her during the last days. She could remember it so clearly that as though she heard his voice in the silence of the night, which was inviting her to come. She was still so helpless a moment ago, now she stood up and wiped her tears. She could imagine her suffering and pain so clearly, she could feel the blood dripping from her heart so clearly that it still seemed to her that there was an open wound in her bosom. She squeezed her heart with her hands and looked down at her feet, because she wanted to make sure whether she wasn't standing in the pool of blood.

Having looked down at the garden, she saw lord Benedict who was inviting her with the gesture of his hand. Having come downstairs, she found him waiting for her on the threshold of his study.

"Come in, my baby," he uttered by closing the door after her. "Me and you, and one more man isn't sleeping under this roof tonight. The rest of them have decided to be wise and to accept their lives such as they are. You think that Sandra isn't sleeping. No, I gave some sedative drops to the Indian, and he's sleeping as well as your father. That one isn't sleeping who didn't mention a single word about your and his own suffering. Lord Mildrey isn't sleeping, his heart is bursting from your drama, from your sadness. In order to stop at least one of the drops of your blood which is still dripping from your heart, he's prepared to go to the scaffold. And now, although by appearance he seems to be calm, but he's rushing about like a tiger in the cage, because he cannot find any answers to his questions. My daughter, you need not to cry and pour your blood, but to remember how you've promised me by the Eternal Fire to provide help and comfort for people. What's the use of it if you are sitting and crying? Won't that happen what is inevitable to happen only because you are crying? Where does your father have to find some strength and peace now? Now when the hour has struck to change the form of his life? You are used to call this change death, but death doesn't exist, only your superstition exists. I've already told you: don't waste a single moment in vain while you are living. Learn to create with your heart, because there isn't any place left for one's creative power in one's tears. Whatever a man would cry for, he's always crying for himself. But the highest form of man's love is an action, energy. Only that one who is strong and brave is going onto the high path of nobility and selflessness. Life needs only such fearless hearts.

The moments of stopping don't exist in one's life. Life is an eternal movement, an eternal urge forward, and only a strong man is able to keep abreast with it. If you continue to bemoan every unexpected blow of your destiny – which is unexpected only because of your ignorance, - then there's no need for you to live next to me. You want to share my life. This is the life of selfless activity. Victories and defeats, disasters and joys are changing in that life, but there's no place for sadness in it.

Death – that is man's superstition, the survival of his barbarous standpoint of life. Look at this wonderful beauty of nature: the sky is breaking already, while the moon is still shining. The day is changing the night in your eyes, and all of these are only the forms of the same Only One Life which is hidden in you, in me, in the sun, in the cloud, in the grass. You will learn a lot and you will acquire some high knowledge later, then the law of life and death won't be disturbing your unusual rhythm of life anymore. Today understand this well and clearly: if you want to meet your father in the activity of your life again, prepare that sacred and high place within yourself where he could meet you again and continue his

work with you. Know only this: you can create that family in which your father will be able to incarnate again. You can be his mother and repay him with your motherly love and care for all his care for you, for all his love, but “you can” still doesn’t mean that “it will happen”. You possess all love, all power, all possibilities within yourself to turn the wheel of your destiny to that one or another direction. Everything will depend on how you will see your father off and what blessing for this eternal path you will give to him now.”

The girl was all changed and radiating, she pressed herself to her great friend’s hand and whispered him.

“I understood everything. Your power has flowed to me. I don’t have anything to cry for anymore. Only lord Mildrey... How could I soothe him?”

“Leave this trouble to me.”

Having stroked the calmed Alyssa’s hand and given some medicine for her to take, he told her to go to bed immediately, because she already should take care of her father. Having accompanied Alyssa to the stairs, Florentian sat down at the writing-table again and finished writing the letter which he had started to write before.

The morning-glow was breaking already. Lord Benedict blew out the candles, dropped in at the bedroom for a short time and left it in a quarter of an hour in pyjamas and with the flannel towel on his shoulder.

Having put the letters in order, he put them into the drawer of the writing-table, wrote several words on the piece of paper, put it in his pocket and went out to the park. Having gone round the house from another side, he stooped to pick a little stone up, wrapped it into that letter from his pocket, stopped by one of the opened windows of the first floor and threw it inside deftly.

Some white object stroke against the floor loudly and landed at the lord Mildrey’s feet, who hadn’t slept during the entire night and who was plunged in his cheerless thoughts. Having given a start with surprise, he stooped to pick the paper up, from which the little stone fell out.

“Put your pyjamas on, take your flannel towel and go downstairs, to the terrace. We’ll go to the lake for swimming in the waterfall.” The note was unsigned, but Mildrey recognized the big and beautiful handwriting of the host instantly. He looked through the window, but he could see only the wonderful breaking morning through it and he could hear only the voices of the birds. Rejoicing at such unexpected opportunity to take a walk with lord Benedict, Amadeo hurried to change his clothes and went downstairs without finishing to reflect on his thoughts that were oppressing him during the entire night.

“Well, my martyr,” lord Benedict met him with cheerful laughter, “just look at yourself now! Another two or three nights spent in the same way, and I will be accused at least of my guests’ torture. Lord Mildrey, excellent educator of my Indian friend, could you please explain to me what kind of sadness took a half of your weight during the night?”

“With pleasure, lord Benedict, because it is very easy to do it. The terrible helplessness to help other people’s suffering is driving me to despair. I only wanted to ask you how did you guess that I wasn’t sleeping and that I was exactly in that room from the three ones which were given to me? Because when you threw the little stone through that window where I was sitting, you needed to be certain that not only I was awaked, but also that you were inviting the man who would read your letter immediately. And how young and charming you are, lord Benedict, I understand why you were named Florentian.”

“Do you know, my dear guest, that if we are going to stand about with every step, then we’ll be back only when our ladies will be having breakfast already? Let’s move forward with more energy, and it is possible that I will disclose that secret for you of how I found out about your sleeplessness. Look around you, take a good look at the diversity of the life that surrounds you. How beautiful the flowers are and how wonderful their forms are! The little leaves, the grass, the butterflies, the flies, the bees – everybody is living their lives full of tension, they are creating, they give their aroma, their fruit, their beauty and... they die. You describe the end of each of these lives like this.

You pluck off the blossom and you cling it to the lapel of your jacket or you decorate your table with it. You don’t think that the blossom will die when it gives its entire beauty to you. This death doesn’t worry you at all. You bless it, you meet it peacefully, as something inevitable and usual. Why? Only because that doesn’t concern you personally, your attachment, your usual desires, your love into which you used to tie the threads of your heart, your blood, your body and spirit every day. You are calm. You know the inevitability of the law of expediency which forces everything what is alive to change their forms. But when all of it affects a man – then everything changes in his consciousness. Then everything is divided into the strangers and your own ones. Your own ones are those with whom you’ve become related, with whom you get along and are united through the bonds of blood. In this case, each of such separations ends in unavoidable tears, despair and in such appearance as my dear friend lord Mildrey’s now.

You took part in two wars when you were seventeen – nineteen years old; the soldiers were creating songs and legends about your courage, while the officers who had seen everything were surprised by your self-control. Now you are twenty-eight years old. So why have you lost not only your self-control, but also your balance in the presence of the pastor’s death? Your love for Alyssa isn’t any secret for me, but that doesn’t justify your behaviour, too. Who does need such love from which the beloved cannot get any heroism? Do you really think that you express your condolences to Alyssa with such behaviour of yours? Only that sympathy is effective and true that extends not its tears to man, but that renders its strength and courage.

Do you really think that if you are hiding the complete disharmony within yourself, then you will be able to help a man in his difficult hour with this hypocritical self-control? Only the really wise behaviour when you are convincingly calm within yourself may help your beloved people. And this living example of wisdom may extinguish thousands people’s dramas only with its appearance, with the only meeting. Such is the example of the real wise man, and in whatever semblance man would meet him, he may provide some heroic tension of actions for his strength; he may help the weak man with narrow views who moans only over himself, who is unable to see further than his yard to pass into a spiritualized perception of himself as the little part of the entire universe. Of the universe that inevitably submits to the one and the same law of expediency that leads everything what is alive on the earth – from the small beetle to the man – into perfection. You can answer me that you know and understand everything about it, but I will contradict you, because in the language of wisdom to know and to understand means to act. That one who is telling you that he knows and understands, but who doesn’t know how to use it in his working day, - actually, he doesn’t know anything. With his ignorance he doesn’t differ from the horses and the dogs of the circus who’ve just memorized some daily associations which they’ve learned in one or another sequence.

Think about all of it, lord Mildrey. Many things in your life will depend on your current behaviour – and not only in your life, but also in Alyssa’s one and in lives of many other people whom you meet right now and with whom you associate. It is a pity that I cannot tell you anything clearer because of the reasons that don’t depend on me. I can only add that now you are standing on the cross-road, and depending on your energy, on your brave behaviour, on your well shown kindness, on the power of your nobility namely during this period – you will hear one or another call from your life. You can or you cannot

create that or another family in which you would give a chance for a great soul to descend on the earth and to walk the new path of her life with protection of your love and kindness.”

Florentian took lord Mildrey to the waterfall. The nature’s beauty, the wonderful morning and the host’s words not only dispelled the previous feelings of the guest, but also expanded his outlook and gave him hope. Lord Mildrey got out of the little lake which had formed from the stream of the water falling down from the steep cliff. He was cringing from cold and answered him.

“Even if I hadn’t accepted the christening of this cold water which gave me new strength, I would feel newly reborn anyway only because of my communication with you and because of your words, lord Benedict. The most important thing that I could understand from your speech is that no superstition of separation exists for the power of love. Only to know and to act in the current stage of development of my consciousness – those are still two different things. I don’t lose hope that while I’m next to you, some day both of these concepts will merge within myself into a selfless and devoted action, into the most common capability to be really kind to people and to forget about myself by thinking about them.”

They came back home in time, they had time to change their clothes and they sat down at the breakfast table together with everybody else. The pastor was feeling weak and tired during this day, but he went out for a walk in the park anyway. He was walking arm-in-arm with his daughter. Sandra was accompanying him up to the steep slope, because he loved to cast a glance at the opening distance from here. But he went upstairs to his room right after dinner. Alyssa didn’t step back from her father for at least a moment. It seemed that she absolutely didn’t see his weakness and the special tenderness in which his tender farewell was felt. She was behaving in the same way as always, as though her father was healthy, only she didn’t step back from him.

“Alyssa, my child, you could go for a walk. Look, everybody is going to the farm with lord Benedict.”

“No, my father, I want to be next to you in silence.”

A knock came on the door. Lord Mildrey came in.

“Could I sit down next to you for a while, lord Wodsword? I want to keep company for a while with you so much that I don’t even dare to disturb you. Won’t you be angry with me for such disturb?”

“Not only I’m angry with you, but I’m glad that you came. Alyssa doesn’t leave me, although I ask her to rest from such aged company. There is no disguising the fact, my friend, that such love of my daughter and yours for myself – that’s a great joy, that’s simply a great reward for all my covered life.”

“You know, father, you are real phenomenon. Another man would be thinking more about himself instead of you. You should value yourself at least a little more and everything what you’ve given to the people and science. Lord Benedict told me that the whole delegation of Academy of Science is going to come here, to visit you and to give an exceptional reward to you for that book which soon will be published. They found out from lord Benedict in the academy that you were unwell and that you wouldn’t be able to participate in the solemn conference yourself where it was anticipated to crown you with laurels, so the most prominent representatives of science are coming here, while you, my dear father, are showing only your meekness.”

“My daughter, I would like to avoid that solemnity, it oppresses me, I even became excited. Lord Mildrey, don’t refuse to ask our dear host to visit me when he comes back from his walk.”

“Certainly, lord Wodsword. I’m sure that lord Benedict will be able to protect your quietness. He left for his farm with some economic business, so he won’t be long and when he’s back, I will pass your request to him. By the way, there’s the captain T.’s comment and article about your book in today’s newspapers. I think that half of the world’s authors envy you similar comments.”

“Father, you know that captain T., in other words Nikolay, has brother, who’s a beginner writer. Once lord Benedict was telling us that Lovushka has already written a work that was very mature for his age, while Nal was telling us that she saw him dressed in an Oriental suit and with grey beard, so if they met face to face, she couldn’t even recognize her husband’s brother.”

“Why? Did they become acquainted in a mask ball and they didn’t see one another without their masks? This sounds like a French novel,” the pastor was laughing.

“I guess that something more is hidden here, lord Wodsword. I doubt whether carnivals are possible in the East, while the countess is very young and she came here straight from there.”

Then their conversation turned upon the miracles of life to which the pastor dedicated his and Alyssa’s meeting with Florentian.

In the meanwhile, another part of the company divided in two little groups turned from the farm towards home. Nal and Nikolay chose a longer path, while Florentian and Sandra came back along the shortest way.

“Sandra, we’ve been talking about your gloomy physiognomy several times already. Today I would like to talk about it for the last time. Your life during the nearest days will depend on your decision and on your future behaviour, too. Either you will stay with me or you will go to London. You see, when you decide to follow somebody, when you choose another man to whom your heart is inclined the most to become your path, you need to be able to merge into harmony with that one whom you want to call your Teacher. In order to perceive your Teacher’s instructions and to walk with them like a creative power during your entire day, you need to gush with joy. Only joy opens the possibility for two consciousness which are in different stages of development to merge. The more joyous and purer the lower disciple’s consciousness is, the easier, simpler and deeper he can merge into his Teacher’s consciousness which surpasses his strength and the more he is able to take out of the higher consciousness that opens up for him. That is one side of the matter. To live next to me and to be gloomy, to entangle yourself in an argument with God and your destiny – it means that you are spending your time in vain and that you don’t have any strength even to notice how light is pouring into you in every moment.

Secondly: you’ve taken the pledge of unconditional obedience which seemed to be a happiness for you, as well as your living next to me seemed to you like some alluring future, and when that future has become reality unexpectedly for yourself, you turned out to be weaker than a woman and you continue to stay like this. With your philosophical searching and scientific discoveries of astronomy and mechanics you’ve reached that power which one could rely upon, while in your relations with people and life you’ve turned out to be a baby who is unable to pass the simplest tests of the turning wheel of life; but you are Indian, you know the law of reincarnation, you grew up and you were educated with that concept. It seemed that your relation with life and death had to be different from Europeans. Where are hiding the causes of disharmony in your spirit? You are losing your good and kind friend who was trying to help you in every possible way. How do you show your gratitude to him? You disturb his last days, you bemoan your solitude after his death. What do you support his daughter with? With the complaints of your heartache. Shame and disgrace upon you, Sandra. I didn’t send you from my home as a man who is unworthy of becoming my disciple only because of my old debt to you. With this conversation I pay my debt which I owed to you for ages.

The pastor leaves the earth not for a long time. If Alyssa is able to see him off like her father with heroism and courage in order to accept him like a son again for his new life, then soon he will come back to his earthly life again. If the power of woman's love and kindness is able to rise so high that she wouldn't be thinking about herself and would prepare a place for her father's incarnation with her selflessness, then he will be back on the earth happy and do that work which he didn't have time to finish now. Then the whole wheel of lives which now is tightened by the loop of dark superstitions will become free, come undone and develop into happiness and light. If Alyssa doesn't overcome her egoistic love for her father, if she continues to cry and clutch at his leaving life in the same way as you are doing it now, then the whole range of lives will be doomed to wait for new possibilities in order for the combination of karmic ties to reach harmony. I'm telling you this for the first and the last time. Now I've given you the possibility to perceive the destinies of many people so that finally you would understand the essence of the law of unconditional obedience, but if you ever transgress this law, you won't be able to correct this act of yours with anything for ages. I will be protecting the bond of love with which I have tied you with myself and which you would break off with your disobedience. It will be winding round us even stronger, but however hard I would like to take your tests on my shoulders, I wouldn't be able to do it. I will take the return blow which you could summon with your act upon myself by loving you and being ready to win, but you would have to untangle the whole range of tangled lives yourself."

"Oh my God, how stupid I am! How inexcusably, shamefully stupid I am, my idolized lord Benedict! I was crying, moaning, rebelling and I almost accused you of coolness, because I knew that you still could keep the pastor's strength, but you didn't do it. Please forgive me, although there cannot be any forgiveness. What a dullard man I am! What happiness may visit the pastor and Alyssa, while I'm bemoaning both of them. Let it be a lesson for me for ever. Right here, my dear and merciful Teacher, while looking at the sunset, I promise to protect the joy of obedience for ever, however sad events to which I will have to contribute with my will and action would seem to be for me. While living each of my days, I promise not to search and strive for any external wealth and appreciation. Now I understand that man's day – that's not what he gets, but how he accepts that and how his heart responds to that. I promise to bring in everything what I take away through myself from you to all my daily meetings and matters. I promise you to live my day bravely, without any fear and in harmony, because now I understand that these qualities are nothing else, but my loyalty to you."

"Amen, my son. You don't need to promise too much. Don't be disappointed in your strength. Not your stupidity forced you to doubt everything, but your habit to meet all circumstances of your life with scepticism, your habit to agree to compromises always and to reflect on the only one earthly life by tearing it off from life of the entire universe. Develop the principle rule of each real man – learn to think in a dialectal way. Don't break off your bond with all joyous powers of nature anymore, and when the time for your knowledge about all elements of nature comes, meet that moment with complete self-control and inner harmony.

Wisdom – that isn't education and mind. The value of those is only that culture of spirit which they might lead to. If they do so – then man will become a shining sphere of energy who is creating intuitively and who joins the balance of the whole universal life. His energy is effective and it will fly past all his meetings with fire. However, if his education didn't leave him from conscious perception into subconscious one – then man is one from thousands of stupid clear heads who are searching for evidence and explanations for their limited minds where only infinite Wisdom is living and creating within man.

Never have it out with people when you communicate with them. Try to make a man happy, to begin and end your conversation with joy, but avoid those who are sullen themselves and who are searching for the causes of their sullenness within you. Avoid the families that are lost in arguments. That

person who is talking about his love for his family, but who actually is tyrant and grumbler – that one is no less criminal than a thief who carries off a man's treasure."

The kind-hearted Mildrey was coming to meet lord Benedict and Sandra by smiling for both of them from the distance.

"What are you going to tell us, lord Mildrey? Most likely you are Alyssa's messenger?"

"Well, you didn't guess, lord Benedict. On behalf of the pastor, I address you with the request to visit him."

All three of them found the pastor in the balcony. He was covered with the plaid, although the evening was warm. Having found out the cause of the pastor's anxiety, lord Benedict promised him to put everything in order.

"By the way, I wanted to offer you to invite your servant here. He's so attached to you that he must be sad alone, while you are accustomed to his services. Sandra goes to London tomorrow, he will take your and my letters to Academy, represent you in celebrations and then he will run in at your servant's and in the evening, to the delight of everybody, he will be here already. I have one more question for you. Your wife and Jenny love to bathe in the sea and a noisy company. Would you like to send them a letter and some money for their trip through Sandra? Soon you will become Creuse, because your book's edition is enormous, right? Just now I could lend you some money, while they would leave London content with you and their future health-resort life."

"Lord Benedict, that would be the best way out for everybody, especially for me and Alyssa. Thank you very much."

"Great, my dear friend. Eat this sweet, and let's go downstairs to have a supper."

Nal and Nikolay were already waiting for them in the dining-room. They were glad to see the pastor and Alyssa, as though they hadn't seen them for a long time.

"Lord Wodsword, we don't like it at all to be separated from you and Alyssa. If you don't want to walk, we will seat you in the shadow by the tennis court with the whole heap of books, but please don't leave us alone," Nal was talking to them by embracing now the pastor now Alyssa.

The evening flew by fast, which Alyssa enriched with her music, while the pastor performed some arias perfectly. Love for the art overcame his weakness, and the song inspired by the pastor took hold of the listeners.

"Man is created so strangely! In all likelihood I will be singing when I die, too."

"I don't know whether I have enough strength to play when I die, but it must be a great happiness to die with the music."

"I don't know what happiness will fall on you, miss Alyssa," Sandra was talking to her by wiping his tears, "but today my heart was overflowed with bliss several times from your music and your father's songs. The music squeezes my tears rarely, and today they were pouring straight from my heart which those wonderful sounds opened."

"I also was feeling your music in a special way, my dear sister."

Nal pressed herself to Alyssa and whispered her.

"Thank you for two of us. How happy thanks to you is that one who's begun to live within me! He is getting ready to understand instantly the nature, its beauty, people and charm of the sounds. Alyssa, my friend, I share both my joy and my pain with you, but at the same time you are both my prop and my support. You are the only woman friend of mine. Although you are absolutely young, but you possess so much kindness, seriousness and love that you are both my friend and my mother. Don't leave me, Alyssa. In spite of all my husband's and my father's love, I will feel lonely without you."

"Nal, why do you think that I'm going to leave you? On the contrary, lord Benedict proposed me and my father to stay here for a couple of months, but I'm not going to leave you in the future, too, I will always be with you."

Having admired the beauty of the night for a little while, everybody went to their own rooms and fell asleep peacefully. Sandra left for London early in the morning, fulfilled his task in the Academy and went to the pastor's house. The old servant met him here. Sandra gave his master's letter to him. It was indicated in the letter for him to gather his things, to take some books from the pastor's study and to go to the country-side at lord Benedict's with the delivery of the letter. Jenny was at home and when she heard Sandra's voice, she appeared in the hall.

"Good afternoon, miss Jenny. I brought your father's letter for you and your mother. If you wish to reply, I could wait while you are writing your letter."

Jenny took the letter, accompanied Sandra to the guests' room and asked him about her father's health in a very formal tone.

"Lord Wodsworth is very seriously ill."

"Oh, I've been hearing about my father's illness during my entire life, for twenty-three years already, but thank goodness he's still living successfully," Jenny continued in the same cold way. "It's a great pity that my mother isn't at home, she surely would like to write a reply, too. Excuse me, but I will leave you for a while."

Jenny went to her room to write her reply, while Sandra sat down on the dusty armchair that was covered with the white slipcover. So little time had flown by since he was visiting the pastor here last time, only a couple of months ago, but now there was nothing left from the atmosphere which was prevailing back then. Where was the peace gone, which the host was radiating in his house? Where was that irreproachable cleanness gone, which must have been kept by Alyssa? Where were the joyous laughter and the music gone? Some joyless thoughts began to spin in the youth's head in the oppressive silence of the house. He was thinking about Jenny, how charming, intelligent and full of meaning she seemed for him to be before, and how everything seemed to be only a shining bubble. He was thinking about the pastor's suffering that was lasting for many years and about which he didn't even have any idea before. One question after another was breaking out from Sandra's heart. Where was the real essence of things? Why did the pastor have to carry this burden of his inner disharmony on his shoulders? How did he manage to remain always the same calm, kind and to give his smile to everybody? Where and what was the source of his self-control, so that he was able to hide his wounds from the strangers like this and even to comfort everybody? While he, Sandra, was so helpless, quick-tempered, unrestrained and egoist.

Jenny came back without any reply. She explained to Sandra that her father's letter had disturbed her a little and that she could reply to him only tomorrow by mail.

"My father is also writing that his health is poor. Besides, for the first time he's not only protesting, but he even wants us to go to the sea. I liked it very much. I hate the country-side and its



boredom. This is the most suitable place only for Alyssa. Aren't you bored with the beauty of the nature yet?" Jenny was speaking ironically.

"Miss Jenny, I still didn't have time to see it."

"Then what are you doing there? Of course, Alyssa is altering all of the dresses of the countess and she doesn't have enough time. And what is the countess doing? Do you still admire her?"

"The countess and Alyssa are almost inseparable, as well as all of us together with your father and lord Benedict. Both ladies are learning to ride on horseback, they strengthen their health with sports, as lord Benedict recommends them. Besides, our host possesses a wonderful library. The ladies are learning both with me and with the count Nikolay and lord Benedict himself."

"You can persuade me as much as you want that Alyssa isn't sewing, I won't believe you anyway. Of course, she made the dresses for the horse-race..."

All of a sudden Jenny stammered from Sandra's look. What was in that look that she was rather calm a moment ago and then suddenly she flew into a rage? As though a fire ran across her – she was so irritated.

Sandra was looking at her sadly, as though he was feeling sorry for her. He wasn't that youth who was admiring her anymore, who was in power of her beauty before, whom sometimes she was mocking at and whom she used to rest against the wall with her wit. He wasn't that man anymore, who was admiring her mind and womanhood. He was the new man who was looking attentively at her soul and who was searching there for an answer to some of his questions, while Jenny only wanted to slide the surface of her life easily, who wanted to be a woman, to be charming, to be liked and not to be interested in a strange soul. Her anger made her ask Sandra sharply why he was staring at her like some compassionate Samaritan whose compassion she didn't need at all.

"Yes, I know that there's no place for compassion within you or next to you, but I was always thinking that you were better protected from evil and now I can see how widely you are open for everything what is evil. That person who is so easily irritated is simply inviting the lowest suffering from his passions into himself and next to himself."

"You must have learned how to preach in the lord Benedict's house? Or perhaps, you've caught mania from my father to correct people? I hate sermons!" Jenny stamped down her foot. "My dearest preacher father who has written lots of sermons almost like before his eternal parting and who proposes us to go to the health-resort, has forgotten about the most important thing – money. Of course, he may forget about such trifle only because of his absent-mindedness," Jenny was almost screaming.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, that's me, gawk, who has forgotten about it, and not the pastor. Here's the packet for you, and here's another one for your mother," and Sandra extended two packets for her. They were inscribed by the pastor's hand.

Jenny snatched them greedily, but then she felt ashamed and became even more furious. She wanted to disguise such behaviour of hers somehow and turned to the window. Having taken advantage of this, Sandra left the room.

Arthur was ready to leave and he was already waiting for him in the hall. They left the house silently, got into the lord Benedict's coach and then they were already in the train. Sandra took the good look at the old servant for the first time. He wasn't stooped from the weight of his years, he was still straight, broad-shouldered, although not very tall, but he was well-built, his face was beautiful, kind and noble. He looked more like the pastor's friend than his servant.

“Have you been living in the pastor’s family for a long time?”

“I never parted with sir Wodsword in my life. When the deceased lord Wodsword, the pastor’s uncle, suspended all his nurses and governesses, he appointed me to be his servant. I was fourteen, while the pastor was seven years old back then and he was living at his uncle’s house. Lord Andrew was saint child back then already, as well as later he was saint youth, saint husband and father, saint pastor,” Arthur covered his face with his hands in order to hide his pouring tears. “The saints don’t live for a long time. What should they do here? My master is still young, but his heart is unable to bear the suffering anymore. It has burnt out. His suffering has burnt it out, as well as me at the same time. I know it well that I will bring only his coffin to London. If you’ve grown up together with another man – then you’ve grown into his heart. There’s no need for any words – you know everything yourself. I know it, too, although nobody has told me anything about it.”

He wiped off his tears again, and his inner strength cleared up his face.

“Most likely, my master also knows that he won’t be back. What great God’s compassion is that he won’t die in the house of his daily suffering.”

Sandra was looking at this man with fascination and respect. His speech and the way of how he was expressing his thoughts showed that he was rather cultured person.

“Have you really lived your entire life next to the lord Wodsword? And you didn’t create your own family?”

“I haven’t separated with my master for a single day up to this year. If he had been happy, then probably I would have had time to create my own family, but the pastor was so unhappy, he was hiding his pain and misfortune so much from everybody that he always needed me. Alyssa was able to fully guess his illness about three years ago, because he succeeded to hide the truth even from her loving eyes.”

The great servant’s loyalty for his master pierced Sandra’s heart. Unawares he compared his behaviour with respect to lord Benedict, and shame penetrated into his heart, perception that he, philosopher and inventor, was of lower spiritual culture than this tender and loving servant.

A friendly relationship settled between them without any words. In this way both of them reached the lord Benedict’s house. They were in time only for supper. The pastor’s meeting with his servant was another lesson for Sandra. The servant who knew that he was coming here to nurse his dying master entered his room in such a way as though he had always been here and only had left to another room in order to bring some small thing. His face was calm, he put all his things in the usual order instantly, gave the newest magazines and today’s newspaper to the pastor and began to tell him about his visiting of his relatives. Sandra exchanged glances and smiles with Alyssa and left the room.

The time for the inhabitants of the lord Benedict’s house was flying by peacefully; but it was like this only visually, and completely differently, with tension in each of their inner spiritual structures between two poles of two men – the pastor who was leaving and the developing new life of Nal.

Alyssa simply burst into bloom. Her spiritual growth was reflected in all her actions. When one was looking at her, it seemed that it was absolutely easy for her to nurse her ill father: Alyssa was rising from the chair maybe a thousand times, she used to feed him, give him medicine, measure his temperature, change the compresses and warmers, scold the patient with her smile for his too big patience. Lord Wodsword was growing sickly, weak and thin in their sight, while his face and his look were getting always brighter. He used to receive some dry letters from Jenny and Katherine. Once, when he was sitting in the armchair, and his daughter was nursing him, he said to Florentian.

“It is so strange that Jenny – my daughter with whom I’ve been living for twenty-three years without any separation, to whom I used to dedicate even more of my attention and wardship than to Alyssa – didn’t even understand that my last farewell letter for her, full of love and entreaty, was my last hope to make my way through to her heart. From all my intensive and abundant tries to break down the partitions between me and her, this last letter of mine was the most active call of my heart. By leaving I’m taking away the big burden for that unfulfilled duty for my daughter.”

“If all parents protected their children from evil in the same way as you were doing it during your entire life, my friend, it would be easier to live in the world, and people would suffer less. There wasn’t any injustice with respect to Jenny in your family. Her mother lifted her up on the pedestal undeservedly, while you would always take her down every time you could. You used to awaken her human feelings and her interest in universal life not with your words, but with your own example. This fight of yours didn’t allow her to go down. Besides, I’ve been telling you this several times already, that neither father nor mother is able to tread the path to life for their children. What is the meaning now for you to rend your heart with pain for that life which Jenny has chosen? Think only about that whether you’ve done everything in order to open two paths of man for her that man’s spiritual path is equivalent to his physical one. Everything what you were doing for her showed her that life wasn’t an outburst of passions, a flight to beauty or a fall into the abyss. You’ve proved to her that man’s daily work on the earth was his life itself, its entire essence. Consequently, you’ve given the proper crutches, all means to your daughter, so that she could perceive that life was the man himself, his kindness and his daily creative process.

You did everything for that soul whom the Only One Life gave to you to protect, and how this soul is walking through her life with her karmic paths and powers, how she would or wouldn’t accept your guiding threads – that doesn’t depend on you anymore. There are some periods in every man’s life when his spirit throws the chains of his accumulated habits down of himself. All of a sudden, his eyes open up, and they we say: the man has changed, but not the man has changed, but the certain amount of the radiating energy became free within him, which he was using to fight against himself before. His passions are falling down off the man like some decayed clothes, which were oppressing his thoughts and his heart, while his liberated matter of his spirit is pouring into his path with Light. Among the many passing turns in our lives, there’s one common and inevitable culminating point for all men during each of their incarnations – that’s death.

In that moment man’s spirit becomes completely free from the laws of the earth. There isn’t a single man who could stay on the earth at least for a moment if he has already hatched from those dried shells of his passions which don’t serve for his creative life anymore. The endless examples of individually unrepeatable lives of people always manifest themselves in the only and the same law of the universe: the perpetual creative movement forward to their improvement. Some hopeless cases of incarnations happen as well when man’s dried passions grow together with the matter of his spirit so much that it is impossible for him to throw them down. Then the whole man’s incarnation is ruined. Many possibilities to become free were sent to him, but he wasn’t able to take advantage of them, and the man leaves the earth so that in his new and lighter form he would learn for a long time how he would need to live on the earth next time. Or on the contrary, man has already outgrown his surroundings. He has given all his creative strengths for his work done and he has risen with his spirit in such a way that he could bring his creation to the earthly life again. Then he leaves the earth so that he could come back onto it again very soon. In these cases, which are especially protected by the powers of light, man not only comes back soon, but the conditions of his new life on the earth unite with that love which he has sown himself during his last life.

Don’t worry, my dear friend, your case is exactly like this one. You’ve given so much love to the earth that already now it has grown into the powerful strength and it would attract your new incarnation to itself. I have already asked you to be immersed in joy of perception of the whole grandeur of

man's path during these last days of yours. The door of your heart used to open widely to your every meeting with people up to now, and now this door is unable even to close anymore: Eternity has come through it and united with Love that is living within you. Go be seeing your entire path consciously. Go without any fear, pain, doubts. No one is able to move your harmony on the earth anymore."

Florentian left the room by leaving Alyssa and her father who were almost inseparable anymore.

Sandra and Mildrey were often going to London with everybody's assignments, but they also used to spend almost their entire leisure time by the patient. By demand of the host, Nal and Nikolay used to make the round of the fields and the forests with him in the mornings by becoming involved in the government of the farming and by learning to manage the farm in this way, but they were trying to spend each of their free minute with the pastor.

Florentian would take Alyssa for a walk in almost every evening, while Nal would stay by the patient instead of her. These hours used to turn into their great happiness for both of the women. Although Nal used to see the pastor relatively rarely, she loved him like her second father, but the father made of the body and the blood as herself, because she considered Florentian and her uncle Ali to be among the higher level people. She used to feel in a much simpler way while staying next to the pastor. All those vital misunderstandings and questions for which she dared to address neither her father Florentian nor her husband used to be solved very easily here. The pastor would guess all those questions of the future mother beforehand and he would bring the perception of the great laws of nature into her consciousness in such a way that there wasn't any place for any superstitions of shyness left in this pure spirit. He managed to reveal to Nal that as soon as the new life is set, its mother must think not only about the physical health of her future baby, but also about its character. The pastor didn't forget to remind her with what tranquillity she had to cover her baby already now and to try not to destroy the family harmony that was surrounding it with anything from its first cradle days until it was seven years old. While explaining her motherhood duties to her, first of all he warned her to avoid any mental and physical idleness.

In the meanwhile, when Alyssa was next to Florentian during the hours of her rest, she became stronger not only spiritually, but as it seemed to her, she used to come back completely renewed. Now her entire psyche was changed. Her parting with her father didn't make her sad anymore. She used to tell both to herself and him easily "See you soon!" The girl didn't even think how that miracle, that new incarnation of her father in her own family was going to happen. She understood that for this future joint life only her inner calm, her spiritual height and nobility were important. Alyssa wasn't thinking about any external life factors anymore, because she understood once and for all that one's external life was going on only as the result of one's inner life, and not the other way round.

One evening, after supper Alyssa went to her room and heard a light knock at the door. She saw Doria in the doorway when she invited her to come in, who had brought the new dress for tomorrow for her.

"Excuse me, Alyssa, I knew that you weren't sleeping yet, so I decided to bring the dress for you, because I was late to prepare it for you."

"That's nothing that you were late, Doria," Alyssa told her while offering a seat for her next to herself. "Besides I could manage perfectly without this dress, but it isn't good already that you sit too long over your work. Me and Nal were asking you several times already to rest more and to go to bed earlier. You seem to be very tired during the last days... But why are you crying, Doria?"

"I'm crying, because just now I understood till the end what I have done during my life. My whole life hurts me, and my meeting with you has forced me to revalue it. Only when I was acquainted with you I understood that I didn't love anybody till the end, I wasn't really loyal to anybody till the end and I even wasn't kind to anybody till the end, although I was living, as I was thinking, only in order to do good for people. Now when I see how you are living I understand what Ananda was telling me when he told me that I was doing everything by following my mind and that I was always searching for the threads of logic with which I was trying to cover people like with my imaginary love; and that I always wanted everybody to see clearly that those were my threads of love and kindness which I was carrying for them.

The path of light was open for me. I was allowed to choose and to determine my path myself. My master, dear Ananda, who developed the powers of perception of all eternal laws of life within myself, gave an absolute freedom to me to form myself not according to his instructions, but by being led of that joy of knowledge which he had revealed to me, but I was thinking that he gave too little attention to me, that he gave preference to others. I was angry, I was jealous, I brought the whole hurricane of my personal riot in my relations with him and the other people who were next to him. Only now when I met you, when I saw your life I understood what the words "Leave your home and follow me" meant. I understood what the ordinary kindness was, what the "home" was not in that sense what it meant for man as the term of his normal mode of life, but the home in the sense of peace within him when he didn't demand anything personally for him from those whom he was living with; the home not in the conditionalities of man's external life, but in the great silence of his heart which he is able to protect within himself both in the strangers' home and during all his meetings and encounters with people, wherever it would happen. Alyssa, you've become love and kindness yourself not because you met Florentian, but you met him because when you were living in that hell of your family by serving your mother and your sister like an ordinary slave-servant, never even thinking to demand any reward for your love from them. Now you are serving your dying father in such a way as though you were leading him into the greatest joy."

"It is exactly like this, Doria. I see my father off into the greatest joy, into our joint joy, although I cannot explain anything more to you, but you are wrong by calling me love and kindness. Simply I give back a part of that duty of love in which I'm living next to my father up to now. That one whom you call Florentian really is only love and kindness. That is an unreachable ideal for me which is impossible for one even to come nearer to."

"Well, you see, you consider your Teacher to be almost from another world, while I always wanted some equality from Ananda, not comprehending and evaluating those facilitations of his with which he was trying to liberate me from my own set eye-flaps of conditionalities with which I was living. Once I began to ask Ananda to send me to one of those difficult tasks to which he was sending others. He was trying to prove to me that I wasn't yet ready for this, that the logic of my mind which declared: "I love", "I believe", "I don't lie", "I'm living without any crutches and superstitions", was exactly my most real superstition, that I had to wait until the chains which were binding the real joy of my love would fall down off me, and only then I would be ready for the tests and tasks. Otherwise that would summon the double grief both for myself and for those people with whom I would be associating. And he added by smiling: "I will have to take that failed try of your life upon myself, while you, my poor Doria, will have to start everything from the beginning. Understand that a wish surpassing your possibilities is burning in you, while man is able to overcome his wishes only where his activity is taking place below the limits of his spiritual strength. Where man's work corresponds to his spiritual strength, he wins with his love and peace. You still don't possess the strength and if you undertake the task earlier than your self-control matures and harmony settles, then you only will become inflamed and... you will go out."

I was striving and demanding it in every possible way, and extremely kind Ananda gave two assistants to me and he didn't prevent me from doing it. You must have guessed already how chaotic my

activity was and how demanding to people I was. I was thinking a lot of how tired I was back then and I wasn't thinking much that I gave neither rest nor help to those people whom I met. They would get tired of me, they didn't make any progress, while I didn't even understand it. The final of that task was sorrowful. I used to bring in so much personal rubbish that I was unable to help the people's eyes to see clearly and to rise up to the grandeur of the real values. Ananda obeyed to the demands of those who were standing higher than him and called me off, while extremely compassionate Florentian took me to himself by sharing the blow hit by me to Ananda with him. I heard how he was saying to my Teacher: "You are always trying to let people walk their paths absolutely free in the same way as you and I. were doing it, but such miracles don't happen with others. Don't lead weak people into temptation to make their choices freely because of your infinite kindness and humiliation, by judging about them from the position of your enormous power. You better let them mature within the limits of the strict obedience. In this way, it'll be easier for them to reach their self-control."

I don't know whether it would have been easier for me like this, I only know that I came here to say thank you for our meeting, for that example of woman's life in which I could see your mind, talent and nobility completely corresponding to your kindness. Joy to be next to you helps me not to bemoan my failures in vain, but makes me gain strength, derive fortitude in the same way as I can see you doing it every day. What a happiness it is that you need me now, Alyssa! I know that you don't need my support as much as I need it myself. Since that time when I saw that in every moment somebody needed you, how everybody was coming to you with their big and small affairs, I began to wish to become your loyal servant, like the old Arthur is to your father."

"Doria, my dear, you will make me die of laughing. I won't hold out anymore and I will burst out laughing by awakening the whole house. You are and you will be Nal's and my best friend, the best and the most wonderful aunt of Nal's first-born. Enough of being a humiliated servant. A kinder, purer, more loyal and modest one than you, doesn't exist even in fairy-tales. Until you marry..."

"No, Alyssa, I've taken the pledge of complete chastity, and this side of life doesn't exist for me."

"Doria, perhaps this is very egoistic for my part, but in this case nobody is able to separate us anymore, and each of my children will have two mothers, which makes me very happy."

The girls still couldn't separate so quickly. Doria told Alyssa about Ananda, about his voice, beauty and his played violoncello.

"I can imagine what a music it would be if you played and sang with him. When he begins to sing, as though the sword pierces through one's heart, and all petty things die in it. Something unearthly is hidden in Ananda's, as well as in Florentian's, singing... Alyssa, and I was next to such man. And I was searching for some spots on his clothes instead of carrying joy to people. I was living next to Ananda on the seashore, in the inexpressible beauty and, instead of rejoicing at his presence, instead of trying to convey his wise help to everybody, I was always comparing my own destiny with the lives of the people who were surrounding him, and it always seemed to me that he was showing too little attention to me."

"My dear, but all of it is the past already," Alyssa was talking to Doria by embracing her. "Now this experience of yours has revealed the perception of your own strength to you. Now being next to lord Benedict you've found the new energy that you need, and undoubtedly, sooner or later you will meet Ananda again."

"Alyssa, do you think that this is possible?"

"I cannot imagine how it could be differently. The people of such level like Ananda, Florentian and, of course, many others about whom I don't know anything are living only in order to help people, everybody without exception. How could they leave you without any help by seeing your efforts? One cannot be only half-loyal, because that would be not devotion of one's heart, but only a compromise, but now you cannot live anybody in half anymore. Even me and Nal you fully accept such as we are, with all our characteristics. I'm sure that you start a new life in which you will protect many people from their painful mistakes, because you've crossed the abyss of human pain yourself."

The girls went out to the balcony and they were surprised when they saw the bright morning already.

"What I've done again! Alyssa, every drop of your strength is so important to you, and I've taken the whole night from you."

"Therefore, try to cook some chocolate for me and Alyssa, and to bring it here, beneath the oak," Florentian's voice was heard, who was sitting on the bench in front of Alyssa's balcony, "and you, Alyssa, come here, now it is too late to go to bed already."

The confused girls separated, and soon Alyssa was sitting next to Florentian.

"My child, the days are flying by quickly, and the summer comes to an end already. We need to wait that if not today, then tomorrow your father will leave us. Be strong, my daughter," Florentian was talking to her very tenderly. "Remember for how many times I was telling you that for man to understand something, but not to be able to fulfil it, means not to understand it completely, but only to obscure his working day with needless confusion of his passions and scurry. Another suffering soul has opened her wounds to you, and you've made certain one more time that everybody was carrying his own cross."

"Lord Benedict, let that day be blessed when I met you. I, as well as my father, can say this: my life has changed after this meeting, it has turned into the fairy-tale and joy since that time. I will try to be worthy of that who has uttered: "My daughter" now and who changes my leaving father for me. Don't condemn your weak daughter if a tear rolls down her cheek anyway. That will be only the tear of bliss by accepting my life such as it was given to me."

Doria gave the chocolate to them. She was still confused and she couldn't raise her eyes.

"Doria, sit down with us. Why haven't you brought some chocolate for yourself, too? Can't you feel that your lessons of the servant are over already? Thank you for your diligence, for your tenderness and kindness which you've tied into your lesson and which you've brought into all my affairs. Thank you, my dear Doria. After the pastor's death and funeral, we'll soon leave for America from here. I had planned out differently, but lately my plans have changed two times already. Everyone of us must adapt himself flexibly to the call of his life and lend an attentive ear to it. My dear daughter Doria, you've understood all your mistakes and the most important from them – your exactingness to people. You've already comprehended your place in the universe, namely your obedience has helped you to finish your lesson faster. Now you will be our friend here, my daughter, the member of our family. Don't weigh how and along which path you are going to come back to Ananda again. Do your everyday work till the end, with love, in the same way as you are doing it now, and life itself will undo and knot the new threads for you, which now you cannot even imagine."

Florentian embraced Doria, seated her between himself and Alyssa, mopped her tears with his refreshing handkerchief, pushed his chocolate to her and added by stroking her head as if she was a child.

“Drink, my dear.”

Doria pressed herself to Florentian, while Alyssa – to her. She was rejoicing at her friend’s happiness more than she would have rejoiced at her own one.

“I could have endured everything calmly without any tears,” Doria almost whispered, “but when you said to me: “Thank you”, that exceeded my self-control already. Your compassion has saved me once already. Now I saw that it was absolutely limitless. That one word of yours has cut all the ropes that were holding my personal wants for ever. As though it has built the bridge from my heart to every man whom I meet. I won’t be able to think about myself anymore, only about those whom life brings to me through different ways for love and comfort.”

“All right, my child. Drink your chocolate and go to help Arthur. Change him by the patient, while you, Alyssa, take these drops and go to sleep for a while. Doria will wake you up in three hours and then you will change her by your father’s bed.”

After a while Doria stepped into the pastor’s room. The patient was sleeping calmly after the difficult night. Arthur was sitting on the chair by resting his head on his hands. Now when nobody could see him, the old servant wasn’t fighting against his despair anymore. His sorrowful eyes were full of tears, his face was pale and gaunt. He was strict and sad. There wasn’t any sign from that usual tender smile of his left when he was smiling while talking to the pastor and Alyssa in order not to reveal his pain. Having seen Doria, Arthur stood up and mopped his tears. He wanted to pull the chair for her, but Doria only put the finger to her lips, showed the balcony’s door to him and left the room silently. In several minutes she came back by carrying the tray with the breakfast. She put it on the table and invited Arthur with the gesture of her hand. She seated him and made him eat.

“Lady, I cannot eat, I’ve lost not only my appetite, but also the whole meaning of my life. Everything is over.”

“For how many times I’ve been telling you not to call me lady, I’m the same servant as you are.”

“Lady Doria, maybe now you are servant, but I know perfectly who is lady and how to distinguish her. You behave like the real lady, and your manners are also like the lady’s ones, so I’m calling and I will be calling you lady, although you would be only a servant for everybody else. My dear pastor was teaching with his behaviour during his entire life how one needed to take a good look at man’s heart and to be able to respect him for his suffering and kindness, and not for his occupied position in the society. You are smiling to everybody in the same way as my dear lady Alyssa is doing, but I doubt whether your smile has come from a smaller suffering than hers. Only she was always gentle, and the angels brought compassion to her cradle for her, while you, lady Doria, are very proud and you had to defeat seven vicious fairies yourself for compassion. Forgive me for such talk. I’m uneducated, right? The kind pastor has done a lot for me, I acquired some education, too. In general, I wouldn’t dare to talk to you like this, but in the presence of death of what is the dearest for me in the world, everything seems to be unimportant for me, and only love for man survives. Now not only the pastor’s life is finished, but also I am. There’s nothing more left of what was worth my living.”

“Could you be indifferent to Alyssa and her life?”

“Of course, not. I love and respect Alyssa very much, and not only because of her love for her father, but also because of her pure and noble soul. However, she will have her own life in which there may not be any place for me. Even now when I could comfort her at least a little, she’s so strong that she doesn’t need it, too.”



"You are very wrong, Arthur. She needs you not only now, but she will need you very much in the future as well. You cannot comprehend now from where Alyssa is deriving strength for her balance, self-control and endurance, why her heart isn't bursting with pain like yours."

"Lady Doria, miss Alyssa is still young. Youth is marching forward easier, while we, old people, don't march forward anymore. Only the grave is left for us."

"Namely here is hidden the whole difference between Alyssa and you. Alyssa knows that man is always marching forward, that death of his temporary body doesn't stop the eternal life of his spirit. And in your opinion, man was living, thinking about something, doing something, creating, then he died and everything changed: he got into the heaven or hell, suddenly became a saint or a sinner. But there aren't any jumps in life. Everything is moving forward and doesn't stop for a moment. If the pastor closes his eyes today – that still doesn't mean that your bond with him will break off. That only means that your life still has to serve him on the earth. He leaves and becomes invisible to you, but he leaves his precept to you, in which not only his last will, but also those truths of life which he understood not so long ago will be set forth. You don't need to grieve, Arthur, you need to see your friend off with joy, otherwise it will be difficult for him to leave the earth if he sees such pain of yours. Believe me, I know that he will leave the letter with his last will for you, from which you will understand what a happiness is waiting for you to stay alive after his death. Due to certain conditions, he can give that letter to you through lord Benedict only after his death. Hold tight, believe and wait without any doubts. Lord Benedict told you to eat these two sweets and to go to bed. I will sit here for a while, and when you take a rest, I will wake up both you and Alyssa."

Arthur was looking at Doria without taking his eyes off her, he swallowed the sweets in silence, kissed her extended hand, took the tray with the remains from breakfast and left the room.

Having sat down by the bed, Doria looked at the pastor's face. It was pale and aged, furrowed with deep wrinkles. The traces of great tiredness and suffering could be seen in it. Doria remembered Alyssa's and Arthur's stories of how handsome and slender the pastor was when he was young, how he used to laugh by burning the heaps of letters written by women every day. Also now his face was still handsome, and when he used to reflect or talk about something with inspiration, then he used to be simply charming, but now as though he had said good-bye to everything what was earthly. Doria was thinking about the pastor's life, about his desires, fight, misfortunes and his tears. How little personal happiness this man had experienced! And anyway, he used to bring peace everywhere with himself, it used to become easier for everybody even from his presence, from his kind word. Only his own family didn't respect him, they needed neither his peace nor his sermons here. That life full of work and difficulties was over already, some unfinished affairs remained, a possibility to change something. "And as always," Doria was thinking, "when people cover the segment of their life on the earth, they lose a half of its value only because of their blind superstitions, and when their last hour strikes they aren't ready for this last call of their lives."

The pastor woke up and gave a smile to Doria.

"How strange, I didn't even know that you were sitting here. I was dreaming about you and I was reading your thoughts in my dream. In the beginning you were thinking about my life, then about people in general, that they were never ready for their death. Was it really like this? Are you thinking like this?"

"Yes, sir Wodsworth, I was thinking exactly like this and I'm surprised that you have guessed it."

“Oh no, Doria. I’m a bad guesser. Simply I was reading the words which were covering your head. For how long was I sleeping? Where is Alyssa? I would like to stay with her during the entire day.”

There was a knock at the door. Lord Benedict came in. He changed Doria, gave the medicine to the pastor himself and sat down in her place by the patient’s bed.

“My dear friend, you asked me to calm Arthur. Now I’ve come to fulfil this wish of yours. Here’s the paper and the envelope for you, here’s the plate so that you could write this last letter of yours in bed. I’m happy of being able to fulfil not only this request of yours, but also to tell an extremely glad news to you: you will spend your future life together with Arthur again. You will be brothers, both of you will be born in Alyssa’s family. A double happiness is waiting for Arthur, because he will be living here until you come back to the earth. His hands will accept your new body, he will be taking care of you until you are seven years old and then he will leave in order to become your youngest brother whom, in your turn, you will return all the trouble and services of this incarnation. Write the letter to Arthur and tell all of it to him, while I and Doria will explain those things to him, which he won’t be able to understand.”

It wasn’t easy to write this precept to Arthur for the pastor who had already half lost touch with the earth. Florentian helped him. Sometimes he even used to hold his hand, gave him the restorative medicine to take – and anyway the pastor was so tired by finishing to write the letter that even the cold sweat stood out on his face. In the letter he also wrote to Arthur about the share of the property which he would get through the lord Benedict.

“It is really my last letter, lord Benedict. I feel that also this day is already the last day of my being on the earth. I would like to spend it with Alyssa and Arthur, and if I dared, I would add that I would spend it with you, too.”

“That’s why I came here, my dear friend, so that I wouldn’t step aside from you until the last moment, and soon Alyssa with Arthur will come. Now you’ve already moved so far away from the physical plan that you only need to concentrate your remaining attention on a person and you will be able to read his thoughts. Exactly in the same way, by concentrating your entire attention on Love which you call your Father, you will be able to leave your physical case and this world without any pain, and to get into the spiritual plan. Every man leaves the earth and goes right there where he’s gotten used to act, from where he’s gotten used to bring the activity of his spirit and fire into the visible forms of the earth. You’ve gotten used to live and to work in the spiritual plan. Now this habit of yours has built the straight way for you into there. Say good-bye to Alyssa and Arthur, bless them as your future mother and brother. Say good-bye to Sandra and Mildrey, read whom of them will become Alyssa’s husband and unite the hands of the future husband and wife yourself by knowing that you will come as the eldest son to their family.”

Lord Benedict gave the pill to the pastor, went downstairs and told to wake up Alyssa and Arthur. He brought the pastor’s letter to his study, locked it in the secret drawer of the writing-table and came back to the pastor. After a while Arthur showed up, Alyssa also came after him. It seemed that both of them understood the change that had happened within the pastor. The patient asked them to lift him higher on the pillows, he took Arthur’s hand and told him silently.

“You’ve never been my servant. You’ve always been my friend, my brother, my nurse, my mother. You’ve replaced all my relatives for me. Don’t be sad and don’t cry because I leave sooner than you do. Think for a while how I could live without you if you left earlier than me. I could live for so long on the earth only because of your care and because of growing Alyssa’s attention. Now I cannot tell you everything what I would like to tell you, but when I die, lord Benedict will give my letter to you. Please fulfil my last will: don’t cry, be kind as before and wait for me again next to Alyssa. Direct your whole love to her and wait for me in her family.”

The pastor united Alyssa's and Arthur's hands, and lord Benedict put his own hands upon theirs.

"Serve lord Benedict in the same way as you were doing it for me. Bring his name into your consciousness for ever, cut it in your heart."

Sandra entered the room. However Florentian had prepared him, although now he entered the room by knowing consciously that he came to say good-bye to the pastor, spasms distorted his face anyway when he saw the dying who had changed so much. Sandra went down on his knees and covered his face with his hands. The pastor put his hand on his head and told him.

"My dear friend, we often used to talk about the values of man's earthly existence, and you used to share my opinion that the whole beauty of man's earthly existence was hidden in harmony of man's strength. Solitude doesn't exist for those hearts and thoughts are liberated from superstitions. Why are you crying now? If you didn't take anything from my thoughts, from my love into your everyday activity, then our friendship is finished, and both of us are separated. If I could love you so much that my love opened an opportunity in your consciousness to go up into perfection, then we'll still meet without fail, because your real activity will draw the energy of my love again. Don't forget that the most important man's meetings are the ones with children. Dedicate more of your attention to them, because we never know whom we meet within them. Go, my friend, be strong. Don't leave the lord Benedict's home and avoid the red-haired women. They might bring lots of evil for you."

Lord Benedict lifted Sandra up, accompanied him up to the door and told him to send lord Mildrey in order to say good-bye to the pastor.

When lord Mildrey came in, Alyssa was on her knees next to her father.

"Come here, my dear friend, faster, I cannot see clearly anything what is earthly anymore," the pastor told him. "I can read your thoughts and I see how you wish me to rise as high as possible, to go as far as possible, to forget about the Earth and to keep only the bond of love with it – of love which is pouring to me from the hearts that stay here. You are trying to send your courage and tranquillity to me with all your heart. Thank you. Now I understood how pure your love to me and Alyssa was. It'll be great for me to live in that harmonious family again, which you and Alyssa will create. I bless you. I give you my daughter as wife and as mother of your future children. Don't leave the lord Benedict's home and live with Alyssa in such a way and in that place where and how he will tell you to."

The pastor united Alyssa's and Mildrey's hands, while lord Benedict strengthened this union again.

"I bless you one more time, live in harmony, go with joy day after day, loving and loved."

The pastor's hand drooped, his body trembled, stretched – he died in a flash.

Lord Mildrey rose, lifted Alyssa up and, having looked at Florentian who was still holding their hands in his own ones, told him.

"I will fulfil my dead friend's will till the end. Lord Benedict, there's only one path before me – to follow you. When you decide that time and place are right for our marriage, please tell it to me and to my future wife. Now I understand why you gave the bracelet with green jewels to me back then. If lady Alyssa accepts her father's and your will – here's that bracelet. I didn't leave it from the very moment when I received it."

Alyssa extended her hand to lord Benedict and told him.

“Let the Only One and bright Life turn into bright happiness for our whole future-family. I accept my father’s will with feeling of bliss, and your bracelet will help me to protect our future children’s lives. I will try to be loving wife and mother, and you won’t leave us and you will continue to be our father.”

Florentian put the bracelet for her, embraced both of them and said to Mildrey.

“Accompany Alyssa at Nal’s, entrust both women to Nikolay and come back here.”

Mildrey took over all official matters of the funeral, he was taking care of the body’s transportation to London, sent the message about the pastor’s death to Jenny and lady Katherine. Sandra had so high temperature that they had to invite the doctor. Nal and Nikolay didn’t step back from Alyssa, Doria was taking care of Arthur who reminded only of the automatically moving marionette.

The difficult moments of Alyssa’s meeting with her mother and sister were rather alleviated, because there were always lots of people present, besides Nal and Nikolay were always next to her. The pastor’s wife was trying to make her demands on lord Benedict in a high tone that Alyssa had to move to her house immediately, but when lord Benedict affected her with his sharp look and reminded her that the house belonged only to Alyssa, she settled down instantly. Lord Benedict told her that the pastor’s testament existed where it was fixed that Alyssa would be living not with her mother, but with him.

“The whole testament for you will be read tomorrow, at twelve o’clock, at Alyssa’s house. You will get its copy, so don’t even think about your joint living with Alyssa. You know yourself how disdainfully you were treating your daughter, how outrageously unfair you were to her. I tried to provide for your life till your old age, so that you wouldn’t have to live in poverty, but if you choose the path of evil and villainy, then both your daughter Jenny’s and your lives will be terrible, only misfortunes will be leading you. Think a little about it one more time before realizing those projects which you are dreaming about now. You still have some time left. You still can stop. Search for the real motherly love within your heart, and not for the surrogate of sale and purchase which you call love.”

This is how the entire period of life ended for the people who had come on the stage of life by the pastor’s grave and then parted.

## Chapter 7

### Alyssa's illness. Florentian's letter to Jenny.

#### Nikolay

Having received the urgent message about the pastor's death, lady Katherine and Jenny were surprised not by the death itself for which both of them were waiting by knowing that his death was deadly, but by the unexpected outcome which they were expecting only after two or three years.

Jenny insisted instantly to come back to London as soon as possible, but lady Katherine talked her daughter out of it by naming different reasons, by telling her that the day coach had already left, and that it wasn't safe for them to go with the evening one during the entire night, besides how they would show to people instantly after such tiring journey.

It seemed that now when the pastor's wife separated with the man who pulled her from the clutches of misery, from destiny of a hired worker, who created cosy and provided life for her, then even the hardest heart would express at least some gratitude; but the pastor wife's words about her husband were full of poison and hatred. Her accumulated jealousy for his kindness, which had summoned reciprocal people's love, now manifested itself in her desire to avenge him and to mock at everything what was related to him. When Jenny kept demanding her to go, the pastor's wife told her.

"Understand that if we go there now, then all those troubles will fall on us, and if we go only to the funeral, then everything will be done already. Alyssa enjoyed her father's closeness in that luxury of lord Benedict, so now let her take care of everything. We'll dedicate this day for buying the mourning clothes. We'll buy them cheaper here and waste less time. By the way, the message about the death was written in the lord Benedict's name, but it was signed by Amedeo Mildrey. I don't understand why. He cannot be secretary, because only that one lord was left from their entire family. Now he's the richest and the most famous groom of London. What is he doing in that country-side? Isn't the countess attracting him?"

Having exchanged several remarks of similar nature, both ladies went out to the city to order their mourning clothes. On the next morning, wearing the clothes according to the strictest mourning etiquette, mother and her daughter left for London with the morning coach. They left short messages for their admirers and new acquaintances about the sad event which cancelled their pleasant stay by the sea so suddenly.

As the pastor's wife had calculated, they were in time before the coffin's carrying to the cemetery. The countless crowd of poor persons was accompanying the pastor to his last journey, in which most of them were mourning over their constant patron's and friend's death. Although lady Katherine and Jenny saw that people's love for their pastor during their entire life, but only now they comprehended its scale and the pastor's popularity. Lady Katherine almost received a blow right there when the people began to put the wreaths and the flowers, when all kinds of scientists and charitable associations began to tell speeches, when sanctuaries and children's homes began to name the pastor's sums. She couldn't forgive him, because the pastor was living so modestly, he provided for his family so modestly, but he was as the multimillionaire with his charity.

Arthur's silver wreath was distinguished among all the wreaths. The old servant spent the biggest part of his savings on it. Alyssa's and the lord Benedict family's wreaths were also great; and all of them had the same records: "See you soon". Jenny was surprised by these records. If Arthur was already prepared to follow the pastor, then what was the meaning to write "See you soon" for all these members of the lord Benedict's family, who were still full of joy?

Jenny couldn't take her eyes off Alyssa during the entire ceremony of speeches. She had changed very much during this season and especially during this summer and autumn. As though she grew up, became stronger and she didn't remind of the starving, poor teenager anymore. She was standing next to Nal and she was as tall, as slender and as... beautiful as the countess. This was what Jenny's heart had to tell her if it was fair. A thought about her father, that she was saying good-bye to him here didn't occur to Jenny a single time. She was looking at her sister, she was surprised by her appearance, and even the greater jealousy was growing within her.

Although Jenny and her mother had decided that they would take Alyssa straight home from the cemetery, but they came back home alone, satisfied their appetite and, not being able to go anywhere on the very first day of the mourning, they began to make the plans of the future. First of all, they decided to move from their rooms. Jenny will live in the pastor's study and in his bedroom, while her mother will settle in the sitting-room, and the cloak-room will be in Alyssa's room. If they succeed to get Alyssa back, she could live in Jenny's room. They had to wait during the entire evening and morning until twelve o'clock when they come to read the pastor's testament. If the pastor's and Alyssa's rooms weren't locked up, they could start reorganizing the house immediately, but idiotically stupid Arthur not only had locked the door with double locks, but he also had tightened some bolts which were hard to remove. Jenny and the pastor's wife were so impatient that they decided at least to inform Alyssa about this decision of theirs. Jenny went to her room to write the letter to her sister, while her mother decided to have a nap which she could do for the entire day.

*Dear Alyssa, - Jenny began her letter banally. "Most likely tomorrow when our father's testament is read or in the nearest days, you will come back home. I decided to write to you, so that you wouldn't be surprised by the changes that have happened here.*

*In my opinion, the best place in the house, - that's our father's rooms. Now they are free, and I move there. My room is a little dark, but you can live in it, because during the day you sew or work in the garden anyway. We've decided to establish the cloak-room in your former room, while our mother will move to the sitting-room. Our life will be completely different now, which you probably don't doubt. Me and our mother will set the days for accepting guests and finally, we'll be accepting those people whose company corresponds to our position in society. Of course, from time to time we can organize some musical evenings as well, because there are people obsessed with the mania for music everywhere. Then sometimes you can clatter a little, too.*

*By the way, please tell me where did you get the cut of the mourning clothes of the countess and yourself from? It makes one tall and slender so well that I order the same cut for myself without any queues. I know that you've sown everything and that both hats were also the work of your hands – you can deceive whomever you want, but not me, the expert of such things. Even such poor fool like you looked quite well in the cemetery. You see how fair I am, although I'm the recognized beauty, but I can tell anyway that your hat helped you look interestingly.*

*I hope that the countess will find another dress-maker in your place. We need you at home, and if our father assented to your whims, then he's gone now, and all of it has to end. Remember that you*

*minor. I send our mother's will to you: tomorrow you come to the testament reading and don't leave our home anymore. There isn't much time left till that solemn moment. I hope that our crank father didn't play any nonsense on us here. We've suffered enough from his oddities while he was alive, so we don't want them to follow us from another world, too.*

*Tell the old fool Arthur to bring the keys from our father's and your rooms with himself. We cannot move immediately to the rooms because of his foolishness, because he has locked up all the doors with the bolts as well.*

*Usually the letters are finished by giving regards to the hosts' family, but I rather do without this ceremony.*

*Your sister Jenny*

Having sent their friends to the country with the earlier train, Alyssa, lord Benedict, Arthur and Mildrey stayed by the grave for longer than others. They came back to the country only when they planted the flowers on the grave with their own hands. Having gone upstairs to her room, Alyssa felt such physical tiredness that she had to go to bed, because everything began to spin in her eyes. Doria told Nal about Alyssa's condition, she came running to her friend instantly, but then she rushed to find lord Benedict, because she was startled with her weakness and paleness.

Florentian and Nikolay were in Alyssa's room in several minutes. Having examined the patient who was lying almost unconscious, he uttered.

"Nal and Nikolay, you will have to spend this night here, because Doria is very tired. There isn't any danger, but Alyssa will have to lie in bed for a week or maybe even ten days. The poor thing possesses lots of spiritual strength, but very little physical one. Nikolay, we'll have to be occupied with the physical restoration of this organism a lot for a long time, because it was undermined even in her childhood. In order for full harmony to become predominant in this conductor, we'll need to use all physical methods of treatment and some sports.

Now go downstairs, dine without me, I will stay by Alyssa, then come back here, make yourself comfortable for the night and share your watching in half. Every one of you will receive precise instructions. Nal, don't be afraid, there isn't any brain inflammation or nervous fever here. Alyssa was exhausted while she was nursing her father, but it isn't dangerous."

Calmed Nal and Nikolay went downstairs where the first, joyless dinner in the lord Benedict's house was waiting for them – without himself, the pastor and Alyssa. Nal told Florentian's words to Sandra and Mildrey and also his request to wait for him in the dining-room; as soon as Nikolay and Nal would change him, he would go downstairs instantly. The dinner was over soon, because everybody was only trying to seem like eating. When the newly-weds went upstairs again they found Alyssa already in delirium and fever, while Florentian was preparing the medicine. They decided that Nal would keep watch during the first half of the night, while Nikolay – during the second one. Florentian explained to every one of them separately how they had to nurse the patient. Arthur and Doria were breaking in, but he told them strictly to go to bed, because there would be many watching nights ahead, and everybody had to observe the strict regime if they wanted the patient to recover, and at the same time everybody would prepare to move to London smoothly.

Florentian refused to dine, but agreed to drink a cup of coffee with Sandra and Mildrey. Then he invited them to his study and told them.

"I have a big favour to ask you. The pastor's testament will be read tomorrow, at twelve o'clock at his house. I was thinking to take part in that juridical act myself with Alyssa, but her illness has changed this plan of mine. I need two witnesses who could change me and Alyssa. If you agree, I will write the warrant of attorney for you which will be confirmed in juridical office. You will bring the original pastor's testament to me and hand its copy to his wife. Besides, here's Alyssa's letter, she's the proprietor of the house, and you will read the letter after the testament's reading. It also has its copy. You will bring the original back to me and hand the confirmed copy to Alyssa's sister. Is this request of mine not too much trouble for you? Sandra, you've just recovered, haven't you?"

"Lord Benedict, how can you ask about it!" the Indian answered him for both of them with his characteristic heat. "I'm completely healthy already."

Having explained everything about the jurists to them and added that the carriage would be waiting in London's railway station for them, lord Benedict wished them luck and asked Sandra to find Arthur. When the old servant entered the study, the host was holding a letter and a portrait in his hands.

"Arthur, the pastor asked me to give this portrait from his childhood to you. It belonged to his mother. You will find his last will in this letter."

Florentian came up to Arthur, put his hands on his shoulders and continued by looking at his eyes tenderly.

"If anything is unclear to you, please ask me boldly. Arthur, there aren't any miracles in life. Only the knowledge exists, and that person who knows that life is eternal isn't afraid of his death. Death doesn't exist, there's only work, great work to improve for ever. Every man is living many times, and each of his lives – that's work which continues for ever. An especial people's loyalty and love also creates an especial life for them. It's your extraordinary, perpetual, fearless loyalty and love to the pastor which has created your future, inseparable life with him for you. You will be his brother. You will be living in one family again, and not you will be taking care of him, but he will be doing it for you. Now stay calm, live next to me and Alyssa, and little by little we'll explain everything what will seem to be strange or incomprehensible to you. Be happy, Arthur, spare your strength. You will still have to live for many years."

Florentian embraced Arthur who was crying and accompanied him to the door. When he was left alone in his study he sat down at the writing-table and took the leaf of paper for the letter. His eyes widened, it seemed that the power of his look was piercing through the space into which he was looking. He got stiff like a statue that perpetuated the tension of his concentration. The whole surrounding world stopped existing for him. His entire will was concentrated on one thought. He was motionless – and nevertheless, there was an action within him, an active spiritual merging with somebody whom he was sending his thought to. Finally, he took the pen and began to write.

*Jenny, I promised your father that after his death I would try to do everything what I could for you. However, in order to do something useful for another man, one needs not only to possess the power oneself. That man should want to accept the help provided, he should want to control himself, his heart and his thoughts, he should keep his thoughts pure and develop his organism harmoniously every day. One cannot even think about helping those people who don't possess any joy, who don't comprehend the value of their entire life in the sense of spiritual creation, who consider their lives as superiousness among the ones similar to themselves as those conveniences of life which money can bring.*



*Absolutely bad people don't exist. Nobody is born as a robber, traitor, murderer. Those in whom the viruses of envy, greed, stinginess are gnawing their bright thoughts and purity of their hearts are rolling down to the abyss of evil themselves where their passions are drawing them to. Break-up of one's spirit is taking part very slowly and insensibly. In the beginning one's envy like the rust settles down on one's relations with people. Then it eats up a hole in some place of one's heart. The stinking waste of one's spirit's break-up starts accumulating above it – the drops of pus appear in this way. Later the pus begins to flow like a stream. Everybody who contacts the man who is rotting so quickly from his thoughts becomes weaker himself if he's unable to protect from the infection. If the viruses of envy and fear are already hiding in their hearts, then having met even bigger evil, they fall under their power completely.*

*Once having fallen under the evil's power, man is unable to become free of it anymore. Jenny, what were you doing today, on the very first day after you were left without your father in his home? What have you done for his honour – he loved you so much, he took care of you, he was teaching you beauty so persistently, - what monument of your spirit for people's happiness have you created? What gift of your heart's beauty have you extended for people today? Perhaps, at least you've found a tender word for your only sister and, while being elder and stronger, you wanted to cheer your little sister up who was serving you so diligently during your entire life?*

*Perhaps, you've decided to give pension to the old Arthur from that capital which your grandfather has left to you after your father's death, because he was your father's closest friend and servant? Perhaps, you've decided to work and to systemize your father's manuscripts the meaning of which you've comprehended from the speeches told by the coffin. Perhaps, your heart will find another epithet rather than oddity for your father? Perhaps, you want to realize his creative ideas, to enrich them with your own ones and to carry them out to the world?*

*Look at yourself, Jenny. You have a lot of possibilities to start a new life. Your creative powers might shine where only passions thrive within you, but if you stop, if your spirit isn't straining forward by trying to become free from the small things of superstitions, if your laziness and endless idleness, your searching for amusements become a part of your life – then evil not only will draw nearer to you, it'll wind round you with such a circle of hissing snakes that nobody else will be able to extend the helping hand to you anymore, even if you ask for it yourself.*

*To close the page of life and to tell light-mindedly: "Enough" – that's the simplest of all lazy possibilities of existence, but to turn it in such a way that you would tell to yourself: "Create" – for this you need to develop self-control first of all. Man who's always irritated, who's always accompanied by fits of rage and suffering from envy isn't yet a man and he cannot be the lord of himself. That's only the embryo of the human stage, a two-legged living creature.*

*You wanted to talk to me, and when this possibility appeared, you understood that it was only your hypocrisy before yourself. Sincerity is knocking at your heart in this moment, you want to overcome your cruel and egoistic surroundings, but the trickle of the poison of your stubbornness and envy is preventing for these noble wants of yours to see the day light.*

*A greater heartbreak as suffering of a repenting man doesn't exist in the world. Jenny, don't waste your precious time in that vanity with which you are being drawn into. All that vanity, that desire for luxury with which you are seduced now are unworthy of that external reward for which you'll pay with the division of your heart, with the collapse of the foundation of the whole man's purity – his loyalty and honour. You haven't lived a single integral day of your conscious life up to now. The constant compromise which accompanies you everywhere, against which your great and wise father was fighting so much, has turned you into an easily reachable booty for every wicked and persistent living creature. You haven't learnt to strive for anything till the end, so that's why you were wasting your will and strength so easily, which*

*mean people might take possession of. Rise with your thoughts above your room. Imagine that there aren't any walls, that you are standing alone in the middle of the universe, that you are a part of it, its daughter, its moment of eternity, incarnated in your shape.*

*What form the current values – your house, the walls, the streets – would you like to keep next to you in this sea of the stars, the ether, the elements? If you don't take away harmony of love in your own heart, your thoughts, your consciousness, then with what are you going to step into the general, universal life of the universe? Your path is clear to me. I repeat that from what I have started this letter: I don't have any hope to break through to something kinder within you, because all of it is impure and discontinuous. All my aspirations are rolling under your feet like some pile of broken pencils and pends, but I have promised to my friend, your father, to do everything what depended on me for rescuing you and I'm doing it. I invite you to come here, to the country-side, to spend several days here in the pure atmosphere which is full of tranquillity. Perhaps, it would help for some changes of fate to happen within you – both external and internal ones.*

*I don't expect to awake everything what is the best within you, and that you will change the whole course of your life from my invitation, but I'm old debtor of your father. One needs to pay one's debts. Therefore, I give you the right to address me in the most difficult moment of your life. God give me strength to serve you then and to protect you from your final fall.*

The envelope and the paper had the count's crown, and lord Benedict signed the letter in his full name. Having written down the address, he took the letter to the Mildrey's room and put it into the letter box. He included the note with the request to hand this letter to Jenny after all official readings.

Then he went upstairs to visit Alyssa where Nal was already sleeping after her night watching, while Nikolay was changing the patient's compresses and warmers. She was still breathing with difficulty, but the heat and delirium was getting calmer. Her face was still burning, and the light spasm used to run through her body now and then.

"Nikolay, you can change the compresses not so often now, while we don't need the warmers on her feet at all anymore. The crisis is over already, but that doesn't mean that she's recovered. Alyssa will still have to be in bed for a long time, and that partly will protect her broken-down organism.

Now, while nobody is disturbing us, let's talk about you. You used to pass all Ali's tests either so easily that it seemed that you didn't even notice them or so strictly, precisely, concentrated, with such unconditional obedience, without any single pointless or curious question that those difficulties which disciples usually create along their paths themselves simply used to melt for you. Now the time has come not only to fulfil the tasks. The most difficult one," Florentian nodded to Nal's side, "where another person instead of you would have put many questions, you fulfilled without any objections, but neither Ali nor me didn't have any illusions for the suffering which you've experienced by accepting this lesson unconditionally.

It seemed to you that you were going out of the straight disciple's path. It seemed to you that the real path of the disciple was inseparable from the pledge of chastity, but here you were loyal to Ali till the end, too, and you didn't protest against him even in your thoughts.

My dear friend and son, a great man is going to incarnate in that family which you and Nal are creating. He was waiting for the absolutely pure people for a long time, in whose surroundings he could grow up, with the help of whom he could comprehend the conditions of his new present, so that he could continue his path of serving people with this new incarnation of his.

This will be your third child in a row when you and Nal already become fully mature educators, when you reach the power of your spirit. Your son and your daughter will come to your family before him, and with each of them you are related with strong and joyous karma. You said to yourself when you received your Teacher Ali's command: "I need to forget about my desire to be my Teacher's disciple. Apparently, I haven't yet become that spiritual power that he needed. I will become obedient, ordinary and kind father of my family. Perhaps, the hour of my liberation from constricted duties of family life will come and some day, I will find my path, I will become worthy of living next to my Teacher. Now I will be carrying that burden which he has put on me. However heavy it would be, I will be carrying it with joy, and it will be easy for me to carry it if my Teacher wants it. I will be strong and kind in that ordinary everyday work of mine. I will be protecting everybody whom life will send to me. I will try to bring as much joy and peace as possible to my family and into the hearts of the people living next to me." Having decided like this, you were walking in the way as Ali had told you by trying to hide the sadness of your separation with him from everybody. You didn't know back then that you would be living next to me whom now you call your happiness. You were walking by not turning back where, in your opinion, you had left all your spiritual riches, achievements and your only close man – your brother-son whom you've entrusted to Ali, me and Ananda.

That man who had enough loyalty, fearlessness and the power of love to act like this has overcome his fire wall and stood up next to his Teacher for ever. The hour of your independent actions has struck. You will still be living with me for several years. I will help you and Alyssa to create the families of new type next to your own ones, which will comprehend education, friendship, unity with children and other people in a new way. You've already grown up from those who are led and you would become leader yourself.

Your brother is assaulting his spiritual fortresses, and everything is completely different as you have imagined, but you will meet him only when he also grows up from those who are led, because his loyalty is like yours. He's flying along his path like a hurricane by experiencing traumas, while you were going like a heavy piece of ordnance and you were always looking what your path was. Your paths are different, but both of you will reach an absolute liberation. Only don't think that man who is free in spirit always has to be free from the external racketing life, too, from its supposed bonds, from his private worries and their conditionalities.

That man is serving his nation best, who doesn't feel the difficulties of the racketing exterior, because he has perceived the meaning of his life: to carry the power of Light namely to that racket. When a person like a combination of passions, desires and ambitions is buried, then he may become an ideal husband and father, see his mission like a help for his Teacher with this selflessness of his. Doria will come to change you soon. Although you aren't tired, take your wife anyway and both of you have a good rest. Try to harden Nal in the same way as you did it for yourself. She's your first disciple whom you are going to lead along the path of her life independently. Soon I will give you Sandra, too."

Florentian embraced Nikolay who was excited from such tenderness and kindness of his, who didn't expect at all that his great friend would read all of his secret thoughts so precisely. Nikolay was unable to utter a single word. His obedience, which nobody was able to guess from his independent and proud attitude, didn't allow him even in his thoughts to rise to such height to which Florentian raised him now. Being left alone, he remembered his entire life.

Nikolay was left as an absolute orphan with his three-year-old little brother in his arms early and he was unable to devote himself to his calling – science – in any way. He graduated the university by taking examinations for two courses at once. He had to go to the army, to the distant godforsaken place of the Caucasus where he received the service easily through his father's friend, which allowed him to

maintain two people and to get some money for the transfer. Having crammed his books into boxes, taken his brother's small dowry and this and that from his own clothes, Nikolay started on the unknown, distant and lonely way through the most terrible highways.

With much difficulty, by covering and warming the baby with his body, risking his life for him many times, finally the young officer came to the regiment. Since he was the "learned", he wasn't met with much joy here. There wasn't a single officer with university education in the entire government, and nobody had even heard about such a case that man would take examinations for the entire course of the cadet school at once and at the same time would become an officer; but already from his first steps, from his first meetings with the highlanders, extremely brave, always composed and inventive Nikolay drew the officers' and soldiers' attention and their hearts to himself. A little path to his little house stretched out, too. The "learned" became everybody's friend. Usually the recruits couldn't be forgiven if they didn't drink or couldn't play cards, but that didn't seem to be Nikolay's defect to anybody. They only used to wave their hands: "That learned is oddity", but it became everybody's pleasant obligation to take a cup of tea, to smoke a pipe and to pamper the baby with something.

If a misunderstanding used to happen in the regiment, they would always choose Nikolay as the judge of honour. If they needed to make a fighting offensive plan, they used to invite Nikolay regardless of his young age. Everybody used to rely on his talent, and his word often was the last. If they needed a representative of the regiment, they used to choose Nikolay unanimously. At last, the glory about his courage and honour was spread also beyond the narrow limits of the regiment. There wasn't a single day that some peaceable highlander wouldn't come on horseback to his modest little house. They used to throw the baby with their shining smiles and flashing teeth, who completely stopped being afraid of the strangers, because somebody was always staying in their little, clean rooms.

In spite of this external noise, Nikolay was reading and learning a lot and he was trying to be the whole family for his little brother with his tenderness and care.

The scenes of his passed by life were flashing in Nikolay's memory. The years were going by. In that godforsaken place of the mountains he had spent five years already, and it seemed to him that life had forgotten about him, as well as he himself had forgotten that noisy cities, the crowds of people and the brilliance of capitals existed somewhere in the world. Only his bond with the book-shops didn't break and was always stronger. With his ordered books he often received the last news, too, by asking for his comments.

A great work was taking place in Nikolay's spirit in that wonderful nature, but among the people living in the neighbourhood there wasn't a single one who would surpass him with his wit and talents, who could respond to his reflections or direct his flights of thought. Reserved, but kind-hearted Nikolay became everybody's comfort and adviser, but he desired to meet a friend himself with whom he could share his thoughts. And then the day of such meeting came. Once he was caught by a hurricane in the mountains. Nikolay was searching for the place where he could hide himself and he turned his horse towards the ruins of some house. Having ridden up to the house, he was surprised that the dwelling that looked miserable from the distance was a solid, clean and spacious cottage. As soon as he rode in through the gates, a tall man in the highlander's clothes heard the tapping of the horseshoes, went out, took the horse from him, took it to the stable in silence and showed to the side of the house to Nikolay. Having entered the porch, he found the opened door to the spacious sitting-room that was furnished in Oriental style with big and low sofas along the walls. A man with white turban was sitting on one of such sofas with his legs crossed in Eastern style. The sofa was low, but it seemed that the man was very tall, because he didn't look much lower than Nikolay even when he was sitting. However, not his height, but his eyes and the whole appearance of the stranger surprised him. His eyes were burning him through, and although he

was holding a cup of milk in his big and beautiful hands, it seemed that a sword would suit them better. Nikolay's heart which didn't know what fear was up to now quivered. He felt this feeling for the first time in his life. "Perhaps, I got into the robbers'", Nikolay thought for a while by touching his weapon.

"No, I'm not a robber," all of a sudden, the stranger spoke up in the local dialect. "You can rest with us calmly, because the storm will still be raging for a long time, while a guest is saint for us."

"How could you read my silent thought?" Nikolay asked him, laughing. "I know that a guest is saint according to the highlanders' customs, but it fell on me to stay in such places where the robbers broke up their victims neither into guests nor into friends, where absolutely nothing saint was left."

"Such places won't attract you. You've been waiting for a meeting for a long time and you wanted to meet Those Who know the secrets of nature and elements, Who know the secrets of spirit. Nature and elements have their own secrets that can be deciphered only with the help of knowledge. There aren't any secrets in life, only knowledge exists, and there aren't absolutely any secrets or mysticism in the sphere of spirit. Only man's growing exists, exactly the same which is taking place in his consciousness. In order for you to enter through the gates of my heart which I have opened to you with this meeting, you have to stand with me on the same level of love and sincerity, and only then you see how widely I've opened them for you. I saw how you were riding down the wide highway and I was asking you to turn exactly here. This is how I opened the gates of my heart to you," the stranger was talking and smiling, "while you decided that I was a robber."

"It is so strange. Namely today I was thinking tensely about the levels of love, about that that perfect love has to open one's eyes."

"Well, I cannot state that I'm perfect," the stranger gave a laugh, "but I can predict that some big changes are going to happen in your life soon. And they are going to happen not because somebody is going to pour them to you from horn of plenty, but because you've summoned them to your life with the inner activity of your spirit."

"It is even stranger. I've been just solving the question about who was creating man's life and how he was developing: with the help of man's creation or at Providence's discretion."

"Superstitions – that's business and destiny of the narrow-minded people, but superstitions and preliminary views are out of the way for you, because you are really intelligent. While you are travelling from one place to another one, you cause that fire everywhere in which the impure people's filth is burnt out. People are passionate, drunk, petty behind the walls of your house, but when they come to you, they become sober and they want to be kinder. They want to burn down their impure inner poverty next to you, in your spirit and to dry the dirt stuck to them in the fire of your spirit. Why they are so attached to your life of recluse? Because of the same why I have called you here. Love acknowledges only one law – the law of creative devotion, and life itself is sending everything what you give to people with love, kind-heartedly, it brings it to you like the swift rives of the mountains. Here, take my hand, sit down next to me."

Feeling of the first surprise had gone a long time ago when Nikolay met the philosopher with the burning eyes like two torches in the lonely mountains. He was feeling only great joy and when he took his extended wonderful, narrow, unusually subtle hand with long and slender fingers, as though an electric current ran through his body. As though the air around him became purer, too, and even greater stability was born in his heart. As though his eyes brightened up themselves, and the coming sounds of the wailing storm weren't separated from all the elements of the universe anymore, but they were only telling about the continuous movement, the inseparable part of which he himself as well.

“You were pushing out persistently all the trifles and conditionalities from your life, which mode of life used to bring to you and load on your shoulders. You were studying the laws of physics and mechanics, mathematics and chemistry, you were trying to feel the man’s role in life and his dependency on the nature. But nothing became clear to you. Now, too, you cannot accept man’s isolation from the entire universal life. You cannot agree with man’s separation of that short period – from his birth till his death – from the general, natural and purposeful life of the universe.

Of course, none of the living beings is able to fall out from his subordination to the universal law of cause and effect, exactly like the people’s code of moral laws subordinates not to the power of external, conditional justice, but to that law of expediency according to which also the movement of the stars, the sun and the waves of the ether is taking place. The crust of hypocrisy is covering people from their head to their feet, it is binding their thoughts and it doesn’t allow the vibrations of stronger and purer living beings who possess that knowledge which you are striving for to penetrate neither to their hearts nor to their brain. In order for this our meeting to happen, all your devotion to science, all your love for it, your love till the end was needed. If you are going to fulfil three of my given conditions for you, you will be called to such place where you will be able to find your new path of life:

1. Your entire life must be the serving to common wellbeing of the nation by not dividing people into your own ones and the strangers, by not choosing your friends according to your taste and your enemies according to your aversion for their personal characteristics.
2. You must solve and fulfil all man’s problems of his new perception and your consolidation with him not as his personal and visible combinations of characteristics, but as eternal threads of his continuous, intertwined lives, because each man is living not once, but thousands of times.
3. You must find room for all the circumstances that enter your day, recognize them as your own, exceptional and the only ones that you need. Your love for a brother-man and for your motherland must find expression not in theories and pledges, but in your continuous, daily activity. And only this everyday action of your kindness is that real path to the knowledge which you are searching for. One comes to us only through love for people.

If you agree to live in absolute chastity for three years and to follow those instructions of mine which you’ve already received and which you will still be receiving, then we’ll meet again and we’ll be collaborating closely for many years.

The stranger took both Nikolay’s hands and pressed him to his chest. It seemed to the brave officer who had forgotten about his mother’s caress that he became a small boy again, that his mother was stroking his head.

“Accept this ring to remember our meeting. When you wake up and the storm is over, I won’t be next to you anymore, but in order for you to believe that you were talking with a living man from the same body and blood, and not with a ghost – put the ring on, while I will take yours. We will exchange them when we meet again.”

The stranger pulled his mother’s ring off his little finger and put on an excellent diamond in the old frame made of platinum. His burning eyes were looking at Nikolay’s eyes, he put his hand on his head and uttered something silently, which Nikolay didn’t understand. An exceptional feeling of peace, joy, inexpressible easiness and quiet touched his spirit. He forgot about everything in the world and fell asleep by plunging into that happiness.

When he woke up, the early, bright and warm morning was looking through the opened windows. There wasn't anybody in the room, but a tea-kettle was fizzing on the table, there was some cheese, butter, milk and white bread placed. Nikolay couldn't understand where he was and why he was lying in the strange room. His memory began to come back to him little by little and also the recollections about the wonderful stranger, his eyes and their strange conversation. Nikolay was about to attribute this meeting to his dream, but his casual look at the ring made him believe it. He got up. It seemed to him that he had never been so strong and healthy. Having come up to the table, he saw a note. The letters were large and clear.

*Don't search for me, this is meaningless, but remember that a call cannot be repeated twice. It is different for everybody, exactly like the people themselves are different. If you want to accept my conditions and meet after three years for our joint work, then eat neither meat nor fish during this entire time. I will be with you during that entire time, and you will feel my nearness. If it is difficult for you, call my name: "Ali", and I will respond.*

*The servant who met you at the gate yesterday is mute. Have a good breakfast, because you are further away from your home than you think. The same servant will accompany you up to the places that you know. Let my ring help you to maintain your faith and your strength, and if you are following my loyalty with belief, then we'll meet again.*

Ali

It didn't even occur to Nikolay to speak to the servant when he entered the room and nodded his head pleasingly. He was tall, grey man, his face was beautiful, kind and sunburnt. He seemed to be still young. His entire appearance, his elegant figure, his slender waist of the highlander, his light step, his manners of the person of culture, his intelligent and attentive look – everything within him was telling to Nikolay that this servant was also exceptional, just like his master. It even seemed to him that he couldn't be mute. The servant answered to the attentive look of Nikolay with his cheerful and friendly smile, extended his hand to him and seated him at the table. Having noticed that he guest wasn't eating anything, he poured him some tea, pushed the milk to him and showed everything else what was placed on the table.

Nikolay didn't want to eat alone. The servant as though understood his thought, he smiled to him again with his charming smile and sat down at the table. He bowed to the guest after breakfast, gave him the felt cloak and the small bag with the food. To surprised Nikolay's look he nodded towards the door and left the room by inviting the guest to follow him to the yard. He brought two saddled horses from the stable, besides Nikolay's horse was cleaned thoroughly. Having locked up the door of the cottage, the servant mounted his horse in such an easy and elegant way that Nikolay was even delighted. The guest didn't have time to inspect the cottage from the outside, he had to hurry and catch up with the servant who had already ridden out through the gate.

Now Nikolay couldn't comprehend at all how he managed to get here. The path was so narrow, so camouflaged with the mountain slip that it wouldn't have been possible to find it without knowing the local signs. They were riding along that narrow little path for so long that the cold moisture of the gorge already began to tire Nikolay, and he was thankful for his companion for that felt cloak without which he would have been chilled to the bone. All of a sudden, the little path led them to the road

absolutely not there where Nikolay was expecting it. The sun was high in the sky already, it was maybe ten o'clock, but Nikolay hadn't wound his watch in the evening and now he couldn't tell what the time was. Having understood his thought, the servant looked up at the sun and showed ten fingers to him. He gave a smile again, gave a pull at the rein and broke forward into a trot. Nikolay's horse could hardly keep pace with the guide, because he was tired already. They kept riding like this for about another hour. Then the servant went out of his way and moved to the shade of the trees. Nikolay was amazed more and more. He didn't know the places, but he had ridden all over the place. The servant unharnessed the horses, fed them and invited the guest to have a bite.

They let the horses to rest, then they kept on riding and rode out to the wide highway which Nikolay recognized at once, as well as the mountains surrounding it. There were at least ten versts left till his house, but he couldn't comprehend in any way how he could push his way through to such places, how the hurricane could drive him so far away. He didn't have time to reflect any longer. The servant stopped his wonderful, black horse with the white star on its forehead, dismounted it and offered Nikolay to do the same with the gesture of his hand.

The servant saw that Nikolay didn't understand him, so he undid one of his pockets, took a note out of it and extended it to him. The note was also written in the same large and clear handwriting.

*My friend and my brother! If you have decided to accept my conditions, please accept this horse from me, too, which my servant will give to you, while you leave yours to him. My servant is great and experienced man. It'll be well for your horse with him, while you soon will need my swift-footed horse and this warm felt cloak. So long! I thank you, because I was disappointed neither in your honour nor in your endurance.*

Ali

Having read the note, Nikolay dismounted his horse, gave the rein to the servant and patted the horse that was serving him so faithfully. The horse knew his master, it used to meet him from the distance, as soon as it felt him and it used to greet him with its lovely neighing; it also took him out from the field of death many times. It was a pity for Nikolay to separate with his friend of the fights. His heart was breaking, as though he was stepping over the certain limit of his life...

