

# The Bet (short story)

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**The Bet** is an [1889](#) short story by [Anton Chekhov](#) about a banker and a young man who make a bet with each other based on capital punishment and whether the death penalty is better or worse than life in prison. An ironic twist responds to this exploration of the value of a human life with an unexpected result. The terms of the wager state that if the lawyer can live in solitary confinement for 15 years, he will be given 2 million rubles.

The lawyer spends his time in confinement reading books. In the meantime, the banker's fortune declines and he realizes that he will be unable to pay off the bet. The banker resolves the day before the bet is to be up to kill the lawyer so as to not owe him the money. However, the banker finds when he comes to the man a note written by the man. The note declares that in his time in confinement the lawyer has learned to despise material goods for the fleeting things they are. Therefore, to demonstrate his contempt, he intends to leave confinement five minutes prior to when the bet would be up, thus losing the bet and unwittingly saving his own life.

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The Bet is a short story written by Anton Chekhov, who writes based on realistic characters and situations. I have analyze this story to prove to the reader who is the winner of The Bet. This short story portrays a situation in which the banker and lawyer wagers a bet based on the idea of the death penalty and life imprisonment. The banker puts on the line two million dollars compared to the lawyer's life worth of fifteen years. For the next fifteen years the lawyer was placed in the banker's backyard without the knowledge of the outside world. It was clear that any attempt on the lawyer's part to break the conditions will result in the lawyer's loss of the bet. Fifteen years later, the banker is near bankruptcy from gambling on the stock market. If he pays the lawyer for winning the bet, he will be ruined. His only escape from his tragedy would be to kill the lawyer. When the banker opens the door into the cell, he discovers the lawyer now looking like a skeleton. He discovers a letter and reads it, but soon realizes the lawyer plans to lose. Five hours before the lawyer's time is complete, he runs away and terminates his eligibility to win the bet. From these events in the story, I have concluded that it was the banker who won the bet and the argument of whether life imprisonment is better than death.

The bet has been argued to be many different aspects. It was stated in the story, "I'll bet you two millions you wouldn't stay in solitary confinement for five years" (1). Taking this idea as the bet, it was shown at the end of the story that the lawyer lost the bet. The rule was clearly stated, "The slightest attempt on his part to break the conditions, if only two minuets before the end, released the banker from the obligation to pay him two millions" (2). It was apparent that the rules were established, but violated. The lawyer stated, "I shall go out from here fire minutes before the time fixed, and so break the compact...Next morning...they had seen the man who lived in the lodge climb out of the window into the garden, go to the gate, and disappear" (5). It is clear that the lawyer's action was to forfeit the bet by leaving and therefore the banker winning the bet.

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"The Bet" is a short story that explores a moral theme regarding the value of human life. However, the story is constructed with an important ironic twist that brings the reader back to the original

context of the bet (if the lawyer could endure solitary confinement for fifteen years), and presents an unexpected result. One can ultimately see that Anton Chekhov presents the readers with two different paths in the story. One of them is the banker, who refuses to face his own morality and the other...

Approximate word count: 596

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## **the Lottery ticket**

Paper Summary:

This paper discusses how Anton Chekhov demonstrates that the mere thought of money can severely impact a personal relationship in his short story, "The Lottery Ticket." An older couple with a family holds what could be a winning lottery ticket, but resists checking the numbers while they daydream about what they might do with the money. It examines how, at first, their reaction to the possibility of wealth is joyful; but rather than share their dreams and communicate their wishes, it looks at how Ivan Dmitritch and his wife, Masha, recede into their own worlds. It attempts to show how money definitely does not buy love and how, in fact, it has the potential to destroy it.

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### The Lottery Ticket's Hidden Meaning

#### The Lottery Ticket's Hidden Meaning

In the short story "The Lottery Ticket" by Anton Chekhov, a couple which thinks they may have won the lottery fantasize about how to spend the winnings. Chekhov's portrayal of the couple and the depiction of the setting dramatize the theme that some believe that those that find joy in life are lucky, as if they were winners of the state lottery, not masters of their own destiny. Chekhov demonstrates how paralyzing depending on good fortune can be as opposed to striving for growth, happiness, and satisfaction to improve one's lot in life.

Through the characterization of the main character, Ivan, Chekhov sets the tone as he identifies Ivan as a "middle-class man who lived with his family on an income of twelve hundred a year and was very well satisfied with his lot" (1). Chekhov proceeds to illustrate how even the possibility of a life transformation can be euphoric demonstrating the irony of how people seemingly content with their lives are actually yearning for a more rewarding life. The anticipation of their lives changing brings enthusiasm to their otherwise predictable and dull life. As Ivan and his wife refrain from seeking the number of the ticket, they share a thrill

ling adventure filled with heart-thumping excitement as they "began laughing and staring at one another in silence" (Chekhov 2). For a brief moment, they share something new, stimulating, and different. This expectation alone is a source of happiness. Though the outcome is not likely, they delight in the mental images of how winning seventy five thousand dollars could transform their lives. Chekhov is demonstrating how the couple believes they are not empowered to initiate such a change through their own achievements. Then as though Ivan's subconscious forces him to see through the illusion that he and his wife have failed to achieve oneness he states, "the ticket is yours" (Chekhov 2).

Many features of the setting in the Ivan's fantasy suggest wealth will bring a new start for Ivan with fresh vegetables from the earth. A life of leisure with long walks, lying around on the sofa reading magazines. Chekhov demonstrates through Ivan's reference to his children how often people have

regrets about their past and if only the circumstances were different their lives would be fulfilled. The reality is that the summer that follows is dark and gloomy with nowhere to go

Some topics in this essay:

**THE LADY WITH THE DOG AND OTHER  
STORIES**

**By**

**Anton Chekhov**

**Translated by Constance Garnett**

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## THE LADY WITH THE DOG

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IT was said that a new person had appeared on the sea-front: a lady with a little dog. Dmitri Dmitritch Gurov, who had by then been a fortnight at Yalta, and so was fairly at home there, had begun to take an interest in new arrivals. Sitting in Verney's pavilion, he saw, walking on the sea-front, a fair-haired young lady of medium height, wearing a *béret*; a white Pomeranian dog was running behind her.

And afterwards he met her in the public gardens and in the square several times a day. She was walking alone, always wearing the same *béret*, and always with the same white dog; no one knew who she was, and every one called her simply "the lady with the dog."

"If she is here alone without a husband or friends, it wouldn't be amiss to make her acquaintance," Gurov reflected.

He was under forty, but he had a daughter already twelve years old, and two sons at school. He had been married young, when he was a student in his second year, and by now his wife seemed half as old again as he. She was a tall, erect woman with dark eyebrows, staid and dignified, and, as she said of herself, intellectual. She read a great deal, used phonetic spelling, called her husband, not Dmitri, but Dimitri, and he secretly considered her unintelligent, narrow, inelegant, was afraid of her, and did not like to be at home. He had begun being unfaithful to her long ago--had been unfaithful to her often, and, probably on that account, almost always spoke ill of women, and when they were talked about in his presence, used to call them "the lower race."

It seemed to him that he had been so schooled by bitter experience that he might call them what he liked, and yet he could not get on for two days together without "the lower race." In the society of men he was bored and not himself, with them he was cold and uncommunicative; but when he was in the company of women he felt free, and knew what to say to them and how to behave; and he was at ease with them even when he was silent. In his appearance, in his character, in his whole nature, there was something attractive and elusive which allured women and disposed them in his favour; he knew that, and some force seemed to draw him, too, to them.

Experience often repeated, truly bitter experience, had taught him long ago that with decent people, especially Moscow people--always slow to move and irresolute--every intimacy, which at first so agreeably diversifies life and appears a light and charming adventure, inevitably grows into a regular problem of extreme intricacy, and in the long run the situation becomes unbearable. But at every fresh meeting with an interesting woman this experience seemed to slip out of his memory, and he was eager for life, and everything seemed simple and amusing.

One evening he was dining in the gardens, and the lady in the *béret* came up slowly to take the next table. Her expression, her gait, her dress, and the way she did her hair told him that she was a lady, that she was married, that she was in Yalta for the first time and alone, and that she was dull there. . . . The stories told of the immorality in such places as Yalta are to a great extent untrue; he despised them, and knew that such stories were for the most part made up by persons who would themselves have been glad to sin if they had been able; but when the lady sat down at the next table three paces from him, he remembered these tales of easy conquests, of trips to the mountains, and the tempting thought of a swift, fleeting love affair, a romance with an unknown woman, whose name he did not know, suddenly took possession of him.

He beckoned coaxingly to the Pomeranian, and when the dog came up to him he shook his finger at it. The Pomeranian growled: Gurov shook his finger at it again.

The lady looked at him and at once dropped her eyes.

"He doesn't bite," she said, and blushed.

"May I give him a bone?" he asked; and when she nodded he asked courteously, "Have you been long in Yalta?"

"Five days."

"And I have already dragged out a fortnight here."

There was a brief silence.

"Time goes fast, and yet it is so dull here!" she said, not looking at him.

"That's only the fashion to say it is dull here. A provincial will live in Belyov or Zhidra and not be dull, and when he comes here it's 'Oh, the dulness! Oh, the dust!' One would think he came from Grenada."

She laughed. Then both continued eating in silence, like strangers, but after dinner they walked side by side; and there sprang up between them the light jesting conversation of people who are free and satisfied, to whom it does not matter where they go or what they talk about. They walked and talked of the strange light on the sea: the water was of a soft warm lilac hue, and there was a golden streak from the moon upon it. They talked of how sultry it was after a hot day. Gurov told her that he came from Moscow, that he had taken his degree in Arts, but had a post in a bank; that he had trained as an opera-singer, but had given it up, that he owned two houses in Moscow. . . . And from her he learnt that she had grown up in Petersburg, but had lived in S---- since her marriage two years before, that she was staying another month in Yalta, and that her husband, who needed a holiday too, might perhaps come and fetch her. She was not sure whether her husband

had a post in a Crown Department or under the Provincial Council--and was amused by her own ignorance. And Gurov learnt, too, that she was called Anna Sergeyevna.

Afterwards he thought about her in his room at the hotel--thought she would certainly meet him next day; it would be sure to happen. As he got into bed he thought how lately she had been a girl at school, doing lessons like his own daughter; he recalled the diffidence, the angularity, that was still manifest in her laugh and her manner of talking with a stranger. This must have been the first time in her life she had been alone in surroundings in which she was followed, looked at, and spoken to merely from a secret motive which she could hardly fail to guess. He recalled her slender, delicate neck, her lovely grey eyes.