It seemed that the servant understood it, too. He went up to the officer, bowed to him, patted his horse's neck, kissed its forehead and pressed his hand to his heart. Then he gave his horse's rein to Nikolay. The horse was biting the bit, it couldn't keep still, it was sowing stars, but the servant took both Nikolay's hands and put them on the horse's head by letting it understand that from now on it became another person's property. The rebellious horse calmed down instantly, it bowed its head and it was waiting for its new rider. The servant turned over Ali's note, and Nikolay read: "My horse is restive. Nobody will be able to mount it or to clean it without you, but it'll always submit to you. Its name is Tornado, and it'll justify this name completely with its service to you."

The servant didn't wait for anything anymore, he got on Nikolay's horse, turned back and disappeared behind the turn immediately. Having accompanied him with his eyes, Nikolay got on Tornado and evaluated instantly what a treasure Ali had given to him.



Tornado carried him out of the battle field twice, and for the third time Nikolay escaped the pack of wolves.

Nikolay remembered how Lovushka was seriously ill when Ali's set three years were about to end... In the dead of one autumn night he was sitting by his brother's bed with all hope lost. "Well, now I really give everything what was "mine" in my life. If I understand the duty of man's life right," Nikolay was thinking, "then my brother should live, because I don't look at him as if he was my own property, on the contrary, I'm only his help and protection that he needs. I cannot understand many things, but I really understood love as man's path to perfection. If the highest expediency sees it needful to take you away, then go, Lovushka. I won't shed a single tear, but I will always thank you for that joy which you've given to me."

A tapping of the horse-shoes was heard, and somebody's hand gave a knock on the window. Nikolay was used to the night visits, because often somebody used to drop in here because of the bad weather or because he wanted to get warm and to rest. He stood up and went to the porch to open the door. He couldn't discern the man who entered in the darkness, but only in the room he recognized the tall Ali's servant from the cottage of the distant mountain-gorge. The servant took his felt cloak off, took a little bottle, a little box and a letter from his pocket and extended everything to Nikolay.

*As soon as you receive the pills and the mixture, give a pill to the patient immediately. Shake the mixture well and give a teaspoon to him in every two hours. Melt the powder in the cup of water and pour one drop to his eyes and nose. The patient will feel better in the morning and he will be completely recovered in two days. Let my servant stay by the patient during this entire time. I will let you know about our meeting. Be strong and calm, meet everything what might happen during these days with absolute self-control.*

Ali

The servant was helping Nikolay to nurse for his brother, and when the boy recovered, they became inseparable, because Lovushka managed to understand his silent nurse perfectly. In this way the entire month of difficult soldier's life with its daily alarm readiness and attacks flew past. The disturbances that flared up in the very regiment partly touched Nikolay, too, but he knew the only one goal, he was living with the only thought – to meet Ali. All other troubles were sliding through the surface without touching his inside deeper. Finally, the long waited day broke when the servant gave Ali's letter to Nikolay with his request to come to the nearest city R. in a month and to stop at his home which his servant knew perfectly. He could take his brother, too, because he would have to live in this city for several years. Nikolay was very surprised, but he was summoned to visit the commander of the regiment on the same day, who congratulated him with promotion, reward for his courage and informed him about his transfer to the city R. He had to leave immediately.

Having handed all his innumerable affairs, accompanied by his sad friends, bemoaned by his hostess and her children, Nikolay loaded his books into the cart, seated Lovushka and set to the journey with the servant. The same nasty highways and inns were waiting for them again, but all of it was so different in comparison with the first journey; this time he was full of strength and confidence that he was going to the new and desired path of knowledge of his life. Now while Nikolay was taking Lovushka dressed with the warm coat and sitting comfortably in the cart, he remembered his first journey as a stage of hell.

He was just smiling cheerfully to his brother and the servant who were frowned from the bad inns and drenched roads. By the end of the month, finally they reached R. where he was very surprised again. He didn't have to get to the porch when he saw the adjacent room through the door, which was furnished with the book-shelves. Nikolay stopped dead in front of the books. The servant who saw the officer with the dusty cloak buried himself in books took care of the baggage at his discretion and allotted the rooms. Every time when he was passing by Nikolay with the pack, he used to smile and flash his eyes merrily.

Nikolay's thoughts kept flowing. This meeting with Ali who was living in the city R. for almost a year was happy for him. His official pretext was trade, but actually, he dedicated that entire time for Nikolay's and other three people's teaching. When Ali left, he left lots of tasks for Nikolay which filled his life with happiness. He also told him that it would depend only on him how soon they would see each other again and how often he would receive a message from Ali.

Other four years passed when they used to see each other only occasionally, and finally, Ali sent him a letter by inviting him to come to K. and to live next to him. Nikolay didn't waste a moment, put his affairs in order and left for K.

Now, while looking at the thin Alyssa's face, Nikolay was thinking about how different people's paths were, how much everybody had to suffer and that everybody founded only that what his consciousness was able to perceive; how many lives were spinning around Florentian now, how many people Ananda and I. were leading, how many of them were visiting Ali and how many of them Nikolay didn't even know at all. And the paths of all of them were different, but the stages were the same for everybody.

Two women are living here, two future mothers, both full of love and self-sacrifice, but how different the paths of their past, present and the future are and how absolutely the same their goal and the meaning of life is...

Doria came to change Nikolay, he gave all Florentian's instructions to her, took his wife in his arms and left the room silently.

## Chapter 8

### Reading of the testament in the pastor's house

Having received Florentian's instructions, Sandra, Mildrey and the lawyers came to the pastor's house. Lord Benedict who always used to find time for everybody had time to speak to Sandra privately in order to help the youth to concentrate, to focus all his thoughts, not to wander during the entire reading of the testament and not to leave the atmosphere of his concentrated attention for a single time.

"Sandra, your dead friend had found you during his time only in order to turn your attention to some of the mistakes of your work. You avoided a lot of difficulties only because of his unselfishness and attention to your work. Now repay him and try to do everything so that his close people would meet his last will as easy as possible. Our duties don't end when we separate with the people who left the earth. Think that the pastor is always with you and that his is unable to express his will or to affect his wife and his daughter in any other way as only through you, with your physical help. Think that also I am standing next to you and that I am holding your hand.

Learn one more lesson how one should look attentively not at the person's appearance, but try to perceive the soul of the person whom we like; remember how you liked Jenny, how naively you believed in everything what she was trying to show to you, while there wasn't any strong vigilance within yourself which would allowed you at least partly to check he showed sincerity and the depth of her way of thinking. Now when you look at Jenny's inside you lose your courage and you don't know how you should behave next to her, although you've dedicated your entire life to people's love and serving to them. Don't search in Jenny for the personality whom you like or whom you don't like, with whom you are content or not, think not about her personal characteristics, but about joy to be a powerful conductor of love, so that you could help her to comprehend her father, to submit to his will benevolently. Of course, you won't be responsible for her conscious actions if she and her mother decide to contest the pastor's will in court, but you will remain the loyal pastor's friend if you enter his house without any personal feelings. Then, having taken to fulfil his last will upon yourself instead of me, you will be spreading only compassion, honour and love, absolute self-control and devotion."

"Lord Benedict, if at least for a moment I could rise at least to the one hundredth part of your consciousness and to hold it within myself, then I would be happy, because perhaps then I could stay in the circle of the atmosphere of my concentrated attention. That circle of solitude while I'm among people, which you've taught me to create, turns out well for me only when I'm working. When I act among people, when I communicate with them I'm always absent-minded and I forget about the most important and the greatest essence of that moment: that exactly this moment is unique flying by moment of Eternity, that exactly this moment is the most important and valuable in my life. And namely only because of this, absolutely all my moments disappear in emptiness, but tomorrow I will try to start my day in a new way, I will try to prepare for it today."

While Sandra was travelling in the train, Florentian's uttered separate phrases or words were always flashing through his mind, and it even seemed to him that both the pastor and lord Benedict were travelling with him. "The thought can work so perfectly," Sandra was thinking. "Lord Benedict had only to say that I should imagine him and the pastor standing next to me, and I always feel that I am among them.

If I didn't lose this feeling when I'm standing before Jenny, then I wouldn't be confused, I could find the proper words and most likely, I would reach the maximum result."

Mildrey didn't disturb Sandra's thinking. He understood that the youth was accumulating his strength, just like himself was doing it. An intensive work was taking place in his own thoughts and heart during the last months. Although Mildrey got very tired during the funeral, because all worries fell almost only on his shoulders, an enormous change took place in his consciousness. He was worried about Alyssa's illness. Alyssa had become the object of his love and admiration from their very first meeting, and now she became his saint and noble dream. Amadeo didn't consider himself even to be worthy of aspiring to her and he was looking at her only like some undeserved compassion showed by his life. Now, while lord Mildrey was going to the pastor's family, although he didn't know the contents of the testament, he felt that not everything was going to happen smoothly there. It was enough for him to see Jenny and lady Katherine at Florentian's during the dinner, as well as in the race, so that he could evaluate their taste and inclinations properly. His habit to help everybody, his activity among people had created the reputation of a kind-hearted protector of poor persons for silent Mildrey. His friends in the club were mocking him many times by asking him whom and where he moved, whom he saved from starvation, whom he was searching a job for.

Sensitive Mildrey's heart was filled with the pastor's suffering. He was thinking intensely about how he could help Jenny to overcome her envy for her sister Alyssa, which he had guessed instantly and accurately. His thoughts were interrupted in the station. They changed their seats to the coach here. They were waiting for them already in the pastor's house.

Jenny and her mother were dressed in chic mourning clothes. They were sitting in the sitting-room and accepted Sandra from very high, who was the only one whom they knew from the four men who entered.

"Didn't lord Benedict and Alyssa come with you?" Jenny asked Sandra coldly even without being so kind as to shoot a glance at the other participants introduced to her and without tiring herself to hear their names. "We don't start until they come. Well, here they are, I can hear the bell."

"I think that you are wrong, miss Wodsworth," Mildrey answered her. "Lord Benedict has authorized me to act for him during the reading of your father's testament, while your sister is very seriously ill and she cannot participate, but that doesn't change the matter. I have all the warrants of lord Benedict. If you are interested in any details, I'm empowered to explain them to you and to answer your questions."

Mister Tendly entered the room. He bowed to the lawyers and came up to Jenny.

"Mister Tendly, you are so untimely today," the unsatisfied pastor's wife uttered. "You probably wanted to invite Jenny for a ride or for breakfast, but unfortunately, we are busy with some nasty and urgent matter."

"Excuse me, dear lady," the lawyer meddled in their conversation, who's been having a grudge against both ladies for such arrogance for a long time already, because he, well-educated and rich person of London's society, favourite of his clients wasn't used to such behaviour, "my clerk has the right to live as he wants to, but now he's come here for the same testament because of which we are here to see you."

"How come!" Jenny gave a shout, "You want to tell me that mister Tendly is nothing else but only the ordinary clerk of yours?"

"Exactly, miss Wodsworth. I invited him here to read the testament and to be an extra witness. I hope you won't protest against my clerk's participation?"

"The further the worse," Jenny filtered the words through her teeth by dropping onto the arm-chair. "Well, please start, mister lawyer's clerk, pretending to be the member of the decent society."

"Jenny!" Sandra gave a loud shout and wanted to dash at the girl, but Mildrey drew himself up, as though he grew up suddenly and held his hand.

"Mister Tendly, I am sorry for the insults which you've heard by pleading the lord Benedict's case. I act for him and I ask you for forgiveness in his name. I don't doubt that lord Benedict will want to see you himself and to apologize personally. I want to beg your pardon as well, sir," Mildrey addressed the old lawyer, "for insult of your colleague and your nephew." And by addressing both of them he added, "We can start if my apology is enough for you."

"Lord Amadeo, I agree to start only because I highly respect lord Benedict and you. Mister Tendly, please start reading the testament. Only before doing so, let the inheritors make sure that nobody has touched the seals on the envelopes," the old lawyer addressed Tendly who was as pale as chalk.

Without uttering a single word, the youth took a big envelope from his uncle's hands. It was sealed up with five red seals with the pastor's initials, written with his own hand. Tendly gave the envelope to the pastor's wife. Lady Katherine inspected all the seals and the signature attentively, while her expression was telling without any words: "Who can guarantee me that there isn't any fraud here?" Jenny cast a glance at the envelope and at everybody present here. She wanted to show clearly that this entire procedure was boring for her and that only her meekness helped her to bear this suffering. She stood up with an expression of a victim and changed her seat in such a way that the light wouldn't fall on her face.

"Perhaps you will offer us to change our seats, too?" the old lawyer asked her in such sarcastic tone that Jenny was even distorted.

"You are here with business, not on a visit. You may conduct yourself in such a way as etiquette of your visit requires it," the pastor's wife snapped out.

There was so much hatred and anger in her voice, look and gesture which accompanied these words, as though she wanted to defeat all those people utterly, who had brought the last will of her husband to her.

The old lawyer sat down, while the rest of them remained standing. Tendly opened the envelope and began to read the testament. When he reached the clause about the house, the pastor's wife jumped to her feet.

"This is robbery! He robbed me and Jenny in favour of that contemptible girl. We'll go to law. Where we know from how my husband was bewitched in the house of that lord Benedict of yours."

"Be careful in choosing your words, respectable lady," the old lawyer addressed the pastor's wife. "When your daughter insulted my nephew who kept his profession from her and didn't tell her that he was one of the largest landowners of L's county, we hadn't yet started the official part of the testament's reading back then, therefore I could forgive you such rudeness, but if now you take the liberty to insult somebody, I will be forced to interrupt the reading and to bring you to justice. There are legal documents about every clause of the testament, as well as about the house. You can familiarize yourself with the grandfather's testament later on. According to him, his house in which you are living practically never belonged to you. It always belonged to your youngest daughter. Tendly, please continue."

Mother and her daughter were feeling worse and worse after every read clause, and when the capital was touched, of which only a percentage belonged to lady Katherine, she was already about to excite hysteria, but lord Mildrey foresaw the outbreak of the pastor wife's temperament and explained to her that also Alyssa's letter existed which had to be officially read, because it was confirmed legally and possessed the status of the document.

"Since when babies in England began to write official letters," the pastor's wife sniffed.

"Since they have the right for heritage and property," the lawyer answered her.

Mildrey gave Alyssa's letter to Tendly. It had the same seals as the testament had.

*My dear mother and Jenny. I'm writing this letter, sitting next to my father. He asks me to do it urgently. Lords Benedict and Mildrey are also here.*

*It is painful that at present when my father feels so well, he's healthy and looks great, he wants me to express his will in writing in that case when he's no longer with us. My heart is breaking solely because of my thought about it, and I cannot imagine in any way that after this loss I could still stay alive – simply I wouldn't have enough strength for that. But I submit to his will and I will touch those points which seem for him necessary for your and my future life.*

*1. As you know, my grandfather bequeathed his house to me. My father wants that not a single wall or doors in it would be broken down. Everything, even the smallest details must remain in their places. Nobody is allowed to move from one room to another one, everything must remain in such a way as though my father would come back to his home. My room, as well as his study, must remain untouched.*

*2. You can live in this house for the next two years if up to that time you cannot find another apartment. If you are still in this house after two years, then the board of guardians will move you, because the house must be empty till that date.*

*3. You will receive money from me during all that time, which are necessary for the house maintenance and repairs. Hire a servant and a gardener for this purpose.*

*4. I will send a master before winter, who will board up the passageway to my and my father's rooms.*

*5. You assume the responsibility for preservation of the property in the house before those lawyers who will be reading my father's testament and this letter of mine.*

*Such is my father's will concerning the house. Lord Benedict whom my father designated as my guardian, and my father confirm that with their signatures, because I'm minor. You will find out from the testament that I won't come back home after my father's funeral according to his own will. However painful it would be for me to understand it, but now I know already that separation with me doesn't make you sad. I've been loving both of you very much during my entire life. I was trying to deserve at least a drop of your reciprocal feeling, but unfortunately, I failed to do it. It is also painful that strange people gave shelter to me and my father, that here, among the strangers, we found tenderness and care, love and attention of which we didn't dare even to dream at home. Of course, that isn't even a reproach, that is only our misfortune, because only now I understand how dear friendship among people is, what happiness is not only to love people for myself, but also to be loved by them. I would like to remember at least one day at home when you needed me not as a dress-maker or a cook, but as your sister, friend, daughter...*

*But why should I dream about unfulfilled happiness? Everything what I want to wish you, dear Jenny – that's a wonderful family in which you could love all your children equally. I embrace you tightly, and somehow it seems so strangely to me that I won't see you again, that as though I don't have any native home anymore, that one life has ended and an absolutely new one begins. I got so old lately that I jumped from my childhood straight into the grown-ups world by forgetting that my youth also existed. I'm living in such beauty here, which I could never even dream about. Thanks to lord Benedict, everything here is filled up with harmony, while my father simply came to life. It seems to me that he felt happiness for the first time during his entire life.*

"Perhaps you could break off reading this brazen-faced lyric gibberish?" the indignant pastor's wife whose face got blotchy gave a shout.

"My duty is to read it till the end," Tendy to whom the pastor's wife directed her anger answered her, "but I finish already."

*In this moment, all of a sudden a scene rose before my eyes that my father isn't here anymore, and my heart gave a moan from pain. If such disaster is really to happen, and our father leaves us, then I beg the Lord to help our three hearts find the way to our reciprocal love. Let the memory about our father remain in our interrelation for ever, and let his pure life be an example for us. I embrace you tightly and I pray once again: don't throw the little Alyssa who's loving you out of your hearts.*

Having read the letter, Tendy folded it and put it on the table next to the testament. The pastor's wife stood up, went up to the table, threw Alyssa's letter aside carelessly and took the testament.

"If I'm not mistaken, at least two witnesses had to sign the testament."

"You are absolutely right. You can see even three signatures here, but what do you mean by that?" the old lawyer asked her.

"I want to check whether the same persons who've signed it brought the document here."

"The first is the lord Benedict's signature," the lawyer explained to her. "He isn't here, but here is the document that confirms the lord Mildrey's authorization to substitute him."

He extended the document to the pastor's wife.

"Mother, I think that everything is all right here, and the sooner we finish this boring test the more pleasing it will be for ourselves and our guests. It is simply exceptionally pleasing for your part, lord Mildrey, that you've come here to visit us," Jenny began to speak in completely different tone. "Please sit down next to me, I want to have a little talk with you. You are probably bored in the country without society, without any amusements. Our little fool Alyssa cannot be called society, right? Only she makes the whole suite of the countess T.'s maids there," Jenny finished her thought in jest by trying to affect the lord with her charms.

Mildrey was looking attentively at her in silence.

"You don't imagine society correctly, miss Wodsword," finally he uttered by sitting down on the adjacent armchair. "The people whom lord Benedict united in the country, also your sister among them – that's the greatest body of society, and it is not only a great happiness for me to move among them, but

also a great honour, while the women like countess T. and your sister might make one forget that also other women existed in the world besides them.”

As if having fallen to the ground, Jenny was staring with bulging eyes at lord Mildrey. For the first time in her life, she felt not only confused, but also defeated.

“I have a personal letter from lord Benedict for you,” Mildrey continued by extending the Florentian’s letter to the girl. “If you wish to read it now and to write your response, we could wait with Sandra, and if both inheritors have nothing against it, I say good-bye to both lawyers and I don’t dare to disturb their precious time anymore.”

“We agree. You can send these slaves of the law,” the pastor’s wife gave a sharp shout, but having remembered that she reckoned also the rich and today already insulted groom among these slaves of the law, she stopped short, felt uncomfortably and as always she got even more furious.

“Sandra, why are you still standing? Do I need to ask you to be so kind as to sit down?” she poured all her anger on Sandra who was looking at her sadly.

“Thank you, lady Katherine, I’m so shocked with your reception, with the fact of how you met us in this house which was always so hospitable with lord Wodsword that I’m unable to come to myself in any way and to get rid of my strong heartache. It seems to me that today I can see the flying shadow of the host here, that I can hear his voice. He was inviting everybody to love people with his songs, words and work like a living example.”

“Love, live!” the pastor’s wife was already screaming hysterically. “He robbed us, he turned us out into the street, and this is love according to you?”

“Lady Katherine, the pastor gave everything what he had to everyone from you so fairly that none of the judges would have done it better.”

“What do you understand about justice! You’ll be the same gnawer of books like your deceased friend. To do it so that I couldn’t use my capital at my discretion? To do it so that after my death both girls would become rich women, while I could hardly survive? And this is fair?” she slammed the door and left.

Left with Mildrey and Sandra, Jenny couldn’t calm down in any way. Finally, she took the letter and uttered to lord Mildrey.

“The letter seems to be quite long. Evidently, the proverb: “Birds of a feather flock together...” is right. My father’s friendship with lord Benedict shows exactly this. Probably, my father’s eloquence corresponded with the lord Benedict’s character,” Jenny was smiling sarcastically by weighing the letter in her hand.

“Poor, poor Jenny!” Sandra shouted almost with despair. “How could you be so blind! It is such happiness to receive a letter from lord Benedict, for which many would give half of their lives, while you are jeering at it.”

“Maybe this is happiness for somebody, while I’m completely indifferent to any mystical happiness and I prefer the tangible happiness,” Jenny continued in the same tone.

“Exactly this is the bite for people. The satanic desire for riches allures them, and later... honour, and all other values are fading in the brilliance of this passion. I saw many sad cases when everything began with one’s seeking after some rich grooms and ended with one’s decline,” Mildrey was talking silently.



Jenny's face turned pale, her eyes were flinging sparks, her hands opened the envelope convulsively, as though she had wished to tear up the letter itself.

While Jenny was reading the letter, Mildrey took sad Sandra to the window. Here they could see the wonderful, but already neglected garden. Both of them were thinking about father and his daughter who weren't here anymore, who took care of this beauty and who were really the soul of this deserted house. It became clear for both of them that the whole beauty, tranquillity and cosiness which surrounded them had withdrawn from their lives, because they valued only the external brilliance and that what they could feel with their hands.

"I don't have enough strength to read all this nonsense now," suddenly Jenny gave a harsh shout. "Sir, confidential agent, please tell your lord that he's forcing through the opened door without necessity. I'm not Alyssa, I don't need his guardianship, and we'll see what could be done as far as Alyssa is concerned. When her mother and her sister of age are still alive, the sixteen year old teenager doesn't need any strange guardian. We shall go to law, we have collected enough facts in order to prove that the pastor wasn't quite sane during his last two years."

"Oh God, Jenny, you'll make a fool of yourself before the entire world," Sandra clapped his hands. "The great pastor's work which deserved the worldwide glory to him was written namely during those two years. How are you going to appear in the court and do you have at least a drop of compassion for your father's remembrance within yourself? Could you really throw such pure and glorious name of his out into the rubbish-heap of gossip and slander?"

"I don't have any doubt that the whole idea of the lord Benedict's organized game with the testament was based on our so called nobility, while actually it was based on great foolishness, but we aren't going to bite this hook. We are going to bring everything to light," Jenny was rampaging more and more, and she finished it without controlling herself anymore.

"Miss Wodsworth, it'll be better both for you and us if we leave now," Mildrey uttered extremely peacefully and with complete self-control, but the tone of his voice which was commanding, determined and intolerant of any objections surprised Sandra so much that he was looking amazed at his friend who was always so obedient.

Usually Mildrey was tender-hearted, somewhat stooped, but now he was standing straight. There was a steel hue in his eyes, his face took the expression of unshakable will. If somebody had told Sandra about such Mildrey, he would have laughed from such joke.

"Miss Wodsworth, a woman who wants to become a lady of the high society certainly needs a great education, but the simplest feeling of honour could have stopped you from those insults which you were throwing around today without any education. Those whom you consider to be useful grooms, but whom you didn't recognize instantly because of your shortsightedness and egoism, and therefore insulted them – won't take vengeance on you. They only will give your name for the tongues of the society to make common, exactly in the same way as you will do it if only you decide to disgrace your father's remembrance in public. Life will never forgive you for such cruel behaviour of yours today. Of course, lord Benedict has already forgiven you for those insults that were meant for him, of what you'll soon be able to be convinced."

The men bowed to Jenny and left. Only they weren't destined to reach the country soon, because all of a sudden, Sandra felt a stinging heartache, and they had to drop in at the pharmacy, and after having sat here for about an hour, they missed the train. When finally their coach rolled into the yard,

Florentian was already waiting for them on the stair and he told Sandra to take the medicine and to go to bed instantly.

“Now, my dear Sandra, you’ve experienced yourself how strongly illusions are chaining a man. You are ill, because you were polluting your organism with your fear, tears and irritation during this entire time. Your heart attack could be named more precisely the attack of sadness and horror. Learn to overcome everything what is oppressing your spirit. Man spirit’s freedom and independence – this is the real foundation of his health. One could say that man has not an attack of liver, but an attack of his selfishness and greediness, that he has not a pain near his heart, but that he has an attack of fear and melancholy. Go to bed and rest. Take out all Jenny’s vices which you saw today on your shoulders boldly by comprehending them as her most vicious enemies. Take them out like a basket of lumber and strew them down the wind, but strew them only after you’ve found enough kindness within yourself to let Jenny into your heart and to think about her only by searching for the ways to help her.”

Having said good-bye to Sandra and entrusted him under Arthur’s protection, lord Benedict went to his study where he invited Mildrey to come, too. Having offered a light supper for his guest, he told him while he was eating that Alyssa’s state was better already, but she hadn’t recovered her consciousness yet, while Nal, Nikolay and Doria were keeping watch by the patient incessantly.

“We need to thank life for sending the illness to her, Mildrey. It saved her from much suffering.”

“Yes, if today she had taken part in those terrible scenes and seen the cruelty and coldness of her relatives, she must have fallen ill, even if she had been healthy.”

Lord Mildrey told him all the details of the events that had happened in the pastor’s house, including their threat with court and Jenny’s reaction to the letter.

“I don’t doubt it, but I had to keep the word that I gave to the pastor and to do everything till the end. A chance to draw back from the evil will be given to her one more time, but she will reject it, too, and when life already seems to be like the hell for her, when she addresses me herself, then I won’t be able to help her much. Thank you, my friend, for doing the favour for me. Lately you are very tired with my affairs. I’ve appreciated your fortitude and your efforts, I know that I can rely on you and I won’t forget about it. However, my assignments for you aren’t finished yet. I would like you to go to the mister Tendly’s office tomorrow and to give this letter of mine to him. If you succeeded, please try to bring him here, to my place, while now I say thank you again, go to rest and don’t worry about Alyssa.”

“Lord Benedict, when I’m next to you, I never feel any fear or excitement. Only when I lose touch with you, like during that terrible night when you threw the note through the window for me, I suffer and I seem to myself to be helpless and miserable.”

“That one who has met me at least once or who has at least found out about me, that one will never feel alone anymore, while that one to whom my hand is extended, as it is for you, that one can feel neither fear nor disappointment. That one who is living with absolute self-control, that one is always holding my hand, and I share all his matters – from the smallest to the biggest – with him. If his irritation has intervened in those matters, it means that he has lost my hand, disturbed harmony within himself and is unable to hold my hand himself, although I didn’t take it away from him. Remember this, my friend, and keep not only balance, but also joy in your heart even during such difficult days like today.”

Having said good-bye to Mildrey, Florentian went upstairs to visit Alyssa. After he talked to Nal for a while and came back to his study, the whole house was already sleeping peacefully.

When Sandra and Mildrey left, Jenny was sitting in the sitting-room for a long time by not being able to control herself. Her thoughts were running about chaotically through her entire past life from her childhood till this day, but she was unable to concentrate. Now she used to succeed to calm down a little when she thought that the part of the money left for her personally and the percentage of her mother's capital would allow them to live in easy circumstances, now she used to start comparing herself with Alyssa, and fury used to boil within her again, now it seemed to her that she had to marry somebody immediately without fail, as though from revenge for somebody, but this thought was irritating her, too. Lately she used to see mister Tendly, but she needed him only for spending her time. They used to ride, go to the theatre or the restaurant, but she never inquired him about his life, profession or occupation, simply he was only a tolerable cavalier who helped her to divert herself. When it turned out that Jenny had missed a great opportunity, that Tendly was a rich landowner, the man with position and connections, fury squeezed Jenny's throat that she had insulted and pushed him away herself.

Exhausted, unable to control herself girl felt completely lonely for the first time in her life. Only now, when the pastor wife's snoring was roaring in the deadly silence of the house, Jenny evaluated her father's loss. However hard she was protesting against his introduced rules of the house while he was still alive, against his demands to behave honourably, what was especially restricting Jenny, but she knew that she would always find a friend when she came to him, she would always be comforted and calmed down. Even in those cases when Jenny was really guilty of something, the pastor never raised his voice, he only used to suffer instead of her, while his daughter used to leave calmed down. While her father was together with them, Jenny wasn't afraid of anything, while now such fear for tomorrow appeared in her soul that she wanted to nestle up to someone's shoulder and to feel some support. Having remembered the Florentian's letter, she started reading it again and she was calming down while she was reading it. It seemed to her that its every word revealed her mistakes, she wanted to see lord Benedict, to talk to him and to become reconciled with her sister...

All of a sudden the pastor's wife entered the sitting-room.

"Jenny, why are you sitting here in the dark? We have to discuss hundreds of things and to decide something; and the sooner we do it, the faster and easier we'll disentangle ourselves from all our difficulties."

The pastor's wife lowered the curtain and put the light on. The whole letter's charm was cleared away. Her daughter had time to hide the letter from her, but the pastor's wife brought in the whirls of passions with herself, and riot and protest inflamed with the new power covered Jenny again.

"Are we going to be at law with lord Benedict? We aren't going to get Alyssa back without the court, while we certainly need the girl at home."

"Mother, I think that today alone we won't solve anything. We need to wait for tomorrow and ask for an advice of some professional lawyer. Neither me nor you can understand here anything."

"Jenny, only Tendly could explain the whole legal part of the case to us, we won't find anybody except him now. You should write a letter to him, apologize and invite him on a visit to your home. He's so in love with you that undoubtedly, he will forgive you and come running here instantly by enjoying his happiness."

"Ah, mother, since my father's death you don't allow me to stay alone at least for a moment and you force me to be selfish, but I might not want it..."

"Jenny, you know perfectly how much I love you," her mother interrupted her. "I would take you to some noisy place with pleasure where you could amuse yourself perfectly, but exactly now, not

wasting any time, we have to reconsider everything and decide how we are going to live. We have two possibilities, but we need to get Alyssa back in order to accomplish both of them. When she's back, you can choose whether to marry Tendly immediately or to start on a journey and search for a good match. Of course, your marriage with Tendly has many advantages, but the laws of divorce in England are so strict that you couldn't become free if he turned out to be a bad husband."

"Mother, wait and don't rush to decide what to do with the fur while the bear is still in the woods. I agree to write a note for Tendly and I promise you to influence Alyssa, so that we could manage without the court. The girl is stubborn, but I could try to do it. I will invite her to come to see us, and then we'll try not to let her go. Then let her guardian bring a suit against us."

"No, Jenny. Alyssa isn't stubborn. If you treat her nicely and tenderly, what we never wanted to do, then you could even ride roughshod over her. Her deceased father didn't love her as much as he knew perfectly this feature of her character and he was making use of it. The poor girl imagined that he didn't even know how to love her and repaid him with real devotion. If you want Alyssa to come back, pretend to be gloomy without her and write many affectionate words. Then she will be plunged in her dreams that you could change her father's friendship for her, and she would come."

Clever Jenny who understood straightforwardness and consistency of her father's and sister's characters perfectly managed to evaluate their friendship and interrelations properly. She understood resemblance of their ideas and tastes, she understood that exactly this had brought them together, but at the same time Jenny didn't have any doubts that the only key to Alyssa's heart for her was to be tender and to plead her for compassion.

Having written a short note for Tendly, Jenny gave it to her mother who was straining to hand it to him personally. Jenny was asking Tendly in playful tone to forgive for her hysteria which, in her opinion, one could understand in the current situation.

The pastor's wife didn't believe in her diplomatic abilities as much as she wanted to verify the old lawyer's words and to make sure of Tendly's possesses wealth, because Jenny's handwritten addresses alone was telling about one of the most excellent streets of London. Since Jenny who exalted the youth from her admirers to the grooms was infected with curiosity where he was living, then she didn't object her mother's desire. Having snatched a hasty bite, the pastor's wife left the house, while Jenny sat down to write the letter for Alyssa. In the beginning, it seemed to her that it wouldn't be very difficult to do it, but in almost a half of hour only the usual "Dear Alyssa" was scribbled on the sheet. No more thoughts were coming to her. Both the arrogantly yielding and commanding tone in which she usually used to talk to her sister – the fool and dress-maker – now didn't suit even that what Jenny herself called tenderness.

For her Alyssa was still only stupid and stubborn baby who had turned her love for her father and lord Benedict into the object of blind glorification. Jenny also remembered that scene in the garden when in Alyssa's opinion she didn't speak highly of lord Benedict. She also remembered the expression of her father's unshakable will that flashed in her sister. She didn't know how she had to begin this journey into the sea of words in order not to run aground or strike against the reefs of her diplomatic keen wits. It occurred to Jenny that it would be quite well to put several lord Benedict's thoughts from the Mildrey's delivered letter into this letter, because most likely namely that was exciting and attracting Alyssa, but unfortunately during the fit of fury she didn't even notice how she tore that letter to shreds, and then nothing was left in her thoughts.

Finally Jenny decided not even to mention lord Benedict, but to address Alyssa's pride and to prove her that simply she couldn't live in the strange house anymore and be the dependent of countess T. when her own true sister was doomed for solitude. Jenny believed so sincerely that she was the victim of

Alyssa's cruelty that she felt relieved instantly and she began to write the letter from the long series of accusations for her sister.

*You left both of us with our mother to our fate and you tell us that you love us very much. You aren't even interested in how we are living in this old, nasty and uncomfortable house. If you think that I or our mother can accept your proposed conditions, then apparently you've forgotten about our habits and inclinations. Besides if you really loved us, then you wouldn't have written those ridiculous orders and you would have told your father that he was losing his common sense due to his old age and illness. Alyssa, you know about my inclination to live luxuriously. So why you are living next to a strange woman who can change you with other ten dress-makers, while I can have only you. You also won't stay with me during your entire life, right? Soon I will marry somebody, and then we can search for a proper husband for you, too. Your wants are so modest, you don't need any luxury, so it won't be difficult to find a proper match for you. If you really love us sincerely, don't leave us. You know perfectly that our mother's and my life was only restrictions, because whatever we wanted, our father didn't like anything and he used to put a veto upon everything. Finally, now we can start living as we want to, but in order to do it, we need you to come back home, while you, wicked girl, exchanged us into country-side. If you were obstinate and if you didn't want to come back home of your own free will immediately, then we'll have to go to law, and then it would turn out that our father wasn't quite sane. Of course, you wouldn't want such publicity, and concerning your letter – not the lyricism, but that part where you tell us your instructions – I don't even look at it seriously. We'd better talk about it at home when you are back from your rather long journey. By finishing the letter, I remind you again that the girl from the high society who was destined to become pastor's daughter, finally should occupy the position in that society and not be a dependent in somebody's strange house. Come back home as soon as possible and finally liberate me and our mother. See you soon.*

*Your Jenny*

Jenny liked her letter; by taking care only of herself, she felt that she had thrown down her heavy burden of duty and she was waiting for her mother calmly.

Soon lady Katherine came back home. She was out of spirits. It turned out that mister Tendly was living in an excellent house, but he was absent, all of his servants were dismissed, except the yard-keeper on duty and the cook. The youth was living in the villa, he didn't visit his home often, but he was in his uncle's office every day. She got all the news from the yard-keeper. Somehow she managed to find out the address of the lawyer's office as well. Disappointed mother and her daughter decided to send the letter by mail, because Jenny resisted categorically the pastor wife's desire to hand the letter personally to mister Tendly in the office.

Both Jenny and lady Katherine were irritated very much because of this misfortune. They were feeling lonely and both of them didn't know what to do. Having chattered a little about various trivialities, they went to bed without confessing one to another that anxiety was breaking their hearts, that they weren't fascinated with their future without any men.

The trickles of envy were pinching Jenny's heart only because of the thought that Alyssa was surrounded by the company of men in the country, she didn't have any worries there, her rich guardian was solving everything for her. She decided firmly to fight against that guardian, to snatch Alyssa from him,

whatever price she would have to pay for it. She will marry if not Tendy than anybody else, while lord Benedict will remember how much trouble Jenny did for him during his entire life.

Jenny calmed down from these pleasant thoughts, she decided firmly and finally she could fall asleep.

## Chapter 9

### The second lord Benedict's letter for Jenny.

#### Tendly's in the country-side, visiting lord Benedict

Having come back to his study, Florentian was reading his received letters for a long time. He was always ordering his correspondence himself. He answered some of his correspondents with several lines and he wrote some notices on the margins of other letters, then he fell to thinking by looking at the pastor's portrait that was placed on the shelf by the writing-table.

"Yes, my dear friend, I promised you to take care of your affairs and your children," he addressed the portrait. "I will try to write to Jenny one more time, although I'm sure that the passions, fury and envy boiling within her have already opened the gates of her heart for evil so much that most likely I won't be able to stop the ball of snakes which are crawling into it. I think that the ninth wave will carry her off, but... on behalf of the promise given to you, I will try to help her for the second time."

For the people who had seen Florentian among other people, who had seen only calm, cheerfulness and joy in his face, it would have been difficult to imagine him such as he was when he was talking to the pastor's portrait. An exceptional tenderness and sadness were shining in his eyes. One could see pain and sorrow in his face for another man's path in which he had created the insurmountable obstacles of suffering for himself. His wonderful and always so young face was now strict, pale and it seemed so aged as though it was oppressed by the wisdom of centuries. Florentian put the leaf of paper and fell to thinking again by looking at the distance attentively.

*Jenny, - he was writing, - compare the date and the hour of writing of my and your letters. Your letter for Alyssa is still lying unsent before you, while I already know not only its contents, but also the whole chaos of your thoughts and feelings which have taken hold of you. Please take notice of the date and the hour of your writing so that later you wouldn't think that I opened the sick Alyssa's letter. I've already written to you that she's very seriously sick, but you haven't expressed any sympathy for her with a single word. I've told many things to you in my first letter, but you didn't read it attentively and you tore it up in the fit of rage.*

*I've explained to you that anger wasn't any innocent occupation. Every time when you are angry you draw the streams of anger that are flowing in ether into yourself from all sides, which stick all around you like leeches. Today – as well as more and more often lately – you are all covered with black and red leeches with the most detestable little heads and jaws that you could only imagine. All of them were born because of your passions, jealousy, irritation and anger. Later when it seems to you that you've already calmed down and controlled yourself, the storm in your atmosphere will continue for at least next two days.*

*How do you think, Jenny, who could approach you while those nasty creatures are sucking your passions and feed on them? These invisible leeches are feeding on you exactly in the same way as the real ones are sucking a man's blood. Any pure living being that is very sensitive to the stench of these creatures run away from those who are encircled by them, from those who doesn't possess any self-control. The pure being who meets the person who didn't get used to control his nerves, who is talking in an irritated, raised tone, who is always in a rage, is suffering no less than meeting a leper. While the wicked man who possesses only determined will is hurrying towards such person and rejoices at his new assistant*

*beforehand, because that stench is drawing him. By hiding his real evil intentions under the mask of hypocrisy, he surrounds his new victim by external brilliance, he seduces her with wealth, sometimes he pretends to be in love with him, but always that's only lie and intrigues, while the essence is to hold tight the unfortunate person's will, to force her to serve evil and destruction. Jenny, I will reveal the law of the universe to you to which everything on Earth submits – both the spirit and the matter: calm of man's heart determines his place in the universe, in the same way as the power of gravitation makes him walk with his head up.*

*The power of man's spirit is that radiating matter which calm of his heart has woven. This matter covers man as the whole sphere of atmosphere's streams, while the attraction of gravity is leading him through the whole range of his affairs and facts which he's unable to avoid in any way. Now it seems to you that you are sick, but that's only those your attracted evil creatures that disturb you. The best way out for you would be to come here, at my place. I will tell some other completely new thoughts for you and I ask you again on behalf of your father's remembrance: give up your old habit to live in constant irritation, create your new life not with egoism and anger, but with love and joy.*

*Work that frightens you so much is the only way to comprehension of meaning of the entire people's earthly life. Everybody without any exceptions must work on Earth. Idleness will lead you only to despair. If you continue being stubborn, if you don't change your mode of living, soon you will make certain yourself that everybody who's kind and bright began to avoid you. According to that you can decide how much the evil has already come nearer to you. Hurry to save yourself from it! Come here, perhaps it is still possible to correct everything. Here you will have the opportunity to meet all kindly disposed to you people whom you need, who are already somewhat related to you and on whom it depends to which direction your life will turn.*

*Jenny, hear my call. We never know what and where is waiting for us and we are rarely allowed to perceive to what circle of people our life and activity is related. If you don't come here during the next three days, I will know that no kindness is able to get into your heart anymore. I also ask you on behalf of your sister: be compassionate to her. She's sick, come to see her. Don't start the lawsuit – that is meaningless. You won't win it, while Alyssa will receive a strong blow from you. Since her pure heart will never feel any anger for you whatever suffering you would cause for her, - you will feel the whole power of your blow yourself, it'll come back to you and hit yourself.*

*I still don't lose hope to see you at my place and I repeat one more time to you: you can meet here some very valuable and interesting people whom you need very much, here your destiny might turn into happiness and joy. Jenny, only know that "might happen" still doesn't mean that it "will happen". That "will happen" – is the man's activity, his energy which turns that what "might happen" into his action.*

Having sealed the envelope, Florentian went upstairs again to see Alyssa where Nikolay had already exchanged Nal. He made sure that all his instructions were fulfilled properly, came back and sat down at the writing-table again. He wrote a short and pleasant letter for mister Tendly by asking him to forgive for experienced insults and by inviting him to come and spend the weekend in the country. He also wrote a note for Amadeo by asking him to drop in at his study early in the morning for affairs in London. Having brought the note to the Amadeo's mail-box, Florentian gave a smile to the pastor's portrait while he was walking through his study, put out the light and turned to his bedroom.

Mildrey was still sleeping soundly after such difficult day when the servant woke him up and gave the mail to him. First of all, Mildrey noticed Florentian's note and snatched it, as if it was the greatest life's value. He read it, dressed himself instantly and he was in Florentian's study already in half an hour.



The host was waiting for him here and he gave two letters to him by asking him first to deliver the letter to Jenny, and then to drop in at the lawyer's office and persuade him to come to the country with Mildrey. His request was explained in the letter as well.

Jenny was still pampering herself in the bed by sipping chocolate when the lord Benedict's letter was handed to her. She recognized the oblong greenish envelope and the handwriting instantly. Her heart started beating faster, and the range of the most contradictory thoughts and feelings overflowed her. Having opened the envelope, she already wanted to start reading it when she heard her mother's steps. She barred the door with the bolt. The pastor's wife who got used to break into the room even without any knocking now couldn't get into her daughter's room at all. That made her furious instantly.

"Jenny, you received the letter from Mildrey. What is he writing? Open the door at last!" the pastor's wife was shouting.

"Mother, I haven't read the letter yet. Please let me read it calmly. I don't ask you who has written the letter to you yesterday, do I? I hope that I can demand similar courtesy from you."

"What is wrong with you, my daughter? Don't you understand that Mildrey would be more worthy of Tendly? Perhaps now you shouldn't send any letter to Tendly?"

"Mother, for how long do I have to tell you to leave me in peace," Jenny became mad in her turn.

She remembered Mildrey's words: "Such women as your sister may force one to forget that other women exist in the world". When only she remembered these words, pain pierced her, and she asked her mother to step back one more time, but she told it more sharply.

Jenny calmed down a little during the night, but then she got irritated again. She read the letter one, second, third time again, and every time it seemed to her that she hadn't understood something before. The first impulse was encouraging her to not acknowledge anything in this letter; after the second reading it seemed to her that it was quite kind to be invited on a visit by the lord Benedict himself, and after the third time she decided to visit him instantly. Jenny began to dress herself by thinking how she would have to tell this news to her mother. She had never been so happy with the starting day like now, as though her childhood had come back when her father used to bring them to their grandfather by the Christmas tree.

To her mother's amazement, Jenny left her room completely dressed, and the pastor's wife who got used to see her daughter only in her robe until breakfast was deprived of speech.

"What? Do you leave so early? What has happened?"

"It happened so that I go to see lord Benedict in order to visit sick Alyssa."

The pastor's wife even sat down and she couldn't utter a single word. Jenny knew perfectly what was hiding behind this silence which predicted the fit of fury. She was hoping to make a getaway until her mother didn't have time to come to herself, but she caught up with her at the very door, seized her hand and began to shriek. Having made certain that she would certainly not get out of here, Jenny came back to the sitting-room.

"What does it all mean? How dare you to go there alone without me?"

"No one has invited you to come there. They invite me. Do you really think that you are going to follow me like this during my entire life? What a life is waiting for me here?" Jenny was almost crying.

"Give me the letter. There must be a blackmail hiding there, which you cannot even understand. I say give the letter to me immediately."

"I won't give the letter to you, but if you promise me to calm down, I can read it for you. God, and I was thinking that my father was despot and tyrant. Such tyranny like yours I couldn't even imagine."

Jenny pulled the letter out of the pocket and read it for her mother. After the long tirade of not very pleasant Italian epithets to the lord, his partners and even Jenny herself, finally lady Katherine shouted.

"Don't you understand that he's afraid of the lawsuit? The invitation itself to come to the aristocrat's house, his promise to bring you together with the necessary and interesting people is flattering you. Only why that rubbish is written here? It is specially chosen in such a way that man of sound mind wouldn't understand anything. Do you understand anything here?"

Joy, cheerful mood, enthusiasm which surrounded Jenny while she was alone were gone. Now her desire to visit lord Benedict seemed to be light-minded for herself, too. Her mother infected her with anger so much that Jenny was frightened of falling into a trap.

"Listen to me. Send the letter to Tendy through the messenger and wait either for his answer or for himself. I am certain: he will be here in less than an hour."

Lady Katherine was persuading her daughter for a long time, while Jenny's heart was growing dark from those words, her face was growing cloudy, she was only cowering, as if all of a sudden she had been plunged into the darkness and cold.

"Mother, there's always the same song about your love, but my God, how boring that love of yours is, you make me suspect everybody of dishonesty and hate everybody! Why do you think that lord Benedict is afraid of the lawsuit? My father couldn't put his signature everywhere without knowing the laws, could he? Why don't you believe that I could meet some really interesting man in that house, whom I even might need?"

"Don't be naïve, Jenny. Your father set his affairs in order perfectly, he took care of Alyssa wonderfully and threw us out – and he was like this during his entire life."

"Mother, my father left to have a rest for the first time in his life and he did it just before his death. Why do you slander him? I don't have any strength to bear it anymore," Jenny was weeping.

Her mother who had never seen her daughter's tears understood that she had gone too far with her incontinence. She dashed at Jenny, she was caressing her, kissing her hands, begging to forgive her and she gave her word not to mention the past anymore. While talking profusely, she was depicting the married Jenny's future, her luxury so well, she promised her life to be without any work and worries, she kept repeating her that she should keep aloof from the menacing and horrible lord Benedict who was talking only about work that Jenny calmed down and agreed to send the letter to mister Tendy and to go to the city for breakfast.

While her mother was dressing, Jenny somehow managed to recover her looks, she hid the signs of her tears, but her mood didn't get any better. As though she had lost someone very dear for her. For the first time the witness of her tears showed up, for the first time her tears revealed the abyss of terror, doubts and uncertainty for herself, which she didn't even suspect to be within her. Lord Benedict's image flashed like a charming vision and faded away, while cold penetrated into her soul. Therefore, her persistent desire to fight against the lord lit up within her and the desire occupied all her thoughts again. A

strong hatred for Mildrey lit up within her, who dared to talk about her sister's charm in her presence. Jenny flew into a rage again and tore up the lord Benedict's letter into the smallest shreds.

The pastor's wife who was ready to go to the city shot up in the doorway and asked her.

"Jenny what is the address of the lord Benedict's office?"

Jenny remembered that there was a postscript with the office address in the letter: if she decided to go there, she only would have to address the office, and they would take her to the very country-side.

"I don't know, I've already torn up the letter," Jenny growled out gloomily.

"My child, you are so careless. I've told you many times that letters are documents, there's no need to write them, but it is necessary to save the received ones. Think for a while what priceless value those two letters would have taken some day in your life, and you tore them up."

Jenny didn't utter a single word, she turned towards the door, and it was nothing else for the pastor's wife to do as only to follow her. Having met the first messenger, they gave the letter for Tendly to him to deliver and went to breakfast.

Having given the Florentian's letter to Jenny, Mildrey went to the Tendly uncle's juridical office. Tendly was already ready to leave, but he saw Mildrey and thought that he was here with some official business.

"Good afternoon, lord Mildrey, in all likelihood you wanted to see my uncle, but he fell sick today, and I set all affairs in order quickly alone. However, I'm at your service if only I could exchange my uncle for you."

"No, mister Tendly, I wanted to see you personally. I've brought the lord Benedict's letter for you, in which he apologizes you for the yesterday's sad fact. Lord Benedict wants to apologize you personally, but now he has a serious patient in his house, whom he cannot leave unattended for such a long time as his journey to London and back. He obligated me to ask you to give that possibility to him and to come with me to his place in the country. Please read this letter, perhaps you won't refuse the insistent lord Benedict's request."

Mister Tendly read the letter and he all blushed with satisfaction.

"I wasn't even dreaming about such happiness to be on a visit to lord Benedict's about whom I've heard so much, but I simply don't know what I should do with my uncle and the office; besides, I should drop in at my house in order to take some belongings with me. Apparently, I will have to come tomorrow."

"That would be more complicated, and if you came today, you would make the lord very happy. I'm with the coach, we could visit your uncle and your place, then we would be just in time for the train."

Mister Tendly wanted to go today so much that it wasn't very difficult for Amadeo to persuade him to go once and for all. The youths were going to visit Tendly's uncle in several minutes. Soon they received his uncle's agreement, because he also was flattered by this invitation of lord Benedict. They got ready even faster at home, and the new friends came hurriedly to the station in the last moment. They reached the lord Benedict's house successfully, the charming host met them himself and he introduced Tendly to his entire family. Tendly was charmed with Nal's beauty and with Nikolay's friendliness, so he felt like at native home instantly. He didn't even notice how the evening flew by.

Sandra felt better, he also went downstairs and he made Tendly's mood even more cheerful. In the beginning Tendly was somewhat rather afraid of Nikolay's and Florentian's scientific knowledge, but soon he forgot his shyness and he turned out to be not only cultured and educated person, but also witty company. When everybody rose in order to go to sleep, Florentian charged Sandra to take the guest to the lake tomorrow before breakfast and he promised Tendly to show the most wonderful places of the environs himself during the day.

While being left with Nal and Nikolay, Florentian told them that Alyssa's health was already somewhat better, that she would be able to sit in bed in three days and then she would begin to recover quickly. He answered to the questions of surprised Nal that frankly speaking, one couldn't look at Alyssa's illness in the same way as the medicine was looking at it, that Alyssa's consciousness only doubled due to the strong nervous shock which has opened the opportunity for her consciousness to penetrate into those vibrations and that frequency of etheric waves which she was unable to reach when she was healthy.

"Such states could also be disastrous for man, and he could even die. Then there's a danger that he will come back as madman or with attacks of some terrible disease; and now Alyssa is coming back to us even more charming than before. That atmosphere which was unreachable for her before, in which her spirit was living during these days, now would be always opened for her. She will hear it, she will be able to communicate with those whom she met there."

"Father, tell me what is happening with me now? I used to see my uncle Ali clearly before, too, as though I could hear his voice. I only needed to think about him attentively and then I could see him before me from the distance. Now when I was sitting by Alyssa's bed I began to see her, but she wasn't lying in bed, as though she was woven from the finest shining web and she was flying high above me. She was happy, cheerful, she was laughing and she told me: "Nal, don't be afraid, I will come back. I could come back already, but I don't want to do it so much..." Father, I thought that all of it was my fantasy and delirium of my frightened imagination because of my friend's illness, but after that what I heard now, it seems to me that it could be reality and not my hallucination."

"Without any doubt, you've seen real facts, Nal, but in order for the people of the Earth to comprehend correctly the facts of the worlds which are living in different laws and frequencies of waves than Earth, man needs to possess not only the talents of his organism, but also such great purity of his heart, such fearlessness and unselfishness that no one was able to disturb him, and that none of the flying by impure streams or currents could find any hook in that man, which they could hang to. In all cases of man's life when his supernatural feelings awake for action, he finds himself in such external circumstances which namely he needs in order to master them. Very often man who has mastered the possibility to penetrate through his conscious into subconscious creation, doesn't seem for others to be very pure, prominent or educated. In short, in other people's opinion, he doesn't possess any especial and valuable characteristics. Let that, my friends, never disturb you. Comprehend and make certain only of one: if a dreamer or a liar or a man who has lost his common sense is standing before you, then never listen to such people. All their dreams, stories about astral and ether visions – that's their leisure nonsense from doing nothing. Nal, you've already made sure in your life that miracles didn't exist, and only knowledge and work existed. An ordinary man would tell about you, Lovushka and Nikolay that each of you have come across some miracles several times already during your short life, while in truth, simply the karmic threads of your older brothers with whom you are connected through your work of ages have intertwined with you on the earth. The sufficient amount of solid and firm loyalty has already matured within you in order for such interaction to become possible."

Florentian said good-bye to his children, and soon the whole house feel asleep.

The wonderful morning of the next autumn day especially revealed the whole beauty of the lake and the waterfall, mister Tendly was like spellbound and he couldn't find any words to say thank you to Sandra for his morning stroll before breakfast. Nature loving Tendly evaluated not only the nature's aesthetical beauty here, but also the tact, mind and artistic taste with which this natural beauty was made more distinct. The Earth's harmony wasn't violated anywhere, and the human hand was felt everywhere, which helped to shine the nature's beauty even brighter. In the beginning, the youths' conversation was turning upon the host, but little by little Sandra whose temperament certainly needed to spill began to tell Tendly about the pastor's death, about Alyssa's illness and about Alyssa herself. Sandra also told him about his longing for his lost friend, about his exceptional disappointment in Jenny whom once he liked so much.

When Sandra mentioned Jenny's name, Tendly became distressed, his face was reflecting his inner pain, and if Sandra wasn't so involved in effusion of his feelings, of course, he would have noticed his friend's change.

"Well, Sandra, I cannot say that you were kind host and brought your friend back cheerfully disposed," suddenly Florentian's voice was heard.

"What is it, lord Benedict?"

"Just look more attentively at our guest. Having associated with you, he looks like Sad Knight. You shouldn't have told him about all your troubles so enthusiastically, then mister Tendly's nature which is sensitive for impressions wouldn't have reacted so strongly to your talking. Don't be sad, mister Tendly, only outwardly it seems that life is driving people forward without mercy, but actually all its actions have great meaning of kindness and wisdom for ourselves. Such an exaggerated sensitivity is hiding in each of us, which puts us uncovered against the severe facts of life, while we must stand against them hardened and react to them as easy and simple as possible."

"Yes, lord Benedict, without knowing me at all, you hit the weakest spot of my character. I am so sensitive that sometimes I keep weeping for entire weeks only because somebody told me one or another word – and I already don't tell you about my disappointments and my flying away hopes. And in order for me to feel hardened – that hadn't yet been in my life. I don't want to say with this that I was unable to encounter the blows of destiny and misfortunes in a manly way. I was destined to experience quite a lot of them, but every time I had to concentrate my entire courage and will, so that I could live normally and I wouldn't show to people how my heart was aching."

"I guess that now you are going through one of such difficult periods, my dear mister Tendly," Florentian was speaking to him by taking the youth's arm, "and if my dear friend," by taking Sandra's arm with his other arm and smiling to him he continued, "would have showed more attention to you and not to his troubles, then he wouldn't have touched such sore strings of yours."

"I am to blame again," Sandra uttered in sad and childish voice by pressing himself to Florentian. "Your kind-heartedness and indulgence justify me thousand times. From the bottom of my heart I would like to live at least one day like a tactful person, but up to now I cannot remember a single such case."

While talking about the flowers in blossom on their way, derived from ordinary field flowers, to which lord Benedict changed the subject of their conversation with the tact characteristic only to him, all three of them came back home where life was taking its normal course and where breakfast was waiting for them. Having fed his guest, the host of the house took Tendly for a walk, because he had promised to show the beauties of the park to him personally. Not even noticing how it had happened, Tendly began to tell him about the reading of the testament in the pastor's house and about the difficult scenes during the

reading. Encouraged by Florentian's questions and his attentive attention, the youth told him about the history of his accidental acquaintance with Jenny – about the race, about their later meetings and about his fascination in her. Tendly admitted that he considered Jenny to be the victim of her father's tyranny – that often happened in the houses of some great scientists where one's father was absorbed in his science and wanted to test those or other problems of science on living people by not reckoning with their individuality. Florentian depicted the real pastor's portrait to him, he told him about his and Alyssa's lives in their own home and – without touching Jenny – he helped the youth to understand the discordant family life, abomination of the pastor's wife herself and her demoralizing influence to her elder daughter.

"It seemed to you that you had to marry Jenny in order to save the girl who was ruined by her father's oppression. I would like you to understand the whole seriousness of the marriage till the end. You cannot marry someone if you aren't certain that that someone really loves you. All marriages when people hope to save another person who didn't love them or whom they didn't love enough fail. The pastor himself whose inner tragedy you understand already was hoping to save her wife, but even with his entire nobility and power of his character he failed to do it."

"Lord Benedict, I react to my surroundings in such a sensitive and exaggerated way that now not the fact Jenny has insulted me badly is poisoning me, but the fact that she didn't even want to show any interest in who I was, although she was spending the time with me and she didn't refuse none of my proposed distractions for a single time. Because of my stupidity, I imagined that the girl appreciated me like a human being, I was even proud that she didn't ask me about my social standing, and I estimated it to be the top of delicacy. So you can imagine from how high I fell down, stunned by the tactless act of miss Wodsworth on the testament's reading day. And nevertheless – however stupid it is – Jenny is still living in my heart, and the pain didn't abate here."

"You see, now finally "she" is living in your heart which was free for so long time. Can I ask you some more questions?"

"Of course, lord Benedict, I will answer you without hiding anything from you. I'm not afraid of the truth. This fearlessness of the truth has not only helped me to get out of a scrape many times in my life, but also saved me."

"Mister Tendly, people possess this quality rarely. It is very valuable not only because it protects man himself from many misfortunes, but also protects others by helping them to throw off the shell of falsehood. However, in order for this quality to help people creatively, man himself has to identify precisely and vigilantly how correct his own understanding about affairs and people is. Did you know that that She, that Jenny, about whom you were dreaming that she was the victim of somebody else's tyranny, is angry, inflamed with fury attacks?"

"No, lord Benedict, nothing of the kind had even occurred to me. I explained her nervousness to be her dissatisfaction. It seemed to me that intelligent woman for whom her father was always forbidding to learn wasn't free enough in the everyday cage. I was dreaming to offer a journey around the world for Jenny, to show the entire world to her and then to create conditions to learn and to become doctor."

A hardly noticeable smile flashed through Florentian's face when he answered Tendly.

"Jenny would have gone for a ride in some capitals with pleasure in order to supplement her wardrobe – although you had to notice the lack of her taste and sense of proportion, - but she would have gone only where comfort would have led her and where she could have demonstrated her beauty beneficially. Jenny wouldn't have gone to the places where she would have had to endure the tropical heat,

dust and inconveniences. She doesn't love nature and any other life without the noisy city. She doesn't need any family, any husband-friend. She needs a comfortable husband with riches and title, because to get into the high society – that's the dream of her entire life. Does this Jenny look like that portrait which you've drawn for yourself?"

"Unfortunately, I believe in your every word, and Jenny of my dreams doesn't look like your drawn portrait at all, but it isn't any easier for me because of it."

"Your straightforwardness will help you not only to become free of the illusion which you've created for yourself, it'll help you to protect your entire life from falsehood and evil, from the tragedy of disunity in your family and your soul. I won't be telling you anything Jenny anymore. Tomorrow you will see her sister Alyssa who is the precise copy of her father's character, kindness and his mind. You'll understand yourself whether the people of this kind could oppress anybody. I only will add that if nothing especial happens during two days, I will tell you more about life in general and about Jenny concretely."

As Florentian had foreseen, Alyssa's health improved immediately, and in two days she went downstairs pale and lean, but completely healthy already.

These two days flew by like one hour for mister Tendly. He couldn't imagine that once he was living in the world without lord Benedict and his family, and when he was introduced to Alyssa he was standing in front of her silent, excited and confused.

"Mister Tendly, why do you look so sad?" Mildrey asked him. "All of us got used that people next to miss Alyssa Wodsworth begin to bloom and smile. Your embarrassed appearance baffles not only me, but all of us."

"I became confused, because I felt I was to blame before you, miss Wodsworth. I imagined you to be a person of difficult nature, with unshakable and strong will. Now I saw you and I understood that I was wrong. Please forgive me. I give my word not to create any people's portraits behind their back from now on, whatever would help me to imagine them."

"If you were drawing my portrait in your imagination and now you are disappointed to the good side, then what I have to forgive you for? I'm very glad that your disfavour for me disappeared in your heart. It seems to me that the most difficult for man is not to be the master of his heart and to carry all sorts of scorpions in it. If I rise from a scorpion at least to the world of plants in your heart, then I will be glad to be at least a nettle there. Take the rose from me, perhaps we'll even strike up a friendship."

"Well, that's Alyssa! Did my little sister become such coquette after her illness?"

"Nal, it is half trouble that she's become coquette, but it really isn't well that she embarrassed our guest. It seems that although she's still a young nettle, but her little leaves sting already. Would you be so kind as to play something for us and correct your awkward coquetting. Not only us, but also the piano missed your sounds," Florentian was laughing.

Alyssa sat down at the piano and began to play Chopin. When the sounds of the funeral march were heard, Sandra could hardly suppress his lament, while the faces of playing Alyssa, Florentian and Nal who were sitting next to Tendly surprised him so much with their unusual expression that he could separate neither them from the music nor the music from them. The new life opened up for Tendly through these people. He could see such power of them and such spiritual attitude which he hadn't yet met up to now. Like every cultured person Tendly had heard lots of music, but he hadn't yet felt such its charm.

Tendly could feel the impression which these three charming faces left for him during the entire evening, as well as those special expressions which he caught in them. It seemed very strange to him

that the tragic music could summon the powerful joy of these people and the light on their faces. How did these hearts understand death if the funeral march didn't excite sadness for them? Tendly was already completely immersed in his thoughts when the host took him out of there.

"Well then, mister Tendly, tomorrow is your last day with us. Weren't you bored here? Would you like to come and spend the next weekend with us again?"

"Would I like to do it? Lord Benedict, this question is very strange for me, because like a small schoolboy I've never fallen into despair that only one day was left for me to stay in your company. I always loved London. Wherever from I used to come back to the city, I always used to go to it as to some feast, and today there's such a feeling within me that everything has turned head over heels. My feast is here, I've found the new, unexpected and wonderful way here, as though I had been waiting for it during my entire life. Of course, you could ascribe lots of what I'm telling you now to my exaggerated sensitiveness, but that new silence within me which I hadn't experienced up to now, that new calm and evaluation of life in such a way as it is going on – I had never felt it before and this novelty was born here. I want to glorify my day, glorify both good and bad that I met in it. Most of all, lord Benedict, I want to tell you that my meeting with you and with those whom I met in your house showed me of what people's meetings may become. I think that I answered you the question whether I wanted to come here again. There's also another question: will I dare to. I get used to feel and comprehend myself to be higher than other people in the crowd of whom I have to move, while here, in your house, I feel as though I am a boy unsure of himself, - in this way I comprehend myself to be lower than all of you. You seem to me as if you know something of what I have no idea regardless of all my universities."

The silence became predominant for a short time which tender Florentian's voice disturbed. Today it sounded in an especially unusual and kind way.

"A moment comes to every man's life when he begins to value the facts of his life differently. We are all changing if we move forward, but not the fact itself is important that we are changing, but how we enter into the movement of life that is changing us. If we meet the external facts that fall on us during that day with calm and self-control, then we can overhear the wisdom in them of that hour of our life which has struck for us. We can see the movement of the entire universe, comprehend ourselves as the little part of it and understand how closely we are bound with its entire movement. The most simplest logic could bring us into the circle of the new unity with everybody who is living and working for the common welfare, because in the nature's life we cannot do anything what could harm this common welfare. If sometimes it seems for us that nature has destroyed something here or there with its cataclysms – then it is only because of our habit to live and to reflect based on the superstitions of the external justice. The Great Life, its External Movement doesn't care about the people's insinuations and their justice. Life is moving forward according to the laws of precision. And the people who are living according to the laws don't search for any rewards or praise, they don't wait for any personal honour and glory, they don't work separated and estranged from the common life of the universe. Family for such people – that's not a little nest of some narrow-minded happiness, personal passions or commercial incentives, but the hearts tied up with an idea, who are loyal one to another and who are working for the common welfare. You can see such family before you, and although majority of us aren't connected with any ties of blood, we make one friendly family."

Tendly, as well as everybody else around, couldn't take their eyes off the charming Florentian's face, who today was especially drawing everybody's attention to himself with the expression of his compassion. Everybody meditated on and experienced again everything what the host was telling them, while Tendly whose thoughts had never turned to that side was sitting like bewitched.



"Now, my dear mister Tendly, you understand," Florentian began to speak again, "that such question whether you dare to come here again doesn't exist. If the magic of our common love attracts you, then we are waiting for you for the entire upcoming weekend. For me it will be even more pleasing to see you, my new friend, soon again, because half of us will leave soon. Our plans were a little different," he continued by looking over everybody present here and stopping separately by the pale Sandra's face, "but some storms of evil have broken in, and now we must retreat from them, while our other friends will be fighting against them. But don't be sad, mister Tendly, lord Amadeo and Sandra will stay here."

Sandra suppressed his tears, but he was unable to hold back his moan. Florentian put his hand on his head and told.

"Besides, the most charming man, an example of exceptional knowledge, will, infinite kindness and selflessness will come here on my invitation before our departure. His name is Ananda. Among many of his talents – a rare musicality and voice which one could hear only once in one's life. You won't be alone. Amadeo and Sandra will be living in my house in London, Ananda will be living with them. You will have the same family of ours there."

"Lord Benedict, it seemed to me that I was drowned man already, but you threw a lifebuoy for me. My small wisdom has taught me only one thing: if you don't possess enough knowledge don't deny that what one is telling you, but... who could exchange or be like you!.." Tendly gave a deep sigh and looked at Florentian. "In any case I accept your offer with the greatest gratitude. I don't doubt that Sandra and Amadeo will accept me into that family to which you recommended me."

Mildrey stood up and squeezed Tendly's hand strongly.

"I know solitude very well and I understand even better your tormenting feeling of lost happiness which you've just found and begin to comprehend, but happiness to know lord Benedict, his friends and his family is exactly what makes it different from any other happiness, because it is eternal. Once man finds it, then it may be neither lost nor broken off if he wants to keep it in his heart. Wherever lord Benedict would be, whatever he would charge us to do, we'll always feel his thought that is living next to us if only we ourselves keep our courage and loyalty for those precepts which he's given to us. So we'll become stronger together and we'll try to become kinder in order to wait till the next meeting with him and his family."

Moved by such tender Mildrey's attention, which he's given so little to himself during these days, Tendly responded to him with his passionate handshake.

Sandra who expected that he would be invited to go to America now was completely crushed. It was more than disaster for him, and he remembered the lord Benedict's words again: "You will remember during your entire life that you were weaker than a woman". He used to remember these words often lately. Now, while he was sitting together with everybody, he couldn't see and hear anything, only those words. He also remembered Alyssa's saying about enslaved heart in which scorpions were living. The youth was feeling in two ways: on the one hand – his separation with Florentian was breaking his heart and excited disappointment, on the other hand – he could feel power and self-confidence that he would overcome all obstacles only if he could keep love and friendship of his great guardian and friend, his only close man to whom he had devoted himself without any reservations. It didn't occur to Sandra at least for a moment to argue with Florentian, to beg him to change his decision. He could perceive always clearer that he had to throw the scorpions that were oppressing him out of his heart, to become free from his weaknesses and unnecessary sensitiveness. He understood that in a sense of spiritual growth he, Sandra, kept standing in one place, while his great friend was always going forward.

It became clear to Sandra that if he wanted the distance between him and Florentian not to increase, he had to move forward and not to stand in one place. The clearer he began to comprehend his situation, the fairer Florentian's decision seemed to be for him, but... the scorpions of his suffering were still breaking his heart.

Sandra came to himself only when the charming Florentian's hand landed on his shoulder. Sandra lifted his head, and it seemed to him that he was drowned in the sea of love which kept flowing from Florentian's eyes. The youth pressed himself to his friend in silence by feeling joy as always when only he would press himself to him. He bowed to everybody in silence and left the room. Soon everybody said sincere good-bye to Tendly, the host repeated him insistently again that he would be waiting for him next week, while Mildrey promised him to drop in at his office on Thursday, at twelve o'clock. Left alone with his thoughts, Tendly turned towards his room. He was sleeping little during that night, he fell asleep only before the morning and he was awakened immediately in order to catch the first train to London. He didn't expect to see anybody from the hosts so early and he was very surprised and even more glad when he met the host himself in the dining-room, who was treating him to breakfast personally.

"Mister Tendly, I promised to tell you something about life in general and specifically about Jenny's life. From that swarm of your thoughts which is hanging over you like a big cap, I decide that I have already told you enough about life in general, while concerning Jenny's life, I have to warn you only about three things. First – she cannot forgive herself that she didn't perceive it and missed a proper groom. Second – she decided to correct this matter, and her letter of invitation is already waiting for you in the office for a long time. Third – she and her mother want to dispute the testament in lawcourt and to snatch Alyssa from my hands. I will tell you only this in short – after everything what you know now, you will understand me, - I promised the pastor to do everything in order to save Jenny from the evil to which she always opens the doors widely with her irritability and fury. I did everything what I could. I wrote to her two times by opening her eyes to that life which she's creating for herself. I invited her to come and to stay here for a while with us at the same time when I invited you, too. I was hoping – if good had outweighed evil, and Jenny had had an absolute victory against her mother who is tempting her with the brilliance of wealth, - that your and Jenny's destinies might unite. That would have never been any happiness for you, however it seems to you now, but that would have been a salvation for her, because the entire circle of my friends and I myself would have helped you to create your family life. Jenny didn't come. She threw the cards of her destiny into the jaws of evil, and we won't be able to save her anymore. You told me that you wanted to become the member of my family. Do you really want it? Perhaps, the fascination of short duration has cleared away already?"

"On the contrary, lord Benedict. Feeling of my solitude has cleared away during this night. I reached the shore, and the sails of my brig are prepared for only one journey – the one led by you. This is absolutely in an English way: precisely, seriously, irreplaceably."

"In this case, captain Tendly, do you agree," Florentian asked him with the smile by responding to such turn of the Englishman's talk, "to obey the admiral's instructions?"

"My agreement is out of the question. I obey the admiral!"

"Here are three points of your obedience till our next meeting on Thursday. First – don't meet Jenny in any way and don't answer her letter with anything however rude and not gentlemanly it would seem to you. Second – tell your uncle everything what you've experienced here, although you've never been frank with him up to now, and it seems to be strange for you. Third – deliver my letter to one youth who's experiencing a great material and spiritual crisis right now, suffer with him during those days even if he seemed to be difficult for you and help him anyway."

“Are those all instructions, admiral? They are so easy and simple that they might seem to be complicated only for very stupid soldiers. Judging by them, I can understand that I’m quite bad captain. But anyway, I can answer you only this: I will be happy to fulfil all your instructions precisely. Concerning the youth – I will try to find him today without fail and if only I dare to feel that your instruction given to me is difficult, then I will demote myself to the private, but I hope to come at your place on Thursday with the same rank, your Highness.”

“Tendly, I think that you will face some hidden rocks and you will have to remember your inviolable word of obedience to me several times,” Florentian was talking to Tendly by giving the letter to him, accompanying him to the carriage and saying good-bye to him.

“If I remember this, then I will only rejoice at happiness of my new bond with you and I will test my honour better, lord Benedict.”

Tendly got into the calash, the horses made a move, and the carriage disappeared from the Florentian’s eyes soon. He was still standing in the porch for a long time, as though by sending his blessing for the leaving man.

## Chapter 10

### Mister Tendly keeps his word.

#### Henry Obersvode

Tendly had never felt such calm and joy to live as on this Monday, while he was coming back to London. Everything seemed to be excellent for him, and he seemed to himself to be strong and self-confident. His meeting with lord Benedict opened the new horizons for him and turned his entire life to the new direction. Having visited his home for a short period, he changed his clothes quickly and went to the office. He found his uncle here, who was irritated. The pastor's wife made him nervous, she came two times in a row and wanted to see mister Tendly. She didn't believe the answers of the employees that mister Tendly was in the country-side and she broke into the study of the old lawyer, because she suspected that he was hiding his nephew. The pastor's wife tried to start one of her hideous scenes, but the lawyer commanded his clerk to call the constable in such austere voice that lady Katherine decided to go away as soon as possible.

As soon as Tendly and Amadeo were gone, the messenger brought the Jenny's letter in a quarter of an hour. Having read it now, Tendly didn't even sigh and he just was immersed in his work, but before that he warned his uncle that he had to tell him the whole story about his life at the lord Benedict's. The old man wasn't used to his nephew's frankness, so he was glad, because he loved him very much. Both of them agreed that in the evening they would dine in the uncle's club where nobody would disturb their conversation. Tendly didn't have time even to look round, and it was five o'clock already. Usually Tendly was working well, but without any special swiftness, so today he surprised everybody with his speed.

"Nephew, you've been changed at the lord Benedict's."

"Yes indeed, my uncle, I've changed. I'm captain now, the time has come to hold the wheel firmly."

The lawyer was laughing from his nephew's tricks merrily and he even forgot about his irritation. Having closed the office, both of them left hurriedly with their own affairs. The confirmed one to another again that they would meet in the club at nine o'clock. Tendly didn't come home, he went to the address of the lord Benedict's given letter. That was one of the secondary London's streets, and mister Tendly was turning round there with the hired cab for quite a long time. Having told the driver to wait for him, he found his addressee in the labyrinths of the big, comfortless and even not very clean house. To his knock, a small, lean, charming, unusually clean elderly woman opened the door of the flat that was showed on the envelope. A white, starched cap was put neatly on her very beautiful head. The same spotless apron covered her poor, but irreproachably clean dress.

"Could I see mister Henry Obersvode?" Tendly asked her by entering the room which reminded of both the kitchen and the dining-room.

"Henry's at home, but he's sick. He got so tired during his journey that today he even didn't have any strength to get up from the bed. If you certainly want to see him, I will tell him. But perhaps, you could drop in tomorrow, sir? Tomorrow he must get up already."

Mister Tendly was standing indecisively. In his thoughts he moved to the lord Benedict's house, remembered their entire conversation and his admiral's words, felt the firm conviction that he needed to give the letter to him today without fail.

"Missis Obersvode, If you allow me to take off my clothes, I will try to drop in at your son's and I will try not to excite him."

The woman smiled with such kind smile that her entire face brightened up and became even more beautiful. She uttered, surprised.

"Sir, how could you guess that I was his mother? I have never seen you before."

"Missis Obersvode, I've lost my mother a long time ago, but I remember how mother's kindness and care looks like and how it manifests itself so well that I could guess immediately that you were Henry's mother as soon as you uttered his name."

The woman laughed, but then she got earnest immediately and uttered sadly.

"Sir, you remembered your mummy whom you've lost a long time ago, while I'm laughing. That's how light-minded I am. That person who's talking about his mother's love in such a way may not possess a vicious heart and do any harm to Henry. Sir, I'm afraid," all of a sudden she began to whisper, "whether something bad hasn't happened to Henry. He left in such a joy, happy, he left for long, but he came back sad, he's silent during the entire day and he's moaning."

Tears appeared in his mother's eyes. She was looking at the guest with trust, hope and such sad question that a sense of a weak person's guardianship woke up for the youth and he uttered merrily.

"I've brought a letter for him from one such kind and powerful wizard that the whole your son's sadness will clear away instantly."

Having thrown off his cloak, mister Tendly knocked at the door of Henry's room. Having entered the room that was as clean as the first one, Tendly saw a handsome youth lying in bed, who was very lean, sickly and very confused. His big, blue eyes pierced attentively and not at all hospitably into Tendly's face, while his hands closed the book nervously, which he seemed to be reading. Without waiting for some questions and having remembered the lord Benedict's words about the difficult youth again, Tendly took the initiative himself.

"Mister Obersvode, I brought a letter for you. Allow me not to tell you, whom it is from. I have no doubt that it'll give you not only pleasure, but also great joy. If after you've read it, you would like to talk to me – I am at your service."

Tendly gave the original Florentian's letter to Henry, which was written with beautiful and clear handwriting. While Tendly was observing Henry, he understood that he didn't know Florentian's handwriting and that he didn't imagine whom that letter was from. Henry broke the lord Benedict's seal slowly and indifferently, then he began to read the letter. The metamorphosis happened in Henry starting from the very first lines already. His face flushed, his helpless body rose flexibly, his eyes fastened upon the letter with such concentration, as though nothing existed for him anymore. Mister Tendly was observing his new acquaintance very attentively. It seemed that Henry not only forgot about his guest, but that in general he flew away no one knew where. The youth was reading the letter, while his face was growing cheerful and stronger. His smile changed his melancholy, and Tendly was surprised how Florentian's words could change Henry so strongly in several minutes, and how he became a healthy youth from the sad ruins which he just saw. Having read the letter till the end, Henry began to read it from the beginning. As though he was improving before Tendly's eyes and he kept brightening up by always not noticing his guest. Having

read the letter for the second time, Henry cast his blond hair from his high forehead and looked at his visitor with shining eyes.

“Mister Tendly, you’ve guessed it. Lord Benedict calls you like this in his letter. Your pleasant service helped me to return to life. Not only I’m glad, I’m also saved. Lord Benedict is writing to me that you and another friend of yours will take me to his place in the country-side on next Thursday. How and where should I meet you?”

“Oh, if you allow me, we could still meet several times till that time. I will be in London until Thursday. I could visit you tomorrow at twelve o’clock, and we could breakfast somewhere. I can see that lord Benedict is a great wizard and that he cured you faster than the Siloam springs, and that tomorrow you can leave your house already.”

Henry’s face became overcast, he was fighting against himself for several minutes and finally, he uttered.

“I would be happy if I could go with you tomorrow, but I’m such beggar and I’m so tattered after my long journey that I cannot even imagine how I could do it without shocking everybody with my appearance.”

“In this case, there are even more reasons for us to meet tomorrow. It is absolutely not possible for you to visit lord Benedict if you are distressed because of your clothes. I’m sure that if you came to him even dressed in rags after he calls you, even then that man would decide about you not according to your appearance, but according to your joy and haste with which you came to him; but I also understand another thing: man must come to him being free from all trifles. You need that if you want to take as much wisdom as possible from lord Benedict and to leave him with the new perception of life. Therefore, I offer you to pass round all superstitions and to accept my offer, here it is: we’ll call on my tailor on the way to our breakfast, and I will make him to take care of everything what you need until Thursday morning. Let him put all his assistants to work, but dress you till your journey. Don’t tell me anything. Life rarely offers such happiness for man as meeting with the great man and even at his home. We need to do everything what I’ve already mentioned, so that you could come to the lord Benedict’s free from any trifles, and with all your creative possibilities and talents of your organism opened as much as possible.”

Henry’s face got earnest and, while looking at mister Tendly’s eyes attentively, the youth asked him.

“Do you know lord Benedict well? I’ve never seen him, but I’ve heard a lot about him from one person. And although that man possessed an extraordinary mind and a very high spirit himself, this friend of yours was an unreachable authority for him. Only I heard about him not as about lord Benedict, but as about Florentian – everybody who were round that man and he himself called him like this.”

“To tell you that lord Benedict is my friend is the same as to state that Jupiter is my brother,” Tendly gave a laugh. “Such an abyss exists between me and him that I will never overstep it. Lord Benedict is my admiral, while I’m an ordinary captain and I want only to submit to him.”

Henry’s face became more sullen than a cloud. Not waiting for the brightened youth to fall back into his melancholy, Tendly became silent instantly and asked him.

“Mister Henry, do you have a pain somewhere?”

“No, it seems that tiredness after my journey responds to my nerves,” irritated Henry answered him by snatching the Florentian’s letter convulsively. “Don’t pay attention to me, it will pass.”

"I don't doubt that it will pass, mister Henry, but we need it to pass as soon as possible, therefore I leave, because I'm afraid that I've tired you enough already. Till tomorrow. And please don't say a single word about the material side of the matter. I undertake to settle everything myself. The time will come, and we'll square accounts one with another."

Henry was still puffed-up and he said good-bye to his new acquaintance in a rather indifferent way. When Tendly came to the first room again, he found Henry's mother working. As he understood, she was darning her son's suit tediously. Tendly sat down next to her and told her in a simply way, as though he had known her during his entire life.

"Missis Oversvode, I'm some kind of a doctor, so I understand that first of all you have to feed your son well. Here's some money which I ask you to accept very much. One man gave the money to me and he told me to spend it during the next three days for that what seemed to me to be the most necessary and important. I think that today's case is the most important, even sacred."

"No, sir, I know my son very well. Not his clothes or food are here to blame, from which only remembrance remained. Of course, partly they are the cause of his illness, but not the most important one. I know what is the most important. Henry is haughty and self-lover. In all likelihood, he couldn't please senior Ananda – that's one very great doctor who had brought him along. When Henry was studying in Vienna's university, he became acquainted with him there. Senior Ananda is exceptionally kind and wonderful. He called me to come to Vienna when Henry was infected with the corpses' poison. He cured him together with his uncle. He's of smaller stature and not so handsome, but he's also a great senior and even better doctor than senior Ananda. When I was sitting by my son's bed in Vienna, he entered the room, looked me up and down with his eagle's eyes – as though he could read everything within me – I even cowered with fear, while he only laughed, stroked my head and told me: "What? Are you frightened, God's child? Live your life without any fear and doubt. Your son will stay alive, but he will still come back many times to you naked and barefoot, very angry with the entire world. But if he doesn't meet the Great Hand of a friend and is unable to seize it after he comes back for the third time to you – then sing Requiem to him. Now be glad, love, believe in my words till the end and never be afraid of anything, just like in this moment. If a mother's purity may protect her son, then yours one will protect him." Well, Henry comes back for the third time, and where is that Great Hand? How should I be searching for him?" the woman was crying bitterly. "Is that you, sir?"

"This is the same if you asked me whether I was Moses," Tendly gave a laugh. "I am only a small hand, but I've brought the letter from the Great Hand to your son and I will bring him to that Great Hand on Thursday – that's true."

"Really? Well then, Ananda's uncle was telling the truth? My God... Oh, if Henry humbled himself at last! He's a wonderful boy, only haughty, oh, how haughty he is. And he is saint son, but sometimes he gives so much pain for my heart that I don't even know how to approach him."

"Never mind, missis Obersvode, everything will be all right. Feed your son to satiety today, while I will take care of his suits, cloak, linen and hats. See you tomorrow. I will call in on you tomorrow, at twelve o'clock."

Being accompanied by Henry mother's blessings, Tendly went downstairs quickly and left her ready to go for the supper for her son. Henry who could hear the muffled voices in the adjacent room was waiting patiently for them to fall silent. Having understood from the silence that the guest and his mother were gone, he began to read the letter again. Henry was reading the lines that were dear to him slowly, as though by fitting himself into every word:

*My friend, it seems to you that in this moment a more unfortunate person than you doesn't exist, but it only seems to you like this, because your thoughts are directed only to yourself. Imagine that a miraculous mirror showed me your entire life day after day. And that it isn't like it seems to be for you now when you've forgotten about many things, when something has already disappeared like your unrealizable dreams and when many things have died for you only because you've risen higher, you've become free of superstitions, and it has lost the meaning for you as the goal which your spirit has already outgrown – but like it was day after day: now burning down or creating obstacles between you and your own people, now creating and exalting your good name and will, now pushing you into temptations, jealousy and revolt.*

*Then what should I think about you, being a passionless observer who knows Ananda and appreciates his care and everything what he has done for you? Ananda is the synonym of a knight-patron among my friends, the synonym of the kindness who has reached the final divine prosperity. Ananda is wise man; his wisdom doesn't allow him to point the bounds of another person's behaviour, because his own freedom achieved without them has taken him to completeness of his consciousness. Ananda is prince among the ordinary mortals who perceives himself in every one of them and everyone within himself. He doesn't have another goal of his life as only to lay the flying rug under everybody's feet for their quicker development.*

*What should I think about you who has gone out of this man's path for the third time? It is true that Peter also renounced his Master three times, but he could see who was standing before him. He swore his firm loyalty to him and he confirmed it with his life, including his death. While your behaviour didn't make you stronger, although every time you used to come back to him, beaten by that storm which you used to summon yourself and every time you used to beg him for forgiveness. The infinite Ananda's kindness was depraving you. The snakes, toads and eagle-owls of the passions which were dazzling you were coming out of your soul's depth. You were bringing not high qualities of calm and morality into the daily routine of your passing by life, but you were hiding the horror of your doubts, discontent, intolerance and instability within your heart.*

*Why am I telling all of it to you? To you, the blind person who didn't see the sun in the orbit of which you were revolving? Only because compassion doesn't know any insistence and doesn't use any punishments as it seems to you. Compassion knows only the law of mercy and joy of help. Gather your wasted energy. Concentrate your attention to this moment. Cast away your always empty thoughts about penitence, stop being braggart, become man. I stretch both of my friendly hands to you without asking anything from you. Take them and believe not in the miracle that exists somewhere, but in the purest fire of your heart that is living in yourself.*

*Be strong. With my help weave the new flying rug for yourself, which would be able to take you back to Ananda again. I stretch both of my hands to you above that abyss which you've opened for yourself, but if this time my entire loyalty doesn't teach you to follow us with your loyalty, then the path of your light will break for entire centuries. Come to me together with both of my friends. Rely upon the deliverer of this letter everywhere. That is very sober-minded man. Accumulate your forces and come to me together with mister Tendly and his friend whom he will introduce to you.*

*Give your mummy my kind regards and tell her that she will certainly see Ananda again, whom she respects so sincerely and nobly. Besides, accept my unasked advice: protect your mother – she's the pledge of your entire future wellbeing. I am waiting for you.*



## *Florentian*

Having read the letter for the third time, Henry pressed it to his lips. His full of tears eyes were looking somewhere at the distance with expression of childish trust and happiness. That was completely not that Henry whom Tendly had left. In all likelihood that was that wonderful and loving son about whom his mother was talking. Henry was thinking about Florentian, about his powerful hands, stretched to him. Will he be able to seize them? His heart was full of anxiety, charm and joy.

Only how could even such giant of spirit like Florentian guess all the precipices and abysses to which Henry used to fall so precisely? He couldn't understand it. His haughtiness which always used to rise against his own independently give pledge of obedience settled down now. A moment ago he saw the Englishman to whom this pledge seemed to be pleasant and joyous obligation of love and honour to that person whom he loved. The scenes of Henry's life were flashing through his mind one after another. Ravishing Ananda's image now seemed to be even more charming to him from the distance, and Henry lost his firmness again. He was crying by understanding whom he had lost irretrievably.

The steps were heard in the adjacent room. He recognized his mother from them immediately. How much trouble and worries he caused for this wonderful and pure soul! His mother sent his son to the best school with all her strength by selling everything what had at least some value by moving to more and more poor flats in the poor person's quarters. When Henry found out about some famous Vienna professors and expressed his want to go there timidly – next morning his mother gave a bunch of bank-notes to him by telling him that she had sold her last rings and earrings. Confused Henry who was hesitating between his wants to go to Vienna or to stay and work in London in order to support his mother was stunned when she told him.

"Henry, don't think about me. Our paths are different. You were given to me to protect you, and I've fulfilled this duty of my life honestly. I'm doing it now as well. I did everything what I could do for you. Now you are educated man. You still miss this knowledge, so go. My conscience is clear and calm because of it. I am to blame before life only for your incapability to control yourself. I had to teach you an absolute self-control. I was unable to give you namely that, and you go to life not being able to control yourself. All the people whom you will meet will condemn me because of that."

Henry remembered how tears began to roll down her mother's cheeks, how she mopped them away instantly and smiled to him.

"It's nothing, my son. Let the ills of your life fall on my head, and you remember that haughtiness and pomposity rarely go next to the real intelligence and talent. Man who's intelligent and who's really talented is always modest."

Henry could remember that scene very clearly now. His mother was still very young back then, with blond, ash-coloured hair, while now her head was grey. He almost couldn't hear her joyous laughter anymore, her movements were slow and she became old namely during those years when Henry kept coming back home, quarrelled with this friend and Teacher; but he had never seen her mother so distressed as this time when he came back home, ragged and hungry... Henry was unable to comprehend well what had stunned him more: his separation with Ananda or that horror which he saw in his mother's eyes when he came back. Now all of it was changing in his thoughts and it didn't leave him in peace. He was rather affected with the Florentian's words: "Protect your mother." He had to admit it to himself that he was protecting his mother only in theory, while in reality he was always dry with her, he felt ashamed to show her his great love somehow. Of course, he was always egoist. In rare, especially happy moments of

his inner peace, Henry used to tell his mother tenderly about that one or another episode of his life; but usually he was always without his balance, when he used to come back home he used to sit down at the table, drink and eat without even asking his mother how and where she earned the money for food, he used to shut himself in his room in order to learn or he used to leave the house again by not telling his mother about his business, but he always used to come back home for supper very punctually.

Now when Henry was thinking about all of it, he remembered that during all those years he could see his mother only at some work or with the needle in her hands. He knew that only her work and her ability to decorate china allowed him to live and to learn, but he always considered it to be natural. Florentian's words which he could hardly understand aroused his regret. Henry could comprehend his behaviour in a new way and he blushed, ashamed. His mother knocked at the door of his room lightly and brought in a big tray, loaded with delicacies. The former suffering was already gone from her face, the daily kind smile was shining on it, and all her movements were much determined. Henry drew a sigh of relief. His mother's confusion and fear were oppressing him very much, which she was never talking about, but which could be felt in her every movement. Earlier she was always fearless, she was frightened neither for herself not for her son, but she fainted away instantly when she saw Henry entering the room, who looked like vagabond.

"Eat, my boy, you need to gain strength as soon as possible, so that you could come to the Great Hand who will save you."

She fixed his pillow, Henry took his mother's beautiful hand that was numb from work and pressed it to his cheek as he used to do it in his early childhood.

"What are you talking about, mother? About what Great Hand?"

"You received the letter from the Great Hand, didn't you?"

"I received the letter from Florentian who is called lord Benedict here for some reason. He is really great man, but did you call him so strangely? And who did tell you that he sent the letter to me?"

"My boy, if you are going to eat, then I will tell you something of which I haven't mentioned to you before."

Having made Henry to eat, missis Obersvode sat down next to him and told her son about the her entire meeting with Ananda's uncle in Vienna. Henry was so much impressed by this story that his mother was frightened, joking apart.

"My God! Why didn't you tell me about it before? Perhaps, I wouldn't have had to come back for the third time."

"You see, my dear son, it doesn't matter how much I would have talked to you, how much my love would have protected you – it doesn't mean much in comparison with senior Ananda. Even if he isn't saint, then he is such a wise man before whom even the candles light up themselves. How could a man's heart not light up from his love? However, your heart is especial, Henry. It isn't full of whims, but now it is shining now it goes out, it lights up again and it goes out again, and there isn't any permanent fire in it. Your haughtiness is preventing you from thinking about somebody else first and only later about yourself. If you want to become great doctor, then you want not only to save people, but you also want to become famous and respected for that what you will do for them; if you want to learn and to become wise man, then you want at least a half of the world to hear about your wisdom. You want to acquire the knowledge that is still unknown to you, but from the beginning you start criticizing your teachers and even their instructions... I was explaining everything to you since your childhood, my dear beloved boy, but I

didn't have enough intelligence to explain to you how much calm and self-control man needed in order to see clearly what was going on around him and within himself. Perhaps now the Great Hand will teach you with his own example how you need to live."

"Ah, mother, mother, if I had seen and understood your entire life properly before, then I wouldn't have needed to travel anywhere and search for the living example of wisdom and pure life."

"Well, there's no need to glance back now, my son. I had fallen into despair until I didn't have hope that you would meet the Great Hand. Now I see how wrong I was. Compassion of great people isn't like ours. If Ananda's uncle told me back then that the Great Hand would save you, then I needed to know that his word was the truth, that it was going to happen exactly like this, that help would come for both of us, while I gave way to fear, I almost lost my fortitude. I'm not a great example for you. Oh, my God, we forgot our time in conversation! The chocolate got cold completely, the pudding is scarcely warm, while you are still hungry..."

Having warmed up the supper and fed her son, Henry's mother was sitting next to him for a long time and listening to his story about his life next to Ananda.

Henry who had never told his mother about his personal life before, now unburdened his entire soul to her by not hiding even his most difficult recollections or experiences. Having begun from the very first days – his absolutely chance meeting with Ananda – he finished his story with his downfall in Constantinople.

Once when he was sitting in one low-priced Vienna's café with his friend, all of a sudden he heard a voice of unusual metallic timbre that addressed his friend.

"Marc, how did you get here?"

Both students who were gone deep into some scientific conversation gave a start with surprise. All of a sudden, Marc all brightened up, forgot about everything in the world and ran to the street to meet the stranger who was looking at them through green street plantations. Having come back to the table together with the stranger, Marc introduced him to Henry by calling him Ananda.

"Aren't you angry with me that I interrupted your conversation?" asked the new acquaintance whose big and dark eyes were shining so much that it seemed to Henry that they were golden, and that surprised him very much.

"I was angry with you a moment ago, but now I am charmed."

"Well, well! You go so easily from one mood to another one? Do your opinions also change so often?"

"My opinions, my moods and I myself are really unstable, but I can say for myself that I haven't yet met anybody in my life who could grab all of me in such a way that I could verify my stability. And if I could share your interests, I would step aside neither from you nor from them. I see you for the first time in my life and I'm certain that you are living differently from thousands of others," all of a sudden Henry spoke boldly, which was unexpected even for himself, because he was usually uncommunicative.

Marc was staring at Henry, he gave a laugh and said to Ananda.

"Well, Ananda, didn't I call you a wandering planet that mixes people's paths. This silent Yankee who considers himself – and rightly so – to be the most talented and intelligent, who doesn't even trouble himself to talk to people respectfully, suddenly snapped out the whole declaration of love to you! But, my dear Henry, this isn't a German professor for you with his methodics, strict frames of studies and

his own order: if you possess memory and diligence – you are invited to be his disciple. Ananda is a Teacher of life. In order for you to follow him, you need to ascend the stairs of high spiritual development yourself and not to content yourself only with science and dreams, what place and when you are going to take among the world's celebrities.”

Henry's most sore spot was touched, and that Henry who hadn't yet met Ananda would have only flamed up, talked rudely and become angry for ever. Now, while feeling attentive, tender and calming look of the new acquaintance, he answered calmly.

“You are absolutely right, Marc, indeed I'm not worth of being sir Ananda's friend or, as you put it, disciple, but in my turn I cannot understand you, too: how can you sit in Vienna's medical faculty calmly when you know that Teacher of life exists in the world, that you can find and follow him?”

“Who did tell you that I sit calmly, seized by the stuffy and shallow German science and that I don't follow Ananda? When you want to draw conclusions and give your opinions, you need those presumptions and opinions to be at least logic, while you didn't know me up to now, you were interested only in my library and not in myself, because I was your free addition to it, and now you draw conclusions, you philosophize incorrectly and in vain. And besides, what kind of sir Ananda is for you? You imagine that in England nobody exists besides you!”

Marc was boiling. Henry's arrow hit the target.

“My children, enough of arguing about non-existent things. Marc, you are more to blame. It is three years soon when you are friends with me. You promised me to bridle your difficult Italian temperament during that time, but I see that your tongue leaves your mind rather behind.”

“No, no, Ananda, my kind and enlightened genius,” Marc answered him sadly. “I understand perfectly that I shouldn't have been irritated. But Henry doesn't even understand how he pierced me.”

“Even if he understood it, you are still to blame that you've caught his arrow, but let's leave this talk for a while. Only remember: never ask from life that what you don't feel to be completely ready for. If somebody doesn't give you something – don't demand it from him. Wait, accumulate your strength, strengthen your self-control and only then take the path that attracts you when you can feel and comprehend the ability and the power within yourself to control yourself. My new friend, if you want it, Marc will take you to my place tomorrow, in the evening. I live close to the city, in Vienna environs, and the communication is rather good. Come to rest and to take a breath of fresh air, and now I will steal your Marc. Don't be angry, try to keep this benevolent mood of yours until tomorrow,” Ananda added by squeezing Henry's hand.

Henry hadn't yet held such hand. Narrow, gentle, strong, rather big, but so proportional and aristocratic Ananda's hand which was squeezing his hand seemed to have taken possession of the whole Henry's living being. As though Ananda's palm stuck to his palm, and Henry didn't want to pull his hand.

“Well then, till tomorrow. I see that you will come. But under one condition that you won't get irritated a single time until tomorrow and that you won't feel any unfriendly feelings for Marc or anybody else.”

“How could I be angry with Marc who introduced me to you? I will have to be grateful to him during my entire life for the happiness to become acquainted with you,” Henry uttered unexpectedly for himself again.

It seemed to him that Ananda fell to thinking for a moment, then he smiled and uttered.

“How difficult it is for man to orient within himself and to understand where his real want and where his illusory inspiration is.”

Having lifted his hat a little elegantly, Ananda turned towards the door by taking Marc with himself at the same time.

Now Henry could remember those first moments of his acquaintance with Ananda so clearly! Then he was telling his mother how he felt the new, never experienced feeling of love for this man. He could hardly wait for meeting with Marc in lectures. He put his best suit on, he was choosing the tie for a long time, combing his hair carefully. Henry had never gone to any appointments, he wasn't interested in his appearance, while now he was standing before the mirror and trying to answer the question whether he was handsome. He fastened his blue eyes upon the mirror and remembered the stranger's eyes, shining like the stars, his slender and tall figure, his elegant and light step, his manners of the duke – and he seemed to himself to be a sickly, grey and plain person. Henry almost frowned and he already wanted to throw off his new suit, to stay at home and not to go with Marc, but charm of the higher soul and unknown life made him overcome his irritation and to hurry up to the university. Henry couldn't remember such state of his during his entire future years that he would hurry so much, would be afraid of being late or not meeting Marc, and that after meeting him he would still be afraid of missing the coach to get where they needed to. Finally when he was already standing before Ananda in his wonderful garden he couldn't see anything else, only the host himself.

“Ananda, please take this Vesuvius from London,” first of all Henry heard this when he was greeting Ananda. “He's some madman. I've known him as the most real Englishman for almost two years, and suddenly – here you go, as if somebody had changed the lad,” Marc was throwing up his arms, “while you told me to control my own temperament. I can control my own temperament, because it is real, from Naples, but when Vesuvius is pouring out lava in London... This is much more difficult case.”

Henry was listening to his friend's derisions with the benevolence that wasn't characteristic to him, while Ananda took both youths' arms and took them to the depth of the garden where the arbour was standing on the little hill. The view that opened from there was fascinating Henry who had almost never left the city.

“You don't know and like the nature much?” Ananda asked him.

“I was thinking up to now that I knew and liked it too little. But now I'm thinking that I could love it very much if I knew it better.”

“I don't think that man could love only that what he knows only as the fact. Love in man is living and forcing him to value not only that what he knows, because he sees it, it is always leading him forward, it forces him to search for some changes within him. If man tells that he loves science, but he doesn't love people for whom he is striving for knowledge and if he doesn't consider the people for whom he would apply his science to be his highest goal, then he is only the grave-digger of the science. If man is walking through his entire life by not noticing how devotedly his own people are leading him during his entire life and what sacrifices they give for him, then he won't achieve those highest paths along which the greatest people are walking. If tenderness and kindness atrophy in man himself depending on his level of education and glory, then he takes all possibilities from himself to strive for joy to communicate with people who fascinate him with completeness and scopes of their activity. Exactly the same is truth with love for the mother nature. If you want to notice it, its efforts to help everybody to love it within himself and himself within it, you need to learn to notice the great deed of your mother's life, who have given birth to you; to learn to love it in such a way that you would always know what love is during your entire remaining life.”

Ananda changed the subject, but Henry couldn't hear what he was talking about with Marc. As though he got dizzy. All of a sudden, his mother emerged in his eyes, and for the first time in his life, blood poured to his head, his cheeks, his forehead and neck blushed. For the first time Henry felt that he had to be his mother's assistant for a long time already and not study by using her money.

They stayed for a long time at Ananda's with Marc. New people of different age, standing and appearance kept coming here. Poor persons used to come, too. Ananda was treating everybody in the same way: everybody would leave encouraged, calmed and comforted, but Henry couldn't tell the same about himself. Feelings of discontent, bitterness and amazement were growing within him: why was he, Henry, feeling so estranged and alienated when everybody else was feeling so well here? And at the same time, he couldn't even imagine that he could continue his life without visiting this wonderful home by not seeing Ananda. Everything what Ananda was talking about and doing seemed for him to be unheard-of and unseen. Ananda himself as though forgot about Henry after his first words uttered to him and only when he was saying good-bye to him he looked at his eyes attentively and told him by laughing.

"Now you look like as though I had condemned you for the fast and abstinence. Probably you won't visit me anymore."

Henry was frightened. He thought that Ananda dropped him a hint politely that their future acquaintance was impossible. Ananda as though read his thoughts and added tenderly.

"My house is open for everybody. I am glad to see you among my guests. This house of mine is only the temporary shelter. My real home is far away from here; but I don't recommend you to become acquainted with my real home. When people hurry they often expect too much both from themselves and from those in whom they are searching for some ideal leaders for themselves. Don't hurry. Search for call of that love within yourself, which I was talking to you about today. You'll understand that call when you begin to love people. Marc will tell you when you can come here again if you are so sad by separating with me, as I can see from your face now."

"Oh, if you knew it! I cannot live without you anymore. It will be impossible for me to bear a single day without you."

"Well, I told you that English Vesuvius is the real punishment," Marc was laughing.

"It's not good, Henry," Ananda told him by putting his hand on his shoulder. "I'm not a magician, but exactly the same man like you are. That person who is unable to live a single day without the most charming magician is too weak to walk the path of free men. He's slave of his own wants and he will find nothing in common with those who have already become free of their wants. Be strong and work with double diligence, while always thinking about the people whom you are going to save with your science and not about the pleasure to be in my company."

This is how the first Henry's meeting with Ananda ended, who had fascinated him so much. Then Henry was telling his mother how the new world was slowly opening for him, how differently he began to understand the whole meaning of life. The most difficult what Henry was unable to comprehend for a long time – that's complete absence of Ananda's personalism. Henry who was always used to put himself in the centre of the universe was unable to evaluate life in which there was nothing personal. Once, when Ananda saw how much mental effort Henry was putting by wishing to understand and evaluate his life, he told him.

"My friend, listen to my advice. Put off your dream to follow me and to live according to my principals. You cannot command yourself to walk along the path of inspiration. You can only be interested in and burn not with a desire to achieve personally my or somebody else's friendship, but love and

compassion for people; to see joy not by imitating somebody loved, but to live on your own initiative and manner, but so easily and with such love that in your daily affairs and actions you would certainly meet that person whom you consider to be an example for you and who is walking in his own way by loving and taking compassion on people. And then the meeting of the people who are trying to attain the same object may become an improvement of their lives. Then their loyalty to the same idea which is sacred for both of them and which ties their friendship may bring them to happiness for liberation from the superstitions that torment them. Concentrate your entire character and will which you are as proud of as of your own set task, and subdue them for your ability to live easily, simply by accepting all your circumstances with love. Believe me, this is the only path that could bring you to me if you are going to walk it. Man doesn't have another possibility to rise above the crowd as only with his daily activity."

But Henry ignored everything, he caught hold of Ananda so much that all his thoughts, his entire life were concentrated on his new friend. With his unceasing and persistent requests he begged Ananda successfully for taking him to Hungary with few people where he was planning to go to in a few months, and he agreed to take him there. Ananda agreed with reluctance and made many terms for Henry, the main of which was his sincerity, then his benevolence for the people surrounding him, then subtle politeness and absolute truth – always and everywhere. Henry had to stay in Vienna alone until Ananda was going to other places, and then when he was back, they had to go to Hungary. For Henry who thought that Ananda would take him to these journeys, too, as he took Marc, it was a deadly blow to stay in Vienna alone, but no entreaties helped him here. Ananda let him understand very strictly that people who didn't have so much spiritual strength and endurance as to live through a short separation were unsuited to live next to him.

Henry had to stay alone, and his solitude when Marc was gone was very difficult. Little by little he began to recover his balance and think about Ananda's terms. Even the most elementary politeness was difficult for Henry. He knew well how to treat friends, but he didn't want to be friends with anybody, he considered himself to be higher than others, and all of them seemed to be uninteresting to him. The most ordinary sincerity and politeness with which Ananda was fascinating him so much were too difficult to him. Even when he was calm, benevolent and didn't have any anger he seemed to be like a gloomy savage. Finally he received a message that Ananda was coming back on the next day. Henry became very glad, but at the same time he became unusually absent-minded. He wanted to reduce the time of his waiting, he dropped in at the anatomy's study to do a little work, but for terror of the professor and the students, he injured his hand. In spite of all the help provided right here, Henry had high temperature towards the evening, he didn't recognize anybody in the morning and he didn't even suspect that Ananda was sitting next to him, who came hurriedly like a whirlwind to him from his journey. It was exactly that time when Henry's mother came to Vienna. Ananda himself, his uncle and some other people were sweating over Henry for a long time, from whom Henry remembered only Marc, when finally Henry was pulled out of the clutches of death. Transformation took place in Henry's soul after his illness, but it wasn't that one which Ananda was expecting. He didn't grow any milder with respect to people, he just became Ananda's shadow and his loyalty was boundless, but that loyalty was greedy and envious – he envied every Ananda's word that wasn't uttered to him.

"Perhaps, it is impossible to bear a jealous and dull woman. It is even more difficult to bear a jealous and intelligent one, because she doesn't possess any stupidly provided privileges; but a jealous discipline is the object of mockery. Henry, if you don't discover anything except personal friendship in your nearness to me, then we are out of the way. I repeat to you the same what I've already told you: you aren't ready to walk the same path with me. Everything what I cannot even notice will become not only an obstacle, but a tragedy for you. You are demanding and you can see yourself how comically your characteristics come out among the free people who surround me. You are all pulled into your personality,

while you can reach your liberation only when all your personal veils unwind and fall down. But you are unable to tear anything off yourself by using your mind and power. You can only love. To love in such a way that you would win victory over that or another passion of yours not with your mind's efforts, but only because your heart has opened up. While you are craving for something higher, you always mix the concepts of a mediocre and wise man. Not that man is wise who once succeeded to accomplish a great feat, but that one who understood that his own working day was the greatest thing what life has given to man.

How many days did you lose when you separated with me and you were raving about waiting and dreams about my coming back? Were you working for the common welfare when you got irritated, when you were crying and thinking about me? What you were waiting for? You were only spending one day after another in vain by not bringing anything into the common people's life. You know that my goal of life – that's people's happiness and harmony. What have you done yourself, so that you could follow me along this great path? And perhaps all your words – that's delirium which reminds me of the vows of some irritated and nervous woman, although there's only the salad of her desires, casual seized thoughts, daily arguments, treasons and compromises in her head and her heart. Reflect on everything what I've told you again and again, and acquire your balance. If you are unable to do it, you won't be able to come with me. I always give an absolute freedom of actions for a man. I always want that no narrow limits of obedience would restrict him, but this method of my education doesn't suit you well. You need some iron limits, another powerful hand."

But Henry's pleas were breaking Ananda's heart so much, his tears were so unbearable that he took him with himself, although his face was very sad when he told Henry to prepare for the trip. Ananda's uncle had a wonderful, old house in Hungary, which looked more like a medieval castle than a modern building. Henry and those other several people who came together with Ananda were put on the separate wing of the house, which was far from the central part of the house where Ananda and his uncle were living. Henry didn't like it instantly, because he thought that he would always be next to his friend and Teacher. He submitted to the strict regime against his will and with the breaking heart by waiting for his meeting with Ananda every day, but he didn't show up. Henry kept lounging about without any work, he was idling, although he could see clearly that everybody around were occupied during the entire days, they were working in the library that was in their wing. When Henry was bored with idling, he took his job and went to the library, being certain that he wouldn't find any books of his specialty, of such subtle field of the medicine. And he was very surprised when he found such valuable material there, about which he had only heard and which, according to his opinion, was out of reach for him. Since that day Henry became involved in his work and stopped feeling unhappy. As though some burden fell down off him, the youth began to look attentively at the people who surrounded him. It seemed very strange to him that nobody addressed him while he was capriciously and gloomily silent, and now when he addressed his neighbours himself with some questions, they answered him with pleasure. His neighbour of dining-room on the left turned out to be very young Frenchman botanist. Although he was young, but he showed his very great erudition not only from botany and medicine in general during their conversation, but specifically from the field of the brain diseases as well, in which Henry was working and he considered himself to be genius of this field. The youths got into conversation, ate and then turned towards the mountain park which surrounded the castle to pick some medicinal herb. Henry company's name was de Sanuar. Although he was young, Henry was surprised with his knowledge and explanations. It seemed that there wasn't such thing which he wouldn't know, that there wasn't such nation, the life of which he wouldn't know.

"When did you have time to go around the entire world?" amazed Henry gave a shout.

"I travelled around the world two times already and I get ready for the third time if only Ananda agrees to take me with him."



“Were you travelling or will you be travelling by using Ananda’s funds?”

“Of course no, but your question is the one that an ordinary person might ask, who doesn’t know exactly the goal and the meaning of his life. I’m living, or to be precise, I’m trying to live according to those laws of love and honour, which might take me to the door behind which the path of Ananda’s discipline exists. I’ve been glancing at you for a long time and I cannot understand how you got here, among us. Now I see.”

“What did you understand, mister de Sanuar? If I don’t know my situation here myself, then how could you know it?” irritated Henry asked him, who was again puffed-up, haughty and talking down.

“You see, every man is shaping his own path himself. When a person’s eyes get used to distinguish people’s types, he sees immediately what path man is walking along and to which ray his prevalent characteristics belong. It seems to me that you got here through a misunderstanding. You should get to the orange ray, while you came to the violet colours which you possess the least. I don’t think that now you could understand me what I am talking about, but nobody has charged me to be a guardian to you, and I cannot speak clearer to you. Don’t think that me or anybody else have some secrets, simply every one of us has enough strength to keep silent about the matters which he considers to be his highest honour and joy. But I can hear the gong that invites us for supper, and we’ve walked far away. Let’s hurry, it is inconvenient to be late at the table here.”

“But this is almost the military discipline, isn’t it?”

“Oh no, why! It is an absolute freedom here. If you want to, you can force yourself to wait for supper during the entire night or stand with the light by the gate. Nobody is going even to try to reproach you – that’s how greatly man is respected and trusted here. But exactly this makes me respect order and calm both of the hosts and the servants who show such joyful love for us.”

Henry kept silent and he was following his new acquaintance down the path from the mountains. The beauty that opened from all sides suddenly didn’t excite Henry much. Now he was thinking about the people whom he would meet at the dinner table.

“Please tell me...” all of a sudden Henry faltered by not knowing how it was accustomed to address not well known people in France.

“My name is Paul if you don’t want to address me in surname,” de Sanuar answered him, as though by guessing Henry’s thought. “We could simply call one another by our names. Almost everybody met one another for the first time here and everybody feels so near one to another and so connected with the same ideals and aspirations that it isn’t absolutely strange to call one another by name.”

“It is amazing how you understood instantly why I fell silent. Paul, could you tell me who those people are whom Ananda has brought here and who those who are living here are? My name is Henry, if you want to call me by name.”

Paul gave a cheerful laugh and answered him.

“Henry, first of all I’m very glad that you became interested in the people surrounding you. It always becomes easier to live when you distract your attention from yourself. But we need to take the nearest path, because I can hear the second gong already. We need to sit at the table already in fifteen minutes and before that we still need to have time to wash ourselves and to change our clothes. Therefore, we’ll climb up this hill and from there we’ll descend straight to our home and be in time.”

Paul named a high mountain to be a hill, which seemed to Henry not so easily overcome, so he told about this to Paul.

"Henry, it only looks like this. The things and the matters don't seem so terrible when you know how to approach them. Jump after me," Paul told him by jumping over rather wide ditch.

Henry had never climbed any mountains or jumped over ditches during his entire life, so his shins were aching already, his knees were trembling, and now if the strong Frenchman's hand hadn't seized him and stood him on his feet next to himself, he would have rolled down while jumping over the ditch.

"I thought that all Englishmen were athletes, but apparently, this presumption of mine was as much valuable as the greatest part of my knowledge in which I'm disappointed every day and I improve myself again. Climb carefully, or even better, give me your hand," he added, while seeing that Henry slipped, and stones scattered under his feet.

He took one Henry's hand, threw it on his shoulder, thrust the gathered herbs into his pocket, embraced Henry with his second hand, lifted him like a child and ran down the steep mountain with him.

"Well, here we are at home, and much sooner than I expected. See you soon," he uttered to Henry by disappearing behind the door and allowing the Englishman neither to come to himself not to thank him.

Stunned and distressed, injured by his helplessness and his English self-love, unhappy Henry was standing in the middle of the yard when all of a sudden, he heard steps behind his back and Ananda's voice.

"Henry, I'm surprised that you are standing here alone. Haven't you made friends with anybody from my friends yet? Oh, but you aren't yet ready for the supper? What has happened to you?" Ananda asked Henry by looking at him attentively.

Henry kept silent. His desire to see Ananda, his longing for him grew into such irritation instead of joy of the meeting at this moment, which he didn't expect from himself, too.

"You've brought me here and deserted. You knew perfectly that I wasn't going here to sit among the strangers. You even didn't introduce me to anybody. I was doomed to an absolute solitude during all those days," Henry was shouting in a raised tone, having forgotten about everything in the world.

When he came to himself he saw that Ananda was looking at him in silence. What was so especial in this look? What did make Henry to lapse into silence suddenly and whisper.

"Forgive me, I am weary without you and now I'm standing in front of you with fear by thinking that I won't see you again so often as I want to."

"My poor boy, I've told you that you aren't yet ready, that my given freedom isn't a suitable path for you. You need some strict bounds of obedience which would change the lack of your will and endurance at least a little, but you aren't to blame that I believed in your pleas."

There was so much kindness and compassion in Ananda's eyes and intonation that it seemed that he took over Henry's heart himself and experienced all his suffering instead of him.

"However, now, at this moment, I cannot change anything. I cannot let you leave from here earlier than in three months, but in three months you will leave, and this time none of your pleas will help you. I don't live alone here. Besides those people whom you can see, many more ones are living here. They

are occupied with very difficult and important work in all fields of science and engineering, art and literature. My uncle is also living here. All these people possess very highly developed consciousness. Their perception of their surroundings is so subtle, their hearing and nerves are so sensitive that your confused state disturb the calm of their work and lives. I was hoping that you would give this sadness neither to them nor to me. Unfortunately, I'm punished for my too big trust in you. Now I have to drink the cup of your suffering together with you. I want to liberate you from your untimely pledges, so I have to take your blow upon myself, otherwise your pledges might have some karmic consequences for you. But I need to protect both you and them from your irritable screams and moaning. Now go to your room. They will bring some food for you to eat. Remember for ever that you cannot go to people with such lost balance and poison all people whom you meet with your toxic vibrations. Gather your belongings. I will move you to the separate little house in the park. In the meanwhile, you will be living there alone in order to prepare to become such man who some time will be able not to disturb his lenient friends who are living with him and who will become help for his own people. Go, I will visit you myself in a couple of hours."

Like convicted Henry went to his room and fell on the bed. Thoughts of despair and all sorts of other ones were tearing him. If that hadn't happened here where he felt the bright Ananda's look of love, compassion and tenderness upon himself, Henry wouldn't have understood the whole size of his fault. He would have searched for the different ways at home in order to accuse somebody, consider himself to be right and hurt. However, here Ananda's look full of such compassion which Henry could imagine only a saint to possess drilled something new in his haughty heart. He perceived the high nobleness of man's spirit and such oblivion of himself and his personal harm when there wasn't any accusation for the person who has insulted him left in his heart, only mercy for his brother-man who has lost his path. Henry's irritation and rage quieted down. Usually they would last for a very long time by tormenting himself and injuring others. He got up from the bed and for the first time he said to himself absolutely clearly that he was to blame. Having refused any food very politely, which was offered to him pressingly and tenderly, Henry picked up his belongings quickly and looked round this wonderful room with regret, which he was unable to appreciate and which now he had to leave. He didn't find any peace here, he brought in great anxiety and delivered a blow for Ananda.

Henry sat down on a wide windowsill and for the first time he saw what a beautiful view opened up from here. The wide valley through which the river was flowing, a part of the meadow, the forest in the distance, the little houses scattered cosily in the mountains – everything was fascinating him now, it was a pity for him to leave everything. Ananda's look as though got stiff in Henry's heart and eyes with his divine non-condemnation and compassion. Henry was prepared to go on his knees and to persuade Ananda with his firm love and loyalty again, but perception was awakening within him already that the baby's scream wouldn't prove anything to anybody. He decided to submit to Ananda's will by not asking anything from him. Now his own behaviour an hour ago and from the very beginning seemed to be unbearably stupid and ridiculous for himself. Why didn't he go to the library from the first days? Why wasn't he working? He could move forward so much in his studies and make Ananda glad with his diligence and peace, couldn't he? Henry remembered how de Sanuar who surprised him so much with his knowledge told him that he was dreaming and searching for the ways to come nearer to the door behind which the Ananda's path of the disciple existed.

"My God, mother, how I was to blame back then. And later, next time I tripped up with the same again: my envy and jealousy. Ananda attracted new people to himself. Now I understand that they deserved it, they were highly standing people, but then I burst again, I got irritated for the second time, I left for the second time and came back to you. Now, this third time, I came back because of even more dismal cause. Ananda told me to become disciple of the great doctor I., but I didn't want it. I began to criticize both I.'s and Ananda's behaviour. Everything ended even without noticing it myself, I got into the

hands of the dark and terrible villain from whose clutches doctor I. and Ananda hardly saved me. Ananda told me to go from Constantinople back to Hungary, but I didn't want to do it. To be precise, I was going, I wanted to do it, but that dark man to whom I allowed to control myself was following in my footsteps. His friends were taking advantage of my constant irritation, they were tempting and persuading me, so I decided not to go where Ananda told me to. I was already prepared to go where the friends of that villain whose name was Bracano were inviting me to go when I saw you in my dream. I was dreaming that you came to me, you were so young, all dressed in white, with golden hair, unusually charming and you told me: Henry, look, you are standing in the tangled ball of snakes. Let's go, quickly. Hurry up, I will take you from here." Mother, I woke up and I jumped up with horror. A steamer was standing in some harbour. I dressed myself in a hurry, caught up only the travelling bag and money, I left everything else and I ran after you towards the shore. You were going so quickly that I could hardly keep pace with you. Having taken me to the quay, you showed the steamer to me that was already prepared to leave and you told me: "Jump quickly." I jumped to the boat that was leaving already and I hardly was in time to climb on the deck as one of the last passengers when they took the gangway, and the steamer left. I began to look round for you, I was completely lost by not being able to answer why I was in the steamer. They took me to the captain. And the miracle happened here. The captain turned out to be James Rettedly whom I met at Ananda's in Constantinople. I recognized him immediately and, although it was painful for me to do it, I uttered Ananda's name whom the captain idolized – I remembered that perfectly. He recognized me, too, and called me by name. Mother, and once again I met a noble man. He warned me, comforted and fed me, and only asked me where I wanted to go. I indicated you and London to him. He told me that he would take the new ship to London only in a month and he offered me to spend that time somehow waiting for it. Since I kept silent, the captain knew that I didn't have an opportunity to go anywhere during that month, he was looking at me attentively for a long time, he must have wanted to ask me something, but he kept it to himself, gave a sigh, rocked his head and told me, as though by feeling sorry for something.

"I can see that you are unhappy. That's enough for me. I remember one of my conversations with Ananda when I was unhappy myself and his words which he told me to remember for ever: "Nobody is a friend for you, nobody is a brother for you, but every man is your teacher." And as a matter of fact, you gave a great lesson to me now. I was thinking that it was a happiness to live next to Ananda, but I saw that the person living next to him may be unhappy and even leave him. This fact both surprises me and teaches me, but now it isn't the right time to talk about it."

Having been silent for a while, he added as though by reconsidering something.

"I have only one possibility to help you. I will give the steamer to my assistant in Yalta, and he will take it to Sevastopol for the maintenance. I will be living in Gurzuf during that month. I cannot take you there, but I offer you to stay and live in my steamer, and to get a job by the maintenance. In this way I will try to take you to your mother in London. However, you will have to work hard, you will be an ordinary worker, and I cannot offer you any other way out at the moment. If you agree, I will try to fulfil this plan."

"Mother, I saw before me the man of not only exceptionally strong will, but also of unusual honour and nobility. I understood that he set strict conditions for me, but he would keep his word, and I would reach London. On the other hand, I also understood that this kind and commanding man would put me on the desert island without thinking twice if I violated our agreement at least a little. Since he kept his word, he demanded the same from everybody else. I didn't have another choice. I accepted his proposal.

I won't tell you how I was sailing and how I was living. All my physical suffering, work, unusual surroundings and people – everything was nothing with comparison to that spiritual suffering in which I was burning by remembering Ananda and everything what I had lost due to my fault. Every day I used to perceive Ananda's grandeur, his kindness and patience more and more, as well as my own

disobedience and revolt. I promised to myself to redeem all my faults before him. I didn't expect anybody from aside to extend a helping hand to me, but I believed in you. Only when I saw horror and despair in your face I gave way to complete despair. My certitude remained as strong as before. Everything was and still is calm in my heart, but I couldn't change my manners again and become tender, attentive and kind to you as I had promised to myself. Now I have destroyed something between myself and you, the partition has fallen down, and I can tell you how much I adore and respect you."

Henry embraced his mother and for the first time he felt to be her protector and guardian. Mother and her son were talking for a long time by feeling an exceptional happiness for their renewed interrelation and complete confidence. Henry separated with his mother with much reluctance. She insisted that Henry certainly needed to fall asleep as soon as possible and gain strength before his meeting with Tendly.

On the next morning, as soon as Henry woke up, he received a letter, the handwriting of which he had never seen before. Henry opened the envelope, he saw the signature: "James Rettedly" and he was surprised very much. When he read the letter and picked up the fallen check for a huge sum of money he was both excited and stunned. The captain didn't make any difference between Henry and other sailors of his steamer during the whole journey, it seemed that he forgot that he knew another Henry, that he was a doctor and could take another position in this kingdom of the steamer. In the beginning, Henry was stunned because of such unexpected captain's behaviour, then little by little he began to consider him normal and by the end of the journey he was thinking that he didn't deserve anything else. He was doing his duties in such a way as though every moment Ananda was standing next to him.

The captain didn't tell Henry how attentively and with what attention he was observing and keeping an eye on him. And whenever he used to look at him, he was working so diligently, calmly and reservedly that the captain was feeling sorry for his subordinate and he was amazed at him always more and more. He couldn't perceive whether this Henry's reserve and his calm were his newly acquired characteristics of his will and character, or they were characteristic to him. "How could it happen that Henry separated with Ananda if such deep calm exists in his heart?" the captain kept asking himself. He decided to help him with everything what he would be able to. Having reckoned with the captain, Henry tried to disappear from the captain's eyes by thanking him for his delivery to London.

*Dear mister Obersvode, - the captain was writing to him in the letter which Henry was reading now. People's paths turn in the most unexpected ways. I will be laconic. In the name of that person who is dear to both of us, please accept this check. This absolutely isn't my personal help personally for you. This is joy to rely upon you and your strength completely, because you pay my whole offered sum to you back to me as soon as the circumstances will allow you to do it.*

*My best wishes to you. Both of us will move forward with the name that is dear to us. The new turn of our lives opens for every one of us, let's call it "Light."*

*Move forward, my friend. You possess a lot of strength. You will reach that what you want to.*

*Your humble servant, your friend who respects you*

*James Rettedly*

The captain included his address and invited Henry to visit him in London. The letter's conclusion, his address by "dear" filled Henry with the childish joy. He dashed at his mother, embraced her, showed both the letter and the check to her.

"Henry, and all of it isn't from the Great Hand? I don't believe that the Great Hand wouldn't know about it, as well as about mister Tendly. By the way, put this suit on, I've finished it more or less."

She gave the suit to Henry, which was cleaned, ironed out and which looked absolutely decently, although he considered it to be completely ruined already.

"My God, mother, when did you have time to do everything? Will you ever forgive me? Your grey hair will be my eternal reproach."

"It's nothing, son. Every man deserves his own path. It isn't important how a person is living, it is important what his day brings to him and how he goes through it. Whatever would happen to me and you, I will be loving you always more and more, and you won't have a more loyal friend than me. You will have – and you have now – some richer, more compassionate and intelligent friends than me, but my motherly loyalty will accompany you everywhere. Quickly dress, son, mister Tendly will come. You need to be able to smile to him and to show how thankful you are to him," his mother was trying to encourage her son by stroking his curls.

"Yes, mother, if I learned from you to smile to people, then I would think that a half of my self-education would be done already. Mother, if only you knew how I'm afraid of meeting the Great Hand, as you called him. I know so little how one needs to behave in the noble lord's house. I was living at one duke's house in Constantinople, I saw many well-bred people there, but Ananda and doctor I. stood out among them. I always admired them in my soul, and something was always preventing me from following them and remembering their manners and their behaviour. As though a certain riot was always disturbing me. It seems to me now that that feeling looked like jealousy."

Henry gave a sigh, kissed his mother's hands and continued.

"I promise, my dear, that I will enter Florentian's house and I will be living there differently from everywhere I was living before. I will be humble disciple and pleader. I agree to become Florentian's servant, only if I could pay off at least a part of my sins before Ananda. Ananda is my living wound. This is my heart's blood that is dripping continuously."

"Stop, my son. Imagine yourself in senor Ananda's place for a moment. Remember how kind he is. How could he feel to be somebody's wound? Your tears and your blood are streaming through him. He can't help feeling them. Leave these bitter thoughts of yours. Think about him with gratitude, and that – together with your work and love – will take you back to him again quicker and easier. Be more cheerful, try to be pleasant to your guest now."

"Mother, I would like to attract everybody with my charm in the same way as you are doing it and to please everybody. I would like it so much, but I'm afraid that I will never learn to do it."

Henry kissed his mother again, dressed himself and met mister Tendly so cheerfully that he was deprived of speech unexpectedly. He was already prepared to meet and take capricious and intolerable youth, he was proud of fulfilling the difficult admiral's command – and all of a sudden, the meeting was so easy.

The youths said good-bye to missis Obersvode, she accompanied them with her smile, and they drove to the tailor. The tailor was charmed with Henry's slenderness and beauty, he agreed to fulfil

the order without any especial persuasions and promised to take care of other purchases, like linen and ties.

The days flew by unnoticed. The tailor prepared everything in a fixed time, and the new friends left for the country-side. Henry boarded the train with some disturbance of his heart, he promised himself again to realize that whole new program about which he was thinking during the last days and nights.

## Chapter 11

### Henry's at the lord Benedict's

### Arrival of the captain Rettedly

### Lord Benedict's assignment for Tendly

Mister Tendly saw Henry's excitement, he didn't understand its real cause and he thought that Henry was excited in the same way as he was before his first meeting with the lord, so he was trying to tell him about the lord Benedict's family life as much as possible. By using simple words, he described him in detail the lord himself, his beauty and incomparable charm, the couple of counts T. and Alyssa. He became so involved in praising Nal and Alyssa that Henry cheered up and asked him by smiling roguishly.

"Whom from these ladies do you like better, or to be precise, whom do you simply like and with whom are you in love?"

"Mister Obersvode, I will confess to you," mister Tendly answered him a little coldly, "that I didn't think about it. And if I could talk about my love, then most likely, I would have to confess my love to the lord himself, my admiral. I hardly know him, but I'm ready to stake my head for him – that's how he charmed me."

"Mister Tendly, you told me that count T. is living at the lord Benedict's. Isn't he Lovushka's brother?"

"Lovushka's brother? I didn't hear anything about him and I didn't see him there. Two friends of lord Benedict are living at his house now. One of them – lord Mildrey – had to pick me and you up in London, and all three of us had to go together today, but I received his letter yesterday in the evening that he wouldn't come to London, but that he would be waiting for us in the country's railway station. So, you will become acquainted with lord Mildrey soon. An Indian called Sandra is also living at the lord Benedict's. His surname is fanciful and long, and although both of us are studying at the same university, I don't know his surname. Simply everybody calls him Sandra. In spite of his young age, he's famous scientist. Many consider him to be genius, but I cannot judge it. Now he's very shocked for some reason, he was even ill, but associating with such grand man like lord Benedict cures everything."

Henry gave a deep sigh. He became so sad that kind Tendly even had a sinking sensation.

"Mister Henry, I would like to help you from the bottom of my heart. If I cannot help you in essence, then I would like at least to cheer you up, to direct your attention to any other field, so that your personal suffering would remain aside."

"Dear mister Tendly, you cannot even imagine how precisely you hit the target. All my sadness springs up namely from my too big attention to my own personality. If I could be interested in



people so sincerely as you are – at least with respect to me, - I would have avoided all the painful moments of my life and I wouldn't have caused so much pain for many people."

Mister Tendly wanted to take compassion on his friend, he didn't know how to ease his difficult condition, so he started telling him about the hothouses of the lord Benedict's estate, about the waterfall and the beauty of the park. The friends didn't even notice how they reached the station and immediately appeared before Sandra and Mildrey who were waiting for them. After his first uncomfortable moments of shyness Henry felt freely and easily with his new acquaintances. Henry was sitting in an excellent calash, he was delighted with verdure and he enjoyed the wonderful weather, then he remembered how he was sitting next to Ananda in the calash for the first time. He felt such a strong heartache that he could hardly suppress his moan. Farms, little villages, chapels and churches were flying quickly before their eyes. Henry didn't listen what they were talking about anymore. The closer his meeting with Florentian was, the more excited he was. Henry didn't know what he would tell him, how he would begin to express his gratitude. All of a sudden, the horses stopped, Henry woke up from his thoughts and heard how his fellow-travellers were greeting the tall man who was standing by the roadside. He was wearing a white suit and holding a little stick in his hand.

"Yes indeed, my admiral, your command is fulfilled. Mister Henry Obersvode is delivered," Henry heard the happy Tendly's voice and saw how Sandra jumped out of the carriage and offered his seat for the handsome stranger.

"This is lord Benedict, our host," Mildrey whispered to Henry. "Let's go, I will introduce you to him."

Henry jumped out of the carriage after Mildrey and felt like a five-year-old boy who was standing before tall, slender and strong like a statue Florentian, while he reached only his shoulder. Having taken off his hat, feeling like a dwarf before this power, Henry looked at the wonderful lord Benedict's face bashfully. His heart was beating, as if he had raced with somebody.

"You did so well be coming to rest at our place. You are very pale and tired. We all will be ashamed if your cheeks don't grow red during your stay with us. I will entrust you to Alyssa. She possesses some miraculous qualities to affect people's temperaments. Even the Indians turn into lambs after staying next to her."

"Please be glad," Sandra was rocking with laughter. "I'm always the scapegoat. It starts with me and it ends with me. But I've already mended my ways, lord Benedict."

"We'll see it. Soon the test of your new energy will take place. Mister Henry, would you like to walk till our house with me? It isn't far away. Our friends won't overtake us much by driving, because we will move straight by shortening our road by half."

"I will be happy to obey your command," Henry answered him silently, in a hardly understandable voice, while his heart was still beating fast.

Having waved his hand for the leaving friends, Florentian took Henry's arm and turned to the forest path. The calash disappeared from their eyes in a moment, the echo of the hoofs fell silent soon, too, and two travellers came to the silence of the forest which only the birds' chirping and the squirrels' jumping was disturbing. Henry was unable to suppress his pain anymore. He fell on his knees by Florentian's feet, embraced his knees and he was talking, while weeping.

"I am to blame. Ananda, Ananda won't forgive me. Don't push me away. I still cannot become that person whom I understood to be in my heart. My mother calls you the Great Hand. Save me. I

fell into the bond with the dark power, don't push me away. I'm afraid that I won't be able to fulfil my promises and wants instantly, but I will try to become worthy of your help."

"Stand up, my son. The path of discipleship is difficult, very difficult for every man. Don't be dispirited. Don't shoot glances at the future and never hurry. Now live not even in such a way as if it was your last day, but as if it was your last hour. You cannot lag behind that man whom you've chosen to be your Teacher, whose life and power is a living example for you. The lag behind your Teacher – that means to come back to the slavery of superstitions and opinions rammed into your head. If you received a task, then hurry to fulfil it till the end. You will fulfil the task easily if you are disposed towards it without any personal, enslaving reasonings, if you can perceive the great meaning of life which you cannot always comprehend in this order and if you don't rummage in your soul by trying to find out whether everything is ready in it or perhaps something isn't fully ready yet. You need to concentrate your attention not to yourself, but to that what you have to fulfil till the end. It didn't even occur to Ananda to make you sad when he offered you to become I.'s disciple. He wanted to help you and to protect you from that net of evil which you pulled yourself into. Stand up, my friend, let's go. If you held out in the steamer, you will find strength within yourself to strengthen your self-control here as well. I won't push you away, and I'm ready to take you to America where we'll sail soon."

Florentian took his suffering friend's arm again and went with him by helping him to calm down with the power of his love and fortitude.

"Lord Benedict, who did tell you about I. and about my life in the steamer? Ananda could write about I. to you, but only the captain Rettedly alone could tell you about the steamer. Do you know him?"

"Remember your question well in this moment, in this silence of the forest and my answer to you. They will be the lesson for your entire life. You were living next to Ananda and you couldn't see next to whom you were living. You were occupied with yourself, but you were thinking that you were searching for the highest path. You couldn't find anything. That person who is searching for his path, while being burdened with his own passions, only gets entangled even more. Now you came to my call and you still remain blind. You even didn't understand my letter and why I told you to protect your mother, because namely she is the guarantee of your material wealth. Who could tell me anything about your mother? Don't hurry to ask questions. I repeat again: live among us as if you were living your last hour. Carry such peace and goodwill for everybody in your heart like those who die after reaching kindness.

Try to solve not the problem of your mind by introducing those or other principles into your day, but simply love those whom life has brought to you now. Take a good look at everybody's needs, cares, interests. Don't repeat the mistake of keeping away from everybody into solitude as you were always living. You saw only your love for Ananda up to now, but what Ananda himself was involved in, who were next to him you didn't care. Search not for your new life in us here, which could support you; search for an ability to be kind for us within yourself. And first of all, start with this: don't deny, don't judge."

It seemed to Henry that neither such forest nor such birds nor such silence nor such happiness existed anywhere in the world. He was walking by not comprehending the reality. For the first time his practical mind refused to comprehend, to apply to itself, to grope something concrete. He merged with the nature, as though Florentian's hand had helped his heart to open to poetry.

"Soon we'll come. Well, here my daughter and her husband meet us."

Florentian introduced Henry to Nal and Nikolay. He told Nikolay that Henry was with Lovushka in Constantinople for some time. Having left Nikolay to show the rooms for the guest, Florentian

and Nal joined the rest of the company who clustered round Alyssa in the terrace. Soon Nikolay and Henry went downstairs and joined them, while the kind host invited his hungry family for breakfast.

Nikolay rained thousand questions on Henry about his brother, about his life and his health. He was surprised in many things from Henry's stories, especially about Lovushka's illness from hitting his head after the storm in the steamer. While Henry was telling the stories, Nikolay's face changed several times and he kept shooting glances at Florentian who responded him with his calming smile.

"Henry, don't be too much surprised if today – or tomorrow at the latest – you will meet one of your acquaintances from Constantinople here," Florentian told him by raising from the table.

"I won't ask you anything, lord Benedict. Perhaps my last hour won't strike earlier than I will meet the unexpected stranger. I admit that earlier I would have racked my brains over who that could be."

"Well, since we need your brain very much, here are two victims of your future erudition for you," Florentian continued by bringing Alyssa and Nal to him. "You've written well-known scientific work about brain illness, haven't you? These two ladies are interested in man's brain very much and they want to hear your lecture about it. Be sure to read it in such a way that they wouldn't consider you to be a patient."

Alyssa and Nal took Henry upstairs where their classroom was, as Nikolay called it jokingly. They sat down by the anatomical atlases there, and Henry who considered it to be lower than his own understanding value to discuss the medical questions even with his classmates of the university up to now, began to explain the most elementary questions to his charming pupils without any preparation and in high spirits, and he was satisfied with it himself. In the meanwhile, Florentian told to saddle up three horses and offered for Sandra and Tendly to ride to the distant farm and to come back till tea. Sandra was jumping with joy, while Tendly expressed his satisfaction by throwing his hat over the tops of the trees. Nikolay and Mildrey turned towards the library where every one of them had started a great work.

The longer Henry was reading his simple lecture the more he liked it, because he saw two charming women in front of him. He forgot his self-love and that he was very educated man. As soon as he entered this room he understood instantly that they were working seriously and a lot here by learning not for the school, but for life. He remembered several overheard phrases from Nikolay's and Sandra's conversation. He was stunned by the depth of their thoughts. For some reason Henry remembered de Sanuar and he thought regretfully how stupidly and unculturedly he was behaving at Ananda's. Henry's thoughts flashed, but the women audience didn't seem to be tired, so he couldn't distract his attention from them. Their questions poured one after another, and he felt tiredness.

"Mister Obersvode, we tired you out," Alyssa noticed. "You turned very pale, while lord Benedict told me to take care of your cheeks so that they would become reddish. Probably, he won't be happy, because we were exhausting you for so long."

"Mister Henry, you are yourself to blame, because you are such great lecturer," Nal told him by thanking him for his lesson. "Let's go to the library, let's take my husband and lord Mildrey, and let's go to meet our riders. They should come back exactly through the waterfall, and you will see a wonderful place."

They had some trouble to distract the scientists who were deep in their books, and all of them went to the waterfall. Henry who saw the English country nature for the first time in his life didn't even imagine that something similar could exist in two hour distance from London. He stopped hearing what they around him were talking about, but nobody disturbed him by letting him behave as he wanted to.

Henry began to think about his future life at Florentian's. He saw from the very first day that everybody was busy here, they were working during the entire days. What is he going to do here? Even if he teaches his women audience every day, even then he will still have quite a lot of free time. Henry couldn't think about the most important, about Florentian and Ananda. Everything here was sinking as behind the curtain of smoke for him. He remembered Florentian's words: "Live in such a way as if you were living your last hour." He felt relieved and began to lend his ear to Nal's and her husband's conversation.

Nikolay was holding some large insect on his palm, which Henry had never seen before, and he was explaining its anatomy to his wife. He was explaining everything in such precise, smooth and clear way that Henry took Nikolay for zoologist. Having taken the insect off his hand and letting it go onto the grass carefully, Nikolay plucked off several little blossoms which Henry had never seen before, too, and began to ask Nal what she remembered from his yesterday's story. Nal answered her lesson in a very businesslike manner, while Henry caught himself thinking about her wonderful little hands, her miniature legs and exceptional beauty. He was thinking absolutely not about that what she was talking. Henry gave such a deep sigh that even Alyssa and Mildrey who were walking in front heard his sigh.

"Are you tired, mister Henry? Perhaps we go too fast?"

"Oh no, lady. I'm very absent-minded for some time already. And now when you are looking at me you can see clearly and study the disturbed co-ordination of my brain activity about which I was talking today."

"No," Nikolay interfered. "Perhaps you are ill, I'm not a doctor and I don't understand much in that field, but I think that the nature of your organism itself has settled and coordinated everything in such a way that its harmony would force your spirit to take a corresponding position. I can see from your face expression and nervousness of your walk and movements that a storm is raging within you. Believe me – you couldn't find any better place as next to lord Benedict in order to rebuild your balance. All of us here are his friends, therefore we are your friends as well. Every one of us has already accepted you into our hearts if our father has accepted you into his heart. Don't feel shy to live here with us and allow us to call you simply Henry. You are dear to every one of us, your joy and suffering, your sorrows and your achievements are dear to us. All of us suffered, we were learning and we are still learning to control ourselves, and our position here is equal to yours. Be calm, nobody is watching you or goes deep into your faults. Every one of us have enough of our own faults, and we only want to greet you as the guest and friend of our dear host. We are all the same guests here."

"Count, your sincerity moved me very much. Your voice is gentle, there's so much kindness in it, but if you knew me better, you wouldn't be talking to me so kindly."

"No, Henry, if I knew you better, I would be even more attentive to you. Don't title me as count, call me simply Nikolay, and most importantly, don't feel to be separate from us. I would be very glad if you could see how much love is for you in our hearts, and that there isn't any space for the word "stranger" among us."

The rumbling of the hoofs was heard, and three riders emerged from the cutting of the forest into the main road. A gigantic horse was carrying no less tall rider who was riding relaxed, as though laughing and he had left the other two riders far behind himself, who were trying to catch up with him with all their might. The first rider slowed down the pace and rode up to the friends at a beautiful trot, who were waiting for him by the edge of the park. The horse and the rider seemed to be unreal to Henry – the rider was sitting on horseback so calmly, while the horse was demonstrating its steps. One could see that his hand was keeping the rein tightly, the horse felt the master on its back, obeyed him and didn't dare to riot. Nobody used to risk to go on horseback of this trotter, except Florentian. Its name – Fire –

corresponded to its wild temperament completely. Sandra who was panting, laughing and who didn't sit on his horse well was shouting from the distance.

"Lord Benedict, that looks like the game 'The wolf and the sheep.'" You seated us on lizards, while you galloped away on tornado. I don't agree to admit my defeat!"

"Sandra, my friend, who have taught you the art of riding? Look, how you sit. You look like a homeless boy who has gotten on a strange horse secretly," Florentian answered him by laughing merrily as well.

"Be glad if you please," Sandra was already shouting with laughter without any restraint. "Nikolay is drilling me every day, and it turns out that I'm ignoramus. Who of us is to blame then?" the Indian blinked an eye at Nikolay and made a comically unhappy expression.

"Well, and for this ungrateful attack against your teacher you will be thrown into the waterfall today," Florentian was talking to him by smiling and threatening him with the willow rod. "Dismount the horse and let Henry take your place, you thankless man."

While still laughing and asking Nikolay sincerely to forgive for his poor sneer and clumsiness, Sandra dismounted the horse and brought it to embarrassed Henry.

"I've never been on horseback before," Henry uttered, "and I don't even know how to keep the rein, but I'm happy to ride at least several steps next to you, lord Benedict, even if those were the last moments of my life."

Nikolay jumped up to him immediately by explaining the most elementary rules of riding.

"This horse is very calm and swift-footed, but the pitiful rider Sandra is spoiling its character. He cannot keep his seat calmly and he frightens the animal with his liveliness. Lord Benedict will go at a jogtrot now, while you keep at some distance. I will take the horse from mister Tendly who probably will agree to take my place with the ladies, and I will explain all the rules of riding to you on the way."

Henry mounted the horse bravely, which already began to fret. Florentian stroked the horse's neck, head, it stopped worrying and trotted with its rider calmly. Never experienced feelings were penetrating into Henry's soul. He didn't feel any self-love that was usually rending his heart, any fear to be humiliated before somebody or to make a fool of himself. All the trifles and details were gone, he was fulfilling instructions attentively. The wave of Nikolay's sincere kindness covered Henry, but at the same time, the rider that was riding in front of him was attracting his thoughts like a magnet. Having ridden back and returned the horse, Florentian stopped at the porch by waiting for his friends.

"So, Henry, it seems that we don't allow even to take a rest for you?"

"Lord Benedict, if I could have such happiness to live next to you during my entire life, then I could hope that some day I will become worthy of meeting Ananda. Having spent several hours at your home, I understood instantly how much trouble I've already done during my short life. It is painful to perceive my stupidity, but I have to confess exactly that."

"Henry, it is great that you've already become more flexible during the several hours which you've spent among us. When you learn to laugh, when you stop taking fright of people, you'll understand your purpose as the doctor and man. Go upstairs to your room, have a rest, tidy yourself up before the mirror and come back to the terrace for tea. Come back without restraint, leave your shyness – it's only the sign of your proud self-love and it doesn't remind of any obedience. We'll still have time to talk about the real obedience of a wise man with you. That state of numbness in which you are living now as though by

ordering to yourself to look at the world and people differently – that isn't obedience, my friend. If you are living with your mind, unnaturally, then you only entangle yourself in superstitions and attitudes."

Having gone upstairs to his room and looked at the mirror, Henry was horrified by his appearance. He was riding on horseback for no longer than twenty minutes, while all his clothes were turned over; his tie was aside, his collar had come out, his hair was tousled, his forehead was wet with sweat and his cheeks were somewhat red. The pedantic Henry couldn't recognize himself and he didn't like himself. He tried to become an English dandy as soon as possible again by thanking destiny that the women didn't see him like this. While he was taking care of his appearance, a new question rose from his new inner depth again: what that obedience was then, and how Florentian could guess that Henry was restraining himself by trying to be obedient with the efforts of his will, and that looked a little like numbness to himself as well. Thoughtful Henry forgot that he had to go for the tea. Mildrey knocked at the door and entered the room. Having seen sad Henry sitting in the armchair, lord Amedeo asked him how he was and reminded him that everybody was waiting for him at the table downstairs.

"What I have done! How am I going to show in everybody's eyes now? I forced you to wait for me. I feel shy to go downstairs anyway, and now I probably will break something, brush against something or I will eat something not right."

"Why, Henry, everything is so simple. Think only about one thing: first of all, you need to go to the host, apologize for your unexpected delay, then bow to the ladies, repeat your apology and sit down to the place shown to you. Nal and Alyssa are kind hostesses, they will forgive you easily."

"If you hadn't dropped in, now I wouldn't have gone downstairs for anything."

"Well you see, Henry, how many burdening attitudes you invent for yourself. Let's come quickly, every minute spent next to lord Benedict is so precious, isn't it? It seems to me that I didn't know a better life since my very birth. I value my life in this house so much that I'm ready to leave everything in order to be next to this man."

Henry only gave a sigh after remembering Ananda again and followed Amedeo. To great Henry's joy, everything ended successfully. Mildrey accompanied him to the host, Henry didn't even have time to stammer out his apology, and Florentian seated him between himself and Alyssa, he left an empty place from his another side. To Sandra's question who was that happy person who would take the free place, Florentian answered him that that person was still only half happy, because he was still on the way, but soon he would be happy. Everybody was staring at Florentian, and so many pairs of charming eyes even took Henry's breath away.

"By answering your silent question, my friends, I can make you glad, because a guest is coming here. Alyssa, please take care of another cup and everything else. Our new guest is very experienced man from a very noble family, who's seen much in his life. Some of you present here already know him, while some of you will be pleased to receive some news from him about your own people."

"Well, lord Benedict, I thought that you had already reckoned enough with me after you mounted me and mister Tendy on the lizards and ran away from us on Fire. Now I can see that that's not enough for you: I also have to burn in the fire of curiosity."

"Confess, you sinful man, that you are not only curious, but envy also is tormenting you, because you aren't sitting next to me."

"Why, no. I don't have this sin. I had the honour to sit next to you only once and I protect that remembrance so sacredly that I understand everybody whom such fortune smiles upon. I couldn't

envy even that person who would sit next to you every day, but I won't let the honour to clean your hats to anybody. I hurry with all my might in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening, and all your hats – that's my concern. That's how clever I am," Sandra was shouting with laughter.

"And I couldn't understand in any way why everybody's hats were like hats, while mine were always ruffled. So it turns out that your Indian temperament is reflected here."

While everybody was still laughing, the servant announced that the guest was already here, and Florentian told him to accompany him to his study.

"Well, my friends, the guest is here already. I will take him here, and you wait for us without fail if we were delayed a little."

Having opened the door of his study, Florentian saw his guest who was standing by the window, lost in thought. Having heard the steps, he turned round and got so stiff with surprise that he not only uttered the usual words of greeting, but it seemed that he was unable to take his eyes off the host's eyes at all.

"Captain James Rettedly," Florentian uttered by approaching him.

"Yes, that's me, or at least that one who was called in this normal name up to now. I can let my head cut off that I saw namely you in Constantinople, that you told me not to forget you and to follow you. And at the same time this is impossible," the captain wiped his dewy forehead with his handkerchief and continued immediately. "Forgive me, lord Benedict, I'm embarrassed like an urchin, but believe me, there are lots of reasons for this, and the most important one of them for me and the most forgivable from your side is that you look like the man of my dreams, whom I have to find, about whom I've been thinking during day and night. Ananda promised me that I would find him, and your resemblance with that one whom I saw once shocked me so much that I even forgot to greet you."

"No phenomenon exists in man's memory, which wouldn't be connected to his atavistic recollections, captain. If you could see the man from a thousand versts distance, then you possess such abilities about which you don't know anything. Look here. Isn't that the man of your dreams?"

Florentian took his guest to the wall where the portraits of people with long and white clothes were hanging behind the brocade curtain. The captain recognized charming Florentian in a flash, as well as Ananda, doctor I., sir Vomi. He had never seen other great and important persons.

"Yes, the man of my dreams was wearing exactly the same white clothes, and it seemed that he was standing in the shining, fire sphere. My God, have I really found my great Light? Oh maybe I'm sinking into insanity?" completely confused captain was talking.

"Don't get into disappointment so easily. You were brave and you were fighting like a lion with an absolute self-control for the lives of the people entrusted to you in the moment of the greatest danger, during the hurricane that was bringing death in the sea. Now when you have to fight for your only one life you are confused and you have lost your famous self-control," Florentian took his guest's hand by smiling tenderly.

Such joy and such silence flowed into the captain's heart all of a sudden that he became self-confident and calm. Not comprehending himself what and why he was doing, the captain took Florentian's hands, pressed his head to them and kissed these wonderful hands which filled his entire being with the warm electric current.

"Let's not hurry the events. Believe me, no madness is threatening you because you heard my call in Constantinople. Soon you will find out that it wasn't our first meeting, that I also was with you in that night during the terrible storm in the Black Sea, in the moment of death that seemed to be inevitable. Now let's go with me, I will introduce you to my family, while you will give me those letters which you've brought to me later," Florentian told him silently by drawing the brocade's curtain.

Such an amazement showed up in the captain's face again that the host gave a smile, but he took his guest's arm and took him to the terrace without saying anything more to him.

"It is less than a half an hour since we know each other, but I'm so stunned two times already that I'm simply afraid of making a fool of myself."

"And to become Lovushka – the catcher of crows?"

"My God, so you are exactly that great Lovushka's friend, Florentian idolized by him, about my meeting with whom he was dreaming so much?"

Florentian put his finger on his lips and told him very silently.

"You've just seen how I look like when I'm Florentian. You know from your experience what man has to reveal within himself in order to meet Florentian. Now I'm lord Benedict and I'm taking you to introduce to my family. It is very mixed, especially now. You can become its member, too, as well as your wife, but you will need to learn not only the sailor's self-control. You will also need to take a good look at everybody and to find a tactful word for everyone. It won't be difficult for you to do it with your impeccable politeness, but don't tell a word about me, about Florentian of your dreams anymore."

Everybody was waiting for the guest in the terrace impatiently. Henry rose from his chair together with everybody else, but he didn't see the persons who entered instantly, because he was sitting with his back turned to the door. Nikolay and Nal were greeting the guest almost at the threshold, and that sonorous, commanding voice seemed to be familiar to Henry. He turned around and all of a sudden, he felt that he cut the ground from under his feet. While greeting sincerely the members of the lord Benedict's family, James Rettedly was coming nearer to Henry. Henry didn't even have time to think how he had to behave now, and the captain was already standing before him.

"What a pleasant surprise, mister Obersvode, to meet you here after all that Constantinople heat and dust," the captain was talking to him by squeezing his hand, looking at Henry's eyes with the sparkles of humour and by extending his hand to others already.

Having sat down in the place indicated to him at the table, James Rettedly looked at everybody and began to answer Nikolay's and Nal's questions when he was in Constantinople. The captain was smiling roguishly and he answered them that he became acquainted with a young Russian, count T. in Constantinople, who enslaved him with his talent and qualities of his character; that now he understood instantly that he saw his brother before himself, about whom Lovushka was telling him a lot and whom he was longing for extremely many times. While the captain continued his conversation, he didn't reveal by anything, any single movement of his muscle about the storm of his thoughts and feelings that was raging within him. Nobody, except the host, couldn't see any captain's excitement through the impeccable veil of his inner culture, politeness and wit. By his example, Henry was learning how a person had to behave when he entered somebody's home for the first time, while the expansive Sandra was enslaved by the guest's elegance, attitude and slenderness, emphasized by his tunic, he sighed and he was trying to take his hanging jacket and to pull it stealthily.



"Well, Sandra, so it seems that you want to become a sailor," suddenly lord Benedict asked him.

"My dreams in this field are limited. I've already accepted the fact that I'm deplorable scientist, but now I will really help my educator Amedeo sincerely to squeeze a well-bred person out of myself."

"Captain, I congratulate you with a great victory. A person must possess a lot in order for Sandra to notice not only his inside, but also his appearance."

"Although I've already decided to educate myself, but anyway I dare to object Your Highness. When I saw your daughter Nal for the first time I was so dazzled by her beauty that I even fainted. So how I don't notice one's appearance?"

"Well, what colour Alyssa's eyes are of?"

"Alyssa's eyes? Alyssa's flashlights, not eyes. Only the colour... To my misfortune, Alyssa, you are sitting on the same side of the table, and I cannot take a look at you."

As soon as lord Benedict directed everybody's attention from the captain, he was trying to calm down. He couldn't understand himself what was exciting him so especially in this surrounding. When the host asked Sandra about Alyssa's eyes, and everybody laughed and mocked at Sandra in a friendly way, the guest looked at Alyssa's face again, which already surprised him before. Now her dark blue eyes reminded him of sir Vomi's eyes colour, while her little somewhat red face stunned him even more this time. An exceptional Nal's beauty evoked painful memories about Anna in the captain's heart. Although both women were so different, they made him feel lower than themselves. However, if from the first moments of their acquaintance the captain recognized Anna to be earthly and he admired her like a beautiful woman, then before Nal he was standing like before the Divine Mother without recognizing her as an ordinary woman. Now, having looked at Alyssa and evaluated her exceptional beauty, too, the captain felt some brotherly feelings for her, the great respect for the kindness and purity that was shining within her, but at the same time he could comprehend clearly that she was an earthly being who was walking along an ordinary, human path together with the thousands of others. All these thoughts flashed in his head, but he was unable to calm the raging storm in his heart. It seemed to him that if warmth, comfort and calm hadn't spread to him from the host who was sitting next to him, then he wouldn't have had any strength to keep his place because of his excitement.

"Would you like to spend the whole weekend with us?" lord Benedict asked the captain politely.

"I'm so deeply moved with your attention. At this time I'm absolutely free, but I'm waiting for my fiancée with her parents coming from Paris. I put them ashore there from my steamer on my way. My future wife didn't want to go to Paris very much, but her parents demanded me pressingly to buy all wedding clothes namely there, because they wanted to avoid, or to be precise, they were afraid of the strict my sister's and my mother's evaluation. We ordered everything by telegraph from Gurzuf, so it won't take long, but anyway I think that I don't risk much if I spend the night and tomorrow's day with you, but..."

"No, captain, don't wait for any guests earlier than on Monday. The troubles of the wedding clothes are so big for mothers and brides that your fiancée won't be able to get out of there until Monday, however she would hurry. You don't have anything to do in London up to that time. If you want somebody to find out whether there are some urgent messages left for you in the city, then my man will be in London tomorrow and on Saturday. Say yes as soon as possible, and I will take you for a walk."

The captain looked at lord Benedict with his eyes full of joy and told him, laughing.

"It is so easy to say yes when one wants it, while I not only want to stay, but I want to obey your desire, so that I would have an opportunity to express what an unusual happiness I feel at your home, as though I had been here in my early childhood and now I came here as the grown-up – that's how this house and communicating with you excites me, lord Benedict."

"I'm glad, I'm very glad, captain. Spend those days here as in your native home. Alyssa will play for us in the evening, and I'm sure that you will fall in love with us even more."

The captain gave a start and grew pale when he remembered Anna, her playing, Ananda and his view... Florentian took his arm, invited everybody for a walk before the dinner and turned towards the exit to the park. Henry didn't cast his eyes from the captain all the time, he felt lonely and forgotten. He remembered his mother, their poverty, that he could have given at least some minimal comfort and beauty in her poor life, which she liked so much, but up to now he was thinking only about himself, he hadn't achieved anything and given her anything.

"Mister Henry, aren't you going together with us?" he heard Alyssa's voice and saw that he was sitting alone at the table, while Alyssa and Amedeo were standing next to him.

"My God! What would lord Benedict tell about my absent-mindedness! The day hasn't ended yet, while I misbehaved for the second time already. What is going to happen with me next?"

"Everything will be all right. Offer your hand to me, and let's catch up with our friends. Once we hear Sandra's laughter we'll know instantly where to search for them."

"Lady Alyssa, I would be glad if I could fulfil your wish, but I have no idea how I should accompany a lady. Please have pity on me and go with lord Amedeo, while I will go next to you, otherwise I will do some trouble, I will step on your dress or something else," Henry was pleading her.

Laughing Alyssa took her poor cavalier's arm and made him forget about any shyness in five minutes. The girl's kindness, her sincerity, her stature, her light step – everything was exciting his thoughts about her resemblance with his beautiful mother whom he remembered in her golden curls, without that strict everyday hood.

"Henry, why are you so sad?"

"For the first time I comprehend all my wrong deeds and I'm sad even unwillingly."

"Henry, if we are going to be sad because of our wrong deeds and even feel sorry for them, then there won't be any time left for us to be joyful. Forget about your pain, while you are living here. You'd rather tell us about the captain whom we all liked. Do you know him for a long time?"

"I became acquainted with him at Ananda's, in Constantinople," Henry uttered this name only with great efforts of his will, but he caught such kind and tender Alyssa's look instantly; the girl was looking at him with such love that he remembered his mother again.

With her big eyes Alyssa looked so much like missis Obersvode that Henry's heart calmed down. He didn't feel alone anymore and told them everything what he knew about the captain, about Anna, about her wonderful, marvellous playing and beauty.

"You are going to play for us tonight. I'm afraid of that moment. I'm not the only one who's afraid of it. I saw how James Rettedly gave a start when lord Benedict mentioned the music. I'm sure that he was suffering, too, when Anna was playing. I was weeping, while the hell was in my soul, as though the

good and the evil of the entire world had mixed and was fighting in my heart. I couldn't see anything through my tears, but I believe that no such man exists, who could survive Anna's and Ananda's performance peacefully, and both of them simply break his heart, make him remember his insignificance, the whole infinite beauty of the world and his weakness while striving for that beauty."

"Don't be afraid of my playing. I'm only amateur. I'm still only learning, I'm still not a real pianist. Only the lord Benedict's indulgence makes him praise me and listen to my playing."

"Yes," Amedeo meddled in with his smile, "if you are still only a student, then what's going to happen when you become the real musician?"

"Lord Mildrey, it is difficult to say whether I will achieve such heights in music. My father was pastor, and it seems to me that I didn't hear any better singers than him, except lord Benedict whose voice and singing are so especial that I cannot describe them in words."

Henry remembered Ananda's voice, he remembered how he was playing at his house in Hungary to the accompaniment of his uncle, and a tear rolled down the poor youth's cheek straight on Alyssa's hand.

"Henry, I cannot look at it and even more I don't want lord Benedict to see that," Alyssa told him so silently, so calmly, but in such commanding way that the youth's tears got dry in a flash.

"Forgive me," Henry whispered by wiping the tear from her hand. "I'm sick and I'm unable to control myself."

"You are suffering, but nobody from your relatives died, nothing is lost yet, isn't it? Be strong, you cannot be weak in the lord Benedict's house. He is so great that that person who wants to be next to him has to learn self-control. I can hear voices in front, soon we'll catch up with the whole company. Be glad that you are here. Believe and remember that nothing is lost yet. Concentrate all your attention and strength, show that you are worthy of that sincerity which is showed to you in this house."

"Forgive me one more time. Thank you for your help. You look like my mother so much that everybody who sees both of you together would consider you to be mother and daughter."

The voices were heard always nearer, and all of a sudden, absolutely unexpectedly, Henry got before lord Benedict who was walking arm-in-arm with the captain. He was holding a flower in another of his hands and explaining its complicated structure to Tendy.

"And you, Alyssa, have poured some bright and light feelings into your little brother Henry. Sorceress, how did you manage to do it? Although I was trying to do my best, I got only the Knight of the Sad Image, while you cast some lots, and suddenly Henry became your happy little brother."

"If I had had such sister like Alyssa, I must have achieved something more in my life and I wouldn't have done so much trouble," Henry uttered by taking the flower from lord Benedict and thanking him for it.

"But didn't you have any close friend who would have helped you in your life with his love?"

"As you know, to my great amazement, I've got my mother. Unfortunately, I was able to appreciate her love and friendship not so long ago, and in general I understood what a mother the life has given to me."

“Don’t be sad, my friend. Everything can be fixed between son and his mother if a selfless love exists in his mother’s heart and if she doesn’t demand anything for her heroic deed of love for her son.”

“Oh, lord Benedict! My mother is saint. Only she isn’t drawn on an icon, but she’s always toiling in our poor flat. Everybody calms down when they are next to her. Only I alone wouldn’t calm down; I was searching for peace where the people were too high, unreachable for me. I understood that lately as well. Your indulgence gives me hope to find some new strength and to create a cosy little corner for my mother where she could rest.”

The couples changed a long time ago, and now only the captain and Henry were left next to Florentian.

“The captain told me how you were sailing in the steamer, how hardly and obediently you were working, how you were suffering, Henry. Now you are talking about the great people with a broken voice. I understand that you are sad because of Ananda. I can make you glad: the captain James brought his letter to me, and Ananda tells a great deal about you in it. He asks me to correct his mistakes with respect to you, but as you can see, I’ve found you without his request,” Florentian was talking to him very tenderly.

The captain was completely perplexed for the third time. The letters which a stranger gave to him on his way were still in his pocket, while lord Benedict was telling the contents of one of them. Florentian kept walking between both of the men, while one of them brightened up already and another one was unable to overcome his amazement in any way.

“Well, you see, my friends, how much you still don’t understand in your life, which seems to you to be miraculous, but in reality everything is simple and clear. I repeat Ananda’s advice to you, Henry: joy is an invincible power, and I will tell more to you, captain: keep moving forward in the same way as you started in Constantinople. You saw it there and you’ve found it here. Act in such a way that you would never separate with me. I will speak to every one of you tomorrow, and now it is time to come back for dinner. I’ve promised the music to you in the evening, and now both of you are afraid of it and you are waiting for it, because you want to compare it with the Anna’s and Ananda’s performance. Stop predisposing yourselves. If already now, beforehand you begin to explain to your nerves how they should react to that one or another phenomenon, then you entangle them in your fears and the net of your memories even more. In this way you won’t understand rightly a single fact of your life. Courage, only courage and fearlessness reveals the whole man, all his strengths and talents. Both of you try to find the free perception within yourselves, which isn’t polluted with your personal misfortunes and heartache. While you are living here, feel not to be pulled out of life, alienated from it and protected under my glass hood, but united in my energy, opened to the greatest heroic strain. No heartache is able to chain the absolute essence of independence that exists in man’s heart. Now, while you are living in our family, every one of you search for harmony within yourselves. It will be easier for you to feel the power of your spirit here, it will be easier for you to feel the joy to comprehend your divine beauty and its values.”

Lord Benedict left them to communicate between themselves and went to Sandra and Tendly who were trying to show their talents in boxing. Soon a plaintive Sandra’s voice was heard from there when lord Benedict raised him to the air with one of his hands. The way back home seemed to be very short for Henry and the captain, because every one of them was plunged in thought. When they were close to the home, Henry whispered to the captain.

“Dear captain, thank you, thank you a thousand times for everything.”

“Actually, Henry, I don’t know who of us has to say thank you to whom. The example of your suffering helped me to understand so much that we really quits now.”

The time flew past quickly, and after dinner the whole company went to the sitting-room where the grand piano was standing. It wasn’t usual for the men in the lord Benedict’s house to sit long at the table alone and to drink spiritual drinks. The weak wine was served, and everybody used to end their dinner together, and this was against the English traditions. Both guests remembered Florentian’s uttered words during their walk, so they were trying to remain calm and to prepare for listening to the music without any preliminary thoughts. Nal was sitting next to the captain, and he could observe her exceptional beauty once again and once again he told to himself that Nal couldn’t be compared with anybody, even with Anna whose beauty was perfect, as well as her bottomless, big, burning eyes. Anna was earthly, although she was taller than others, subtler and divinely beautiful. Nal was from the highest element, even if she had come to live on the Earth according to its laws, then only in order to disperse the darkness around herself.

He looked at Alyssa, for whom the host himself helped to lift the piano’s lid. It seemed to the captain that he saw absolutely different Alyssa whom, as it seemed to him back then, he took a good look at and understood, whom his earthly heart was inclined to as to his sister from the same body and blood. Now an absolutely different Alyssa was sitting at the piano, whose blue eyes full of kindness were shining with such will, such power and inspiration that they were burning life a fire. It seemed that the girl wasn’t only in this room anymore, that she was far away from here, that she could see something, she was striving for something, and the captain could feel that striving of her so much that it seemed to him that Alyssa would rise and fly away in a moment or two. Alyssa reminded him of Lisa who was absolutely different than her when she used to take the violin in her hands and forget about everything.

Already the first sounds stunned the captain. The power and joy were pouring from Alyssa’s fingers. It seemed to James that the sounds surrounded him from all sides, that the walls, the ceiling, the floor sounded – everything sounded, everything responded to these waves of love sent by the girl. The captain wanted neither to cry nor to weep as in Constantinople; not the pain of his lost years was breaking out of his soul – simply he was happy that he was living, that he already comprehended the power within himself to overcome all obstacles and to pass to that world of Light in which the man of his dreams was living. It seemed to him that the sounds of Alyssa’s piano were talking about Him to him.

The girl complied with everybody’s requests and kept playing again and again, but then she fell to thinking, became quiet, ran her fingers through the keys and... began to sing. As soon as Henry heard her voice he jumped up, extended his hands to her and gave a shout: “Mother!” He staggered and he would have fallen down if Nikolay and Amedeo hadn’t run up to him and seized him in their arms. They took fainted Henry to the lord Benedict’s study. The host asked everybody to calm down by explaining to them that Henry’s nervous system was very sickly, but that there wasn’t any danger. When Henry came to himself he saw charming Florentian next to him, who was telling him merrily how he got in his study.

“Forgive me, lord Benedict. Now I remember everything. When lady Alyssa began to sing the song that my mother was singing to me in my childhood, then her voice, her eyes and the whole figure of her reminded me so much of her that as though by having lost my mind, I forgot about everything and dashed at my mother.”

“Hold tight, my friend Henry. Pull yourself together more flexibly. Why are you always mourning over your past when I tell you to live not only in the present, but even in the very last of its moment?”

Careful Arthur accompanied Henry to his room, while the host came back to the sitting-room. It was completely calm here. When the captain who rushed to help Henry came back to his place, Nal began to ask him tenderly about his fiancée, but when she saw that the captain was deeply moved by Henry's fainting-fit she told him.

"My father explained to us that it were only too strained Henry's nerves, so you can calm down. And in general, if my father is by the patient, then what should you be afraid of? Not only the patient will recover next to my father, but everybody will find strength to direct his life in another direction. If only man finds the strength within himself to overcome his doubts and to believe till the end – then he will stay next to my father and he won't lose this friendship during his entire life."

Alyssa approached the captain and Nal who were talking. Apparently, the girl was excited that the very first phrase of her song touched Henry so strongly, but she didn't mention a single word about the event, she sat down in another side of the table and asked the captain.

"I've heard a lot about the Anna's and Ananda's performance. I want to ask you what an impression the Anna's music and she herself left for you. I don't dare to ask you about Ananda. Everything what I've heard about him seems to be so high for me that probably, no words may render that grandeur which that man has achieved. It must be the same, if I wanted to describe lord Benedict. However, I would like to hear about Anna if it isn't difficult for you to do."

"I was thinking namely about Anna and her performance, while you were playing, lady Wodsword. I don't know whether I will be able to describe her playing as the real music expert would do it, but I will give my personal, very deep and sharp impression to you. I will start from the fact that once you see Anna you cannot forget her anymore. Who is she? She's a storm, an element. The power of her sounds is so enslaving that when you submit to the influence of them you are ground up as in the mill. That person who yesterday was simply a mediocre man, today after hearing her playing was broken in half. And the questions, like a hedgehog's needles, stick out of one's every nerve, out of every fibre of one's muscle, out of every cell of one's brain. The whole man feels like a freshly lifted turf because of her music. The spirit that was smouldering under the shroud of man's decaying convictions bare itself within him, which he begins to understand as the unfair and superstitious thoughts and perceptions that oppress him. After this playing man enters another atmosphere that wasn't characteristic to him before. The tragedy of man's revaluation happens from her sounds. To be frank with you, the sounds are divine, but their source – that's the angel of sadness, pain and death. There is any joy neither in herself nor in her divine beauty nor in her brilliant music. You must admit that Anna is the being of a higher level, but the meeting with her is tragic, although it's unforgettable. That's an epoch, a landmark in man's life. And the man who is weak and unprepared for tests will have to heal his wounds for a long time. Even the strong man all changes, he begins to use his energy in a completely different way. Everybody who meets Anna is doomed to die in that element of the spirit in which he was living up to then. The strong man will overcome his death and he will start living in much brighter atmosphere, but the weak one will remember the meeting only with horror and he will feel sorry for the lost paradise of his daily peace and happiness, but unfortunately, he will never be able to come back to it. Anna – that's the stroke of the hammer, that's a shock. The question arises: and what have you done for your life? But that isn't the life itself, that isn't its glorification. That's the black pearl of sadness, but not the reddish one, shining with joy. I don't know whether it is clear to you what I am talking about. It is very difficult to convey such impressions. It would seem for that person who's experienced such meeting himself that I've told even too much, while for that one who is listening to me only with his mind my picturesque story will look only like the story full of fantasy. While your playing, lady Alyssa, which enslaves man no less than Anna's one, makes him happy, joyous and self-confident. A blessed glorification of life and love is heard in it. There's light, an invitation to create in it. There's such thing in it, about which doctor I. is talking so often: "No grey daily routine exists, there's only the shining temple which

man himself is building with his daily work.” Thank you sincerely for the happiness and joy with which you have filled me up. You reminded me of my fiancée with something, with some spiritual resemblance, in those moments when she takes the violin in her hands. She isn’t a beauty, but having started playing or singing, she changes and becomes simply wonderful. Her sounds are also an invitation to the happiness to live. When she’s playing, you forget about everything, except this moment of bliss and gratitude for life, in the same way as it happens when you are playing.”

While being carried away in conversation, the captain didn’t notice when Florentian came back and stood behind his back, when Nikolay, Sandra, Amedeo and Tendly who were sitting in the corner joined their small group. The captain’s words were like a torch for mister Tendly. All of a sudden, he comprehended the whole happiness and importance of his meeting with lord Benedict and his family. A bomb exploded in his life, in his ordinary life of a member of the London’s high society, that was full of such refreshing and pure air which he didn’t even imagine existing so near to him.

“Captain, the different life,” Florentian’s voice was heard, “always exists in man himself for a long time already, much earlier than he receives its call or, as you put it, the stroke of Life in one or another way. There isn’t a single case that that stroke of Life would be given to man to no purpose, as his cruel and unnecessary suffering. Life, the great universal Life, knows neither cruelty nor punishment. All its laws of compassion and help function according to the only one law of the universe – the law of cause and effect. It seems to people that a cruelty broke into their lives. The person starving to death considers himself to be ill-fated, oppressed and harmed by life, while he doesn’t remember how he starved his entire family to death, although sometime and somewhere he had all possibilities to extend his helping hand to them. No strokes exist at all, as well as a murder or a meaningless death doesn’t exist. Every man dies only when his spirit either already overgrew all those creative possibilities which his physical body possessed, or when the hardened, superstitious passions of greediness, jealousy, denial and self-love wound round his body, and when there wasn’t any possibility for his spirit left already to rip open the case of its passions and to escape to kindness. Everything what people got used to call the miracles, the miraculous meetings and rescues – everything is only the creation of man himself during the entire row of his earthly incarnations and his own activity in them. Man has so little time during each of his incarnations! By knowing the transiency of the earthly forms and keeping our common sense, we cannot waste our time in vain for the trifles of our private life and for its superstitions, for living without creation in our very heart. We cannot live and wait for the superstitious understanding about revelation to take care of man’s life itself and to direct the wheel of his life to that or another direction, while man will only be drawing the fruit of compassion falling down to him. The whole compassion which is only able to flow into man’s destiny – that’s his own activity. That’s his activity during the entire centuries, his activity in uniting with big and small people, his activity of love and nobility. Man’s honour, his honesty, his kindness and beauty which he’s awakened and extended to the hearts whom he met, and not waited until somebody else would bring them to him, is namely the man’s activity along his path of centuries – along the path of the living and always toiling heaven and the living and always toiling earth. Man doesn’t have to fly to the distant heaven by hoping to breathe in some beauty and rest from the earthly dirt, but he has to pour a drop of his creative goodwill into the dirty, sweaty and sad earth. Then the Wisdom of the living and always toiling heaven will certainly step into his earthly activity, and he will hear its call. That person who has brought a strophe of his victorious song of love onto the earth, who has blessed his day from the bottom of his heart, bleeding with suffering, that one will enter the new atmosphere of power and knowledge in which he will see clearly that no miracles exist, there’s only that one or another stage of knowledge.”

Florentian’s voice was soft and tender, like the stroking mother’s hand. His wonderful face looked like a vision in the light of the fluttering candles and in the silver of the moon beams. By not taking his eyes off this face, the captain plunged into his memories about his vision in Constantinople. Alyssa was

as though reborn again, her eyes were shining with such will that mister Tendly was unable to recover from his amazement when he looked at this new and strange face accidentally. Only Nal and Nikolay were casual and joyful, so joyful and bright as though the Florentian's words had told them not that what the rest of them heard, but something that was usual to them, that what was their constant inner daily life. Having accompanied all his guests and wished the good night, Florentian came back to his study, plunged into his thoughts and sat down on the armchair by the opened window, as though by waiting patiently for somebody. And indeed, soon a woman stopped under the window by waiting for his invitation silently.

"Come in, Doria, I was feeling for a long time that you were walking in the garden, you were waiting and suffering, and if I didn't invite you, then I did it only because you had to answer your questions yourself, while I was unable to help you with anything. Now you've decided everything yourself by rejecting your habit that somebody else from aside – me or somebody else – had to decide and act instead of you. Come in, we'll have a talk, my friend."

Having entered the room, Doria sat down on a low little chair by the Florentian's feet and uttered silently.

"It was so difficult for me to solve my questions, my dear Teacher and friend! The thought about Ananda didn't desert me for at least a moment among my daily troubles during all these years of my separation with him. When I was living next to him, it seemed to me that everything was solved very easily for me. When he used to say to me: "Doria, before acting think a little, so that later you wouldn't blame yourself with light-mindedness," it seemed strange for me to think about the questions which were as clear as the day to me. Now all those as clear as the day questions are also clear to me, but my requirements for myself have grown so much that I don't dare to answer every one of them for a long time, because with every one of them – now it is clear to me – it is so little done and it still needs so much to do! Whatever side I would look at, everywhere I see how my own characteristics prevent me from standing next to those people who are my ideal, my temple and the only path of my life."

"My dear Doria, you are tormenting yourself with your thoughts about your insignificance, unfitness and everything else without necessity. You see, if you comprehend these feelings of yours well, too, then you'll understand that they didn't help you with anything. Their roots – however strange it seems to you – that's your haughtiness anyway. The real obedience has nothing to do with self-pity. The really obedient person comprehends his place in the universe so clearly, he's so free inside of him that no comparisons with the strange life occur to him. Simply he's walking through his present by not becoming involved in the whole complexity and intricacy of those affairs which he doesn't understand and see their course till the end. Only that person is walking faithfully along his creative day, who doesn't plan cleverly, but who's acting in such a way that the moment of his meetings or affairs opens up his heart and summons his kindness to act in a simple, easy and joyful way. Don't torment yourself, try to decide in essence how you should live in order to meet Ananda again. Understand another thing, too: I've given several tasks, orders to you, I charged you with some affairs. Have I reproached you at least a single time for your efforts? I allowed you to reflect on complicated problems and decide yourself, but I didn't offer you to climb up any rotted steps. If you are going to create your tomorrow with today's tears, doubts and heartbreak, then you will never be climbing up any firm and harmonious steps. When you live your today with the whole completeness of your feelings and thoughts, then tomorrow you may get into the atmosphere of your life of full value. The day which is creating this atmosphere – that's the day lived easily and joyfully, without any tears and rubbish of heartbreak which is always summoned by the Earth, only the Earth that buried the living, toiling heaven in oblivion. Besides, don't forget that the more man develops, the higher he's able to see and comprehend the spiritual man's creation, the clearer he understands the boundlessness of a man's development, but that doesn't oppress him and only gives him cheerfulness, makes him burn and dream where another person – by comprehending only the small banality – stops by sinking in his thoughts,



lingering and sobbing. During this entire time, while you were Nal's and Alyssa's servant, you didn't go wrong because of your jealousy and haughtiness. No insignificance worried you. Not a single unkind thought dropped in within you. Even your constant and respectful Ananda's remembrance was without any bitterness. You blessed even your separation with him, because you understood how much you've learned by losing your great friend. You received my instruction to join the whole company as the full member of my family already more than three weeks ago. So why do you linger? Why are your eyes full of tears, why is your heart burdened and why is the swarm of the stinging thoughts buzzing in your consciousness?"

Florentian was stroking Doria's head tenderly, as though by pouring that special calm and confidence into it, which everybody used to feel, while communicating with him. Doria kept silent for a long time, then finally she lifted her hung head, looked at Florentian's eyes and told him in a simple, easy way.

"During that entire time I understood that I was doing everything wrongly again. I was waiting by thinking that inside of me something wasn't prepared yet, that still not everything was clear and stable. I was waiting until it would mature. In this moment I understand absolutely clearly that I was wrong here as well, that I concentrated to myself in my thoughts and not to that task that was given to me. Some shyness was tormenting me, some anxiety. It always seemed to me that Ananda had to come, that he could enter at any moment, and I was afraid of that meeting, I wanted to escape..."

Doria's voice lapsed into silence a long time ago, while the Florentian's hand was still on her head.

"If you could comprehend all your affairs and meetings till the end, then you won't be waiting until something would mature inside of you, but you would get down to the business which I gave to you instantly by trying to pour your entire kindness and sincerity into it. Ananda is really coming and soon, very soon he will be here. It wasn't important for your meeting with him in which role – a servant or a lady – he would find you. For you it was important to meet other people, to be useful for them, because a difficult karma is spreading between you and them. You and Henry, and even more you and Tendly – you are still eternal bonfires, very hostile. They didn't meet you as the member of my family immediately, and with that you delayed them on their way, extinguishing the anger of several centuries. You will enter the dining-room starting from tomorrow already, you'll have to forget your role of the servant for ever, and on Monday morning you will go to London to visit Henry's mother with the captain James Rettedly. You will bring my letter to her, buy an elegant dress, coat, hat and all other clothes that she needs for her, and you'll bring her here on a short visit. Neither she nor you need to know anything more, but if you fulfil this lesson perfectly, then you will repay Henry for his heartache and big pain which you've caused to him during one of your incarnations. Don't be surprised if you feel his hostility to you. Those will be the echoes of your old discord that will awaken within him, which now you can extinguish with your love. Rejoice at this meeting."

Florentian sent brightened, silent and happy Doria to sleep, came to the wall, draw the brocade curtain back and stood before that group of the portraits which he showed to the captain. The space in that place where Ananda's portrait was hanging began to shine in several minutes, as though a round, bright window had opened in it. Many-coloured lines, triangles, points, squares, circles and other fire figures began to twinkle in this space quickly, like a row of lightnings. Those were the thoughts which Ananda and Florentian exchanged between themselves; the thoughts which were sent to the ether without any telegraph, only by using the power of their will and selfless love to help and save people. Having smiled to the shining image of Ananda and bowed low to him, Florentian drew the curtain across the space that wasn't shining anymore and went to his bedroom where no one could ever enter, except his personal servant and now also Arthur...