"There's something pathetic about her, anyway," he thought, and fell asleep.

## II

A week had passed since they had made acquaintance. It was a holiday. It was sultry indoors, while in the street the wind whirled the dust round and round, and blew people's hats off. It was a thirsty day, and Gurov often went into the pavilion, and pressed Anna Sergeyevna to have syrup and water or an ice. One did not know what to do with oneself.

In the evening when the wind had dropped a little, they went out on the groyne to see the steamer come in. There were a great many people walking about the harbour; they had gathered to welcome some one, bringing bouquets. And two peculiarities of a well-dressed Yalta crowd were very conspicuous: the elderly ladies were dressed like young ones, and there were great numbers of generals.

Owing to the roughness of the sea, the steamer arrived late, after the sun had set, and it was a long time turning about before it reached the groyne. Anna Sergeyevna looked through her lorgnette at the steamer and the passengers as though looking for acquaintances, and when she turned to Gurov her eyes were shining. She talked a great deal and asked disconnected questions, forgetting next moment what she had asked; then she dropped her lorgnette in the crush.

The festive crowd began to disperse; it was too dark to see people's faces. The wind had completely dropped, but Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna still stood as though waiting to see some one else come from the steamer. Anna Sergeyevna was silent now, and sniffed the flowers without looking at Gurov.

"The weather is better this evening," he said. "Where shall we go now? Shall we drive somewhere?"

She made no answer.

Then he looked at her intently, and all at once put his arm round her and kissed her on the lips, and breathed in the moisture and the fragrance of the flowers; and he immediately looked round him, anxiously wondering whether any one had seen them.

"Let us go to your hotel," he said softly. And both walked quickly.

The room was close and smelt of the scent she had bought at the Japanese shop. Gurov looked at her and thought: "What different people one meets in the world!" From the past he preserved memories of careless, good-natured women, who loved cheerfully and were grateful to him for the happiness he gave them, however brief it might be; and of women like his wife who loved without any genuine feeling, with superfluous phrases, affectedly, hysterically, with an expression that suggested that it was not love nor passion, but something more significant; and of two or three others, very beautiful, cold women, on whose faces he had caught a glimpse of a rapacious expression--an obstinate desire to snatch from life more than it could give, and these were capricious, unreflecting,

domineering, unintelligent women not in their first youth, and when Gurov grew cold to them their beauty excited his hatred, and the lace on their linen seemed to him like scales.

But in this case there was still the diffidence, the angularity of inexperienced youth, an awkward feeling; and there was a sense of consternation as though some one had suddenly knocked at the door. The attitude of Anna Sergeyevna--"the lady with the dog"--to what had happened was somehow peculiar, very grave, as though it were her fall--so it seemed, and it was strange and inappropriate. Her face dropped and faded, and on both sides of it her long hair hung down mournfully; she mused in a dejected attitude like "the woman who was a sinner" in an old-fashioned picture.

"It's wrong," she said. "You will be the first to despise me now."

There was a water-melon on the table. Gurov cut himself a slice and began eating it without haste. There followed at least half an hour of silence.

Anna Sergeyevna was touching; there was about her the purity of a good, simple woman who had seen little of life. The solitary candle burning on the table threw a faint light on her face, yet it was clear that she was very unhappy.

"How could I despise you?" asked Gurov. "You don't know what you are saying."

"God forgive me," she said, and her eyes filled with tears. "It's awful."

"You seem to feel you need to be forgiven."

"Forgiven? No. I am a bad, low woman; I despise myself and don't attempt to justify myself. It's not my husband but myself I have deceived. And not only just now; I have been deceiving myself for a long time. My husband may be a good, honest man, but he is a flunkey! I don't know what he does there, what his work is, but I know he is a flunkey! I was twenty when I was married to him. I have been tormented by curiosity; I wanted something better. 'There must be a different sort of life,' I said to myself. I wanted to live! To live, to live! . . . I was fired by curiosity . . . you don't understand it, but, I swear to God, I could not control myself; something happened to me: I could not be restrained. I told my husband I was ill, and came here. . . . And here I have been walking about as though I were dazed, like a mad creature; . . . and now I have become a vulgar, contemptible woman whom any one may despise."

Gurov felt bored already, listening to her. He was irritated by the naïve tone, by this remorse, so unexpected and inopportune; but for the tears in her eyes, he might have thought she was jesting or playing a part.

"I don't understand," he said softly. "What is it you want?"

She hid her face on his breast and pressed close to him.

"Believe me, believe me, I beseech you . . ." she said. "I love a pure, honest life, and sin is loathsome to me. I don't know what I am doing. Simple people say: 'The Evil One has beguiled me.' And I may say of myself now that the Evil One has beguiled me."

"Hush, hush! . . ." he muttered.

He looked at her fixed, scared eyes, kissed her, talked softly and affectionately, and by degrees she was comforted, and her gaiety returned; they both began laughing.

Afterwards when they went out there was not a soul on the sea-front. The town with its cypresses had quite a deathlike air, but the sea still broke noisily on the shore; a single barge was rocking on the waves, and a lantern was blinking sleepily on it.

They found a cab and drove to Oreanda.

"I found out your surname in the hall just now: it was written on the board--Von Diderits," said Gurov. "Is your husband a German?"

"No; I believe his grandfather was a German, but he is an Orthodox Russian himself."

At Oreanda they sat on a seat not far from the church, looked down at the sea, and were silent. Yalta was hardly visible through the morning mist; white clouds stood motionless on the mountain-tops. The leaves did not stir on the trees, grasshoppers chirruped, and the monotonous hollow sound of the sea rising up from below, spoke of the peace, of the eternal sleep awaiting us. So it must have sounded when there was no Yalta, no Oreanda here; so it sounds now, and it will sound as indifferently and monotonously when we are all no more. And in this constancy, in this complete indifference to the life and death of each of us, there lies hid, perhaps, a pledge of our eternal salvation, of the unceasing movement of life upon earth, of unceasing progress towards perfection. Sitting beside a young woman who in the dawn seemed so lovely, soothed and spellbound in these magical surroundings--the sea, mountains, clouds, the open sky--Gurov thought how in reality everything is beautiful in this world when one reflects: everything except what we think or do ourselves when we forget our human dignity and the higher aims of our existence.

A man walked up to them--probably a keeper--looked at them and walked away. And this detail seemed mysterious and beautiful, too. They saw a steamer come from Theodosia, with its lights out in the glow of dawn.

"There is dew on the grass," said Anna Sergeyevna, after a silence.

"Yes. It's time to go home."

They went back to the town.

Then they met every day at twelve o'clock on the sea-front, lunched and dined together, went for walks, admired the sea. She complained that she slept badly, that her heart throbbed violently; asked the same questions, troubled now by jealousy and now by the fear that he did not respect her sufficiently. And often in the square or gardens, when there was no one near them, he suddenly drew her to him and kissed her passionately. Complete idleness, these kisses in broad daylight while he looked round in dread of some one's seeing them, the heat, the smell of the sea, and the continual passing to and fro before him of idle, well-dressed, well-fed people, made a new man of him; he told Anna Sergeyevna how beautiful she was, how fascinating. He was impatiently passionate, he would not move a step away from her, while she was often pensive and continually urged him to confess that he did not respect her, did not love her in the least, and thought of her as nothing but a common woman. Rather late almost every evening they drove somewhere out of town, to Oreanda or to the waterfall; and the expedition was always a success, the scenery invariably impressed them as grand and beautiful.

They were expecting her husband to come, but a letter came from him, saying that there was something wrong with his eyes, and he entreated his wife to come home as quickly as possible. Anna Sergeyevna made haste to go.

"It's a good thing I am going away," she said to Gurov. "It's the finger of destiny!"

She went by coach and he went with her. They were driving the whole day. When she had got into a compartment of the express, and when the second bell had rung, she said:

"Let me look at you once more . . . look at you once again. That's right."

She did not shed tears, but was so sad that she seemed ill, and her face was quivering.

"I shall remember you . . . think of you," she said. "God be with you; be happy. Don't remember evil against me. We are parting forever --it must be so, for we ought never to have met. Well, God be with you."

The train moved off rapidly, its lights soon vanished from sight, and a minute later there was no sound of it, as though everything had conspired together to end as quickly as possible that sweet delirium, that madness. Left alone on the platform, and gazing into the dark distance, Gurov listened to the chirrup of the grasshoppers and the hum of the telegraph wires, feeling as though he had only just waked up. And he thought, musing, that there had been another episode or adventure in his life, and it, too, was at an end, and nothing was left of it but a memory. . . . He was moved, sad, and conscious of a slight remorse. This young woman whom he would never meet again had not been happy with him; he was genuinely warm and affectionate with her, but yet in his manner, his tone, and his caresses there had been a shade of light irony, the coarse condescension of a happy man who was, besides, almost twice her age. All the time she had called him kind, exceptional, lofty; obviously he had seemed to her different from what he really was, so he had unintentionally deceived her. . . .

Here at the station was already a scent of autumn; it was a cold evening.

"It's time for me to go north," thought Gurov as he left the platform. "High time!"

### III

At home in Moscow everything was in its winter routine; the stoves were heated, and in the morning it was still dark when the children were having breakfast and getting ready for school, and the nurse would light the lamp for a short time. The frosts had begun already. When the first snow has fallen, on the first day of sledge-driving it is pleasant to see the white earth, the white roofs, to draw soft, delicious breath, and the season brings back the days of one's youth. The old limes and birches, white with hoar-frost, have a good-natured expression; they are nearer to one's heart than cypresses and palms, and near them one doesn't want to be thinking of the sea and the mountains.

Gurov was Moscow born; he arrived in Moscow on a fine frosty day, and when he put on his fur coat and warm gloves, and walked along Petrovka, and when on Saturday evening he heard the ringing of the bells, his recent trip and the places he had seen lost all charm for him. Little by little he became absorbed in Moscow life, greedily read three newspapers a day, and declared he did not read the Moscow papers on principle! He already felt a longing to go to restaurants, clubs, dinner-parties, anniversary celebrations, and he felt flattered at entertaining distinguished lawyers and artists, and at playing cards with a professor at the doctors' club. He could already eat a whole plateful of salt fish and cabbage.