The days flew past so quickly for the captain James that when lord Benedict asked him on Sunday evening to bring Doria with his coach in London to a distant district of the city, he as though fell from the moon by making everybody laugh with his question what day of the week was tomorrow. To all persuasions that tomorrow was Monday, that exactly tomorrow he would meet his fiancée, the captain was only throwing up his arms and insisted that Friday and Saturday disappeared this week. The days weren't flying past so quickly for Henry, and life as though was putting obstacles for him in every step. On the next morning after his fainting-fit, having remembered Alyssa, her tenderness, beauty and unusual resemblance with his mother, Henry decided to strike up a friendship with the girl as much as it was possible to do. He felt that she was a sincere friend and he wanted to tell her all the sad story about his separation with Ananda. He was thinking that Alyssa would give a good advice to him or at least she would tell him whether he could address lord Benedict with many of his questions and requests. Being disposed in such a way, Henry couldn't see anything around him anymore, all his thoughts were turning upon Alyssa. He was going downstairs being certain that she would be alone, and that he would ask her to dedicate some time for this conversation. While Henry was going downstairs, he saw how the girl went to the terrace alone. His heart began to thump stronger, he quickened his step, but the more he was hoping to fulfil his plan immediately the greater his disappointment was. Henry wasn't thinking about Alyssa herself, about her time and affairs at least a little, he only knew that he needed help now, at this moment. All his egoistic wants came to naught, because a woman whom he had never seen before was sitting next to Alyssa.

"Let me introduce you to another lord Benedict's daughter," Alyssa greeted Henry and told him by introducing him to Doria.

Having greeted both women with his gloomy face, Henry felt hostility for Doria instantly, because she ruined his plans. Her beautiful, dark and piercing eyes, her small white teeth, even her sincerity, as well as her entire beauty – Henry didn't like everything, she made him irritated and even angry. Henry wasn't answering Doria's cautious questions in a very polite way and he was surprised with himself why he was so irritated and angry with this undoubtedly beautiful and kind woman. Envy stirred deep inside of him, as though a dissatisfaction that the lord Benedict's family was so big, that all these people were "at home" here, while he was a stranger, a guest to whom might be offered to come back to London at any moment, because a newly arrived guest might need a room.

"So, dear Henry, you still cannot get rid of your illness of an uninvited guest?" Florentian's voice was heard behind his back.

Henry jumped up from the unexpected question, from the word "guest" that was heard in the phrase, which was rending his soul, from the sudden host's appearance behind his back, he brushed against the cup and poured out the whole coffee. Completely confused, with his new suit poured over, Henry was standing with his balance absolutely destroyed when Nal and Nikolay came. When Henry was prepared to burst into tears from his shyness and embarrassment he saw Doria with the wet napkin in her hands next to him, who cleaned his suit very quickly and said to Florentian cheerfully.

"Lord Benedict, you'll have to accept the bill from mister Oversvode for his damaged suit. Is it really possible to walk so silently? You frightened me, too, not only the man who's still not fully recovered."

"Forgive me, Henry, Doria is right. You aren't yet used to the fact that all guests at my home are also at their own home, and they cannot feel shy or get irritated from my habit to show up among them instantly. Don't grieve because of the tipped cup in the strange house. You are not guest here, but the kindest and anticipated friend. The member of the family. We all are guests on this Earth, we'll stay here for a while and leave; you are guest at my home only in the same sense. As much as happiness to live for

other people's wellbeing binds all of us, such are the bonds of our relationship in this family. And absolutely not that who is host and who is guest is important, but that all of us would be carrying kindness for every heart whom we meet by considering ourselves to be brothers one with another, and that we wouldn't get irritated because somebody is nearer or further, higher or lower.

What significance and meaning a man's life for the universe might have if he solves the question of his individual development only through his standpoint of mode of life, glory, awards? Henry, your mother, about whom you were telling me like about a copy of Alyssa, probably didn't pour a single drop of poison into anybody's life. Her portrait is clear to me, I can see it well. And how about your father? What kind of a person was your father?"

Having understood that Florentian read all his thoughts, his entire irritation and hostility, Henry couldn't calm down in any way and he was sitting with his hung head before the new cup of coffee placed for him by Doria.

"My father?" Henry mumbled. "I don't know him and I've never seen him. My mother told me that he died even before my birth."

"And did your mother have any relatives?" the host kept interrogating completely embarrassed Henry.

"It seems to me that she was from a very rich family, but her father, my grandfather, was very strict. He told her to marry another man and he didn't acknowledge my father. I only know that my mother's marriage made her leave her native home and hide, but my mother never told me about our relatives, while I didn't ask her about it."

"Did your mother never tell you about her brother?"

"She was telling me about her brother in my early childhood, especially when she used to sing that song which lady Alyssa began to sing yesterday. She told me that he could sing perfectly, that they often used to sing duets and dreamed about learning to sing. My mother wanted me to find my uncle when she was dead and tell him that he was the only man whom she loved during her entire life and to whom she was loyal till her very death. The time was flying past, I was learning, my mother grew old, she was changing, and our conversations about my uncle ended a long time ago."

Florentian fell to thinking, as though he got stiff for a moment, and everybody who were sitting at the table was struck with fear to break his silence. Having given a deep sigh, Florentian looked at Alyssa, then he directed his look from her to Henry and uttered silently.

"Different meetings exist. Some happy meetings exist, but they unbind tens of karmas instantly. They are as rare as the dark, Indian emeralds. These meetings are prepared for a long time, during the entire centuries. Every man who gets into the circle of such meetings has to strive very much not to open the slightest access for the evil will through himself. Henry, beware of irritation. Beware of it especially now and remember your mother more often, who's dedicated everything to you. Alyssa, by joking in a friendly way, you called Henry to be your brother. Stay next to him during these days and help him to grow his wounds well again, help him to open himself for his new talent to comprehend people and life as the path of centuries. Namely during these days many things must happen in your life. All of you try to live in harmony during these days and rely one upon another completely."

Florentian's words seemed to be mysterious for everybody, and especially for Henry. Only the captain James Rettedly who entered the room unnoticed remained absolutely calm, as though he could expect only something especial and mysterious from the man of his dreams.

When the breakfast was over, Alyssa offered to Henry and Doria to walk a little, and Henry needed to make a lot of his efforts to overcome his unfriendliness to go where he was invited to. Florentian's look and his smile showed to Henry that all his thoughts were read again. Lord Benedict took the captain to his study.

"Sit down, James, now I'm the man of your dreams, Florentian, as you can call me."

"This moment is the top of my happiness, but I don't dare to call you Florentian, in such a sacred name to me. I don't know how I deserved such unheard happiness – to meet you, to stay in your home, to talk to you. I comprehend how little I am, how simple and daily my life was until my meeting with doctor I., how I couldn't orient myself in the meaning of life, the perspective of which would never rise above the Earth and my personal searching for me. However, the truth is that an idle life surrounding me was always tiring me from my early childhood. I've chosen the path of the sailor not because I loved the sea, but it seemed to me that with the energy characteristic to me I would be able to bring the maximum use for my motherland. Dissatisfaction was haunting me everywhere, I was always searching where I could use the flights of my nobleness and selflessness. Only when I met doctor I. and Lovushka, when I saw sir Vomi and Ananda I understood who man was, what his tasks had to be and what he was able to achieve in his cells made of the same matter if he could pour the light and spirit into them. I was as though thunderstruck when I met Ananda; but the vision when I saw you, while the music was ringing, assembled me into a monolithic mass again like a wonderful harmony, like the power of comfort and peace. I could feel such power within myself, such peace of trust and happiness that I told to myself: I will find the man of my dreams. I used to win by using my mind, now I will strive for the victory with my love. But I didn't believe or dare to dream that I would experience the happiness of my meeting with you so fast. I haven't yet grown as high as that happiness, I see myself as a pygmy and I want only to learn next to you."

"The speed of realization of our most secret desires – that's not karma, my friend. The people's meeting itself – that's always the call of karma, but the time and place of the meeting, the intensity of man's perception and its influence to his life – that's the combination of the unique characteristics of the man himself, his tact, energy and adaptation. If back then, in Constantinople, you hadn't burned down during one night, our meeting wouldn't have happened so fast. Every man has his own measure of things; and only those people come to their Teacher during one incarnation for a direct communication with him, who have done everything moderately, who have destroyed all their previous beliefs about life in general and about the only one earthly existence within themselves. While man leans on somebody's help and connections; while he's searching for the advices of those who are stronger than him for solving his questions, he is unable to escape the orbit of the superstitions that restrict him, which always keeps him balancing between the attraction to the world of the higher beauty and wellbeing of the earthly life. How a man lives his day, which orbit the earth pulled him to – that's not only his activity of the centuries, that's also his entire experience of this incarnation. Soon you'll marry and you'll marry from love. If you hadn't met I., if Ananda hadn't pushed you with such supernatural force that everything turned head over heels within you – then you would have remained bachelor by not joining life as the cell of the family. By creating your family, remember those precepts which I will tell you now. Your wife. Never suppress her will, her taste, her aspirations with anything. If you see that her taste and her flights are vulgar with something, then show beauty to her, but in such a way that she would never notice that you are teaching her. If you succeed to open her eyes for beauty, she will change herself, but if you persuade her and make some intrusive offers to her, then beauty won't open within her, and she won't be able to bring it into her life, however persistently you would try to persuade and prove it to her. Don't meddle in her art and creation in any way. Give an absolute freedom to your wife, criticize her sincerely if she asks you to, but don't allow yourself to suppress, extinguish her flights if they, in your opinion, aren't very tactful and don't suit the mode of life of that society in which you are living. Not talent is for society, but society is for talent."

Talent is for the entire Life. Those who are listening to your wife's playing might rise from her talent only during those minutes when her talent is burning, and they can always live their everyday life. Let them adapt themselves to her, and not her to them. Support her thoroughly, even if your home is called original, what isn't any praise in England. If your wife's will turned out not to be enough, and if she wanted to give up her art after your children's birth, if a dilemma rose before her – her children or her art, if mother prevailed over artist in her thoughts, feelings and behaviour – then explain the meaning of art for education of the growing soul and for the entire children's life to her. Every family is created with care of many workers and assistants whom you don't see. Those families, the main element of which is art, are always the highest cells of the society from which the creative powers that draw nearer to their Teacher develop. If personally you don't have any single talented child, then your grandchildren born from your children who are sensitive to the art already will have that atmosphere of harmony in which they will be able to develop their talents. By the way, it will happen exactly like this in your family. You will bring your youngest grandson and your middle granddaughter to me – two great talents. Your wife will help them to find the new beginning of communication, for what your own children won't be ready yet. Unfortunately, your wife will suffer from too big, passionate love for her children. Your tact and love will help you to explain to her that mother's love must be a creative, very peaceful energy, so that they could grow up by developing their spirit and talents fully. A mother's self-sacrifice when more or less she gives up the art for her children by considering it to be a heroic deed, only shows the inferiority of man's talent, who had to serve his nation and Life that had given the drop of its eternal fire to him. No fight for your children's education might exist in your home, as well as going downstream which leads children to the banal, usual English family life. You and your wife will have to pay attention to the forming relations between your children and the people surrounding them. No seclusion, don't separate your children from the neighbouring children; train them to communicate with other children. Create such life for them that there wouldn't be any place for vanity in it and that love for man, the need to communicate with as many people as possible would be engraved in their consciousness for ever. The best lessons take place during those days when children encounter all kinds of the characters of the same age. In order for a child to grow up by observing attentively his entire surrounding, you have to teach him this from his very first conscious days. Train your children's attention together with their self-control. Don't forget that your children aren't only the fruit of the body and blood who belong to you personally, but that they are precious cups whom Life has given to you to protect, develop and increase their creative fire within them. Don't attach yourselves to them like a snail to its little house. Always think that they are destined to live and to stay at your home for a while in order for them to mature for their own lives. Your life has only as much value for the world as much you've managed to reveal its self-contained beauty that doesn't increase or decrease from outer or inner earthly bonds. By creating your family, step into it being free from the superstition that it is a secluded cell in which those or other people characteristics boil in the juice of possessiveness. On the contrary, destroy the barriers between yourself and other people, attract the people whom you met with beauty which they feel shy to find within themselves. Children aren't only the flowers of the earth. They are also the presents for the entire universe. Through them you, as well as all other parents, either help the mankind to rise or you remain an inert mass, that mixture from which coal and diamond will be born after many thousand years like from some overrotten forest. The storm is raging in your fiancée's heart at this moment. Sometimes you are afraid of her temperament, but a talent needs temperament as much as a machine needs fuel. Always try to direct her temperament to the art with the great tact, tenderness and attention. I would like very much you to take your fiancée to my home. Next week we move to London. I'm waiting for Ananda there. I will be waiting for you and your fiancée for breakfast on Monday, at twelve o'clock, and you can leave making the acquaintance with parents to me. During the return visit of myself and my daughters for you and your fiancée I will arrange everything in such a way that it'll be better and more comfortable for the counts R. Don't guess the future. I see that you also worried about the parents desire to follow you and their daughter everywhere, while you didn't want it. I think that I can help you with it, too."

Having talked to the captain a little more about his affairs and some peculiarities of his personal life, Florentian saw him off calm and joyful, and then he sat down at the table to read a letter. Tendly slipped through the window after a while, and his voice was heard.

"Excuse me, lord Benedict, I heard your voice three times, as though you called me. I went downstairs two times, it always seemed to me that your voice was coming from your room, and I came back two times not daring to disturb your calm. Then I decided to come up to the window and I saw the light in it. I am sorry if I disturbed you."

"I was inviting you, Tendly, and I was already prepared to get angry with you, because you didn't understand my invitation for so long. Well, give me your hand, English athlete, and jump over here."

Tendly gave a happy laugh, seized Florentian's hand, the iron power of which he knew already, and jumped over the high windowsill.

"Well, when I think," Tendly was talking, while still laughing, "I heard your voice so clearly and I was afraid of making a mistake anyway."

"I'm glad that you didn't make me go upstairs to you. And if you are here, my dear Tendly, I will explain to you why I was inviting you so persistently. I must admit that my assignment won't be the most pleasant for you, and if you wanted to fulfil it precisely and successfully, you would have to become my captain again."

"At your service, admiral, to become your captain! I strain my ears and my eyes, and I'm so happy to serve you, lord Benedict, that I can't bring myself even to talk about it."

"You know the pastor's testament well and, of course, you remember one of the clauses that made Jenny and the pastor's wife especially furious. It says that the big capital in the bank belongs to the pastor's sister Cecilia who left home when she was young and hid herself – she changed her surname to Obersvode. The pastor succeeded to find out this surname and he picked up her trail several times, but every time she used to hide herself even more. And he died without finding her."

"But Jenny told me that such person didn't exist at all, that it was a cruel trick of her father to take the possibility from her and her mother to live without any troubles and how not to work for them."

"You will make certain yourself of how much truth in Jenny's words were. The fixed time of the law ends on the next Monday, after which the pastor's wife may demand the interests left for her from the Cecilia Obersvode's capital if the owner of the capital or he descendants don't claim rights to it. I've found Cecilia Obersvode, and she's nobody else as..."

"Henry's mother!" very excited Tendly gave a shout by jumping up from the chair.

"You've guessed it, Tendly."

"My God, while I was looking at her wonderful face, the forms of her hands, her light figure, I was always thinking whom she reminded me of so much. Only now the veil fell off my eyes – that's Alyssa in her old age!"

"Tendly, you didn't make a mistake again. She's the real Alyssa's and Jenny's aunt whom the pastor was searching for so persistently. Now let's get to business. Tomorrow you will bring my letter to your uncle in which I ask him to inform lady Katherine officially that her husband's sister to whom the capital belongs was found. And therefore, the interests which she already asks to pay to her don't belong to her. Tendly, you will have to drink a bitter cup from both women. As far as I know, mother and her daughter decided to marry you with Jenny after they found out that you were rich. The girl's letters in

which she invites you to visit them didn't get into your hands only by accident. While travelling from the office to your apartment and not finding you there, all of them will get into your hands at once."

"It is very difficult, lord Benedict, but your assignment will be fulfilled. Not the assignment itself is difficult, but my remembrance of that disappointment which I've experienced because of Jenny. Now the wound in my heart doesn't exist anymore. It isn't connected personally with me anymore, but my pain for her, shame and bitterness because of my helplessness to help her to see the world and the people differently is still tormenting me."

"Don't be sad, my captain. If the slightest possibility had existed to help Jenny out of trouble, she would have been here. I've been doing everything what I could for this to happen, as I had promised it to her father. Now everything has already turned in such a way that we need to try to protect Jenny from her final fall into which her poor mother pushes her. Could you give me your word, the word of the captain to the admiral, to fulfil all my assignments precisely, without exceeding the authorizations given to you or deviating from them anywhere? To fulfil all my assignments in such a way, as though you had given the unconditional pledge of obedience to me?"

"Of course, I can do it. It's a great pity that you had to put his question to me. Hence, I didn't manage to fully open the whole devotion of my heart to you. Your life which I was happy to observe is full of such superiority against other people, of such wisdom and perception that not a single man could even dream of competing with you. I know precisely that where you commanded me to act in one or another way, I could perceive only a little part of that entire business. Stay calm, lord Benedict, I will act precisely not only because of my devotion to you, but also by comprehending that your command – that's people's happiness, although it would seem for somebody to be differently outwardly."

"Thank you, Tendly. Here's the letter for your uncle. Your uncle will give the official extract from the testament to you, and take these documents, too. The certificates of birth of Cecilia Wodsworth are here. Here's her marriage certificate. Here's the certificate of death of her husband Richard Rettedly, lord Obersvode. I'll let you know personally that Richard Rettedly is the real brother of the captain James Rettedly who stays with us now. But it doesn't even occur to him that Henry and Alyssa are his most real relatives. Deliver all these documents, as well as the extract with your uncle's letter to the pastor's house. Since the pastor's wife and Jenny will agree in their hearts absolutely with everything what you will tell them, but they will make a face that they don't believe in anything, that I'm a charlatan, then you'll have to take them to your uncle's office where I will be waiting for you with all necessary witnesses, including the captain James Rettedly, lord Obersvode."

Having given even more instructions to mister Tendly, lord Benedict asked him to keep all his assignments in complete secrecy until the needed time.

Tendly assured him passionately again that he would take care of this business properly, he squeezed the hand extended to him with joy, thanked him for his hospitality and all of a sudden, having burst out laughing like a brat, he uttered.

"I will be walking like that, with your hand in my hand everywhere. I'm sure that everything will go easily for me when I imagine that my hand is holding yours."

## Chapter 12

### Doria, the captain and mister Tendly in London

On early Monday morning all inhabitants of the house saw Doria, the captain James and mister Tendly off to London. Before they left, lord Benedict was telling something to the captain Rettedly who seemed to be unusually surprised for Alyssa who always noticed everything. James Rettedly didn't ask anything, but Alyssa caught his attentive look which in the beginning he cast at Henry and then at herself. It even seemed to her that when the captain said good-bye to her and kissed her hand he looked at her in an especial and sincere way and he embraced Henry in no less sincere and even ardent way, which – with the captain's self-control – also seemed to be unusual for her.

"Don't forget that I will be waiting for you with your fiancée for breakfast on Monday, in my house in London," these were the last Florentian's words when the coach already moved.

"Father, is our wonderful life here really over already?" Nal asked him.

"My friends, why should we be sad? We've been working for those new goals and affairs here with which we would meet in London. *If man wants to move forward, first of all, he must change himself.* Having raised his spirit up, having cleaned it, he acquires the reserve of the new power to give his kindness to the people whom he meets. Every one of us have strengthened his self-control in this silent and harmonious little corner, took a new look at his mistakes and understood how much strength he's wasted for fear, doubts, pain and tears in his previous deadlock of spirit instead of extending the thread of light, peace and love from himself, from his heart instantly to the world, to the new day like the bridge to the victory. You cannot achieve anything without preparing your spirit and your entire organism for the main step: accept all your circumstances which the breaking day is bringing to you by blessing them. *Grandeur of man's spirit begins from his complete self-control and peace.* In order for man to ring like a little part of the creating universe, he must feel like a harmonious totality not in separate moments, but knowledge and experience have to penetrate deep into his consciousness that his entire creation may advance together with the creation of the universe only when he is a harmonious totality. The path to this highest knowledge of the whole universe within himself and himself within it goes only through the most ordinary daily routine, through his work in it. While toiling with joy by his development and self-control, each man solves not only his own task, but he unties or ties, improves or worsens the lives of the entire circle of people, although in most cases, he cannot see and even comprehend the whole importance of his strength poured into his day from himself. Every one of you understood a long time ago already what a crime it was to throw the passions of his riot and the bitterness of his tears that burst from him into the world. Every one of you understood that the way of uniting with people here and now – that isn't only the personal question of his own development. That is the power that creates the entire world, that doesn't drowse in one place like the water of the swamps, but that it flies into the universe by disturbing or soothing the life of the entire world. When that what people call disaster comes, you need to hold firmly the flag of the eternity in your hand and remember that all man's complained injustices are only the reflection of his spirit. If now you don't succeed to overcome an obstacle with your love, if you estimate it not like a part of your own path, but like other people's business, in your opinion the bad people's one, whose activity will look like an external destroyer of your happiness – the happiness which you also understand in your own way by wishing that neither you nor your relatives would be disturbed, and you don't comprehend the higher powers within you for a calm fight – then the days of your life are lost. And nobody knows when and where you will have to start everything from the beginning again."



The whole group of people gathered round Florentian were listening to him absolutely quiet; but as much as Nikolay's and Nal's, Amedeo's and Alyssa's faces grew brighter, as much Sandra's and Henry's faces turned sad. It seemed that every word of his wonderful, full of kindness voice was penetrating into their hearts by opening the sad pages of wisdom which they understood differently up to now. When Florentian was looking at the young people who surrounded him, his look was also full of compassion and love, so everybody was moving always nearer to him unwittingly and finally they got absolutely close to him, as though they wanted to imbibe the power of his love into themselves.

"Namely such moments of people's uniting through love when everybody is carrying only the purest and the most beautiful feeling give birth to the new knots of light and kindness in one's life. All invisible assistants use every of such knots by creating the new channel, the new thread of spiritual bond and by uniting the visible and tangible activity of the earth with the invisible and intangible activity of heaven. A sad, alienated and polluted earthly life doesn't exist without the Eternity and not within Eternity. Only one great Life exists where the activity of two worlds pours out through the most different temporary forms, but life doesn't stop because the forms change and grow old. Knowledge makes man happy not only because he's found the light himself, but also because the light within him makes a path for the person whom he meets. However little the light within man would be, once it lights up it will never allow him to dip into sadness and melancholy. Only that man could be sad who doesn't possess a solid loyalty, whose understandings fluctuate and whose heart is broken by despair. If a mother has lost her only one daughter, her only one wealth and she cannot live anymore, because her heart is burning like a torch of sorrow by burning out her blood – then this mother will bring neither happiness nor relief into the new life of her daughter, which is invisible for her. She doesn't know that when you are living on the earth you need to comprehend that you stand not by the bound of the earth, but by the bound of Eternity. That mother who knows and comprehends herself and everybody else only like a form of Eternity will be able to overcome her personal pain, and by using the whole courage of her heart, she will be sending help of her love for her daughter with her smile, and not with her tear and moan that would give bitterness to the new form of her daughter. When our beloved die, our duties for them don't end; and our first duty – that's to forget about ourselves and to think about them. To think and to remember: if we cry and moan, then we load an unbearable weight on their new and delicate form, from which they bend and might even die. We are inclined to dedicate our cordial mourning to our virtues, while the real love that helps them – that's our courage, creative power of our hearts by living in two worlds, and not our sadness after losing only our earthly habits. By developing our self-control, self-discipline, we help not only those who are alive, but also those whom we call to be dead and who in reality are much more alive than us who are incarnated in the material form."

Having finished his speech, Florentian pressed Sandra and Henry to himself, bowed to the rest of them politely and took both youths to the park to saw dry branches. Tormenting reflections made Sandra ask his great friend.

"I've understood my mistakes well. It already seems for me to be impossible to appear weaker than a woman one more time, but did I really disturb the pastor in his new life with my tears and sadness, did I disturb my friend to whom I have to be grateful for so many things?"

"If a spiritually developed and pure man lived only in the world of the earth, as the people do it, who live only with their interests of body and earthly wellbeing, then any of your behaviour couldn't disturb your friend. Since your bond with the pastor was spiritual, existing in both worlds, he took this bond away from the earth when he left us. Any disorder of harmony within you, the cause of which was your sadness because of his departure, was stinging him or pouring him over with the streams of your sad thoughts. Try to develop an absolute self-control with all your might, so that I could leave you for Ananda's guardianship, who is coming here."

“Ananda!” both youths shouted in one voice, but Sandra’s cry was merrier, while Henry’s one was so sorrowful that Sandra even dropped the saw from his hands with surprise.

“Henry, aren’t you dreaming about your new meeting with Ananda during day and night? And you, Sandra, you remind me of the Lot’s wife who turned into the pillar of salt. Take the saw, inspect the branches attentively and take all your impulses back to the normal position. Learn to observe the activity of your entire organism by not spending a single moment of your life uselessly. Let’s go, Henry, to that high, old oak. We’ll have enough work to do there – we’ll help it to recover its youth, to throw the rest of its old soul off.”

While working by the old oak and pretending that he absolutely didn’t notice how Henry was trying to wipe his rolling down, unwanted tears one after another unnoticed, Florentian was talking tenderly to the youth.

“Ananda’s arrival shouldn’t worry you in that sense that Ananda is coming, while you aren’t yet ready to meet him. Henry, Ananda isn’t only the little part of the divine Wisdom that descended onto the earth, to the human body, he’s also the part of the divine Kindness who incarnated in order to untie the firmly tightened bands of human love. In ninety-nine cases from a hundred, that what people call love is only their superstitions, their opinions rammed into their heads or their self-love. While Ananda is communicating with a man, he opens the unexpected surprises of his passions to him. Man thinks that he’s walking down the path of loyalty and compassion, that he’s searching for the ways to become free and that he gives help to people with his loyalty, while in reality the people whom he meets don’t rest in his atmosphere of peace and joy, but everything what he touches is suffering from his loyalty. Why is such loyalty needed at all? The man’s path to his Teacher, as well as to every higher consciousness is leading through his sincere uniting with people. With such loyalty when man lets die the living being who was crying for him and needed his help only because he was occupied with his affairs and he was waiting until something finally matured and got ready inside of him – he won’t be able to fulfil the task for which the whole troop of assistants was searching and waiting for the moment to entrust that task to him. And in this case it happens so that the work prepared in the spiritual world cannot become an action on the earth. Then the record in man’s book of Eternal Life says: “Might happen doesn’t mean that it will happen.” Henry, your book of Eternal Life has different pages. There are some pages of your heroic deeds, your self-sacrifice, your love, and there are some white pages with the only record: “Might happen doesn’t mean that it will happen.” However, there aren’t any pages of joy in it, as well as in your current incarnation, while this time you came to the earth namely to learn joy, and you were given thousands of occasions and cases for this lesson of your destiny. Your mother, your dutiful chosen one, the woman full of honour, power and purity surrounded you with joy and love from your early childhood, while you responded to it only with your exactingness, melancholy and egoism during your entire life. Only now, after those difficulties and horror, which you got into in Constantinople, when you encountered the power of darkness face to face yourself, you understood the horror and grandeur of man’s paths on the earth, and your bleeding heart opened to your mother, opened with its entire depth.”

“Only because,” Henry interrupted him, “great Florentian’s loved opened my eyes and helped me to look at my life differently with his compassion.”

“Now we won’t be talking about the causes of your transformation within yourself. All people, without any exceptions, experience the moments of their rebirth, and their life extends to every one of them the ring of his life and death. The man takes it into his hands, inhales the aroma of life and turns away from already obsolete parts of stench and pus within himself, and it happens for everybody in a difficult, unique and individual way. Your mother will arrive here on the day after tomorrow. Doria will bring her here, while the captain will help her in every possible way.”

"O Lord, that would be the last straw for the captain James to meet my mother at your home!" Henry gave a moan.

"What are you afraid of so much? That the captain will see your mother who's still charming and beautiful?"

"I don't know myself what is that what the captain possesses that fascinates, alienates and dupes me. Perhaps one of the remembrances from my youth is here to blame. Once I brought a monthly advertisement paper home, in which I had wrapped the flowers which my mother told me to buy. My mother unwrapped the flowers and began to even the paper before folding it with the tidiness characteristic to her. There was an advertisement in big letters on the first page that lord Samuel Rettedly, baron Obersvode, announced to his son Richard Rettedly's wife about the big capital left in her name; that if his wife doesn't demand this capital from the bank in two years, it will be transferred to her brother to protect until his death. I don't remember anything more, but my mother fainted away for the only one time in her life and she recovered with difficulty after being ill for even two weeks. When I heard Rettedly's name in Constantinople – as though a snake had bitten me. But then, after comparing the high social standing of the captain to that poverty in which we were living, I calmed down for any possibility for Cecilia Obersvode to be related with the lords of England. A lot of similar names exist in the world. But now I value my mother's peace so much, I would like to help her to avoid all kinds of excitement so much that even if I'm sure that they don't know one another, I would like my mother not only to avoid hearing his name, but also seeing him."

"You see, Henry, now your awakened love for your mother doesn't have to acquire a degenerated form, because any love which is accompanied with fear will turn into a nasty one without fail. What her fainting-fit means, what feelings within her your paper summoned, what she read between the lines of the advertisement – that doesn't have to touch you, if she didn't tell you anything about it. And you can express your real love, your real help for your mother only with your respectful silence about the pages of her life which you don't know. If you really love your mother, then the only lesson of your life, the only help for her – that's your absolute calm and belief in great honour of your mother. Wait for her arrival here as the greatest your and her joy. Wait for her by not wasting your time in vain for all sorts of hysterical attacks, but act in such a way as if you felt the shadow of your dearest friend and Teacher Ananda next to yourself."

"Not lord Benedict, but the greatest and kindest friend Florentian, how could I express it to you that only next to you I could clear up my mistakes till the end? And that's not all – perhaps I could clear them up in another place, but only in the atmosphere of your love I could find peace, obedience and love within myself, so that my self-confidence could grow in calm and harmony within myself. Such kindness, such power, such pure compassion is pouring out of you, in which no condemnation exists," Henry went on his knees by pressing himself to Florentian's hand.

"Stand up, Henry, stop thinking about my qualities, bring that into the activity of your day with what my living example attracts and convinces you. I've just told you that your mother would arrive here. Whether the captain will come with her and who he will become for you when he comes here, you will find out about that yourself. If you were reading my letter attentively, then I told you in it to protect your mother, because she's the guarantee of all your material wealth which you value so much. You didn't understand my words right, but soon you would understand them. Now go and find Alyssa, and continue the lessons with your students. Give a slight press on the nature science now by knowing that Nal will need physics very much. Go, forget about your business and think only about your future work by considering it to be the most important at this moment."

Henry came home and he was trying to quiet the sea of questions that was raging within him, but when he saw Alyssa he felt ashamed of her calm and deep look instantly, which as though was reading his inner disharmony...

As soon as Tendly drove into London, the calm country life in which he was living during those days ended instantly. Having said good-bye to Tendly, the captain brought Doria to the Henry's house and asked her indecisively, while standing before her.

"Would my visit be very untimely if I called at missis Obersvode together with you?"

"Lord Rettedly, I think that it could frighten her. Allow me to prepare her. If you leave your address for me, I will let you know how I am doing, as well as how and when we could meet."

Regardless of very decisive Doria's voice, apparently it was very difficult for the captain to believe in her rightness. Now lack of confidence now dissatisfaction in his indecision was flashing in his face.

"Lord Rettedly, you are worried that perhaps I won't be enough pleasant and tactful with your brother's widow. Of course, if I acted on my own," Doria gave a smile, "only according to my own understanding, then most likely I wouldn't be able to fulfil the assignment given to me, but I carry the lord Benedict's letter for her, besides I hold tight on that invisible bond which our great friend is pouring as a continuous thought about him into consciousness of those happy people to whom he gives his assignments. Therefore, you can be calm. I hold on his great hand with all my might and I act in such a way as though he was next to me. While your participation in the job given to me is limited with your help for me to travel from London to the country. If both of us don't want to violate the unconditional command of obedience by anything, then everyone of us has to fulfil our own part of the assignment as carefully and attentively as possible, but we shouldn't give in to our personal flights and impressions."

This conversation was taking part on the dirty and muddy stairs on which both companions were climbing up to the Henry's flat. Doria was cheerful, she was going upstairs easily, step by step, while the captain was gloomy and sad, he was seized with shivering of disgust and suffering.

"Just think! The unlucky woman was living in this poverty for long years only because of my brother's and my grandfather's biased beliefs and mistake, while I didn't suspect anything, I was living in vain and spending tens of thousands to no purpose," the captain was speaking with pain and bitterness. He stopped on the fifth floor's landing and lit up a cigar, because he wanted to protect himself and the lady from the buckets with rubbish, the smell of overbaked onions and other aromas characteristic to poverty.

"Lord Rettedly, you may behave as it seems necessary for you. I think that we are close to our goal already, but if you were really touched by heroic lady Obersvode's life, then you don't want to cause some extra heartache for her to accept you here."

"Everything what I want – that's to take her out of here immediately."

"You won't be able to do it by using only your own strength. If this matter was so simple, then it wouldn't have been necessary for lord Benedict to meddle in it. Believe me, his power will make that improvement which nobody could make during the entire lady Cecilia's life. I will let you know about everything. Besides, I will certainly spend the night at the lord Benedict's house in the city, and if you want to find out about this day very much, then you can visit me there at eleven o'clock, and I will tell you everything."

Having parted with her companion, Doria knocked at the door. The woman with the white hood, whom we know already, opened the door to her instantly. Doria was dazzled with her beauty and her

big blue eyes, she became so embarrassed that she was only looking at her in silence. The hostess of the house gave a charming smile and uttered in a pleasant and melodious voice.

“Lady, you must have lost your way, because the same flat’s number as mine is also in the house from the street side, and sometimes people mix the number and come to me. You have to go downstairs and turn round the corner.”

Doria came to her senses and she was listening to Alyssa’s voice with amazement – it was the same young and soft.

“No, I think that I’ve come to the right place. You are lady Cecilia Obersvode, right?”

Having heard her right, surprised answer, Doria continued.

“I’ve brought a letter for you and I was ordered to tell you that you should remember the words once uttered to you by Ananda’s uncle when Henry was ill in Vienna. That man whom you call the Great Hand is sending this letter to you.”

The tiny woman who was standing before Doria became embarrassed and she extended her hand timidly to take the letter.

“Please come in,” she uttered by not looking at the letter and opening the door to the Henry’s room where the sunbeams were playing joyfully, and like everybody else, Doria was also surprised by the room’s cleanness. Cecilia seated Doria on the armchair by the table, the mahogany of which and inlays made of pearl and tortoise were telling clearly about the better times, she sat down on another end of the table and took the letter out of the pocket of her bright white apron.

Her first look at the letter made her give a cry, lean back on the armchair’s back with completely pale face and throw the letter from her hands. Doria got next to her in a flash, lifted the letter, gave her some sniffing salt to sniff and rubbed the liquid received from Florentian onto her temples and back of her head. He had warned Doria that the letter might cause the great excitement for Henry’s mother. Lady Obersvode moved in several minutes and gave a deep sigh. Doria wanted to make it easier for her, she took the hood off her head, which in her opinion, only burdened her head. She was very surprised when two very thick plaits slipped out from the hood, which preserved the wonderful ash-colour. Her pale face with her closed eyes and without the hood seemed for her to be absolutely young, even if the halo of her grey hair girded it.

Having prepared the medicine which Florentian also gave to her, Doria rubbed her temples, back of her head, her forehead again and she started waiting for the moment when she could give the medicine for her to drink. She didn’t have to wait for a long time. Lady Obersvode opened her eyes and she was forced to swallow the medicine which Doria gave quickly to her. Having thrown her plaits on her back, Henry’s mother opened the letter quickly, with the strong hand already. The following was written on the letter: “For lady Cecilia Richard Rettedly, baroness Obersvode, from Florentian.”

*In this moment when you are reading this letter, your dear brother and friend of your youth, who was searching for you during his entire life and left the earth sad, isn’t among the living anymore.*

Her moan interrupted her reading of the letter shortly, but when Doria came to her, her silent and strong voice answered her.

“Don’t worry, I’ve recovered already. That was only the spasm of my heart, but if it didn’t finish me off, then I will look at everything calmly now.”

And lady Obersvode continued reading the letter.

*Your life that you’ve spent in an absolute solitude isn’t yet finished at all. Your brother whom you imagined to be a famous singer or scientist, unfortunately was pastor, in spite of all his wants and talents. But he had a calling for scientist and he achieved a great deal in his favourite field. He left his daughter who needs you very much. I say “daughter”, although the pastor had two of them, but why now I’m not talking about his second daughter I will tell you personally. The pastor left the capital for you. You can receive it only through me, because I have the testament’s original.*

*Don’t think only about yourself and your passed by life in hiding. Now live for your son and for your brother’s daughter whose lives you can make easier. I sent my friend Doria to you as my messenger. I’ve explained everything to her, how she should dress you and take you to me, to the country where your new duties from your love for your brother are waiting for you, whom you left so cruelly and before whom you need to justify yourself not with your tears and regrets, but with your activity and new work for his daughter and for your son. I have to tell you so much, to explain even more to you, and it is impossible to tell it in the letter.*

*Agree to accept the youngest brother of your husband, the captain James Rettedly whom you don’t know. Meet him as your friend and brother, and don’t put that big insult on the absolutely innocent man, which your father-in-law and his family caused for you. He will help you to come to my country-side, while Doria will take care of your clothes. Confide in her, don’t waste your energy for your thoughts of little value, think about the essence, about your big debt for your brother whom you left so cruelly and so fast, who adored you so much. Now you need to make up your mind and sincerely give all love that your brother didn’t receive for his daughter, and to bring up her first-born. Come here as soon as possible with all your courage that is characteristic to you.*

Having read the letter, lady Richard Rettedly covered her eyes with her little hand which was working a lot, but which was still beautiful. Doria didn’t interrupt her silence by taking compassion from the bottom of her heart on that pain that was felt in the whole woman’s body. Lady Cecilia stood up, wound her plaits round her head and wanted to put the hood back on her head.

“Lady Cecilia, lord Benedict, as of course you will want to call him officially, who is writing to you in Florentian’s name, asked me personally to give his request to you not to put the hood on your head anymore, but to change all your toilet and to come to the country-side at his place, as it is suited for lady Richard Rettedly. Allow me to take care of everything what you will need. By sending me, lord Benedict was certain that I would be able to do everything as needed. I will bring everything for you today, including the stockings and the shoes, while tomorrow at ten o’clock in the morning I will call in at your place with lord James Rettedly, and we’ll go to the country immediately.”

“Let it be as lord Florentian wishes. It didn’t even occur to me to look at everything in such a way as he is writing; but if he’s right – and he cannot be wrong – I have to understand that I’ve committed a crime before my brother. Act as you are ordered to, I won’t cause any trouble for you.”

“If I dared to ask you, lady Rettedly, please call me simply Doria, like the whole lord Benedict’s family does, as well as your brother’s daughter. If I was a prattler, then I would pour you with

the praises about your and her beauty. I refrain from this defect, I leave you with some business to do and soon I will come back, because the captain was so kind that he left his carriage for me.”

Doria left, while lady Cecilia sat down on her armchair again and started reading the letter that excited her so much for the second time.

When Doria and the captain left the country, mister Tendly was mostly excited with the task entrusted to him. He visited his home and found out instantly that the letters were waiting for him for more than two weeks already. They were travelling from the office to his home, from his home to the office and then back again by crossing each other every time. Finally, his uncle ordered to leave them in the youth's apartment and not to send them to the office anymore. The servant threw them into a special mail-box, the key of which the host himself was carrying. As soon as the servant threw them there, the pastor's wife presented herself by demanding him persistently to let her at mister Tendly's. The servant's persuasions that mister Tendly was in the country didn't help. The pastor's wife demanded to give the letters back to her, she was shouting that the host was hiding at home and she broke into the rooms like a bomb. The servant together with the cook managed to persuade the enraged lady that the host really wasn't in London.

“Give me his letters. We've written so many times to him, while he didn't even respond to us,” the pastor's wife was crying.

“They used to bring the letters here from the office, I used to send them back by thinking that the host would receive them faster there. The messenger was carrying them forwards and backwards and every time he used to miss the host a little. Today His Highest Excellency uncle lord lawyer ordered to leave the letters at his home, so I threw them into the mail-box.”

“What lord? Is he really lord?”

“Yes, he is really lord, and when he dies, then everything – both the money and the title – will pass on to our host, and it is finished with the letters, I threw them into the mail-box.”

“What do you mean you threw them? Did you throw them into the rubbish-heap?” the pastor's wife got furious.

“What rubbish-heap? I told you that I threw them into the mail-box.”

It is unclear how this dialogue would have ended if the cook hadn't seen sense to show her the locked mail-box that was nailed to the wall. To all pastor wife's demands to give the key to her, the indignant servant threatened her with the constable if the lady lingered here for any longer.

The servant was telling everything to her by demonstrating his indignation and his insulted dignity in such a funny way that Tendly who wasn't in a cheerful mood at all was dying with laughter. Having dismissed the servant, he took the whole batch of letters out of the mail-box, among which were several ones written by Jenny's hand. Tendly read them and gave a deep sigh. Not so long ago he would have been happy to hold such Jenny's letters in his hands! But now he saw and perceived them as the writings of treason, falsehood and unfaithfulness. Tendly didn't have time to be sad, he needed to hurry with the lord Benedict's assignment, because he knew perfectly his uncle's passionate attachment to the lord, as well as his passionate character and punctuality. Having come dashing to the office and given the lord Benedict's letter to his uncle, Tendly together with his uncle were discussing the legal side of the testament for a long time. Having drawn up a statement and written an official report to the pastor's wife and Jenny, the lawyer sent his nephew to the pastor's house.

While waiting for Tendly for so long, Jenny's moods were changing one after another, but all of them were similar to the indications of the seismograph. It was unbearably difficult for the girl to admit her mistakes, all her troubles and misfortunes; she was more inclined to shift them on her mother. The pastor's wife tolerated all her daughter's whims and accusations, she was persuading her that nothing was lost yet in her career and life; that she received a letter from Constantinople from one of her old friends with whom the pastor forbade her to communicate by threatening her to divorce instantly, while now this friend sent two very rich youths to London for her. She found out very good news from this letter. It was written there that if she wanted to do one little keen-witted business, then she could make a fortune for her entire life. Also there was a hint in the letter that the youths weren't married yet, while she had two unmarried daughters. The pastor's wife was persuading Jenny not to ruin her beauty, to have a good time, to smarten up and to wait for the youths.

Tendly disturbed namely this conversation by showing up. The housemaid let him in and she didn't even tire herself to report about him. "Good Lord!", Tendly cried in his heart, but he didn't show his inner shock by anything. Both ladies were lying on the sofas with not the cleanest robes, dishevelled, most likely unkempt from the morning, and every one of them still had the plate with remains of their meal.

The pastor's wife reacted to the especially polite and official Tendly's greeting faster than Jenny. She jumped up from the sofa and began to explain to the youth that Jenny was ill, that she was going through Alyssa's absence and her father's death with much difficulty, and especially because she insulted him, Tendly, in the hour of her pain. Saved by her mother, Jenny made an unhappy face, wrapped herself up in a shawl and asked in a broken voice whether Tendly received her letter.

"Miss Wodsword, I received all six of your letters at once, so I don't know about which one of them you are talking now."

The pastor's wife already wanted to slip out of the room, but Tendly stopped her by telling her that the business with which he had come here was connected with both of them and it couldn't be delayed.

"Well, Jenny, didn't I tell you that it would be exactly like this, that mister Tendly would begin to speak to you exactly in these words," the pastor's wife interrupted the youth by sitting down on the armchair next to Jenny's sofa.

Jenny extended her hand to mister Tendly and invited him to sit down closer to her by explaining to him that now she couldn't hear well because of her splitting headache. Having squeezed her extended hand to him, but not lifted it to his lips as Jenny was hoping, Tendly sat down in the place showed to him and continued in the same official voice like in the beginning.

"Now I've come to you as the of two instances. The first one – that's my uncle lawyer who asks me to give this report to you, lady Katherine, which tells that the interests of the capital left by your husband to his sister Cecilia, which you demand cannot be paid to you."

"What do you mean the interests cannot be paid?" very excited Jenny and the pastor's wife gave a shout in one voice.

"An obstacle showed up, which hinders to pay it to you, because the pastor's sister, lady Cecilia, claimed her rights to it."

"The pastor's sister? But that's the myth with which he was threatening me when I demanded him not to pretend to be a poor person, but to live according to his income. Such woman never existed, nobody in the whole family had ever uttered her name, except my oddity husband."



"This capital never belonged to the pastor. It was transferred to him from lady Cecilia husband's family, from the lords Rettedly, barons Oversvodes. Both of you will find out from the testament that this capital has to be transferred at the lord Benedict's disposal in ten years, which he will use for charity at his own discretion."

The pastor's wife interrupted Tendly again by trying to prove to him that her husband wasn't completely normal, that she didn't believe in lord Benedict at all, that it wasn't difficult at all to find somebody instead of the pastor's sister, but also an innate resemblance was needed for that.

"We'll go to law! I'm sick of it!" she finished by being at the limit of her fury already. "To take the girl from me, to take the money from me and to imagine that he could rob people without being punished – your lord Benedict has assembled a band of crooks around him..."

"Dear madam," Tendly interrupted her sharply. "My uncle whom you insulted once already, whom your daughter insulted twice, and myself have the honour to be lord Benedict's friends and his devoted servants. I don't recommend you to insult our much respectable person in my presence. Either you will behave as cultured and educated people do, or I will leave and I will never talk about business with you again."

"Mother, please calm down, and most importantly, sit down, you irritate my nerves," Jenny uttered capriciously. "Mister Tendly, forgive us. You cannot even imagine how and how much we suffer without Alyssa and because of her and our father's fancies. Please explain to me what and how we should do now. Our aunt cannot show up now by a miracle, whom my father was searching for during his entire life, right?"

"Miss Jenny, not only your aunt, but also your cousin showed up."

"We'll go to law without fail!" the pastor's wife gave a shout again.

"You'll only harm yourselves with the law, because you don't have the smallest basis to dispute the pastor's will and his testament. He put everything into juridical shape very correctly. Here, let me hand this report from my uncle to you. You are invited to come to the office of your district court of justice where all the lawyers will be present, lord Benedict, Cecilia Richard Rettedly, baroness Obersvode, her son Henry Rettedly, baron Obersvode, your daughter Alyssa and many other witnesses, among them also Richard Rettedly's brother, captain James Rettedly, and we'll find out where the capital for the proprietress will be transferred."

"We'll still have to see it! You can transfer the capital only when nobody objects against it!" the pastor's wife was raging.

"I've already told you that the law won't be in your favour, and you'll have to pay all very big law expenses yourselves."

"I don't have any basis to believe in your guesswork. You aren't pythonesse and your pleasant clairvoyance still might turn out to be erroneous. You can be certain together with your honourable uncles, aunts and lords, with all your mouthpieces of honour that my no less influential friends are already coming from Constantinople to help me. So tell exactly this to your master whom you respect and to whom you listen so much."

"And you, Jenny, do you assent to your mother's opinion and convictions concerning this business?"

Jenny, having understood how she had missed again by thinking that Tendly came here to ask for her hand, now already hated him once and for all, she threw off the mask of sick cat instantly, stood before the youth at full length and shouted stingingly.

"I'm certain not only for this business, I go even further. I'm sure that we'll succeed to punish all this company of "personages" who hunt for babies, deceive their short-sighted parents and grow rich at the expense of innocent people. Finally, we will drag them into the day light, and most likely such diligent servant like you will be among them as well."

While Jenny was popping this tirade, she looked unusually ugly. Red spots appeared on her usually pale face, her mouth was distorted, her eyes were flashing. It flashed through Henry's mind that some time she might lose her mind. Having heard out this "pleasant" retort, Tendly bowed and told Jenny.

"I asked you about it only because I had to give the lord Benedict's letter to you, but only under the condition – if you had had another opinion than your mother, and then perhaps you could have come to the country at the lord Benedict's house with me; since you and your mother are like-minded, I won't give the letter to you. I have the honour to say good-bye to you."

Tendly wanted to leave the room, but Jenny appeared by the door faster than him, leant her back against it and she was wheezing out with anger always with the same ugly expression.

"The letter is document. I won't let you leave until you give it to me. You are talking about some conditions – I spit upon them – tut! The letter! Otherwise, you'll be sitting here like this with us."

Even the pastor's wife was trying to persuade her daughter to come to her senses, but Jenny had already lost any self-control, any sound perception of the situation. However composed Tendly was, but even he got confused in the first moment and he was standing before the girl silent, absolutely not understanding what he had to do. A strained silence was hanging for several minutes, while Tendly was calling for his admiral with all might of his thoughts by asking him for help, not knowing what he had to do. All of a sudden, something absolutely unexpected happened to Jenny. As though she cowered, covered her face with her hands and cried with horror.

"No, no, lord Benedict, I was only joking, I let your messenger go immediately, only please don't come here and look at me so strictly."

Stunned Tendly and the pastor's wife were looking round by not understanding whom Jenny was talking to, because there was nobody in the room except themselves. Jenny hung her hands, and Tendly saw the face of a really sick person before himself. It seemed that during that moment Jenny experienced such horror from which she became old and lean noticeably. The pastor's wife dashed at Jenny, but she pushed her away as though with gesture of loathing or disappointment and went to the sofa by being hardly able to drag her legs along. The girl fell down on the sofa by moaning, and now Tendly didn't doubt Jenny's illness anymore. He was already prepared to offer his services for her and run for a doctor by thinking that Jenny had fever when he heard her words.

"Please, mister Tendly, leave. I cannot bear your presence anymore. It seems to me that lord Benedict's head with his terrible eyes is above your head. Please, leave as soon as possible, only don't forget that terrible second floor of your head."

Completely weak Jenny's voice could hardly be heard. Surprised Tendly was listening to her delirium and he looked at the pastor's wife imperceptibly by wishing to hear her advice – whether he had to listen to Jenny or to run for a doctor, - because he thought that Jenny was going mad. The pastor wife's

look stunned him no less than Jenny herself. She set up her bristles like a cat, she was ready to attack Tendly and at the same time she couldn't move, as though she was stuck to the floor.

"Leave at last, I beg you. Hurry, I suffocate," Jenny's voice was heard again. Strongly oppressed by these experiences, Tendly left the pastor's house by being unable to calm his thoughts in any way. It was very difficult for the poor Tendly. In his memory he searched for everybody whom he could visit now. He could come to Doria and he would have found some peace next to her, but Doria was lost in her assignments, and he didn't dare to burden her with himself, too. He could have found the captain who allowed him to disturb him at any time, but Tendly knew that the captain met his fiancée, and he absolutely didn't want to spoil his diametrically opposite mood. "Help yourself," Tendly thought, but since he didn't want to see anybody from the strangers and he couldn't show up to his quick-tempered uncle so confused, he remembered that Arthur had to come to plant flowers in the grave of his master and friend. "This is the most suitable place and company for airing my brain and regaining my balance," Tendly decided, changed the direction and his step, and felt to be the captain of his admiral. He turned towards the pastor's grave.

Having left Doria on the staircase by the door of Henry's flat and told the coachman to serve her till the evening, the captain went home with the first cab. Here he found his very excited mother and sister, because the telegram in his name came yesterday in the evening, announcing that his fiancée and her parents were coming at three o'clock to London, while the captain wasn't at home for several days already. Both women attacked him and gave him a scolding in a reserved tone that he had to warn them in advance; that they had to prepare at home for meeting his future wife; that the groom had to sit and wait for the announcement and not disappear like a schoolboy who has broken away to freedom.

All of it was filled up with the smiles and tender grimaces, although the captain knew what it was worthy of for a long time. Having wrinkled his forehead, he asked them with the astonishment in his voice what their home and arrival of his fiancée and her parents had in common. Then he told them that there was still a lot of time left till three o'clock and he wanted to go to his room, but his mother stopped him. After some vague opening remarks lady Rettedly expressed her desire to take care of her daughter-in-law and her parents in the high society of London herself where the newcomers – she uttered this word with some contempt – might harm themselves and even the opinion of the society about all Rettedlies. The captain gave a joyful laugh by imagining the proud couple of the counts R. watched over by his mother who was kind, but intolerable and rather tactless woman.

"Mother, you don't have any idea about the Russian dukes and counts. The Russians are in a general way very original and independent people. Their characters and perception don't have our caste narrowness, and if they consider themselves to be aristocrats in their own country, then they absolutely don't care about the strange society's opinion about themselves. Both the count and the countess are very cultured and educated persons. Their interests round is very broad, so if anybody had to brace up, then only you and my sister have to do that, so that you wouldn't get into an unpleasant situation and could answer their questions and keep a conversation with them. Besides, the count and the countess R. have many friends among the highest aristocracy where both of you aren't introduced up to now and which you were dreaming of during your entire life; while my fiancée is a personality of genius, rewarded with musical talents and, like all talents, she possesses a stubborn character. I don't advise you to bother her with your advices and protection if you want to get on with her and her parents at least during that short period when they will be here.

The captain was talking very calmly and politely, but his tone was completely new for his mother. He used to be very compliant to his relatives during all his previous short and rare visits to London, he never asked them how they were spending his money, and his mother and sister got used not to limit their expenses. This time the captain ordered his banker to cut down the unlimited expenses of his family.

He announced to his mother that they had to live from their own and his father's and grandfather's inherited capitals. Both ladies were wasting their son's and brother's capital by raising the interests of their own ones.

"My son, I don't understand you. Of course, you will marry and your needs will grow, but anyway why do both of you need such a heap of money?"

"Mother, I think that both of us need no less money than both of you do. And you managed to spend that heap of money till the last pound during this winter. If I hadn't had a reserve capital, then I would have showed up well before my wedding! My banker warned me a long time ago that you were gambling and you've even involved my sister into this temptation. But I don't understand why you don't stop when you see that you've already spent all the interests and you want to touch my capital! Live from your own capitals, and if such is your will and hobby, then thrust them into the swindlers' pockets, but my money earned honestly by my grandfather, my father and myself don't exist for you anymore."

"But you know that Rebecca is unmarried yet, that she's considered to be one of the most excellent brides, and her entire capital must be left for her dowry."

"Rebecca will soon be thirty-five and she will hardly ever marry somebody. She needed to choose less and have a better character, then she could still have expected her marriage. Now, whatever your objections and dissatisfaction would be, both of you know my orders, and we won't be talking about it anymore. I'm very happy that I succeeded to keep my brother's capital untouched, although both of you were demanding it so persistently."

"You remind me very much of your grandmother with her yellow eyes. Her way of thinking was always phantasmagorical, too. You still imagine that the missing Richard's wife will show up," his angry mother was mocking at him.

"Everything is possible, and most importantly, you knew perfectly that my brother Richard was married, that his wife was pregnant, but you said to my father and my grandfather that Richard had to do with the girl. You knew that she was from a good family, didn't you? I was still too little, so that I could understand something in this story, but now I think that you yourself are afraid of something here, you slandered, insulted and expelled your son's wife after his sudden death when she came to you."

Lady Rettedly wanted to object him, but the captain said good-bye to her by telling her that he had to prepare for meeting with his fiancée and he left the room.

"How do you like it? As though our James was changed," mother addressed her daughter who heard this entire conversation.

"This is horrible, we possessed the warrant, we could take the whole capital."

"What do you understand! The capital, the capital! That is just the point that I didn't have the warrant for the capital, while that trickster banker used to give me only a half of the interest by stating that he transferred the rest to James to Constantinople. I don't understand why does he need so much money?"

"Only this is clear to me that your plan didn't work out. You wanted to take James' fiancée to your own tailors and at the same time to renew our own clothes with one bill. Now how are we going to appear in the fashionable society with our old clothes? Mother, you started gambling so incautiously that you lost thousands during one evening."

"Aren't you going to moralize me?"

One word after another and the war blazed up between both charming ladies. When the captain was leaving home in an hour he could still hear the reproaches between themselves, uttered in a raised tone.

“And where were my eyes? Why was I thinking earlier that my mother and my sister were the most wonderful women?” the captain was thinking sadly by getting into the carriage to the port.

Being excited for his upcoming meeting with Lisa whom he loved with the purest love with his entire essence, tormenting himself for the sad Cecilia's and Henry's fate, having changed after his meeting with Ananda and I. and come to life again next to Florentian, now the captain remembered his precepts about creation of his family. His thoughts turned to Florentian. It became easier in his heart. Having remembered that Monday, when he would take Lisa to him, was not far away, he became absolutely cheerful and rolled into the quay with the smile. The steamer was coming nearer already, and the captain didn't have any time to concentrate his thoughts, because a lot of his acquaintances were here, and their questions and congratulations with such unexpected marriage with the Russian were simply pouring on him from all sides.

First of all, the captain saw Lisa who was standing on the edge of the deck, her pale and gaunt face. The girl didn't see him instantly in the crowd, and her sad eyes were sliding along the shore indifferently. The captain raised his hand with the bouquet of red roses and waved above his head several times. Lisa noticed this movement of his instantly, gave a smile, her eyes lit up, and her face took the same charm as in those moments when she used to get ready for playing. Her parents were standing behind Lisa, who also noticed the captain and they were sending their smiles and greeting to him. With the Parisian clothes all of them seemed to be changed to the better side for the captain. For the first time he felt impatience, and it seemed to him that the bridge of the steamer was being extended for a very long time. Having taken advantage of his rank, before letting everybody land, the captain was already standing next to Lisa. He was looking at his fiancée joyfully, and while lifting her slender, long, little fingers to his lips, he remembered Florentian's words which he told him about his future wife. Having controlled himself with difficulty, he was greeting his future parents-in-law by hardly having time to answer their questions, while Lisa was standing arm-in-arm with her fiancé by holding his flowers in her free hand and looking at him with her shining eyes.

Having taken all of them to the hotel, the captain explained to them that he ordered early dinner, because he wanted to show London to them after dinner, which his fiancée hadn't seen at all, while her parents had seen it a very long time ago. The captain was oppressed by the fact that he couldn't speak to Lisa face to face. By feeling his new spiritual state, he wanted to open at least a part of his inner world to his fiancée, because he didn't doubt that her spirit would respond to it; he wanted to tell her about Florentian, about his invitation for breakfast on Monday. Sincere and cheerful parents loved their daughter so much that in their hearts they couldn't feel any difference between their daughter and their future son-in-law anymore. Even by being cultured, they didn't comprehend that the epochs of their own and the captain's and Lisa's were different, that parents and their children could live in harmony only when the parents were living a full-blooded life and when they weren't trying to fill the gaps of their own interests with their children's lives.

Nevertheless, the captain told his fiancée that tomorrow at two o'clock he would drop in to take her, because first of all he wanted to show their future dwelling to her alone. Then they will come back, take her parents and visit his mother and sister, and then once again, with their parents already, they will go to that small villa which the captain has prepared specially for his wife and himself. Lisa's parents weren't very pleased with such project, they were accustomed to always stay together while travelling, but anyway they felt that they would have to get used to stay without their daughter.

When everybody saw London, the captain took the counts R. to the hotel again and, to everybody's amazement, he said good-bye to them. He whispered to Lisa that tomorrow he would explain much more to her. The captain's look was so serious and loving, the kiss of her hand was so passionate and sincere that Lisa saw him off calmly by radiating with her joyous smile, and she went to her room immediately by telling her parents that she had a headache. Actually, she had a thick captain's letter under her shawl, which he was writing for the girl every day like a diary when he was on a visit to the lord Benedict's home. He also put a little note of his tender love there by asking her to read his words with an especial attention, because without going deep into them she wouldn't understand many things from his story with which he only would prolong the contents of the diary. He described the Florentian's family in the letter, as well as the most important events in Constantinople, except his vision.

Having left Lisa, the captain went to Doria in the lord Benedict's home. Here everything was already prepared for the host's return. The captain was surprised by the unusual furnishing of the house, an absolutely new harmony for him, by cosiness and an especially subtle beauty. Doria whom he used to see only in passing up to now and to whom he hadn't directed a lot of his attention, surprised him no less than the house itself. For the first time he saw that Doria was very beautiful. He also was surprised by her objectivity with which she was telling him in detail about lady Cecilia by adding that lady Rettedly herself decided to go to the country-side tomorrow with the first train at seven o'clock in the morning, and if it was inconvenient for the captain, then they could do without him. The captain smiled, reminded Doria of her own words about everybody's duty by fulfilling the lord Benedict's assignment, and added that he had already settled his business in such a way that his entire morning was free and that he would accompany them till the very stop in the country, take them aboard of the carriage and come back to London with the returning train.

Having agreed that he would be waiting for Doria at six o'clock in the morning by the lady Cecilia's staircase, the captain was ready to leave, but before doing so, the servant gave several letters to Doria. Having examined them, she extended one of them for the captain. There was a note on it: "Please read it immediately." The letter was from Florentian, and he was writing.

*My friend. Please don't hurry to disappoint your future relatives, the count and the countess R., with the announcement of your soon departure to America. Allow them to accustom to their thoughts about their daughter's life by creating her family where they won't have any preference which they are accustomed to. And if you believe me till the end, allow me to prepare them for their return to Russia which I think I can do really free of pain both for you and them.*

*In order for you to remain rather tactful before Lisa's parents, hand this invitation included here to them to visit me on Monday together with their daughter. Please don't be disappointed, because most likely the countess will still feel unwell after their journey to Paris which has tired her too much, the count won't leave her alone, although he will desire to go with you very much, - and both you and your future wife will have the possibility to come to our place.*

*In order for you not to become an obstacle between your wife and her relatives, and at the same time for you to live your full-blooded, free life, you and your future wife need to concentrate your whole tact and ability to adapt yourselves to the circumstances. Don't try to fence yourself off somebody's pressure, but with your own and your wife's love for freedom rise above all of it. Don't discuss the question how to avoid somebody's intimate meddling into your and your wife's life, but be so united between yourselves before everybody, so that it wouldn't occur to anybody to reason about your relationship.*

*Leave lady Cecilia to me. When, where and how I will need your help – I will call you. Don't tell anybody a single word about Florentian, like the man of your dreams. This is the precept of silence.*

Having read the letter, the captain told Doria that there wouldn't be any answer, and he confirmed that he would be waiting for her by the lady Rettedly's house.

When the captain came back home he was reading the Florentian's letter again and again. He remembered his entire conversation with him in the country once again and he went to bed a little bit worried whether he hadn't told Lisa too much in his letter.

## Chapter 13

### Lady Cecilia Rettedly in the country at the lord Benedict's

As they had agreed in the evening, at six o'clock in the morning Doria and the captain met by the lady Cecilia's staircase. They greeted one another and went upstairs in silence. The higher the captain was climbing the more he feared. According to the whole appearance of the house and those people whom they passed on the stairs, by seeing their shabby and dirty clothes, the captain expected to see the similar view in the house of Henry's mother, too, but he calmed himself that he was going to visit his brother's widow, the woman whom his entire family and his own mother hurt and insulted so undeservedly.

Such great compassion was accumulating in his heart that he was prepared to accept his brother's widow, no matter how she would look like. The captain was trying to be calm, he knew his duty in this moment and he wanted to fulfil it, but somebody was forcing his hands to tremble against his will. He was thinking about this woman's life full of her heroic efforts and he was prepared to see a wreck who was physically and spiritually exhausted. In her turn, Doria, although she was certain that such brave women like lady Cecilia didn't have any hysteric fits, she was feared whether her fainting-fit and her heart's spasm wouldn't repeat.

The light steps were heard after Doria gave a tender knock, and the captain and his lady were rather surprised. Lady Cecilia was standing before them completely prepared for the trip, she was wearing an elegant silk costume with a small, charming black hat, a handbag and a shawl in her hands. Doria was simply nailed to the threshold by the grace of her figure that up to now was hidden by her old dress and apron, by her beautifully combed hair and by the manner of her still unseen carriage. Now lady Cecilia looked younger and taller, and she reminded of Alyssa so much that even those who would have seen them for the first time couldn't help but call them sisters.

The captain who was prepared to see the sumptuous, but clumsily put on clothes which were unable to hide the widow's poverty and the rest of vulgarity, was so stunned that he was ashamed of his careful and pliable thoughts with which he was going upstairs. Seeing that her guests didn't come in, lady Cecilia opened the door widely till the end, smiled and told them.

"Please, come in. I will prepare a light breakfast for you, it won't take more than five minutes. We'll be in time to catch the train, everything is ready."

Stunned and confused Doria and the captain greeted the hostess who didn't allow them to utter a single word. She seated them at the little table, covered with the bright white tablecloth. As if with the help of some magic, the hot chocolate and the pudding shot up before each one of them.

"My God, lady Cecilia, I ate such wonderful pudding like yours only at home, in my childhood."

"Perhaps, this isn't the only recollection from your childhood which you will find here, lord James. If you pay attention to your cup, then you will recognize it. My husband highly appreciated it and he used to say that it was your present."

The captain lifted the cup carefully and recognized his present for his elder brother instantly, which he gave to him on the occasion of one of his birthdays. His heart was breaking, thousands of memories flashed and he looked at his relative attentively again. Undoubtedly, she was a beauty. There



wasn't a single wrinkle on her not young, pale face, only her skin was more yellowish than usually by reminding of the colour of a light sun-tan or ivory. Doria saw how the captain's face changed, how his lips began to tremble. She feared whether lady Cecilia would sustain such great excitement, so she started hurrying the captain by stating that they might miss the train.

They were already sitting in the carriage in several minutes and soon on the train, too. Every one of them felt so much that all of them were more inclined to talk insignificantly, they were explaining the stops for lady Cecilia, telling her about the lord Benedict's family and about those people whom she would meet at his house.

When they came successfully to the place, the captain seated both ladies in the lord Benedict's calash, checked their belongings and, having said sincere good-bye to them, he came back to London at one o'clock as he expected.

Lady Cecilia separated with Doria in the evening and she didn't want to try on a single dress or costume at her presence by telling her that she would choose something suitable for the journey and fix them if needed. She would take the rest of the clothes to the country and, with the Doria's help, she would adjust them to her figure there. Doria didn't argue with her, because she didn't want to waste lady Cecilia's strength in vain, which, as she anticipated, she would need for her future tests. Having seen lady Cecilia dressed so artistically and exactly in such a way as she imagined her first appearance in the country, Doria was satisfied and she calmed down by perceiving in this the real feature of great self-control.

Now, having left the city for the first time, boarded the calash for the first time after twenty-five years, lady Cecilia was thinking about the whim of destiny that has taken her out of her solitude and out of the cage of her work in which she considered herself to be buried for ever. She was always thinking about the same, always about those words from the lord Benedict's letter, about her guilt before her brother, before beloved and tender man whom she made even more unhappy by taking her care and love from him. Now she was concentrating her entire will, love and hopes for her niece by wishing to give that to her and her future children what she had taken away from her adored brother.

Lady Cecilia wasn't thinking of what people had taken from her. She didn't feel a person celebrating her name-day whom life rewarded for her merits. She was thinking only about Alyssa, about that new life for which she could be useful. Lady Cecilia stopped worrying about Henry from the very moment when he left for lord Benedict. She wasn't thinking much about the meeting with the captain James who remained as a teenager in her memory, about her past, about the wrongs and heartaches experienced by the family of her husband. She forgave everything for everybody, but she couldn't forgive herself for the extra suffering which she had caused for her brother. While being occupied by this thought, lady Cecilia was craving to see Alyssa as soon as possible and to realize the energy of her love.

The nearer they were coming to the lord Benedict's house, the more excited lady Cecilia was. Now her thoughts turned towards her son. However friendly mother and her son drew closer to one another during the last days, anyway there were still some wounds left from their previous relations within the aching mother's heart. Now, not knowing that Henry didn't have any idea about his kinship with Alyssa and the captain, that her arrival would be unexpected for Henry, she fell to thinking how her son would accept her new appearance and how his irritated nerves would endure her appearance with him in the high society. She wasn't destined to solve this question, because as soon as the carriage turned into the lane of the park, a youth and a girl were walking before it, by talking joyfully, and apparently, they really didn't expect to see the calash. All of a sudden, a cry was heard like a shot: "Mother!" and sooner than lady Cecilia had time to comprehend something, her son embraced her already when he jumped on the footstep of the calash from her side.

Doria stopped the carriage by letting Henry whose eyes were wet have her seat and allowing son and his mother to come to the house together where she could see the tall Florentian's figure already. When the carriage stopped, nobody was faster than the host to open its door. Having given his hand to the guest and helped her to get out of the calash, the host accompanied her to the terrace where the covered table was waiting for them already. Having seated completely pale lady Cecilia on the sofa, lord Benedict extended a small box to her by offering her to eat a sweet that would revive her after the long journey.

Lady Cecilia obeyed him, took off her glove and looked at his elegant hand that was holding the opened box before her. Her eyes rose up and they were lost in the sea of tenderness which was pouring from the host's eyes.

"Courage, lady Cecilia, I assure you that everything in your and your relatives' lives is better than it could be, although I've frightened you with your guilt before the pastor."

Lady Cecilia felt stronger and better instantly among the luxury and the space which she hadn't seen for ten years, and she answered him with her musical voice.

"Lord Benedict, such great and well-wishing hand as yours cannot frighten anybody. Man may be unprepared to hear the news which it gives to him, or he may be too low in order to understand its given wisdom and his salvation, but he may not be frightened if he's able to see light."

As soon as she had time to utter these words, Doria and Alyssa appeared on the stairs.

"What is it? Am I sleeping? Perhaps, my imagination shows a mirage to me of what I will become in ten years?" Alyssa was speaking silently, standing on the stair with her hand covering her eyes. "Lord Benedict, I'm simply afraid of opening my eyes. Most likely, I have a temperature, and that what I can see is a hallucination."

"Calm down, my friend, now you aren't going to fall ill so easily after your long illness," Florentian gave a laugh. "Open your eyes and take a good look at your father's sister, at that beloved sister Cecilia of his whom he was searching for until his very death, but whom he didn't find. Now she is in front of you, and if somebody appeared and didn't want to recognize her, then the resemblance of kinship with you is more than all negations."

Even with the whole courage characteristic to her, Alyssa didn't have any strength to make a move – she was so much stunned. Lady Cecilia and Henry who was no less surprised than Alyssa considered her silence and numbness as her unwillingness to recognize her as her relative.

"Mother, dear, don't be upset! If Alyssa doesn't want to recognize you, I will love you and care for you so much that you will forget how she pushed you away now."

"Are you out of your senses, Henry?!" Alyssa gave a shout by rushing at lady Cecilia. "Aunt, aunt and one more time aunt, desirable aunt from the bottom of my heart! If my father was searching for you and didn't find you, then that one about whom he was talking like about the only one happy meeting of his life, lord Benedict managed to find not for dramas and pain, but for our love and happiness. My father, my adored father was always hoping to give his love to you, to repay you for your suffering which he was always thinking about. He didn't have time to do it, but here, this house, the house of his rebirth, happiness and death will give you back not only your niece, but also your grandchildren, friends and the strength to live in happiness. Aunt, don't cry, I cannot look at it. Embrace me by accepting all love with which my father loved you in my person."

Having calmed down sobbing lady Cecilia, Alyssa and Henry accompanied her to the room prepared for her. Poor woman's organism, tired by never-ending work during her entire life, became

completely exhausted towards the evening from so many people, events and complexity of all those new affairs befallen on her, although the lord Benedict's herbs helped her a lot.

On the next morning Alyssa was the first who knocked at lady Cecilia's door. Her face which was so pale yesterday, today was shining with all its youthful charm and freshness. By helping her aunt to get up from the bed tenderly, in which she was already sitting for a long time deep in thought, Alyssa asked her to try on the dress which she and Doria had chosen for her for this day, because they wanted to see her look really beautiful.

"Then it is better for my niece to stand with her back turned to the audience, so that nobody would compare her face with mine, there's no other way out, and no dresses are going to help me."

Having criticized her aunt's hairstyle when she wound her plaits round her head firmly in the old-fashioned way as she was used to do during the long years, Alyssa was combing her hair by chattering about everything and not allowing her aunt to think about the things which worried her.

"I'll tell you this, my aunt. However worried you would be, if you've gotten to the lord Benedict's home, then you can be sure that you've already left the circle of your misfortunes. It is not worth thinking always about the same difficult life, because the time is going by, while the down-hearted man is always sitting and he cannot see that joy which this flying by time is carrying with itself."

"Yes, my child, you are absolutely right, but there wasn't a single day during my entire life that I wouldn't remember, love and bless two men: your father and my son. And I was able to give happiness to neither one nor another."

"My aunt, I don't dare to argue with you about that what I still don't know, that is about your son, but I'm afraid that you are very wrong, and the whole happiness, the most important Henry's happiness is that he had you; and concerning the second one, up to now I had only three people in the entire world: my father, my mother and my sister. I loved them from the bottom of my heart, as much as I could... And I made happy not a single one from them. That was the tragedy of my life, my always bleeding wound. And only here, next to the great friend, my second father, lord Benedict, I understood the meaning of my suffering and the meaning of the entire, and not only my personal, life. I think that lord Benedict will explain everything to you what you didn't know up to now. Then you will find joy within yourself and you will find the entire circle of people to descend to the Earth again."

Lady Cecilia was excited by love sounding in her niece's words. She didn't have time to put any questions, because Henry knocked at the door by demanding to let him in impatiently. After his long joy with the new appearance of his mother, wonder of her resemblance with Alyssa, Henry was unable to understand in any way why he didn't see their likeness right away. All of them together went downstairs where lady Cecilia became acquainted with the remaining members of the family whom she couldn't see yesterday due to her ailment. Nal's beauty made such strong impression on lady Cecilia that she even became embarrassed.

"Lady Obersvode, I see that my beauty daughter captivated you."

"Yes, lord Benedict. I must admit that not only your daughter's beauty, but also something else fascinates and frightens me. It seems to me that I'm not worthy of being here," blushed lady Cecilia uttered. "Perhaps, this is only the result of my too long solitude, of my too long habit to hide myself. I must have grown out of the habit of being with people. Although," she added by laughing and looking tenderly at the frowning Sandra and benevolent Amedeo, "I absolutely don't feel embarrassed of this young friend of yours, however strictly he would look at me, and of lord Mildrey."

“Bravo, lady Obersvode! Concerning our young scientist Sandra, you hit the nail on the head. He considers himself to be the greatest friend of your deceased brother, and therefore, by taking into account the importance of your arrival, he thinks that he cannot be naturally joyful and he puts on airs before you with his entire erudition.”

“Take pity on me, lord Benedict,” shouting with laughter Sandra was pleading him. “Is my entire erudition really only a pomposity? My God, I’m ready to take the pledge not to frown with joy till the very end of my life, only if I didn’t need to wear the gown of the bookish wisdom and the wig.”

Having indicated something, found out what every member of his family was going to do, changed something in his agenda, lord Benedict told them that he claimed the host’s rights to show the house and the park to the guest himself, what would take for him to do till the very breakfast, and then he would pass the guest to entertain for all the rest of them.

The first room which lady Cecilia saw was the Florentian’s study. Having seated her on the armchair, the host gave a wonderful pastor’s portrait to her, which was painted by lord Amedeo’s hand and which conveyed the whole new and real life of lord Wodsword. The stream of tears poured from his sister’s eyes imperceptibly.

“My God, and in my memory only the face of the youth with fire eyes is left! I didn’t even think for a single time that my brother was already old and grey like myself. And it didn’t occur to me a single time how much grey hair and wrinkles on his face appeared due to my fault...”

“You aren’t used to cry, lady Obersvode. You really want to pour that entire energy of love which you’ve taken away from your brother when he was still alive. Hear me out, but first of all, answer two questions. First: do you have enough strength to listen to me, to reconsider everything calmly and to decide in even calmer way? Second: do you believe in me in such a way that you wouldn’t doubt a single word of mine? Think a little before answering me. This is a very important moment of your life. It is no less important for the entire circle of people, a part of whom you know, a part of whom you don’t know at all and you don’t remember them in this life, but with whom you are closely connected anyway. When I ask you whether you believe in me, it means not only your belief in my honour and goodwill, but belief in my knowledge. Not only about this only current man’s life, but about all his lives, all his karmic connections, all his creative possibilities and redemption now, in this moment. I see that you don’t understand me completely. First what you need to know – that is eternity of life of every living being that is coming to the earth. The earth is the world of forms where ideas, energy, thought – everything with what man is living is realized through a form without fail. For everything what is impalpable, invisible, for everything the highest with what man is living on the earth – while he’s living on it, - everything he puts into form constantly and inevitably only if he’s a useful member of his society. Everybody who is chattering to no purpose, who is building monuments for mankind with his words, but who cannot even patch the hole of his friend’s clothes and pour calmly his love into his most ordinary daily work – that man is a needless shoot of mankind. The earth is the world of effective forms, the world of one’s activity. Here every man has to learn the lessons of his day in such a way that he wouldn’t demand anything from other people, but he himself would render help for them. You were mother who was helping your son during your entire life. You were too compliant, you didn’t reproach your son for his laziness, inattention, intemperance, egoism. It seemed to you that life itself would teach him the great art of self-control. You were wrong. But this is the minor question in comparison with that what you need to understand now and to decide. No miracles exist. Everything what seems to be a miracle for one person is only the most common knowledge for another one. I and many others have managed to make progress with our knowledge further than those people whose thoughts and hearts weren’t so curious. From that what opens up for me, I can tell you not so much now, but also that little bit will seem to be a miracle for you. Man in his body, in his earthly form is living not a single or a

hundred times, but as many times as his eternal evolution demands from him by leading him into his eternal and continuous improvement. Everybody's path is different, especial, individually unique. And that man who understood that no other Deity exists, but only his creative fire which he's carrying within himself, that while you are living on the earth, everything with what you can move forward is only your own day, then that man didn't miss that moment of the form in vain, that is his entire earthly life in which he's living now. You didn't know any philosophies of the world, but you succeeded not to pay attention to any habits, to reveal the most precious within yourself and to put it into your actions. In any case, you understood the laws of life. You devoted your gift of love given to you by nature not to your personal life to settle it in such a way as it is accustomed in the society, but you devoted it as your pure, faithful love to all of those whom you met in your way. You didn't give love only to one man, you were creating your relations with one man by using only the laws of the earth, you didn't put them into the orbit of eternity – with your brother. We won't be talking about that for how much you've suffered, for how much he's suffered due to such tactics, we'll pass to the main point, to the question: whether one could pay that debt of love and care for man, which was left for him for ages, because as people say, death separated you with that man. I've already told you that people live many times. Such especially exalted souls exist, above whom both love and help and the big troop of assistants invisible to people of the earth soar. These assistants foresee far in advance all the best possibilities of conditions of their improvement and build the new path for them on the earth by preparing the place of their future incarnation beforehand. If man's soul is pure, noble and selfless, if the earth needs it like help and wisdom, then his friends whom religion calls saints and angels, while we call them the masters of karmas and invisible assistants, choose a family for him, in which he has to incarnate. Now such circle of your brother's friends has chosen his future family for him. They also took you to me, because that family will be created in my home, with my help. The future family of your brother – that's Alyssa and lord Amedeo. Their first-born will be nobody else, but your brother. An opportunity is given to you in order for you to give all your remaining strength and life not only for the first child of Alyssa and Amedeo, but also for all their other children. Do you want this, lady Cecilia? If you want it, you must concentrate spiritually, you must take two pledges with absolute self-control: first – the pledge of absolute obedience to me, because only with this you can express your entire loyalty by accepting the task; second – you must take the pledge of absolute chastity and you must remain unmarried. You laughed – it seems to you so incredible to marry now after such pure and long life in solitude. And anyway, you must utter this pledge, because tests are waiting for man in every turn of his life. I wrote for you that you also had another niece, the elder pastor's daughter Jenny. Jenny and her mother were tormenting the pastor with turn for evil during their entire life. While he was alive, he was protecting them with his purity from an absolute evil. Unfortunately, they opened their hearts and thoughts for evil widely, for the whole terrible its circle, and now nobody is able to save them anymore. All kinds of infernal ideas how they could take the capital and the house from you and Alyssa are ripening in their heads. They will start with the court and official perfidies, and they will finish with your and Alyssa's temptations to marry – in a very perspective way, in their opinion. I absolutely confide in you, but your choice of pledges for the Eternity doesn't depend on me. Those who are standing higher than I am gave them to you, but your choice is absolutely free. Nobody is able to restrict you anyhow and in any way. Don't hurry to answer me. If your answer is negative, it won't affect your welfare in any way."

Lady Cecilia stood up, came up to the Florentian's armchair and went down on her knees.

"I don't have anything to choose, great friend Florentian. I didn't know anything about who you were, and I don't know it now, but my heart called you Great Hand. You are like this for me in this moment and you will remain like this for me. I've made a vow only once before the altar of the real God – loyalty to my husband. I've kept this vow easily and simply. In the presence of the same God whom I serve as well as I can I take those two pledges for you, about which you were talking to me. I will obey to you with joy for everything what you will kindly command me to do. I won't marry anybody, whoever would tell me

that I could even save his life by doing so. I want to give my activity and life not only for my brother, but also for all Alyssa's children and for everybody whom you will tell me to. I will be going everywhere and anytime how you will indicate me to do it."

"Get up, my friend, get up, new soul, ready for your life of selfless compassion. It isn't important to be self-collected and calm when everything is going well. Man's spirit is growing only in fight and storms, his self-control is tempered in suffering. Remember, my friend and sister, only one thing from now on: Joy – that's invincible Power. A little fight with the powers of darkness is waiting for us. We won't be taking part in it for a long time, we'll leave and the main fight will be left for great wise man Ananda whom you respect. Let's leave. Keep everything what I've told you in secret and take this bracelet which the pastor left for you. There are words on it from green jewels: "Overcome by loving."

Florentian embraced lady Cecilia, he put the wonderfully made bracelet on her hand, which she kissed, as though by confirming her pledges, and they went to the park where they found sad and thoughtful Henry sitting on one remote bench.

"Henry, why are you sitting here alone?" Florentian asked him.

"Lord Benedict, I've fulfilled your instructions. I passed round the whole park and I admit I was sad, because I found neither you nor my mother. And I wanted to stay with you and her so much that I nearly cried... That's why now I'm so happy!"

Henry's voice which was so sharp and dry before now sounded tenderly and affectionately. His open look with which he was looking straight at Florentian's eyes surprised lady Cecilia.

"My God, Henry, where did you get this voice and this look? Even my heart began to beat. You uttered these words absolutely in the same way as my brother Andrew, your uncle, was doing it. You are typical Rettedly, but now your look, your voice was a living incarnation of my brother."

"Rettedly?" Henry was absolutely embarrassed. "Mother, you've mixed the names from those troubles which I've caused for you during these days."

"No, Henry, the time has come to discover for you that you are Rettedly, son of Richard Rettedly, baron Obersvode. I couldn't tell you this before, because when your father was dying he asked me to promise to him that I wouldn't be coming to his father's home until his grandfather was alive. His grandfather died very soon, only several days after your father's death, he didn't leave any testament, as everybody was thinking. I went to that home, to his mother, but they didn't accept me there, they insulted me terribly by saying that I wasn't his wife, that there were lots of wenches in the world. Now it turned out that the grandfather left the whole capital for me, which he had taken away from Richard after his argument with him, but his mother kept everything to herself, although she knew about it. I didn't have strength to bear the insult, I married your father against the will of their entire family. I ran away from my home with your father, but we registered the marriage like all Englishmen do, and you are real and rightful Richard Rettedly's son."

Lady Cecilia didn't allow Henry even to come to himself and uttered, while Henry was deprived of speech with amazement.

"And that's not all. My brother about whom I was thinking like about some famous and happy singer and, as it turned out, who was pastor, he had two daughters. One of them, Alyssa, we know already and we'll have to become acquainted with the second one, Jenny."

"Come to yourself, my friend Henry," Florentian was smiling by squeezing Henry's hand. "Such pile of news is still awaiting for you that first I will advise you: get to know Alyssa better. She will tell

you everything about her family and her father, and how you should become respectable nephew of lord James, I think that now I don't need to teach you."

The rest of the company were already walking in front of the three companions by inviting them for breakfast.

Lady Cecilia was mature and whole by nature, so once she made up her mind, then she didn't acknowledge any hesitations. She comprehended her further path clearly; whatever difficulties would rise for her along her path in the future, she knew where and to whom she had to go, so she was calm.

The days flew by – it was time to come back to London. Lord Benedict offered for lady Cecilia and Henry to settle in his house in London, so that they wouldn't have to waste their time with the apartments, private life and they could spend more time close one to another during all this complicated time of notary actions by regaining the capital.

Before agreeing lady Cecilia faltered a little, but having remembered her pledges, she smiled joyfully and accepted his proposal both for herself and her son with gratitude.

The whole family moved to London cheerfully and successfully. Every one of them understood with gratitude how much strength they acquired during that time while they were living in Florentian's house, and their love for him was uniting them into even greater friendship.

## Chapter 14

### James Rettedly and Lisa at the lord Benedict's

Having met Lisa who was also waiting for the opportunity to talk to her fiancé without her parents, the captain took her to his small cottage, as he called it. The small cottage turned out to be a spacious and cosy old villa, although it was one-storeyed. Once it was his grandfather's bachelor lodging which he wanted to give to his grandson Richard, but after their argument by understanding his mistake perfectly, the stubborn grandfather devised the house to James anyway, who was only twelve-years old back then. The house was standing boarded up for many years.

When the captain entered it here for the first time, the real antiquity began to blow, about which people already forgot even to think in England by chasing the last shriek. His grandfather kept the best gathered furniture, crystal, china and sculptures of his forefathers in this house. The captain found not only a bit of the ancient England here, but also many Venetian knitting and glass, some very valuable paintings and carpets, rare museum tables and Gobelin tapestry. The house was standing on the hill, it was surrounded by the garden, while the descending street was winding between the green gardens. The truth is, it was far away from the centre, but the captain didn't doubt that Lisa would like it, so he decided to settle with his wife in it.

Having reorganized some of the rooms and only renewed their ancient style in others, the captain was very happy that it didn't even occur to his relatives to visit the house, although they had the keys. Lady Rettedly was surprised when she found out that her son with his wife were going to settle in the grandfather's villa.

"Is there really something valuable there? Your grandfather told me that the house was empty."

"Mother, value is an undefined concept. Perhaps, there isn't anything valuable there according to your and Rebecca's tastes. But for me, and I hope for my wife, too, it will be cosy and beautiful there, and most importantly – joyous."

Being very unhappy that not only her efforts to take care of the relatives were rejected, but even her son was asking neither for his mother's opinion nor for her advices, lady Rettedly fell silent by expressing indignation and disapproval with her entire appearance. However, being certain that a greedy fiancée bewitched her son, the noble lady decided to be clever and wary, to show as much as possible attention to her son, but to bite and injure her future relatives in every possible way and especially his fiancée.

The captain didn't utter Lisa a single word how their future dwelling looked like. The girl, although she knew his fiancé's artistic nature and that everything what his skilful hands used to touch was fulfilled nicely, was hoping only the most ordinary pattern, a decent house. She doomed herself for the sad fate of the high society lady beforehand, although her heart was revolting and protesting against that futile and insipid life which she used to observe in her surroundings.



A dilemma of love for man and love for the art gave Lisa no peace. Disagreements and disappointments between themselves could arise because of it. Lisa's heart was often aching when she was thinking about her future family life, but she didn't tell James her doubts a single time, and all of them were going out when she used to see the strong look of his yellow eyes and when she used to become numb when he kissed her.

This mood accompanied Lisa also now, while she was going with her fiancé, but as soon as he opened the outside door, and both of them got into the spacious hall with the wooden ceiling, heavy old-time beams with high, wooden panels which were darkened from time, with the big hearth in which the fire was crackling merrily, while the old vases were full of flowers – a cry of fascination slipped out for her and, having forgotten about everything in the world, she threw her arms round her fiancé's neck.

The further Lisa was walking with her future husband the clearer it became for her that he would understand her entire soul, that she wouldn't have any secrets from him, that the art wouldn't separate them with the band of envy.

"Well, and now we are going to step into your temple," the captain told her by taking Lisa to the small door that was covered with the carpet of a rare beauty. "I don't know if I hit the mark. Are you going to like this little corner of my homeland? I've put all my love, all my perception of art into it."

The captain opened the door, but the shutters of the room were closed, and Lisa couldn't see anything clearly. As soon as the captain opened the shutters, and the sun began to shine through the windows, Lisa saw that she was standing in a little room from which the doors to the right and to the left were. A white Buddha statue was standing on the ancient pedestal in the very middle of the room, he was holding a cup in his extended hand. The eyes of the sculpture were looking straight before itself, as though by greeting those who were coming in and asking them to put everything into the cup what was the highest and the purest from the very bottom of their souls. The floor was covered with wonderful Japanese mats, while the walls were upholstered with the same mats. Some low sofas, the little, low, Oriental tables encrusted with pearl and the same stools were standing in the corners and by the walls. Lisa was looking at the Buddha's face, who met her and who was radiating with divine kindness and compassion, and the tears were rolling down her face.

"How could you know that I valued Buddha so deeply? I've never told to anybody that I admired him. I was dreaming so much to have a white Buddha!" she was whispering.

"Stop crying, my dear. I found this treasure in the cellar, in one of the boxes, as well as these mats. Buddha emerged for me like the symbol of man's grandeur – of that man who wants to follow the path of talents and possibilities which he possesses. I thought for a while, if both of us see this cup before us and if we carry harmony and forgiveness into it – then our life won't be futile and pointless. Harmony and forgiveness will be pouring from this cup back into our daily routine through our hearts. You will be working and improving in your art, you will fascinate the people's hearts with your music, while I will be doing my work as well as I can. And both of us, while seeing this emblem of compassion before us, will be carrying the cup of love and uniting the people surrounding us with beauty and nobility. Don't be afraid of me, don't be afraid of life in general and don't be afraid of life with me. Before this giant of spirit I promise you to protect your freedom and to create such home for you, in which you could live easily, simply, joyfully. But let's keep going, my dear. This is only entrance, your temple is further."

They turned into the room on the left. Its windows were to the garden, and everything in it – the carpet, the walls, the torchere, the curtains were white. A grand piano was standing in the middle of the room, it was covered with the white, old-time brocade, while a violin in an old case could be seen in a small cabinet of Saxony china and glass.

"I found this violin in one of the wall cupboards, it was all dusty, covered with spider's web, wrapped up in the stack of paper. I was unwrapping it for nearly an hour until I reached the case. A note was written on it, a womanly handwriting that that person who would find this violin could consider it to be his owner. I don't understand the qualities of the violin, so I called an expert who told me that this violin was priceless.

Lisa couldn't resist the temptation anymore and after a while, having forgotten about everything, except her love and the image of the great Buddha, began to play her fantasy. Almost empty room with the white narrow sofas was filled with sounds. The violin, like a man, now was crying now was glad, and its sounds reminded for the captain of another city, of another musical sitting-room, of Ananda with his violoncello and... of the man of his dreams, who stepped down from his dream into the reality miraculously.

The captain covered his face with his hands. His thoughts were flying to Florentian. Word after word, he remembered their conversation in the country, he remembered the portraits in his study where he saw I. and Ananda next to other persons whom he hadn't met, and he understood firmly and clearly that there wasn't another life for him without these people anymore. The sounds lapsed into silence. The captain opened his eyes and he saw changed Lisa. But Lisa didn't see him yet, as well as anything else round her. She was pressing the violin to herself like an icon, as though an imaginary vow and a prayer were reflected on her face.

"What are you thinking about, Lisa?" the captain asked her by coming up to her and embracing her.

"James, I pray that me and you, while being blessed by that statue which you've put here, would walk down that length of our path which is destined for us to walk together, by being pure and kind. I pray that we would meet such guardian in our life, who would help us to glorify life, to decorate it for people, as we want it to do now, so that in our life we were able not to cry for ourselves and not forget about others."

"Lisa, we've already got such friend, such charming and perfect friend that you can imagine only when you get to know him personally. All words fade and they are helpless to describe him. We will go to breakfast at his place on Monday. Don't worry about anything, everything will get settled in such a way that two of us will go, and everything what only you'll be able to comprehend at this friend's, lord Benedict's home – everything will stay within you for ever. I'm certain that you will find that spiritual path, that creative beauty there, which you are searching for."

Having put the violin, the value of which she understood from its first sounds, into the case, Lisa put it back into the wonderful cabinet.

"Well, your grandfather gathered so much treasure only in this house! I'm dazzled and I will be unable even to remember everything what I saw here."

"Now, let's come back already and let's take a look at the divine wise man again," the captain uttered by taking Lisa's arm and leading her out of the musical sitting-room.

They came up to the statue. Now the Buddha's face seemed to be even more wonderful for Lisa. It seemed to her that his lips would open, and that he would begin to speak. The world with its wars, crimes, vengeance, greediness, fight emerged in Lisa's imagination; the death about which the king's son – the future beggar and finally Buddha – didn't have to know anything. She imagined his youth in the gardens of amusements where he didn't see a single old face or know about the old age and diseases – and then he

chose himself the fate of the Indian nomadic monk and he's standing here eternal and compassionate by declaring about freedom and mercy to the world.

Lisa and James cuddled up one to another. As though they were marrying now, here, by swearing love and loyalty before this wonderful symbol and by seeing in him their only real path into the pure and respectable life.

"Lisa, your bedroom is on the right. We won't enter it now. We'll enter it only like a husband and wife, so that we would never overstep its threshold while being irritated or angry with each other. Let the great image of this seeker of divine truth be that source of kindness and wisdom for us, from which we'll be deriving our strength for every new day."

When they left and looked at the clock they saw that they had missed all their promised terms to come back, so they hurried to visit counts R. The parents first of all wanted to give them a scolding, but when they saw how changed and happy the faces of the newly-weds were, they only laughed merrily and changed their plans: first the visit at the lady Rettedly's, then inspection of the house.

The visit at her future mother-in-law's, which Lisa was so afraid of, now didn't seem to be so frightful anymore, only the most ordinary formality, all the more so because she could feel perfectly the real essence of the son's and his mother's, the mother's and her sister's relations. She wasn't thinking much about his sister, because sometimes the captain was telling her about Rebecca with humour – about her always awaited oversea prince who didn't come to his desirable bride up to now.

Lady Rettedly was trying to meet her future relatives with care, but she struck against such high wall of pride, besides the count loaded her so much with the names of his friends from the highest walks of life, who were going to participate in his daughter's wedding that lady Rettedly who wasn't even dreaming about such company for herself and Rebecca changed her tone instantly. With tactlessness that was characteristic to her, she went too far here, what the countess R. didn't like much.

The countess R. who always loved music and who had spent her entire youth among famous people couldn't bear families with narrow-minded taste. Her future son-in-law's mother made a repulsive impression on her, and she was rejoicing at the captain's love, tact and that he prepared a separate house for Lisa. Now the countess was impatient to see that house as soon as possible and to escape the banal lady Rettedly's company. An unpleasant scene almost happened before they left. When Rebecca found out that her brother was taking his future relatives to examine his new house, she clapped her hands and began to jump about like an eight-year-old girl by expressing her mother's and herself great desire to join the counts R. Their faces fell, but the captain stated categorically that neither his mother nor his sister would enter this new house until the wedding. When the newly-weds accept their first guests, then they will come, too, but not earlier. If they didn't want to see how he reconstructed the house up to now – then they would see it only when it was radiating with the whole splendour when the hosts were already living in it. The captain's tone, that new tone to which neither his mother nor his sister could get used was very friendly, but categorical. They had to obey, to suppress their anger within themselves and to smile politely.

Lisa triumphed. She was taking her parents to her house by feeling absolutely clearly to be the hostess of the new dwelling. Without making any arrangements one with another, both of them decided not to take anybody to the little Lisa's corner, but they crossed all rooms, took her parents straight into the musical sitting-room through another door, and the house inspection was ended here. Her parents were fascinated with the house, the garden and the furnishing. The countess was happy, because the house was remote, but it seemed to the count that the newly-weds rather had to live closer to the centre. Having come back to the hotel, they worked out the tomorrow's program, and both parents were especially

delighted with their future visit at the lord Benedict's of whom they already had time to hear a lot as about the new miracle of the London society.

The next day flew past so quickly for Lisa and James that they could hardly find several minutes to stand by the white Buddha without whom, as it seemed to Lisa now, they couldn't live anymore. On Sunday evening, after the detailed discussion of the counts R. about how they were going to dress tomorrow in order to look irreproachably at the lord Benedict's house, after the captain's remarks for the ladies, which were full of humour, when everybody was laughing and, in their turn, they were jeering at him benevolently, the countess complained of a light headache several times. Since the countess had poor health during her entire life, no one could see anything else here as only an ordinary migraine. Having separated with the fiancé joyfully, everybody went to their own rooms. In exactly the same joyful, easy and cheerful way, Lisa jumped out of the bed on the next morning. She was sleeping very soundly during the entire night, she woke up with the feeling of exceptional happiness, self-confidence and for the first time she felt to be grown-up, independent and ready for life.

"Oh, I will have the strength to overcome everything! Now I know how wonderful man's life is, of what miracles it is full. Oh, my white Buddha, I owe you so much," Lisa was pondering. "Those moments which I spent next to your cup, great wise man, helped me to understand that such phenomenon like death couldn't exist in life. You didn't die, you are Eternity, hence everybody who follows you is also Eternity. And my violin is the little part of Eternity."

Lisa was absolutely prepared already, but she didn't want to go to her parents – that's how unusually elated she was feeling. She concentrated to the Buddha's cup with all her thoughts and she was carrying both her violin and her love into it by praying that this bright state of spirit which she was feeling now would never darken for her music and love. Now she wasn't afraid of anything. She understood that life was eternal, that that day which she was living now – that was the moment of creation. Creation was also eternal, consequently, also this moment experienced with the creative fire couldn't be anything else, but only the moment of eternal creation, Eternal Life. "I would like so much," Lisa was whispering, "to carry such pure, such loving and comforting sounds for people, as though I was drawing them out of the Buddha's cup."

The knock at the door interrupted her dreams. Her excited and annoyed father was knocking. The countess had a temperature in the morning, she had a cold and a cough, so they couldn't even think about coming to the lord Benedict's. Lisa went to her mother instantly, who was very distressed about her unexpected illness and even more irritated, because she couldn't visit the lord who interested her very much. The countess was used to see Lisa only like a girl who wasn't fit to be independent and who couldn't go anywhere without her father and mother, so she began to persuade her daughter to go with her father and to leave her alone. The count who didn't feel ashamed to leave his wife alone in Russia even for a very long time, didn't retreat a step from her here. He stated categorically that they wouldn't go, that they would let lord Benedict know about the countess illness, while the children would sit at home.

"Father, this is absolutely impossible. Lord Benedict is the closest James' friend whom he highly appreciates and respects no less than his own father. I know that the whole lord's family came from the county earlier, because they wanted to become acquainted with me. I know that during this breakfast which is being prepared for my and James' honour, the people will participate, on whom James' destiny depends very much. My mother isn't a patient, she only feels unwell, and we'll come back soon. Father, if you don't want to go, then the two of us together with James will go. We certainly need to go, and it is a little strange for me how you, by deciding to give me in marriage, don't allow me to be independent in such matter like breakfast."

Both her parents were stunned with such Lisa's resolution and her want expressed in such categorical form that they didn't know even what to answer her, but both of them were clearly unhappy with such independence of her. The countess as though woke up from a dream and for the first time she began to comprehend that her daughter already had her own life where there was no place left for her mother anymore. Every one of the three of them were concealing their thoughts and, while being too much educated in order to talk unpleasant words, all of them were holding calm, but everything turned bitter in her parent's soul. However it would have been, Lisa and the captain entered the lord Benedict's house at the fixed hour.

The captain predisposed Lisa what was waiting for her in the lord Benedict's house and family, but she was confused not only from the first look of the host, but also every new person whom she was introduced to made her always more excited. Her shyness which always accompanied her this time reached such extent that her constrained state already became unbearable for herself. Exactly at that moment when her strength was already completely exhausted, she felt the lord Benedict's look. The host rose from his place, sat down next to her and asked her about her mother's health. Word after word, their conversation turned to London, the music, and in ten minutes there wasn't a sign left from Lisa's shyness, while everybody who surrounded her and seemed to be so especial for her, now became ordinary and accessible. In the beginning, stunned with such crowd of beauties, Lisa felt ashamed of her appearance, but as a matter of fact, inspired with love and mutual happiness she was not only nice, but she also was well noticeable among the greatest beauties with her light grey costume with reseda colour decoration, with her pale face in which the eyes of the personality marked with temperament and talent were burning. Her slender figure and graceful movements gave harmony and exceptional beauty for her appearance. Her decisive voice of metal sound and pleasant timbre, which was vibrating with many different intonations and nuances, as though finished the whole complex of impression. There wasn't a sign left from that girl whom I. and Lovushka met on their way relatively not so long time ago.

Florentian asked Lisa whether she wasn't a singer. She laughed – as though a bell rang out – and told him that for great sadness of her father, she was both singer and violinist, but in both cases she was only amateur.

"Oh, in this case you have a rival. My foster-daughter is also singer, but she's not violinist, but pianist and she's also only amateur. If you wanted to give pleasure to us, don't refuse to play something for us with Alyssa. We haven't heard violin for a long time and we would be grateful to you for an hour of relaxation with the music."

"I like to play so much that I'm glad of every occasion when I only can take the violin, but today I feel so many "buts" that I doubt whether I will make up my mind to take this step."

"Well, and if I guess all your "buts" till the last one, will you agree to play then?"

"This is so unbelievable that you could guess all of them till the last, lord Benedict, that I don't even decide to accept such condition."

"Your first "but" is that you haven't played properly for a long time. Second – that you don't have your own violin here and you don't know whether you are going to like mine. Third – you've just had the violin in your hands, the pearl of an ancient master, which the man who loves you gave to you. Fourth – by the Buddha..."

"Oh, in the name of all saints," Lisa jumped up from her place and shouted. "I don't know what you want to tell," she continued by gasping air, "but this your uttered word aroused both joy and horror in me at the same time."

"If you hadn't interrupted me so suddenly, then I would have managed to reach your fifth and sixth doubts," Florentian was smiling.

"No, no, I see that I'd rather agree to play today. I don't know whether we with miss Alyssa find the common contact, whether I can play those compositions which she has prepared, but please, don't guess anymore."

Lisa was trying to control herself. It was awkward for her because of her reaction before lord Benedict, especially next to her fiancé who could control himself so perfectly everywhere. Lisa didn't even dare to look at his side, but all of a sudden, she saw him in front of her.

"Lisa, if you want to play only with your old violin, I will bring it to you soon."

The captain's voice was so tender, pleasant and loving, which Lisa had never heard before.

"Don't worry, captain," Florentian meddled in. "I have Ananda's violin here, which he left for me to protect. I think that the pure hands of your fiancée are worthy of touching that treasure. And for you," he turned to Lisa and continued, "touching of the fiddlestick and the neck, which the hands of great wise man and musician touched, will help that fourth "but" to be fulfilled, which you didn't allow me to tell you."

The servant came in to invite everybody at the table, and this allowed Lisa to control herself a little from her confusion, gladness, childish joy and shyness which the handsome host was exciting. Lord Benedict gave his hand to her and accompanied her at the table. Everything surprised her in this house with its uncommonness. Although at home Lisa was used to the perfect setting and beautifully laid table which was always decorated with flowers, because her grandfather was great fan of china and flowers, he was making bouquets himself, but she didn't know what she had to admire more in the lord Benedict's house. Everything around Lisa seemed to be unreal for her, it seemed for her that Nal was a fantastic princess of her dream, that she would be gone when she woke up; Alyssa seemed for her to be a fairy, while Nikolay and lord Benedict himself – charmed princes. When she was going to the dining-room she leant strongly against the lord Benedict's hand a couple of times, as though she wanted to check herself. And both times, a wonderful feeling of an exceptional calm, almost a bliss spread across her entire body.

All Lisa's fears, her shyness and uneasiness slowly disappeared. While she was sitting next to the nice host, seeing her fiancé in front of her, Lisa was thinking that probably she was never so happy as now during her entire life. A grand tranquillity, never experienced balance and at the same time a completeness of perception of herself as the whole creative personality cast a new light on her life.

"Life – that isn't only a segment of the characteristics and strength within man, gathered from the entire universe," she heard the lord Benedict's words. "Man's life on the earth – that's that interval of the universe which he managed to gather into himself, remade it in a creative way, purified it with his suffering and returned it back to the universe in order to help it move forward. Our guest will play for us today. We will be listening. But if her heart isn't burning with the fire of inextinguishable love for art, then we'll be only cold observers. We'll be watching her hands, her face, her mimic. We'll see only her, and our eyes won't penetrate into the closed kingdom of joy of communication through beauty, which is the only one valuable and necessary for people. If Phidias has left his name for us, whom not a single sculptor managed to overshadow, then it happened only because he was thinking not about the earth while creating a sculpture, but he was carrying his heaven onto the earth. Our guest still feels shy of our company, but I'm certain that as soon as her fingers will touch the precious violin, she will forget us and she will be carrying her happy heaven for our hearts."

Florentian was looking at embarrassed Lisa tenderly and encouragingly.

“Lord Benedict, if next to you I couldn’t feel the feelings absolutely not experienced up to now, then after your words about the art, I probably couldn’t pour a single sound. But now, both self-confidence and courage are pouring into me. I’m not afraid of playing before you anymore, on the contrary, it seems to me that only today I will begin to play not like a student. Perhaps, it is too bold to talk like this, but my soul feels like this at this moment.”

The breakfast was over, and everybody stood up after the host. If somebody had asked Lisa what she was eating and drinking, and whether the breakfast took place at all – she could hardly answer this question. Only separate moments, separate Lord Benedict’s words and her beloved man’s face existed for her. Everything else was buried at the height of her desire to play and in such still never experienced desire of creation, which opened for her today and which was burning her with its fire. Lord Benedict accompanied Lisa straight at the piano where he invited Alyssa as well. While the girls were discussing what they wanted to play, he brought the case from his study. Both the case and the man who was carrying it were exceptional. The case was square, very bright, made of the wood that was yellowed with time. Lord Benedict unlocked it with a small old key. Before opening it, he looked at Lisa and told her.

“Lisa, I repeat one more time to you that now this violin belongs to my friend, great wise man Ananda. He is not only a wise man, he’s also a prince among ordinary people. He is pure kindness and such power of love before whom even Vesuvius calms down. Concentrate your entire love which now is so pure and happy. While you are playing with this violin, carry its sounds into the Buddha’s cup, and let them pour from it back with tranquillity and power for all suffering people on the earth.”

He opened the case and gave an old, big and very proportional violin to Lisa. Shaking with joy Lisa took the instrument, tried its sound, she was surprised that it was tuned and, having exchanged glances with Alyssa, she began to wait for the first sounds of sonata. Tens of thoughts and doubts flew in Lisa’s head in that short moment – what was Alyssa’s level as the pianist, how she would play. She couldn’t look at Alyssa anymore. All her strength came to her hands which seemed for her to be light, free, as though charged with the electric energy. From Florentian’s gaze fixed on her, Alyssa changed more than ever before. The first sounds of the violin, which were unexpectedly deep and powerful for Lisa herself, made her draw herself up, give a start, and when she ran the fiddlestick over the strings it seemed to Lisa that she touched the hearts of everybody who was present here.

One part after another the sonata was pouring, and suddenly it seemed to Lisa that the new power was growing behind her back, which helped her. Her hands became even lighter, the sound became stronger, the violin itself was as though inspired, and it seemed to her that not her brain, her memory was leading her fingers, but that the current was flowing into them from her heart. Almost by not feeling where she was and who was next to her, Lisa finished the sonata.

“Now, Lisa, try to play your fantasy for us,” Lord Benedict asked her.

Still by not comprehending the reality very well, Lisa began to play her fantasy, that solemn canto of Love which she was playing in the new house for the captain, inspired by Buddha’s image. Now it seemed to her that she could hear the new nuance in the strings, as though they were whispering her: “Play for the earth, for people. Don’t think about yourself, think about the people, for whose joy your canto has to pour.” Now the power that helped her to play united with her hands, her heart, the atmosphere of happiness covered her. And Lisa finished her fantasy with such passionate gust that she felt even a physical exhaustion.

When she came to herself she wanted to look around. Her look met the new guest’s eyes, who entered the room unnoticed. Ananda was standing in the middle of the room. Everybody’s eyes were fastened on this antique figure, these radiating eyes. Everybody was stunned by the silent appearance of

the stranger, only Florentian and Nikolay were coming to him joyfully and unsurprised from the opposite sides of the room. Florentian embraced his guest powerfully, and Ananda who seemed to be so tall a moment ago, suddenly became much smaller next to the host. After their first greeting, lord Benedict introduced his new guest to everybody by calling him to be his friend Sandra Kon Ananda.

First of all he became acquainted with both young musicians. Ananda took Lisa's hand and looked round the room, as though by searching for somebody.

"Of course, you are looking for the other half of the apple," Florentian uttered by smiling mischievously. "Here he is, the bold captain hid behind my back," and Florentian pushed James forward, who was so excited that Lisa didn't even expect to see it.

Ananda took the captain's hand, put it on Lisa's one which he was still holding, and said to James with his especial and uniquely tender, sonorous voice.

"When I was telling you about this moment in Constantinople, it seemed for you to be an unrealizable fantasy. Now I unite you with this pure soul by knowing that the fire of joyous love for you will stay within her until the very end of your days. Everything else doesn't matter. Now only the new family matters, which we need so much and for which wonderful and high souls are waiting so much as for the pure place for incarnations. Remember this, and you will keep your promise given to me in Constantinople, while I will always remember whom I owe so much, who returned the stolen ring of my uncle to me. You, my dear," Ananda addressed Lisa, "keep only one precept of mine: always and everywhere go by asserting persistently and teach your children to understand this present, to accept it and never deny. The art will help you to educate your children. It will be their second mother. Don't believe in those who will tell you that the music and family don't go well together. You don't need to separate your love between your family and music, you need to merge them into one totality, to reflect the entire universe like the only one eternal Love within yourself, in which everything – your family and your work for it, your work for society, your musical activity – are only the aspects of that only one Love living within ourselves. Play. Play always and everywhere as much as possible. Play for the big crowds of people after throwing the superstition off yourself: "To appear on the stage." But always play for free by giving all your money for your music to the poor persons."

Ananda turned to Alyssa who was listening to him with such attention that she was already by the limit of bliss.

"My friend, you also are meant to comfort people with your music. You'll still be young when you will give concerts together with your children. Cast away your shyness, go with that unshakable will which your father has given to you. Never be afraid of anybody. I still will talk to you."

"And for you, Ananda, I caught this couple of fugitives at the door," laughing Florentian brought Henry and his mother to him.

"Henry, could you really run away from me again?"

"Forgive us," lady Cecilia uttered silently and – no one could expect it from her – she went down on her knees before Ananda, "both of us are really to blame before you very much. My son isn't to blame that his mother didn't succeed to develop self-control within him," lady Cecilia continued when Ananda lifted her, and she leant on his shoulder.

"No, my dear. Henry is excellent youth. If passions were boiling too much within him before, then now his nobility and integrity grew so much next to our friend and Teacher Florentian that as though that rebellious lad didn't exist. Henry, my dear son, the tests of your pure and mature heart only begin,



they aren't over, as you are thinking," Ananda was talking to him with unique kindness. "Many tests are still waiting for you, but you are not alone, you've got not only Florentian and me, you've got the entire circle of people, friends, and everyone's heart whom you see in this room – all their hearts – are tied with you by the activity and love of many centuries. The truth is, you were causing much troubles and worries for us up to now, but now your manhood has already matured in you, and you are already responsible for your behaviour yourself. Keep maturing, my friend, soon you'll have the possibility to display your heart's heroism and all its straightforwardness."

Then Nikolay and Nal were greeting Ananda with joy. He said to Nal.

"In a not evident sense, you know me for a long time, as well as I know you. Now we have an opportunity to meet and never forget where, how and when we met. Your uncle Ali and that whom you call your father now, my great friend Florentian, - they are my eternal guardians. I will accept all your children among my disciples from the bottom of my heart. And I would like only one thing from you – that by preparing your children for life you wouldn't be afraid for their destinies yourself. No stronger talisman, a stronger protection for children exist as their mother's fearlessness for their destinies."

Ananda, surrounded by everybody who were here, entered the Florentian's study where he told several words to Amedeo, Sandra and Tendly, personally for everyone of them. He was talking to them so silently that nobody from the rest of them could hear anything, but the faces of all three of them brightened up so much that all of them saw this clearly.

After some time when Ananda told them that unexpectedly he got the news from his uncle about the new Bracano's escapades and the order to leave to London instantly, lord Benedict saw all his guests off, so that he could talk to Ananda face to face and that he could have a rest. While saying good-bye to Lisa and the captain, Florentian reminded them tenderly about their new life and their new way of thinking according to which they had to behave now and to meet their every new breaking day in a special way.

"Lisa, tomorrow in the morning, I and Alyssa, Nal and Nikolay will visit you. I know your father's exceptional hospitality and self-love in regards to this question, so I reveal the "secret" of our tomorrow's visit to you. And you, James, don't worry about anything. I will help you to avoid the menacing pompous celebration of your wedding exactly in the same way as your parents' menacing journey to America with you. Be happy, have a good trip."

When lord Benedict was left with Ananda, he told him that Bracano's friends were already involved in the case of the pastor's testament, whom one of the pastor wife's friends and close Bracano's friend from Constantinople sent to her.

"Not only those who already were sent," Ananda answered him, "but two more of them arrived on board of the same steamer with me. This couple received an exact goal: to kidnap Alyssa. While exchanging letters with her friend, the pastor's wife described clearly both of her daughters with the whole frankness that was characteristic to her. An innocent girl with the purest heart is needed for the hellish Bracano's plans. These scoundrels didn't recognize me. Hoping that I don't understand their language, they were chattering frankly both about the plan to give both sisters in marriage to the two lads sent here and about the urgent Alyssa's transportation from here right after the wedding. Of course, they can bribe a half of London. I don't have any plan of actions right now and I will accept all your instructions. Isn't there any hope left to save the pastor's wife and her daughter from that horror which they get into?"

"Ananda, I tried all possible means to save them. Now there isn't any salvation for them. Both mother and her daughter have opened their hearts for evil so persistently and a long time ago that in

this moment all their passions are already hanging strongly on the lure thrown by their friends from Constantinople. Their desire for luxury, their want to live in style – everything is used and lit up to the flame. Until both unfortunate women don't reach the very bottom, neither of them will come to herself. But I think that the pastor wife's bottom is nearer, and we still can try to help her out of the hands of the band of the villains, while her daughter's connection with Bracano is too deep. She put her chains on herself by pushing away my call two times."

"I found out from the same travellers from the steamer that their plan was made in such a way that Jenny was only a free bonus to Alyssa who was their main goal. Unfortunate Jenny," Ananda whispered.

"Yes, this entire plan found a passionate servant – the pastor's wife. She's prepared for everything, so that she could only take Alyssa out of my hands. Ananda, we'll have a meeting in the office of the court with her, Jenny and those two puppies who now, of course, are already at complete disposal of the newly sent allies. At least the smallest threat to Alyssa is out of the question, but you, Ananda, will have to protect those whom I leave here – Sandra and Tendly, as well as poor lawyer. The whole anger and fury of our enemies will befall on them. My dear friend and brother," Florentian continued by embracing Ananda, "for how many times during this life you've been burdening yourself with fight against evil, with strange sins and actions by undoing the bonds of people's horrible karmas. Let your days be blessed! Let the paths of activity shine with eternal light for people!"

As though the sunbeams were pouring from Florentian and covering Ananda from all sides.

"My friend, here once again you will have to experience many tormenting moments in your new fight against Bracano. Your divine kindness, along the path of which you are walking by serving people, made you take pity on that villain. You thought that his sting was already taken out, he gave his word of honour to leave the path of darkness. You believed in him. You forgot that a dishonourable person doesn't possess any honour. You had pity on him and took measures according to your personal perception, but you didn't take into account that the universal law of mercy had to destroy that villain completely. My enlightened friend, you've been burdening yourself with suffering of the perished heart again and again. And now, by obeying those who are walking higher than I am, I'm forced to leave the fight against the new band for you. Besides, I also give two young, inexperienced friends of mine to you. They are brave and fearless, but they haven't yet hardened their will and obedience."

"My great guardian," radiating Ananda answered him. "I've chosen the path of kindness myself, as well as the path of help for stubborn persons, – for those who are unable to develop their discipline and obedience in any other way as only through many mistakes and falls by developing their experience and will independently. I've chosen this path myself, in which almost every disciple was bringing the sorrow of their return blows to me. But I used to accept them as joy, and in almost all cases, people used to find their paths of liberation and love. In all those cases when I was unable to overcome them with my love, your powerful hand, my Teacher, used to come to help me. You haven't left me a single time, and even in the simpler cases, as with Doria and Henry, your tact and wisdom helped me. If I didn't understand how I had to deal with Bracano, then I know that now you will give a precise plan to me, and if I don't understand your instructions till the end I will obey them with joy. Therefore, now I absolutely believe in our final and real victory against the evil, although everything would appear differently outwardly."

"Be blessed once again, my friend and son Ananda! Be a living example of light for everybody whom you meet! By the way, Doria is waiting for you. She didn't dare to enter the sitting-room where you will come, as I told her."

“Doria who didn’t dare to enter the room where I am?” Ananda gave a shout by laughing in his sonorous laughter. “Then she’s already different, not my Doria. That stubborn person of mine would give me a scolding without thinking twice for all affairs even if she didn’t understand anything in them.”

“Oh, Ananda, in the name of all saints, don’t talk like this anymore,” Doria rushed at Ananda’s feet from the very door which Florentian opened for her. “Now I understood everything. All my words and deeds make me blush, suffer and want to act in such a way that I could expiate my behaviour before you,” she was sobbing. “Don’t push me away now.”

“My poor friend, my dear stubborn person, my beloved disciple who confided in me and who doubted me,” Ananda was talking to her exceptionally tenderly by lifting Doria up. “We won’t be analysing what was dark and sad in the past. Let’s thank heaven for sending us help through the powerful Florentian’s hand, his love and tact. Now when you’ve done all your tasks in such obedient, pure and faithful way, when you understood yourself how much you’ve lost by breaking your unconditional pledge of obedience, we won’t be wasting our time in analysing the past. It doesn’t exist anymore. You are spending your time in vain by sending the past back into your soul, because the heart’s creation doesn’t exist in sorrow, and the moments of your eternity, your presence will fly by to no purpose. Feel braver, stronger. Many affairs are waiting for us in the future. I can read within you how you want to ask me not to send you to America, but to leave you next to myself. I couldn’t have stopped and persuaded the former Doria. She would have undertaken more tasks than she could do, she wouldn’t have listened to my advices, but she would start the battle with her bare hands and she would be forced to be put out of action again. But the current Doria is silent, she doesn’t beg me anything and she even thinks that she isn’t worthy of being next to me. Calm down, my friend. I will ask Florentian to leave you to me. I hope that he will agree. If not – then we will submit to his decision easily, simply and joyfully. Come with me. I need a secretary, I think that you can do that neglected part of my work.”

Radiating with happiness, deeply excited and defeated by Ananda’s great kindness, who didn’t allow himself even to reproach her a little, Doria followed him to the rooms prepared for him. As soon as they left, the host came back to the study again, and in a few minutes mister Tendly with the old lawyer came here. Both jurists told all the details of the pastor testament’s case to lord Benedict, which the pastor’s wife and Jenny brought in the case lately. Besides their objection and official declaration that the pastor never had any sister Cecilia, and therefore, the pastor’s wife demanded the capital that was hidden from her, she and Jenny also wrote another declaration by trying to prove that the pastor wasn’t normal, and therefore, they demanded Alyssa to come back home. A summons to the court’s office on the day after tomorrow was set for all persons interested in the testament, and the investigation of the new declaration of the pastor’s wife would take place in several days. The old lawyer was boiling with indignation and he said that he had used all means by trying to persuade the pastor’s wife with illegality of her behaviour, but some youth whom she introduced to him as Jenny’s fiancé and who called himself to be jurist was persuading her the other way round. Today in the morning that youth appeared in his office again and he was trying to bribe him in every possible way, so he was expelled shamefully. Having calmed down both jurists, given them an instruction to act calmly, to talk and behave by following on the truth, lord Benedict saw them off.

Having sat down at the table, he wrote two letters and called the servant to send them, then he went upstairs and told Nikolay that he was leaving now and that he would come back only in the late evening. He left the whole house and his tired guest Ananda for Nikolay’s supervision. He told Nikolay in the strictest way that no one of the family could leave anywhere or accept anybody until he was back.

“Nikolay, I know you well. One couldn’t find any little crack or stain in your loyalty, but many things might happen during these days, even some deception. If somebody sent letters for Alyssa or the

news that her mother was dying and that she wanted to say good-bye to her – warn the girl that all of it would be a deception.”

Florentian didn’t come back till the late night, and all inhabitants of the house were waiting for him patiently and calmly, grouped round Ananda. Only one man couldn’t find any place for himself, he was excited and all trembling without understanding himself what was going on with him. That was Henry. He would shiver with fever by getting hold of his head and his heart.

“Henry, what is going on with you?” finally Ananda asked him when the youth’s consciousness was nearly lost already.

“I don’t know myself what has happened to me. I am worried and excited, as though something would threaten me, everything is shivering within me, and I don’t have strength to hold the excitement arising.”

“Let’s go with me to my room. Nikolay, we’ll be back soon, but if you need me urgently, send Doria to me.”

“My boy,” taking Henry into his room and closing the door behind him Ananda told him, “now you have to experience the results of the evil which you have allowed to enter you so carelessly. When you rose before me in Constantinople you began to open the path for evil within yourself. The evil could touch you not because it was stronger than you, but only because it found a crack for itself and it could build the nest for himself in your heart. Your passions and your pride obscured your intuition, and you took the letter from Bracano. If you had been pure and loyal – his evil venom of hypnotizing will couldn’t have poisoned you. They poured like fear, pomposity, negation into your excited soul. The efforts of my love saved you from destruction. I. helped me. He protected you with the vision of your mother who appeared to you, her pure love took you to the captain James’ steamer, while Florentian is protecting you from Bracano’s friends who are still chasing after you with his powerful strength of will. Now they are here, in London. Their emanations are going round you, because they found out where you were living, and they are on the watch for you from all sides of the house. How, my friend, could you protect yourself? If now you cannot find complete fearlessness within yourself, if your confidence don’t grow into joy of loyalty for Florentian and all your friends who surround you with their light, if you cannot see your happiness that Life has saved you from the infernal net of swindlers – then nobody from us will be able to help you. All your psych has to turn over. Not you yourself, or your personal happiness or misfortune that comes outwardly to you makes the meaning of your life, but that tranquillity, that light, that support and strength which you pour into your activity for people – this is the meaning of your life. By clarifying your mother’s old age when you were poisoning her youth many times, by protecting Alyssa in a chivalrous manner, through love of whom you understood the grandeur and power of pure woman’s love, now during these days you may become my disciple again, for whom the great tasks of activity won’t be too difficult anymore. You don’t know your other cousin, Jenny, yet, but you know from your own experience with Bracano how easily man can get into the net of evil if he’s irritable. Jenny is always not only irritated and angry, but the real astral bonfire – her mother – is always irritating her, too. While feeding one another, both of them draw the entire band of our enemies to themselves. If you are prepared to endure the experience of the whole abyss of pain, to repeat the pledge of unconditional obedience, if there aren’t any doubts left in your heart and if you comprehend clearly that there’s only one path: to walk in such a way as your Teacher sees it and leads you – then I can accept your pledge and keep leading you. You’ll leave with Florentian for several years by considering him to be the same Teacher and friend like me. An external separation won’t exist for you if joy and calm of knowledge become predominant within you.”

Henry who was still trembling before their conversation felt such relief which he hadn’t felt during his entire life.

"Thank you, Ananda, my Teacher and friend. I understand everything what you've told me. I know what I have to do, I am calm. I am not that unconscious kid anymore, who was in love with you, who caused so much pain, to be precise, troubles for you and for myself. I've matured and now I can utter the pledge of unconditional obedience independently, without any hesitation."

Ananda came up to Henry, put both his hands on his head and looked straight into his eyes. It seemed to Henry that brownish Ananda's eyes-stars with the golden hew pierced him through till the most secret fractions of his being. It seemed to Henry that he was melting from this look, that the blood in his veins melted by turning into the fire.

"Another moment – and I will die, I will die happy," it occurred to Henry.

"Wait for me here, my son," Henry heard Ananda's voice which seemed changed to him.

Henry inhaled deeply several times, looked round the room and fell down onto the armchair without any strength. His weakness passed soon, his strength and joy came back again. Another door opened, which Henry hadn't noticed. Changed Ananda was standing on the threshold – Ananda who was shining like the ball of light with the white clothes, embroidered with gold, and he was extending both of his hands to him.

Having exclaimed with happiness, Henry dashed at Ananda, and he took him into the white Florentian's room. Ananda brought Henry to the white marble table and lifted its cover. Surprised youth saw a high, green cup in which the fire was burning. Ananda took a thin stick from the table, which as it seemed to Henry was made of amethyst, reddish jewels and gold, dipped one of its end into the cup by chanting to Henry in the language which he couldn't understand, - and the fire flared up brightly, threw out several tongues of flame, one of them stuck to the stick firmly and it kept burning.

Ananda touched Henry's vertex with this fire, and a trembling rippled through his entire body. Ananda was touching him with the fire of the stick several times by putting it to his throat, heart, spleen and belly-button, between his shoulders, and every time the fire of the cup used to flare up violently, while Henry's body used to give a start. Having raised both of his hands high above Henry's head, Ananda kept chanting to Henry in the same way, in the language which he didn't understand. He didn't understand the meaning of the words uttered with his mind, but his free heart was beating with joy, it penetrated into the whole meaning of the action that was taking place. Henry perceived the infinite and eternal Life – without any forms, without any time, without any space, - to which Ananda attached him.

The flame which Ananda was still holding in his hand now was already burning along the entire stick, it was running through his entire body, his white clothes by sparkling and changing in all violet hues. Even the cup which Henry saw to be green in the beginning now was violet. Fascinated and happy Henry understood with his entire essence that now Ananda was chanting the canto of Love that overcame everything, and he responded to Ananda by uniting with him through this Hymn of Eternity. Having turned his face to kneeling Henry, Ananda put the stick on his vertex again and told him in his wonderful voice.

"My son, do you want, are you able to be for ever loyal to brothers of Compassion, to unite for ever in their activity and their paths?"

"If I'm worthy of that happiness, then I want it," Henry answered him.

"Are you able and do you want to act daily only with heroic strain?"

"I cannot live differently anymore. I won't be able to live without fight for light and truth anymore."

“Then step into the temple of creation of your fathers and Teachers, leave all your conditionalities in it – and Life will give all your talents back to you, which you’ve forgotten after ages. My son, repeat after me those several formulae which will become the basis of your day from now on:

*I follow my Teacher’s loyalty with my entire loyalty. I follow Him unconditionally and joyfully by obeying Him in such a way as my Teacher sees it and leads me.*

*I follow Him by singing the song of Love that overcomes everything.*

*I follow Him by loving and being happy, by affirming the power of victory with my Joy.*

*I follow Him, having forgotten about sadness and negation.*

*I follow Him through the days of my activity in honourable and unselfish way, and those aren’t my personal characteristics, but the aspects of Eternity that is living within me.*

Ananda lifted Henry who was on his knees, took both his hands and put them on the cup. Henry was covered with bliss, tranquillity, harmony, inexpressible calm, as though the divine power had touched him. The wave of joy escaped his entire cleaned essence, the flame flared up, jumped from the cup on Ananda’s head where it turned into the five-pointed star, and having rippled down in cascades, it covered Ananda and Henry from all sides by nearly dazzling the latter one.

When Henry came to himself, the altar was closed already, only he was still standing next to it, while Ananda had already changed into his everyday clothes, he was standing next to him with his hand put on his shoulder.

“Be strong, my son, remember this moment of your consecration, but don’t decide according to it that all consecrations are taking place in exactly the same way. Open your eyes of spirit wider and understand: as many paths exist as people do. The path of one’s consecration is everywhere: in the battlefield, by the patient’s bed, in work by the machines and where people work with joy – there’s a path to consecration everywhere. You can find it where pure laughter is ringing, but you cannot find it where fear and sadness are living. Meet all your tests with joy, because you know that everybody whom you meet during your life is only the path of your fathers and Teachers of Eternity through your meetings.”

Having embraced excited and happy Henry, Ananda took him to the music sitting-room again where Alyssa was already sitting by the grand piano. Now it couldn’t be anything better for Henry’s heart than this joint silence when the powerful and joyful sounds of the piano were sounding.

“Ananda, sing something for us,” Nikolay asked him.

“I won’t be singing today. Today Alyssa will accompany me on my violoncello, and our music will be dedicated only for Henry. And you, Henry, remember the sitting-room in Constantinople, the dark-haired, charming musician and... yourself. Everything what now you will be able to take from our music, to be precise, from our ringing love for you, - let it be only your own secret.”

And the sounds of the violoncello spread all over the place. They seized not only Henry and lady Cecilia – the whole group of people as though got stiff, they were afraid of making a move. Henry could feel the essential difference between Ananda’s performance with Alyssa and his performance with Anna. Henry was thinking that Ananda was always directing Anna to the path of harmony which she could slip away in every moment. As though he was leading her fighting spirit by helping her to escape the fight

against her passions. He was pouring calm and tranquillity onto her, while she was always forcing her way through to the new stage of her fight by complaining of her suffering and heartbreak. A protest was living within her, which was invisible in her everyday work, but which was struggling through with fire in the music. Ananda – the reconciler was playing there, while here the sounds of the music were glorifying Life, they were carrying joy from the musicians' souls who understood their life in the way as it was. All creative forces of hearts opened here, the balance of which didn't prevent the spirit from rising as high as possible, as high as it was only possible for the man's strength.

Henry understood the difference between the creative people there and here. He understood himself there and here. Today he finished one of the stages of his life and began another one. While Henry was looking at radiating Alyssa, he was thinking about Ananda's words told to him how he had to protect her in a chivalrous manner. Where and from whom he had to protect her, Henry didn't know, but he understood firmly that he would be protecting her everywhere.

Florentian entered the sitting-room by smiling with his ordinary, tender smile. Having talked to everybody for a while, he told them that he would accompany Ananda to his room himself. Having reminded Nal, Nikolay and Alyssa that tomorrow at twelve o'clock they were going to visit counts R., Florentian proposed jokingly for ladies to think well about their toilets, because most likely, the count wouldn't miss the opportunity to do things in a big way and he would invite somebody from his friends.

Having left with Ananda, Florentian was still talking to him for a long time and made casual mention that two Ananda's friends were coming from Paris and Vienna on the day after tomorrow...

The morning of the next day brought a big racket for Lisa – she almost fell out with her beloved mother. Always calm and unobtrusive countess R. on this morning was irritated and simply unrecognizable from running around and stress. Having found out from her daughter that both lord Benedict's daughters were beauties, the countess was worried that they could overshadow Lisa. She forced her daughter to change her clothes two times already and she was still unhappy about her appearance. Finally, when the first dress seemed for her to be too solemn at home, while the second one too common, the countess wanted Lisa to put on another one – the newest Parisian model.

"Mother, understand at last that the eyes of these people will see not rags. They look at you in such a way as though they were looking straight at your heart."

"Lisa, this is another one of your fantasies. Play them with your violin and let me dress you."

Everything ended in such a way that Lisa became stubborn, she put an ordinary white dress on and decorated her neck only with pearls by driving her mother to despair completely, because that seemed to be provincial for her. Lisa remained deaf to all her persuasions and she shut herself in her room, because she didn't have any strength to bear this racket any more, which the countess was rousing, as though she was getting ready to marry herself. Here she started thinking about the wonderful white Buddha in her new home, about the Florentian's words which he told her about her talent and the music, and having taken the violin from the case tenderly, she was glorifying this day, her love and her happiness with its sounds...

The knock at the door distracted Lisa from her fancies, James was inviting her, while the guests were already gathering in the sitting-room.

Lisa, obsessed with the sounds of the music, full of love and happiness, surprised the countess as soon as she entered the sitting-room. The countess was relieved already from the first lord Benedict's words when he greeted her daughter tenderly. While Lisa was standing before the tall guest, she didn't seem to be provincial. Inspiration and nobility were felt within her. Her father's endless worries, the

fight that was taking part against the original, artistic nature of her daughter under the influence of her aunt, infected her mother a little, too, who wanted to make a path for Lisa herself into the happy life which she understood in her own way.

Now the countess was observing her daughter with amazement, who was so aristocratic, so independent and... so obedient and respectful for lord Benedict. The new, yet unknown bitterness gave a twinge in her heart. She hadn't seen her daughter idolizing somebody during her entire life as now when she saw that feeling in her every look and word with which Lisa addressed lord Benedict.

"How are you today, countess?" she heard the lord Benedict's question and blushed like a student caught with a secret thought.

"I'm very absent-minded because of my constant migraine, lord Benedict. Thank you, today I feel much better already. The wonderful fruit and the flowers which you sent to me had a miraculous effect on me."

"I think that your daughter's happiness, her being with you must give you a hundred times more strength and health than my flowers, and arouse energy and desire to live within yourself. Her future family might turn into the new centre of activity and love for you. Your grandchildren, her children..."

"Lisa's children," the countess laughed by interrupting Florentian, "I haven't even thought about this side of my life yet. Lisa is still such a child... It is ridiculous to think about her future baby, as well as about your Nal's baby. Nal is charming, I can find no words, but she isn't any older than fifteen years, is she? Her little face is absolutely childish. Lisa is at least seventeen-year-old, but we shouldn't think about her children anyway. By the way," the countess added by frowning, "Lisa all looks like me, and I didn't have children for a long time. I hope that the wraps and any other baby's charm won't burden her life instantly."

"It's a great pity that Lisa has left not the most aesthetical remembrance in her mother's memory for so long with her coming to this world. When I look at her now, I can bet that she was a calm, reserved, never crying child who didn't make any trouble for her nurses. In all likelihood, life will send some calm children for her, too. And would you be satisfied with your lonely life in Gurzuf now?" lord Benedict looked at the countess with inquiring look, as though by penetrating into her hidden thoughts till the bottom.

The countess blushed from this look, she became embarrassed and answered him in a rather irritable way.

"I don't prepare for a lonely winter in Gurzuf. I've already spent many of them there due to my poor health. Our children are getting ready for their honeymoon trip to America. James casts off with his new ship there. I cannot leave my daughter alone, can I?"

"As far as I know," lord Benedict gave a laugh, "according to the laws of all countries, the parents lose all legal rights to their daughter when they give her in marriage to her husband. All the rights pass to her husband, and their daughter isn't alone any more, because she has the lord – her husband. Was your mummy accompanying you to your honeymoon trip across Spain?"

The countess was stunned. When and who could let it out about her honeymoon trip? Ah, that Lisa! When did she have time to blurt it out? And the views of her happiness that passed a long time ago flashed in her memory. How the count loved her, he was carrying her almost in his hands, he fulfilled all her whims; how she was holding him under control, she was jealous without any reasons by taking his most innocent hobbies away from him; how she took him in hand until the count got tired of her often scenes and imaginary diseases. Then Lisa was born, her diseases became not imaginary any more, the



count moved his entire love to the baby. Then her sister cut like a wedge, lots of suffering came, lots of perception of the new life, a certain wisdom – and now all of a sudden, grandchildren and... old age.

Having forgotten about everything, the countess kept reflecting, although the guests were coming, whom she was greeting automatically, she was smiling in a banal way, answering them, but her inside was living in completely different rhythm. A driller was working there persistently, which was turning up always deeper recollections of her one layer after another one. The countess as though doubled: one part of her was digging in her past by pulling out always new segments from her memory, while another part of her perceived clearly for the first time that she wasn't the centre of their family life any more. Lisa was reigning there. Lisa was attracting everybody to herself. Lisa was talking to everybody. Lisa was the turning-fork of life and she was sounding absolutely not in that tune which the countess was always trying to suggest to her. The countess was still sitting in the same place, she was talking to respectable, subtly perfumed lords whom the count used to impose on her, while he himself was always turning round Lisa and James who didn't step aside from lord Benedict, he was wisecracking cheerfully with them and he was talking by kissing Lisa's hand.

"Lord Benedict, I'm so happy that you are kindly disposed towards my little daughter. For me and for my father – that's the only sun whose light helped both of us to remain decent people in life. I'm prepared to worship you until the last of my days for your favour for Lisa and James whom my heart has already adopted as my own son."

"Dear count, I can tell you this: for your today's feelings and words you will become the happiest grandfather whom your family hasn't seen yet."

"Well, if this is really so, lord Benedict, by taking advantage of your benevolence, I invite you to breakfast with us and to drink a joyful toast. Oh, they invite us at the table right now."

Lord Benedict gave his hand to Lisa, the count came to Nal, James to Alyssa, the countess leant upon the hand of one very noble lord, she was disappointed once and for all, she felt abandoned and unwanted, but she kept talking to her neighbour in a pleasant and aristocratic way. If the manners of the neighbours of both tables hadn't made her keep the same level, the countess probably wouldn't have sustained that double feeling of her and she would have run to cry. Having strained her entire will, she was sitting like an incarnation of the highest culture, but she perceived herself: a drop would suffice – and the cup would overflow.

"Countess, there's a custom in Venice," she heard the lord Benedict's voice, "when the young couple exchange their most secret treasures during their engagement, the bride's mother exchange their wine glasses with the future matchmaker of the young couple. Your husband and your daughter asked me to accept this honour on the day of their wedding. Don't refuse to keep this custom of my homeland. Accept this small glass as my present for you and give me yours, also drink my wine, while I will drink yours."

Having come up to the countess, lord Benedict looked deeply at her eyes and gave his glass to her. He held her hand for a moment and squeezed it a little. The wave of joy and humiliation reached the poor woman's heart, and when she tasted the lord Benedict's wine, she felt relieved, her strength grew, and the whole bitterness of her disappeared.

"Be strong, my friend. You've been thinking about meeting of the wise man for a long time, you were searching for him, weren't you? Now be strong, don't be egoistic, forget about yourself and think only about those whom you've given too little of your love – about your husband and your daughter. And you will be able to meet the wise man," lord Benedict whispered her by clinking glasses with her.

"What a wonderful glass," the neighbour of the countess noticed.

The cup made of the green glass – at least it seemed like this for her – was standing on the table before her, in which several white lilies with yellowish stamens as though were engraved or impressed. The beauty of subtle work with tastefully inserted brilliants interested all guests, and the glass went through everybody's hands.

When it was the count's turn, he only made a helpless gesture with his hands and uttered by addressing lord Benedict.

"One needs to be a magician in order to give such things as a present. This isn't the glass, is it? This is an emerald cut in the finest way. Only the ancient Florence could possess such riches and such masters. Me and my wife have to give only our thankful hearts to you, because we couldn't come up with you in any visible riches."

He rose and bowed low to Florentian. After some time when the champagne was brought, the count rose again and announced that today the engagement of his daughter and lord James Rettedly, baron Obersvode was taking place.

It was a surprise for the countess. No one had even consulted her. It would have been an unbearable blow for her before, that last drop of the bitterness which she couldn't have held out, but now she heard this news out calmly and even joyfully, as the most natural thing. The countess didn't know that the engagement announced by her husband now was not a smaller surprise for Lisa and James, too. And when lord Benedict came up to Lisa to congratulate her and to put a wonderful ring with an emerald on her finger by telling her that she could give it only to that person whom she loved mostly in the world, and that according to the custom of his country, the young couple exchanged their most sacred treasures, now already not only Lisa became embarrassed, but also the captain who wasn't ready for this situation.

"Dear James, why are you so distressed? You have the medallion in your pocket which Ananda gave to your future wife. Why don't you give that treasure to Lisa now?"

"I received it, so that I could give it to her after the wedding."

"I take this trifle upon myself," Florentian smiled. "It is difficult to say when the real wedding between two people is taking place."

Lisa pressed the ring which she had just received to her lips and said to Florentian by looking at him.

"I dedicated my violin to Buddha. I dedicate my life to you, lord Benedict, and I unite my entire activity, my love, my soul, my thoughts and my heart with James, so that we could follow you together."

She put the ring on her fiancé's finger, while he gave the Ananda's medallion to her. Lisa uttered a shout of fascination unwittingly when she saw it.

The breakfast was over. Having said several more words to the count and the countess, lord Benedict and his family agreed to meet at the lord's home in the nearest days and they went home where they were met joyfully by everybody who were waiting for them.

## Chapter 15

### Jenny and her engagement

#### Jenny's wedding

Jenny felt giddy for several weeks already with many contradictory feelings and thoughts, as well as with the new people whom she had to become acquainted with. Jenny couldn't tell herself in any way that she assented firmly to her mother's position that she believed in the victory against lord Benedict. While remembering the letters received from Florentian, thinking that he was her father's friend, that he was Alyssa's friend and guardian, Jenny felt how her heart was aching, she felt sorry for her unwise actions. She was sad, but having gotten into the stream of evil created by her mother's irritability, she was unable to suppress her envy and humiliation which were tormenting her as soon as she remembered Alyssa and Nal, Nikolay and Tendly.

Her mother's new friends sent by her old admirer from Constantinople seemed for Jenny to be very kind and educated. They became wild admirers of her beauty instantly and they were competing one with another by making up to her. They covered her with the net of care and pampering so much – from the smallest trifles to the most precious presents –, they were taking care of her clothes so much, they were taking her to the most stylish and noisy places that Jenny simply didn't have time to think seriously about anything. In the evening she used to be so tired from her amusements and flirtation that she would fall down onto the bed fall asleep instantly, as soon as she put her head on the pillow.

Somehow naturally, as though against the will and want of Jenny herself, they began to consider her to be fiancée of one of those youths. The second one of them, who used to ask questions about Alyssa often also before, now was asking Jenny about her sister even more persistently. Why couldn't they see Alyssa in any of the most stylish and chic places? Why doesn't Jenny make an appointment for her sister? Doesn't Jenny love Alyssa?

Being accustomed to reign between her aides-de-camp, Jenny didn't have any desire to let Alyssa into that small circle of the youths who were so madly in love with her – as it seemed to her. And at the same time, she didn't know what and how she had to answer them by trying for her admirers not to allow to see Alyssa at all in every possible way. In this everyday racket Jenny was mostly trying to forget about the court's office, having decided that it wouldn't be soon yet. And suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, she and her mother received summons to come to that disgusting place in two days. Radiating pastor's wife, waving her summons to the court, entered the just awakened Jenny's room and began to rattle in her Italian patter.

"I've just received the letter. Two more of my friends from Constantinople arrived. They will visit us tonight. Please, try to be charming. They are very very rich, even the richest people, and as your fiancé states, they are very influential. Now we'll put the screw on lord Benedict. Here's your summons. The court's session concerning the testament will take place on the day after tomorrow. We'll uncrown the false Cecilia. You can lie in your testament as much as you want to, but you have to provide your inborn resemblance. This is the only one undeniable proof, but the pastor isn't with us anymore, so with whom should we compare her resemblance now?" the pastor's wife was shouting with laughter.

"Mother, I don't understand why you are repeating that resemblance. If you based yourself on it, you couldn't call me and Alyssa to be sisters in any possible way," Jenny answered her by not having

any desire to go deep into this question in essence and by searching for a possibility to think how she had to behave herself, what she had to do, whom she had to consult.

“Not only I invented the resemblance, my dear, our friends also state that resemblance is a very important argument. Be the way, you must have understood that your future husband’s friend is hoping to marry Alyssa. I’ve already discussed about it with him. Since the great lord doesn’t retreat a step from Alyssa, while the youth, of course, wants to see his fiancée as soon as possible, I decided to go together with him today and hand the letter to Alyssa. Perhaps, we’ll even succeed to bring her back home.”

“Mother, have you really forgotten how we stuck to the floor only from the lord Benedict’s look? You’d rather delay your intent till the court’s session. Your friends don’t know the lord Benedict’s power.”

The pastor wife’s face was only distorted when she tried to abuse lord Benedict, she uttered a groan and fell down into the armchair.

“Jenny, pain has paralyzed my spine again,” the pastor’s wife complained to her in a whining tone. “Once I spent even two days lying due to my back. It seems that it repeats again.”

“This is because you are angry and you cause a stir at home from which I feel dizzy. Please go to bed. You told me yourself that your friends were coming tonight. I thank you humbly that I will have to spend the evening alone, in the company of four strange men,” Jenny got irritated.

“How come they are strangers, Jenny? One of them will become your husband soon, right? The other one – your brother-in-law, while the rest of them are their closest friends and even their relatives.”

“Relatives or not relatives – only you know it, while no one has become my husband yet, and it isn’t clear who will become my brother-in-law,” Jenny stammered with hatred.

“What is going on with you, Jenny? I don’t recognize and understand you at all. If one behaves with a man like you do, if you take everything from him, including the most intimate services, then you certainly need to marry him.”

“Please, leave me in peace!” Jenny gave a sharp cry. “You entangled me so much with your friends that I’m unable to orient myself anymore. Leave me in peace, otherwise I will fall ill like you, and no one of us will be able to come to that wonderful office.”

The pastor’s wife still wanted to say something, but the pain bent her, and tears began to pour from her eyes. She answered Jenny silently.

“I adored only you, Jenny, and I hated only one person – your father. Well, he’s gone. I was dreaming that I and my goddess Jenny would be happy. Now I’m afraid that you are going to break our entire happiness.”

“I don’t know whether I’m breaking it, or you cannot shape it, but I repeat: you’ve almost driven me mad. Let me stay alone for a while and think.”

The pastor’s wife was so painfully sick at heart not for the first time during the last days. For all her efforts to give Jenny as much as possible pleasure and to provide for her life she heard not only a single word from her daughter, but in most cases, it used to give rise to her disapproval and coldness. Now it seemed to her that while her husband was alive, as though he was protecting her from her daughter’s irritability. The pastor never allowed Jenny to talk to her mother in a high tone. Jenny knew his

uncompromising strictness so perfectly concerning this question that she never even tried to violate this veto of her father. Now the pastor's wife couldn't understand her daughter's change, as earlier she couldn't understand her restraint and self-control. This heartache of her gave rise to the pastor wife's strong hatred for Alyssa and painful vexation for the dearest pastor.

Left alone Jenny read the court's summons several times. The small shred of paper with cold, official words for her turned into the lined up, alive, unpleasant images of the lord Benedict's family members and himself. But mostly her sister-Cinderella, her sister-fool rose among them, who surprised her during her father's funeral and who was turned into princess. Alyssa with some unclear sorcery. Jenny was feeling lonely, surrounded by the racket and people from dawn to evening. And she didn't have anybody to consult concerning this question in the importance of which she didn't have any doubts.

Jenny would have given anything if only now she could hold the green envelope of lord Benedict! How it could happen that he invited, wrote three times for her that it wasn't yet too late to correct everything – and Jenny tore up all his letters. It crossed her mind that she could dress quickly and dash away at the lord Benedict's, to tell him that she took back her declaration, that she believed in his honour and nobility, that she was begging him to break away from the web of her mistakes, in which she was entangled. Jenny already wanted to stand up and fulfil her plan, but the housemaid entered and gave her the bunch of flowers and the letter from her fiancé that he would drop in at her place in an hour, and that they would go to the dress-maker to try the bride's dress on.

Jenny was horror-struck. She wrote a short letter for her fiancé by asking him to forgive her today, because both of them with her mother suddenly fell sick and that they couldn't accept anybody. Jenny sent the letter, but she felt as though shut in the little cage by not having any freedom to act or to live as she wanted to do it herself. She didn't know the man whom she would need to call her husband. She noticed that he was restricting her only several days ago and she didn't even feel how she became dependent on him. Commanding Jenny couldn't resist him anymore when he used to propose some program of actions to her, because as though tender eyes of her fiancé were looking at her attentively and demandingly. And Jenny was worried not only about it. Every touch of her fiancé was unpleasant for her, as though some strange will was pouring into her. Jenny was rebelling inside of her, but visually she used to stay calm by not possessing any strength to resist him. It was enough for her to stay alone, oppression of his power used to disappear instantly, and Jenny used to become herself again.

Being left alone, Jenny threw down the luxurious robe given to her by her fiancé, put her old one on and she began to think about her father for the first time after a long break. It seemed to her that his shadow was whispering tender words to her, that he assented to her decision to go to the lord Benedict's, that she had to hurry. Tears darkened Jenny's eyes, she stood up again, ready to go to the lord Benedict's. She didn't have time even to step forward when the strong knock came at the door, and her fiancé commanded her in an imperious voice to show up instantly. Protected by the closed door, indignant at the youth's rudeness Jenny flared up and demanded him sharply to leave her in peace.

"How can I leave you in peace when your mother is dying?"

Frightened Jenny rushed to unlock the door and she jumped back from it in horror. A tall stranger was standing next to her fiancé, who was looking at her with strict, shining, black as coal eyes. "I will teach you some obedience," those eyes as though were talking to Jenny. Horror didn't allow Jenny to make a move, she couldn't take her eyes off him and she moved only when she heard her fiancé's voice.

"Dear, I frightened you, excuse me, excuse me. But I was afraid that you wouldn't open the door instantly, and your mother really feels unwell. This is my uncle. He knows several means and he can help your mother. Take us to her, I'm sure that she will get better."

By not comprehending anything besides that “obey, obey”, which his eyes were telling her, Jenny took both men into the pastor wife’s room. Lady Katherine was lying on the sofa, she didn’t feel any pain, but she was unable to stretch herself. Having introduced his uncle to the pastor’s wife, who had just come from Constantinople in order to help her, Jenny’s fiancé squeezed her hand tenderly, offered her to dress and to go with him to the dress-maker’s. Their wedding had to take part tomorrow without fail, as his just arrived uncle and his friends were demanding it. Jenny didn’t have any strength to protest. Lady Katherine surprised her, who was having a chat with her fiancé’s uncle joyfully, who seemed to be so disgusting to Jenny.

“Go, go, my children. I feel better already only because senor Bonda is here. Understand, my dear Jenny, he’s friend of the closest man to me in the entire world from my childhood and my youth. I recovered instantly,” the pastor’s wife was chattering, who straightened herself a little.

Senor Bonda looked at his nephew meaningly and began to speak in unpleasant, thin tenor, which was too high and shrill for his fat figure.

“Armand, your fiancée’s and her mother’s sudden illness frightened you so much that you forgot to introduce me to them according to all rules of Oriental courtesy.”

Senor Bonda was smiling. Perhaps, one could consider this smile to be polite and tender in the East, but the London’s girl shivered with loathing. When senor Bonda took both of her hands without restraint and ceremony, and kissed them one after another, it seemed to her that a snake approached her. All of a sudden, Jenny grew pale, she felt unwell, she was sickened and she wanted to run to her own room, but his black, sharp and running eyes as though were ransacking her soul and preventing her from making a move.

“Soon, very soon, my dear, you will become Jenny Sedelani and not Jenny Wodsword, and I will have the right to greet my niece in much tender way. And in the meanwhile, accept the small present from me. This is the string of blue Oriental pearls, fitted into agates. Let it be the wheel of your life. Take it off neither during the day nor in the night. Your fiancé Armand will fasten it for you, and nobody’s hand, except mine, will be able to undo it,” senor Bonda was talking by smiling in the same way.

He put his luxury present quickly on Jenny’s neck, who as standing before him, deprived of speech, while Armand fastened the small clasp hidden among pearls, agates and brilliants so skilfully that it was impossible to find it. When the string began to shine in all colours of the rainbow on the white Jenny’s neck by making her paleness, her red hair and her dark eyes with narrow, dark eye-brows more apparent, the pastor’s wife gave a shout of fascination.

“Oh, Jenny, my dear child, not a single beauty of the world will be able to come up with you. What brilliants, what pearls! Alyssa will burst with envy only by seeing you with this string.”

“It’s nothing, mummy,” senor Bonda answered her by stepping back from Jenny and coming to the lady Katherine’s sofa again.

He tapped on the old lady’s shoulder without ceremony, sniffed and continued.

“We’ll find not worse present for your second daughter as well. Just bring her back home as soon as possible.”

Armand dragged his speechless fiancée back to her room and told her in a commanding way, as Jenny wasn’t used to hear it.

"Dress quickly, we don't have much time. We'll go to my uncle's after the dress-maker, who will be back home by that time. You'll become acquainted with his friend there, who came with him from Constantinople. He's my friend Henri Dordier's uncle Martin Dordier, but he's so cheerful and witty that everybody calls him only cheerful Dordier or Marto. All of us call him monsieur, you also call him like this, and please don't pretend to be a Madonna if he tells something in a little freer way. Sometimes he doesn't control his hands, too, not only his tongue, but I won't allow him to do it, be calm. Well, quickly Jenny, and please don't show your mournful face," Armand squeezed her hand, closed the door after him and added from another side already. "Put the black silky dress and that hat with the white plume on, which I brought to you yesterday in the evening, and no other adornments, which you love to hang all over you. We'll be having breakfast with selected public. I give you fifteen minutes."

Armand went to the sitting-room, and there was nothing left from his calm. All his movements showed his great excitement. He was looking at the pastor wife's door with anxiety behind which a laughter and cheerful conversation was heard. Senor Bonda showed up in the sitting-room in several minutes.

"Well, my imaginary nephew, how did you manage to fulfil the master's order?" he asked with his squeaking voice by pulling a wry, stinging face.

"It is easy to order, my imaginary uncle. First, you needed to find out who that old fool lawyer was and only then send me to bribe him. He is a perfectly honest idiot, a maniac of English honour. I don't have any influence on him, because his purity stinks so much that it is difficult to breathe, while his young nephew was absolutely inaccessible for me, I was unable to hang on any of his passions. I don't doubt that Ananda inspired that lord Benedict. Henri found out today that Ananda was in London already. How could it happen that the master didn't know about his journey to London when he sent us here. He was persuading everybody from us that Ananda would stay in Constantinople for the entire year. Now we can lose this entire business. It won't be easy to fight against him without Bracano."

"Well, you are still too young to value the master's instructions. Do as you are told to, then we'll see."

"Well, not! I'm not a soldier for you, while you aren't a commander for me. It is enough that you shoved this always sullen and gloomy beauty as my wife and also her most vulgar mummy to me."

"We won't argue, my nephew. As soon as we get Alyssa, we'll liberate you from your deathly pale wife instantly. It will be like this, leave her silly mother to me. Here's a little bottle for you. Pour a couple of drops into Jenny's wine when she cannot see it, and her cheeks will begin to bloom like roses, her tongue will come undone, and most likely, you will be satisfied with her. Don't be long, come straight to my hotel."

Bonda came back to the pastor's wife again, while Armand wanted to go to Jenny's, but he didn't walk more than two steps when he caught her by the outer door.

"Well, I like this. Only fourteen minutes passed, and you are not only dressed, but even standing by the outer door."

All her hopes to slip away unnoticed disappeared. When Jenny was left alone in her room she was trying to tear off the string which she called the dog-collar instantly, although she noticed that it suited her very much and emphasized her beauty. She was trying to tear it off with both of her hands, but the string didn't submit to any strength, it was like made of iron. Jenny got into a rage, she fell onto the armchair disappointed and suddenly, like in the most ardent moments of her childhood when things were not getting well for her, she gave a shout: "Father, father, help me!" It seemed to her that her father was

absolutely next to her, she calmed down a little. Jenny threw off her robe and dressed in a flash. She put on everything what her fiancé told her to, and only one thought was spinning in her head: to slip away as soon as possible, to escape to the lord Benedict's. Jenny couldn't have answered why it seemed to her that she would find salvation there, but this thought was clearly leading her out of the house. Jenny was late for several seconds. If not the fit of her anger which took time from her, Jenny would have been in time, and who knows how her future life would have been getting on, how the destinies of the entire circle of people would have met and separated. Jenny lost only a moment, one short moment – and the relentless hand seized her in order not to let its victim go again.

Armand understood that he had nearly lost the main trump of this game slip off his hands. He didn't show Jenny that he had guessed her secret and her want to escape, he hid his anger deeply and made a vow to revenge himself upon his future wife for her today's escapade. Armand was conducting himself in a polite and gallant way by not showing his dissatisfaction in her with a single word. Surprises were waiting for Jenny at the dress-maker's as well. First, Armand insisted that the dress – against the English fashion – was without the trail by explaining to her that the wedding would take place only at the notary's. Second, by looking at his fiancée attentively, he asked the dress-maker to send the dress to her house tomorrow, no later than at four o'clock, because they needed to be at the notary's at six o'clock.

It was such a jeering for Jenny who hadn't fixed any wedding's day to find out that they dared to take advantage of her against her own will, that she was marrying tomorrow, that she got wax angry, seized the collar of her dress and wanted to tear it off, but before doing so, she touched the string inadvertently, and her hands turned themselves loose like some broken strings. Having met Armand's look, she saw such sarcasm and contempt within him that she directed all her helpless anger to the great handbag made of pearl and turquoise, which her fiancé had given to her. Jenny as though threw it down on the floor accidentally and squashed it with both of her feet by trying to fool him that she slipped.

"What a pity, my dear," Armand was speaking to her by feeling for his fiancée and picking the crushed handbag up. "It was really an Oriental thing. I have no doubt that among my uncle's wedding presents you'll find not so fragile things, but more like your string."

He stroked his fiancée's hands tenderly and threw the remains of his present into the burning fireside.

"Oh, what you've done!" the dress-maker gave a shout. "It was still possible to mend that wonderful thing."

"No, madam, the entire period of miss Wodsworth's life ends with this ill success. An absolutely different woman, my wife, senora Sedelani will step into her life tomorrow. Well, there will be some more stable materials than pearl for my wife. The turquoise is also an amulet of Oriental love. If it turned out to be too weak, we'll find some more effective ones. How do you like this string?"

"It is wonderful. It suits miss Jenny very well, but it makes her demonic. I had never soon your fiancée more beautiful as today before, but... I wouldn't like my daughter to appear like this on the eve of her wedding."

"Girls – that's a strange breed, madam. It seems to them that they need to register a marriage with the tragic expression."

"Maybe it is so," the dress-maker gave a sigh, "but if we need to be in time, then please leave the dressing-box, because miss Jenny must dress herself."



Armand Sedelani left the room as though with reluctance. He reminded Jenny on the threshold that they were waiting for them, so they had to hurry.

"Miss Jenny," the dress-maker bent down by the pale and sad girl, and whispered her, "what is going on with you? Come to yourself, you are in England and not in the East, aren't you? If you don't like this man, then who's going to force you to marry him?"

"Perhaps, you could cut this damn string? If you can do it, then I'm saved."

"What is so especial here? Not some wires are welded here, right?"

"I'm afraid that it is worse than wires. I tried to tear it off, but I was unable to do anything."

The dress-maker who became more and more surprised took the biggest scissors and approached Jenny. As soon as she touched the string with the scissors and pressed the very thin like platinum small chain, both women gave a shout and bounced one off another. The dress-maker felt a stroke and burning, while Jenny got hold of her heart and fell onto the armchair by which she was standing.

"Lord, I haven't seen anything like this in my life," the dress-maker crossed herself in horror. "This isn't any string, but the rope of a convict."

"Jenny, are you ready soon? We'll be late because of your lingering," Armand was knocking at the door.

"Woman isn't any soldier, senor Sedelani, is she? Miss Jenny needs to dress herself as your beautiful bride is supposed to," the dress-maker was filled with indignation.

Big tears were rolling down from Jenny's eyes, and she could hardly dress herself even with the help of the experienced dress-maker.

"You don't love him. Don't you really have any friends who could help you?"

"It is too late. Only now I understood who my real friend was and why he warned me."

As soon as Jenny got dressed, there came a knock at the door again. When Jenny came to the waiting-room she was so weak and pale that the dress-maker offered the glass of wine to her.

"Just in time," Armand uttered.

He took the wine from the dress-maker's hands himself, diluted it with water a little and, as it seemed to her, gave it to Jenny after pouring some drops.

As soon as she drank the wine, a strange reaction happened instantly. Her cheeks burst into bloom, her lips turned red, her eyes lit up like those agates and brilliants of her string.

"You are so charming, miss Jenny, I'm certain that everybody's eyes will be directed only to you during the breakfast."

Jenny who was silent up to now, suddenly recovered her speech and coquettish laughter which surprised the dress-maker very much. A stunning change happened in Jenny's mood. She was admiring herself while she was walking along the mirrors, she liked that impression which she made on the neighbours of the table, while they seemed to be very nice and pleasant to her.

Senor Bonda who seemed to be so repulsive for her now seemed to be very attentive and kind. He was telling her about his innumerable riches which she and her husband would receive, because he didn't have his own children. Only his keen eyes as though were always telling her: "Be obedient, be

obedient", but now Jenny was joyful. Riches, clothes, jewels and aristocracy of which Jenny was dreaming so much – finally, everything opened up before her. And the eyes that were talking to her about obedience boringly and always looking at her so insistently, now seemed to be only a trifle which she didn't have to pay any attention to. After breakfast senor Bonda invited Jenny, her fiancé and both Dordier to his room where coffee served in Oriental style was waiting for them. Having seated Jenny on the sofa and given a cup of coffee to her, senor Bonda began to talk about Alyssa.

Having interrogated her cunningly of everything about lord Benedict, he offered Jenny to write a little letter for her sister, to inform her about the serious illness of her mother and about her sadness that her wedding was tomorrow, while her sister hadn't even seen her future husband. That Alyssa could come with the deliverer of the letter and tomorrow, after the wedding she could come back home. Laughing merrily Jenny was mocking at Alyssa's fiancé Henri Dordier who couldn't even imagine what an ugly duckling was prepared for him as his wife. Henri was sighing and responded to her in the same style by saying to her that his close kinship with her would compensate a great deal for him. When the letter was written, senor Bonda put it into his pocket and told them that he would go to visit Alyssa himself personally and bring her to Jenny.

Having separated with cheerful company where they gorged themselves with heavy, piquant, fat meal and sucked enough of wine, Jenny and her fiancé came back to the pastor wife's home. Now it seemed to be natural for Jenny that her fiancé embraced her body, bent down and he was looking at her eyes closely. Her thoughts about her wedding didn't worry her anymore, and even the pastor wife's question why they had to hurry to register a marriage so much when she was sick and she couldn't accompany her daughter, now seemed to be unworthy of any attention for her.

"Mummy, we'll register our marriage at the notary's tomorrow, and if it seems to you that we certainly need the church, then we can postpone this ritual until your recovery, but my uncle says that church ceremonies – that's an old survival which no one needs anymore."

The pastor's wife nodded her head in doubt, but she didn't dare to argue with senor Bonda's opinion whom Bracano himself sent to her. All memories of love from her youth revived in her heart which probably knew only Bracano alone during her entire long life. The time was passing pleasantly, everybody was waiting for Alyssa, but it was late already, and she still didn't show up. Finally, there came a knock at the door, but unfortunately, disappointed and angry Bonda entered instead of Alyssa.

"Why didn't you tell me that it was a fortress, not a house?"

"What fortress? This is one of the richest houses. There are such great pictures, such great china..."

"I'm not talking about furnishing. I'm talking about the barricades around the house through which it is impossible to break. I couldn't even hand the letter, not only see Alyssa," Bonda was roaring by attacking Jenny.

"I offered you to go myself and bring my sister with myself, didn't I? Me and my mother have been there many times and we didn't see any barricades. I volunteer to go there for Alyssa again."

"Sit at home and go to sleep earlier, so that tomorrow you would look charmingly next to your young husband," Bonda answered Jenny by trying to smile. "We used to overcome even more serious barricades than the ones of some blockhead Benedict."

Soon the guests took their leave, while mother with her daughter were left alone.

"Well, my dearest angel, my dear Jenny, we've lived till the great day of your wedding."

As soon as the guests left, Jenny began to pull her string again.

"Jenny, my dear, what are you doing?" the pastor's wife gave a shout in horror by changing from the most tender tone into the most irritable intonations in a flash, as soon as she saw her daughter's efforts at the mirror.

"Instead of shouting and chattering trifles about the great days, you'd rather help me to take this dog-collar off," no less irritated Jenny was shouting.

"My God! What is going on with you? Where do those expressions come from? What else could you be dissatisfied with? Everything is like in a fairy-tale: your fiancé came flying on the flying rug, his uncle jumped out as though of the magic box and poured everything with gold, while you are always snorting. Indeed, your character was better, while your father was still alive, and now I don't even know how I could please you."

"It does not matter, you'll fall asleep in five minutes, you'll begin to snore in the entire house in the next five minutes and you'll forget not only about your worries – you'll forget about everything in the world. And whether that snoring of yours is pleasant for me – you haven't even think about it during your entire life. I ask you only one thing: sleep and snore as much as you want to, but don't poke your nose into my business and behaviour. Otherwise, I'll leave you tomorrow."

Having reproached her mother in such "friendly and respectful" way, her "tender" daughter went to her room to spend her last maiden night alone. Having pulled her dress off herself somehow, Jenny put her old robe on, which was made by loving Alyssa's hands. As though scattered about by a whirlwind, she could calm down neither on the couch nor on the chair; she was rushing about from one corner to another until finally, she went to the sitting-room. It was an absolute silence at home. As though everybody was dead. This unusual silence surprised Jenny, which usually was disturbed by the pastor wife's snoring. She even became anxious for a moment when she thought whether she was talking to her mother not too rudely, but her egoistic thoughts about herself overflowed even this noble thought of hers instantly. The girl wasn't afraid of the dark sitting-room which was lit up only by her brought candle. On the contrary, this darkness was pleasant for her, it didn't irritate her strained nerves which were tormenting her. Jenny was always searching for what she could do. Her look touched the table, and she noticed a golden cigarette-case with her fiancé's monogram on it. In all likelihood, he was smoking while he was waiting for her and forgot it here. Being certain that it was her fiancé's cigarette-case, Jenny opened it, took a cigarette out and had a smoke. The cigarette was small and very thin. Jenny was surprised by the pleasant aroma that didn't remind much of an ordinary tobacco and she thought that the Oriental cigarettes were different than the English ones.

The more Jenny was smoking the more her mood was changing, she became cheerful. That what still frightened her several minutes ago, now seemed to be only a trifle. She even grew tipsy like from a good glass of wine which she already got used to drink. She felt how pleasantly her blood was getting warm. It became hot. She took her robe off, stood up and saw her reflection in the big mirror.

It became boring in the dark for Jenny. She lit up the big candelabums by the mirror and saw herself in the mirror only in the nightdress, with her smiling lips, her widened eyes and her burning cheeks. She liked herself like this. She wanted even more light. She lit up all candles on all tables, but that didn't seem to be enough for her. Then she stood on the high chair and lit up both chandeliers with the special candle on the stick. Now the room was shining brightly, and so was doing Jenny herself. She went up to the ancient mirror again, came unplaited and began to admire herself. The string illuminated by hundreds of candles was pouring in all colours of the rainbow, while the pearls which were blue – Jenny knew it well, - now became fiery.

Jenny was bending to all sides by being reflected in the mirror, her luxuriant copper hair covered her like a fire clothing and it was fluttering round like flaming tongues. It occurred to her that she had never seen herself nude and she didn't even know how she looked like. Since she was educated in that purity which the pastor was spreading around himself, it didn't even occur to her to think about her nudity, but now Jenny who was encouraged by her hot blood pulled her nightdress off her shoulders carefully in the sitting-room that was sparkling with lights. Having bared her irreproachable hands and breasts, Jenny was struck with admiration. Then her belly and her hips were already uncovered, later her entire nightdress fell down on the floor by her feet.

"I'm so beautiful! Just think for a while – I didn't even know that I was so wonderful," Jenny was talking by laughing silently. "Isn't that one happy, who will get this treasure..." she kept talking by admiring her body. "Is it worth it that this beauty would belong to somebody alone? Such wonderful body must adorn the lives of many people. What is Alyssa worthy of next to me? Or that fool Nal? Both of them will be stunned in the office. And lord Benedict himself could hardly resist my charms. Oh, the real life will start now!"

Step by step, while moving towards the mirror and away from it, Jenny started doing some movements. By not understanding herself what she was doing, Jenny began to dance the most shameless dance which couldn't have occurred even to the greatest temptress. Jenny enjoyed herself so much that her loud laughter already reached her mother's ears several times, who was crying bitterly and silently.

The pastor's wife was crying many times during her life, but every time her rage used to summon her tears. Now she was crying with tears of an aged woman. Now the pastor's wife understood that her husband whom she hated was the only one who was feeling sorry for her, he was the only one compassionate for her. Having experienced how lately Jenny repaid her for all her sacrifices and love, the pastor's wife was crying with despair by understanding that she had nothing what she could hang on in her life. The ghost of utter solitude and death rose before her eyes for the first time. Her life which she lived in vain had flown past already, and there was nothing left for her, only the darkness. There wasn't any light of life before her, which she would have created with her own love... When Jenny's loud and sonorous laughter was heard between her silent wails again, a superstitious fear covered the pastor's wife. By putting her feet somehow with much difficulty, with her eyes red with weeping, stooped, with tousled hair and not having any strength to stop her rolling down tears, she walked slowly to the sitting-room where Jenny's laughter was still heard. Without having any strength to understand anything, lady Katherine opened the door, she was dazzled with the bright light and got stiff with horror on the threshold from the shameless movements of naked Jenny, from her terrible laughter and her excited state. Unfortunate woman decided that Jenny had lost her mind. Jenny who didn't notice her mother instantly, all of a sudden, saw some scarecrow in the mirror and decided that that was a ghost, and she began to scream "Witch, witch!"

Frightened by the supernatural view in the mirror, having forgotten that she had her mother, having forgotten about everything, except her orgy, intoxication from her beauty and hunger for life, naked Jenny rushed from the sitting-room by almost knocking the pastor's wife down, who managed to step aside somehow, she ran into her own room and fell down to bed.

"The witch of old age appeared to me, so that I wouldn't stare with my mouth wide open and wasted my time in vain. She could have not appeared, too. Not a single day without pleasures and spending money in the future," Jenny was thinking by calming down little by little.

Exhausted by the long dance, Jenny began to drowse at last. In this way she stepped into the new day that had to end the presence of miss Jenny Wodsworth and that promised the new life of senora Sedelani.

The pastor's wife was still standing in one place for a long time. It seemed to her that the most terrible and irretrievable disaster of her life had happened. Jenny was madwoman! Her pride, her life, her future – Jenny – was madwoman! Despair dried up her tears and revalued all values in her heart in an instant. What were the riches of the entire world worthy of now if her baby couldn't use them? Not having any strength to put out the candles which were still burning, which she had prepared for tomorrow so carefully, the pastor's wife lent her ear to the silence by being afraid of hearing the mad Jenny's laughter again and she walked slowly to her room. Now she could clearly see the abyss of her misfortune. That's why Jenny was so rude with her during the last days. Hence, Jenny was insane for a long time already, only her mother didn't understand her baby. What was the universe, what was the entire world to her if her dearest, her body and blood wasn't together with her, if she couldn't comprehend the beauty of the world now?

"Oh, Bracano, Bracano! You seduced and you lost me. You told me to marry Andrew immediately by hiding my pregnancy. I obeyed, I did everything precisely, while you deceived me. You promised me to come back and you never did it. You promised to help me in the most difficult hour – where's that help of yours then?"

The pastor's wife spent the rest of the night and the whole breaking morning with these thoughts, having forgotten to tell the housemaid to put in order the melted candles which were still smouldering here and there.

When the housemaid entered the sitting-room she was stunned by the melted candles which trickled down to the floor. She ran to tell this to the pastor's wife immediately. To even greater amazement of her, the pastor's wife only shrugged off by not paying any attention to her words, she told her to call the yard-keeper, to scrape off everything and to put new candles. She was lying on the couch like dying, absolutely broken down spiritually and physically, and she was waiting for the sounds of her death sentence from Jenny's room.

But it was absolutely calm there. The hours were passing, there wasn't any sound from her daughter's room heard, and the pastor wife's patience was exhausted. There came a knock at the outer door, the messenger brought Jenny's every day present – the morning bunch of flowers from her fiancé. Today's bouquet was especially luxurious. Two letters were enclosed, too – one of them was for Jenny, another one was for her mother. Having passed the flowers and the letter to the housemaid, the pastor's wife sent her to wake up Jenny, while she herself, by not daring to come in, hid behind the door in order to see and hear everything.

"What is it?" Jenny answered to the knocking with her overslept voice.

Having found out that she received the letter and the flowers, Jenny got up from the bed lazily and let the housemaid in. Having taken the bouquet, she dropped it on the floor and said to the girl.

"Bring me some wine quickly, my throat got dry."

Having heard such unusual demand of her daughter, the pastor's wife was even more distressed. Everything simply confirmed Jenny's madness. Having come back to her room, she sat down on the armchair and opened the letter. Having looked at the signature, she saw that the letter was from Bonda. Only yesterday she would have rejoiced at this letter, but this night carried away all her energy and joy of life. She was holding the letter indifferently by not reading it and always listening attentively to what else life would send her from Jenny's room. There wasn't a sign left from that pastor's wife, cheerful and lifegiving woman who was standing in the lord Benedict's sitting-room several months ago by introducing her daughters to him and competing in her beauty with them. One night furrowed her face with deep, sad

wrinkles, turned her hair grey, withered the skin of her neck. Not the pastor's wife, but a deplorable shadow of her was sitting on the armchair with her swollen, red eyes, all sickly yellowed.

"Mother, what has happened to you? Why are you sitting undressed?" all of a sudden, the pastor's wife heard and she saw Jenny with luxurious robe given to her by her fiancé.

Jenny's face was pale, her eyes were out, she was all lazy and flabby. That already was completely different, new Jenny whom her mother didn't know. Everyday tone of former Jenny was raised, her movements gushed with energy and temperament. Today's Jenny was exhausted, indifferent to everything, she was straining the words as though by confirming the pastor wife's night thoughts that her daughter wouldn't be interested in any beauty of the world anymore. The pastor's wife wanted to find out whether Jenny remembered something from her night behaviour and whether she knew that her mother saw her disgraceful clowning by the mirror, but she was afraid of asking her about it.

"I didn't sleep well, I was dreaming grim dreams," Jenny was straining the words indifferently. "Besides, this string is very inconvenient, it lies heavy on me. It is so stupid to make such fasteners. Apparently, there are many different follies in the East if we judge by my fiancé and his uncle. Whom is the letter from?"

"From senior Bonda, but I didn't have time to read it yet."

"Then read it. I didn't have time to read mine, too. I hope that today until wedding I won't have to see your protégé."

"Jenny, my child, don't you really like your fiancé? He is so handsome, isn't he? After all, you are still free, you can still postpone the marriage, you can cancel absolutely everything."

"Ha, ha, ha! That's how you started singing! It was impossible even to breathe without your advice of how to charm Armand and not let him go, and now you started singing about my freedom. It is too late, mummy; when they put the collar on your daughter, you shouldn't allure me with any freedom. You've pushed me into the trap yourself, and now you want to wash your hands in the clean water and remain innocent. Oh, you! At least now you could find a drop of love for your baby – love which you were boasting of so much and which you used as a cover during your entire life."

Jenny was telling all these terrible words in the apathetic way, as though a dead doll would have moved her lips, that's why the words seemed to be even more terrible for the pastor's wife. Jenny stood up from the coach with difficulty, went to the sitting-room and stayed there after asking to bring her breakfast there. The pastor's wife who was doubly crushed both by Jenny's appearance and her words was sitting and always listening attentively to what was going on in the sitting-room. But nothing especial happened there, only that Jenny asked to open all windows. The pastor's wife started reading the Bonda's letter.

*Dear lady Katherine! Our mutual friend, duke Bracano reminds you of the oath of your youth which you've made to him for ages. You've sworn to him by his most precious black brilliant to be loyal and obedient always and everywhere by submitting to all his instructions. He allowed you to live as you wanted to until your husband's death. Now he demands you to leave your elder daughter in peace, she will have her own lords who will fill the gaps of her education. You perfectly know who her father is, and if you don't submit to these requirements, both of your daughters will find out about this truth. Bracano demands you to give your second daughter, the only one baby of the pastor, in marriage to Henri Dordier – he does so without going into details of how it could happen so that you've let the youngest one slip out of your hands.*

*Bracano gave us a task to take her to Constantinople. According to our prepared plan, we'll take her away straight from the court's office, we'll use force if needed. We've already selected some people for this task. Your task is to put the string on her neck when you embrace your daughter in the court's office before proceedings, and I will bring the string to you today. Leave everything else to us. Remember well: with one of your hands, on which I will put Bracano's bracelet for you, embrace the girl tightly, while with your other hand put the string on her neck while stroking her head. I will bring some medicine for you, so that tomorrow you would be healthy, and today stay at home, the wedding ceremony will be modest and short, we'll manage without you. Together with fiancé I will come at your home at four o'clock.*

*Respectfully yours, Tebald Bonda*

The pastor wife's horror grew into spiritual and physical paralysis. Depression, fear, despair that obsessed her during the entire morning and disappointment in man for whom she had kept illusions of her youth now crushed her completely. Today she remained indifferent to this terrible letter, too, which yesterday she would have tried to burn down. Isn't it the same what they will be thinking about her now? Jenny was madwoman, wasn't she? And she won't even understand that what was written here. But they were taking the only one little thread of life from her, even the mad Jenny.

The pastor's wife didn't know how much time passed. She also didn't know that Jenny smoked the thin cigarette again, and again she as though came to life. The pastor's wife was surprised when Jenny entered her room with the brightly green dress, reddish cheeks and shining eyes by humming a tune. Jenny wasn't musical, the tune didn't sound correctly, and not that surprised the pastor's wife, but the expression of her daughter's face, the rest of the orgy that she saw at night. The pastor's wife took the letter and covered her face with her hand, as though by being afraid of seeing the night dance of her daughter.

"Mother, what is going on with you? You are still undressed and uncombed. It is three o'clock soon, and the guests will come at four o'clock. We need that you at least wouldn't frighten Henri. He's as lively as a grig, but I feel that he also will die from boredom when he sees such an appearance of yours."

"I think that I have neither to go to the sitting-room to meet the guests nor to go to the wedding. I will have to lie in bed, I'm absolute patient and I feel like an old woman of a hundred. The whole ceremony will be only a record at the notary's, according to the last shriek, and for that none of the custom of society is needed. Both of you will sign, the witness will sign – and you are husband and wife already. Probably, your husband and his relatives won't have any desire to come back to the sick mother. You'll have another family name already, and I doubt whether you will want to visit me at all with such current mood of yours. My child, live as you want and as you like to live."

The pastor wife's voice was so unusual and silent that Jenny stopped and she was listening to her mother as to some incredible story which somebody told her. The whole appearance of her mother – of the crushed, faded and suddenly aged woman – surprised Jenny.

"Mother, you've really changed. Give the letter to me. What is written in it? Who is writing it?"

Jenny wanted to take the letter from her mother's knees, but she clasped it in her hand and put it into her pocket.

"This letter is only for me, Jenny, while you let me understand a long time ago already that I didn't exist for you. My troubles, as well as my love, is a burden for you not for the first time."

"Where is that intolerable manner from," Jenny stamped down her foot, and the string sparkled, as though her entire anger passed into it. "And that is called my wedding day! You also could say your prayers for me like by a dying person. Well, show your whims as much as you want to, we'll manage without you, too. Just think! She organized this wedding with her own hands and now she takes to her heels."

"Jenny, have pity on me, for God's sake!"

"Why do you thrust that God of yours to me now? What pity are you talking about? Where you pitiful? To whom? To my father? To Alyssa? To me? She wishes pity! Reap what you sow."

Having turned round on her heels, Jenny left the room and began to command to lay the table for tea for which her fiancé promised her to bring the whole dessert and snacks. Jenny forgot her mother after a while and she was admiring herself in the mirror. She went up to the table and took the golden cigarette-case into her hands. The initials made of dark brilliants which Jenny liked began to shine brightly in the daylight, and she read the letters: "T.B."

Jenny snickered.

"I thought that I was smoking my fiancé's cigarettes. I'll have to confess myself, that crocodile will notice instantly that two of them are missing."

Having remembered the ransacking Bonda's eyes, Jenny felt unpleasant nausea in her throat, but she didn't have time to think about anything else, because four men already entered the hall by laughing joyfully from Marto's wit. While everybody were taking their seats in the sitting-room, while they were inspecting the wedding dress that was brought in, the pastor's wife was still sitting alone with her despair. For some reason she remembered how she visited the lord Benedict's, how he gave the string from opals and brilliants to her, as well as the same earrings and the fastener. Especially she liked that fastener, often she used to admire and clasp it. She extended her hand, took the fastener from the small desk, pressed it to her forehead and whispered.

"Compassion, compassion, compassion. You've taken one daughter from me, now he takes the second one from me. He doesn't possess any compassion. Can you find some compassion for the sinful woman, can't you? I deceived my husband, I deceived my daughters. Let me die, too, but I beg you to have pity on my daughters."

All of a sudden, she felt relieved. As though the cold stones imbibed the heat of her body. She could breathe easier already, she could draw herself up, she stood up and bolted the door of her room. She came back to her armchair by always pressing her favourite fastener to herself firmly. Confidence was pouring into her. Her thoughts became calmer, she started thinking what she had to do now.

By not comprehending why she was doing it, the pastor's wife lit up the candle and burnt down the Bonda's letter. She felt calmer. Having put both of her hands on the fastener, lady Katherine started thinking how terribly she behaved when sometime she uttered Bracano's oath which now gave the right to her life and death to him. She addressed her thoughts to lord Benedict by asking him to save Alyssa from those terrible people now, not to give her second daughter to the people whom she comprehended till the end during this terrible night. "Why, why was I repeating those meaningless words after him, why was I kissing that black jewel?" lady Katherine always remembered the days passed a long time ago. Only now, abandoned by everybody, when she was told that she wasn't needed even in her beloved daughter's



wedding, when she already couldn't find a single close person in the entire world, suddenly she began to comprehend what she had lost when the pastor died. And with this new gust of despair, by pressing the fastener to her lips, so that her lament wouldn't slip out, she was talking to Lord Benedict in her thoughts.

"You were his friend. You really cannot be angry and revengeful. Save, save the pastor's baby! Alyssa is his true daughter. I will be punished for my sins, but please save Alyssa."

By not understanding anything with her heavy heart, by not comprehending that that whom she was offering her prayers was unable to hear them, the pastor's wife fell on her knees, pressed her face to the string given to her and kept praying with such faith and such heat with which she had never prayed God. Everything mixed into a delirium in her exhausted heart and shaken brain. She couldn't comprehend anymore where the reality ended and her fantasy began. It seemed to her that somebody's comforting, compassionate voice that gave strength to her was talking straight to her ear.