In another month, he fancied, the image of Anna Sergeyevna would be shrouded in a mist in his memory, and only from time to time would visit him in his dreams with a touching smile as others did. But more than a month passed, real winter had come, and everything was still clear in his memory as though he had parted with Anna Sergeyevna only the day before. And his memories glowed more and more vividly. When in the evening stillness he heard from his study the voices of his children, preparing their lessons, or when he listened to a song or the organ at the restaurant, or the storm howled in the chimney, suddenly everything would rise up in his memory: what had happened on the groyne, and the early morning with the mist on the mountains, and the steamer coming from Theodosia, and the kisses. He would pace a long time about his room, remembering it all and smiling; then his memories passed into dreams, and in his fancy the past was mingled with what was to come. Anna Sergeyevna did not visit him in dreams, but followed him about everywhere like a shadow and haunted him. When he shut his eyes he saw her as though she were living before him, and she seemed to him lovelier, younger, tenderer than she was; and he imagined himself finer than he had been in Yalta. In the evenings she peeped out at him from the bookcase, from the fireplace, from the corner--he heard her breathing, the caressing rustle of her dress. In the street he watched the women, looking for some one like her.

He was tormented by an intense desire to confide his memories to some one. But in his home it was impossible to talk of his love, and he had no one outside; he could not talk to his tenants nor to any one at the bank. And what had he to talk of? Had he been in love, then? Had there been anything beautiful, poetical, or edifying or simply interesting in his relations with Anna Sergeyevna? And there was nothing for him but to talk vaguely of

love, of woman, and no one guessed what it meant; only his wife twitched her black eyebrows, and said:

"The part of a lady-killer does not suit you at all, Dimitri."

One evening, coming out of the doctors' club with an official with whom he had been playing cards, he could not resist saying:

"If only you knew what a fascinating woman I made the acquaintance of in Yalta!"

The official got into his sledge and was driving away, but turned suddenly and shouted:

"Dmitri Dmitritch!"

"What?"

"You were right this evening: the sturgeon was a bit too strong!"

These words, so ordinary, for some reason moved Gurov to indignation, and struck him as degrading and unclean. What savage manners, what people! What senseless nights, what uninteresting, uneventful days! The rage for card-playing, the gluttony, the drunkenness, the continual talk always about the same thing. Useless pursuits and conversations always about the same things absorb the better part of one's time, the better part of one's strength, and in the end there is left a life grovelling and curtailed, worthless and trivial, and there is no escaping or getting away from it--just as though one were in a madhouse or a prison.

Gurov did not sleep all night, and was filled with indignation. And he had a headache all next day. And the next night he slept badly; he sat up in bed, thinking, or paced up and down his room. He was sick of his children, sick of the bank; he had no desire to go anywhere or to talk of anything.

In the holidays in December he prepared for a journey, and told his wife he was going to Petersburg to do something in the interests of a young friend--and he set off for S----. What for? He did not very well know himself. He wanted to see Anna Sergeyevna and to talk with her--to arrange a meeting, if possible.

He reached S---- in the morning, and took the best room at the hotel, in which the floor was covered with grey army cloth, and on the table was an inkstand, grey with dust and adorned with a figure on horseback, with its hat in its hand and its head broken off. The hotel porter gave him the necessary information; Von Diderits lived in a house of his own in Old Gontcharny Street--it was not far from the hotel: he was rich and lived in good style, and had his own horses; every one in the town knew him. The porter pronounced the name "Dridirits."

Gurov went without haste to Old Gontcharny Street and found the house. Just opposite the house stretched a long grey fence adorned with nails.

"One would run away from a fence like that," thought Gurov, looking from the fence to the windows of the house and back again.

He considered: to-day was a holiday, and the husband would probably be at home. And in any case it would be tactless to go into the house and upset her. If he were to send her a note it might fall into her husband's hands, and then it might ruin everything. The best thing was to trust to chance. And he kept walking up and down the street by the fence, waiting for the chance. He saw a beggar go in at the gate and dogs fly at him; then an hour later he heard a piano, and the sounds were faint and indistinct. Probably it was Anna Sergeyevna playing. The front door suddenly opened, and an old woman came out, followed by the familiar white Pomeranian. Gurov was on the point of calling to the dog, but his heart began beating violently, and in his excitement he could not remember the dog's name.

He walked up and down, and loathed the grey fence more and more, and by now he thought irritably that Anna Sergeyevna had forgotten him, and was perhaps already amusing herself with some one else, and that that was very natural in a young woman who had nothing to look at from morning till night but that confounded fence. He went back to his hotel room and sat for a long while on the sofa, not knowing what to do, then he had dinner and a long nap.

"How stupid and worrying it is!" he thought when he woke and looked at the dark windows: it was already evening. "Here I've had a good sleep for some reason. What shall I do in the night?"

He sat on the bed, which was covered by a cheap grey blanket, such as one sees in hospitals, and he taunted himself in his vexation:

"So much for the lady with the dog . . . so much for the adventure . . . You're in a nice fix. . . ."

That morning at the station a poster in large letters had caught his eye. "The Geisha" was to be performed for the first time. He thought of this and went to the theatre.

"It's quite possible she may go to the first performance," he thought.

The theatre was full. As in all provincial theatres, there was a fog above the chandelier, the gallery was noisy and restless; in the front row the local dandies were standing up before the beginning of the performance, with their hands behind them; in the Governor's box the Governor's daughter, wearing a boa, was sitting in the front seat, while the Governor himself lurked modestly behind the curtain with only his hands visible; the orchestra was a long time tuning up; the stage curtain swayed. All the time the audience were coming in and taking their seats Gurov looked at them eagerly.

Anna Sergeyevna, too, came in. She sat down in the third row, and when Gurov looked at her his heart contracted, and he understood clearly that for him there was in the whole world no creature so near, so precious, and so important to him; she, this little woman, in no way remarkable, lost in a provincial crowd, with a vulgar lorgnette in her hand, filled his whole life now, was his sorrow and his joy, the one happiness that he now desired for himself, and to the sounds of the inferior orchestra, of the wretched provincial violins, he thought how lovely she was. He thought and dreamed.

A young man with small side-whiskers, tall and stooping, came in with Anna Sergeyevna and sat down beside her; he bent his head at every step and seemed to be continually bowing. Most likely this was the husband whom at Yalta, in a rush of bitter feeling, she had called a flunkey. And there really was in his long figure, his side-whiskers, and the small bald patch on his head, something of the flunkey's obsequiousness; his smile was sugary, and in his buttonhole there was some badge of distinction like the number on a waiter.

During the first interval the husband went away to smoke; she remained alone in her stall. Gurov, who was sitting in the stalls, too, went up to her and said in a trembling voice, with a forced smile:

"Good-evening."

She glanced at him and turned pale, then glanced again with horror, unable to believe her eyes, and tightly gripped the fan and the lorgnette in her hands, evidently struggling with herself not to faint. Both were silent. She was sitting, he was standing, frightened by her confusion and not venturing to sit down beside her. The violins and the flute began tuning up. He felt suddenly frightened; it seemed as though all the people in the boxes were looking at them. She got up and went quickly to the door; he followed her, and both walked senselessly along passages, and up and down stairs, and figures in legal, scholastic, and civil service uniforms, all wearing badges, flitted before their eyes. They caught glimpses of ladies, of fur coats hanging on pegs; the draughts blew on them, bringing a smell of stale tobacco. And Gurov, whose heart was beating violently, thought:

"Oh, heavens! Why are these people here and this orchestra! . . ."

And at that instant he recalled how when he had seen Anna Sergeyevna off at the station he had thought that everything was over and they would never meet again. But how far they were still from the end!

On the narrow, gloomy staircase over which was written "To the Amphitheatre," she stopped.

"How you have frightened me!" she said, breathing hard, still pale and overwhelmed.  
"Oh, how you have frightened me! I am half dead. Why have you come? Why?"

"But do understand, Anna, do understand . . ." he said hastily in a low voice. "I entreat you to understand. . . ."

She looked at him with dread, with entreaty, with love; she looked at him intently, to keep his features more distinctly in her memory.

"I am so unhappy," she went on, not heeding him. "I have thought of nothing but you all the time; I live only in the thought of you. And I wanted to forget, to forget you; but why, oh, why, have you come?"

On the landing above them two schoolboys were smoking and looking down, but that was nothing to Gurov; he drew Anna Sergeyevna to him, and began kissing her face, her cheeks, and her hands.

"What are you doing, what are you doing!" she cried in horror, pushing him away. "We are mad. Go away to-day; go away at once. . . . I beseech you by all that is sacred, I implore you. . . . There are people coming this way!"

Some one was coming up the stairs.

"You must go away," Anna Sergeyevna went on in a whisper. "Do you hear, Dmitri Dmitritch? I will come and see you in Moscow. I have never been happy; I am miserable now, and I never, never shall be happy, never! Don't make me suffer still more! I swear I'll come to Moscow. But now let us part. My precious, good, dear one, we must part!"

She pressed his hand and began rapidly going downstairs, looking round at him, and from her eyes he could see that she really was unhappy. Gurov stood for a little while, listened, then, when all sound had died away, he found his coat and left the theatre.

## IV

And Anna Sergeyevna began coming to see him in Moscow. Once in two or three months she left S----, telling her husband that she was going to consult a doctor about an internal complaint--and her husband believed her, and did not believe her. In Moscow she stayed at the Slaviansky Bazaar hotel, and at once sent a man in a red cap to Gurov. Gurov went to see her, and no one in Moscow knew of it.

Once he was going to see her in this way on a winter morning (the messenger had come the evening before when he was out). With him walked his daughter, whom he wanted to take to school: it was on the way. Snow was falling in big wet flakes.

"It's three degrees above freezing-point, and yet it is snowing," said Gurov to his daughter. "The thaw is only on the surface of the earth; there is quite a different temperature at a greater height in the atmosphere."

"And why are there no thunderstorms in the winter, father?"

He explained that, too. He talked, thinking all the while that he was going to see her, and no living soul knew of it, and probably never would know. He had two lives: one, open, seen and known by all who cared to know, full of relative truth and of relative falsehood, exactly like the lives of his friends and acquaintances; and another life running its course in secret. And through some strange, perhaps accidental, conjunction of circumstances, everything that was essential, of interest and of value to him, everything in which he was sincere and did not deceive himself, everything that made the kernel of his life, was hidden from other people; and all that was false in him, the sheath in which he hid himself to conceal the truth--such, for instance, as his work in the bank, his discussions at the club, his "lower race," his presence with his wife at anniversary festivities--all that was open. And he judged of others by himself, not believing in what he saw, and always believing that every man had his real, most interesting life under the cover of secrecy and under the cover of night. All personal life rested on secrecy, and possibly it was partly on that account that civilised man was so nervously anxious that personal privacy should be respected.