"Remember your husband and pray for his help not only in this moment, but also during your all remaining days. Protect the pure jewels given to you by the compassionate hand. Understand what compassion of kindness is and have hope. Everybody who addresses compassion with prayer will find mercy in it. Stop crying. Be strong. Act in such a way as though your husband was standing next to you and he saw everything what you were doing. Don't touch those things and that medicine which they will bring to you. Throw them into the fireside, and when you are left alone, wait for the instructions of what you have to do next."

It seemed so clearly for Lady Katherine that she could hear that voice that she brightened up immediately, became much straighter and began to dress herself.

The sonorous laughter was resounding in the house, everybody was talking at the same time, somebody ran across the corridor and the hall several times. The words about the bride's dress and that it was time to go already reached her, but no one remembered the pastor's wife. Finally, somebody came up to her door and knocked by turning the door handle instantly. Having made certain that the door was locked, Bonda shouted impatiently.

"Mummy, quickly open the door, I will give that what I've promised to you."

The pastor's wife whose ear could distinguish the intonations of drunk people perfectly, understood that Bonda had several drops. She answered him, while sitting in the armchair.

"I cannot get up and open the door. Leave everything by my room's door. I will stay at home absolutely alone, nobody will take your things. As soon as the pain allows me to do it, I will try to get up and take them."

Impudent and sarcastic Bonda's laughter was heard behind the door.

"But don't you really want to take a look at the beautiful bride and to bless her?"

"Senor Bonda, you explained perfectly to me that church ceremonies are unfashionable anymore, and no blessing is needed for registration at the notary's."

"All right then, I put the medicine and the little packet on the chair. When you untie the packet, you'll find a note of how to use the medicine and how to behave with the things. Don't forget my instructions. By the way, Jenny won't come back to you tonight. Tomorrow all of us together will go to the office, while you will come there alone. In many aspects, it will be much more convenient for me in this way."

Bonda wasn't even interested in how the helpless, sick pastor's wife was going to spend the night, who dismissed the servants for the entire night by his own order. He joined the whole merry company, and soon the noisy sitting-room became empty. Not only pain was tormenting lady Katherine's heart – it seemed to her that only the piece of ice was left instead of her heart. She was all starting with despair, solitude, contempt and pushing away. Her cherished dream – Jenny's wedding about splendour and luxury of which she was dreaming for long years, now would take place only at the notary's. And her girl will sleep at the hotel like some wench. That adored girl of hers didn't even come up to the door to utter her last maiden good-bye.

The pastor's wife couldn't have told for how long she was sitting, stiffen like this. Little by little, her thoughts began to turn upon tomorrow, upon the pastor's testament, upon the pastor himself and upon friend of his last days lord Benedict. She thought that she had fallen into a doze when she was crying and praying lord Benedict to help her, and that she must have dreamt those words of compassion. The pastor's wife decided to listen to the advice of her dream. She was surprised herself how easily she got up and went up to the door. The wave of horror and hesitation rippled through her. She was listening attentively – the silence was reigning everywhere. Lady Katherine stepped back from the door, set fire to the fire-wood in the fireside and only then she opened the door of her room. When she took the packet with the tongs of the fireside, it seemed to her that she all as though was torn in two parts: somebody was whispering to one of her ears "Quickly throw it into the fireside", while to another ear "Don't dare".

By hurrying, being afraid of dropping the ill-fated packet and of not listening to the comforting voice heard in her dream, she threw it into the very middle of the burning fire-wood. Several minutes passed, and the packet with the medicine blazed up, began to hiss like the fireworks, while the flame was changing in all colours of the rainbow. The view was so unusual and beautiful that the pastor's wife couldn't take her eyes off it. After the long resistance, suddenly the packet with the things took fire, an explosion was heard, then the second, even stronger one, and the smoke broke out of the fireside...

Frightened to death lady Katherine rushed out of the room, she was shouting and thinking that there was a fire and that the roof was falling down. As soon as she jumped to the corridor, there came a knock at the outer door. By not comprehending anything, she dashed at the door like mad, opened it and... she found herself straight before lord Benedict.

"Quickly, quickly," he uttered by throwing a cloak on her shoulders. "Close the door well and get into my coach."

Having slammed the outer door with his powerful hand and turned something in the lock, lord Benedict seated the pastor's wife into the coach, sat down next to her and shouted to the coachman "Home!".

Lady Katherine who was defaming lord Benedict two days ago now was buried in his soft and warm cloak which warmed her entire trembling body. Suddenly, the pastor's wife felt in the same way as a person pulled out of the burning house had to feel. Tears were rolling down her cheeks; she didn't dare to take a look at her rescuer, she was thinking that she would see that attentive and commanding look which used to nail her to the floor.

"Don't be sad, poor lady Katherine. I was acting in the name of your husband and his love. He's forgiven everything to you for one moment of your love for Alyssa, for one real, experienced till the end moment of your self-sacrifice."

The pastor's wife who was afraid even to look at lord Benedict now forgot everything, because she was enchanted by the intonations that sounded in his voice. Her heart that already reached

the limit of man's suffering, who was hoping to get some strict reprimands and morals, now opened up and poured everything what was the best from the most secret depths.

"Lady Katherine, compassion of the Great Father-Life doesn't look like the one of people," the same tender voice continued, the kindness and comfort of which melted all the mountains of evil and sadness with which the pastor's wife was fencing herself off. "Tonight you can spend the night at my house, but if you give me honour and accept my hospitality, you'll have to submit to some of my conditions. They won't be difficult, but only then agree with them when you want to submit to them voluntarily. If you don't want to do it, you can go back home in any moment."

"Lord Benedict, have pity on me, don't send me back home. I don't have any home anymore. I couldn't beg successfully any word of compassion from Jenny during that terrible hour. And those who can come back for me there wouldn't bring me anything else, except death. I agree to endure everything. I'm almost dead already. I've lost the most precious in my life – my Jenny and her love. I don't value life anymore. Now the mistakes of my life seem to be so terrible for me that I cannot be rescued anymore. Now I can see my relations with Alyssa as the whole row of my mistakes – not even mistakes, almost crimes. And now I cannot even understand how I could be so cruel to the poor girl who was so diligent and who loved me so much. I don't have any strength to retrace from what such behaviour of mine began and how I've taken such terrible path. Command me, lord Benedict, I'm not afraid of anything, except going back home and meeting Bonda."

The pastor wife's voice was trembling and twitching. One could feel that this woman who had reached the abyss of disappointment got hold of lord Benedict like the only one hope of her rescuing sent to her by Providence.

"We've already come, lady Katherine. Muffle yourself up in the cloak, and nobody is going to see us. It will be difficult for you to breathe in my house without the cloak. You won't see Alyssa now. And tomorrow you won't let it out about your experiences of these days. I will accompany you to the room where you will feel absolutely safe and where none of your persecutors will dare to penetrate."

Lord Benedict helped her to get out of the carriage and he took her straight upstairs from the garden's side. Here the fire was burning in the small and cosy room, it was warm and calm. Florentian seated lady Katherine into the deep armchair by the fireside and told the servant to call Doria. In several minutes the girl showed up and he told her.

"Dear Doria, I brought my dead friend's, lord Wordsword's wife. She's sick, and you loved the pastor. Please spend the night with the patient in the name of the pastor's love who was talking to you not so long ago. Here's the medicine for you, which you need to give her right away. Order to prepare the bath for her and give the second medicine to her after the bath and the supper. Stay by lady Katherine after you put her to bed until I come myself."

"I repeat to you, lady Katherine, don't be afraid of anybody. As soon as you take your medicine you will feel better, you'll stop trembling. Don't think about anything, sleep calmly. Tomorrow I will tell you everything what you will need to do later. You feel much better already, your back doesn't hurt anymore, does it?"

Lord Benedict went downstairs. The whole family that missed him already were very glad of his appearance here. He asked them merrily to feed him. After the supper he invited everybody to his study and reminded them about their visit to the court's office. Nikolay and Nal would have to stay at home. The band of dark fanatics who were also persecuting Lovushka in K. got in touch with Constantinople, but they lost his tracks there. Now they sent their messengers to London according to false information where they

keep searching for him. They don't even realize about Nikolay and Nal. They don't need to see them, but that band is plentiful. They couldn't leave the house empty, the villains would try to get into it. Sir Vomi and Ananda's uncle will come tonight. He would stay at home together with the people whom he would bring with himself. They would protect Nal with Nikolay.

Ananda would take the most important witness to the court's office with the separate coach, while everybody else would go with lord Benedict and sir Vomi. Everybody would be shown his own place in the office, but Henry, Alyssa and lady Cecilia would have to hold sir Vomi's hand and not step back a pace from him. Having said good-bye to everybody at home, who were excited in their own way, Florentian together with Ananda went upstairs to visit Doria and lady Katherine.

The pastor's wife was fast asleep already and, contrary to her habit, she wasn't snoring at all. Having come up to her bed, Ananda took one of her hands, while Florentian – the second one, and he put his other hand on her forehead. Florentian uttered silently and clearly.

"I cancel your terrible oath made to the villain during your youth by not comprehending its meaning."

A spasm rolled along the whole body of the pastor's wife. She gave a sigh, and the bloody saliva dribbled from her mouth, but she didn't open her eyes, it seemed that she didn't even wake up.

"The outburst of your today's prayer for Compassion and your selfless love which you found in your heart cancelled your treason against the powers of light. Your love which you showed to your youngest daughter who was persecuted for so many years and your prayer to save her sent help to you and forgiveness of Those whom your husband asked to save you. Now stand tightly on your new path which you managed to obtain by your prayers. Forget about everything what you ever promised for Bracano or Bonda. Remember only one thing – that you need to save Alyssa, that you want to save her, and that your and her salvation depends on your loyalty to that what Ananda will be telling you. Sleep peacefully and without any fear. No strange will or hand will be able to touch you in my house or anywhere else if Ananda or I will be next to you."

Having told Doria to leave lady Katherine alone neither in the night nor in the morning, and to find some better dress and hat for her from her own clothes, both friends went downstairs again and took seats in the study in order to wait for sir Vomi and Ananda's uncle.

As soon as Jenny with her bride's dress, her head decorated with beautiful little wreath made of orange blossoms and the same little bouquets attached to her fiancé's and matchmaker's lapels left her native home her stormy mood died out. Although Jenny was irritated by the poisonous Bonda's cigarette from the early morning and she drank several glasses of wine during the breakfast, anyway she wasn't so drunk like the men who accompanied her. Their tongues got untied so much, till the most indecent hints and jokes that it became almost terrible for the girl who hadn't heard a single obscene joke not so long ago. She would have given a lot if now her mother was sitting next to her.

"Why didn't my mother got into my coach?" she asked her fiancé.

The merry Marto answered her, who was shouting with laughter and prattling puns which were not very pleasant to Jenny's ears. By making faces and winking at Jenny, he persuaded her that Bonda was taking her mummy in his coach, that they weren't bored there, and that soon it would be absolutely joyful. Along the whole way her fiancé pressed Jenny to himself by not feeling shy of his friends, he put his arms round her body by trying to pull her closer to himself and to kiss her lips. Poor Jenny was trying to beat off his attacks with all her might by cheering up her fiancé himself and the whole company even more while doing so.

"Armand, it seems that you will have to call your friends to help you today," Martin Dordier was raging by shouting with brazen-faced laughter. "You can count on me," Henri's uncle finished, because the coach stopped already, while the drunk voices assented to him with their neighing.

Somebody's hand opened the door with anger. Sullen Bonda was standing next to the coach and he looked at the merry company angrily with his ransacking eyes.

"What? Have you all broken loose from chains?" Bonda shoved his head into the coach and he was shouting by hissing with anger. "I prepared to visit the well-known notary not with some scandalous band which can disgrace me, right? I promised you the cheerful night in the hotel, while you cannot even wait and you behave yourselves like some drunk sailors. While you, young lady from the good family and decent society, are no different. You cannot behave yourself in the coach in the middle of the white day. This isn't any bedroom for you. Well, Bracano is going to teach you with his whip several times, then you'll become well-bred instantly. Get out quickly and tidy yourselves up, so that one could see that the cultured people came and not some dissolute beasts."

Without waiting for an answer from his friends who were deprived of speech, Bonda turned away from the coach, entered through the wicket-gate and tore along the flower garden to the house standing deeply. Only when Bonda was entering through the wicket-gate, everybody who were sitting in the coach, and mostly Jenny, began to come to themselves from their confusion and fury.

"Don't pay attention, my dear wife. The manners of this gentleman are especially original, but he's quite good man, he's loyal as a friend, and you will have an opportunity to be convinced of the truth of my words not a single time."

Jenny whose fury had already reached culmination, while her eyes were burning like coal, was unable to utter a single word. She only whispered in a wheeze.

"While I'm going to register a marriage with you, I swear to take vengeance on him."

Jenny was so horrible, her distorted face from her spasms was so terrible that not only her fiancé, but also the whole company got sober instantly.

"Jenny, control yourself, smoke a cigarette. You cannot appear to people with your wedding-dress and such face," Armand told her by poking already lit cigarette into Jenny's mouth. "Is also your sister's character the same?" his question slipped out.

Jenny didn't have time to answer anything to him. A servant came running up to the gate to let the coach into the yard. The notary who thought that it would be uncomfortable for the bride with the long dress tail to walk through the entire flower garden told to open the gate. This break allowed Jenny to control herself. The irritating smoke of the cigarette raised her spirits instantly, while the poison of her insult, hatred and anger which were boiling in her veins merged into such decisive and angry will of hers that Jenny entered the notary's house being completely calm by appearance. She succeeded to hide the fire that was burning within her even from Bonda's eyes. The lessons of dissembling which once the pastor's wife revealed to her helped Jenny in this moment. She was smiling pleasingly to the notary and his clerks, and she played such happy bride that she managed to fool even Bonda himself. Jenny's behaviour surprised the old crook, and he praised himself immediately for his subtlety in reforming people. He decided that the main medicine for Jenny was her fear of the whip, and he praised himself one more time for such ingenuity of his, which opened in educating girlies.

When all formalities were done and when the whole sincerity bought for money was over, including the champagne offered in the name of the notary, Jenny with her husband got into the Bonda's

two-seater coach, while Bonda was delayed by counting the money. They left their seats for him in the merry company. Armand assented to his wife and got into the Bonda's coach with her. He got furious with his imaginary uncle no less than Jenny herself. He knew that due to Martin's care the festive dinner and some of his friends with their ladies were waiting for them in the hotel, and that with whatever mood Bonda would return he wouldn't dare to make a scene next to them. Jenny's rage, her hatred for Bonda and her entire behaviour were telling Armand that his wife would be his loyal ally in all deeds of his life, even if she didn't become loyal and dedicated to him, what didn't seem to be so important to him.

And indeed, a big company was greeting them loudly in the hotel. Jenny controlled herself once and for all and she began to play the role of wife in love instantly – of the charming kitty and pleasant hostess who was a little shy in this new and unusual situation. By attracting everybody's attention with her beauty, Jenny decided to play first violin today and not to give way to Bonda in anything, but... to pretend that she was very attentive and obedient niece. Bonda suppressed his anger for a while, which was tormenting him since they left the fiancée's home, he pretended to be a happy uncle, he was trying to keep the conversation with high life manners and to appear absolutely careless, but he felt uneasy in his heart. His thoughts were always turning on the pastor's wife whom he hadn't fastened the bracelet himself as he was ordered to do. He admitted himself that it seemed that he made a mistake by not bringing the pastor's wife with himself here. It would be calmer for tomorrow, but Bonda was afraid that the unrestrained woman would be insulted after seeing what company her daughter got into on the very first day of her new life, and that she would make a racket. Bonda looked round the table, and his face was distorted by his terrible smile. The company suited very well for the pastor wife's daughter. The faces were drunken, colourless and tinted... Bonda had seen many fallen down people, but rarely he could observe such anxious ones who didn't have even a hint about happiness and calming. They were eating and drinking greedily by trying to represent themselves as people from the good society, who knew its luxurious and aristocratic life. And in truth, Bonda was reading their poor thoughts, he could see their desire for riches and pleasures. He understood perfectly that the merry Marto had gathered the band of people here who were ready for everything, and if their work was paid well, then they wouldn't feel shy to try any means. And the company had provided enough money, because the Master of the Order himself was concerned with success of the business. And Bonda gave a smile again, he was satisfied by feeling to be a certain kinglet.

The dinner was taking place in usual order by turning into an orgy, while Bonda was glorified. Only Jenny was trying to drink as little as possible and to stop her husband from doing so. Being dizzy from Jenny's characteristics revealed today, Armand was obedient to her so far. She even excited his respect and gentlemanship. Martin who was trying to start his obscene puns several times met such sullen and furious looks of both newly-weds that finally, he bit his tongue by not understanding why Armand was so vexed. When the dinner was almost over, Bonda was tired of the disjointed and stupid joviality of his guests. He wanted to stay alone and to drink his favourite wine to his satiety, which was too expensive to make drunk such gang, besides Bonda liked to drink hard alone by reflecting freely on the affairs entrusted to him.

Without understanding why, Bonda felt especially unwell today. His head was splitting with pain, he was unable to accumulate his always so unshakable will, while his thoughts were scattered. All of a sudden, the image of the pastor's wife always kept emerging from somewhere, as though one could have expected some serious danger from that sickly and old woman who was plunged in evil and anger. Being amazed at himself, Bonda was shrugging his shoulders in his thoughts and chasing away that unwanted image by thinking that the pastor wife's anger was persecuting him because of her solitude which he had doomed her to. Finally, he succeeded to send his guests and the newly-weds to the dance-hall, while he went to his own room. Here he sat down on the armchair comfortably and surrounded himself with the bottles of his favourite wine.

One bottle after another one, one cigar after another one, Bonda reached the highest point of his bestial satisfaction and he began to drowse by swallowing the liquid of the ruby colour suddenly again and again. Having tossed off one more bottle, he threw his feet on the fireguard of the fireside and fell fast asleep. That one who would have seen this face of the sleeping man would have decided that his eyes were misleading him, that a ghost was before him, and that such beings could really neither walk nor breathe nor live on the earth. His forehead was greenish pale, his cheeks were violet, his puffy nose was red, his lips were black, from which the saliva was stretching down by soaking into his beautiful shirt with diamond cufflinks, his contracted arms had veins of an old man of a hundred, his fingers were distorted with big, flat nails... Bonda didn't look like a man. His protruded lips uncovered his blackened, rotten teeth and they were making an angry grimace from which even a robber would have given a start if he had come here to rob the sleeping Bonda.

Unexpectedly, the calm dream of the villain stopped. All of a sudden, he felt terrible pain in his heart, spine, throat, he jumped up, gave a loud cry and began to rummage the room with his mad eyes which were running about without comprehending anything. Bonda was unable to understand anything. The pain that pierced him scattered all his hangover, but he couldn't understand in any way where he was, what was going on with him, why he woke up. Suddenly, the second wave of pain pierced him. He remembered that Bracano felt the same pain in Constantinople where Bonda pretended to be a doctor back then. A horrible thought occurred to him, from which fear chained him. He broke into a cold sweat, his eyes widened with horror. "Ananda" – that only one word was tormenting him, it paralysed his will and it didn't allow him to draw himself up. He looked round, saw his cigarette-case on the table and reached it very carefully by not moving too much. He lit up a cigarette with his trembling hands. The cigarettes with opium didn't affect his deaden nervous system in the same way as Jenny's for a long time already, but smoking helped him anyway. Now he didn't look like that horror ghost anymore. He turned grey from the smoked cigarette, and his face turned from red violet into ash-coloured one.

Bonda grew bolder, he even tried to make a move and he could do it. He drew himself up a little at a time, stood up and asked himself with amazement why he was so frightened. He wanted to stretch himself already by thinking that he had taken a glass of wine too much and to go to the bedroom when suddenly, he felt the pain again, and now it was so strong that he could hardly keep his feet.

His eyes became drowsy, he remembered Bracano again and now he didn't doubt anymore that he encountered the power of kindness that surpassed him. But where was the centre of the fight now? Whose renunciation and treason stroke these terrible blows to him now? Who did betray him and Bracano? Who has broken her oath of life and death? Bonda was standing with fear to move for a long time. He was rummaging in his heated brain by searching for that person who became his deadly enemy. All of a sudden, it occurred to him that nobody else except the pastor's wife could cause such horror which threatened him to be not only the loss of favour of his chiefs, but also his real destruction.

Bonda didn't comprehend his big mistake and light-mindedness instantly with respect to lady Katherine. When he tried to imagine that with help of his medicine she could reach lord Benedict and betray him or even give his things to him, which Bracano gave to her and Alyssa, Bonda felt so unwell that he could hardly reach the sofa and he fell down on it with despair.

He smoked one more cigarette, drank a glass of water and began to think about his situation. It was clear that first of all he had to get into the pastor wife's house and to find out the degree of her guilt. Bonda went to his bedroom and took a bundle of master-keys out of one of his suitcases. He wanted to have a reliable accomplice, so he decided to take Henri and Armand with himself.

Bonda threw on his cloak, pulled his hat over his eyes and cast a glance at the corridor. Everybody was sleeping in the hotel already, the musicians were breaking up, one could see some servants

here and there. Now Bonda regretted that he told to put his suite as far as possible from himself when he was pretending to be a kinglet. He had to go upstairs and cross the long corridor. Having reached Armand's rooms, he stopped with amazement. The door was thrown open till the end, while the servants of the hotel were doing the rooms. They answered vaguely to the Bonda's question what was going on that the newly-weds had left an hour ago.

Furious and anxious Bonda went to the hotel's office and found out that the newly-weds moved to another, much calmer building, but now nobody could get there, because the gates were locked for the night, but the nephew asked to inform his uncle that he with his wife would come straight to the office at the agreed hour. Bonda couldn't bring himself to wake up Henri, he decided that both he and Martin would be in such condition after the drinking-bout that there wouldn't be any use of them, even if he succeeded to wake them up.

Having sent the curse for such discipline and sluggishness, Bonda went out to the street by surprising the doorkeeper with such late hike into such foggy night. In spite of his work of many years with Bracano, Bonda couldn't boast that he was brave. Besides, he liked only to drink alone, while he was always working with his handymen. If he hadn't been so afraid of Bracano and all other characters, whose cruelty he knew perfectly, probably now he wouldn't have gone into the fog of the sleeping town, but one of his fears benumbed his heart, while another one controlled his feet.

Bonda found the cab, explained to the sleeping coachman what he needed and told him to bring him to the pastor wife's house. Having found the front door with difficulty, he began to hit it so strongly that even the pastor could rise from the dead, not only the pastor's wife who was still alive. But nothing helped him. Having groped the door lock with his hands, Bonda wanted to shove one of his master-keys into it, but as soon as he touched it he received a strong blow on his hand instantly.

"Who is here?" he screamed with fear, but he could hear only the snoring of the coachman who fell asleep again in the silence of the night.

With his hands thrown up Bonda was trying to grope for the door in the dark by putting his feet carefully, but he didn't seize or strike anything. Being afraid of the night policeman, Bonda found the keyhole in the lock for the second time, he shoved the master-key into it quickly, but he couldn't turn it again, he received a strong blow on his hand again and this time he couldn't lift it anymore. His hand was hanging like lifeless. With much difficulty he managed to lift the fallen down master-keys with his left hand. It seemed to him that the stairs of the porch were slipping under his feet, and he could hardly sit down on them, because he wanted to reconsider his situation. Bonda understood instantly that the pastor's wife not just escaped, but that some strong enemy took her. But where could he search for that enemy, how could he regain the pastor's wife, so that he could have her next to himself tomorrow and get Alyssa with her help? The fog was clearing away already, the day was breaking. His hand began to revive, he explained to coachman where he had to go, and they rolled down the empty streets again, this time to the lord Benedict's house.

Having come to the other end of the street, Bonda got out of the cab and, having told the coachman to wait for him behind the corner, he went past the lord Benedict's house several times by not daring to cross the street – he could remember too well his first unsuccessful try to get into the house with the letter for Alyssa.

Finally, he plucked up his boldness, came down from the pavement onto the roadway and had time to take some steps when the coach harnessed with excellent horses dashed out from around the corner and stopped by the gates of the house by nearly knocking him down.



The villain had a narrow escape from death, the autumn mire spattered him from top to toe, and everything what he had time to see – that were two men who already stepped through the lit up door of the house.

The door closed, the gates opened widely instantly, the coach drove in through them, and everything settled down again.

Furious, wet, exhausted Bonda could hardly control himself in order not to beat up the coachman who was already drowsing on his seat again.

Bonda somehow managed to slip to his room unnoticed, because the morning fuss of the hotel servants who were always cleaning something had already begun. Having pulled his wet clothes off himself with aversion and tossed off several glasses of wine devouringly, Bonda went to the bedroom.

In this way the night before the battle ended, for which Bracano sent him here and which he described to him as an easy and pleasant joke.

## Chapter 16

### The court's office.

#### Martin and the duke Saintger

The sun began to shine unexpectedly after the foggy and rainy night, and dried the wet and dirty streets. The pastor's wife who had a strange sleep woke up with relieved and joyous heart. The benumbed sadness didn't oppress her anymore, it was her constant company since the pastor's death, which she was trying to conceal from Jenny.

Lady Katherine didn't understand instantly where she was. And only when Doria opened the windows to the garden, and when the aroma of the flowers, the chirping of the birds and the sunbeams gushed into the room, she understood where she was and she remembered all her experiences of the last night. She was surprised that all these memories didn't call any fear and despair within her now, which she was feeling during the last days. Neither Bonda's behaviour nor the oath with which Bracano had tied her up disturbed her soul, as though a wall had risen between him and her.

Having washed herself and put a modest, but elegant black costume with Doria's help on, as well as black hat with the mourning band, lady Katherine understood absolutely clearly for the first time that she was wearing mourning which they with Jenny used to always throw off, that she was widow and not a young woman anymore. Her yesterday's terrible wrinkles and flabby cheeks smoothed down a little through the night, she didn't look so terribly anymore like yesterday when she was sitting by the fireside. The hoarfrost touched the red pastor wife's hair, and now it wasn't so striking. This tender hue of silver even embellished her peculiarly.

"Well, lady Katherine, our breakfast is finished, let's go to the adjacent room, soon Ananda is going to visit you."

"Ananda, Ananda," as though by trying to remember something, the pastor's wife was repeating after Doria. "Who is he, that Ananda? As though I've heard this name, but I cannot remember it."

"Ananda – that's very close friend of lord Benedict. He will go to the court's office together with you. Well, here he is."

Having greeted both women politely, Ananda gave lord Benedict's request to Doria to go to lady Cecilia's where she would find Alyssa and himself. Having heard lady Cecilia's name, the pastor's wife gave a cry, staggered and sat down on the chair without any strength to stand anymore."

"What did frighten you so much?" Ananda asked her.

"Nothing. I'm just so exhausted from all kinds of misfortunes of the latest days that the uttered name which doesn't have anything in common with me summoned very difficult memories within me instantly."

"In truth, I don't even know how your husband's sister who is such kind and peaceful soul could cause any difficulties and pain for somebody, and I don't doubt that your meeting with her, as well as with Alyssa is very important to you."

"Hence, my husband who was searching for his sister was right? Hence, he really had sister?"

“Why don’t you trust your husband? Even in Venice when you were only his fiancée, he told you about his sister’s sad disappearance from home.”

“Yes, yes, he told me about it, but... but... Bracano explained to me that Andrew Wodsworth never had any sister, that that was his mental disorder, some insanity of his.”

The pastor’s wife was completely confused, she was looking at the charming companion, as though by asking him to help her to find the truth.

“Lady Katherine, your love and confidence in Bracano has brought many misfortunes to your life, hasn’t it? In all likelihood, you could see his cruelty and falsehood with respect to both yourself and your daughters many times. Let your meeting with your husband’s sister and your real nephew Henry become the decisive step in your life. Having made sure of Bracano’s falsehood, renounce him and his entire band with Bonda at the head of it.”

“If only you knew, mister Ananda, how my heart is bursting! I cannot be even for a moment with those mean people anymore, but I invited them myself and I gave my beloved baby to them with my own hands. How do I have to live now? How could I get back Jenny from them?”

“Before thinking of how to get your daughter back, you have to fortify your position at least on the small moral platform, so that the integrity of your thoughts and feelings could take your being into creation. If you chase two rabbits, you will get nothing. Accumulate all your strength of love, so that first of all you would help us to save Alyssa now. Don’t repent of being unfaithful wife and bad mother, but be glad that you can return a part of your loyalty to your husband by providing your overdue help and care for his daughter Alyssa.

Jenny – and you know it better than others do – has her alive father who won’t stop before any obstacles in order to claim his rights to her. If you haven’t understood that Jenny inherited quite a lot of his characteristics, then you had to make sure of it lately. Are you still feeling the tormenting bond with Bracano within yourself?”

“No, no! My terrible oath for Bracano was oppressing me so much, as though several pounds of weight, like some iron chains, were put on me all the time, but when I had a good sleep at the lord Benedict’s house, everything fell down off me, as though somebody had untied wings for me. It is easy for me now, I stopped being afraid of him.”

“If this is so, then now you have to think not about your fight against Bracano, but about Alyssa’s protection. And your first job must be your joyous meeting with lady Cecilia, her acknowledgment as the competent proprietress of the wealth left to her by your husband’s testament.”

“My poor little head, mister Ananda. Of course, I’m not going to defend Bracano’s lies, the goals of whom I don’t understand up to now, but how am I going to recognize her if I’ve never seen her before?”

“Your desire not to argue with the evident facts – that’s what is important. Your loyalty and fortitude is important if you can make sure yourself that lady Cecilia might be your relative. It is important that there wouldn’t be any hesitation and doubts within yourself. Leave everything else to us.”

Ananda stood up and offered to lady Katherine to go downstairs where he would introduce her to lady Cecilia and to somebody else. They climbed down the stairs which were lit by the sidelong sun. Dazzled with the sunbeams that were shining straight into her eyes, lady Katherine couldn’t even see instantly who was standing before her in the room, but she could see well one figure – her daughter with the mourning clothes.

“Alyssa,” her mother gave a shout by extending both of her hands towards her.

“I’m here, mummy,” she heard her daughter’s voice behind herself.

Having turned around and found herself between two Alyssas, the pastor’s wife covered her eyes with her hand and whispered.

“My God, what is going on here? Isn’t it some kind of magic?”

“Calm down, lady Katherine,” lord Benedict uttered. “Lady Cecilia really looks very much like your daughter, but anyway Alyssa will see herself like her in the mirror only in twenty years.”

The pastor’s wife felt how lord Benedict took her arm. She looked at him with gratitude and she was surprised how it became easy and unusually joyous in her heart and what a strong attachment to this man was born within her, who seemed to be the most terrible still not so long time ago.

“Let me introduce you to,” lord Benedict continued, “to your relative, lady Cecilia Wodsworth, according to your husband – lady Richard Rettedly, baroness Obersvode. Here’s her son Henry, your nephew. Here’s lady Rettedly husband’s brother, captain James Rettedly. You know the others.”

While still holding the pastor wife’s arm, lord Benedict came to lady Cecilia again, took her arm and seated both women next to himself.

“Lady Katherine, you still cannot come to yourself after your amazement that such resemblance passed from one kinship to another might exist. I think that no examination would have needed anything, only to stand both of them one next to another,” he added with his smile by letting Alyssa have his place.

Lord Benedict talked about something with Ananda and left the room.

“Alyssa, will you ever forgive me for all my sins?” her mother took her daughter’s hand and asked her by looking at her wonderful face.

“My dear mother,” Alyssa answered her by going down on her knees before her and pressing her lips to her hands, “you were suffering so much that even your hair turned white, your face became lean, while I wasn’t next to you, so that I would take care of you and protect you. My God, who’s going to measure my guilt for leaving you in your bad luck!”

Tears were ready to pour out of Alyssa’s eyes. She was looking at this new her mother’s face without stepping back – it was exhausted and aged, but such calm, without any daily irritation.

“Where were my eyes, my little daughter, that I didn’t see how beautiful you were? Why didn’t my heart feel your love? It is terrible to think what I should have done in an hour from now,” the pastor’s wife was talking with horror.

“Alyssa, stand up,” the lord Benedict’s voice was heard. “I want to introduce all of you to my friends who came here this night. Here’s sir Vomi whom some of you know well already, and here’s Ananda’s uncle, duke Saintger. Both of these friends take care of the destinies of everybody who have gathered here. Stop crying. No other possibilities exist in this moment in order to fulfil the pastor’s testament, as only to accumulate all our strength bravely, as well as our tranquillity and joy of our love for him. You cannot forget the most important thing in the most gloomy and tragic moments of your life – joy that you are still alive, that you can help somebody by pouring the atmosphere of calm and protection into man through your body. Now everyone of you steps into the new stage of your life and every one of you will have to meet evil in that moment. Not an abstract devil about whom your grandmothers were telling

fairy-tales to you, but everyday evil who is walking among us on his two feet, the same ones as ours, and who is weaving the net of falsehood, irritability and treason. With what forces are you going to that meeting? An absolute fearlessness, tact and self-control. But these powers – they aren't the result of our breeding, they are the aspects of that living love which everyone of us has in our hearts. Go to fight and to win by loving. Compassion for liars and deceivers is exactly the same as for all suffering, kind people – just not tears. To take compassion on somebody – first of all, it means to accumulate courage. To accumulate courage in such a way that your fearless, pure heart would be able to pour its love. While love, sympathy and protection – that's not always kind, approving word. That's both a reproach and a lift of a strange thought through yourself into much higher and wider sphere. That's also the blow of a loving hand if it sees how man's spirit is falling into decay in order to pour fire into the falling down man's spirit and energy with the prop of its power. That's also a reward for one's lived daily routine in pure and creative way. Now we'll go to the court's office. Lady Katherine, Ananda will take you together with Doria. Please don't leave Ananda's hand not for a single moment. Here's a bracelet for you, it will protect you against Bonda's sorties when you have to sign the statement at the lawyer's. Everybody else know how they have to act and they will go with me and sir Vomi. We leave in fifteen minutes."

Lady Katherine, Alyssa, Cecilia, Henry and James Rettedly clustered round Ananda like round their own common centre. The rest of them clustered round that duke Saintger, sir Vomi and lord Benedict.

On that bright morning Jenny woke up from the knocking at the door. To the overslept Armand's question who was there, the servant answered him that his uncle invited his nephew because of the very important and urgent matter. Armand began to curse, but anyway he started dressing himself immediately, because he knew that Bonda wouldn't disturb him without a serious matter. It was disappointing for him to step away from his young wife in whom he found much more than he expected to. Since yesterday's dinner he and Jenny made a silent union when he understood and appreciated her cunning, her mind and her insidious simulation. He didn't doubt that Jenny didn't love him, but since she hated Bonda like a tigress she would stay together with him, and this tied them together even stronger than love.

The newly-weds were getting up lazily by mocking at Bonda and half-dressed they sat down to drink some chocolate, but Jenny and Armand weren't destined to sit calmly and silently during this first morning of their marriage. As soon as they sat down, absolutely unrestrained Bonda broke into the room.

"How did you dare to move here? Why are you acting wilfully? Probably you want me to teach you some obedience?" Bonda began to shout by imitating Bracano.

Jenny's eyes flashed, but that wasn't that furious and unrestrained Jenny anymore like yesterday when she was driving in the coach. She pressed her husband's hand a little by calming his anger, she gave a joyous laugh and told him.

"Uncle, you like to be ridiculous, don't you? Look at the mirror, how you look like – as though you had waded in mud and fog during the whole night."

And while still laughing, Jenny showed the spots on his cloak to Bonda, which he put on again because of his absent-mindedness instead of the clean one that was prepared for him by the servant. Bonda looked Jenny up and down suspiciously and angrily.

"You have only follies in your head. It's my business where I've been during the night, but where your mummy was wading – nobody knows it."

These words really touched Jenny, but she didn't show her anxiety to him.

"What could be so strange here if my mother was bored alone and she came to some of her friends?"

"Just think! It was sad for your beloved mummy because of her beloved child! Perhaps she came straight to lord Benedict's to visit her lost baby?"

"My mother could visit lord Benedict in the same way as you could turn into the statue of Madonna," Jenny was shouting with laughter.

Bonda calmed down after such categorical Jenny's statement, but he was still trying to show his exaggerated anxiety.

"I don't understand you, uncle," Jenny was talking to Bonda by frowning from the bad smell of wine that was spreading from him. "Why are you so worried? My mother hates all Benedicts so much that even because of her revenge she is going to take Alyssa from them. I know my mother's character well: if she decides to do something, then she will die, but do it. And that is the question of life and death for both her and me, because I'm her idol."

Such ruthless malice and horrible hatred was reflected on Jenny's face that even the cruel Bonda gave a smile in his thoughts by congratulating himself with his loyal ally to whom he managed to turn stubborn and self-willed Jenny.

"And you, my charming niece, are sure that your mummy will be punctual, that she will fulfil all my instructions precisely and in time?"

"I think that she will be there sooner than you and especially sooner than us if you keep disturbing us, so that we could dress," Jenny snapped out in the same dismal way.

"I leave you. I'll drop in again in half an hour. All four of us will go together: I with Henri and both of you, while merry Marto will be busy with some other, no less jolly business," Bonda added by smiling impudently.

"Uncle, haven't you thrown that absurd thought out of your head yet to attack the lord Benedict's villa?" Armand asked him by frowning with vexation.

"I don't have to give any account of my actions to you, my dear. And don't poke your nose into my instructions."

"My husband is absolutely right. It is simply a ridiculous occupation to try to break into the lord Benedict's house against his will in the middle of the day. And what do you need there if Alyssa is in the office?"

"Well, if you with your mother were tactful women, then I wouldn't need to play the comedy of the empty house attack, but simply one of you could take that what I needed there and put it secretly where needed."

"Well, I repeat if you aren't tactful and don't leave immediately, we'll be late," Jenny snapped out. "I don't understand in any way why we need to go all together without fail? If somebody delays us, then at least you will be in time. And on the contrary, if you are delayed, then we'll be in time, right?"

"Neither you nor I will go alone. All of us together will be in the office, such is my order. Now you don't have any rights without your husband, and of course, your mummy won't bring herself to act and she will be waiting for us for as much as needed."

Lots of thoughts were spinning in Jenny's head. Her own behaviour with her mother now seemed to her not only too cruel, but also dangerous. Jenny searched for all her mother's friends in her head and she kept guessing where she could go in order to avoid her solitude in the empty house during the night. Something similar to compassion and regret flashed in egoistic Jenny's soul. While her husband was hurrying her, Jenny was dressing by having forgotten about her mourning completely and that man whose testament they were going to contest. Jenny put on the grey costume with orange colour borders which absolutely didn't suit to her red hair, it made her pale and look older, but her passion for bright colours triumphed over all Armand's protests, who offered her to dress in black.

Finally, the whole company got into the coach and left. Armand examined everybody's faces in the daylight and he was stunned by their crushed appearance, their died out eyes and absolute indifference. When his eyes stopped by Jenny, he even jumped back – she was so uninteresting with her collar from orange colour gathers and even brighter bands on her hat. Armand possessed innate taste, so he swore to take his wife in hand with respect to this question. They hadn't driven even a half of the way when something happened to one of the horses of the harness. The long delay made Bonda lose his patience completely. He offered to go on foot till the next cab, but Jenny didn't want to be out in the rain that changed the morning sun again. They were late for a half-hour when they finally came to the office. If these ill-fated travellers didn't make one glad with their appearance when they left the hotel, then now they seemed to be very obnoxious for everybody who were waiting for them to come when the sun came out from the clouds again and lit up the big office of the old lawyer.

The old lawyer who was indignant at such violation of order and decency listened to the lord Benedict's advice, he suppressed his quick-tempered character and he didn't reproach such unpunctual clients of his. Armand who was more cultivated than the others apologized to the lawyer and explained their misfortune with horse to him. Henri who was absolutely indifferent up to now was stunned by his future wife's beauty and he fastened his eyes upon her. He was used to hear that Alyssa was fool, so he was searching for another woman by being afraid that the wonderful girl standing next to the tall and handsome man would turn to be not Alyssa. Jenny fastened her eyes upon Alyssa, too, who was exceptionally interesting, dressed with a modest mourning dress. Her anger flared up again. She regretted for not putting the black dress on and she only gave a little bow to Alyssa with contempt when she greeted her tenderly. Surprised Jenny was looking round to all sides, because she couldn't see her mother.

Bonda who was still so rude, commanding and self-confident an hour ago, now as soon as he entered and met the lord Benedict's look, looked as though frightened and constrained. He remembered his helplessness by the door of the pastor's house and he felt danger namely from this giant whom Bracano described to him as a worthless English fool.

"Lord Benedict, let me start," the old lawyer addressed Florentian as the most important person by bowing to him. He had the judge's gown, wig and the little cap on.

"I object," Bonda stated. "We cannot begin the case for the testament when the main concerned person – the pastor's wife is absent."

"You are wrong," the lawyer answered him politely. "Lady Katherine is here a long time ago already. And you have to thank only her for waiting for all of you. She told us that her daughter got married yesterday and that practically, she didn't have any right to today's decision anymore, but..."

"If she doesn't have any right," Bonda interrupted him, "then according to the English laws, her husband, my nephew, has such right. And I object in his name."

"First of all, your nephew doesn't need any guardian, because he's of age and he can speak for himself. Second, that part of the testament for which today's session is dedicated is important for lord Wodsworth's daughters only until they got married. Such is the will of the man who wrote the testament. By getting married, his daughter Jenny lost the right to decide the acknowledgment of inheritance of lady Cecilia Rettedly, maiden name Wodsworth. I repeat that we were waiting for you only because of lady Katherine and Alyssa Wodsworth's request, but since she is minor, then we did it with agreeable request of her guardian lord Benedict."

"I cannot see my mother here, if my eyes can see anything at all," furious Jenny noticed ironically, who was shocked till the very depth of her heart from such vicious Bonda's trick. He was persuading her that when Jenny marries her power of influence on deciding the question of inheritance would double.

Probably, Bonda didn't expect such turn of the case and he hurried to tie Jenny and Armand with the unbroken bonds of the English marriage.

"Jenny, I'm here," a weak sound was heard, which reminded of the powerful voice of the pastor's wife very little.

The shadow of that woman whom Jenny called to be her mother came to the lawyer's table, supported by Alyssa and Doria.

Jenny and all her companions gave a shout, frightened. Jenny who saw the grey spectre of lady Katherine instead of her mother was unable to control the shiver of her repentance and horror. While she was searching where she could pour her feelings, she directed all her hatred towards lord Benedict by considering him to be the cause of such change of her mother, while Bonda and both of his friends felt how they were losing ground under their feet when they saw Ananda. When the lawyer asked the pastor's wife whether she recognized lady Cecilia to be the only on inheritress of the pastor's left capital and whether she renounced the interests, lady Katherine answered that she couldn't deny the obvious fact.

"Mother, don't you really see how they've made a fool of you here without us? How do you look like? Where have you been during that entire time? You must have spent the night in hell. What lady Cecilia did these people slip for you?"

Jenny was so obsessed with fury that none of her husband's efforts helped to control her anymore. The lawyer asked mister Tendly to call the pastor Wodsworth's sister and her son Henry from the adjacent room. Soon lady Cecilia Wodsworth entered the room arm-in-arm with sir Vomi, while Henry and the captain James Rettedly walked next to them. Bonda tumbled onto the chair as soon as he saw sir Vomi entering the room, while amazed Jenny got stiff, speechless when she saw two Alyssas of different age standing one next to another.

"I repeat my question, lady Katherine Wodsworth: do you recognize lady Cecilia Rettedly to be the inheritress of your husband's left capital? Do you renounce the interests to which you were claiming your rights?"

"I recognize her and I renounce the interests," the pastor's wife answered him silently and clearly.

"Lord Benedict, guardian of minor Alyssa Wodsworth, do you and your ward recognize lady Cecilia Rettedly to be the real pastor's sister and do you agree to hand over the whole capital to her immediately, which was written to her in the testament?"



"I recognize lady Cecilia to be my real aunt and I ask to give the capital to her, which belongs to her for a long time already," Alyssa answered him.

"I, as the guardian of Alyssa Wodsworth, legitimize the possibility legally to hand over the whole capital to lady Cecilia."

Completely furious Bonda rushed at the pastor's wife and wanted to seize her hand, but he flew sideward instantly and he almost caught his foot on the chair which the clerk pulled from the table by standing up. Bonda remembered how sadly Bracano's fight against sir Vomi ended in Constantinople, so he didn't bring himself to continue his actions himself. He shoved his reserve string into Jenny's hand, he was trying to speak to her as silently as possible and told her to come up to Alyssa, to embrace her and to put the string deftly on her neck. Jenny wanted to fulfil this order very much, because she knew the value of the dog-collar that was hanging on her neck and she hated her sister with the whole might of her anger.

"Alyssa, please come to me. I must tell you something and I want to embrace you very much. We haven't seen each other for so long time."

The pastor's wife became worried when she saw that Jenny was coming nearer to Alyssa, but lord Benedict was still standing arm-in-arm with Alyssa, while the girl didn't even move. The pastor's wife calmed down, she even smiled to Alyssa.

"Dear Jenny, I'm very glad that you want to talk to me, but it seems to me that this place is absolutely not right to talk here. You can visit me at my guardian's house, and we can associate there as much as you want to."

Jenny walked two more steps towards Alyssa, and not triumphant anger, but fear could already be seen on her face.

"Come closer and stop being afraid so much of the people standing behind your back," lord Benedict uttered. "While I'm present here, no one will dare to do anything to you."

Jenny went up to Alyssa obediently, but she was looking at lord Benedict.

"Act!" furious Bonda cried to her.

He wanted to run up to Jenny himself, but sir Vomi was already standing in his way. Armand and Henri were trying to approach Jenny, too, but Ananda's look didn't allow them to make a move.

"Unfortunate Jenny, extend both of your hands to me," Florentian's voice was heard again. "Hold that nasty thing in your hand, which Bonda gave to you by wishing to turn you into the angriest and meanest traitress."

When Jenny extended her hands, and Bonda's string began to shine, Florentian touched it with his small stick. The string coiled like a burning paper, it split by half without any sound and fell down on the floor by turning into some powder. Bonda, Armand, Henri – they gave a shout with horror.

"You see, Jenny, how much your friends' persuasions and their power are worthy of," lord Benedict uttered again.

Poor Jenny seized the string on her neck with both hands and began to tear it to all sides by rubbing sore red bands on her tender neck. The entire range of emotions was reflected on her face: anger changed her fury, disappointment – her hatred. Both Bonda and Armand wanted to attack the misfortunate person, their appearance betrayed their goals and intentions clearly, but Florentian's look nailed them to the ground and they failed to reach the raging Jenny.

“Now, Jenny, you’ve made certain how weak the power of darkness and anger is in comparison with light. But it is still holding you captive and controlling you like a pitiful slave. The moment of love and selflessness helped your mother to cross this horrible Rubicon, behind which you die. Stop pulling this terrible collar. Your anger is its power. If in that moment when this villain gave you that what has already turned into ashes you had pitied your innocent sister – I could have saved you. And now, the name of that honest man in whose home you’ve grown up and whom you called your father...”

The wild Bonda’s neighing and the heartbreaking pastor wife’s wail interrupted lord Benedict. Her wail fell silent from Ananda’s touch, while Bonda’s neighing, who was gaping disgustingly and showing all his rotten teeth, suddenly stopped by giving a whistle like some old, loose harmonium. Lord Benedict kept speaking in the prevalent silence.

“The pastor’s protection, his begging to save you – everything is falling down by striking against the wall of your own anger, jealousy and irritation. Everything what I can still do for you in the name of that wonderful man whom you called your father – that’s not to leave you as an eternal slave in these people’s hands. I can give you the possibility and hope to escape the nets of evil if some day your heart opened for love and kindness. Turn your back to me.”

When Jenny turned round, lord Benedict put his small stick in Alyssa’s hands and asked her.

“Alyssa, do you want to help your sister and to open the way to your home for her when despair opens love in her heart and she’s calling for compassion?”

Alyssa answered him affirmatively. Then lord Benedict took her hand with the stick with his own hands and touched the string on Jenny’s neck with it. Jenny gave a loud shout, gave a start, and at the same moment the string fell down on the floor and it looked like the shivers of the broken glass.

“Turn to me and come closer, Jenny.”

Jenny almost went up to Alyssa. Lord Benedict, while still holding Alyssa’s hand in the same way, told her to touch Jenny’s breast with the end of the stick and he told her slowly by looking at her eyes.

“Your sister’s and the pastor’s love protects you from your eternal destruction. Remember the Light in the gloomiest moments of your life, which accompanies the path of every man. Remember that life – that’s kindness and compassion. Only with them you can achieve the real results in your life. No hopeless situation exists, compassion is limitless and it never refuses to help one. No angry, greedy, impudent hand is ever going to enslave you. You will never become the slave of that hand. And only then an evil is going to turn you into its accomplice and slave when you choose it to become your companion yourself by letting it into your everyday activity and by attracting it with your irritation, treason and falsehood. Go. You’ve chosen your path yourself by pushing away my extended hand of help three times voluntarily. You are tied up with your accomplices with much stronger ropes than this string which you considered to have some magical power. Only your angry heart was that magical power. Go protected from your eternal enslavement, but you can help only yourself by attracting to yourself only similar people to yourself. Stop being afraid of the crawlers who are crawling round you. Soon they will suffocate from their own evil, but your entire life will turn into the hell if you cannot understand that your constant hypocrisy, hatred and absolute indifference to people turns you into the slave of your own passions.”

Jenny was standing and looking at lord Benedict’s face in silence.

“And anyway I hate Alyssa, I hate even my mother who’s betrayed me because of you and... I also hate You. I don’t believe in any power of yours. Simply your tricks are stronger than Bonda’s ones. But Bonda isn’t the main member of his joint-stock company, he’s only an ordinary executor, like your clerks,

such as mister Tendly,” Jenny finished her tirade with angry sarcasm by taking a peep at Tendly who was listening to her sadly. “Of course, you don’t doubt,” she continued, inflamed with anger after a minute of silence, “that I never and nowhere will find myself in the role of the person who serves or fulfils a strange will, as my sister and all these weak-willed people who surround you at this moment do. I will have the suite of my own servants myself.”

The angry Bonda’s laughter interrupted Jenny again, but it stopped from one sweep of lord Benedict’s arm, and Bonda stooped.

“In the name of the pastor’s love and compassion, Life takes pity on you one more time: insulted Tendly whom your look is piercing with such contempt now will be exactly that hand which will save you and take you to Alyssa one day. Jenny, very soon you’ll find out yourself about that man whose servant you will have to be and where you’ll find yourself. Remember: the law of compassion will protect you only when you start acting with love and not with hatred as you are doing it now.”

Lord Benedict turned to Bonda and to his accomplices.

“In order for you not to be able to deny or forget how you were cringing before the power of kindness, leave this place by bending low uninterruptedly and picture the moving Chinese statuettes will the dark night. Be afraid of the new meeting with me or with anybody of those who are close to me. Of course, the band sent by you failed to break into my house, while your bribed drunkard Martin, Bonda, has already paid dearly for trying to get into my personal room. Don’t disturb the silence anywhere – don’t dare to talk in any other way, but only in a whisper.”

All of a sudden, Jenny and her three companions began to bend low. They were struggling, they were trying to overcome this power which was bending their backs, and those efforts were so ridiculous that Henry, then Tendly after him, the clerks, and finally, the old lawyer himself and the captain were rocking with laughter. Alyssa and lady Cecilia covered their eyes with horror. Doria was trying to calm down the pastor’s wife who had a hysteric fit. Having caught a moment before bending and thinking that Ananda’s attention became weaker, Bonda flung a dark rope on the pastor wife’s neck like a lasso, but the rope didn’t touch the pastor’s wife – Ananda’s hand caught it in the air and flung it back on Bonda by winding it round his neck, his arms and his body. Bonda gave a cry, he fell down by pulling the rope that fettered him in the same way as Jenny was doing it with her string before.

“Go, villain, with this decoration. And let it strangle you as the image of all that evil and falsehood which you bring in everywhere with yourself. Now only Bracano will be able to take it off you, and only because the pure soul has extended his tear of compassion and his kiss to him. So, this drop of pure compassion will be able to help you, but whether you’ve deserved such favour from Bracano that he would like to help you – that’s already your own business.”

“We won’t get any mercy from lord Benedict,” Jenny started begging by sobbing and extending her hands towards sir Vomi. “Take pity on us. Don’t make a laughing stock from me and these people during the very first day of my wedding. I... I... cannot hate you. I’m afraid to look at your eyes, as though I could read the whole horror of my life in them, but... I bow before you and I beg you – help me.”

“Tell me, poor woman, can you remember at least one living being whom you helped in your life?” sir Vomi asked her, while his always kind and gentle voice now reminded of the sounds of a melodious harp. “Do you know that man – that’s the God’s harp, the strings of which glorify the entire universal life? Do you know that people’s tears and sadness – that’s the Lord’s pollen which turn man into the wonderful blossom? Do you know that every people’s meeting – that’s the wings controlled by love, which gather this Lord’s pollen into the cup of heart and pour it onto the Earth that is plunged in sorrow

like the power of love, like a joyous echo? Let the poison of your anger and your tears mix with my compassion in the cup of my heart today. And let the horror of that moment when a miserable being will call you to be his daughter flow into my heart and find comfort in it. Go. I've taken your punishment upon myself at your mother's, your sister's and your aunt's request, but I cannot set you free from it myself. My brother and my Teacher Florentian, I beg you – let me take part in Ananda's fight and have pity on these poor people one more time," sir Vomi said to lord Benedict by bowing low to him.

"Let it be as you wish, my friend and brother," Florentian answered him by bowing to his bow, "Jenny, but if anyone of your friends even dares to touch Alyssa or your mother, then both them and you won't be able to walk in any other way as on all fours till the very end of your life. Go. And you, villain," he addressed Bonda, "be silent during the entire day today. And you will be able to speak only in a whisper in the future. Take your rope off and throw it in the fireside."

Having wiped sweat from their foreheads, which was pouring in streams, Jenny and her accomplices hurried to leave the office.

Having carried out all the necessary formalities, by holding especially shocked Alyssa, Cecilia and almost fainting pastor's wife, all inhabitants of the lord Benedict's house came back home.

During those few hours when they weren't home, the house that was always silent and calm became the camp which was attacked from all sides by all kinds of the most irksome elements. Less than half an hour passed when lord Benedict left, and three big coaches full of camouflaged people rolled up to the main entrance to the villa. Some disguised men had musical instruments in their hands, others were singing songs – the scene from the carnival was played so perfectly that the policemen didn't stop this noisy company by thinking that the aristocrats were enjoying themselves in such an original way. The joyous company that was still making noise in the same way began to knock at the main door impatiently not only with the hammer dedicated to this, but also with the sticks and fists, they were knocking at the windows of the hall. At the same time, the company of beggars gathered by the small door and by the door that led to the side stairs, as though they were accidentally lured by the sounds of the merry festival with clear hope to get alms during the ball of the wealthy.

The duke Saintger ordered the servants to remain in their places. He put Amedeo and Sandra in the hall by the door and gave sprinklers in their hands by explaining to them that if they were going to break very much from outside, then Amedeo had to sprinkle through the keyhole, while Sandra had to open slightly the little eye hidden in the woodcut from outside and press the sprinkler several times. While laughing, he added that the liquid was harmless for one's life and health, but its smell was simply unbearable. Besides, the cardboard and paper masks of the attackers would melt from the liquid, and their hands would turn black. That would frighten the brawlers.

The duke Saintger put Arthur by the side door and gave the same sprinkler to him. He shut the little door which was bound with iron from inside with bolts and closed the shutters. He stood next to Arthur, as though by waiting for somebody.

One begging monk was especially distinguished in the group of the beggars by the door. Now he was begging for a crust of bread, now he was clowning and laughing boisterously by entertaining the company gathered round him with his items. He started crawling through the iron fence by persuading these tramps to make more noise. Soon the tramp wearing the monk's robe tore out the thick metal pivot from the stone foundation with his brought tools, crawled through that hole somehow and he was in the garden already. Having commanded the company to make even more noise, he began to climb the wall by trying to get by the window of the lord Benedict's study. He must have known the rooms dislocation well. The duke Saintger told Arthur to besprinkle the front line of the tramps, and those who took their places by

this narrow door to besprinkle one more time. He went to the Florentian's study, came up to the window and hid himself behind the curtain. His keen ear could hear the silent and treacherous tramp's steps coming closer to the window through the thick wall as well. The duke Saintger could see through the curtain's crack how the tramp pressed himself to the window glass, made sure that there was no one in the room, and soon the diamond sparkled in his hand, with which he began to cut the glass. Having settled this task quickly and deftly, he got into the room easily. While listening attentively, the tramp examined the excellent apartment, took off his dirty shoes and, since to all appearance he could orient himself well, he crossed the room and stopped by the door that led to the adjacent premises. Having taken the bundle of master-keys out of his pocket, he already was prepared to put one of them into the keyhole when suddenly the silent and commanding voice nailed him to the ground.

"Stop, miserable man, throw your dirty bundle into the fireside and stand there, on the tin-plate if you don't want the brick that is falling down already to squash you."

Having darted a glance up, the tramp hardly had time to jump aside from the heavy, iron piece that was falling down straight onto him. Having cried, he wanted to attack the slender man of short stature who was standing in the middle of the room, but he seized his throat, as if somebody had strangled him, and he turned to the fireside immediately. Once there, he sat down on the copper fireguard instantly, because he didn't have any strength to stand anymore.

The tramp was trying to hide his master-keys in his pocket, but the fiery glance of the stranger's eyes was burning him. He threw the bundle into the fireside obediently by trembling all over. Still without losing his self-control once and for all, by mumbling some enchantments, the tramp began to ransack in his bosom, he pulled out some triangle from his robe with his trembling hands and directed its point to the duke Saintger who kept standing in the middle of the room calmly. While holding his triangle in which something was shining, the tramp felt greater self-confidence and he dared to look at the man who was standing before him. He was stunned by the stranger's kind-hearted laughter. The anger escaped Martin's lips in the flow of obscene curses. That was him who agreed to be a chief of the whole company. Martin cried out in challenge.

"Why are you laughing? Probably you don't feel that your last hour has struck? My stone will knock you down on the ground soon, although you are dressed up in a good suit. Fall down now, I tell you!" and the villain extended his hand towards the duke who kept standing.

The duke's face was serious and even austere.

"If you still linger for a long time and don't fall down," Martin cried again, "I will give a whistle and call up my friends here. Then you won't save your skin."

"Try it," the duke answered him silently by lifting his hand a little and waving it at Martin.

He couldn't keep his feet and took a seat on the copper sheet of tin near the fireside by gasping and sweating.

"Where did you dare to get in, miserable man? And what did you agree to do? Who has encouraged you to desecrate these rooms?"

"Bonda promised me the whole wealth if I can chop off the piece of the green cup on the marble table from that room," Martin answered him by trembling all over. "Oh, don't come nearer to me, only don't come nearer to me!" he uttered a shriek in horror when he saw that the duke took a step towards him.

"You still have time for your repentance. You can still understand the whole horror of that what you are doing now and what dirt you are living in. Throw all that junk to the fireside which Bonda gave to you, promise me to work honestly, and I'll save you from the entire of your terrible gang. I will give you the possibility to become man again and to feel joy of free and pure life."

"It won't pan out! You don't have enough strength to overcome my stone, so you pretend to be a lamb. Hold tight."

And the villain tried to extend his hand with his triangle again. And again that tender movement of the duke's hand forced him to take his hand back with curses.

"I offer you this for the last time: do you want to start a pure, new life? Now you've made sure that all misdeeds are helpless before love, its knowledge and power. Take a look at your heart. What can you see in it? Is there anything else besides falsehood, treason and insidiousness in it? Run through your life. Since that time when you've betrayed your mother, robbed your sister, abandoned your woman with your child by condemning them for poverty and starvation – was there any happiness in your life? Have you been happy at least once? Do you really prefer to live in endless fear? Today you've come to rob and to desecrate. Tomorrow they will send you to kill somebody – are you going to do it, too?"

The tramp was silent with his head hung and he was looking at the floor sullenly. Not a single muscle on his face showed any regret for his ruined life. Only astonishment in the stranger's knowledge about his life was reflected on it, as well as his dull stubbornness, cruelty and slyness. He sniggered and uttered impudently.

"Let's drop it! I can see, my brother, that you from our company managed to get here before me. I agree to share with you everything what we'll find here and what I will get from Bonda, but that what I will take from that room from the marble table – everything will be only mine. I have to kill Ananda myself, he's made a lot of troubles for our dear Bracano..."

Saintger stopped Martin's negotiations by lifting his hand up slowly and he told him clearly in the same slow way.

"Compassion doesn't punish anybody. Remember: everything what happens to man, he creates himself. However sinful man would be, the moment of his selfless love till the end takes him out of the circle of all his crimes and mistakes, and unites him with the powers of light. You only needed to address, to cry for Love, and it would have taken you out of your death in the clutches of evil, but you cannot return to life through Love anymore. The part of life that is given to everybody has already died within you. Your consciousness has become gloomy, and there's no sense for you to live on the earth anymore, your heart is unable to create anymore. It can think only about itself alone, only about its bestial interests. Man who is living only with his personal passions of evil isn't needed for life of the entire universe, so the earth doesn't need him as well. By giving you the last compassion, I order you: put everything what you have on you that doesn't belong to you, all the treasure stolen from your friends into the fireside. Leave this place. Can you hear how your band is running already? Hurry up. If the host of this house finds you here, you will end in a bad way. Go home, you can crawl back somehow. Once you are there, tell everything to all those cruel accomplices of yours who've sent you here and forget this house forever. Only remember that you cannot live with villainy. Spend your days covered with sadness and fear by not finding place in any way until death finally takes pity on you."

Like a wild beast Martin was tearing the bags, jewels and boxes off himself and throwing everything into the fireside.

“Take the burning candle from the fireside and set fire to all your poison and to your charmed talismans, miserable drunkard and petty pilferer.”

Martin fulfilled this instruction obediently, but not very easily. The flame was hardly burning, it used to blaze up and die out again. Finally, Saintger threw some little box into the fire, a bang was heard which frightened Martin, and he dashed at the window. He accumulated all his strength and wanted to crawl out through his cut hole through which he had crawled in so easily, but he couldn't lean over the window in any way. He was squealing with horror and he began to ask for mercy.

“I say to you – leave. Put your dirty shoes on and leave. The wounds on your body, which are bleeding already – that's not my punishment, but the result of that poison which you were carrying on yourself for so long due to your ignorance. Your accomplices have turned you into a walking living wardrobe in which they were preserving their treasure, while you've ruined your organism because of your stupidity and now you don't have any salvation anymore.”

Finally frightened, weak and completely confused Martin crawled out through the window, squeezed his way through the fence with much trouble and walked home heavily by staggering like drunk. Strange thoughts forgotten a long time ago began to turn in his head. For no apparent reason, suddenly he remembered his childhood, his mother, how she loved and pampered him, and how he, persuaded by his sombre neighbour, was trying to be always brazen-faced with her and how he always responded to her tenderness and care with his rudeness.

Martin didn't understand why the neighbour was happy when he would make his mother nervous, but the delicious cakes and sweets which the neighbour gave to him for each quarrel with his mother encouraged him to search for the new pretext to hurt her.

Martin didn't know why exactly now he was thinking about his solitude, about the fact that there wasn't a single heart in the entire world, which would love him. He was jeering at love during his entire life. He never remembered that his son was somewhere, and now he would have given much in order to call at least one living being to be his son.

Everything was mixing in the miserable man's head. He only comprehended that he had to find the way to that disgusting inn where he left his clothes several hours ago and changed into the monk's robe by grimacing merrily and blaspheming. Now the laughter of the drunk sailors who blocked up his way and asked him where he got so boozy in the middle of the day irritated him and poisoned his already difficult way. Martin crawled back to the hotel being hardly alive by dreaming about silence, solitude and bed. Most of all he was afraid of meeting Bonda or keen Jenny's eyes. He couldn't even understand why he was afraid of them, but he wanted only one thing – to slip down unnoticed.

Having reached his room successfully, he decided that Bonda with his friends hadn't come back yet, he rushed to the wine that was always waiting for him on the table and fell down on the bed with the only thought: to fall sound asleep and not to think about anything. It didn't even occur to Martin that Bonda was sitting in his room alone, left by everybody, furious, without any strength to utter a single word, while Jenny with Armand and Henri were dead-beat, stunned and even more enraged, they were waiting for the dinner and any news from Martin in the newly-weds' room.

When the first day of Jenny's married life was almost over, her only one thought was vengeance for her mother who betrayed her and for her sister whom now she hated once and for all.

Jenny wasn't thinking about anything else as only how to destroy and trample the lord Benedict's power which didn't allow her to reach Alyssa.

Jenny forgot completely about that compassionate man to whom she confessed that she was unable to hate him. She took a terrible fear and no less burning hatred for lord Benedict out of the office.



## Chapter 17

Mother and daughter. James and Ananda.

Ananda and the pastor's wife.

The future Nikolay's and Doria's plans

On the next day, life in the lord Benedict's house was taking its normal course if we don't pay attention to the pastor wife's illness. Alyssa and Doria were nursing her, while Ananda treated her under his uncle's, duke Saintger's guidance. Lady Katherine didn't recognize anybody anymore, and the shadow of the pastor who was fighting against Bracano and always defeating him was always flashing through her irritated imagination. She was talking loudly about it, while being delirious. Lord Benedict dropped in at Alyssa who still couldn't recover from shock in the court's office, he embraced her tenderly and explained to her that her mother's delirium wasn't the direct reflection of the truth and that her mother would recover in several days.

"And you, Alyssa, need to think very seriously about everything what you've experienced, seen and observed lately. You know your great lesson, you know what you need to do during this incarnation, but I've already told you: it can happen, but it doesn't mean that it will happen. Only unshakeable hearts can fulfil the task given to them. The disciple's courage, his fearlessness – that's only his loyalty to his Teacher. If he is following his Teacher with his entire loyalty, if he doesn't ask for any explanations from him, he is walking in such a way as his Teacher sees it and leads him. Now the destinies and karmas of the big circle of people have become entangled in such a way that you have the possibility to see me constantly, you can run to me and take my hand, but you won't be next to me during your entire life. Reflect whether you will have enough strength to walk your entire path without seeing me, but in such a way as if I was always standing next to you and you were holding my hand in all cases of life."

"Please don't continue anymore, my friend, my father, my guardian," Alyssa told him by going down on her knees and pressing herself to Florentian's hand. "I cannot live in any other way as only by being loyal to you forever, in unity with your activity and your paths. I strive neither for any rewards nor for any praises, I know how it is difficult for every man to live on the earth, chained in his passions and personal attachments. I will go everywhere in such a way as your love is going to lead me and how it will be pouring through me onto the earth. I will try to carry your help and peace for every soul that is worthy of it with my absolute self-control and tact. I know how modest my place in the universe is. I'm full of meekness and joy, and I want to fulfil those modest tasks and work which you will entrust to me sincerely and diligently."

"Stand up, my baby, and listen to me carefully. Now I'm going to visit Lisa's parents and to persuade them not to make a show from their daughter's wedding, but to wed her with the captain silently and calmly. My second task – that's to persuade her parents to come back to their motherland and to allow their children to sail to America alone with us. The sea-sickness awaits for Nal again, from which it will be even worse for her in her current condition. Although Lisa is accustomed to the sea, she'll cast off to the trip by carrying a baby below her heart already and this time she'll be suffering quite a lot from tossing. Doria won't step back from your mother whom we'll leave here under Ananda's and Saintger's patronage. Both Nal and Lisa will be holding only on your shoulders during the trip. The voyage for lady Cecilia will be

difficult, too, but Henry will take care of her. In this minute only you can answer the question independently: do you want those difficulties during the journey – to take care of two women who'll be suffering much? Do you want to continue helping Lisa whose pregnancy will be very difficult not only for herself, but also for all the people surrounding her? Lisa will be always irritable, she'll harm you continually, but... you, my child, are to blame before that person who is coming to life through her. Once, a long time ago that man loved you by hoping to marry you, but you made fun of him and pushed him away. He took vengeance on you, betrayed you, and you were punished. Now an opportunity opens up for you to help him deserve your forgiveness with your kindness and compassion, but it isn't enough to forgive man his guilt before yourself. You need to help them to create that family to which he will come. You need to untie the entire karma, so that he would come free, and that namely your heart would create the joyous shelter for him, in which he could live in a free, simple and joyous way."

"What a happiness! What a happiness to be useful for Nal and Lisa, and at the same time to expiate my guilt by taking care of them. Oh, if my father was alive, how happy he would be!" all brightened Alyssa answered him.

"My child, however strong you would be in this moment, think once again before answering me by solving your questions. While you will be nursing your friends, while both of them give birth to their children and for some time later all your external life, the music, the art and the theatres – everything won't be for you. You'll be the main axis of everyday household worries, but both mothers will be suffering from their own babies, while you..."

"While I will be enjoying happiness to live without any suffering by taking care and bringing up two babies at once. Why do we still need to talk about it, my Teacher? I leave. You are with all of us in this moment. What a greater happiness could be than life next to you! If only we could live in such a pure way that we wouldn't prevent you from pouring your compassion through our physical bodies. Where you cannot act only because the atmosphere there is too low for you, let our loyalty help you to act through us in such a way as you see it. I know that Lisa is quick-tempered and unstable, irritable and demanding, but I also know that the great diligence is leading the real talent. She will learn to control herself, because she will learn to climb the peaks of the art. A disorganized, unstable man can never possess the real talent or he will have to die early, because the genius will exhaust everybody who is unable to achieve his absolute self-control and to become worthy of his talent in harmony. If Lisa is destined to live in the high life of the art, she will learn self-control. While I'll be happy by allowing her to try her difficult victory on myself. It is so easy to do it when one feels you next to oneself!"

"Thank you, my dear Alyssa. Actually, it is rare for the Teacher to experience the happiness to have such treasure next to himself, to have the living cup of peace and love. Be blessed. Go being loved and loving others, protect all of those whom you meet. Never be afraid of anything. You are living in order to protect the ones whom you meet with your joy."

Florentian embraced Alyssa, said good-bye to her and went to Lisa's parents where he had made an appointment to James.

As soon as he entered the counts' R. sitting-room he noticed the disagreement between parents and the children instantly, and the first words of the countess were her complaint of the children's behaviour. She stated that, of course, children were complaining in their letters for their grandfather of the pompous wedding that had to take place in both churches which their parents had planned. Because they were certain that the marriage would be real only when the formalities required by both religions were carried out. It seemed for the count that Lisa had to strike up as many as possible honourable acquaintances whom her father and her grandfather had, and that it would be the most convenient moment to do it during the wedding feast.

Lisa's grandfather who was poking his nose in his son's family business so rarely demanded categorically in his letter that the wedding of his granddaughter had to be as modest and silent as possible, and that her parents had to come back to Gurzuf by letting the newly-weds travel independently and live in such a way as it would seem necessary for them.

"Just think, lord Benedict, how could I let my underage daughter travel alone? And moreover, James planned that wild journey to America. Besides, how should I feel if Lisa is writing to her grandfather secretly from me. Hence, she has an aversion to us and she's exchanged us to James immediately."

"We've already been talking on this subject with you once. It seems to me that you remember perfectly everything what I had told you then. Now I will tell you only one thing: I cannot believe that Lisa and James might need some secret paths. Both of them are so honourable and noble that they will find enough strength within themselves to protect their opinions in an open conversation. I omit your remark of how and to whom Lisa exchanged her love. That doesn't make any honour to you. I think that you don't feel well from such thoughts as well. Let's speak about your father-in-law's opinion. I think that he's very right. Why are you doing all that racket? If you confess it honourably, you are doing it for yourself and for your husband. Now you want to do everything in such a way as once you wanted to do it during your rather modest and silent marriage. Countess, what that external market racket has in common with love? You tell me that you cannot let your daughter live alone and ride around the wide world. About whom are you thinking when you are talking like this and whom do you take care of? About your daughter or about yourself? How could you help her even if a disaster happens? Do you possess such strong self-control that you could inspire her with calm and tranquillity when a panic rises? Can you keep her from taking a risk with your fearlessness? I think that you are kind, noble and sincere, but your entire life has passed in gusts and zigzags. How often could you control the flow of your words with which you used to pour your relatives? If Lisa's health was weak, then you were stimulating her instability with the storms of your unrestraint. And her grandfather has told this you alone several times, who was protecting you so ardently in public and who served you in such a chivalrous manner during his entire life. Why don't you accept his advice now, the advice of great Wisdom? Besides, I will be sailing myself in James' steamer with my entire family, while you admire my daughters. Do you really think that if Lisa needs any help, care or anything else, we will leave her without any attention?"

The countess kept silent with her downcast eyes, but one could see clearly that every guest's word fell onto her sore place. She couldn't deny a single lord Benedict's word and she was indignant at them anyway, but the more he was talking in his tender voice, the more her mood was changing, and the countess began to comprehend how she must have harmed all her beloved relatives with her instability, how strongly that instability of hers befell on her own daughter.

"After my father's letter," the count uttered, "I refuse my previous plans. My father didn't forbid me anything, even in such serious cases like the marriage, a friendship, a financial activity, although he didn't always share my opinion. Now he asks categorically not to disturb my only one daughter's life and to listen to my inner voice of love and honour. Your voice, lord Benedict, is namely that voice of love and honour, the voice of wisdom. Having joined my father's voice, today it forces me to obey you, although yesterday I would have still argued and been exasperated at this. My father is old. You've opened my eyes to many things. I wasn't a respectful teacher of my daughter, too, as I wasn't a good my father's son as well, but he – he was always an example of a chivalrous education for me. And I always knew that an incorruptible honour and dignity – that's my father. If I was honourable man during my entire life up to now, then only because I saw his living example next to me, and when I couldn't see him, then I used to remember and carry his image in my heart. I will come back to Gurzuf now, immediately after the most modest Lisa's marriage, and I let the countess act in such a way as she will decide and want to herself."

The count's voice was sad and trembling in the beginning, but then it became always stronger, and when he finished talking, it was absolutely calm already.

"Lisa, step into life," he approached his daughter and told her by embracing her. "It is not me who has to teach you what kind of a wife and mother you must be. I didn't think a lot about it, you always seemed to be a little girl for me. I know for sure only one thing – you look like your grandfather with your honour. If you are simple and not small-minded in your daily routine, you will decorate everybody's life. Appreciate happiness that you marry that man whom you love. Probably, me and your mother will manage to prove to you that we love not ourselves, but you," the count kissed both of his daughter's hands tenderly, held them for a while and added silently. "Now when your childhood is over, I must confess to you. I would have never agreed that you could play the violin if not your grandfather. Don't condemn me so strictly. When I become grandfather I will try to convey their great-grandfather's image to your children. Play, Lisa, and sing. I know how soft people's hearts become from your playing."

"Count, please visit my home tomorrow in the evening with your entire family. One of my friends has come to visit me, he's a rare singer. Once you hear his voice you will never forget it. Countess, I hope that you won't refuse to visit us with Lisa tomorrow in the evening, and I don't need to ask James to do it: that singer about whom I was talking is great friend of his, Indian Sandra Kon Ananda. I'm certain that tomorrow your heart of musician and woman will tremble many times from his voice and his fiddlestick."

Lord Benedict said good-bye and left. The countess who controlled her tears next to him was unable to control herself anymore. Her bitter tears of disappointment and her lament surprised Lisa. When she waved her hand, the count and James left the room. Lisa sat down next to her mother, embraced her and snuggled to her. She waited until the first wave of her mother's pain abates, and then she whispered to her ear.

"Mother, why are you crying? In this moment you and me aren't mother and daughter, but we are two women who love each other, right? If you are crying because you were unable to educate me well, then know that nobody had ever had a better mother than you. You've taught me to live freely and to search for the meaning of life within myself, and not to be sad in solitude and search for some futile friendships or amusements. You've taught me to find the whole charm in nature and not in the racket of people. Only because of this you are my first and dearest friend of my life. You didn't prevent me from reading everything what I wanted to, from playing whatever and for how long I wanted to, you always understood my inclinations and only you knew how I loved James. Now I will confess this to you, to my best friend. From this confession you will understand the whole power of my love and confidence in you. You know, you saw my little corner in James's established house. My grandfather used to tell often to me and you about his journeys to the East, about Buddha and about his life. He taught me to love that great wise man. Imagine how I was surprised when I saw a wonderful statue of Buddha in my future rooms. I was standing before him like being in prayer and I made a vow that I would pour all the sounds into the cup that is such saint to me when I'm playing. Every day me and James used to come and stay by that statue at least a little, and each time I felt how my faithfulness for my vow made to him became stronger day after day, how my fearlessness was growing, how I was coming always nearer to him, how I could see my guardian and friend in him. When I play in that house, my heart opens in such a way as though I was playing right before Him by carrying His compassion and gathering the tears of all my listeners into His cup. Mother, I know that what I will tell you now will surprise you, but hear out my confession not as my mother, but as my best, the most loved friend. Yesterday we came to our Buddha, and His room was decorated wonderfully – I had never seen such flowers. James was surprised no less than me. That wasn't him who decorated the room with flowers... He told only this to me: "That's Ananda who blesses our marriage." I didn't know who that Ananda was, and James told me that Ananda was wise man, that he was unusually kind and that the power of his love for people was nearly equal to holiness. We walked to Buddha in whose

cup I saw a letter and a case. It was written on the letter: "To my friends on the great day of their marriage." Here's the letter itself, listen, mother:

*His grand Love is living in man's body. Carry this Love through your pure physical union and create the new bodies in which the living and effective Love could work by uniting people with beauty.*

*Marriage – that's the sacrament which is taking place not only when somebody's hand unites people at the altars of the church, but also when the people merge by melting one in another's Love. Lisa, put that bracelet on which I put in the cup of the great Man of Wisdom. It is inscribed on it: "Go with eternal faithfulness and fearlessness, and overcome by loving." Accept these words engraved on the bracelet as your guiding thread, and give not only your body and thoughts to your husband, but merge your entire vital power with his one, and step into the new stage of the earthly happiness where there aren't any differences left anymore between the visible toiling earth and the invisible toiling heaven. The sacrament of marriage is also the sacrament of the beginning of the new life. The time has come for that soul to enter your body, who would become man again through you.*

*This first-born will be the blessing, big help and peace for you, and today you will become mother who will be glad and who will greet him with your entire heart by singing the song of love that overcomes everything to him.*

*Your friend Ananda*

Lisa kept silent for a while and she whispered her mother again in several minutes.

"And the sacrament has taken place."

And she showed the bracelet hidden under the sleeve of her dress to her mother.

The countess was so moved by the Lisa's words, she was so deeply shaken by such absolutely unusual form of her daughter's marriage that she was sitting in silence and examining the dear, close and usual Lisa's face in amazement, from which she couldn't recognize her daughter anymore. She could see the new and changed face full of inspiration of another, completely strange woman to her.

"That's what kind of woman Lisa can be," it occurred to the countess. She kept looking at this new face and suddenly, she really comprehended for the first time that not only harmonious and loving woman was sitting before her, but also mother who was protecting the new life within herself.

While Lisa showed the bracelet to her, which looked very much like that one which James gave to her, the countess's head was working persistently. It seemed to her that for the first time she understood her life that she had had. If now Lisa hadn't considered her to be worthy of her absolute frankness, if she hadn't told her that she found the most valuable thing – freedom of her spiritual life – with her mother's help, then now she wouldn't have anything at all even to remember from her life, the countess was talking to herself. Only in this moment she understood a mother's responsibility for life, for the entire world, and not only for the small family nest. The countess thought that Lisa had swum out like a white swan from their poorly talented family, and now she remembered her grandfather's words which he told her several times.

“Can’t you see that Lisa is real talent, and not an entertainer of sitting-rooms, that you cannot thrust any superstitions and customs on her. You rather need to put every effort in order to help her to get rid of her spirit of conciliation, preliminary attitudes, womanly subjectivity and conditional moral, so that her talent could develop in the pure and free soul.”

The countess didn’t understand those words back then. She envied her daughter for her grandfather many times, because they loved each other very much and they were friends. Now the countess saw how pure her daughter was, how she didn’t pay much attention to the external rules and respectable etiquette which the countess wouldn’t have violated in any way. Mother and her daughter were sitting embraced for a long time and they didn’t need any words... Their souls were talking one to another, they were talking joyfully, although both women were walking in different directions and both of them understood that every one of them was walking her own path of eternity, that this life from their birth till their death was only a little segment of happiness of the eternal life.

Now everyone of them made a vow without any words to give all their strength in order to protect the new life and to try to overcome all bad traits of their character within themselves, so that they wouldn’t cause trouble for their family with them.

“Mother, I want only one thing – to deserve such confidence and friendship from my children, with which I leave your home.”

There came a knock at the door, James entered, who accompanied the count to the Russian orthodox church, to be precise, where they called it like this in the embassy. The countess extended her another hand to him, embraced James and seated him next to herself. He understood from her and Lisa’s faces what mother was talking with her daughter about and he responded tenderly to the countess’s kiss.

“My dear, be happy. If you have any doubts, write to your grandfather. That heart had never given any bad advice to anybody. Besides, that man who married you with his flowers by Buddha, surely he won’t leave you in the future, too. Today you must stay together. You still haven’t seen one another properly. Go to your home and come back only for the dinner which I will order a little bit later.”

Having seen her children off, the countess went to her room and told them not to receive anybody. She decided firmly not to tell anything to her husband, because she knew perfectly his scrupulousness for the rules of good style. Having managed to step over all the superstitions hammered into her head from her childhood now, she was surprised that she didn’t feel any heartache because of her daughter’s deed, but she valued it absolutely normally. The countess also started thinking about lord Benedict, about that how he would value Lisa’s and her behaviour.

The count came back rather late and he told her that Lisa’s marriage would take place on the day after tomorrow, at twelve o’clock, and he decided to not invite anybody else except lord Benedict and his family. The countess was very happy with that, she still wanted to say something, but all of a sudden, two men brought in with much difficulty a gigantic, luxurious basket of flowers with Lisa’s and James’s initials.

“My God, but the real wedding procession already starts here, doesn’t it?” the count gave a shout by bending at the basket and showing the precious cases hidden among the flowers with Lisa’s and James’s names to her. “It seems that every member of the lord Benedict’s family has placed his present here. I didn’t even know anything about such English custom.”

“You know, let’s make our children happy, too, and at the same time, let’s be happy ourselves. Dress quickly, order the most splendid dinner, tell them to light up the sitting-room as much as possible, while I go to put the smartest dress on.”

"This is an unexpected surprise, countess," the count was laughing merrily. "You can wait for your appearance with the smart dress for entire years, and now – here you are, rejoice at it. Is it really you? What does this dream mean?"

It seemed that the countess threw twenty years off her shoulders. Her eyes were shining, she went up to her husband, put her hands on his shoulders and looked at his eyes joyfully.

"Only today I understood and appreciated that we would have grandchildren, that our life wasn't finished yet and we could still be of use."

Having kissed her husband passionately, the countess ran to her room by reminding him of that woman from the distant past, whom he loved so passionately. The count was completely lost, he didn't understand anything, he ascribed his wife's mood to her common caprice, but since he liked to have a good time in any occasion he was doubly happy of the today's pretext.

The work was in full swing soon. The servants were running about, the candles were shining brightly, the cut-glass was glittering on the table. As soon as the countess entered the sitting-room with a charming dress, Nal, Alyssa and Nikolay entered it. They apologized by thinking that the dinner was over already, they only wanted to sit with counts R. for a while, the guests wanted to leave immediately after getting into the dinner-party. Of course, nobody let them leave by saying to them that the countess thought of the celebrations and that even the heroes of the festivities themselves were not at home.

The countess was happy that the closest people to Lisa and James now came so unexpectedly and successfully to celebrate the real Lisa's marriage. While she was taking the guests into her sitting-room, she was worried secretly that Lisa would come with an ordinary dress, while the guests, although they were close to her, were dressed so wonderfully and splendidly. Lisa and James entered in the same moment, and the countess was destined to be surprised again on that day.

Not the usual Lisa to whom her eyes were accustomed was standing before her, but again a completely different, young woman. Wearing a costly green brocade dress with interwoven silver lilies which were revealed with golden leaves and stamens, with a wonderful little wreath from small brilliant lilies and emerald leaves on her head, Lisa stunned her mother with an expression of her great seriousness, tranquillity and inexpressible joy that was pouring from her.

"Lisa, on behalf of my father I congratulate you," Nikolay uttered by greeting her. "Here's his letter for you, while for you, captain, lord Benedict asked me to hand these two portraits."

Nikolay gave a small box to him, on which a white peacock was parading. The captain was unable to refrain from opening the box. He opened it and saw two portraits in it, which were put in the joint, small, collapsible frame. Two wonderful faces were looking at him from the frame of intertwined lilies and pansies – the ones of lord Benedict and Ananda. The captain gave a joyous and surprised shout, and while everybody clustered round him were examining and admiring his received present, Lisa stood aloof and she was reading the Florentian's letter:

*My friend, my sister and my future disciple. Man doesn't possess anything more precious than peace of his heart. During these most important moments of your life think not only about your people who surround you, but also about all women who are carrying their future lives within themselves in this hour. Think not only about the happy and beloved ones like you, but also about all of them who are abandoned, who cry and who have neither their own home nor job nor money. Think about all women who don't know how to get out of poverty and to bring the new, saint life into the world.*

*When you play in public for the first time give all your received income to the abandoned mothers and don't condemn a girl who's become mother during your entire life, but try to press everybody whom you'll meet to yourself and calm him down. Accept the lilies which today my hand put into the Buddha's cup as the sign of my honour for your purity and love. Protect purity of your relations with your husband and your children, and always expand your consciousness, search for the source of inspiration always higher and you will reach that level of self-control when you can enter the path of disciple.*

*That person who can see and hear the shining God in music and art, that one already possesses the knowledge of the eternal Life within himself. Once man perceives Life as eternal compassion, he cannot be unhappy anymore.*

*Every day in your happiness, in your happy love remember other people's misfortunes and their unhappy love. Search for the knowledge to understand that a misfortune doesn't exist by itself. Everything – all miracles and all misfortunes are hidden in man himself. When knowledge opens up for man, he calms down, because Wisdom comes to life within him. Don't search for any miracles, they don't exist. Search for the knowledge – it exists. And everything what people call miracles is only one or another level of knowledge.*

*Your eternal friend Florentian*

The feeling of an especial joy, perception of big and bright happiness covered Lisa. She hid the dear letter by her bosom and went up to her mother who was holding the wonderful frame with the portraits.

"I was already thinking that more handsome man than lord Benedict couldn't exist," the countess was talking. "Now I don't know to whom I should give favour. Perhaps the beauty of this stranger isn't such classical as lord Benedict's, but there's something special in his face, some magic, shining kindness before which it is even difficult to resist the want to fall down at his feet... Or perhaps this is only an illusion caused by the portrait, perhaps all of it doesn't exist in life?"

"We won't have to wait long for the answer. Tomorrow you'll see him," Nikolay uttered. "In any case you, countess, only need to look at radiating James and you'll make sure that alive Ananda surpasses his portrait. I think that James prays for Ananda and he's trying to control himself with all efforts of his will in order not to tear the portrait of his idolized friends out of your hands."

The countess gave the portraits back to James without even paying attention to the frame picture, while Lisa noticed instantly that the lilies intertwined with pansies on it exactly in the same way as on her bracelet and medallion.

"James, pansies and lilies must become our flowers. Let's choose them as the path to our self-control. Oh, if I could learn never get irritated and judge anybody, then how easy it would be to live in the world and communicate with people, because my irritability and exactingness for others torment me mostly.

"The better you will understand what these people have achieved, the clearer you will see where and how you should direct your thoughts when you feel instability. Since we love each other so much we only need to remember with whom, where and why we live. Since we love we won't forget those who've made us so happy, as well as those unfortunate people whom we'll meet on our way."



The count came to invite everybody at the table by apologizing that beforehand unanticipated dinner might not meet its purpose, especially concerning the vegetarian menu, but one could see that he could feel himself in his own place here, while his liking to entertain people to dinner at his home was one of the count's pleasures, and the dinner was excellent.

It was cheerful at the dinner table. Lisa was talking much and cordially to Alyssa by appreciating her new friend's great musical and vocal education for the first time. Today Alyssa was affecting Lisa especially strongly with her ordinary kindness and sincerity. It seemed to Lisa that Alyssa had absolutely forgotten that she was young and beautiful, that her playing enslaved people's hearts and that she also needed her personal life. It seemed to her that Alyssa was living only for Lisa's benefit, for her happiness, only for her playing, for her future plans. Lisa was unable to imagine that she could forget herself, her happiness, her love at least for a moment.

"Alyssa, you still say "You" to Lisa," James who was sitting next to Lisa interfered their conversation. "How can you do like this with your love for all people, and moreover for me and Lisa?"

"You or "You" – what meaning does it have, uncle? Besides, thanks to you, Lisa is my aunt now. I must show double respect to her somehow," Alyssa was laughing.

"This is absolutely not a Russian way, my daughter," the count supported the captain. If your husband has a niece, then you have to love himself in her personality. Be so kind and drink brotherhood with Alyssa, while I will draw near to both of you."

"Father, you'll have to drink so many brotherhoods! Alyssa also has her cousin Henry and aunt Cecilia, then some further relatives will show up."

The dinner and the evening flew by like this, and the guests left. It seemed to Lisa that only a short moment had flown by. When James approached her to say good-bye till tomorrow, it was a pity for her to let him go, and at the same time she wanted to stay alone for a while, to reflect on everything what she had experienced during such short time.

"My dear, think about the white Buddha and about Ananda's letter. We'll stay separately during this night, but all my thoughts will be with you. And let every separation with you during the entire life be only external. Wherever I would be, you'll always be next to me."

Having said good-bye, James went to the silent, little house to spend the night by the white Buddha.

Having entered the small room with the statue of the wise man showing white, the pedestal of which, as well as the whole room, was buried in flowers, and their aroma was felt everywhere, James sat down on the low sofa in front of the statue and he was looking at the divine prince in the twilight, who had left everything for the sake of searching for the truth. For the first time James was alone in this room after his factual marriage. As he had promised to Lisa, his thoughts were with her.

James remembered their entire old acquaintance and such short romance with respect to time, but which was so especially rich with strain of their feelings. All those events seemed like a miracle to him. He had already lived so many years of his life without even thinking about marriage for a single time and he even was proud of his reputation of a hopeless bachelor which had stuck to him strongly. And all of a sudden – the girl who had just crossed the threshold of her childhood became his wife, the part of his life. James's eyes already got used to the darkness and he could see the garland of the flowers which Ananda's hand had flung on the cup together with a letter and a bracelet. The flowers from the cup were hanging down nearly till the floor, and it seemed to the captain that every blossom was the little part of his own

heart that was torn up into pieces in order to imbibe the pain and joy of the earth into itself more easily and to carry them into the cup of the man of Wisdom.