After leaving his daughter at school, Gurov went on to the Slaviansky Bazaar. He took off his fur coat below, went upstairs, and softly knocked at the door. Anna Sergeyevna, wearing his favourite grey dress, exhausted by the journey and the suspense, had been expecting him since the evening before. She was pale; she looked at him, and did not smile, and he had hardly come in when she fell on his breast. Their kiss was slow and prolonged, as though they had not met for two years.

"Well, how are you getting on there?" he asked. "What news?"

"Wait; I'll tell you directly. . . . I can't talk."

She could not speak; she was crying. She turned away from him, and pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Let her have her cry out. I'll sit down and wait," he thought, and he sat down in an arm-chair.

Then he rang and asked for tea to be brought him, and while he drank his tea she remained standing at the window with her back to him. She was crying from emotion, from the miserable consciousness that their life was so hard for them; they could only meet in secret, hiding themselves from people, like thieves! Was not their life shattered?

"Come, do stop!" he said.

It was evident to him that this love of theirs would not soon be over, that he could not see the end of it. Anna Sergeyevna grew more and more attached to him. She adored him, and it was unthinkable to say to her that it was bound to have an end some day; besides, she would not have believed it!

He went up to her and took her by the shoulders to say something affectionate and cheering, and at that moment he saw himself in the looking-glass.

His hair was already beginning to turn grey. And it seemed strange to him that he had grown so much older, so much plainer during the last few years. The shoulders on which his hands rested were warm and quivering. He felt compassion for this life, still so warm and lovely, but probably already not far from beginning to fade and wither like his own. Why did she love him so much? He always seemed to women different from what he was, and they loved in him not himself, but the man created by their imagination, whom they had been eagerly seeking all their lives; and afterwards, when they noticed their mistake, they loved him all the same. And not one of them had been happy with him. Time passed, he had made their acquaintance, got on with them, parted, but he had never once loved; it was anything you like, but not love.

And only now when his head was grey he had fallen properly, really in love--for the first time in his life.

Anna Sergeyevna and he loved each other like people very close and akin, like husband and wife, like tender friends; it seemed to them that fate itself had meant them for one another, and they could not understand why he had a wife and she a husband; and it was as though they were a pair of birds of passage, caught and forced to live in different cages. They forgave each other for what they were ashamed of in their past, they forgave everything in the present, and felt that this love of theirs had changed them both.

In moments of depression in the past he had comforted himself with any arguments that came into his mind, but now he no longer cared for arguments; he felt profound compassion, he wanted to be sincere and tender. . . .

"Don't cry, my darling," he said. "You've had your cry; that's enough. . . . Let us talk now, let us think of some plan."

Then they spent a long while taking counsel together, talked of how to avoid the necessity for secrecy, for deception, for living in different towns and not seeing each other for long at a time. How could they be free from this intolerable bondage?

"How? How?" he asked, clutching his head. "How?"

And it seemed as though in a little while the solution would be found, and then a new and splendid life would begin; and it was clear to both of them that they had still a long, long road before them, and that the most complicated and difficult part of it was only just beginning.

## A DOCTOR'S VISIT

THE Professor received a telegram from the Lyalikovs' factory; he was asked to come as quickly as possible. The daughter of some Madame Lyalikov, apparently the owner of the factory, was ill, and that was all that one could make out of the long, incoherent telegram. And the Professor did not go himself, but sent instead his assistant, Korolyov.

It was two stations from Moscow, and there was a drive of three miles from the station. A carriage with three horses had been sent to the station to meet Korolyov; the coachman wore a hat with a peacock's feather on it, and answered every question in a loud voice like a soldier: "No, sir!" "Certainly, sir!"

It was Saturday evening; the sun was setting, the workpeople were coming in crowds from the factory to the station, and they bowed to the carriage in which Korolyov was driving. And he was charmed with the evening, the farmhouses and villas on the road, and the birch-trees, and the quiet atmosphere all around, when the fields and woods and the sun seemed preparing, like the workpeople now on the eve of the holiday, to rest, and perhaps to pray. . . .

He was born and had grown up in Moscow; he did not know the country, and he had never taken any interest in factories, or been inside one, but he had happened to read about factories, and had been in the houses of manufacturers and had talked to them; and whenever he saw a factory far or near, he always thought how quiet and peaceable it was outside, but within there was always sure to be impenetrable ignorance and dull egoism on the side of the owners, wearisome, unhealthy toil on the side of the workpeople, squabbling, vermin, vodka. And now when the workpeople timidly and respectfully made way for the carriage, in their faces, their caps, their walk, he read physical impurity, drunkenness, nervous exhaustion, bewilderment.

They drove in at the factory gates. On each side he caught glimpses of the little houses of workpeople, of the faces of women, of quilts and linen on the railings. "Look out!" shouted the coachman, not pulling up the horses. It was a wide courtyard without grass, with five immense blocks of buildings with tall chimneys a little distance one from another, warehouses and barracks, and over everything a sort of grey powder as though from dust. Here and there, like oases in the desert, there were pitiful gardens, and the green and red roofs of the houses in which the managers and clerks lived. The coachman suddenly pulled up the horses, and the carriage stopped at the house, which had been newly painted grey; here was a flower garden, with a lilac bush covered with dust, and on the yellow steps at the front door there was a strong smell of paint.

"Please come in, doctor," said women's voices in the passage and the entry, and at the same time he heard sighs and whisperings. "Pray walk in. . . . We've been expecting you so long . . . we're in real trouble. Here, this way."

Madame Lyalikov--a stout elderly lady wearing a black silk dress with fashionable sleeves, but, judging from her face, a simple uneducated woman--looked at the doctor in a flutter, and could not bring herself to hold out her hand to him; she did not dare. Beside her stood a personage with short hair and a pince-nez; she was wearing a blouse of many colours, and was very thin and no longer young. The servants called her Christina Dmitryevna, and Korolyov guessed that this was the governess. Probably, as the person of most education in the house, she had been charged to meet and receive the doctor, for she began immediately, in great haste, stating the causes of the illness, giving trivial and tiresome details, but without saying who was ill or what was the matter.

The doctor and the governess were sitting talking while the lady of the house stood motionless at the door, waiting. From the conversation Korolyov learned that the patient was Madame Lyalikov's only daughter and heiress, a girl of twenty, called Liza; she had been ill for a long time, and had consulted various doctors, and the previous night she had suffered till morning from such violent palpitations of the heart, that no one in the house had slept, and they had been afraid she might die.

"She has been, one may say, ailing from a child," said Christina Dmitryevna in a sing-song voice, continually wiping her lips with her hand. "The doctors say it is nerves; when she was a little girl she was scrofulous, and the doctors drove it inwards, so I think it may be due to that."

They went to see the invalid. Fully grown up, big and tall, but ugly like her mother, with the same little eyes and disproportionate breadth of the lower part of the face, lying with her hair in disorder, muffled up to the chin, she made upon Korolyov at the first minute the impression of a poor, destitute creature, sheltered and cared for here out of charity, and he could hardly believe that this was the heiress of the five huge buildings.

"I am the doctor come to see you," said Korolyov. "Good evening."

He mentioned his name and pressed her hand, a large, cold, ugly hand; she sat up, and, evidently accustomed to doctors, let herself be sounded, without showing the least concern that her shoulders and chest were uncovered.

"I have palpitations of the heart," she said, "It was so awful all night. . . . I almost died of fright! Do give me something."

"I will, I will; don't worry yourself."

Korolyov examined her and shrugged his shoulders.

"The heart is all right," he said; "it's all going on satisfactorily; everything is in good order. Your nerves must have been playing pranks a little, but that's so common. The attack is over by now, one must suppose; lie down and go to sleep."

At that moment a lamp was brought into the bed-room. The patient screwed up her eyes at the light, then suddenly put her hands to her head and broke into sobs. And the impression of a destitute, ugly creature vanished, and Korolyov no longer noticed the little eyes or the heavy development of the lower part of the face. He saw a soft, suffering expression which was intelligent and touching: she seemed to him altogether graceful, feminine, and simple; and he longed to soothe her, not with drugs, not with advice, but with simple, kindly words. Her mother put her arms round her head and hugged her. What despair, what grief was in the old woman's face! She, her mother, had reared her and brought her up, spared nothing, and devoted her whole life to having her daughter taught French, dancing, music: had engaged a dozen teachers for her; had consulted the best doctors, kept a governess. And now she could not make out the reason of these tears, why there was all this misery, she could not understand, and was bewildered; and she had a guilty, agitated, despairing expression, as though she had omitted something very important, had left something undone, had neglected to call in somebody--and whom, she did not know.

"Lizanka, you are crying again . . . again," she said, hugging her daughter to her. "My own, my darling, my child, tell me what it is! Have pity on me! Tell me."

Both wept bitterly. Korolyov sat down on the side of the bed and took Liza's hand.

"Come, give over; it's no use crying," he said kindly. "Why, there is nothing in the world that is worth those tears. Come, we won't cry; that's no good. . . ."

And inwardly he thought:

"It's high time she was married. . . ."

"Our doctor at the factory gave her kalibromati," said the governess, "but I notice it only makes her worse. I should have thought that if she is given anything for the heart it ought to be drops. . . . I forget the name. . . . Convallaria, isn't it?"

And there followed all sorts of details. She interrupted the doctor, preventing his speaking, and there was a look of effort on her face, as though she supposed that, as the woman of most education in the house, she was duty bound to keep up a conversation with the doctor, and on no other subject but medicine.

Korolyov felt bored.

"I find nothing special the matter," he said, addressing the mother as he went out of the bedroom. "If your daughter is being attended by the factory doctor, let him go on attending her. The treatment so far has been perfectly correct, and I see no reason for changing your doctor. Why change? It's such an ordinary trouble; there's nothing seriously wrong."

He spoke deliberately as he put on his gloves, while Madame Lyalikov stood without moving, and looked at him with her tearful eyes.

"I have half an hour to catch the ten o'clock train," he said. "I hope I am not too late."

"And can't you stay?" she asked, and tears trickled down her cheeks again. "I am ashamed to trouble you, but if you would be so good . . . For God's sake," she went on in an undertone, glancing towards the door, "do stay to-night with us! She is all I have . . . my only daughter. . . . She frightened me last night; I can't get over it. . . . Don't go away, for goodness' sake! . . ."

He wanted to tell her that he had a great deal of work in Moscow, that his family were expecting him home; it was disagreeable to him to spend the evening and the whole night in a strange house quite needlessly; but he looked at her face, heaved a sigh, and began taking off his gloves without a word.

All the lamps and candles were lighted in his honour in the drawing-room and the dining-room. He sat down at the piano and began turning over the music. Then he looked at the pictures on the walls, at the portraits. The pictures, oil-paintings in gold frames, were views of the Crimea--a stormy sea with a ship, a Catholic monk with a wineglass; they were all dull, smooth daubs, with no trace of talent in them. There was not a single good-looking face among the portraits, nothing but broad cheekbones and astonished-looking eyes. Lyalikov, Liza's father, had a low forehead and a self-satisfied expression; his uniform sat like a sack on his bulky plebeian figure; on his breast was a medal and a Red Cross Badge. There was little sign of culture, and the luxury was senseless and haphazard, and was as ill fitting as that uniform. The floors irritated him with their brilliant polish, the lustres on the chandelier irritated him, and he was reminded for some reason of the story of the merchant who used to go to the baths with a medal on his neck.

...

He heard a whispering in the entry; some one was softly snoring. And suddenly from outside came harsh, abrupt, metallic sounds, such as Korolyov had never heard before, and which he did not understand now; they roused strange, unpleasant echoes in his soul.

"I believe nothing would induce me to remain here to live . . ." he thought, and went back to the music-books again.

"Doctor, please come to supper!" the governess called him in a low voice.

He went into supper. The table was large and laid with a vast number of dishes and wines, but there were only two to supper: himself and Christina Dmitryevna. She drank Madeira, ate rapidly, and talked, looking at him through her pince-nez:

"Our workpeople are very contented. We have performances at the factory every winter; the workpeople act themselves. They have lectures with a magic lantern, a splendid tea-room, and everything they want. They are very much attached to us, and when they heard

that Lizanka was worse they had a service sung for her. Though they have no education, they have their feelings, too."

"It looks as though you have no man in the house at all," said Korolyov.

"Not one. Pyotr Nikanoritch died a year and a half ago, and left us alone. And so there are the three of us. In the summer we live here, and in winter we live in Moscow, in Polianka. I have been living with them for eleven years--as one of the family."

At supper they served sterlet, chicken rissoles, and stewed fruit; the wines were expensive French wines.

"Please don't stand on ceremony, doctor," said Christina Dmitryevna, eating and wiping her mouth with her fist, and it was evident she found her life here exceedingly pleasant. "Please have some more."

After supper the doctor was shown to his room, where a bed had been made up for him, but he did not feel sleepy. The room was stuffy and it smelt of paint; he put on his coat and went out.

It was cool in the open air; there was already a glimmer of dawn, and all the five blocks of buildings, with their tall chimneys, barracks, and warehouses, were distinctly outlined against the damp air. As it was a holiday, they were not working, and the windows were dark, and in only one of the buildings was there a furnace burning; two windows were crimson, and fire mixed with smoke came from time to time from the chimney. Far away beyond the yard the frogs were croaking and the nightingales singing.

Looking at the factory buildings and the barracks, where the workpeople were asleep, he thought again what he always thought when he saw a factory. They may have performances for the workpeople, magic lanterns, factory doctors, and improvements of all sorts, but, all the same, the workpeople he had met that day on his way from the station did not look in any way different from those he had known long ago in his childhood, before there were factory performances and improvements. As a doctor accustomed to judging correctly of chronic complaints, the radical cause of which was incomprehensible and incurable, he looked upon factories as something baffling, the cause of which also was obscure and not removable, and all the improvements in the life of the factory hands he looked upon not as superfluous, but as comparable with the treatment of incurable illnesses.

"There is something baffling in it, of course . . ." he thought, looking at the crimson windows. "Fifteen hundred or two thousand workpeople are working without rest in unhealthy surroundings, making bad cotton goods, living on the verge of starvation, and only waking from this nightmare at rare intervals in the tavern; a hundred people act as overseers, and the whole life of that hundred is spent in imposing fines, in abuse, in injustice, and only two or three so-called owners enjoy the profits, though they don't work at all, and despise the wretched cotton. But what are the profits, and how do they

enjoy them? Madame Lyalikov and her daughter are unhappy--it makes one wretched to look at them; the only one who enjoys her life is Christina Dmitryevna, a stupid, middle-aged maiden lady in pince-nez. And so it appears that all these five blocks of buildings are at work, and inferior cotton is sold in the Eastern markets, simply that Christina Dmitryevna may eat sterlet and drink Madeira."

Suddenly there came a strange noise, the same sound Korolyov had heard before supper. Some one was striking on a sheet of metal near one of the buildings; he struck a note, and then at once checked the vibrations, so that short, abrupt, discordant sounds were produced, rather like "Dair . . . dair . . . dair . . ." Then there was half a minute of stillness, and from another building there came sounds equally abrupt and unpleasant, lower bass notes: "Drin . . . drin . . . drin . . ." Eleven times. Evidently it was the watchman striking the hour. Near the third building he heard: "Zhuk . . . zhuk . . . zhuk . . ." And so near all the buildings, and then behind the barracks and beyond the gates. And in the stillness of the night it seemed as though these sounds were uttered by a monster with crimson eyes--the devil himself, who controlled the owners and the work-people alike, and was deceiving both.

Korolyov went out of the yard into the open country.

"Who goes there?" some one called to him at the gates in an abrupt voice.

"It's just like being in prison," he thought, and made no answer.

Here the nightingales and the frogs could be heard more distinctly, and one could feel it was a night in May. From the station came the noise of a train; somewhere in the distance drowsy cocks were crowing; but, all the same, the night was still, the world was sleeping tranquilly. In a field not far from the factory there could be seen the framework of a house and heaps of building material:

Korolyov sat down on the planks and went on thinking.

"The only person who feels happy here is the governess, and the factory hands are working for her gratification. But that's only apparent: she is only the figurehead. The real person, for whom everything is being done, is the devil."

And he thought about the devil, in whom he did not believe, and he looked round at the two windows where the fires were gleaming. It seemed to him that out of those crimson eyes the devil himself was looking at him--that unknown force that had created the mutual relation of the strong and the weak, that coarse blunder which one could never correct. The strong must hinder the weak from living --such was the law of Nature; but only in a newspaper article or in a school book was that intelligible and easily accepted. In the hotchpotch which was everyday life, in the tangle of trivialities out of which human relations were woven, it was no longer a law, but a logical absurdity, when the strong and the weak were both equally victims of their mutual relations, unwillingly submitting to some directing force, unknown, standing outside life, apart from man.

So thought Korolyov, sitting on the planks, and little by little he was possessed by a feeling that this unknown and mysterious force was really close by and looking at him. Meanwhile the east was growing paler, time passed rapidly; when there was not a soul anywhere near, as though everything were dead, the five buildings and their chimneys against the grey background of the dawn had a peculiar look--not the same as by day; one forgot altogether that inside there were steam motors, electricity, telephones, and kept thinking of lake-dwellings, of the Stone Age, feeling the presence of a crude, unconscious force. . . .

And again there came the sound: "Dair . . . dair . . . dair . . . dair . . ." twelve times. Then there was stillness, stillness for half a minute, and at the other end of the yard there rang out.

"Drin . . . drin . . . drin. . . ."

"Horribly disagreeable," thought Korolyov.

"Zhuk . . . zhuk . . ." there resounded from a third place, abruptly, sharply, as though with annoyance--"Zhuk . . . zhuk. . . ."

And it took four minutes to strike twelve. Then there was a hush; and again it seemed as though everything were dead.

Korolyov sat a little longer, then went to the house, but sat up for a good while longer. In the adjoining rooms there was whispering, there was a sound of shuffling slippers and bare feet.

"Is she having another attack?" thought Korolyov.

He went out to have a look at the patient. By now it was quite light in the rooms, and a faint glimmer of sunlight, piercing through the morning mist, quivered on the floor and on the wall of the drawing-room. The door of Liza's room was open, and she was sitting in a low chair beside her bed, with her hair down, wearing a dressing-gown and wrapped in a shawl. The blinds were down on the windows.

"How do you feel?" asked Korolyov.

"Well, thank you."

He touched her pulse, then straightened her hair, that had fallen over her forehead.

"You are not asleep," he said. "It's beautiful weather outside. It's spring. The nightingales are singing, and you sit in the dark and think of something."

She listened and looked into his face; her eyes were sorrowful and intelligent, and it was evident she wanted to say something to him.

"Does this happen to you often?" he said.

She moved her lips, and answered:

"Often, I feel wretched almost every night."

At that moment the watchman in the yard began striking two o'clock. They heard: "Dair . . . dair . . ." and she shuddered.

"Do those knockings worry you?" he asked.

"I don't know. Everything here worries me," she answered, and pondered. "Everything worries me. I hear sympathy in your voice; it seemed to me as soon as I saw you that I could tell you all about it."

"Tell me, I beg you."

"I want to tell you of my opinion. It seems to me that I have no illness, but that I am weary and frightened, because it is bound to be so and cannot be otherwise. Even the healthiest person can't help being uneasy if, for instance, a robber is moving about under his window. I am constantly being docitored," she went on, looking at her knees, and she gave a shy smile. "I am very grateful, of course, and I do not deny that the treatment is a benefit; but I should like to talk, not with a doctor, but with some intimate friend who would understand me and would convince me that I was right or wrong."

"Have you no friends?" asked Korolyov.

"I am lonely. I have a mother; I love her, but, all the same, I am lonely. That's how it happens to be. . . . Lonely people read a great deal, but say little and hear little. Life for them is mysterious; they are mystics and often see the devil where he is not. Lermontov's Tamara was lonely and she saw the devil."

"Do you read a great deal?"

"Yes. You see, my whole time is free from morning till night. I read by day, and by night my head is empty; instead of thoughts there are shadows in it."

"Do you see anything at night?" asked Korolyov.

"No, but I feel. . . ."

She smiled again, raised her eyes to the doctor, and looked at him so sorrowfully, so intelligently; and it seemed to him that she trusted him, and that she wanted to speak

frankly to him, and that she thought the same as he did. But she was silent, perhaps waiting for him to speak.

And he knew what to say to her. It was clear to him that she needed as quickly as possible to give up the five buildings and the million if she had it--to leave that devil that looked out at night; it was clear to him, too, that she thought so herself, and was only waiting for some one she trusted to confirm her.