The wise man succeeded to open light for the earth and to show the way how an ordinary man could make himself free from passions. The captain thought that by living so impurely up to now he was only showing the path to the slavery of passions to everybody. Tonight he felt to be at the crossing of hopes. He remembered the terrible night of the storm, fearless Lovushka who was pushing the sweet into his mouth and laughing in the presence of the greatest danger and menacing death. He remembered the unusual view of the sea and two poles of water in it, clashing in that place where his steamer was not long ago, and strange expression of I.'s face – the one of harmony, peace and silent joy – with which he was looking at that horror of the water mountains.

“Man must live in such a way,” I.'s words began to sound in his memory, “that an emanation of peace and calm would pour into every heart that he meets from him. Every ordinary man doesn't have to become saint or try to imitate him, but without exception every man's obligatory task is to live his ordinary day in such a way that he would bring a drop of peace and joy into his own and another person's existence.”

The captain began to think again whether he brought at least a drop of peace and joy into at least ten people's lives during his entire life. He was looking at the man of Wisdom who succeeded not to search for popularity and anyway to become well-known not only in the entire world, but also a God for half of the world. His own life seemed to him to be lived without any goal and meaning. What could he take away from the earth if he should end the phase of his earthly life now? There wouldn't be at least a handful of kindness which he had given to people and even less joy. How could he start the new life now? Whom should he follow in his family life?

The captain meditated on his conversation with Florentian in his study in the country many times. And now, as well as every time when he was thinking about those wonderful words, it seemed to him that he wouldn't have strength to fulfil even the one hundredth of them. He was already close to depression when he heard the light knock at the outside door. The captain listened attentively and made certain that the knock repeated in the same silent, but more persistent way. He went downstairs himself in order not to disturb the family of the old servant who were the only dwellers of this house. Having opened the door, he was surprised when he saw Ananda covered with a cloak on the threshold.

“Captain, of course, you were not waiting for me, and I must admit that I didn't know myself an hour ago that I would drop in at your place. I was roaming about the sleeping town with my uncle, he told me that you weren't sleeping and he added immediately that not the darkest, but grey darkness was in your soul.”

Ananda laughed with his especial metallic voice, and the captain remembered how Lovushka called that laughter the clank of swords.

“Since my uncle is great clairvoyant he sent me to cheer you up and to clear your spiritual mist which has risen without any reason at all.”

The captain wanted to take the guest to his study, but Ananda looked at him attentively and uttered.

“Why do we need the rules of conduct accepted in the society when I came to you by paying no regard to any rules of etiquette? Let's go where you've been up to now and let's try to get into that calm and light with which the atmosphere of the great wise Man is concentrated.”

"It feels so great here, captain," Ananda uttered again when both of them sat down on the low sofa where James was sitting alone not so long ago. "What a great idea has come into your mind to decorate the intimate, small room of your wife with this charming statue. I don't doubt that your grandfather who gathered such rare treasure in this small house was great and wise man."

"I don't know. It was the real surprise for me to find Buddha and the old violin, not to speak of everything else. I was still too small to understand my brother's and my father's argument, and I hadn't heard any talking about Buddha at my home, but the fact that I found this statue after I met you and... the man of my dreams Florentian helped to perceive the whole grandeur of that man by the feet of whom we are sitting now."

"My dear friend, look at these traits full of inspiration, at this kindness that gush in streams. Let the path of this prince and man of Wisdom give the possibility for every man to perceive the whole grandeur of each earthly soul's life. Not for a single moment of man's life on the earth only his bestial, physical "I" has to sound. If man has found out about his life's eternity at least for a single time, if he has felt that mantle of eternity put on him at least for a single time – then he won't take it off anymore, he won't be able to live in the surroundings of only physical, earthly interests. The perspective opened by knowledge, like the feeling of perspective of a painter, opens for people not instantly and absolutely not because the man wanted to find out something about the spiritual world. The book of spiritual knowledge isn't placed on the table – it is in man's heart, and only that person can read it, who learns to live his every dawning day by always rising higher in his creative work. Man cannot say to himself: I want to develop; or: I've been despising mediocrity during my entire life, I was taking only that what I could lift on the pedestal and think that my want to develop or my want to live among the greatest could bring me to something really high. Those are only reasonings that don't have anything sound, powerful, creative – anything what could take one to the Truth. Action, action and one more time action – this is the path of the Earth activity. What are you rummaging for in your past which doesn't exist anymore and which you alone are still creating in your thoughts? What has given the right to you during this night, the last one before your announced marriage in public, to sit here, lost in sadness and negation instead of the power and joy, instead of assertion of all the best of what your spirit has already achieved? Look at this divinely kind man of Wisdom. Crowds of his disciples and followers were following him, and he didn't put any verbal or physical obstacles for them. He was telling only one thing for everybody: "Don't deny", and if he saw some followers who were denying their present he told them: "My friend, go away from me. Learn to live without any negation and then come back." You start the new life. Don't plan cleverly. Know only one thing firmly: you need to prepare yourself today, so that tomorrow a man next to you could rest and not suffocate. Today you need to go to bed happy yourself, with a thought that your heart was living in Eternity by respecting the fire of every man's heart whom you met. You cannot search for happiness of life in any other way as only with those powers of Eternity which sound in your own heart. Man educated anyhow by his shallow, nervous parents who didn't know anything else except the earthly wealth is unable to jump instantly into the atmosphere of harmony and wisdom, but every person by loving his relatives can think about the Light's grandeur within himself and send his greeting to the Light of the person met. I took you, your wife and your family upon myself, because you – without knowing and imagining anything – did a great favour to me by returning my uncle's ring to me. Today I came to tell you that you have a loyal friend and guardian of your life; in all cases of your inner disharmony call me by my name, and wherever I would be I will hear you everywhere. You may not hear my response, but I will certainly hear you, and my response will come to you as the factor of your life's facts, as the outcome of your inner drama. You suffer without necessity for those or other circumstances of your personal life. The art to live on the earth for you brings you to one truth – to achieve a complete loyalty. Every man has his own task of life. And sometimes man receives life on the earth only because he could develop one of his characteristics. Your task – that's integrity. Integrity of your thoughts, feelings, loyalty. It is time for you to achieve harmony, in other words,

such power of spirit and the balance of its stability when your entire organism – psychic, physical and spiritual one – may begin to create.”

Ananda went up to the Buddha statue, took the captain’s hands and put them on the wise Man’s cup.

“Let help pour onto the earth from your cup through these hands. Let this heart that has forgotten about itself remember how the breathing of your calm and kindness, love and compassion was pouring onto the earth with joy. Let this physical heart in a physical body walk through the earth by bringing joy and confidence to every person met. Let this heart grow with fearlessness and loyalty for you, for your wisdom and calm by cheering up and making happy the people met.”

It seemed to the captain that Ananda’s words were spreading through his entire body, that they were flowing like an electric current. As though the wave of peace and confidence washed off the thin coating of his sadness and dirt. The captain felt like connected to a certain new power which he had never felt within himself up to now. Ananda put his hands on the captain’s shoulders, looked at him tenderly with his eyes-stars and left the room.

“See you in the evening,” he uttered only this to James in the hall and went out to the street where it was dawning already.

Left alone the captain came back to his little corner again, sat down on the same sofa where Ananda spent several hours with him. Now James didn’t ask himself anymore why such people like Ananda and I., lord Benedict and sir Vomi were living among other people, in the swarming heap of their sins and passions. He used to remember often how Ananda and I. would laugh from his and Lovushka’s incomprehension when they used to reckon them among the higher living beings who possessed some especial powers acquired in a supernatural way. They used to say to the captain that the control of his steamer for every botanist would be a miracle until he would learn that art. When the knowledge opens one’s eyes, all the miracles disappear... Buddha was shining for him like an example of the mortal man’s life. This man didn’t propose his authority or the fanaticism of his belief to anybody. Simply he was teaching people to overcome with love, to search for peace within themselves and to understand the wonderful and priceless freedom within themselves. The captain went up to the cup, pressed his head to it and whispered.

“I want to follow your wisdom. I will try to see it everywhere during my day. I know my place in the universe, I know that I haven’t yet reached my necessary spiritual height which would allow me to be next to the greatest during my entire life, but I won’t forget my meetings with them and I will try to begin and end my modest day by your cup.”

Once again he looked at the wonderful Buddha’s face and left the house silently, in which the servant’s family was already waking up.

The counts R., as well as the captain himself, were counting the hours and minutes during the entire day when finally they had to go at the lord Benedict’s. In the meanwhile, everybody was occupied in their everyday affairs at the lord’s house and they weren’t thinking much about the upcoming reception in the evening.

Alyssa exchanged Doria by her sick mother who already recovered her consciousness, but according to the horror and excitement that still beset her, she was near the limit of going crazy. To all Alyssa’s efforts to calm her down, lady Katherine was stating always the same.

"Alyssa, if you knew everything you wouldn't show so much tenderness for me. You wouldn't want even to enter my room. I, only I alone ruined Jenny and a half of your life. What should I do? Where do I have to run? How could I help Jenny?"

"My dear, beloved mother. What life did you ruin for me? I was happy, I loved you, my father and Jenny, I was doing everything what you wanted me to do in a simple, joyous and glad way, and I feel sorry for not doing more. Now I know only one thing: if my father didn't condemn you, but he was teaching us to respect you, then now he would repeat the same will of his for me and Jenny – to respect you. Mummy, stop trembling and dreading. There is no place for fear at the lord Benedict's house. Everybody finds protection here."

With these Alyssa's words Ananda entered the room. He was so radiant, he was so cheerful and joyous that it seemed as though the sun of the spring entered together with him.

"Alyssa, I see that for some reason you are sad. And here's the answer," Ananda continued by sitting down by the patient's bed and looking attentively at her eyes red with weeping. "Why are you crying, my dear friend," he uttered so tenderly, such a piercing through kindness was felt in his voice that lady Katherine seized Ananda's hand, nestled up to it, and the heartbreaking lament of the pastor's wife was heard in the room, which simply wounded Alyssa's soul.

Alyssa went down on her knees, nestled up to another Ananda's hand and looked at his eyes so pleadingly as though she would have wanted to give all of herself for her mother's calm and tranquillity.

"Stand up, my baby. Don't be sad. Don't think that you are helpless in those minutes of your life when you are standing before man's pain and despair; don't think that you cannot help him. Such moments don't exist that pure love and real compassion would be helpless and unheard by those whom you address, that they would be left without any response. The truth is that not always your pure powers manifest themselves as a sudden external help for the person whom you met. The facts of the external welfare, the only form of help acknowledged by people, don't always mean the real love. However, in every moment when you were pouring your help of love as the highest kindness you were leading your person met into the only path of the pure life on the earth – into the path of uniting through courage, beauty and fearlessness. Having destroyed the rammed opinion in the suffering person's thoughts and heart that his entire life has risen against him, that his sins may not be remitted, that by being sinful he's unable to go out into the path of Light anymore and carry that Light for others – you will destroy the partitions of his authorities and superstitions, and you will furrow the new way along which the unfortunate person's thoughts will be flowing from that moment on. Never lose hope and understand the power as your inner work. The higher your unselfishness and joy will rise when you gather the whole pain of your person met into your heart, the more resolutely you will merge your love with your Teacher's compassion – the more resolutely the facts of daily routine of your person met will turn, the faster, simpler, easier the charms of his heartbreak will disappear."

Having seated the girl next to himself, Ananda put his hand on the pastor wife's head, who was still sobbing, and he told her silently.

"Are you crying for your daughters now? Now you are mourning over your shortsightedness that you didn't understand your husband in time, evaluated his honour and kindness, and trusted him. Listen attentively to this voice of your conscience which is breaking your heart so much now. You are crying for yourself, aren't you?"

Lady Katherine fell silent from the light touch of Ananda's hand. She still had enough strength to look at that who came to touch her purulent wounds, because all of a sudden, it seemed for

lady Katherine that she should look like a leper for the pure Ananda's look. This thought flashed in her head, but the voice of the talking man took hold of all of her soon.

"Think about Jenny. Think about your beloved daughter without fail, whom your heart may not condemn. Only don't think that such sympathy is worthy of something before eternity when you only cry, rush about, boil with dissatisfaction or any other passions, although you would give the halo of holiness to them in your thoughts. Your work, tranquillity, perception of your relationships by knowing that the great meeting with everybody is unselfishness of your love – this is what an effective sympathy should be, into which the energy of the Eternity's universal love may penetrate. Understand once and for all: you have to live by working and loving for Jenny. If you can stop crying you will be able to meet your daughter after some years, so that you could help her to get rid of superstitions of jealousy which now have pushed her into the clutches of darkness. You won't start denying that during your entire life with Jenny up till now, every day you were building an insurmountable wall with your irritation and falsehood for her, behind which she got now, right? You were always shaping that wall around your daughter yourself one stone after another; so now only you can destroy it one little stone after another. Only calm and tranquillity may be your work tools. Exactly like you haven't possessed any self-control, so now you can start your work of liberation of your love and your daughter only when you learn not to raise your voice in all cases of your life; not only to control the flow of your words, to think about your every word uttered, but also to understand well that your irritation in this room is flying much stronger than the discharge of the storm in the ether of the universe. You are absolutely healthy. Get up, start working if you really love Jenny and want to serve her. Exactly like earlier, during your entire life you were pouring the rubbish of your soul and littering the entire universe with them, so now you have to foster new habits within yourself, and first of all – to learn to be glad, to laugh and not to judge people. Start with the simplest and modest work. You were lazy during your entire life and you were only trying to represent a lady. Now take all the housekeeping business off Doria's shoulders, because she must start another work. Learn to communicate with people in the most common daily routine and in the smallest affairs, learn to control yourself. Forget all classic superstitions and behave with every servant and commercial traveller in such a way as if in every one of them I was standing before you, and you were talking to me. And I will see how much sincerity you possess when you say that you respect me," Ananda finished cheerfully.

He didn't wait for any of the pastor wife's answer, he left the room by leaving Alyssa and her mother in the most different spiritual states.

Alyssa's eyes which were shining no less than Ananda's ones were reflecting the deepest perception of Ananda's words. She understood the guidelines of her mother's behaviour indicated for her as almost the only one possibility for lady Katherine to achieve self-control and at least some politeness. And at the same time she didn't even doubt what disappointment and even despair her mother had to feel now, who hated the housecraft, the order and everyday thorough work required for this during her entire life. Her thoughts and her heart were already prepared by wishing to find the way to show to her mother the most attractive sides of this work, to explain to her that by doing it she could show gratitude to lord Benedict for everything what he had done for their family.

A vacancy appeared in lady Katherine's soul. She understood that in this moment she was unsuitable for anything when she was confused like this. Ananda's words penetrated into her very heart. Now there wasn't any falsehood there. The pastor's wife admitted to herself that her tears were only her overdue regret. Only now she could see her husband such as the others saw him. Bracano didn't take any place in her thoughts and in her heart anymore. For her spiritual eyes her husband and Alyssa seemed to be absolutely different, new people for whom also the new feeling was waking up within her. The new power to live matured within her, which was supported by these new, still unusual images to her, and this power was already shooting in the depth of her heart. Lady Katherine knew only one thing firmly – she wouldn't

protest against Ananda's work given to her, but how she had to get down to it – she realized as much as the wood-cutter about the subtleties of a sculpture.

Mother's and her daughter's looks met. They didn't utter a single word one to another, but both of them understood that the old way of lady Katherine's living was out of the question. The pastor's wife was always indignant at her husband's explanation to her that she needed to work, but now she was thinking only about her inexperience and her absolute nonconformity to new tasks. She even wouldn't have thought to listen to an advice and to get up from the bed before. She used to take care of herself even if she felt unwell at least a little. Now by feeling completely smashed and without any strength, the pastor's wife began to dress. It seemed that Alyssa's help gave the new strength to her. Now her daughter wasn't a stooge teenager, a dressmaker needed for the family, but she was a friend in whose sincerity she didn't have any doubts.

"Mother, don't think that that management of the housekeeping is complicated. First of all, you won't have to run about in the market or stand by cooking pots. A great cook and a housekeeper are here. You'll have to put all house expenses and orders in order for everything what lord Benedict will desire for this house. Usually he used to explain everything shortly and clearly to Doria."

"Ah, my child, I'm so afraid of lord Benedict! I don't expect anything else without great work from him, but as soon as I feel him – I find myself like in a fortress. I know that I'm protected from everything, and anyway when I think about him I'm seized by fear. I feel like a dwarf before a giant; I always remember how his eyes stuck my feet to the threshold. How will I call at him to get his instructions? If you knew how heavy my heart is. I know that I need to start living differently and I can't imagine how I will settle the monthly bill. For how many times your father asked me to do that, how many notebooks he started, he showed and tried to help me, but I was only shouting with laughter and tearing the sheets of his started notebooks. I cannot do anything."

"I will help you, my dear, and Doria won't leave you until you learn everything."

Alyssa helped her mother to comb her luxuriant hair which was not so fiery anymore because of silver in it, she looked at her mother's eyes and told her.

"Mother, now you love my father, so of course, you will be able to do everything. You have to justify yourself with your work not only because of Jenny, but also for my father's peace, don't you? Both of us will be working together. Now I have to go to play. Doria will be back soon. She's verifying the bills with the housekeeper now. Try to delve deeply into their work, and perhaps it won't seem difficult for you."

Having kissed her mother, Alyssa went downstairs. Lady Katherine didn't bring herself to meddle in Doria's work without her invitation. Besides, she felt so weak that she could hardly come up to the armchair. She thought for the first time that she hadn't read anything else except some futile novels in her native language, that she wasn't well educated and she was writing with mistakes. She approached the book-shelf and took a random Shakespear's volume. Having opened "Hamlet" which unfortunately she hadn't read she began to read by waiting for Doria.

In the meanwhile lord Benedict was talking to his friends who had come to visit him in his room. Nobody from the inhabitants of the house knew what they were talking about. Lord Benedict rang after a while and told to the servant to invite Doria and Nikolay to come. When both of them entered his study they saw that everybody were wearing long, white clothes, similar to the Indian ones.

"My friend," sir Vomi addressed Nikolay. "I saw Ali and I've brought a letter and a chiton for you from him. He asks you to fulfil all the instructions which you'll find in the letter, and at the same time to

accept one of his friends in your home in America, whom you know a little. Do you remember that dumb person who lived in the mountains when you met Ali for the first time?"

"Not only I remember the kind, silent host of the hall, but I also remember his impression made on me. It seemed to me back then that the demure person wasn't dumb one and I think so now. Whomever Ali would send to my house, I and Nal will be very glad and we'll share everything what life will give to us with him. Only neither I nor Nal – and you, sir Vomi, know it – we don't have anything. We are visitors in our friend and father Florentian's house, but we'll kindly share everything what we get in this house with Ali's guest."

"Nikolay, I'll be your guest in America," Florentian uttered, "speak like the host and leader immediately."

"Could you," sir Vomi continued, "shelter not only the dumb man who've learned to talk perfectly, but also help the big group of people who would come together with him from Ali? Do you want to help them personally to organize the little body, the branch of your future community? Do you want to lead those people and to set up a small settlement where more people could come in six or seven years already? Reflect on your answer. You need to prepare such body of high culture where people who will come would find the possibility to join the collective instantly, which would be free from property that oppresses one's spirit, where soil cultivation would be facilitated as much as possible, where every member of your new community could work freely according to that profession which he will choose with love for that work by wasting the least time for the whole keeping of the community."

"Sir Vomi, if I thought about it even for many hours I couldn't find the words anyway in which I could express my joy for this proposal. Only one thing could disturb me: if I was less obedient and if my loyalty for Ali hesitated, then I could still think about it whether I'm worthy of that honour, but I know that I'm walking in such a way as my Teacher sees it and leads me."

"I also have a favour to ask you," the duke Saintger uttered. "Right now I would like to send two of my students together with you. They are very well educated mechanical engineers. I've given a great task to them in advance to prepare the whole technical basis for the new flying apparatuses. You are great mathematician, so from that side they will have help already. Please, if you want to help me, create conditions for their scientific work, and after some time I would send the next group of workers to you, whom I also will ask you to accept to this new community. After some time I will come myself to visit you for a year or more, because I'm very interested in the future of mechanics in this field."

"Moreover, Nikolay, if you don't refuse this difficult task to organize the little corner according to the new principles, to the new perception of who the "well-bred man" is, as you were writing in your new work, then Florentian who is coming with you will help you everywhere," sir Vomi uttered again. "Alyssa will organize the musical life, Nal will help you in the educational work. Sandra and Amedeo will come to visit you in several years. Amedeo will have to study the builder's profession, while Sandra with his encompassing everything memory will learn agriculture in a short time. Now they won't come, because in the beginning the people with absolute self-control and well-formed workers will have to be next to you. That's everything what I can say to you now. Ali will keep in touch with you and Florentian. He decided to participate actively in this activity himself and he would give as much attention and time to you as you would need. It is your and your assistant Florentian's matter to choose the place and time when you can accept those people of whom we were asking you now with Saintger, but remember, my friend, that namely you must become the leader of the new activity and take up on yourself the whole responsibility for it."



Sir Vomi gave two big envelopes to him, which were written in big, clear handwriting, and Nikolay recognized the clear Ali's handwriting immediately. He also received two big packets, one of which was dedicated to Nal.

"Now, Doria, we'll talk about your business," Saintger uttered. "Your unselfishness and active activity of the late without any requests and demands which you liked so much earlier, convinced us that it has already come time for you to act much wider. You receive the task to stay with Ananda and to do several actions independently in fight against Bracano and his band. Bracano who doesn't understand at all who is hiding behind Benedict's pseudonym decided that he didn't need any great power here, so he sent those who helped him to lure the pastor's wife and Jenny. Since Bracano knew well Jenny's mother he found out everything from her about her daughters, but his calculations were very light-minded, of which the people whom he sent here made sure. We'll leave this place only when we see off Florentian and everybody whom he will decide to take with himself. You stay here with Ananda and you take pastor's wife under your guardianship. I know how difficult this burden will be for you, because her fear and hesitations will disturb your own harmony and balance for some time, but you see, there's no such place in the universe where man could retreat if he wants to work for everybody's welfare. You cannot hide from the racket and people's passions. You cannot search for your personal peace and calm in an isolated silence from the external world. You need to stand so firmly in the crowd that is walking through you, you always have to see the only power – life in everyone so clearly that your harmony wouldn't even tremble. Man reaches that only when his interests rise above his own personality, when he isn't living in any other way anymore as only united with life of the universe with every movement of his breathing. Harden yourself next to the pastor's wife who replaces the whole crowd with her heartbreak, attacks, tears and her constant hesitations. Don't think what small or horrible her experiences are, but think only how you should learn such fortitude that she would calm down next to you."

Kindness and an especial, grand courtesy was blowing from Saintger. He looked at Doria, smiled her tenderly again and continued.

"Now, my friend, when you understood through your own experience with what difficulty the disciple's broken pledge fell on his leader, you stay next to Ananda, so that you would become his loyal assistant in his business, on whom he could lean as on the executor who fulfilled his instructions precisely and immediately. Be brave till the end. You don't have to stay next to Ananda forever, without any separation. The disciple helps his Teacher the most not when he lives and acts next to him, communicates directly and lives under one roof with him, but when he matures for an absolute self-control and he may be sent to the people's swarming heap, into the depth of their passions and pain. And during those periods of separation with Ananda you'll always receive the precise news from your Teacher, although you aren't any clairvoyant. You are surprised, and your entire interior asks: how? It is very simple. When needed – also the ant will become a messenger. Never pay attention to that who brought the news to you, always concentrate on that what news you received. Your first task of your current self-education – that's to chase away the sadness that still visits you. Chase it away not with your mind by perceiving that there aren't any creation in it and that with it you infect every met person's day, and he intercepts a little part of your anxiety and pessimism inevitably. Chase it away by loving, by understanding what a strong power is pouring from you if not a single particle of people's pain got stuck in your heart's cup, and you carried it all to the cup of Ananda's heart. When silence and peace is in your heart, only then you'll be able to carry the whole heartbreak gathered from people during your entire day to your Teacher's cup. Only in that case your Eternal fire won't emit smoke or die out from the pressure of the people's passions. It won't die out, but it will touch Ananda's flame, and his kindness will revive the suffering and send them help. Absorb the turbid wave of the earthly day into yourself, be simple and calm in your daily routine. Try not to surrender to the influence of superstitions of sympathy that demands sympathetic tears, kisses and embracing, but live with

the real sympathy, be strong, fearless and carry your heart's fire in such an easy and simple way as everyone who knows the eternal life and its action is walking. Then your respect to your met person's fire will become a continuous flow of Ananda's work within you."

Having embraced Doria, the duke Saintger took her to his room. Ananda together with Nikolay went to Alyssa to talk about the musical evening.

Lord Benedict and sir Vomi invited Sandra and Amedeo to themselves.

## Chapter 18

### Evening at the lord Benedict's.

#### Lisa's and the captain's wedding

Finally Lisa caught a moment to go to her room by saying that she wanted to rest and play. The countess was excited during the entire day, she was arguing with her husband and daughter about all kind of trifles of the tomorrow's wedding. Lisa wanted to register a marriage with Florentian's given dress, she wanted neither the traditional married woman's headdress nor the little wreath made of orange blossoms. The count who was certain that he wouldn't have to celebrate Lisa's marriage in a grand and luxurious way was inclined to an absolute simplicity and he assented to Lisa, but her mother for whom Lisa's behaviour was rather unexpected and incomprehensible was nervous by always repeating: "Everything is different from other people" and she demanded to keep the external decency. Then why did they have to waste a thousand roubles for the wedding-dress? Then why did they take her great-grandmother's headdress and expensive laces here? Lisa saw that a scene might rise in every moment, so since she could guess the real cause she smiled to her mother and told her.

"Mother, my dear friend, the least what I want is to upset you on the last day of our joint life, so if it is pleasant for you to see me like a lump of snow – then I will be glad to become that lump during those several hours of the ceremony."

Having calmed down both of her parents, she went to her room by adding that today she would certainly put the lord Benedict's dress on which she became especially fond of. Lisa's mother understood perfectly from Lisa's tone that it was meaningless for her to argue about it. When the countess was left alone she began to think again about all the questions which worried her, which always used to gather in one thought: how was she educating her daughter that it could happened what had happened? Who was to blame here? How much was she to blame here? And is anybody to blame at all here if that is atoned in the church so soon, already tomorrow?

While the countess was putting one of her best dresses on, she noticed that today she looked in a very youthful way, that her hair was falling down in especially light curls, while the dress bought in Paris revealed her well-kept figure in a new way. "Soon the end will come for this, too. Soon I won't need to choose any dresses for myself and for my daughter at all." Her thoughts skipped over to the lord Benedict's family, she ran through every of its members and came back to her own family. The difference between both families was so huge! But where was it hidden? The word "work" sparkled in the countess's heart. From the lord Benedict's and Nikolay's words she got an impression that all of them were always occupied with something. Her husband and Lisa were also always occupied with something. Her husband always had the big farm which he constantly was making better, but she was never interested in this activity. Lisa had her own God – music. She was improving her mastership and sometimes she used to work like an unskilled worker, as the countess used to estimate it jokingly. Lisa was living with the music, she was longing for it, while it seemed to the countess that work – that was a slavery, but not a pleasure. And now,

while still hearing the passages of Lisa's singing arriving to her, the countess began to worry and she sent the servant to tell her daughter that it was time to dress.

Having looked her daughter up and down, who came out of her room only when she was announced that her fiancé arrived, the countess didn't refrain from saying that Lisa was dressed too much as an adult according to her age. This remark made everybody laugh, the countess became embarrassed in the beginning, then she wanted to get angry, but finally she embraced her daughter sincerely and laughed together with the others. It was difficult to consider the countess to be Lisa's mother on this evening. Even James was surprised how her dress changed her and how much charm it gave to her. Everybody was already sitting in the coach in several minutes by concealing their excitement one from another, and in another half an hour they entered the hall of the lord Benedict's house. As soon as they had time to take off their cloaks and shawls when Nikolay and the host himself were already coming to receive them. Lord Benedict gave his hand to the countess and he took everybody straight to the musical sitting-room where the whole family and their new friends had already gathered.

The count and the countess were used to participate in all kinds of society, everybody used to consider them to be expected and important guests everywhere, but here they felt shy and ashamed. Lord Benedict was introducing them to his friends who had come easily and in jest. It seemed that every introduced person was irreproachably polite and kind, but the countess and her husband felt as though they had looked straight at the very counts' heart, had opened it till the end and seen all their hidden thoughts.

"We'll start with the music," lord Benedict addressed Alyssa and Lisa. "We'll become acquainted one with another and get used one to another better when the sounds of the music take us out of our conditional and usual habit of communication to look at every meeting like at the order of our words and actions set by etiquette. Today is such important day of Lisa's and James's life that we want to congratulate them, such young and pure husband and wife in unconventional surroundings. We want to create such bridge to their new life for them, in which the spiritual power would dictate all their external circumstances. Let the music tonight open in every one of us our entire love and goodwill for man. And we dedicate that entire love to the newly-weds today."

The countess looked surprised at lord Benedict, and her cheeks turned red. The count was surprised, too, but he decided that most likely the fiancé and the fiancée in England, on the eve of their wedding were called husband and wife already. Lisa and James looked one at another as well – only an endless devotion was in both of their looks. It seemed that they didn't even notice how they got in the centre of everybody's attention – on the contrary, they accepted everybody's attention and the host's words absolutely naturally, as dedicated to them, which could neither restrict nor shame them.

Ananda went up to them, took the violin from James's hands and brought it to the piano where Alyssa was standing already.

"If I have to play, while you hear me, then I'll do it certainly only before you," Lisa told him by taking the violin into her hands. "I haven't heard your playing yet, but I think that my hand wouldn't hold the bow anymore after you."

"Of course, my and your songs of love will be different," Ananda answered her, "but they will have something in common, too: they will be joyous and triumphant. Now play in such a way as if you were standing before Buddha," he added so silently that only Lisa heard him, "and you will rise to that peak of happiness where the creating man meets the Creator."

Ananda took James's arm, brought him to the furthest corner of the room where the duke Saintger was sitting already, and seated him between himself and his uncle. Lord Benedict was sitting between the counts R., the remaining members of the family sat down by the walls of the spacious sitting-room. The sitting-room itself was almost unlit, only both girls were left in the middle of the bright light. They were so different – Alyssa was in white dress with black laces, the sign mourning, and Lisa - with green brocade interwoven with lilies, with a shining little wreath on her head, with a passionate expression of her face and her sudden movements. Even undecorated Alyssa's hair looked like a shining halo from lighting, and Henry who was sitting next to his mother whispered her.

"Mother, I remember you well such as Alyssa is now."

The sounds of the violin and the piano began to ring suddenly, unexpectedly. Nobody had time to prepare that the silence would be disturbed so quickly. When the countess lifted her head and looked at her daughter, she could hardly refrain from shouting out. She had seen her daughter changed several times during these days already. It seemed to her mother that love had turned her daughter nearly into the beauty, but that whom she saw now was completely different, not her Liza from Gurzuf. In truth her hand was the same, but how she was playing the violin! Lisa had never had such strong hand, such easiness and flexibility. Lisa was playing absolutely easily. Now she was somewhere else, not here. She pressed her lips together hardly, then suddenly she loosened them, her smile began to shine, her head and her body became straight elastically and she bent a little. No, the countess really had never seen Lisa so changed. "But she's glorifying God, isn't she?", all of a sudden it occurred to her, and for the first time her mother saw that her daughter didn't make an idol from music; that God was within her, in her heart; that music was God of the entire Lisa's life; that this God had no equal; that without the music also Lisa wouldn't exist, exactly like without the sun its sunbeams wouldn't exist. The countess didn't know what Lisa was playing, how Alyssa was accompanying her. Now she didn't understand and picked out any musical phrases, she only heard the song of Lisa's heart and she was thinking where this girl could feel life so well that she could transfer the cry, the prayer and the wounds of her own heart to the strings in such a way. Lisa let the violin down. Her blind eyes were still focussed on one spot for some time. Finally she gave a sigh and, having placed the violin on the piano with difficulty, as if it had weighed a pound, uttered silently.

"Today I cannot play anymore."

Ananda went up to her, seated her in her place and came back to the piano.

"Well, Alyssa, my friend, now it's my turn," Ananda uttered by taking the violoncello. "I performed these compositions in Constantinople not so long ago, only brunette accompanied me there. Some of you who are here know her, some of you also heard her playing. I must admit that I don't know a better pianist."

"Ananda, you encourage Alyssa very well," lord Benedict gave a laugh. "And without your opening remarks I can see how Alyssa's heart is beating with fear."

"Oh, if at least one tenth of the world's women knew fear only as much as Alyssa, then there wouldn't be any place left for anger and darkness in the world," Ananda answered him. "And the most important thing is that fearless Alyssa is simply grown together into one living being with music. Her harmony is pure like the nature itself, and she cannot tolerate any falsehood. Her harmony doesn't compete with anybody, it cannot crumble from the incorrectly sounded note next to it. And no gust is able to interfere in it, except the pure love. It is easy for everybody everywhere where Alyssa is present, if he doesn't possess any passions of evil. Evil will suffocate and it cannot do any malice to her or win her over to its side. Happy is that person who will create family with her."

"You know, Ananda, if you are still going to continue your philosophy, then not only roses, but also peonies will begin to bloom on Alyssa's cheeks," Saintger's voice was heard. "Don't feel shy, Alyssa. When Ananda is getting ready to play, the circle of his life lifts him immediately into such high spheres of the ether that everyday talks, perception of every day's life don't exist for him anymore. He sees the sky studded with diamonds and he carries it to the sad earth. I'm sure that today he will take you together with himself."

The tender, silent, but such clear voice of the duke Saintger that his every word was heard in every corner fell silent, and the first sounds of the piano began to ring in the fallen silence. When Lisa was playing, the countess didn't hear Alyssa. Her daughter had enslaved her, and she could hear only the violin. Now she was surprised that the piano sounded so joyously and so powerfully, but suddenly the countess's thoughts stopped – the new sounds were heard in the room and... Everything fluttered, everything trembled. That was the violoncello which was singing in a human voice.

"That's what kind of the music it is when the creating man meets the Creator," Lisa thought for a while. Tears were rolling down her face, her fists were clenched, and she couldn't take her eyes off Ananda in any way. James who was sitting next to her, who was plunged in love which Lisa glorified when she was playing, who felt that life itself was ringing in her strings, now forgot that he had already heard music. It seemed to him that he started living only when Ananda's violoncello began to sing. Again like in Constantinople he heard the whole people's fight, all their passions, their entire pain. All people's tears and complaints were concentrated in Ananda's bow. But what a different reflection was there and here! Here everything was breathing with joy, comfort, quieting. Completely changed Alyssa was shining by the piano here, who almost didn't remind of the earthly living being with anything anymore. Here, as well as there, the waves of man's inspiration were flying, but the music here showed what the power of selfless love was able to achieve. There it spoke up only all its personal desires, all the gusts of its passions and dreams, there one could understand life personally, every moment was valued only as much as man's "I" was concerned with it.

All of it was flashing in James's memory. He looked at Florentian, at the man of his dreams, who had acquired a physical body. This real physical man was much higher than James could create him in his dreams. Always charming Florentian's face now was above any comprehension of human beauty, above everything what James succeeded to see during his life. His wonderful green eyes were looking at the distance with such tenderness and sympathy, as if he was sending Ananda's songs to that distance by trying to embrace as many people as possible with them. James saw Lisa's tears, he understood the strain of her spirit and her heart, he understood that the new perception of music had opened for Lisa, too. The countess was sitting with her face covered with a fan, and James understood from her flinching shoulders what an abyss the woman had taken a look at, for whom the centre and the essence of her entire life was only her own family up to now. It seemed that the turning point in evaluation of her past and future life had taken place. The count also surprised James. His face was pale like a patient's one, his eyes were looking at Ananda without stopping. He looked like an accused who pleaded guilty for his wrongly lived life. The sounds kept pouring, and James's state was changing. It seemed to him that he was standing by the Buddha's cup where Ananda took his hands back then. He was feeling always easier, as if a burden had slipped off his life. He understood why it was so easy and calm in his heart: no external circumstances controlled it anymore. A spiritual transformation had taken place within him. As though Ananda's song pulled him out of his body's case in which now he was living temporarily, and showed that life of his spirit and his Eternity to him, in which neither time nor space existed.

James understood that time didn't exist in those high powers about which Ananda's violoncello was singing; and everybody could get into the sphere of those high paths not because he had become a saint or perfect, but because he comprehended the whole Beginning of the Beginning within

himself and he was able to leave all those conditionalities which he had to overcome for a moment. The captain understood that only when he overcame his conditionalities he could enter that path along which an ordinary man could reach the prominence of Ananda, Florentian and other people about whom the captain didn't know anything and who might be walking and creating even in higher spheres. Ananda stopped playing. He put down the violoncello, looked at everybody with his shining eyes and approached Alyssa who was still sitting. He bowed to her by thanking her for such excellent and simply rare accompaniment, and having given several notebooks with notes to her, he showed her what he was going to sing now. As though he didn't notice the impression left from his playing. He didn't notice it not because his high inner culture demanded it, but he was creating now not only for the people who surrounded him here, - he could see something else what James and all of those who were living only with their earthly plans and flights couldn't perceive.

Ananda began to sing and he attracted people closer to himself. Lady Cecilia stood up and embraced Henry who also couldn't sit anymore. His eyes were looking not only at Ananda, but also at Alyssa. Lady Cecilia also fixed her gaze on Alyssa. She knew this song, she knew that starting with the second couplet Alyssa had to join and she was worried that the girl wouldn't disturb that wonderful world into which the singer had taken everybody. Ananda's voice enslaved all her thoughts, she was burning with a desire to pray. And how surprised lady Cecilia was when she heard two voices intertwining. She didn't even comprehend when the woman's voice joined. Now she could hear the phrases of not so very well-known song which she used to sing with her brother in her childhood, but only the hymn of happiness, the one that glorified Life.

One more living being invisible for the guests was listening to Ananda's music. Having heard the sounds of the music from the distance, the pastor's wife went downstairs and she was coming closer to them. She stopped by the door of the sitting-room exactly at that moment when Ananda began to play. The pastor's wife didn't understand what was going on with her now, because she was unmusical by nature, she hated singing and the music more because of her continual irritability and anger for her husband, not because of the music itself. It seemed to her that not the sounds of the instrument were ringing, but an accusation meant to her personally. A categorical command to look through her entire life seemed to her in the sounds. "Jenny, Jenny, my child, what have I done? I loved you from the bottom of my heart, didn't I? I wanted you to be happy from the bottom of my heart."

When Ananda began to sing the pastor's favourite song, and Alyssa's voice joined him, the poor woman fell on her knees and buried her face in the sofa so that her lament wasn't heard. All of a sudden, somebody's hand touched her shoulder tenderly, and calm spread through her entire body.

"Get up, my friend," a strange and tender voice told her. "Sit down next to me and try to listen to my words attentively."

The duke Saintger helped the helpless woman to stand up, he stroked her tousled hair and seated her next to himself on the sofa by the window through which the colourless light of the moon was pouring. Having calmed down in that light instantly, lady Katherine saw the slender man whose manners and grandeur showed not only a man from nobility was standing before her, but the one who's used to command, and she thought whether it was possible not to obey him. She was unable to decide by such colourless light how old the stranger was and she understood only one thing that he had come here absolutely not to judge her as Ananda's song judged her.

"Oh no, the song doesn't judge you. The song invites you to the new life, to the new energy. It doesn't matter for how many years man would live, he always may develop more and more; the new powers may open within him again and again, which he didn't notice within himself yesterday and he was thinking that he hadn't possessed them at all. Now you think that you led your daughter to ruin when you

gave her to Bonda and to his company. No, my friend, you led her to ruin when you started her in falsehood, when you gave birth to her in falsehood, when every day you were drowning her cradle, her childhood in your irritability, and finally when you brought her together with the groom who was sent to you by that person who deceived and abandoned you in your youth. Who was protecting you and Jenny from your total ruin up to now? Who was protecting you every day from the disaster to get there where you got now? Only those two – your husband and Alyssa; and you were despising, tormenting both of them as much as you could during your entire life. Now you are crying. Perception of beauty and love illuminated you. The song which your relatives were singing to you once brought the desire to your heart to get into another life in which you could unite with people in the sphere of beauty and loyalty, redeem your fault before Alyssa whom life has still left for you.”

“Oh, senor, now I pray God only for Jenny, because I know that Alyssa cannot be tempted with pleasures and riches. Alyssa is living at the lord Benedict’s not because he has chosen her wrongfully, but because she’s such kind and calm, such diligent and she had to get into such surroundings which would reward her for everything. But Jenny, Jenny! What will happen to Jenny? Can’t I really help her with anything? Let everything befall on me alone. I understand my sin before my husband. I understand everything what I wasn’t doing rightly. Now I’m ready to visit Bonda and to promise him anything, only if he could let Jenny go.”

The pastor’s wife was looking at tender stranger’s face, and it seemed to her that a smile slipped in it.

“My friend, if you gave thousands of your promises to Bonda, now that wouldn’t help her anymore. Your Bonda, as well as Bracano, would be helpless before Jenny if she wasn’t burnt herself by suffering of the hell of her envy and fury. Everything with what you can help Jenny – that’s your work with yourself. Your every quick-tempered irritation which you overcome within yourself will be namely your help for your daughter. You want to protect her. How could you be of use for her if you cannot control a single of your thoughts in such a way so that it would be clear, whole and it would include everything what you are thinking about. You have rammed into your head that your daughter would be saved when you were next to her. But how are you going to protect her by living next to her? With your moods that change a hundred times a day? With a hundred of your kisses and embraces? Another hundred of your thoughtless, irrational words and proposals? You always want to hear an advice that would be very wise, and that after realizing it you would come to the path to new life, new perception, new affairs. All new affairs which are new according to their higher level of spiritual development are realized not by somebody’s advice, but with the energy that gushes from man himself. If you cannot keep from your tears, then what can you do for others at all? When man wants to be of use for somebody he needs his entire will and such love in which he would forget about himself and he would act, act... He would act by seeing clearly before himself those for whom he wishes to act. However, only those eyes are able to see how it is necessary to act rightly, which have lost their ability to cry. Everybody who is crying from blows of his own life is destroying the entire atmosphere around himself with his confusion. It is easy to destroy it, but it is very difficult to create peace within and around himself. Even when the crying person calmed down already, he is still struck off the list of the powers that create the day of the universe for a long time. Every person whom he meets gets into the space of the ether which is rotten from his irritability. Man not only cannot help anybody if he got irritated or nervous for something an hour ago – which is six of one and half a dozen of the other, - but he even becomes a bearer of this infection that works no slower than the bacillus of the plague. Understand me. Understand that first of all you need to educate yourself, to learn self-control and only then begin your duties of the real mother. Your bad luck isn’t that that you were a bad educator, but that when the time came to show the real love with your actions to your daughter, you were unable to keep your balance at least for an hour, in the same way as you couldn’t do it during your entire life. Now be



strong. Come back to your room and, instead of crying from the songs, read this short narrative. It tells about lives of two sisters and their daughters. It will become clear a lot for you from this simple story, and you'll find strength within yourself for a lot of things, although now it seems to you that everything around you is hopeless and desperate."

He helped the pastor's wife to stand up, treated her to some sweet from the little box similar to a snuffbox and gave a thin little book to her. Lady Katherine who could hardly move from her weakness, the further she kept walking the stronger she could feel the strong stranger's look and goodwill. The sweet melted in her mouth, her steps became stronger, and when she entered her room which she left completely sickly an hour ago, it seemed to her that she had been on the great and joyous trip that cured her. Revived pastor's wife began to read the book that turned out to be Italian.

In the meanwhile Ananda was still singing downstairs. Now he was singing one song after another; and the longer he was singing, the brighter faces of the listeners became. Their tears got dry, the eyes full of fascination were directed to him from all corners of the sitting-room. Almost everybody was standing already, while some of them came very near to the singer. Only the tears were still streaming down the pale Henry's cheeks. The youth went through his separation with Ananda again and he couldn't find any excuse for his behaviour. Suffering and sadness for the upcoming separation with Ananda was reflected on his face. But then wonderful words began to sound, Ananda was singing in Russian.

*I'm only wanderer of this earth.*

*Between work, passion and suffering*

*My destiny is going on like this:*

*Only for the saint Beauty I weave my song*

*From love, will and power.*

The count and the countess, Lisa and James, and after them all the rest of them who knew and who didn't know this language stood round the singer in a close circle. The last note sounded, the silence became predominant like in a temple, and everybody was afraid of disturbing the blessed silence.

"Thank you, Ananda," lord Benedict told him by coming to the singer and embracing him. "You've carried us out of all the limits of our habits restricting us with your songs. Every one of us could see clearer the path of man's activity for people's welfare. Who yesterday took care of the general welfare and activity only for himself, that one today ploughed up the new spiritual long-fallow lands within himself. Every one of us, by thanking you, felt how much he still haven't done in his life, how much time he was spending uselessly; and none of us will leave from here without making a vow not to spend at least a moment uselessly."

"Oh, Florentian, when you say "us" and put yourself on the same level with us – we want not to sing, but to shout and jump with happiness. Only because of your endless kindness you forget that neither of us can put anything on your altar except our gratitude, anything with what we could inspire you. You descended from ordinary people, you who have risen above all what an ordinary man could achieve remained the same kind and compassionate as you have been in those distant times when you began your path of Light. If everybody of those who now stand round you here can carry out a grain of joy from my songs, they have to thank you. You were that first herald of the new life, new perception and new Light,

who inspired beauty for me. You extended your powerful, great hand to me and opened the Eternal Light before me. Teacher, I return your word of gratitude hundredfold to you.”

Only several from everybody who were here could understand the meaning of Ananda’s words. One could see from the rest of the faces that they considered the exchange of pleasant phrases between the host and the guest to be an inevitable Eastern courtesy. The countess said to the singer by thanking him.

“That what I couldn’t understand at all before I understood today – what a great value is man and what he can achieve if he dedicates his life to any single goal till the end and wisely. I’ve spent my entire life in constant compromises and I can see now that namely because of that I haven’t achieved anything.”

“And me,” the count uttered, “lived not one, but several lives during these hours. It seemed to me that I was wandering after your voice across the entire earth, across all nations and that I saw only dissatisfaction everywhere. And I remembered my father’s words which I heard a hundred times: “One day you will be sorry for spending your entire life in vain.” That “one day” happened today. And what is more, I was cured of my constant worries about the grandeur of my personality. I understood that I’ve come to the earth and I would leave it naked. By looking at your eyes I promise to start working for my nation as well as I will be able to.”

“I won’t be able to express, as my father did it, everything what your music and your songs opened to me,” Lisa who was standing next to her father uttered, “but from now on I know one thing: it is possible to open for man that he’s living not only on the earth. That person who is singing like you do, that one is leading people in the same powerful way as Buddha or any other saint does it. I don’t know whether I said it rightly, I cannot find words, but my entire life until your songs today and after them – that’s my real Rubicon.”

Every one of them thanked Ananda in his own way and he was trying to explain to him how he got rich from his songs. Only Henry whispered.

“Everybody got rich, only I grew poor. I’ve lost everything today, because I understood that I couldn’t come back to you now, while separation with you was more than poverty for me.”

“My poor boy,” Ananda answered him by taking him a little aside, “you are still the same unstable in your wants. Every of your passionate wants irritate your entire organism, disturb your equilibrium, and then you cannot see clearly those who surround you. Was it so long time ago when you understood that Florentian saved you? Was it so long time ago when you made sure that only his spiritual power helped to pull you out of the sack of your confusion and longing into which you had gotten yourself? Haven’t all those lessons taught you anything? Haven’t really the love poured to you so much called any gratitude in return?”

“Oh, Ananda, you are thinking too badly about me. Not only I value Florentian, I bow before him and I thank him, I know that maybe only next to him I will find strength to become worthy of you. I feel great respect for Florentian’s wisdom, but my happiness which alone I desire in my life – that’s to be next to you. I know that every man has his own tasks, his own obstacles of his incarnation. Now I understand well that no one will open to me until my character becomes stable, until I am so gloomy. Oh, if I could be such a merry soul like Lovushka!”

The host interrupted their conversation and offered everybody to go to the dining-room. The evening ended with light supper which flew by like an instant for everybody. The duke Saintger and sir Vomi surprised the family of the counts R. with their knowledge and their journeys. The count and the

captain who thought that they had seen a lot of countries, nations and customs, felt that they didn't know anything when sir Vomi began to tell them about India, about its secret, inaccessible little corners, about its religious sects, about its little nations that didn't lose their hope to become free.

The duke Saintger's witty story, his subtle foresight, the peculiarities of different nations noticed by him from all sides, his knowledge of science and technology made everybody both laugh and take thought how such universal education could fit in one head. Nobody wanted to leave this house where everybody received so much during one evening. The host himself had to remind them that tomorrow had already begun, and that Lisa's marriage in the Russian orthodox church was at twelve o'clock.

With much difficulty to step back from lord Benedict's family and his charming friends, the counts R. and the captain left home. And once again all four of the most close people were sitting in the couch without uttering a single word till the very hotel. Only when they said good-bye, the countess uttered.

"Thank you, James. Today I've found the answer what life was. Your friends proved to me without any words that I've given everything to my daughter. I cannot be useful for her from now on. Travel alone. Lisa is yours now. I don't doubt that you'll be her excellent friend and teacher in her new life, while your friends won't leave both of you."

Having embraced James sincerely, she went to her room quickly, because she wanted to hide her gathering eyes. The countess wanted to stay alone so that she could orient herself at least a little in the mess of her experiences, but Lisa didn't allow her to concentrate only on herself.

"Mummy, my dear friend, don't cry during this last night when both of us are together. We've just seen real people. Can you imagine them crying when they separate? We'll separate for only a short period of time. Help me to undress as you sometimes help me, and we'll come back to my father's. He was so sad when we were coming home."

"My child, I'm not sad," the count uttered by entering after having heard his daughter's words. "I'm very resolute. I'll do everything what I can still do, so that I wouldn't reproach myself for my life lived in vain that I wasn't of any use for anybody. My dear girl, I propose you to go to your room alone and to go to bed faster. It is not good if tomorrow you aren't more refreshing than a rose. Have a good night's sleep, be strong by entering the new stage of your life and let me with your mother spend this night together, which will solve many things in our life. We had to give help and comfort one to another many times during our life already. From the bottom of my heart I wish you to find the real, eternal friend in your husband's personality. It isn't enough to love your husband and family in your marriage. An infinite tact and great joy is also necessary, so that you wouldn't burden another person with your love and exactingness for the sake of it."

He embraced his daughter, accompanied her till her room, kissed both of her hands and came back to his wife.

"My dear, the morning is wiser than the evening. Drink the mixture and let's try to fall asleep calmly. From now on until our separation with Lisa let's think only about her happiness, about her life and joy. If you also decided to come back to Gurzuf, we'll go there not to our grave, to end our last useless days silently, but we'll be happy, free from many things and we'll start working for the sake of strange children. You've been wishing to establish a children's home for a long time. I was always preparing to build a hospital. Now we'll try to fulfil those dreams."

With several sweet words and ridiculous remarks the count helped his tired and sad wife to recover her equilibrium. Soon the light was out in all their rooms, but how these hearts that had grown

together during their long joint life were sleeping and whether they were sleeping at all, only their pillows knew. The suffering of separation was breaking everybody's heart, although no one of them felt any despair. If the left alone parents had wished to clear up every one of them to himself what had happened within them and why the unbearable, tiresome pain there had settled down, then no one from them would had had to tell anything.

The countess for whom returning to Gurzuf without her daughter was equal to the death sentence, all of a sudden began to think about the garden and the flower gardens with joy. Her daughter wasn't her most painful spot anymore, that was only one of the components of the life beauty. She didn't even fall to thinking in which way and when this turn in her thoughts had begun and happened. She knew clearly only one thing that lord Benedict, his example of constant activity, attention and care for people revealed to herself her sluggishness and constant thoughts only about herself and her own people. The new desire to find a deep subject common for the interests of this man awakened within her. Now the countess wanted to act – and to act unselfishly for the sake of others in order to win his attention and friendship which she began to value.

The count's heart calmed down instantly, as soon as he read his father's letter. He decided to come back to Gurzuf immediately and to give freedom for his daughter to settle her life independently. The longer he was observing lord Benedict and his friends, the longer he was listening to their talking, the more he was surprised. Since he was living with his father for a long time, he respected him for many things, he loved him very much and now he often used to remember his words. Sometimes lord Benedict used to say the thoughts which his father was telling him not once or twice. Only when his father used to talk like this – and he was both living and acting in the same way as he was speaking, - it seemed to the count that his father was the only oddity on the earth; while now when the count would hear the same thoughts in lord Benedict's talking time and again he accepted them only as the compulsory program of his future activity.

The count was impatient already to come back home as soon as possible without wasting time anymore. Not so long ago it seemed important to him to enter into as many as possible new aristocratic relations, while now it became important only to build the hospital as soon as possible and to make his new contribution to relief of the people's suffering.

The married couple woke up with this mood and with these desires to work for the welfare of others – they were quiet, calm and almost happy. Their very first exchanged looks in the morning were telling already that their faces grew old during the night, but their souls became younger and they found that what they hadn't found one in another up to now – a friend and an associate.

Both of them felt that their bond became stronger, that their loyalty for each other grew. They could see only their daughter through their interrelation during their entire life. It seemed to them that when their daughter – everything would be lost. Now their daughter was leaving, while their relation only started.

The countess got up easily and went to wake up her daughter, but Lisa was sitting by the window already, and her face was sad. Having entered with the smile in her lips, her mother looked at her daughter attentively and uttered.

"My daughter, look at me. Do the unhappy mothers who bemoan their leaving daughters look like this? I'm absolutely calm. Now I won't explain it to you why such transformation has happened within me. When you come back to Gurzuf, I will tell everything to you, or perhaps, you'll understand it without any words. Know only this – you don't need to tear your love in two halves. Marry your husband bravely and win your place for yourself by fascinating everybody with your playing. You have somebody from whom you can learn both how to live and to play; while we both with your father understood that we

had to learn to live in our native Gurzuf in a new way. Let's go, my dear, we'll drink some coffee for the last time and we need to hurry to dress ourselves."

Lisa's face brightened up and – as always in the moments of happiness – it became prettier. The breakfast flew past easily, which she was afraid of, and she began to dress for the wedding even more easily and cheerfully. The count didn't allow the hairdresser to approach and he was doing his daughter's hair himself. No one knew where the count had acquired this talent from, but he combed his wife himself during his entire life when he wanted her to look especially pretty and elegant.

Lisa's head with the splendid married woman's headdress and unseen white flowers sent by James was the real miracle of beauty.

"Where could James get them from?" the count was talking by placing the flowers. "Of course, these flowers are alive, but he must have gone to the moon to get them," her father was mumbling by examining his daughter. "Wife, why today you don't say that everything is not like by the ordinary people? Those aren't the blossoms of oranges, but the flowers simply from air and light, right?"

While they were solving this question, lord Benedict took them by surprise. He exclaimed.

"How could it be, countess! You haven't dressed yet? Excuse me, James told me that according to the Russian custom, the bride goes to the orthodox church with her matchmaker. Well, here I am to take the bride. The groomsmen, the bridesmaids and the groom have already gone to the church."

The countess who was only in the robe and the count who was wearing the special tunic for combing one's hair became embarrassed, but they hurried to dress themselves by laughing and they assured lord Benedict that they would be ready in several minutes.

Left alone with the bride, lord Benedict took her by the window and, while showing the noisy crowd of people and carriages to her, which were scurrying forwards and backwards, he told her.

"Lisa, here's the sea of people's lives in which you are sailing. My path is one of the most difficult ones on the earth. Few people are able to tell their souls in such a way that they could see that God within themselves, whom they have to pour like a creative fire to their art. Handicraftsmen are always searching for those whom they could accuse for their misfortunes. The real handicraftsman understands his successes and misfortunes as the lessons of his own development. He understands that all the success and glory is unable to help him to bring those great views, sounds and colours onto the earth, which he's seen and heard in his dreams. Personally for you, your path is meant for people, for the crowd, you'll always have to be in the racket. Your entire life will fly past in the constant racket, you'll get into it always and everywhere. Don't search for solitude and respite. Don't think that the artist-thinker's spirit – and the real artist is always like this – depends only on the physical or material welfare. Not the sap of wealth of the body and the earth feed the spirit of the creative man. Only when man penetrates into the great secret of Love he can perceive how that or another aspect of this Love within him opens in his spirit. Love – that's flame. The more you gave to others, the brighter and bigger your flame is. Love in a creative man doesn't die out; but in order for you to understand what love is, you have to love the art for which you serve till the end. Only when the artist forgets about himself and dedicates himself to the art, he can understand where the people – creators derive their new strength from. Only then man crosses the limit of his handicraft and penetrates into the real creation, into intuition. Such man is very happy. He derives strength from for his work not from the earth, but while renewing himself with his every breath, he takes part in all earthly affairs and misfortunes himself. Remember this conversation and every time when you create and learn, learn to give your entire soul, your entire heart, all love to the flying past moment. If there are such moments when you cannot play in such a way that you could pour the sounds straight into the pure cup of

Buddha, then put the violin aside until you regain your balance again. But if you think that man's balance depends on the external causes, you will never reach creation. The path to creation goes through your liberation from the slavery of your passions and authorities; and in order for you to shape this path when you find it, you need to develop your self-control. Try to achieve an absolute self-control and you will live till the new meeting with me, about which you are dreaming."

Lisa's parents entered, and in several minutes lord Benedict was already taking the bride to register a marriage in his coach, while her father and mother were going after them by violating the old Russian custom. The count who had ordered only the orthodox church's decoration and illumination was surprised when he saw the whole hall, the lobby and the external façade decorated with luxurious garlands and flower-pots.

By the entrance to the orthodox church to which lord Benedict accompanied Lisa, James met her and took her to the altar. Nobody was invited here except James's relatives, the count's friends and lord Benedict's family, but the orthodox church was full of people. Curiosity attracted many people from the high society, who wanted to see the marriage which apparently was taking part in the last word, without any separate invitations. Somebody of them knew that lord Benedict was taking part in the ceremony, so they came to the marriage, because they wanted to see him close to them; the others were simply rejoicing at the possibility to gape at the nice event that didn't cost them anything.

When lord Benedict was accompanying the bride, her clothing aroused the general admiration, but when the people directed their eyes to the groom who they considered him to be, they couldn't refrain their remarks.

"My God, that's the groom! He is simply carrying the bride on his palm! Good Lord, where did the Russians get such handsome man from?"

The remarks were pouring on the imaginary groom from all sides, and only the little fires of humour in the lord Benedict's eyes showed that he could hear them.

Lisa was as charmed. Her little, narrow hand put on her matchmaker's one was trembling for the first time in her life. It seemed to the girl that lord Benedict was taking her into the unreachable grandeur, that this grandeur intervened into her life namely through him and that he was taking her namely for leading her out to that path about which he was talking to her by the window.

Lisa was simply rising upward. She forgot where and why she came here and she came to herself only in the doorway when Florentian took her left hand, squeezed it a little and whispered her.

"Be honest wife and carry that life that is pulsating within you now as the most sacred pledge of your loyalty for your husband and your family. Family – that's not suffering and fetters, but the place of your service to the world. Go, my hand is with you. Accept your wife," Florentian uttered silently by letting James have his place, "and lead her in the same sacred way as you were leading your steamer during the horrible night of the storm in the Black Sea. My hand saved all lives entrusted to you there. Be as much pure in your family as possible, and my hand will always be with you."

The songs of the choir gathered from the bridesmaids and the groomsmen were accompanying the ceremony, and Lisa still felt as broken away from the earth in the world of her dreams as she often used to feel while playing in her childhood. She came to herself only when somebody squeezed her hand masterfully and she saw Ananda uncle's, the duke Saintger's face before her. He was smiling by congratulating her.

"A wife's fortitude and her calm – those are two characteristics with which her family is grounded. Once you find them you will be able to make everybody who will enter your home happy. When you come back from the church, search for my congratulation by the Buddha's feet."

Sir Vomi gave a small case to Lisa.

"This is my congratulation for your first-born. I'm glad to congratulate both of you with your husband in this moment. The clearer you will see one another's imperfections, in the more sacred way you will protect this charming portrait of one another today in everybody's own heart. Try not to judge one another in your life, but to develop such delicacy and endurance that you wouldn't show one to another how difficult her or his imperfection is for you."

The congratulations began to pour, which Lisa couldn't perceive anymore. She followed James, he was taking her to the exit and finally, both of them got into the coach. She was carrying the bouquet in her right hand from the same flowers as the ones fastened to her headdress. Ananda handed the bouquet to her when he greeted her; the same flowers were everywhere – on his lapel, in the bridesmaids' hands, on the lapels of the groomsmen and the groom. James's hand was squeezing Lisa's left hand strongly.

"My wife, we are now like in an exhibition. All the passers-by are staring at us. Lord Benedict and his handsome friends are going at the head, the beautiful bridesmaids and groomsmen are following us, and unawares everybody is eager to look at that bride who is accompanied by such beautiful cortege. Ah, if we, my little wife, could not forget during our entire life that not only the physical, incomparable beauty saw us off from the church, but also that spiritual power which from the most ordinary physical people's hearts has grown into such height that it almost reaches the superhuman limits. In this moment we make a vow before all those people: to meet every morning by the feet of your beloved Wise man by promising our loyalty to the precepts of his compassion by his cup. Let's try to walk with his calm in our hearts during our grey daily routine, and by finishing our day let's visit him again, so that we could review how we lived that day next to him. Let's never go to sleep when we are dissatisfied one with another at least a little and let's step aside from our Wise man only when we find his all forgiving love in our hearts, so that we could fall asleep calmly by comprehending wisely whether we lived our day rightly, whether our hearts were pure. And if we have insulted somebody by not being able to hold our sharp, wounding word, then let's try to prepare ourselves for our next day in such a way that we could give more joy to people."

The coach stopped by the newly-weds' villa where the whole escort formed two lines, and they were throwing flowers on the young couple by joking joyfully and cheerfully until they entered the hall of their house.

The young Rettedlys saw only one another on the way back, so they didn't notice how the carriages were overtaking them, how they got in the end of the cortege, so they were very surprised with such meeting of theirs. The rain of the flowers accompanied them till the very dining-room where Ananda and lord Benedict put a flower at their plates and they sat down next to the young couple on beautiful, old-time chairs which James dragged out of the loft. By the end of the dinner lord Benedict offered the newly-weds to go to his country-side and to spend the last three days of James's vacation there. The young couple became very glad of this offer. They had to change their clothes hurriedly and to go to the station immediately.

By ignoring the great dissatisfaction of James's mother and sister, because they didn't play any role during the ceremony and the dinner, besides they failed to see the James's home, the whole big company saw the young couple off to the station, and soon their happy faces melted in the fog. When the

rumble of the wheels, remarks and talking fell silent, the countess felt such vacancy in her heart that tears began to pour from her eyes by choking the entire world.

“Countess, don’t cry,” she heard the lord Benedict’s voice. “You’ve already seen one of your children off from your home, but is that all what you can do for the hundreds of people? Let’s come to my place. Amedeo started studying the builder’s profession now. He’s artist and amateur architect, but he possesses a great talent and taste; while Sandra is absent-minded only by appearance. Both of them with Nikolay are great mathematicians. All three of them will do whatever plans, drawings and calculations you need, and if both of you with your husband want to decorate your native places with buildings when you come back, then you can take already prepared projects of the buildings from here, while I could plan parks around them, because everybody consider me to be an expert of this field.”

“Oh, lord Benedict! Who else if not you could offer one his help with such tact and kindness? It is not enough that we were happy to spend this evening with you, which is turning from sad to joyous one – it also becomes sacred for us, because it will lay the foundation for our entire new and capable of working life about which both of us with my husband are thinking continuously.”

Soon they came to the hospitable lord Benedict’s house and they were discussing about the projects of the hospital and the children’s home in his study by the tea. Everybody was taking part in this discussion, often they used to accompany some of the proposals with laughter or wit. Anyway, poor Sandra was the one who used to get it hot in most cases.



## Chapter 19

Jenny's life and her attempts to see her mother and sister. Jenny's letters.

Her mother's and sister's feelings when they were reading them

Having come back home after the horrible hours spent in the lawyer's office, smashed, shaken, understanding that all her plans to take possession of her mother and sister were ruined, Jenny was an absolute patient. She spent two days lying in bed almost without opening her eyes. She could hardly answer her husband who wasn't completely healthy as well and she was pining with heartbreak, mad anger and an absolute confusion. Her alluring dreams of riches, luxury and grandeur with which her mother, Bonda and Armand were tempting her, - into what it all turned already in the very beginning of her new life! Sir Vomi's words which she couldn't understand in any way were irritating her. Lord Benedict's indulgence showed to her, which she experienced as the greatest humiliation, her hatred for him, for her mother and Alyssa – everything aroused such desire for vengeance within her that as though Jenny could feel the burning poison in her entire body, which was seeping into her blood. For the first time in her life she was unable to pour her rage out in any way. Everything what was burning within her remained inside of her. She had any strength neither to fling something nor cry. As though poisoned Jenny kept silent and she was thinking about one and the only thing – how to avenge, how to gain power over lord Benedict and his friends.

Being smashed till indisposition Jenny was thinking only about fight anyway. She was searching for a gap in the enemy camp persistently by wishing to find an ally there for herself. She thought that naïve sir Vomi who seemed to her to be very kind and short-sighted man would suit her namely for this goal. Jenny was dreaming to win his favour and help by pretending to be a repenting woman who wanted to become reconciled with her mother and sister. Since Jenny was always used to control both of them, she didn't even doubt that she would defeat them only with her letters of love.

"If only I could see them," Jenny was thinking. "I will force that blue-eyed naïve man to help me see them."

The plan of her actions was ready on the third day. She surprised her husband when she got up instantly, began to drink chocolate and even asked him about Bonda and Martin.

"Bonda is still speaking in a whisper and he's bent down like an eighty years old man, without any hope of becoming straight. Of course, he could still recover, but that idiot Martin both failed to do that what he was entrusted to do and he also lost the whole medicine which he was carrying on his body; and Bonda without any reserve of the medicine is doomed to wait until the time itself will cure him, while Martin seems to be out of his senses. He invited Bonda with Henri to visit him on yesterday evening and he confessed his sins to them," Armand was shouting with bitter laughter. "Nobody knows what has happened in the lord Benedict's study where he managed to get in anyway, but the whole Martin's body is studded with bloody and bleeding wounds and sores, they must have tormented him there."

Jenny gave a start and she was staring at her husband with her eyes opened with horror. Also the fear of physical torments contributed to her fear and hatred for lord Benedict. Having seen the horror in his wife's eyes, Armand gave a wry smile and continued.

"When Bonda left by scolding Martin that he hadn't brought some kind of a thing to him, which Bracano needed without fail, Martin was begging Henri to escape from us. He was explaining to him that his wounds appeared not from the strokes of the lord Benedict's whip at all, but from too big amount of that medicine which Bonda forced him to carry on himself. Henri called a doctor, but he explained that Martin's disease was incurable and that his death was quite near."

Jenny was already completely horror-struck. She couldn't bear Martin and in this moment she wasn't sorry for him at all, but she connected his death to the gigantic power of the enemy.

"Bonda says that we have to leave this place, although our meeting with Bracano when we show up without Alyssa will be no much better than Martin's meeting with Bonda when he came back without any of the needed things."

"What do you want to tell me with that? Do you serve Bracano? Who is that Bracano?"

"I was thinking that you had quicker wits, Jenny. It would be the best for you to address your mother, and you would receive the most comprehensive information. She would explain everything about him to you," Armand was scoffing at her sarcastically.

"My mother? What a nonsense! What does my mother have to do with it, she had never left London any further than some bathing places of the sea, and Bracano who lives in Constantinople?"

"Your mother is Italian, isn't she? She married your father in Italy, and before that she had a love affair with Bracano, which ended in some fiasco."

"You know what, don't judge about everybody according to yourself. Of course, my mother is quick-tempered, but I don't doubt her honour before my father. If you had known my father, then you would understand that a dishonourable person simply couldn't have lived with him."

Armand was laughing even louder and more impudently.

"And you, my wife, are you very honourable? Of course, I could violate Bracano's prohibition and tell you something, but it is a pity for me to take the pleasure from you to feel the surprise, and the pleasure from me to observe your expression in that moment."

The cold gave Jenny the shivers. She had never thought that her husband's physiognomy could be so repulsive. Something satanic flashed in this handsome face. Jenny understood that if she went wrong, then she wouldn't get any mercy from him. Three days ago it seemed to her that this lover would be able to become her friend, too. Now she understood that he was a rare villain, and if he had to save his own skin, then he would drown her even without thinking twice.

"Why are you staring so intensely at me? Did you expect me to be the knight of the Sad Image like your imaginary father pastor? You'd better use your loaf and think how we could lure Alyssa here. At least lure her here, then believe me, we will be able to dash away with her. We could even leave you for your mother to comfort, only give your sister to us. Are you really so stupid and you are unable to do anything in order to find the ways and possibilities to see your mother and sister? You can do much troubles for that lord. Hand in an application that he holds your relatives at his place by force and that he doesn't allow them to see you. Until the case reaches the court, he will be bored with judges and lawyers whom it is easy to bribe.

Jenny husband's words were lashing her more painfully than a whip. So this is what she was worthy of in this man's eyes, the wife of whom she had become only three days ago! She was only the

means to reach Alyssa. Why did they need her sister? What was hidden here? Jenny was unable to bear the mocking voice of her husband anymore, she stood up and went to her boudoir.

“Reconsider everything what I’ve told you now. I don’t throw my words in the wind.”

Having entered her boudoir, Jenny shut the door with the bolt and fell down on the sofa without any strength. She was suffocating. She couldn’t comprehend in any way what had happened, why her conversation with her husband frightened her so much. The difficult presentiment was oppressing her so much that she was all shaking, even her teeth were pattering.

Jenny took a cigarette, what now had already become her habit. She was calming down little by little. She hadn’t yet used to the drugs which her husband was trying to leave everywhere as slim cigarettes, so her mood was getting better, her fear disappeared and Jenny began to draw a new plan. Accidentally her husband’s words conformed with her own desire to see her mother and her sister somehow. Now she believed once and for all that sir Vomi was naïve man and that she had to act namely through him. Jenny forgot about everything what had happened in the court’s office, the drugs were doing their own job, she felt strong, dodgy, clever and so far-seeing that it seemed to her that nobody could read her real thoughts. Jenny sat down to write the letter for sir Vomi.

*Dear sir Vomi, with this letter for you I also write for my mother and sister who left me to my fate so cruelly. Don’t think that I complain to you. No. I love them too much, but at the same time I know that these dear creatures are very weak-willed, and it is absolutely easy to involve them into the sphere of any influence.*

*Now it has happened exactly like this. Both poor things have taken the bait of lord Benedict and they are hanging like some fishes on the fish-hook. Your words of sympathy which you said to me in the court’s office gave me courage to address you for help.*

*Lord Benedict, his son-in-law Nikolay and Sandra – every one of them could help me to fulfil my rightful wish to see my mother and my sister, but they are so cruel and hard-hearted that they are indifferent to my suffering. It seems to me that only you are endowed with the warmth of your heart and compassion for people’s suffering. So please understand how shocked and unhappy I feel. Thrown out of the silent and cosy house of my father where I was used to see dear faces of my mother and my sister, where the patriarchal morality was prevailing during my entire life, now I feel like in a strange country, although the dearest creatures to me are living only a half of hour away from me.*

*Help me to see my relatives. Let Alyssa and my mother come to me. I don’t have any strength to enter that horrible house where such compulsion is prevailing with respect both to myself and them.*

*With your sensitiveness that is characteristic to kind-hearted people you’ll understand me. Your image has left a trace in my memory, and if this sympathy of ours is reciprocal, then I would like to meet you very much. Then I would have a better possibility to tell you about the terrible lord Benedict’s behaviour with me, and probably your help would be more active.*

*Don’t refuse to inform me through the address included whether my mother and my sister received my letters. Even for this I don’t trust lord Benedict.*

Having signed under her maiden and her husband’s name, Jenny was very satisfied with her talent and she set to write the letter for the pastor’s wife.

*My dear mother, although you've betrayed me so terribly and left me alone among the strangers, anyway I believe that you love me and that you were acting only under the influence of the strange, evil will.*

*I don't understand in any way why both of you with Alyssa don't come to me? Aren't you really even interested in how I'm living when I'm married? You've been telling me so much about the riches and charm of your friends among whom I am living, haven't you? The truth is that I still don't take a golden bath, but I often hear Bracano's name, who, according to my husband's words, is really very rich and famous. They say that namely next to him my real, luxurious life will begin.*

*I won't ask you any questions in this letter. When we see each other, you'll tell me about Bracano. I was very surprised when I heard about your friend of your youth from the strange lips.*

*Ah, mother, if my father was alive he would demand you and Alyssa to visit me and not leave me to my fate as you do it now, but anyway I forgive you all the injustice. I'm sure that lord Benedict keeps locked both of you and that he doesn't even allow you to visit me; but my father was strict, too, but you used to visit your friends, even those whom he didn't like at all.*

*Please, escape and visit me. You understand that I cannot come to you when you live in that house, the host of which I hate, right? If my request doesn't mean much to you – please comply with my request not only for myself alone, but I ask you on behalf of your friend Bracano as well – come to me. If he's your real friend, then he's also my friend, you always used to tell me about people like this.*

*See you soon, my dear mummy. Come to the museum with Alyssa. I will write and explain to her where and when in detail. We will decide with you there how we should live.*

*Your Jenny asks you of it all*

Jenny was satisfied with this letter, too. She praised herself for the subtlety of tact shown in it. It was the most difficult for her to write to Alyssa. In her thoughts she was choosing for a long time the style and the form of the letter with which she had to address her sister. Especially that fact was restricting her that Alyssa before responding to her, of course, would run to lord Benedict and show the letter to him. Finally, Jenny decided to address her sister in the tone of elder, married sister and the guardian with much experience.

*My dear sister, my sweet stubborn Alyssa, you still look at the world and at people with your childish eyes when I had to dip into the very depth of life. Therefore, it isn't strange at all that now my eyes cannot look at the world so naively and idealize people so much as you do, my dear, credulous baby.*

*I wrote to our mother that I couldn't visit you in that house which is unpleasant to me and where both of you are living now, while I need to see both of you very much. I don't blame you for your terrible egoism. If our father hadn't been ill with that brain disease before his very death, then of course, that "benefactor", as you call him, would have failed to lure both him and you. However, in my opinion, as in every grown-up's opinion, in this and in many other cases a little different epithet would do nicely for lord Benedict. The court will explain everything to you. As your elder sister, I need to discuss your marriage with you. My husband's cousin is very good-looking man whom you had to notice in the office. He is dreaming to*

*meet you for a long time already by wishing to open his feelings to you. Think what a happiness that would be for both of us! We would leave together and we wouldn't feel any solitude. I know your affectionate nature, how you were always idolizing me and you were sad without me, and I can imagine well how you suffer now, separated with me by force. That's why I don't quarrel with you for your such self-willed egoism and going out of our father's house, because I'm certain that they keep you locked in that boring lord Benedict's house. I can imagine how many old rags the kind countess forced you to alter. And why do they force you to dress in black? It is so stupid! It is old-fashioned already to show your mourning in public.*

*If now I'm going to discuss all those questions about which I wanted to talk to you, then I will never finish the letter. Let's do the following: come in three days. I choose such a long time only because I imagine how you will have to plan cleverly and lie in order to escape stealthily to the museum by the T. public garden. We'll meet in the Eastern section, by the mummy. We'll decide there, where we'll go for a chat. Come at twelve o'clock, don't be late and dressed in black. I will be waiting for you.*

*Your Jenny*

While Jenny was living such uneasy and gloomy period of her life, the last wounds of the pastor's wife were closing in the lord Benedict's house. The flows of Alyssa's, Doria's, Ananda's love and the constant care not only of the host, but also of his guests affected her in a refreshing way.

Unexpectedly for the pastor's wife herself, lady Cecilia and Henry became her great friends and assistants in her learning to take over the management of the housekeeping from Doria. Henry, although he didn't understand anything in this field, but he was persuading the pastor's wife in a very funny way that he had to learn the secrets of the housekeeping urgently. Since he couldn't do anything else, he could be only senior man-servant in America, otherwise he wouldn't be fit for that community in which everybody had to bring the contribution of his work.

By joking in this way, Henry helped his aunt to learn to use calculators and he was teaching her patiently to manage bills, records and to keep the keys in good order. Lady Cecilia was surprised by his son who now was so different than that previous puffed-up Henry. The youth's appearance was changing every day, and he was smiling always more frequently. Often they with Alyssa used to translate some English texts for lady Katherine, which she hated before and now she was doing her best with all her strength. On one rainy day Ananda found them working like this. He came to invite Alyssa to visit lord Benedict.

When Alyssa entered the study of her dear guardian where it always was a happiness to enter for her, she saw not only him there, but also sir Vomi and the duke Saintger. All three of them met her like always in a very pleasant way, but the girl felt an especially serious mood of theirs instantly. Alyssa couldn't have explained why all of a sudden her heart was constricted, why the presentiment of as though sad and terrible sorrow forced her to stop indecisively by the threshold. The duke Saintger stood up easily and youthfully to meet her, he bowed to her elegantly, took her hand and told her in silent and musical voice.

"Why are you, my child, worried beforehand? Can the conversation with Florentian frighten you with anything? Now he's not lord Benedict for you, but he's the closest friend of your father and even closer friend of yourself. You haven't lost your father, but only found another one. And whatever you would do during your working day you always act together with him, although by appearance both of you are occupied with absolutely different work. If we want to talk to you, then it happens only because you

yourself have reached the new level of knowledge with your heart's purity. As you can see, no one is standing in one place in discipleship. To be precise, those who are moiling by searching for a connection with us and who talk much about it, and who sometimes as though dedicate their entire life for serving everybody's welfare and searching for us and for work with us, - they often stay with their initial searching, although it seems for man himself and for his people living in the neighbourhood that they move forward together with their Teachers and share their activity with them. You, as one of the few from many people for whom we send our call constantly, you follow us by not choosing the work which you would like to do, but by accepting everything where only you need to bring in calm and love. Now the moment has come when you can help your mother and your sister with your pure love. And depending on what you will be thinking about – about yourself or about them, you will push into their lives – into the ones full of great heartbreak – the new possibility to be glad, and at the same time you will push yourself forward and upward into the possibility to share your activity with Florentian. Calm down and hear your friend out. For the first time in your life fear squeezed your brave heart, and I believe that you will never have to feel this feeling in your life anymore."

He took Alyssa to Florentian and seated her into the armchair next to him. Tiny Alyssa looked like a baby in comparison with her grand, handsome guardian. Now there wasn't any fear left in her heart anymore, but she was all covered with excitement and waiting for something special, great what she couldn't understand, but what she could hardly withstand.

"Alyssa," Florentian said to her, "there are neither parents, nor mothers, nor sisters, nor brothers whom we are connected with ties of blood before the Eternity on the threshold of which we all stand. And now when I'm talking about the dear and close people to you, remember only one thing: all people are only the little parts of the universe, who are walking their own path of the universal evolution. Every one of them, while carrying the sparkle of Life within herself, is there where her spirit could come closer to the greater or smaller point of perfection by walking the difficult path of liberation. If you want to come closer to me, you need not to condemn them, grieve for their destinies, torment yourself personally. In other words, you need not to react to their destinies personally. You need to remember that everybody was living, is living and will be living only in such a way how he was able to comprehend life, to feel it, its power within himself and how he was able to open his heart for creation in his life, at least for a single of its aspects. No one could be lifted to a higher stage. It is possible only to give possibilities for everyone to rise upwards by serving as a living example for him; but if man is unable to find love within himself he won't perceive his meeting with a higher living being and he will complain that he wasn't given enough of love and attention, although he is standing next to them himself and he cannot see the hands extended to him. He won't understand that what he couldn't see because of his instability and impurity of his heart – the help of love given to him. This is exactly from where his dissatisfaction, reproaches and complaints appear. One of such examples will open for you now. You remember the life of your family well. However young you were when your father died, you were a friend, an assistant and a support for him for many years already. Alyssa, have you had your childhood? As soon as you grew a little, you had to understand the suffering and the entire hell of your father's heart instantly. However you loved him, you didn't condemn your mother for a single time, although you knew that your father's suffering was coming from her. Now you will find out the cause of your relatives' heartbreak and discord. Your mother married your father by loving another man and by carrying the fruit of that love under her heart already. Your father who understood everything from the very first days of his married life never uttered a single word that he understood everything. He lived till your birth and he left the bedroom of his wife forever by making excuses to her about his serious illness. Jenny's father, the man who abandoned your mother and who forced her to marry your father, already back then was incorrigible thief and robber who was searching for the men like himself everywhere and who possessed unclean connections in the whole wide world. While your father was alive, he didn't dare even to remember your mother, because he knew that the pastor was

the real flint concerning the questions of honour and justice. The fight for his daughter wasn't included into his calculations, he knew everything perfectly about Jenny's and lady Katherine's lives; but then misfortune overtook the villain and he needed a pure living being for his meanest goals. She had to be so pure that none of life's temptations could have touched that living being's heart. Then the villain's thought reached the pastor's house and you, Alyssa. The whole hideous scene of Jenny's marriage was played only in order to get you by any means. Your father isn't here with us anymore, Alyssa. I am next to you instead of him."

"I thank heaven a thousand times that my father isn't alive anymore and that he doesn't have to suffer from all that horror," Alyssa fell on her knees before Florentian. "Let my father walk as high as possible, so that none of the earthly troubles would excite his wise life. I was left here instead of him, father Florentian. I beg you, please help me to live with absolute self-control and tranquillity, so that your power would go through me without any waste and your entire help would pass to my dear, unfortunate mother and Jenny."

"Yes, my daughter, I didn't expect anything else from you, but one more test is waiting for you. You heard how Nikolay was telling about his brother Lovushka and Bracano. Bracano is Jenny's father."

Poor Alyssa couldn't take her eyes off Florentian and she only whispered.

"And you, father Florentian, allowed me, daughter of the woman who knew Bracano, enter your home! Be an example of compassion that knows neither any limits nor a negative answer for me forever. Help to fortify the double self-control within myself, so that it would be easier for my mother and sister to fight and win."

Florentian put his right hand on Alyssa's head, sir Vomi and Saintger put their right hands on his hand.

"Let my path intertwine with your orbit, and let your entire Love together with my Love intervene into the protective net around you," sir Vomi uttered.

"Let your life turn into beauty from now on, and let the ritual of evil be unable to draw nearer to you. All the spells of evil will crumble without reaching you, because you are protected by my protective net," Saintger uttered.

"Amen. Light will flow through your channel without any obstacles. Go, my friend, and wait for me at your mother's in an hour," Florentian uttered.

When Alyssa left the room, she felt such joy, such lightness which she hadn't experienced for a long time already. Now she didn't want to see anybody, she went to her room quickly and sat down by her father's portrait. Having pressed the dear image to herself, she was thinking only about one thing: to be worthy of her father and to create such family in which there wouldn't be any place left for falsehood. Now it was calm in her heart where she was always used to feel suffering from her childhood, which as though was burning her like a hot iron. Florentian's words illuminated the entire essence of the people's relations with Eternity for her. And she perceived even clearer how she, his daughter, would become mother for that one who was her father.

"If only I could be worthy of that confidence shown to me. Day after day I will be thinking always stronger how my great friends' will is pouring through me. Father, father! I couldn't even imagine that one could rise to such height of honour and compassion for man, in which you were living. Now I will go to my mother's and I will bring your entire forgiveness, your entire help to her."

Alyssa was thinking like this by feeling an invincible power and self-confidence within herself. She didn't hesitate even for a moment. She wasn't afraid of getting confused during her meeting with her

mother. She was thinking not about her shame, but about the real help which she could give to her. Alyssa changed her clothes. It seemed to her that she couldn't leave the room in that clothing which she was wearing when the wonderful hands of her great friends blessed her. Having taken off her black dress with the feeling of bliss, by not comprehending why, she chose one of the best dresses, the white one with black, and went to lady Katherine.

She found only Ananda here, who brought the new Italian magazine for her mother by recommending her to pay attention to some of its articles. Alyssa who knew how lady Katherine hated any reading was surprised that she was interested in the magazine. Her mother's appearance surprised her as well.

"Alyssa, what is going on with you? Are you especially glad with something today?" in her turn her mother asked her, because she was surprised by her daughter's appearance.

"I surprised you with my smartness, while I wanted to ask you why did you look so great? You are simply beauty, although you've turned grey already."

"I am to blame so much before you, my daughter, I didn't see how beautiful you were and what a heart was beating in you."

"The glory is spreading about Alyssa's heart, they tell fairy-tales about her little hands and her laughter, her voice – an angel himself is singing, the roses are blooming on Alyssa's cheeks," suddenly Ananda began to sing by putting Alyssa's name into the popular English song.

Ananda's voice which was always fascinating Alyssa with flexibility and tonality of its phrase today penetrated into her heart especially strongly. How much she still needed to work if she wanted to achieve at least a half of that expression that was pouring so easily from Ananda's lips. Humour with which the singer was looking at her made both mother and her daughter laugh merrily. Florentian entered unnoticed during that laughter.

"It is so great, Ananda, that you entertain your patient. How are you, lady Katherine?"

"If somebody had told me a week ago that I would be able to laugh so merrily, I wouldn't have believed it, and now I don't want to be sad – this is how my daughter's beauty affects me. And I cannot understand why. Was I blind up to now, or Alyssa has become so unusually prettier?"

"Perhaps, more place for Alyssa appeared in your heart, and that's the whole answer," Ananda told her.

"I doubt it. If Alyssa became prettier together with her taken place in my heart, then she would overshadow all the beauties of the world, but today she's especial with something, only I don't know what it is."

"I hope that you'll find it out one day. And now I came to talk about Jenny," Florentian told her.

Lady Katherine gave a start and turned pale.

"Lady Katherine, is Jenny happy in your opinion? Can you imagine her present life?"

"Jenny cannot be happy, lord Benedict. Those who are next to her now deceived her and... me. I wanted to run to my elder daughter in order to save her, but I understood at your home how difficult this task was which I still couldn't fulfil. I understood that first of all I had to educate myself, namely what I'm trying to do."



“Do you believe in that what Jenny is talking about herself?”

“No, lord Benedict, I know Jenny too well, I know that now she won’t tell the truth about herself to anybody, and especially to me.”

“Why especially to you, lady Katherine?”

“Jenny won’t forgive my escape to you, lord Benedict, but I’m not afraid of it. I’m only afraid of that moment when she finds out... the terrible truth. I’m not afraid of her malediction – I will expiate it with my prayers; I’m afraid that my proud daughter will be unable to bear it...”

“Don’t cry, lady Katherine, hear me out. Soon, much sooner than you think, I and my entire family will leave for America. Ananda, sir Vomi, Doria, Sandra, Amedeo and Tendly will stay with you. All these friends will always be next to you and they will help you to beat off tens of the attacks from the side of Jenny and her friends. Neither Jenny nor her accomplices will know that Alyssa left with us. Since they will want to have you as an additional pretext for enticing Alyssa and for her suffering, they will try to catch you as the necessary lure. If you aren’t strong, if Jenny and the only goal – to save her, - doesn’t prevail in your thoughts and your heart, then you won’t move from one place and do anything for the real help for your poor daughter. Understand me in such a way as the mother has to understand, who deeply and really thinks about the entire life of her daughter. That doesn’t mean at all that in this moment you need to run to Jenny and to try to help her with anything. Instead of help you will bring only confusion into her already sad life. Try to take in the entire Jenny’s life with your spiritual eyes. Accumulate the new strength within yourself, so that you would grow and have the opportunity to help your daughter in that minute when she wants the concord with you and with us instead of fighting and wishing to control us, what she’s trying to achieve now. If a mother doesn’t possess any tact, then she won’t be able to build any strong bridge to a single man from her heart, and especially to her children. However broad love would be, a tactless man won’t find the path to unity through beauty. The pastor was trying during his entire life for you to allow this little word “tact” to enter your heart. There are some people who are allowed to live for a long time purposefully in order for them to understand this quality of Love, so that they would learn to recognize the level of spiritual maturity of the persons whom they meet and they wouldn’t bother them with their understandings, arguments, complaints and morals by thinking that if it seems something to them, then it is really so and they need to run and pour from their pot out everything what is boiling in it. Reconsider every word. Always take a good look at those people who surround you and remember firmly that there are some situations when it is better to be silent. An imaginary, external man’s inertia visible to everybody often is the most active help for that person who complains to you because of that inertia. With his silence man is building the fortress of calm and love within himself, around which the invisible defenders line up like a high wall. All of them can see the image of the suffering person which man is carrying in that fortress, and none of them will leave the suffering person for whom you are praying without any help. Those people who are running about driven by their passions during their day and who give their imaginary help for everybody hurriedly with their external energy – those are standing in one place in the sense of the real help and, instead of being of use, they only harm, because the real help – that’s fortitude, perhaps sometimes a stricter word which the encountered person won’t like, but that’s not the stroking of the crying person. If you want to find the strength in order to show this courage and to pour it into your encountered person’s heart, then you have to rise with your spirit yourself, to develop fearlessness and tact. I can see that my words don’t rise a revolt within you like before. My friend, remember everything what I told you. I don’t doubt that soon Jenny will send a letter to you. Try to orient yourself in the falsehood of her letter, and that with what Jenny could hurt you in her letter doesn’t exist for a long time already. I and Ananda have destroyed your terrible bond with Bracano for a long time already. The only man who had the right to condemn your behaviour – your husband – has forgiven you everything a long time ago.”

“But Alyssa, Alyssa?” the pastor’s wife whispered.

“Alyssa? Alyssa isn’t the judge for you. She’s that little talisman which Compassion has given to you.”

Florentian said good-bye to the pastor’s wife and went downstairs. Ananda sat for a while with both women, he was very sincere, he comforted Alyssa’s mother who was sad because of the soon separation with Alyssa. It seemed to the pastor’s wife that life punished her because she didn’t love Alyssa before, and that it separated her with her daughter exactly when she succeeded to appreciate and come to love her. Ananda was listening patiently to her sorrows and he asked her to think about Florentian’s words, to think not about herself, but about her main task – Jenny’s life. When Ananda left, the pastor’s wife embraced Alyssa and she was crying silently. Alyssa didn’t disturb her, but she was pouring such joy of love, such triumph of love from her heart that her mother calmed down and told her.

“My daughter, if I could take at least a little part of your self-control, then I could send Jenny back home sooner.”

“Ah, mother, it always seems to us that if we waited till this or that, then we could do more, but in truth, we can do something only under our own circumstances which surround us and not the ones under which others are living. You are talking about my self-control, but if my circumstances had been different, if life hadn’t taught me to control myself since my very childhood, then would have I found such happiness in which I live now?”

The servant came in and gave the letters to them, among which both of them found a letter from Jenny. Alyssa’s face remained reddish when she took the letter, but her mother’s one turned so pale and changed so much that Alyssa wanted to take the medicine already.