But he did not know how to say it. How? One is shy of asking men under sentence what they have been sentenced for; and in the same way it is awkward to ask very rich people what they want so much money for, why they make such a poor use of their wealth, why they don't give it up, even when they see in it their unhappiness; and if they begin a conversation about it themselves, it is usually embarrassing, awkward, and long.

"How is one to say it?" Korolyov wondered. "And is it necessary to speak?"

And he said what he meant in a roundabout way:

"You in the position of a factory owner and a wealthy heiress are dissatisfied; you don't believe in your right to it; and here now you can't sleep. That, of course, is better than if you were satisfied, slept soundly, and thought everything was satisfactory. Your sleeplessness does you credit; in any case, it is a good sign. In reality, such a conversation as this between us now would have been unthinkable for our parents. At night they did not talk, but slept sound; we, our generation, sleep badly, are restless, but talk a great deal, and are always trying to settle whether we are right or not. For our children or grandchildren that question--whether they are right or not--will have been settled. Things will be clearer for them than for us. Life will be good in fifty years' time; it's only a pity we shall not last out till then. It would be interesting to have a peep at it."

"What will our children and grandchildren do?" asked Liza.

"I don't know. . . . I suppose they will throw it all up and go away."

"Go where?"

"Where? . . . Why, where they like," said Korolyov; and he laughed. "There are lots of places a good, intelligent person can go to."

He glanced at his watch.

"The sun has risen, though," he said. "It is time you were asleep. Undress and sleep soundly. Very glad to have made your acquaintance," he went on, pressing her hand. "You are a good, interesting woman. Good-night!"

He went to his room and went to bed.

In the morning when the carriage was brought round they all came out on to the steps to see him off. Liza, pale and exhausted, was in a white dress as though for a holiday, with a flower in her hair; she looked at him, as yesterday, sorrowfully and intelligently, smiled and talked, and all with an expression as though she wanted to tell him something special, important--him alone. They could hear the larks trilling and the church bells pealing. The windows in the factory buildings were sparkling gaily, and, driving across the yard and afterwards along the road to the station, Korolyov thought neither of the workpeople nor of lake dwellings, nor of the devil, but thought of the time, perhaps close at hand, when life would be as bright and joyous as that still Sunday morning; and he thought how pleasant it was on such a morning in the spring to drive with three horses in a good carriage, and to bask in the sunshine.

## AN UPHEAVAL

MASHENKA PAVLETSKY, a young girl who had only just finished her studies at a boarding school, returning from a walk to the house of the Kushkins, with whom she was living as a governess, found the household in a terrible turmoil. Mihailo, the porter who opened the door to her, was excited and red as a crab.

Loud voices were heard from upstairs.

"Madame Kushkin is in a fit, most likely, or else she has quarrelled with her husband," thought Mashenka.

In the hall and in the corridor she met maid-servants. One of them was crying. Then Mashenka saw, running out of her room, the master of the house himself, Nikolay Sergeitch, a little man with a flabby face and a bald head, though he was not old. He was red in the face and twitching all over. He passed the governess without noticing her, and throwing up his arms, exclaimed:

"Oh, how horrible it is! How tactless! How stupid! How barbarous! Abominable!"

Mashenka went into her room, and then, for the first time in her life, it was her lot to experience in all its acuteness the feeling that is so familiar to persons in dependent positions, who eat the bread of the rich and powerful, and cannot speak their minds. There was a search going on in her room. The lady of the house, Fedosya Vassilyevna, a stout, broad-shouldered, uncouth woman with thick black eyebrows, a faintly perceptible moustache, and red hands, who was exactly like a plain, illiterate cook in face and manners, was standing, without her cap on, at the table, putting back into Mashenka's workbag balls of wool, scraps of materials, and bits of paper. . . . Evidently the governess's arrival took her by surprise, since, on looking round and seeing the girl's pale and astonished face, she was a little taken aback, and muttered:

"Pardon. I . . . I upset it accidentally. . . . My sleeve caught in it. . . ."

And saying something more, Madame Kushkin rustled her long skirts and went out. Mashenka looked round her room with wondering eyes, and, unable to understand it, not knowing what to think, shrugged her shoulders, and turned cold with dismay. What had Fedosya Vassilyevna been looking for in her work-bag? If she really had, as she said, caught her sleeve in it and upset everything, why had Nikolay Sergeitch dashed out of her room so excited and red in the face? Why was one drawer of the table pulled out a little way? The money-box, in which the governess put away ten kopeck pieces and old stamps, was open. They had opened it, but did not know how to shut it, though they had scratched the lock all over. The whatnot with her books on it, the things on the table, the bed--all bore fresh traces of a search. Her linen-basket, too. The linen had been carefully folded, but it was not in the same order as Mashenka had left it when she went out. So the search had been thorough, most thorough. But what was it for? Why? What had

happened? Mashenka remembered the excited porter, the general turmoil which was still going on, the weeping servant-girl; had it not all some connection with the search that had just been made in her room? Was not she mixed up in something dreadful? Mashenka turned pale, and feeling cold all over, sank on to her linen-basket.

A maid-servant came into the room.

"Liza, you don't know why they have been rummaging in my room?" the governess asked her.

"Mistress has lost a brooch worth two thousand," said Liza.

"Yes, but why have they been rummaging in my room?"

"They've been searching every one, miss. They've searched all my things, too. They stripped us all naked and searched us. . . . God knows, miss, I never went near her toilet-table, let alone touching the brooch. I shall say the same at the police-station."

"But . . . why have they been rummaging here?" the governess still wondered.

"A brooch has been stolen, I tell you. The mistress has been rummaging in everything with her own hands. She even searched Mihailo, the porter, herself. It's a perfect disgrace! Nikolay Sergeitch simply looks on and cackles like a hen. But you've no need to tremble like that, miss. They found nothing here. You've nothing to be afraid of if you didn't take the brooch."

"But, Liza, it's vile . . . it's insulting," said Mashenka, breathless with indignation. "It's so mean, so low! What right had she to suspect me and to rummage in my things?"

"You are living with strangers, miss," sighed Liza. "Though you are a young lady, still you are . . . as it were . . . a servant. . . . It's not like living with your papa and mamma."

Mashenka threw herself on the bed and sobbed bitterly. Never in her life had she been subjected to such an outrage, never had she been so deeply insulted. . . . She, well-educated, refined, the daughter of a teacher, was suspected of theft; she had been searched like a street-walker! She could not imagine a greater insult. And to this feeling of resentment was added an oppressive dread of what would come next. All sorts of absurd ideas came into her mind. If they could suspect her of theft, then they might arrest her, strip her naked, and search her, then lead her through the street with an escort of soldiers, cast her into a cold, dark cell with mice and woodlice, exactly like the dungeon in which Princess Tarakanov was imprisoned. Who would stand up for her? Her parents lived far away in the provinces; they had not the money to come to her. In the capital she was as solitary as in a desert, without friends or kindred. They could do what they liked with her.

"I will go to all the courts and all the lawyers," Mashenka thought, trembling. "I will explain to them, I will take an oath. . . . They will believe that I could not be a thief!"

Mashenka remembered that under the sheets in her basket she had some sweetmeats, which, following the habits of her schooldays, she had put in her pocket at dinner and carried off to her room. She felt hot all over, and was ashamed at the thought that her little secret was known to the lady of the house; and all this terror, shame, resentment, brought on an attack of palpitation of the heart, which set up a throbbing in her temples, in her heart, and deep down in her stomach.

"Dinner is ready," the servant summoned Mashenka.

"Shall I go, or not?"

Mashenka brushed her hair, wiped her face with a wet towel, and went into the dining-room. There they had already begun dinner. At one end of the table sat Fedosya Vassilyevna with a stupid, solemn, serious face; at the other end Nikolay Sergeitch. At the sides there were the visitors and the children. The dishes were handed by two footmen in swallowtails and white gloves. Every one knew that there was an upset in the house, that Madame Kushkin was in trouble, and every one was silent. Nothing was heard but the sound of munching and the rattle of spoons on the plates.

The lady of the house, herself, was the first to speak.

"What is the third course?" she asked the footman in a weary, injured voice.

"Esturgeon à la russe," answered the footman.

"I ordered that, Fenya," Nikolay Sergeitch hastened to observe. "I wanted some fish. If you don't like it, ma chère, don't let them serve it. I just ordered it. . . ."

Fedosya Vassilyevna did not like dishes that she had not ordered herself, and now her eyes filled with tears.

"Come, don't let us agitate ourselves," Mamikov, her household doctor, observed in a honeyed voice, just touching her arm, with a smile as honeyed. "We are nervous enough as it is. Let us forget the brooch! Health is worth more than two thousand roubles!"

"It's not the two thousand I regret," answered the lady, and a big tear rolled down her cheek. "It's the fact itself that revolts me! I cannot put up with thieves in my house. I don't regret it--I regret nothing; but to steal from me is such ingratitude! That's how they repay me for my kindness. . . ."

They all looked into their plates, but Mashenka fancied after the lady's words that every one was looking at her. A lump rose in her throat; she began crying and put her handkerchief to her lips.

"Pardon," she muttered. "I can't help it. My head aches. I'll go away."

And she got up from the table, scraping her chair awkwardly, and went out quickly, still more overcome with confusion.

"It's beyond everything!" said Nikolay Sergeitch, frowning. "What need was there to search her room? How out of place it was!"

"I don't say she took the brooch," said Fedosya Vassilyevna, "but can you answer for her? To tell the truth, I haven't much confidence in these learned paupers."

"It really was unsuitable, Fenya. . . . Excuse me, Fenya, but you've no kind of legal right to make a search."

"I know nothing about your laws. All I know is that I've lost my brooch. And I will find the brooch!" She brought her fork down on the plate with a clatter, and her eyes flashed angrily. "And you eat your dinner, and don't interfere in what doesn't concern you!"

Nikolay Sergeitch dropped his eyes mildly and sighed. Meanwhile Mashenka, reaching her room, flung herself on her bed. She felt now neither alarm nor shame, but she felt an intense longing to go and slap the cheeks of this hard, arrogant, dull-witted, prosperous woman.

Lying on her bed she breathed into her pillow and dreamed of how nice it would be to go and buy the most expensive brooch and fling it into the face of this bullying woman. If only it were God's will that Fedosya Vassilyevna should come to ruin and wander about begging, and should taste all the horrors of poverty and dependence, and that Mashenka, whom she had insulted, might give her alms! Oh, if only she could come in for a big fortune, could buy a carriage, and could drive noisily past the windows so as to be envied by that woman!

But all these were only dreams, in reality there was only one thing left to do--to get away as quickly as possible, not to stay another hour in this place. It was true it was terrible to lose her place, to go back to her parents, who had nothing; but what could she do? Mashenka could not bear the sight of the lady of the house nor of her little room; she felt stifled and wretched here. She was so disgusted with Fedosya Vassilyevna, who was so obsessed by her illnesses and her supposed aristocratic rank, that everything in the world seemed to have become coarse and unattractive because this woman was living in it. Mashenka jumped up from the bed and began packing.

"May I come in?" asked Nikolay Sergeitch at the door; he had come up noiselessly to the door, and spoke in a soft, subdued voice. "May I?"

"Come in."

He came in and stood still near the door. His eyes looked dim and his red little nose was shiny. After dinner he used to drink beer, and the fact was perceptible in his walk, in his feeble, flabby hands.

"What's this?" he asked, pointing to the basket.

"I am packing. Forgive me, Nikolay Sergeitch, but I cannot remain in your house. I feel deeply insulted by this search!"

"I understand. . . . Only you are wrong to go. Why should you? They've searched your things, but you . . . what does it matter to you? You will be none the worse for it."

Mashenka was silent and went on packing. Nikolay Sergeitch pinched his moustache, as though wondering what he should say next, and went on in an ingratiating voice:

"I understand, of course, but you must make allowances. You know my wife is nervous, headstrong; you mustn't judge her too harshly."

Mashenka did not speak.

"If you are so offended," Nikolay Sergeitch went on, "well, if you like, I'm ready to apologise. I ask your pardon."

Mashenka made no answer, but only bent lower over her box. This exhausted, irresolute man was of absolutely no significance in the household. He stood in the pitiful position of a dependent and hanger-on, even with the servants, and his apology meant nothing either.

"H'm! . . . You say nothing! That's not enough for you. In that case, I will apologise for my wife. In my wife's name. . . . She behaved tactlessly, I admit it as a gentleman. . . ."

Nikolay Sergeitch walked about the room, heaved a sigh, and went on:

"Then you want me to have it rankling here, under my heart. . . . You want my conscience to torment me. . . ."

"I know it's not your fault, Nikolay Sergeitch," said Mashenka, looking him full in the face with her big tear-stained eyes. "Why should you worry yourself?"

"Of course, no. . . . But still, don't you . . . go away. I entreat you."

Mashenka shook her head. Nikolay Sergeitch stopped at the window and drummed on the pane with his finger-tips.

"Such misunderstandings are simply torture to me," he said. "Why, do you want me to go down on my knees to you, or what? Your pride is wounded, and here you've been crying and packing up to go; but I have pride, too, and you do not spare it! Or do you want me to tell you what I would not tell as Confession? Do you? Listen; you want me to tell you what I won't tell the priest on my deathbed?"

Mashenka made no answer.

"I took my wife's brooch," Nikolay Sergeitch said quickly. "Is that enough now? Are you satisfied? Yes, I . . . took it. . . . But, of course, I count on your discretion. . . . For God's sake, not a word, not half a hint to any one!"

Mashenka, amazed and frightened, went on packing; she snatched her things, crumpled them up, and thrust them anyhow into the box and the basket. Now, after this candid avowal on the part of Nikolay Sergeitch, she could not remain another minute, and could not understand how she could have gone on living in the house before.

"And it's nothing to wonder at," Nikolay Sergeitch went on after a pause. "It's an everyday story! I need money, and she . . . won't give it to me. It was my father's money that bought this house and everything, you know! It's all mine, and the brooch belonged to my mother, and . . . it's all mine! And she took it, took possession of everything. . . . I can't go to law with her, you'll admit. . . . I beg you most earnestly, overlook it . . . stay on. *Tout comprendre, tout pardonner.* Will you stay?"

"No!" said Mashenka resolutely, beginning to tremble. "Let me alone, I entreat you!"

"Well, God bless you!" sighed Nikolay Sergeitch, sitting down on the stool near the box. "I must own I like people who still can feel resentment, contempt, and so on. I could sit here forever and look at your indignant face. . . . So you won't stay, then? I understand. . . . It's bound to be so. . . . Yes, of course. . . . It's all right for you, but for me--wo-o-o-o! . . . I can't stir a step out of this cellar. I'd go off to one of our estates, but in every one of them there are some of my wife's rascals. . . . stewards, experts, damn them all! They mortgage and remortgage. . . . You mustn't catch fish, must keep off the grass, mustn't break the trees."

"Nikolay Sergeitch!" his wife's voice called from the drawing-room. "Agnia, call your master!"

"Then you won't stay?" asked Nikolay Sergeitch, getting up quickly and going towards the door. "You might as well stay, really. In the evenings I could come and have a talk with you. Eh? Stay! If you go, there won't be a human face left in the house. It's awful!"

Nikolay Sergeitch's pale, exhausted face besought her, but Mashenka shook her head, and with a wave of his hand he went out.

Half an hour later she was on her way.

## IONITCH

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WHEN visitors to the provincial town S---- complained of the dreariness and monotony of life, the inhabitants of the town, as though defending themselves, declared that it was very nice in S----, that there was a library, a theatre, a club; that they had balls; and, finally, that there were clever, agreeable, and interesting families with whom one could make acquaintance. And they used to point to the family of the Turkins as the most highly cultivated and talented.

This family lived in their own house in the principal street, near the Governor's. Ivan Petrovitch Turkin himself--a stout, handsome, dark man with whiskers--used to get up amateur performances for benevolent objects, and used to take the part of an elderly general and cough very amusingly. He knew a number of anecdotes, charades, proverbs, and was fond of being humorous and witty, and he always wore an expression from which it was impossible to tell whether he were joking or in earnest. His wife, Vera Iosifovna--a thin, nice-looking lady who wore a pince-nez--used to write novels and stories, and was very fond of reading them aloud to her visitors. The daughter, Ekaterina Ivanovna, a young girl, used to play on the piano. In short, every member of the family had a special talent. The Turkins welcomed visitors, and good-humouredly displayed their talents with genuine simplicity. Their stone house was roomy and cool in summer; half of the windows looked into a shady old garden, where nightingales used to sing in the spring. When there were visitors in the house, there was a clatter of knives in the kitchen and a smell of fried onions in the yard--and that was always a sure sign of a plentiful and savoury supper to follow.

And as soon as Dmitri Ionitch Startsev was appointed the district doctor, and took up his abode at Dyalizh, six miles from S----, he, too, was told that as a cultivated man it was essential for him to make the acquaintance of the Turkins. In the winter he was introduced to Ivan Petrovitch in the street; they talked about the weather, about the theatre, about the cholera; an invitation followed. On a holiday in the spring--it was Ascension Day--after seeing his patients, Startsev set off for town in search of a little recreation and to make some purchases. He walked in a leisurely way (he had not yet set up his carriage), humming all the time:

"Before I'd drunk the tears from life's goblet. . . ."

In town he dined, went for a walk in the gardens, then Ivan Petrovitch's invitation came into his mind, as it were of itself, and he decided to call on the Turkins and see what sort of people they were.

"How do you do, if you please?" said Ivan Petrovitch, meeting him on the steps.  
"Delighted, delighted to see such an agreeable visitor. Come along; I will introduce you

to my better half. I tell him, Verotchka," he went on, as he presented the doctor to his wife--"I tell him that he has no human right to sit at home in a hospital; he ought to devote his leisure to society. Oughtn't he, darling?"

"Sit here," said Vera Iosifovna, making her visitor sit down beside her. "You can dance attendance on me. My husband is jealous--he is an Othello; but we will try and behave so well that he will notice nothing."

"Ah, you spoilt chicken!" Ivan Petrovitch muttered tenderly, and he kissed her on the forehead. "You have come just in the nick of time," he said, addressing the doctor again. "My better half has written a 'hugeous' novel, and she is going to read it aloud to-day."

"Petit Jean," said Vera Iosifovna to her husband, "dites que l'on nous donne du thé."

Startsev was introduced to Ekaterina Ivanovna, a girl of eighteen, very much like her mother, thin and pretty. Her expression was still childish and her figure was soft and slim; and her developed girlish bosom, healthy and beautiful, was suggestive of spring, real spring.

Then they drank tea with jam, honey, and sweetmeats, and with very nice cakes, which melted in the mouth. As the evening came on, other visitors gradually arrived, and Ivan Petrovitch fixed his laughing eyes on each of them and said:

"How do you do, if you please?"

Then they all sat down in the drawing-room with very serious faces, and Vera Iosifovna read her novel. It began like this: "The frost was intense. . . ." The windows were wide open; from the kitchen came the clatter of knives and the smell of fried onions. . . . It was comfortable in the soft deep arm-chair; the lights had such a friendly twinkle in the twilight of the drawing-room, and at the moment on a summer evening when sounds of voices and laughter floated in from the street and whiffs of lilac from the yard, it was difficult to grasp that the frost was intense, and that the setting sun was lighting with its chilly rays a solitary wayfarer on the snowy plain. Vera Iosifovna read how a beautiful young countess founded a school, a hospital, a library, in her village, and fell in love with a wandering artist; she read of what never happens in real life, and yet it was pleasant to listen--it was comfortable, and such agreeable, serene thoughts kept coming into the mind, one had no desire to get up.

"Not badsome . . ." Ivan Petrovitch said softly.

And one of the visitors hearing, with his thoughts far away, said hardly audibly:

"Yes . . . truly. . . ."

One hour passed, another. In the town gardens close by a band was playing and a chorus was singing. When Vera Iosifovna shut her manuscript book, the company was silent for

five minutes, listening to "Lutchina" being sung by the chorus, and the song gave what was not in the novel and is in real life.

"Do you publish your stories in magazines?" Startsev asked Vera Iosifovna.

"No," she answered. "I never publish. I write it and put it away in my cupboard. Why publish?" she explained. "We have enough to live on."

And for some reason every one sighed.

"And now, Kitten, you play something," Ivan Petrovitch said to his daughter.

The lid of the piano was raised and the music lying ready was opened. Ekaterina Ivanovna sat down and banged on the piano with both hands, and then banged again with all her might, and then again and again; her shoulders and bosom shook. She obstinately banged on the same notes, and it sounded as if she would not leave off until she had hammered the keys into the piano. The drawing-room was filled with the din; everything was resounding; the floor, the ceiling, the furniture. . . . Ekaterina Ivanovna was playing a difficult passage, interesting simply on account of its difficulty, long and monotonous, and Startsev, listening, pictured stones dropping down a steep hill and going on dropping, and he wished they would leave off dropping; and at the same time Ekaterina Ivanovna, rosy from the violent exercise, strong and vigorous, with a lock of hair falling over her forehead, attracted him very much. After the winter spent at Dyalizh among patients and peasants, to sit in a drawing-room, to watch this young, elegant, and, in all probability, pure creature, and to listen to these noisy, tedious but still cultured sounds, was so pleasant, so novel. . . .