“Don’t worry, my child, it cannot be worse than that what I have already experienced. Whatever Jenny would write – let her be blessed. I will accept everything from her without any reproaches and I promised you to remember only Jenny’s rescuing forever and to do everything for that goal. And I won’t do anything without senor Ananda’s advice and permission.”

When they read their letters, both of them exchanged glances. The tears were rolling down lady Katherine’s cheeks, and she extended her letter to Alyssa without any words. Alyssa took the letter, kissed her mother’s hand and put her letter into it. Their looks met again, they embraced one another.

“Mother, now there’s no such power that would make you to go to Jenny’s; she’s like blind now, she cannot see any little spot of light. She cannot even imagine how easily and wonderfully man can live on the earth. My dear, let’s take those letters and burn them down; perhaps, when their poison burns down, also Jenny will feel better, her anger sent to us will go away.”

“Alyssa, I would like to suck the poison out of every letter, only if Jenny felt better. If my kiss could fly to her, I would agree to change with her even with blood, only if I could ease her current state.”

“And this entire gust of your self-sacrifice,” sir Vomi entered and told her, “now harms not only yourself, but also Alyssa and Jenny.”

He took the letters from her hands tenderly, threw both of them to the fireside and came back to the pastor’s wife who was sadly leant.

“Not only you, but also none of us is able to help Jenny during these unhappy days. She calls for her real father with her entire behaviour, and he won’t leave her without any attention and help. He hopes to have Jenny as the real assistant, but he didn’t evaluate that the pastor brought up his daughter,

whose immaculate honour and love have left indelible tracks in Jenny's being and in her memory. I've become Ananda's assistant and I've taken up on myself the responsibility for the eternal Jenny's life. Don't be afraid for her. Live and don't wait for something. Work, observe yourself so that you would always be in the bright circle of our friends. Did you understand me well? Do you want to enter the path of your daughter's rescuing now?"

"Yes, I want to do it from the bottom of my heart, but I'm afraid. I've been living my entire life in gusts, with flights of my heart and I absolutely cannot submit to my mind's voice. How do I begin to act? I cannot bear even the smallest misfortune calmly, not only to think seriously? Sir Vomi, I promised it to you, but most likely, less than an hour would pass, and I would go wrong."

"Lady Katherine, it is important for you to comprehend what you want yourself. It is important not to be hollow or to hesitate by starting your own new creative day. It is important to finish your day with even more grown loyalty for that what you've chosen as the path of your life. When you finish your day you need to perceive absolutely clearly where you were strong and where you stepped back from your heart's idea for which you were living and working. It is important to live your every day by working so easily and honestly as if it was the last day of your life. If man comprehends that the whole exterior is only a changing case, that it isn't that what is important, but the invisible power within man, his conviction, belief and loyalty, then no heroism will be needed. Love will lead man joyously and gladly. Why should you cry and complain if your wife or your loyal mother is loyal to you? It's only happiness for a loving, loyal and dedicated mother to be useful for her people in the hour of their misfortune or to carry out their entire pain on her shoulders. Man cries only for himself. When you love your people you overcome your pain, and there's only joy to be useful for them. Reconsider these words of mine. Only that person who lifts himself, his talents, his achievements above everything, only that one cannot step into the circle of life of the bright brotherhood, the representatives of which surround you now. It is absolutely important how you were living up to now, what your interests were. It is even less important how your friends estimate you. That person who haven't experienced how suffering changes man, how he may overstep the fatal limit in a flash and get onto the completely different level of life, in another state of consciousness in which even a lot of his previous concepts would fall off, - that one still keeps denying the miracle of life's aspects coming to life in man. Anyway the real change in men always happens suddenly. It happens suddenly, because the new aspect of Love opens in his heart quicker than lightning. If man is unstable, then this inner change of his that happens in a flash demands such long and boring period of decay of his old personality that he mixes up this period of his suffering with the moment of happiness of his own change. If one thought is living within you - to become the power of Love in order for you to join our activity and to save your daughter, then ask yourself only one thing: do you believe in me and Ananda completely, till the end? Do you believe in our love, honour and selfless compassion? Do you believe in our loyalty for those who are more developed than we are, who lead us and whom we follow with our loyal devotion and our firm, voluntary obedience?"

"Sir Vomi, once when I was angry, unwise woman who loved only myself, who was in love with Bracano, I uttered a horrible, urgent vow to him. Only now, for the first time I've learned to love. My heart opened for the first time. And first of all I bless that person who's become light and law for me - the pastor. I swear my loyalty to him now. I bless him. Now I will follow you and Ananda. I don't have anything else without my path after you. I submit to you not like a slave. My only happiness is to submit to you. That's my prayer."

The pastor's wife knelt before sir Vomi. In the meanwhile Ananda entered the room. Sir Vomi lifted lady Katherine whose face was radiating and her tears were frozen up in her eyes, he put his hands on her head, Ananda took both pastor wife's hands into his own ones and united them with Alyssa's hands by telling her.

“You’ll end your days in the new family by rocking your grandchildren. Remember this moment. Prepare yourself not for a sacrifice or a fight, but for your only one task – to love and to be loyal to your matter of love till the end. You can save Jenny not in the heat of your love, but with your highest self-control; and the highest self-control – that’s calm of your spirit, whatever your external circumstances would be. Don’t plan cleverly. Fulfil only that what we will tell you to, but remember that if you are fulfilling only a half of it, you will get stiff in one place, and your life will go past you. If you are acting only in half, you won’t advance at least a step into the real perfection, even if you were labouring during your entire day like a squirrel in the wheel. Not a single heart will open and calm down next to you if your spirit is fluttering anxiously. Be glad and cry not because today you did something good or bad, but carry the final goal in your heart – that Eternal, the only one in which the people of the bright community may live.”

Both great friends, sir Vomi and Ananda, sat down next to the pastor’s wife and Alyssa, and sir Vomi told them that he received a letter from Jenny as well, but that it was not worth even talking about it, because it only showed how far Jenny was from the truth and from any right comprehension of people and things. Now it would be impossible to talk to her even about the simplest matters of the family, not only about those significant tasks that rise for every member of the pastor’s family.

“Alyssa will leave, but Doria will stay next to you, lady Katherine; also me, and Ananda, and Saintger will stay with you. All of us are close to you, both your matters and your life are dear for us. Perhaps you will understand for the first time that not only the people connected with ties of blood illuminate one’s life and give sense to it. Don’t be afraid of us. Don’t think that only superiority of our knowledge or power grants us the right to consider ourselves higher than anybody else. The more man knows the better he understands every encountered person’s suffering. We aren’t meant to judge you, we are destined to help you. And you? You only need to understand that once every one of us was the most common, ordinary man who was living the most ordinary life, as you are doing now. If you can understand it, if you believe that everything what we’ve achieved we could achieve it only because Love was teaching us self-control, - then you will find the same path. Only you will find it in your own way, as your obedient and opened heart will indicate you. When man reaches wisdom, first of all he finds obedience and tranquillity within himself. His inner revolt and any constant fluttering of his passions, any of his desires to always have it out with people and to explain to them about himself – everything disappears, as well as any fear of the future events. You need to fall out of a habit to see your days as the small segments: “yesterday”, “today”, “tomorrow”. All your days – that’s the row of the moments of eternity, in which you always need to see the final goal. Exactly like the Milky Way has neither beginning nor the end when you look at the sky studded with stars, so the row of our days doesn’t limit itself with the stages of our sensations and strength, but their whole, integral strain forms our days, our suffering and joy, our moving forward. Now you can see the row of difficult days in Jenny’s life. Is that already everything what she can fulfil? You want to dash in order to help her. Do you have enough strength to turn the flow of the facts of Jenny’s life if she created them, and not you? Both of you are connected with the joint affairs when you were ruining and saving one another, but also in this case the part of your help for your daughter may reach her only if your self-control is so strong that you will possess neither fear nor tears nor any thoughts about yourself anymore. Don’t think that it is so far away and out of reach for you that probably you will die before reaching such self-control. If you are able to always remember that every hour of your life lived only with your thoughts about helping your daughter only then builds the bridge of help for her when you are brave yourself, then day after day you will become stronger and you will live until it is necessary for this matter of Jenny and yourself. Don’t think about Alyssa and your separation with her. Any separation – it is man’s suffering only until the power of his spirit matures to send the creative flow of love for his beloved person with such energy which would always weave the joint net of devotion of one to another. This power of spirit grows in the same way as any other man’s quality does. Don’t clutter up your days with all sorts of “supertasks”. Live simply. So simply as if there wasn’t any past, and as if every breaking day – that’s your

life created in a new way. And don't torment yourself for your future. It doesn't exist. Your present is still only weaving it. Therefore, live your every moment with the whole completeness of your feelings and thoughts by giving up your doubts forever."

Sir Vomi and Ananda took Alyssa out by recommending lady Katherine not to respond to Jenny's letter at all. Left alone the pastor's wife took the great Jenny's portrait in her hands. Her thoughts didn't want to agree in any way that Jenny Wodsworth didn't exist anymore, that only Jenny Sedelani was living. Lady Katherine considered herself to be the main culprit of Jenny's misfortune, she couldn't put up with the fact that she couldn't help her daughter in any way now, and at the same time she understood that now Jenny hated her so much as only the revengeful Jenny could do it. And she will hate her even more when she finds out the secret of her birth. While she was pondering these sad thoughts, Doria took her by surprise. Having understood the pastor wife's mood immediately, she let it out that lady Cecilia was ill, while Henry needed to go to the station to meet the young Rettedlys' couple where the whole lord Benedict's family was going. The pastor's wife offered her services immediately.

"But you are patient yourself. You are pale and exhausted."

"No, I'm absolutely healthy. I'll be very glad that somehow I will be able to show gratitude to my dear relatives for whom I'm so guilty."

And lady Katherine hurried to visit lady Cecilia. Henry didn't want to leave his mother. He was very glad when his aunt came and he left for the station calmly.

Everybody met Lisa and the captain in a joyous, noisy and cheerful way. Their friends accompanied them till the home where the happy parents were waiting for them. Here a coincidence sent a drop of bitterness for Jenny as well. When she was leaving the shop she saw Alyssa in the coach together with lord Benedict, Lisa and the captain, and behind them – the whole row of carriages with merry people. Jenny who was gloomy in any case came back home more sullen than a cloud and she made a scene for her husband, which didn't contribute much to her family happiness.

## Chapter 20

The last lord Benedict's and his friends' days in London.

Tendly. Martin's confession and his death. The music once again.

Farewell conversations with those who were left

Having come back from the country, already on the next day the captain hurried to his work and he began his steamer's inspection by preparing for the distant trip. In the evening, having left Lisa with parents, the captain went to lord Benedict's for instructions of how many and what kind of cabins he needed to record for them beforehand. Having finished talking about the business, lord Benedict asked James why he was worried and why he didn't look radiant with happiness at all.

The captain smiled and answered him that he was already used to and knew well that he couldn't hide his thoughts from Florentian, but now he worried about the trip, because during the last days some storms were raging in the ocean and several catastrophes had happened. The memories about the horrible storm experienced in the Black Sea kept rising in the brave captain's imagination and they were frightening him, because he was responsible for so many people who were dear to him and who would be sailing on his steamer.

"I don't understand myself why I'm so worried. To tell you the truth, the last storm surpassed everything what I had ever experienced. Also the truth is that I've never sailed with so many people who were dear to me, but I don't understand anyway why namely this voyage forces me to be so excited."

"It seems that you aren't sure that if I'm next to you, then nothing can happen. If only an absolute loyalty to that person whom you called to be the man of your dreams was in your heart, then there wouldn't be any place left for fear, and not even a thought or anxiety would occur for all of us and for the upcoming day in general, James. Then you would be occupied with only one thing – to prepare the ship for the trip with complete self-control and tranquillity. It is necessary that none of the rubbish of spirit, not even the smallest, personal worries would disturb that self-control with which a man's task could be fulfilled. Such integral attention, solid self-control is certainly needed for every ordinary man's creation. But you, James, want to move forward, don't you? You want to tear yourself away from the calm and dutiful citizen's life which is taking its normal course. You want, as you were telling me, to follow me. Where that joy is which is spurting from your heart if you've already comprehended this path? My friend, if you've stepped into the path of your Life, you need to cast away your habit of feeling concern about something which manifests itself as fear or anxiety; however you would persuade yourself and others that you are crying, fearing, doubting and suffering for others – you experience all of it in the form of your personal suffering only because you are thinking about yourself. If you analyse it honestly, then you will understand that your suffering for yourself is hiding behind your pain for people. If you really are thinking only about people, you will always remain firmly faithful, you will always remember that man – that's the little part of Eternity, that the only man's goal and happiness – that's his activity for Eternity. And now think not about

these our temporary bodies, but develop your courage, your entire power of Love, your entire eternal memory so that you would prepare your ship for the trip with the greatest joy. Sometimes man says: "A bad foreboding is oppressing me. I know that I will die." In truth he doesn't know anything, but his spirit is too weak for those tests which now he has called forth himself with his activity through the entire centuries. If he had always seen the grandeur of his eternal path with his spiritual eyes, of course, he would have overcome this time, too."

Florentian went up to the captain, put his hands on his shoulders and looked at his eyes so tenderly that he felt how as though the warmth of the sunbeams had penetrated into him by covering his heart with its Light. The whole James' anxiety melted in this Light.

"Go, my son. And pour that joy which you've felt now into all your affairs and meetings. With the tact that is characteristic to you, you won't become the herald of the market, you won't press your belief on anybody by declaring it intrusively to be the only truth, but your heart's resolution, your firm knowing that I'm with you – therefore, you are in the protective circle – will pass to everybody who will be sailing in your steamer. Go and remember that the net of my protection covers you and that your steamer will reach the destination successfully, even if the storms and catastrophes were ranging round it. You need to live your working day joyfully."

The captain left the study of his great friend completely changed, and it seemed to him that the fetters restricting him inconveniently fell off him.

In the meanwhile Alyssa who was sitting in her mother's room was trying to calm down poor lady Katherine who was still taking to heart such horrible Jenny's marriage with difficulty, as well as her current life. She only needed to hear something about Lisa's marriage or about her life when the scenes from the last Jenny's maiden days, her marriage and the views from the court's office used to come to life instantly in the pastor wife's memory. A bitterness used to cover lady Katherine when she was comparing the lives of these two young women. Having heard that James came to visit lord Benedict, the pastor's wife cuddled up to Alyssa and began to cry again.

"My child, will life reward you with double happiness also for all Jenny's suffering?"

"Mummy, but why do I need a double happiness? I want to be worthy of that happiness which has fallen on me now. Sometimes it seems to me that I'm not so worthy of that success that is pouring on me as from the horn of plenty, as you would like to see it. I don't even doubt that man who's more worthy of that, in my place would be able to develop his energy in a much active way."

The radiating captain approached them, and their conversation came to an end. Having greeted them pleasingly, he passed Florentian's request to Alyssa to go downstairs at nine o'clock to him if she's not occupied and now to send Sandra whom James couldn't find anywhere.

"If Alyssa isn't occupied? I think that if Alyssa needed to go to God himself, even then she would postpone her appointment and would run to lord Benedict's. My child, run quickly, search for Sandra. Where could he disappear like this?"

"I know where I should search for Sandra if he's disappeared like this," Alyssa gave a laugh. "A thought has struck him that he's found a new star with his mathematical calculations and secretly from everybody he arranged his astronomic study in the loft of the left tower. Probably, also now he's contriving something there. The poor person can hardly control himself, it is so difficult for him, because he isn't sailing together with us."

"I understand him so well! In his place I would be no less sad, although I know perfectly that one cannot thrust oneself with force into any, even the most ordinary affairs. You can choose neither your activity nor your destiny yourself if you are next to the Teacher already."

Alyssa ran to search for Sandra and she found him as expected in his own observatory. Sandra was so involved in his observations that he neither noticed Alyssa nor even heard her voice. Only when the girl touched his shoulder, frightened Sandra jumped up and he couldn't understand in any way that Alyssa was standing before him.

"How did you get in here? I locked the door, didn't I? And how could you know that I was here?"

"It wasn't difficult to enter through the opened door. It is even easier to find out that your... workshop is here," Alyssa told him by examining the loft. "You were dragging everything absolutely close to me, through the gallery into this observatory of yours, which would be more precise to call the hole of the magician. What kind of torment instruments are these?" she asked him by showing to some stands put out through the little window.

"The hole of the magician! Please be glad," Sandra wanted to retort her, but having looked round his lodging which now Alyssa illuminated by coming here and which was filled up with boxes, pipes and sketches, he joined her laughter.

"I don't doubt, my dear lady, that you've come to the magician to order your horoscope. Stay old maid and don't dream about the married woman's headdress," Sandra was shouting with laughter.

"And I don't doubt that these words of yours about my future are like a clairvoyance. Go quickly to lord Benedict's and confess to him that you've ruined a part of his house loft."

"Fear God, Alyssa! Did you really blurted out about my workshop to lord Benedict? What will happen now? Before the races he told me that four legs would grow for me, so what is he going to tell me now?"

"Probably that you've invited your four eyes to help you. Go quickly, he invites you, otherwise he will climb up here."

Sandra seized the girl's hand, ran out of the cramped loft with her and slammed the door.

"That would be the last straw if everybody started laughing at me," the worried poor scientist was talking to Alyssa by going downstairs with her.

"Sandra, just look at yourself! Well, can you go to lord Benedict's with such dirty shirt? And your hands? You are all sooty, aren't you?"

"My God! What do I have to do, Alyssa? I cannot..."

Florentian himself shot up before Alyssa and Sandra.

"A couple of conspirators in my house? Where have you been? Alyssa, why do you look like a striped zebra? And how do you look like? Are you, Sandra, learning the handicraft of the blacksmith together with Alyssa?"

Lord Benedict was laughing merrily at his embarrassed young friends. Surprised Alyssa saw some dark bands on her dress, evidently everything was dusty and sooty in the loft, so she didn't see it and she made herself dirty in the dusk.



“Well, confess to me what have you contrived there, in the tower?”

“I only drove some nails into the stone wall there and I didn’t imagine that so much dust would rise.”

“It is great that you didn’t burn us down,” Florentian kept joking. “If you had told me that you needed the tower for your observatory, I would have offered you to work in the right tower where Nikolay and Nal have excellent workshop. Well, all right, don’t worry. Run to your room and tidy yourself up. Drop in at my place after the supper. In the meanwhile I will talk to Alyssa.”

Florentian and Alyssa went to the musical sitting-room. Only one lamp was put on here. It was the dusk in the room, and lord Benedict sat down by the window by seating Alyssa next to himself.

“My baby, can you feel the especially pure atmosphere of this room?”

“Every time when I enter this place I’m especially glad. It becomes for me easier to live, as though I can feel the new happiness, but after Ananda played and sang here, this room became a temple for me. Once in this room – after you were singing – I understood what the song was in general, but your song was so majestic, it was so divinely out of reach that it only caused the ecstasy of prayer and respect within me. Not even a brave hope rose to reach the possibility some time to come nearer to this perfection. When Ananda was playing and singing, I also admired his art, but felt instantly that a man could reach this level. And now when I enter this place as though I get into the temple of my dreams. As though I understand that I will have to play much during my earthly path not for my personal joy, but because such is my path of serving others. Don’t think that I want to tell you that I hope to play and to sing like Ananda does it. I only know that Ananda showed me that what one could reach if one gave all one’s unselfish love to the art.”

“Yes, it is so, Alyssa, but in this life of yours some complicated tasks are destined for you, and one cannot say which one of them is more important. The family, the deepest tasks of which you know already; the music, the significance of which you’ve perceived; your sister and your mother, for salvation of whom all their misfortunes open before you now till the very ground, - everything is equally important for you now, while you are preparing yourself for that role of your social activity and serving to people for which you got into my home and you became acquainted with the group of people here, who are destined to create the new type of community of the people’s uniting. You’ve already seen two families – Nal’s and Lisa’s. The path of two future mothers extends before you, and you need to observe their constant growth, their mistakes, anxiety, disagreements, joys and happiness. Only then you’ll enter your maternity when you habituate yourself to it through the strange example which is next to you, when you understand its entire importance, responsibility and when you are able to bear it in an easy, joyous and simple way. But, my friend, when are you able to be so spiritually free that you would create an easy and joyous life for your family in which the gifted people with an extraordinary mentality could develop absolutely freely and without any setbacks? When are you prepared to create such family which would change the mode of life in essence in comparison to all those degenerative and distressing families which die from their own suffocating passions by calling it love? The terrible violence, their own beliefs and imaginations imposed on everybody, the company chosen for their children according to their own taste and not according to the development of their abilities – all of it is called love, care and guardianship in the narrow-minded families. Only then you will become real mother-educator when you throw three perceptions out of the path of your life. First – your fear, second – your personal perception of your passing-by life and third – your grief.

Think for a while, what is fear? This is the most complicated from all man’s feelings. It never manifests itself in man alone, a lot of nasty things always surround it, which destroy the values of man’s spiritual life no less than fear itself. Fear infects not only man himself, but it fills up his entire surroundings

with the most penetrating vibrations which are more venomous than the cobra's poison. That person who's obsessed with fear is already stifled as active, intelligent and freely thinking man. Only then a thought is able to create rightly by understanding intuition when the man's organism is functioning in a harmonious way, when the balance of all his powers sets in. Only then you get into that higher consciousness of yours – through the conscious activity – in which the divine part of your creating being is living. If your thought gets stiff with fear, then you cannot break away from the bestial part of your being, while your spirit doesn't open. The people who think that they possess spiritual sight, but who actually only occasionally throw their binding fear off themselves are the ones who are the most worthy of mercy from everybody who make mistakes. Their endless tears and complaints for their relatives actually are only the fragments of their deplorable egoism and physical attachment to their body without any outbursts of the real self-sacrifice. The people whom fear drives through their lives are defective. They cannot be creators of life or create any great things. They are living only in the world of temporary bodies, while everybody who can create are living in two worlds – in the worlds of the toiling earth and the toiling heaven. The spirit of such creators is bringing the radiance of those forms of Eternity onto the earth, which they saw, which were imprinted in their memory and which they brought from there with their creation for their contemporaries' happiness and for their advance.

The second perception from which you need to liberate your spirit – that's perception of your personal life. What does it mean? How you, Alyssa, young girl, for whom the life of full value is meant, who has to give the entire completeness of her feelings and thoughts for every work in every moment till the end, how do you need to understand this liberation of your lower "I" pressure that belongs only to this earth? My friend, everything in man is so strongly connected one to another that you cannot root one of your characteristics out of yourself so that your entire essence wouldn't echo to one or another step of your spirit. If today, in this moment you are frightened, then your entire organism fell ill. If you were walking with joy, with great efforts – you've tied a pledge of victory in your organism, which in some time will go into all actions of your life. If you've overcome your fear, because you knew that the divine temple was in your heart, then you've already learnt your first lesson, you've made your first step into your life in Eternity. If you are living in Eternity, you know that no such separation is possible when your earthly life in this body could walk independently, without the Eternity in you. And you are walking by carrying that Eternity to all people, into all your affairs in every moment of your earthly life. Every moment of your life on the earth for you is only the moment of Eternity. When you know firmly this universal law of Life, then there aren't any conditional, formal feelings and passions left, any conditional, formal comparison of your destiny with other people's ones, and at the same time any jealousy, evaluation, condemnation left, which rise when you know only one physical love. The following concepts disappear: my home, my family, my children, my friends... You perceive with joy that everybody who is living on the earth, as well as yourself, are fulfilling only their own eternal tasks.

From that the third perception arises by itself, which torments you and burdens every moment of man's life. It both burdens him and it doesn't allow him to see his entire life, to be precise, his life in two worlds. I'm talking about grief. You know the folk expression well: "The crying eyes cannot see clearly." If you understood fearlessness not with your mind, but with your heart opened for love, then you understood the Path of Eternity, and if you understood the Path of Eternity – you understood that your life on the earth is the activity of two worlds. And then you don't choose anymore what is more convenient and useful for you, you create your working day with the entire completeness of your heart by meeting all your circumstances with joy as exactly the ones with which you experience this moment in a quicker, easier and simpler way. In this moment you can see only your serving for Life in that form, in that place and in that time which Life needs for people's happiness. Not your personal "I", but that what goes through you creates the success of your everyday creation. If you've already perceived the first two conceptions, then the logic conclusion as the simplest consequence results from this that grief doesn't exist. If you see a

grieving person, don't cry for him, because you won't help him with your tears. Your help – that's your clear vision of the Eternity in man, your clear perception in which place of evolution of his Eternal Life this man is now. Only when you are standing next to the man firmly and with an absolute self-control yourself, you can see the eternal man's happiness hidden behind the tears of his conditional, formal suffering. You can see and understand his happiness by lifting the fallen out link from the terrible chain that was binding him with his previous passions and crimes. You can see that the time has come for the man to lift, to experience with joy and to carry out on his shoulders both this link and all those people who helped to bind him with those oppressing chains of insults, wrongs, arguments, treasons and unfaithfulness between themselves. Any grief of the weeping people – that's the grief of ignorance, that's the grief for themselves, for personal comprehension of that fact. Remember, my dear, that grief – that's one's thoughts about oneself. That's the conditional form of the connection when man forgets about the eternity of his life, about his radiating freedom which no one is able to restrict, about his inner light which no one without the man himself is able to overshadow. My daughter, if you want to fulfil the task of this incarnation, you have to find so much joy and love so that you would rise a step higher where these concepts don't exist in people's psyche anymore. Don't be distressed that it is still so far till that level for you, you are closer to it than you think. Now go, change your clothes and come back for the supper. I can hear the gong already. Besides, tomorrow we will visit your father's grave. Tell Arthur and your mother about it. Tell the gardener to pick off the most beautiful flowers. That will be the visit of our parting with your father. We'll also drop in at your house where we'll tenant the family of Doria's relatives."

Alyssa hardly had time to change her clothes and she was the last who entered the dining-room.

"Alyssa, I couldn't find you anywhere. Me and Nikolay thought of asking you to play for us after the supper," Nal told her.

"Great idea," Ananda supported her. "I will also contribute to the music. Anna sent some new notes for me. She writes to me with fascination about the new concert for violoncello by composer B. Alyssa, would you like to perform it with me?"

"I'm afraid that I will be unable to accompany you as you need it instantly, but if you give an hour to me, then I will play the score alone so that I would have more courage and self-confidence in order not to ruin the composition."

Nal was protesting, Sandra whom two desires were tearing apart – to go to the lord Benedict's and to hear the new concert, – proposed to allow Alyssa to run over the notes; Amedeo had to go somewhere for an hour, so he sided with Sandra's request. The host reconciled everybody by proposing to send the coach for Lisa and James, and at the same time for counts R., and to give an opportunity to listen to the new composition for everybody. Having decided like this, everybody rose from the table. Sir Vomi and Saintger joined Ananda and Alyssa who went to rehearse, while Florentian and Sandra went to the host's study.

"Sandra, does it still seem for you to be a great misfortune to part with me? Can't you still think calmly that Henry leaves with me, while you stay?"

Sandra gave a deep sigh and he didn't answer him instantly.

"My dear Teacher, I cannot tell you anymore that as before I estimate my separation with you like a catastrophe. Now I know that I have to learn so much during those two years, that both my days and my nights will be occupied. On the other hand, Henry makes such a progress, he is able to accept his separation with Ananda so well, he behaves with his aunt, his mother, Alyssa in such a chivalrous manner

that I don't consider myself to be more worthy of your company than him for a long time already. I will try to fulfil and even to exceed the program that you gave to me."

"That's why you decided to arrange the observatory on the quiet," lord Benedict gave a smile.

"No, I'm not that naïve that I would think that I could hide something from your look," Sandra gave a laugh. "Simply I was hoping to do much more before your look found me. I didn't use Nikolay's laboratory not because I'm competing, but because I wanted to polish the new lenses myself for which I can guarantee only now that they are good. My workshop only seems terribly, but the telescope's tubes which I calculated myself newly and which now I tested already are good. Besides, Nikolay's and my methods are completely different. If both of us are right, we'll find the new star. I'm talking briefly, because I know that you understand everything in one word. Speaking about the grief of my separation with you, my friend, my father, although I told you that it wasn't a catastrophe, but... now I cannot be weaker than a woman for the second time anymore. Now I live with work and I always feel you so closely, as if you were next to me. If I had seen you off a month ago, I would have cried every day and night, I would have been ill for a long time and I couldn't have been able to work, and there wouldn't have been any end for my grief. Now I found you at work. I only need to start working and to think: "For the sake of the community," and all my thoughts stop turning like heavy millstones instantly, I can see you next to myself, I consult you, it even seems to me that I can hear how and what you advice to me. The same unusually bright illusion was in my loft, too, which the scoffer Alyssa called the hole of the magician. The illusion of your silent voice – not as the real one, but the strange one, as if I could hear it from myself, from inside of me, as if from somewhere distant – was such clear, I hear it so well that I'm glad with our communication in the same way as I'm glad now. My resume is: the separation with you doesn't exist for my spirit, while my body... My body will be living with work, with hope to become worthy of you and with gratitude that you left me next to Ananda. The separation with you, my beloved father and friend, that's that test of mine with which I have to temper my will. I'm so naïve concerning all the questions of life that I would walk in rags and so on, I would forget about the most elementary things if not Amedeo who always saves me with his care. I also have to learn to be useful for Amedeo who – I don't doubt it even for a moment – is suffering more than myself by parting with you and Alyssa."

"Sandra, you poor and at the same time rich Sandra! Your joy, your lightness with which you've accepted the big work which I loaded on you, that simplicity with which you do it, the fact that you didn't deny the circumstances of your life in any way for a single time, which always used to rise before you, led you to such wisdom to which you would have walked for many years of discipleship if you had only planned cleverly and waited until everything inside of you would mature for the active work among the people indicated to you. I cannot reveal to you that happy karma with all the people who surround you now, but I can congratulate you that today you've pulled out the last splinters from your interrelations with Henry and Amedeo. You see, my friend, there are many people who are looking for God and his work in their lives. They are dreaming about their Teacher, about their Path with Him and about their life next to Him during their entire lives, and when in one or another way, with help of invisible assistants of heaven they get into the path where they can meet their Teacher, they start denying this path, they can see only its earthly form without seeing the eternity to which it leads them. Hence, not the news that reached them was important to them, but the ant that brought it to them. Their attention concentrates on the ant and on their own spiritual cunning which is like degeneration. There aren't any pettiness within you. You can see the grandeur of Life in all of its paths and forms. From this minute on when you've accepted the separation with me till the end, without any tears, any negation, any weakness, when you started working for the community in an absolutely brave and loyal way, you will fulfil your task earlier and in less than two years you will join us in the creation of the community. Sandra, you are worried about Jenny. You are itching to

help her. Here you have to call for help all your loyalty of the disciple for me. I forbid you to contact Jenny, as well as her entire company in any possible ways. At the moment neither you nor Alyssa nor me nor Ananda are able to help her. I anticipate that Jenny who doesn't suspect anything about our and Alyssa's departure will certainly try to attack both you and Tendly by considering both of you to be complete fools and she will write the heart-breaking letters to you. Don't believe a single word of her. Jenny is full not of sorrow, but of anger. Not the pain of separation or suffering of the outcast as she will be writing to you is rending her, but jealousy, and Jenny is thinking only about vengeance. So, my veto of love with respect to Jenny is uttered to you. Now go, thank you for your loyal serving, I hope that from now on, by following my loyalty you will always be walking only nearer, stronger and more fearlessly."

Florentian embraced the youth, accompanied him to the door behind which mister Tendly was waiting for him, who was unusually excited. Florentian let him enter his study and told Sandra.

"Ask Ananda not to start without me."

"Well, my valiant captain?"

"Ah, my admiral, I've never been so shocked during my life," Tendly answered him by sitting down on the armchair with difficulty and hanging his head on his hands. "Martin died half an hour ago and he asked me to hand this terrible packet to that man whom he met in your study on that day when he got in here through the window. I couldn't get out of him who that man was in any way."

"That was me," the duke Saintger entered unnoticed, stood behind Tendly's back and told him.

Tendly whose nerves were strained to the last string gave a strong start with surprise.

"I understand how irritated your nerves should be if you stayed with ill-fated Martin for so long and if you were carrying this fruit of many of his crimes in your hands," he continued by pointing to the packet which Tendly put on the table. "Take my sweet, it will strengthen you more than any tranquilizer."

Tendly put the sweet into his mouth automatically. He couldn't align his thoughts in any way. And he didn't know from where he had to begin his story.

"Well, my captain, did my assignment surpass your strength?" Florentian asked him.

"No, my admiral. I don't know whether the duke's sweet helped me so miraculously or the Martin's packet inspired me with loathing, but now I've already controlled my feelings and I can tell everything clearly to you. On that day when you commanded me, I went to Martin's. I found him completely abandoned and sick. I paid for the separate ward in one of the private hospitals, I found a nurse and I entrusted him to several doctors. Every one of them was interested in the patient's illness, they accepted the money for their visits willingly, but their whole treatment manifested itself only in these visits. Finally, one of them told me that there wasn't any hope left to save the patient, but that the good air, the food and care could help for his memory and speech to come back at least for few days. I took the doctor's advice, brought Martin to the silent house in the town's outskirts, and there he began to speak three days ago."

Tendly was silent for a while and he breathed in deeply several times as if by wishing to push some heaviness out of himself.

"I don't remember if I had ever been so unhappy as during those days. Martin understood that he was dying, and during his first days his talk was only maledictions for Bracano and Bonda till their

seventh generation. Here it fell to Jenny's lot, too, about whom he was telling such terrible things which one could explain only as his madness and which I don't dare to repeat. There was a sudden change within him on the second day after dinner. It began to seem to him that he could see that man whom he met in this room. He was calling for compassion instead of maledictions and he asked to give him a pansy. He swore that he had never stolen the ring, that the bribed man-servant stole the ring with pansies from amethysts, after which Bracano was running about in the whole world, but then the ring was given to one of Bracano's agents and it disappeared in the most secret way when he came back home to Constantinople. Nobody knows the destiny of this ring with which Bracano connected the part of his power against you, duke Saintger. Martin still said a lot mad and incomprehensible things. He also made a confession during his imaginary conversations with you. I couldn't even imagine that a man could live so morally fallen into decline and completely ruined. I was trying to stop him, to persuade him that there wasn't anybody in the room except me. He used to rage and throw anything at me by reproaching me that I prevented him from purifying himself with his last confession at least as much as Bracano wouldn't disturb his spirit by calling it after his death and by forcing him to submit to him and to serve for his mean goals. He was crying that you, duke Saintger, promised him salvation and protection if he refused evil and returned a part of the stolen things to those innocent people whom he turned into beggars. Here, in this terrible packet, as he was persuading me in his visual hallucination, you would find the documents of his sister, mother, wife and his son whom he turned into beggars for their reluctance to join his predatory life. He was persuading me that here was his little box full of jewels with which he wanted to escape the band of his accomplices by waiting for a proper chance. He asked me to hand these jewels to his robbed family and – it is terrible even to say it – to the children of that woman whom he deceived, abandoned and brought to the gallows by shifting his entire crime on her and by bribing the judges and the guard. I don't have enough strength to give the whole terrible list of the Martin's murdered people to you, I only remember the number of people, a hundred and forty, whom he made die in the gallows, drudgery and prisons. He repeated the number several times to me, to be precise, he stated it to your imaginary picture. His continuous conversation with you, his confession with incomprehensible details of his mocking at his victims continued nearly till the evening. He calmed down only a couple of hours ago, he began to thank you for your compassion, but his hatred for Bracano remained the same burning, and he cursed the miserable Jenny several times by thrusting the terrible kinship to her. Although I don't believe in a single Martin's word about Jenny, anyway I'm terrified by that company which the unhappy girl got into. Independent of Martin's words and by remembering the scenes in the office, I'm suffering with helplessness to help Jenny. I don't know anything about her current life, but during these days when I went to the museum to visit my friend who was working there, all of a sudden I saw Jenny in the Egyptian section. She didn't notice me. Oh God, probably I won't forget that face for a long time, at least until I have my memory. Not a single painter had ever depicted a greater disappointment, a bigger pain in a woman's face... Only the woman who was pushed away from the gates of heaven could look in such a way that maybe some rescuer would still enter through the door."

"Yes, my dear Tendy," Saintger told him, "Jenny was really waiting, but she wasn't waiting for a rescuer, but for a victim – for her innocent sister whom she was ordered to kidnap and to bring for the mean Bracano's goals. And that Bracano is Jenny's father, unfortunately this is the only truth that the dying villain told you. His confession was soaked with falsehood in which he got used to live. He kept much more horrible things from you and distorted a lot in such a way that there were any tracks left if we had to search for the victims of his villainy according to his testimonies. Luckily, I succeeded to find some of them. I met Martin's son and I helped his completely impoverished and beggarly family to rise to their feet again. Now we only need to give a part of this packet to the children of the woman who was hanged innocently. She was Hungarian Gipsy of the rare beauty. I undertake to do this not easy business. Of course, your loyal friend Florentian will talk to you about Jenny, while I have to leave for the town immediately."

Saintger left the study hurriedly after exchanging their significant looks with Florentian.

“Who’s that Florentian, my admiral, why is he my friend and even loyal?”

“That’s me, my captain, so it isn’t strange at all that I’m your loyal friend. I’m really descended from Florence. Once, a long time ago I had my own reasons to conceal my name. People knew me under this surname which eventually became my name. In this way I remained as Florentian. But we’ll talk about it some time. Now I would like to explain to you that Saintger is absolutely not cruel for Jenny, as it seemed to you. Do you remember our first conversation in the country? I was telling you about the man’s tact, about understanding where, how and when one could go to help somebody. Today you need to understand that you cannot break into the strange life and offer your help if you don’t possess enough knowledge yourself, without your endurance and courage. If now you rushed to help Jenny not even knowing how to protect yourself against hypnosis of the small villain Bonda and his nephews, then there would be only one result: Bonda would have another servant for Martin’s role. That would be a very valuable find for him, and Jenny – another footwoman without any honour and conscience which she would knock out of you with her father’s help. Decide yourself, my captain, in what situation I would find you after coming to save you. If you still want to be my fellow, captain, here’s my order: not to talk, see or exchange letters with Jenny. You must protect Alyssa and not allow anybody from Jenny’s company and herself to come nearer to her until we stay in London. If you sincerely feel for Jenny and value her possibility to be torn out of the circle of evil one day, which she has gotten into now, if you really and not with your words want to help Jenny to become free forever, then you cannot step beyond those limits which I draw for you now. I told Jenny when you were next to her that exactly that person whom she insulted could be her rescuer and that he would bring her to her sister’s home with his own hand. But when something could happen, it doesn’t mean that it will happen. In order for that to happen you need to be strong, you need to achieve such level of knowledge, such loyalty and self-control that you wouldn’t tremble in that moment when your sympathy till the end is needed. Only then you will be able to extend your hand of help for Jenny when there’s no place for regret left in your heart. It means that it will happen when you, while feeling for Jenny, see bravely not only this current her existence, but when you see and remember forever her entire life, when you learn to comprehend what the whole work of her life is, when you know precisely and see clearly how a man’s life in his orbits of the earth and heaven is going on. Tendlly, a lifeless and resting heaven doesn’t exist; the spots that don’t create and do nothing don’t exist at all in the universe. The land laid fallow – it also doesn’t rest, it creates and prepares energy for the future harvest. Man, you can see millions of moving two-legged beings, but this is exactly why you see so many parasites among them, because they are not men-creators yet, not the creators of the general welfare, but they are only half conscious beings who prepare for the human stage, who live the lowest period of evolution of their personality. You need to understand a lot, to gain a lot of knowledge. Do you want it? You promised me to follow me faithfully. Day after day your loyalty must become stronger, your fearlessness must grow, so that you could walk after me always higher, further and nearer to me. I’m not standing in one place. I follow unceasingly those who extended their hand of compassion and love to me. My loyalty is walking after their loyalty in the same way as their loyalty is walking after the eternal movement of the most Enlightened Beings. This eternal and constant advance to perfection is the whole basis of the entire universe. If your heart is happy by joining this eternal circle of activity, if your thought is happy when it gets to know Light – then repeat after me the pledge of your voluntary obedience and walk after me till the end with your entire loyalty.”

“I obey, my admiral, I repeat the pledge of my obedience to you easily and joyfully. I will be happy to obey you unconditionally where I won’t understand and I will be happy to serve you doubly where I will understand.”

“So, my friend, here are my first instructions for you: don’t reply with a single word to Jenny’s letters. Don’t keep any appointments with her even if she addressed your gentleman’s honour and

asked your help as a woman. Strengthen your will. Don't condemn any zigzags of her behaviour and send such sympathy to her, which could direct at least one drop of her suffering, that is while looking at her so fallen down today, open your heart wider for her. Build the bridge for her with your own love; and one day Jenny holding your brave hand will be able to get across that bridge, down its clean planks which you'll put one after another from her hopeless destruction to the happy Alyssa's home. That's it in the meanwhile for this lesson. Now let's go to listen to the music, they are waiting for us."

Florentian squeezed both Tendly's hands extended to him, and they went to the musical sitting-room. The sitting-room was brightly lit and it was shining like a temple during a celebration. The whole family was here already. The count and the countess R., Lisa and the captain hurried to Florentian who entered by thanking him for the unexpected joy of the musical surprise.

"I'm glad to be able to give pleasure to myself to see all of you at my home, however both you and me owe Ananda for today's joy, who, of course, will take us to the new fascination."

Everybody wanted to be closer to Florentian, that's why they sat next to him in a semicircle. Florentian seated those who were destined to part with him soon closer to himself, while those who were sailing with him to America he sent to sir Vomi who was sitting in the end of the room.

This time, too, as soon as Ananda's bow touched the strings, everybody's heads rose, they fastened their eyes upon the musician without any desire to lose touch with radiating face till the very last sound. This time, too, Ananda took the listeners out of the world of time and forms; once again everybody forgot about all conditionalities, everybody opened the gates of their heart till the end and destroyed all the partitions between themselves and the surroundings.

Only divinity was pouring from the listeners' hearts, and it seemed that even the separate breathing of everybody of them wasn't left anymore, that only the monolithic Unity from the fascinating Ananda's sounds was left. As soon as the last sound died away, everybody felt to be the people of the earth again, as if by getting back into the case of their body only with great efforts; but Ananda didn't allow to rest them for a long time, he began to sing by accompanying himself with the grand piano.

Alyssa who was telling Florentian not so long ago that she understood man's possibilities while Ananda was singing, now perceived that not every unselfish and dedicated to the art man was able to reach such perfection which Ananda had reached. She was shocked. It seemed to her that Ananda hadn't sung like this a single time, that it wasn't a man's voice anymore. That was an element that was arising absolutely not on the earth, but it was falling down onto the earth from some different world.

Alyssa didn't understand that language in which Ananda was singing, she didn't even comprehend the meaning of the words, as though her brain stopped working at all. It seemed to her that she left her body. Everything around her began to shine in the most wonderful, bright colours. Alyssa didn't see such Ananda whom she knew, but the big, transparent, clear sphere which was changing in all pearl colours. The butterflies of untold beauty were flying round the sphere like some little flames by creating an illusion of the vibrating air.

The sounds appeared to her like some ribbons, they were interweaving into some geometrical figures, while Ananda's hands were strewing the swarms of light and sparks on the keys. It seemed to Alyssa that she became even lighter, that she was rising up and turning between all those lights and the radiating sphere. All of a sudden she saw her father next to herself.

"Alyssa, one moment – and your earthly life is finished; and there's no possibility to send anything what you've perceived newly here to the earth. Remember that. Remember that those who can lift people's hearts and their consciousness to the world of the higher consciousness in which you find



yourself now through the art, - those aren't people, but the selfless little parts of the Divine Wisdom. They agree to possess the human body in order to tread a path to Light for people. You need to follow them. You need to serve them, so that you would bring their energy with your body to those dirty places full of passions where they are unable to walk anymore. Remember it. Protect your purity and march bravely everywhere where they send you to, but don't go where they have forbidden you to in any way."

The song ended. Alyssa as though fell down heavily. She looked round and saw that she was sitting on the armchair, while sir Vomi was next to her and he was holding her hand.

"Keep silent, baby. That what you've seen and heard is only for you alone and only yours. You've seen how the fire of creation opens the door for spirit. That one who's seen it once, one day will be able to get into that sphere of creation himself. Don't tell a word to anybody," sir Vomi uttered.

"My friends," Florentian rose from his place, "today Ananda performed the farewell concert for us. Very soon we'll leave for America with the captain Rettedly's ship. Let the moments of this sacred happiness to live without any conditionalities, which we've experienced now when the new creative energy, the new comprehension of how we need to live free and joyous, which was born in every one of us in one or another form, remain in the memory of every one of us forever. When we are far away from here, while remembering one another, we'll remember namely these moments of our uniting through beauty. We'll be thankful to Ananda. He helped us to open all our powers of the highest Love within ourselves. Having perceived the possibility to rise to such high path of Light and by blessing Ananda, we'll convey our happiness to live for our suffering relatives. Accept, Ananda, my dear friend and brother, my respect as our joint gratitude for you. When the man of the earth of the ordinary development is accompanying you, you are sending the songs to the earth, which purify people from passions. Then they can hear the whole sorrow and the whole joy of the earth in your songs. They understand what a man can achieve by creating the path to beauty for his brothers. Today you didn't take any fellow-traveller from the earth. You didn't share your songs with him. Today you gave us the entire harmony of your being, your whole Wisdom that is living within you and that is melted in your kindness and sympathy. You've brought the living heaven onto the suffering and weeping earth, and you showed its shining, little patch to us. Kindness became stronger within us during the single moment of your song. Every one of us understood in his own way how far he still was till perfection, but every one of us didn't lose hope to achieve it and he comprehended the powers of tact and joy within himself, as well as the power to create, - to create as he is able to do it, but without any tears, any irritation, any dull stubbornness by throwing off his selflove and calculations, easily and unselfishly. From this moment on every one of us won't be able to live and he won't live with only earthly affairs anymore, but he will always know that the living heaven is living within him and that it is living and working with him. Be blessed, Ananda. I greet your fire and I bow to it, let it burn so brightly forever, so that everybody whom you meet would bathe in the atmosphere of your joy."

Without allowing Ananda to respond to his speech, Florentian embraced him and he began to say good-bye to his guests by telling them that some urgent matters were waiting for him.

Everybody hurried to break up in order to feel once again in solitude that what they comprehended during this evening. While saying good-bye to Ananda, they were expressing their respect and gratitude to him, but without any words by being afraid of disturbing the charm of their inner happiness with which everyone was leaving this place by understanding that it was already the last evening spent with music. None of the hearts was breaking from longing. Such conception as "the last" moment didn't exist for anybody anymore, a great energy was pulsating in every one of them. Every one of them comprehended the Eternity not like a principle or an idea, but like a joyous, pure work. The conditional, personal understanding of unselfishness disappeared, and the sense of the aspect of the revived Life appeared instead of it.

When Florentian was coming back to his study he sent Arthur to invite Amedeo. After his conversation with lord Benedict in the country Amedeo dedicated almost his entire leisure to architecture and engineering. Nobody even noticed it, but under Florentian's very attentive leadership not only Amedeo's interior, but also his appearance changed. The former kind-hearted, absent-minded person who couldn't draw into work anybody, but on the contrary, who was spoiling everybody with his kindness, now began to go deep into people's affairs attentively. He understood that without the lessons of the practical activity he wouldn't create that family in which Alyssa could live and fulfil her task. Amedeo who was observant and intelligent by nature was surprised by the lord Benedict's life and he was unable even to comprehend the whole many-sided activity of his friend and host.

Amedeo was very excited with Florentian's widest correspondence, the constant addition of the new books to his library, his attention through which nothing could slip by, his constant power of love and kindness for everybody. He never heard any irritable note in the lord Benedict's voice when this voice used to sound threateningly. Amedeo saw with what respect Ananda was always talking to Florentian, so today he was stunned with the greatest submission that sounded in Florentian's gratitude for Ananda for his songs.

Florentian bowed to him in such humble way as if he had bowed to God himself, and not to Ananda. Amedeo couldn't do anything half-and-half, and a small wound still couldn't heal in his soul and heart, from which – as it seemed to him – the blood was always oozing. He adored Alyssa with the greatest comprehension of happiness of his entire life by lifting her up on the pedestal and... he was always thinking that he hadn't any place on this pedestal next to her. If he hadn't believed in the impeccable knowledge of his great friend, he would have asked Florentian ten times already to liberate him from the marriage with Alyssa. Although he adored the girl, he was feeling easily and simply next to her only when he imagined himself to be her brother, protector or friend. As soon as he would start thinking about Alyssa as his future wife, he would lose his entire liveliness, he would become timid, silent, he seemed to himself to be no much clever than a crow that was dreaming about the peacock's feathers.

Finally, because of such suffering of his Amedeo began to avoid Alyssa and any possibility to stay the two of them. It seemed that in the beginning the girl didn't even notice such behaviour of his, but after some time Amedeo began to feel her looks full of humour – of such sharp one which only she possessed. Lately, more and more often, he used to notice sadness in her eyes, a question and even an anxiety when she used to look at him. Today when Alyssa was playing with Ananda, as always he was looking at her attentively, he was fascinated by uniting her and the music into one totality and by forgetting about everything; but he also could feel the physical plan, he perceived the surroundings perfectly and he knew that Alyssa was sitting before him, whom he adored and without whom not only joy, but also life itself didn't exist.

What had happened when Ananda began to sing alone? Why did Amedeo forget about Alyssa, his personal happiness, the time, whether somebody was equal to him or not? Now he knew clearly and firmly that life – exactly that was the complete freedom, the liberation from the possibility to suffer and to be frightened; that life on the earth was of real value only when the sound flying from the free heart was ringing by gathering everything round it into one, unbroken ring of joy; that namely such sound was spreading from Ananda's lips.

In this way the perception of what Love was sounded in the Ananda's subconscious. Love doesn't demand. It doesn't ask to give anything to it. It gives itself; and it lives only because it gives. Otherwise it would fade away from the unused oil which is burning in the fire of its bonfire and supports its burning. It seemed to Amedeo that not Ananda was sitting at the piano, that the bonfire was burning in that place; it seemed to him that not Florentian was sitting, surrounded by people, but that another bonfire

was burning, from which the widest bands were spreading to all directions by going through all the people who surrounded him. The flame of the bonfire was spreading from sir Vomi as well and it was rising up in the pillars of fire up to the ceiling where they united and were gliding like some gigantic, burning flowers.

Amedeo revived this entire beauty which appeared to him in his memory and he felt easy, his bleeding wound closed, and the new happiness to live opened for his spirit – he understood not only his place on the earth, but also in the entire universe. He remembered Florentian's words that only then peace came to man's heart when he understood his place in the universe.

Somebody knocked at the door, and Arthur told Florentian's request to him to go downstairs to him. Already when Amedeo was climbing down the stairs he felt absolutely differently. For the first time he could go to the Florentian's study so easily and simply. It seemed to him that he understood absolutely differently and the night itself, and Arthur, and Sandra whom he met on the stairs and who gave a smile to him, - everything was differently as yesterday. When Amedeo entered, Florentian was standing alone in the middle of the room with the white clothes embroidered with gold. Amedeo had never seen him so charming.

"Well, my friend, can you see the shining sky even in the night? That's what it means when you become free from one little wound which was always made rancid by your personal sorrow. Amedeo, sit down next to me. In this moment you understand yourself why I haven't spoken to you for so long time. Still yesterday I would have had to explain to you everything for a long time and I doubt whether I would have succeeded to persuade you. You cannot lift a man on the next level of his spiritual development, however hard you would try to show the Wisdom to him, which exists both within him and next to him. When this Wisdom awakes in every man in its own way and for different reasons, he may get not only on the next level of consciousness in a flash, but also fly over the next connecting ring in that golden chain that girds every man like the power and energy of the universe which always creates and pours its sparkles onto the Earth. The person who can see and hear their sound ties them into his activity. Then people call them to be genii, awakened and so on, however, everything is destined absolutely not by genius. The whole essence – that's a restored to life little part, an aspect of Wisdom awakened in it, comprehension of complete liberation in one's work. All of a sudden your heart opened. You've forgotten about yourself. Ananda helped your kindness to escape to freedom. He explained to you that Life – that's Light in man's path. This Light doesn't die out, flitter or fade from anybody's touch only when you don't choke it with your thoughts about yourself, your doubts and fear. Today you saw the red bands of love as the whole ropes of light which tie people together one with another. You saw them, although others couldn't see them, because you can connect yourself with other people with your whole loyalty by not demanding any gratitude or reward from them. That's your path – the one of love, compassion and kindness. Now you follow me, because you need to learn great tact, self-confidence, the ability of leading people until you can create your own family with Alyssa, until those will come for whom your family will have to be their shelter. First of all comprehend tact, understand how you should carry kindness and compassion, then carry them to people. Today I don't need to explain to you anymore that you should change your behaviour with Alyssa. There isn't left the haughtiness and bitterness within you anymore, from which the blood was oozing. You called it the wound of obedience, but in truth it was the one of your haughtiness. Today it became clear to you that the whole essence of life – that's to unite through love with those who are walking along on the earth in the same way as you are doing it. You've made sure already that only when you are united through love with people you can rise higher with your spirit and reach the ardent love of those you've walked further than us with their development. To walk down the path of kindness, love and selflessness doesn't mean at all to lose your sober mind and to forget about yourself in the same way as Diogenes did it, who in truth didn't forget about himself for a single moment. Your role – that's not only to be Alyssa's husband, but also to be constructor of the society, creator and spreader of the idea of the new social life, and educator of

those whom you considered to be higher than yourself during this incarnation and who would be born in your family. For all these roles you need a complete self-control without fail. Take thought what is the complete self-control? That's such liberation from your passions when not a single sparkle of one's irritation thrown at you is able to call forth your reciprocal passion or irritation. Nothing more is left in your heart free from evil as only to die out. The oil of the bonfire of your love and kindness puts out all the sparkles thrown at you. Those are exactly the miracles of the Earth which people are carrying within themselves...

We'll cast off in two days. Find the way to show all your deepest love and joy to Alyssa. The poor girl who's experienced so many treasons and infidelity during her life is suffering silently by thinking that you didn't like her much. It isn't an especial happiness for a wife to think that her husband marries her only because somebody has told him to. I can see that you are surprised that Alyssa could think so strangely. Here's the first lesson of tact for you, which you need to smother up. Don't take part in fight against Jenny and her company. Stay next to Ananda during the entire time of our separation, and during the first days while Saintger is still here, be next to him. He's great expert of the sciences of the technology and mechanics. I hope that we'll see each other sooner than in two years. Good-bye, my son. Be strong and work in such a way as if I was always next to you. Having awakened in the morning, stand in the post of your watch by the threshold of Eternity. Report about your fulfilled watch to it before falling asleep. If you are able to imagine well that I'm next to you, then both of us will always keep watch together. Concentrate your entire attention on your every work, give the whole completeness of your feelings and thoughts to every meeting. Then you'll strengthen our bond day by day."

Having embraced Amedeo sincerely, Florentian saw him off and then sat down at his writing-table. The whole house was sleeping for a long time already, while work was in full swing in the host's study. Here, bent over a map, Florentian, sir Vomi and Saintger were discussing about something, while Ananda was writing down their decisions on the paper sheets, the little heap of which was always growing. In this way they were caught by the dawn.

## Chapter 21

### Jenny and her appointment with sir Vomi.

#### Her disappointment and the last decision before her departure from London

Having waited with tension for her mother and Alyssa in the hall of the museum where she was hoping to take possession of them so easily and where it seemed to her that she had calculated everything precisely, Jenny invited Bonda and her husband for a consultation.

Having tried all the means to recover his voice, Bonda couldn't do anything and he only kept wheezing by squeezing out that snorting whisper with difficulty, too. And the more he was furious, the more difficult it was for him to whisper.

Since that time when Jenny saw his helplessness to help himself, she stopped being afraid of Bonda and now she changed her previous fear into a contempt for him. Especially that Bonda didn't rely on any of his nephews and that he used to address Jenny in his various affairs when he needed to talk to people, because his poor knowledge of the language prevented him from corresponding, and it made him somewhat dependent on Jenny and even somewhat subordinate to her.

Being afraid of Bracano whose assignments – and the most important ones – he didn't fulfil, Bonda didn't forget that Jenny was Bracano's daughter and he was trying to worm himself into her favour. Although he didn't admire Jenny, but he managed to appreciate her cunning and anger, he understood that she could be a merciless enemy and he decided to do everything in order to become useful and even needful for her. Therefore when he received Jenny's note with the request to drop in at her place with an important business in the evening of the next day, Bonda became glad, he was rocking with spiteful laughter alone and he decided to play a devoted friend and loyal assistant for her. Bonda began to make a plan of his future behaviour and to prepare those hooks with the bait which the fish had to bite the best in his opinion.

What was Jenny doing during those days? Why did she postpone her appointment with her friends instead of acting instantly?

Jenny still didn't consider herself to be routed. She concentrated her entire attention on the blue-eyed naïve man, as she called sir Vomi. It occurred to her that perhaps he didn't receive her letter, that the host could decide not to give it to him if the mail got straight into his hands. Jenny decided to write to the naïve man again – she fastened this nickname on sir Vomi by sneering at him – and to play an insulted woman before him, who was hoping to find gentleman and assistance, but who received only indifference and even impoliteness.

*I don't even know what I should think about you, sir Vomi, - Jenny was writing. If at least for a moment I believed that you received my letter and that you didn't reply to me, then of course, I wouldn't write to you now. In my opinion, a man, a young cavalier which every Englishman must be, who didn't reply to a letter isn't worthy of any attention. Since I was writing to you and at the same time to my mother and sister, and I didn't get any reply from them, too, I understand that neither you nor they received my letters. I*

*don't want to repeat myself. I will start from the most important: I need to meet you. I need to meet you not only because of myself, but also for my mother and sister, and for their safety.*

*My mother was neither clever nor orderly during her entire life, while my sister is still such uncomprehending teenager that one shouldn't be surprised by lack of her opinion.*

*I hope that you will help me to save them from those terrible paws of lord Benedict into which they got because of their oversight and partly, of course, because of my father. My unfortunate father entrusted Alyssa to lord Benedict, and he took my mother out of our home by force. Of course, you don't know anything about it, as well as many other things about your host's behaviour, but I will try to open your eyes.*

In this place of the letter Jenny's hand trembled a little. She remembered the letters which she once received from lord Benedict, she remembered that she didn't even read them properly, but she knew that there was a compassion for her in them, she remembered his words in the office, and her heart began to beat stronger; but she didn't go into further reflections, she seized greedily the cigarette that was always prepared for her helpfully and, having taken several drags, she drove away the irksome voice of her conscience. Having given such an impudent and anger laugh that also Bracano would have been satisfied with her, Jenny continued her letter:

*It isn't worth for us wasting our strength and energy, and counting the strange sins on the paper, we'd rather meet, try to understand one another and smash the army of the enemy that won't have time even to concentrate their forces. Of course, it is the most unpleasant for me to come to the lord Benedict's house, but if it is more convenient for you or, in your opinion, it is more useful for me because of liberation of my dear prisoners who are imprisoned in that house, then I, of course, will come to the place by overcoming my aversion in that air which is saturated with it.*

Having signed as "friend", Jenny was satisfied with her letter. She called the messenger and commanded him to bring this letter immediately and not to come back without the answer. Jenny dressed and left with her affairs as she explained it to her husband, while in truth she wanted to observe the lord Benedict's house from the distance, because it was very sad for her to sit and to wait for the answer. But she failed to observe it, because Bonda caught up with her by the door of the hotel and he had a telegram in his hand. He was so gloomy and pale that Jenny understood the importance of the matter for which he was inviting her. On their way Bonda extended the telegram to her in silence. "Martin is dead. I forward the letter. Tendly", Jenny read it.

"How could that trash slip out of our hands?" Bonda was wheezing. "Couldn't really any of my nephews see sense to do it if I'm sick and I cannot look after everything personally? Jenny, I'm falling into despair," Bonda pretended to be modest by trying to involve Jenny in this affair and to turn her into his accomplice as soon as possible. "Read this ill-fated letter. There's something unpleasant for you in it, but don't pay attention to it. Only go deep into the essence: Martin betrayed us before his death. You still know very little, that's why you cannot evaluate the unpleasantness of this whole fact, but remember that you can use not only alive, but also a dead man for your personal goals. Only that villain has found a protection for himself, and now none of us is able to reach him, but only for the time being. If we catch Alyssa – then the business was a success. It would be great if you could find some not absolute fool who could force his way through to the lord Benedict's house. If only he was able to throw one little thing on your sister's neck,

then everything would be all right," Bonda was wheezing by piercing Jenny with his eyes which she wasn't afraid of anymore.

"It seems that the little things on your neck aren't worth much before the lord Benedict's used spells," Jenny was rocking with brazen-faced laughter.

Bonda's eyes were throwing the sparkles of his rage what entertained Jenny even more, but anyway she understood that Bonda's power was still controlling her strongly, because she felt a blow straight in her chest. Jenny didn't become embarrassed, but she stopped laughing boisterously. In his turn Bonda controlled himself, too, he remembered the main task, he smirked and told her.

"That little thing that is now meant for Alyssa is more fanciful than yours," and while Jenny was hesitating whether to tell Bonda about her plans or not, he gave a letter to her.

Jenny was stunned by the letter's appearance. It must have been written for many days, it was all smeared with some rust spots, as if the hand that was writing it was bleeding.

*Damned Bonda, I write this letter to you, because I want to reckon with you before my death. If not because of my meeting with you and your impudent deception with which you lured me, I wouldn't be lying in the bed of death here now. I don't even have any strength to reckon with you, the killers of my soul, in such a way as I would like to do it. When I felt sick, you threw me out like a dog, and if those whom you call to be your enemies hadn't given shelter to me, I wouldn't have found out what it meant to be living with light and kindness at which I was jeering while I was living with you.*

Then there were several lines missing in the letter, he must have gotten tired while he was writing it and he had a break, and then he continued with a little changed handwriting.

*Now I'm not even glad that I've played a dirty trick on all of you and liberated my spirit from your mean influence. I understood something more what you wouldn't understand and about what it is impossible to talk to you, but personally for you, Bonda, and for three times damned Bracano I don't forgive your villainy for ruining me. Everything what you were forcing me to steal, I was stealing without forgetting about myself, too, and in this place we are settled up. But I don't forgive you for stealing my family, my heart from me and I compensate myself in such a way as you cannot even imagine. Only know that I've taken vengeance on you with it. You can tell Bracano that I help diligently his charming daughter whom all of you help to lose her human shape and I will help her even more diligently from the coffin.*

There must have been a break again, and after several lines it was written in the weaker handwriting already and almost unreadably.

*By ending my life I know only one thing: soon all of you will die, while your assistant, Bracano's daughter, will run away from you after drinking the entire cup of villainy. Keep a good eye on her, because she will deceive all of you. If you, Bonda, die in the same way as I do, then that will be enough for me, but I think that not a single compassionate hand is going to take care of you, scallywag. You've turned*

*me into a bleeding man, while I gave all your secrets to those whom you all your enemies. Now try to fight against them.*

*Perhaps the hell will swallow me up in several hours, but every one of you won't have any peace – in this way I call down curses upon you for all my suffering which you've pushed me into.*

*That one who once was a man and whose name was*

*Martin*

"Why did you give me to read this gibberish of the madman? About what Bracano's daughter is he talking here?"

Bonda pulled a wry face bitterly, and it seemed that his smile was telling her expressively: "And I thought that you were cleverer and more sagacious," but he only wheezed in words:

"I gave you to read this rubbish, so that you would understand that you couldn't rely on anybody else, except me and Bracano. Even your husband – he, too, is unreliable. If you are able to attach him to yourself, maybe then we can still talk about some confidence, but... I advice you not to rely on him in any serious business. While we are trying to get Alyssa, it would be the best to make friends with somebody from the lord Benedict's house. It seems to me that Tendly is the most suitable for this. You could charm him and fight your way to the secret appointment with Alyssa, while we need only this."

"It is easier than you think to see Alyssa, my uncle. Maybe even it will happen soon. Wait until tomorrow evening, then maybe I will tell something pleasant to you concerning this question, and now I need to go. Why does Martin' death worry you so much? I haven't yet seen you so gloomy for a single time."

"Soon you'll start thinking differently about many things. Now I can tell you only one thing: our meeting with Bracano isn't going to be very joyous if we show up without Alyssa before him and even without Martin."

Having parted with Bonda, Jenny wasn't thinking much about him and about his gloominess. She completely forgot about the Martin's letter and himself, she was thinking only about the response to her letter and about her appointment with sir Vomi for whom she was waiting impatiently now. Her thoughts already were flying across the lord Benedict's rooms, she was already imagining how she would find Alyssa in them and take her to Bracano. Why was Bracano trying to get Alyssa so much? Wasn't then she his daughter? Jenny even stopped, this thought seemed so stupid to her – Alyssa looked like the pastor so much. A doubt for herself didn't flash a single time, although she had a stinging and heavy stitch in her heart. Jenny came back to her rooms where she found the messenger with the letter. Jenny became glad, but she considered her own letter which the messenger gave to her to be sir Vomi's response, so finally she understood the truth and gave a shout angrily and with despair.

"What does it mean?!"

"Gentleman to whom the letter is addressed left for the pier and he would come back only at three o'clock as his servant explained to me."



"In this case you had to sit and wait for his answer. I told you not to come back without his answer, didn't I? Go back, wait until three o'clock and bring me his answer immediately," Jenny was shouting, while being completely irritated.

It was almost two o'clock. Jenny thought for a while whether it wasn't worth to go to the pier herself and to meet the blue-eyed man as if unintentionally; but it was a long distance to the pier, while to charm the cavalier on the street seemed to be more difficult and not so much interesting for her. Jenny knew perfectly the whole charm of her skin and hair in the room, she knew that she wasn't so much attractive on the street. She decided to go to the fashionable dress-maker and to choose a black dress, similar to that one with which she saw Alyssa last time.

Having fulfilled her desire, Jenny called at the café, because she didn't want to come back for longer and to find the sir Vomi's response already delivered to her. While she was sitting with the cup of chocolate which she didn't want at all, for the first time Jenny felt alone. When she was writing about it in her letters she was only choosing as sad words as possible, but there wasn't any solitude in her soul, and now, while she was observing the couples and friendly families, suddenly Jenny asked herself: "So what's next?" However she was asking her husband she couldn't get from him in any way where they would go. In the beginning he told her that they would go to Constantinople, then he mentioned some little Austria's towns where they would go to see Bracano who was undergoing a treatment in a health resort there.

A well-known irritation till rage struck Jenny, she was angry with her mother. Her mother who was persuading her with her love during her entire life seemed to be the culprit of all her misfortunes for her again. A wild hatred for her mother began to burn in Jenny's heart. It seemed to her that the most important now was her vengeance for her mother who left Jenny in the most difficult time; but she controlled herself and decided not to change the plan of her actions. Having left the café, she was going on foot, so that she would have time to calm down. There was a short reply on the telegraph form waiting for her at home: "Sir Vomi will be glad to accept senora Sedelani tomorrow, at two o'clock." Then there was indicated the address of the lord Benedict's house and the secretary's signature which Jenny didn't even read. She became angry again. She was accustomed to her mother's praise and she believed that nobody could remain indifferent for her beauty if she wanted to charm somebody, so now Jenny decided that sir Vomi had to hurry himself to visit her or at least to write himself instead of making an appointment through his secretary.

"Just think, those gentlemen from the Benedict's consider themselves to be such Ministers," Jenny thought angrily. She had a sudden idea to consult Bonda and to tell him that tomorrow she was going to visit the lord Benedict's villa and to see Alyssa, but her spiteful desire to swell before Bonda and to show him that she was much clever and more far-seeing than him overcame her. Of course, Bonda suspected something, because in the evening, unexpectedly he showed up at the newly-weds' and invited them for a dinner in the luxurious restaurant. His eyes were piercing Jenny through and they were ransacking all the tables, but the young woman who was throwing her letters and her belongings across all rooms not so long time ago now was unusually orderly, because she made sure many times that somebody was always checking all her pockets and papers. She laughed at Bonda's anxiety in her heart and she accepted his invitation, because she wanted to sit among the dressy public, to listen to the light music and to shorten the time until tomorrow.

Without idleness and care of her body which Jenny started idolizing, one could see only some stylish novels in her hands which her husband used to provide for her by inciting passions and sensitiveness within her. If the pastor had seen this girl for whose development he was striving so much by trying to awaken her interest in the science, mental work, he would have been surprised by her current life.

Now she wasn't worried about anything except herself and her desire to have the precedence everywhere, although Jenny herself didn't understand well how that precedence of her had to manifest itself.

It seemed to her that the most important – that's the riches which gave advantage to lord Benedict. Jenny set herself the task of acquiring riches, but first of all she wanted to punish her mother and Alyssa who didn't have the right to that luxury in which they were living now. Jenny even began to tremble with her hatred by imagining how Alyssa was bathing in riches – they had to belong only to the beauty Jenny and not to the fool Alyssa, didn't they?

"When did you receive some news from your sister?" Jenny heard Bonda's wheeze during the musical break in the wonderful hall of the restaurant where all of them pretended to be dining calmly, but in truth it was difficult and even dismal in everybody's soul, especially in Henri Dordier's one, who only today found out about his uncle's, the merry Martin's death.

Henri announced a desire to bury Martin, but Bonda snapped out angrily to him that he needed to take care of his sick uncle earlier and not to indulge in debauchery and amusement until the hospital itself would bury the mad tramp. Bonda hid the truth from Henri, and Jenny also asked the same. He only told him that Martin fell down unconscious in the street, that the keepers of the order took him to the hospital and that he, Bonda, found out about his death only through his agents with much difficulty. Now at the brightly lit table, among the well-dressed ladies, the handsome Henri could feel many looks of the fascinated women directed to him. His pale face of neat features, his slim figure and his height was hiding deceptively the terrible poverty of the youth's spirit. Usually he was greedy for money, luxury and success among women, he was searching himself and he liked choosing only those who could pour him over with presents. But today Henri as though didn't notice anything. His very beautiful grey eyes with black and thick eyelashes were looking attentively and even angrily. He was always trying to be a kind cavalier for Jenny, even to excite Armand's jealousy, but today he looked at Jenny angrily several times, who was dressed up in the striking violet dress. She was really very beautiful. Her hair was shining in all the hues of the copper and gold, her tender satin skin attracted one's look no less than her hair, but everything was disgusting for Henri today.

"Here's the final for you," he was always thinking about Martin who was kind to him many times. Martin was always drunk, he was always occupied with Bonda's affairs, but in the rare moments of his soberness or illness he was sad, he used to look at Henri sadly and tell him: "I also had a son. He had your age, but I've lost him." Unfortunately, those moments were short like a flash, Martin would start rocking with laughter and taunting again, and he was always shouting with intoxicated height: "When you have nothing, then nobody can take anything from you!" Now the sad Martin's face was always emerging before Henri. He would have given a lot in order to break away from this banal music, from the lit up hall, and to stroll for a while alone along the empty and dark streets.

"It is the end for Martin," Henri was thinking. "And what did Martin see? The slave labour for Bonda and Bracano. Did he really remain the beggar, and all the riches brought with his hands lie in Bonda's and Bracano's pockets, and after some time they would flow to this beautiful liar?" he rewarded Jenny with this great epithet once and for all after he made sure of her deception concerning Alyssa whom she depicted as a dumb-bell. When Henri saw Alyssa he was dazzled by her beauty and he couldn't forget her. He was ready for a great risk if only he could get Alyssa whom he saw as his future wife.

Jenny and Bonda who didn't doubt for at least a moment that he wouldn't see Alyssa as his wife and even as his relative, were instigating Henri's love by trying to reach for their own goals. While comparing Alyssa to half-naked Jenny, Henri was very dissatisfied with Jenny and Armand who were pretending to be a young pair of sweethearts in public. Some little note of doubling, some dissatisfaction

and reproach for himself was ringing Henri's soul always louder, it was calling for the Martin's image always more persistently.

"Alyssa and my mother are sitting in the lord Benedict's fortress, but that doesn't prevent them from writing to me," Jenny was lying impudently.

"So, you are absolutely certain that both of them are in London?" Bonda asked her again.

"Today I received a telegram from the lord Benedict's house," Jenny answered him intentionally louder than needed by wishing to attract Henri's attention.

He seemed to be pale for her, but actually he was listening attentively to the talk of his neighbours.

"And what did that telegram write to you?" Bonda asked her distrustfully.

"I will tell you about it tomorrow in the evening, as I've already had the honour to tell you," Jenny was laughing.

"It is strange, it is very strange," Bonda said to her anxiously after being silent for a while. "My agent states that he saw himself how today, at four o'clock your mother left the lord Benedict's house with her belongings, accompanied by a young lady and a gentleman.

"Well, perhaps she changed her mind and came back home," Jenny answered him with indifference by appearance by not showing with anything that the announcement moved her much.

"No, she didn't come back home. I was in the pastor's house myself. Everything there is shut up tightly from all sides."

"Apparently, my mother needed something, so she together with Alyssa and Sandra went to her house, then they came back again. Of course, your agent wasn't enough attentive and he didn't notice it," Jenny was glad to be able to sting Bonda.

But Bonda didn't even notice the attack and he told Henri.

"Now Martin is gone, I don't have anybody to rely upon. Tomorrow you'll have to observe your bride's house. I don't want to believe in any slanders, but I was told that lord Benedict was going to outsmart everybody and to marry Alyssa himself by taking her out of here. We cannot allow them to leave."

"While her fiancé is marking time by the villa, his fiancée will be spending her time with pleasure in the museum and café with me. Wouldn't it be better for him to call at the favourite Alyssa's café as if unintentionally and to accompany both of us to my room in the hotel by coach? Around three o'clock I and Alyssa will be in the café by the B. bridge."

"Why didn't you tell me anything about it?" Bonda wheezed.

"I already explained to you that I invited you for a consultation. You cannot organize a big activity by telling the entire world about it. I was hoping to whisper in Henri's ear about it before dinner, but he was always so gloomy that I postponed this news until coming back home, but everything turned differently."

When one wants to believe, one believes in the most incredible things, and when a beautiful woman is persuading one with such aplomb, then it is even easier to believe. Henri became cheerful, he forgot about Martin, and Jenny now seemed to him to be both pleasing and close. Bonda was irritated for

his illness, for Martin and for the entire row of his misfortunes which he was hiding diligently from his relatives, and although he didn't have any special reasons to believe in Jenny, anyway he gave a sigh of relief. He wanted to propose that he was going to go himself with Henri, that it was more reliable, but then he thought that the greatest desires came true unexpectedly, he only needed not to make any trouble.

He decided to give the most precious talisman, which Bracano told him to protect especially well and which was dedicated for an especially important goal, not to Jenny, but to Henri, but Jenny as though guessed his thoughts and told him.

"I must be especially armed for tomorrow's appointment. You told me about one little thing meant for Alyssa. I have to get it already today, so that I would get used to it and practice to fling it on her."

Bonda didn't want to give the treasure into Jenny's hands, to which Bracano attached such great importance. He was unable to accept the thought that sir Vomi had already destroyed one of the jewels with his power and at the same time he was afraid of ruining the whole affair that started so well with his stubbornness.

The whole company came back home in much better mood. Only before dispersing to their own rooms they decided to admire the wonderful reddish brilliant on a very thin golden chain, about which Bonda was telling them and which he brought from his room. While giving it to Jenny, he told her.

"Bracano himself was wearing this jewel for a long time," and he gave a disdainful smile when he saw that Jenny pressed it to her chest. "It doesn't suit you. Reddish and red tones don't suit for red-haired, but... perhaps, because of the mutual sympathy for Bracano this stone will be pleasant for you."

Bonda tried to hide his hellish expression in his unpleasant physiognomy by pretending that he had lost something and by bending to pick it up, but the sharp-sighted Jenny's look had time to notice the flash of his anger. Jenny decided to befool the cruel uncle before time, she squeezed the talisman strongly in her hand, as the guarantee of her strength and power for Bonda. As if by lifting her hand with the talisman accidentally before Bonda's face, she was stunned herself from the effect of her movement.

"Easy," Bonda wheezed with all his strength. "I told you that this thing possessed an exceptional power. Never hold this thing before a man's face. You can kill him and become disabled yourself."

"So that's how it is," Jenny uttered by lowering her hand down, while Bonda who sprang back began to recover and stopped suffocating, "you could have explained it to me earlier, and I wouldn't have caused such trouble to you. What other movements one cannot do, so that I wouldn't hurt Alyssa and only would make her obey?"

"It will be enough only to fling it on Alyssa's neck, and she will follow you like a little sheep, but if you meet some of the experienced lord Benedict's friends, then always hold the jewel in your hand raised high. You can wind the chain round your wrist several times like a bracelet, but by no means show this jewel if you see lord Benedict himself. Of course, this thing is no match for your string, but don't get in the fight against that conjurer."

"It is great that you explained everything to me. I will be careful."

Jenny was transported with delight. Although she was holding the jewel squeezed in her hand, but she felt how her strength, impudence and will was growing.

*"Karamba!"* Bonda uttered a curse. "Who could have thought that this talisman in your hands would be so menacing? I've got it for a long time already, but it didn't show any characteristics to me. Apparently, the friendship between you and Bracano will really spring up."

"It's enough, uncle," Jenny uttered and lifted her hand a little as though unintentionally. And again the effect of the reddish jewel surprised her. "I forbid you to mention Bracano's name at my presence, unless I allow you to do it."

She kept holding her hand before Bonda's eyes.

"I obey," all pale, trembling Bonda answered her. "Lower the stone as soon as possible, you will finish me off."

Very naively by appearance, but by triumphing in her soul that such power felt to her lot unexpectedly, Jenny lowered her hand, yawned and uttered indifferently.

"I'm tired, I want to go to sleep," she lifted her hand again, held it before each of the three men and added. "Uncle, go to sleep and don't show up to me until five o'clock in the evening. You Armand, will spend the night in the sitting-room and tomorrow at five o'clock present yourself as well, while you, Henri, wait for me by the café from three to five o'clock and sit at home before that time. If until five o'clock I don't show up in the café, then go home, that will mean that Alyssa is here already."

All three of them bowed to her in silence by accepting her commands, and Jenny went to her bedroom. She didn't have any experience and knowledge that she needed to strengthen her command by lifting the stone high over everyone's head to whom she commanded.

As soon as she left, all three men as though woke up. There were no limits for everybody's anger. Both youths attacked Bonda by cursing him and asking since when he went so crazy that he gave the jewel to Jenny's hands, which had such power for them and himself. Their cries and curses were so terrible that Jenny who already wanted to call the housemaid was frightened joking apart. It seemed to her that the men were consulting one another how to kill her. It even gave her the shudders with horror. Jenny seized the jewel into her hand, she felt the impudence and power to command again, she threw open the door which furious Armand was already hitting with his fists and put the jewel almost next to his eyes. Armand jumped back, staggered and uttered timidly.

"Don't be angry, Jenny. I leave. Till tomorrow."

Without saying a word she directed the talisman straight to Bonda's eyes, in whose hand she noticed a whip.

"Get out of here, villain," Jenny gave a frenzied shriek, "you are still going to beg for mercy down on your knees."

Bonda began to turn round as if he was being frizzled in the frying-pan, and he fell on his knees.

"And you, Henri, do you want the same?" Jenny asked him by lifting the jewel to his face.

"Tomorrow I will be at home, then I will be waiting for you in the coach," Henri answered her, and all three of them left by leaving the whip that fell out of the trembling Bonda's hand, which he couldn't even pick up.

Being left alone, Jenny threw some fire-wood to the fireside, took the whip from the carpet with pair of tongs and threw it into the flamed up fire with the greatest repugnance. She was looking at the

burning whip with the feeling of victory, she gave a laugh when its leather began to grow a little crisp and she went to bedroom by staying alone for the first time during her married life. Having taken her chic dress off, Jenny felt so exhausted and tired that she fell asleep instantly, as soon as she went to bed.

The night for Jenny flew past so quickly that she woke up and saw that it was eleven o'clock already, so she called the housemaid instantly and told her to bring the breakfast to her bed. By reflecting on her day, first of all Jenny asked her whether the dress-maker had already sent her dress. Having calmed down that the dress was sent, Jenny commanded the housemaid to hang it here, in the bedroom, and she was examining it while she was having breakfast. The dress seemed to her to be too modest, but having remembered how effectively Alyssa looked in her simple black dress, Jenny decided to put it on without fail.

The young woman devoted so much attention to herself, to the body massage, to the bath, she was trying her new hat on so carefully by matching it up to her hairstyle that she wasn't yet prepared at one o'clock. By being furious and cursing the impudent girl Alyssa as always that she didn't have anybody to help her, Jenny shortened her indulgence at the mirror and ordered to call the cab. However strange it was for Jenny she couldn't imagine sir Vomi's face in any way and she didn't know how to start the conversation.

While she was sitting in the cab, she decided to talk in the tone of a little spoilt girl, but on the halfway she changed her mind. Having remembered that she had to talk about her teenage sister who was taken from her by force, she decided to pretend to be sad and abandoned victim. Jenny wound her talisman round her hand and, while she was going through the gates of the villa, she pressed it firmly to her chest by calling all its witchcraft to help her. She remembered that she needed to avoid lord Benedict and, having entered the hall, she examined it quickly. Having seen that there wasn't anybody here, except the servant, she calmed down and told him that she wanted to see sir Vomi. The servant looked at the clock and told her.

"He's waiting for you for twenty minutes already. Sir Vomi will be occupied in other business in forty minutes."

With those words the servant opened the door to the adjacent room where sir Vomi was sitting at the table, while Ananda was standing by showing some work drawings to him.

"Senora Sedelani," the servant reported by letting Jenny into the room.

All of it affected Jenny in a very unpleasant way. The formality of her reception, the fact that her name was imparted to the servant, the solidity and accuracy of all of it and that sir Vomi wasn't alone, - everything irritated Jenny. Although she was pressing the talisman to herself, but she was embarrassed and she felt lack of self-confidence. Besides, she recognized this room that was especially unpleasant for her, that study of lord Benedict in which her feet stuck to the floor so strongly from the host's look back then that she couldn't make a move.

Four eyes fixed their gaze on embarrassed Jenny, and even her hands grew cold. All of a sudden she comprehended the entire absurdity of her behaviour, it seemed to her that these two men read her most secret thoughts which she had disguised so perfectly.

"Till three o'clock, Ananda," sir Vomi said to his friend, and he, having bowed to him and looked at Jenny again with compassion, as it seemed to her, left the room.

"Please, forgive me for being late," Jenny uttered by taking a seat on the armchair by the table offered to her, although it hadn't even occurred to her to start the conversation with apology.

"I was thinking exactly like this that the toilet was always in the first place for a lady."

And it seemed to Jenny again that he guessed her thoughts, but she controlled herself, gave a smile, and as though unintentionally, she lifted her hand as high as the jewel began to shine before sir Vomi's eyes. She didn't even have time to finish this movement when sir Vomi's face changed. A wave of wrath rolled over this wonderful face which was still so kind and very calm a moment ago. Sir Vomi's eyes flashed, he lifted his hand a little, and Jenny's hand fell down on her knees like paralysed.

Jenny didn't connect these movements of his and her hands. She decided that she still didn't know the jewel's characteristics very well, and that the naïve man had already bitten. Jenny adjusted her bracelet calmly and began without ceremony.

"I've already written to you about what kind of help I expected from you. I need to take my sister Alyssa and my mother from here. Both of them write to me that they suffer here and they ask me to take them from this house where they are living in captivity."

A derision slipped through sir Vomi's face, while the little sparks of humour began to shine in his eyes. Jenny elucidated this smile of her cavalier in her own way and she continued without letting him utter a word.

"I know very well that you were going to help me. I cannot remember what exactly you were telling me in that hour of horror in the court's office. To tell you the truth I didn't understand anything back then, too, but my intuition told me that you would help me. I want to see Alyssa immediately," Jenny finished by lifting the jewel up to the level of sir Vomi's face again.

This time the effect was the most unexpected. Sir Vomi only moved his finger lightly, while Jenny's hand hit her own head like a thrown ball and knocked her hat down.

Stunned, confused and furious Jenny was prepared to jump and hurl her hat at sir Vomi, which she matched to her hairstyle with such difficulty at home, but her hands were lying on her knees like some sticks. She all got stiff with surprise by not being able to utter a single word.

"Damn stone," Jenny thought for a while. "Bonda must have known what kind of tricks it was performing and he didn't tell me anything intentionally. Well, I'll show him as soon as I come back home."

Sir Vomi was looking at Jenny's face silently, which was deformed by her anger.

"It is a pity that there's no mirror before you in this room. You could remember that you couldn't become so furious by keeping an appointment. That's the first thing. Second: who told you that Alyssa and your mother were here? None of them is living here at the moment."

"What do you mean? What kind of trick has your host performed again?" Jenny gave a shout without controlling herself completely.

However she was trying to lift her hand and to direct the jewel to sir Vomi's eyes again for the third time she couldn't do anything, although she broke into a sweat from her efforts.

"I told you not to move," sir Vomi told her. "I did it by protecting you from your own mad actions, unfortunate woman. If you dared to direct this worthless weapon to me for the third time, which you were given as a talisman that could enslave everybody, then you would fall down dead, because I would have to touch you. And you, with this little toy round your hand, would be unable to hold out the touch of great and pure power. You wrongfully abuse that who gave this jewel to you. It is omnipotent against him – the servant of evil. It would be helpless against your sister, because her purity is irreproachable. She wouldn't feel its power, but it wouldn't harm you, too. I repeat that your meeting with

me will end with your death if you raise your jewel before me. And not only before me, but also before everybody who is living in this house. Remember it well. Now let's get down to business. You know yourself in what lie and constant falsehood you are living now. Here are both of your letters. Take them. Perhaps when you read them sometime, you will find enough intelligence and tact to act differently. Your sister is sailing in the ocean together with lord Benedict's family for the second day already, while your mother is living in the outskirts of London, because that is needed for her health. You know yourself better than everybody else in what right mind the pastor was, you know his kindness well, and what his honour was – that you will remember during your entire life. You told me that you didn't understand my words in the office. Poor Jenny! It is a pity that now I cannot do anything for you – neither to help nor to protect you. If you had brought at least a drop of love, at least a drop of kindness in your heart with you when you entered here, then I could have struck a flame in it, but you've come with malicious, traitorous intentions. You desired to turn me into your slave and servant, like your Bonda. By taking Bracano's stone and commanding those who depend on him you've become his slave yourself. Soon your life will be wonderful by appearance, but... The wound of your heart is much deeper than the whole external wellbeing. Go home. Defend yourself with your jewel against Bonda and his servants, so that you wouldn't die from their hands. But anyway, remember that every tamer of lions is living with wild beasts that hate him and that are waiting for a moment to tear him to pieces. Until you cannot find love for your sister and your mother in your heart, until instead of abusing them you start begging them to save you – don't utter my name in vain. Don't write to me, there will be no use of it. Only when everybody fulfils his first task on the earth – love for man – is able to find the path to our place without any obstacles. The lesson of your life – to redeem your treason before your sister. However hysterically you would cry that you love your sister, however you would try to convince somebody of it, I will always see your real love and your hypocrisy. Even when it seems to you that you love Alyssa already, also then you will think about yourself and not about her. I will see hypocrisy in your heart and not love until you understand your duty obediently and tell yourself: "I have to be next to my sister whatever would happen, whatever would menace for me or her." Only then you will really forget about yourself. Then your love won't arise only for the reasons of practical use or earthly fear anymore. And you will open the narrow path to the great one for yourself, to that path where people appreciate freedom not as dependence or independence on the conditionalities of the Earth, but as the widest inner liberation from visible authority of values. Then your own creation of spirit will awaken. Wherever I would be, in what horror and despair you would be yourself, I will hear you. And my help will come... Only don't think in a superstitious way that assistance of the Great Life – that's an accidental fortunate lottery; any help needs to be deserved, and you need to be worthy of it. If you value only the earthly wealth, money, riches, jewels and position in the society that is connected with them, and if the matters of spirit is a needless, gratis supplement for you, then your efforts to find the real knowledge which is characteristic only to higher life will always end in disappointment for you. Everything what you've chosen yourself and what you would have to encounter only because you've tied yourself together with it by taking this Bracano's stone is impossible to name during such short time. I can tell you only one thing: don't press this jewel so firmly to yourself. It wasn't meant for you, but now you wouldn't be able to take it off anymore. If I wanted to liberate you from it, then it would lose any of its powers. Then you would stay defenceless against your terrible accomplices. Only it will be able to protect you from their anger and even from their cruel torments. Don't be afraid of their attempts to take the stone off you. They won't be able to do it. In order for me to protect you from Bracano, I put an interdiction on your terrible bracelet, and nobody, except myself and my messenger, will be able to take it off. As I've already told you, this will happen only when you recover your sight spiritually. Go. An opportunity was given to you to find the path of your salvation, but now you are lost in such falsehood and hypocrisy, in such darkness and evil that you cannot see anything, except the external forms."



"You told me," Jenny was rattling in a patter by looking at sir Vomi angrily as though by being afraid of forgetting something, "that the external luxury, the dreams about riches – that it were only the mean wants of evil. Let me ask you: then why aren't you living in a hut, in mud, but you accept me in the room which alone is probably worth several hundred pounds? Why all of your friends are rich and not beggars?"

"Now you won't understand this, even if I explained those questions to you for many hours. You can live among the most brilliant things and not even notice them; and you can, after giving your riches out purposefully, live in the poorest conditions of life, but still think only about luxury which you've lost or never had. I repeat again: I've done everything for you what I could do, while all your questions and words – that's only the result of your poison and anger. Keep them to yourself. My last advice for you: don't go to Bracano's now. He's still strong enough in order to make you suffer, but he won't recover his previous strength and he will die after some time. If you want to save yourself and your husband from the villain's anger, go to Rome where your husband possesses a small house. Both of you will be able to start working there, while with help of your bracelet you can find lots of talented servants for yourself. You can acquire both the riches and luxury with their help, while Bracano's misdeeds won't touch you. He won't be able to reach you in Rome, too."

Jenny was all trembling with fury. Her anger kept growing, because she couldn't tear the bracelet off in any way and directed the stone to the very sir Vomi's eyes – her fingers could only hardly touch the thin chain. Jenny was unable to utter a word.

"Jenny, listen to my advice and go to Rome. I will do everything for my part in order to protect and help you. If you go to Bracano's, then blame yourself."

Sir Vomi stood up and went to the door. He opened it, bowed to Jenny and added silently.

"Talk Bonda out of his thought to get into this house. If he doesn't listen to this advice of mine – you'll leave London without Bonda, and it'll be even worse because of it. Then the entire Bracano's anger will pour on you alone..."

Jenny left the room in silence. By boiling with anger, by suffering from her helplessness and hatred, she got into the cab completely enraged and the further she was going the angrier her thoughts were.

Having driven up to the hotel, she had already decided: first, she will send Bonda himself immediately to the lord Benedict's villa for those jewels which Martin failed to bring from there; second, as soon as Bonda brings those things for which Bracano sent him to London, they will go to Bracano's and join him.