"Well, Kitten, you have played as never before," said Ivan Petrovitch, with tears in his eyes, when his daughter had finished and stood up. "Die, Denis; you won't write anything better."

All flocked round her, congratulated her, expressed astonishment, declared that it was long since they had heard such music, and she listened in silence with a faint smile, and her whole figure was expressive of triumph.

"Splendid, superb!"

"Splendid," said Startsev, too, carried away by the general enthusiasm. "Where have you studied?" he asked Ekaterina Ivanovna. "At the Conservatoire?"

"No, I am only preparing for the Conservatoire, and till now have been working with Madame Zavlovsky."

"Have you finished at the high school here?"

"Oh, no," Vera Iosifovna answered for her, "We have teachers for her at home; there might be bad influences at the high school or a boarding school, you know. While a young girl is growing up, she ought to be under no influence but her mother's."

"All the same, I'm going to the Conservatoire," said Ekaterina Ivanovna.

"No. Kitten loves her mamma. Kitten won't grieve papa and mamma."

"No, I'm going, I'm going," said Ekaterina Ivanovna, with playful caprice and stamping her foot.

And at supper it was Ivan Petrovitch who displayed his talents. Laughing only with his eyes, he told anecdotes, made epigrams, asked ridiculous riddles and answered them himself, talking the whole time in his extraordinary language, evolved in the course of prolonged practice in witticism and evidently now become a habit: "Badsome," "Hugeous," "Thank you most dumbly," and so on.

But that was not all. When the guests, replete and satisfied, trooped into the hall, looking for their coats and sticks, there bustled about them the footman Pavlusha, or, as he was called in the family, Pava--a lad of fourteen with shaven head and chubby cheeks.

"Come, Pava, perform!" Ivan Petrovitch said to him.

Pava struck an attitude, flung up his arm, and said in a tragic tone: "Unhappy woman, die!"

And every one roared with laughter.

"It's entertaining," thought Startsev, as he went out into the street.

He went to a restaurant and drank some beer, then set off to walk home to Dyalizh; he walked all the way singing:

"Thy voice to me so languid and caressing. . . ."

On going to bed, he felt not the slightest fatigue after the six miles' walk. On the contrary, he felt as though he could with pleasure have walked another twenty.

"Not badsome," he thought, and laughed as he fell asleep.

## II

Startsev kept meaning to go to the Turkins' again, but there was a great deal of work in the hospital, and he was unable to find free time. In this way more than a year passed in work and solitude. But one day a letter in a light blue envelope was brought him from the town.

Vera Iosifovna had been suffering for some time from migraine, but now since Kitten frightened her every day by saying that she was going away to the Conservatoire, the attacks began to be more frequent. All the doctors of the town had been at the Turkins'; at last it was the district doctor's turn. Vera Iosifovna wrote him a touching letter in which she begged him to come and relieve her sufferings. Startsev went, and after that he began to be often, very often at the Turkins'. . . . He really did something for Vera Iosifovna, and she was already telling all her visitors that he was a wonderful and exceptional doctor. But it was not for the sake of her migraine that he visited the Turkins' now. . . .

It was a holiday. Ekaterina Ivanovna finished her long, wearisome exercises on the piano. Then they sat a long time in the dining-room, drinking tea, and Ivan Petrovitch told some amusing story. Then there was a ring and he had to go into the hall to welcome a guest; Startsev took advantage of the momentary commotion, and whispered to Ekaterina Ivanovna in great agitation:

"For God's sake, I entreat you, don't torment me; let us go into the garden!"

She shrugged her shoulders, as though perplexed and not knowing what he wanted of her, but she got up and went.

"You play the piano for three or four hours," he said, following her; "then you sit with your mother, and there is no possibility of speaking to you. Give me a quarter of an hour at least, I beseech you."

Autumn was approaching, and it was quiet and melancholy in the old garden; the dark leaves lay thick in the walks. It was already beginning to get dark early.

"I haven't seen you for a whole week," Startsev went on, "and if you only knew what suffering it is! Let us sit down. Listen to me."

They had a favourite place in the garden; a seat under an old spreading maple. And now they sat down on this seat.

"What do you want?" said Ekaterina Ivanovna drily, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"I have not seen you for a whole week; I have not heard you for so long. I long passionately, I thirst for your voice. Speak."

She fascinated him by her freshness, the naïve expression of her eyes and cheeks. Even in the way her dress hung on her, he saw something extraordinarily charming, touching in its simplicity and naïve grace; and at the same time, in spite of this naïveté, she seemed to him intelligent and developed beyond her years. He could talk with her about literature, about art, about anything he liked; could complain to her of life, of people, though it sometimes happened in the middle of serious conversation she would laugh inappropriately or run away into the house. Like almost all girls of her neighbourhood, she had read a great deal (as a rule, people read very little in S----, and at the lending library they said if it were not for the girls and the young Jews, they might as well shut up the library). This afforded Startsev infinite delight; he used to ask her eagerly every time what she had been reading the last few days, and listened enthralled while she told him.

"What have you been reading this week since I saw you last?" he asked now. "Do please tell me."

"I have been reading Pisemsky."

"What exactly?"

"A Thousand Souls," answered Kitten. "And what a funny name Pisemsky had--Alexey Feofilaktitch!"

"Where are you going?" cried Startsev in horror, as she suddenly got up and walked towards the house. "I must talk to you; I want to explain myself. . . . Stay with me just five minutes, I supplicate you!"

She stopped as though she wanted to say something, then awkwardly thrust a note into his hand, ran home and sat down to the piano again.

"Be in the cemetery," Startsev read, "at eleven o'clock to-night, near the tomb of Demetti."

"Well, that's not at all clever," he thought, coming to himself. "Why the cemetery? What for?"

It was clear: Kitten was playing a prank. Who would seriously dream of making an appointment at night in the cemetery far out of the town, when it might have been arranged in the street or in the town gardens? And was it in keeping with him--a district doctor, an intelligent, staid man--to be sighing, receiving notes, to hang about cemeteries, to do silly things that even schoolboys think ridiculous nowadays? What would this romance lead to? What would his colleagues say when they heard of it? Such were Startsev's reflections as he wandered round the tables at the club, and at half-past ten he suddenly set off for the cemetery.

By now he had his own pair of horses, and a coachman called Panteleimon, in a velvet waistcoat. The moon was shining. It was still warm, warm as it is in autumn. Dogs were

howling in the suburb near the slaughter-house. Startsev left his horses in one of the side-streets at the end of the town, and walked on foot to the cemetery.

"We all have our oddities," he thought. "Kitten is odd, too; and --who knows?--perhaps she is not joking, perhaps she will come"; and he abandoned himself to this faint, vain hope, and it intoxicated him.

He walked for half a mile through the fields; the cemetery showed as a dark streak in the distance, like a forest or a big garden. The wall of white stone came into sight, the gate. . . . In the moonlight he could read on the gate: "The hour cometh." Startsev went in at the little gate, and before anything else he saw the white crosses and monuments on both sides of the broad avenue, and the black shadows of them and the poplars; and for a long way round it was all white and black, and the slumbering trees bowed their branches over the white stones. It seemed as though it were lighter here than in the fields; the maple-leaves stood out sharply like paws on the yellow sand of the avenue and on the stones, and the inscriptions on the tombs could be clearly read. For the first moments Startsev was struck now by what he saw for the first time in his life, and what he would probably never see again; a world not like anything else, a world in which the moonlight was as soft and beautiful, as though slumbering here in its cradle, where there was no life, none whatever; but in every dark poplar, in every tomb, there was felt the presence of a mystery that promised a life peaceful, beautiful, eternal. The stones and faded flowers, together with the autumn scent of the leaves, all told of forgiveness, melancholy, and peace.

All was silence around; the stars looked down from the sky in the profound stillness, and Startsev's footsteps sounded loud and out of place, and only when the church clock began striking and he imagined himself dead, buried there for ever, he felt as though some one were looking at him, and for a moment he thought that it was not peace and tranquillity, but stifled despair, the dumb dreariness of non-existence. . . .

Demetti's tomb was in the form of a shrine with an angel at the top. The Italian opera had once visited S---- and one of the singers had died; she had been buried here, and this monument put up to her. No one in the town remembered her, but the lamp at the entrance reflected the moonlight, and looked as though it were burning.

There was no one, and, indeed, who would come here at midnight? But Startsev waited, and as though the moonlight warmed his passion, he waited passionately, and, in imagination, pictured kisses and embraces. He sat near the monument for half an hour, then paced up and down the side avenues, with his hat in his hand, waiting and thinking of the many women and girls buried in these tombs who had been beautiful and fascinating, who had loved, at night burned with passion, yielding themselves to caresses. How wickedly Mother Nature jested at man's expense, after all! How humiliating it was to recognise it!

Startsev thought this, and at the same time he wanted to cry out that he wanted love, that he was eager for it at all costs. To his eyes they were not slabs of marble, but fair white

bodies in the moonlight; he saw shapes hiding bashfully in the shadows of the trees, felt their warmth, and the languor was oppressive. . . .

And as though a curtain were lowered, the moon went behind a cloud, and suddenly all was darkness. Startsev could scarcely find the gate--by now it was as dark as it is on an autumn night. Then he wandered about for an hour and a half, looking for the side-street in which he had left his horses.

"I am tired; I can scarcely stand on my legs," he said to Panteleimon.

And settling himself with relief in his carriage, he thought: "Och! I ought not to get fat!"

### III

The following evening he went to the Turkins' to make an offer. But it turned out to be an inconvenient moment, as Ekaterina Ivanovna was in her own room having her hair done by a hair-dresser. She was getting ready to go to a dance at the club.

He had to sit a long time again in the dining-room drinking tea. Ivan Petrovitch, seeing that his visitor was bored and preoccupied, drew some notes out of his waistcoat pocket, read a funny letter from a German steward, saying that all the ironmongery was ruined and the plasticity was peeling off the walls.

"I expect they will give a decent dowry," thought Startsev, listening absent-mindedly.

After a sleepless night, he found himself in a state of stupefaction, as though he had been given something sweet and soporific to drink; there was fog in his soul, but joy and warmth, and at the same time a sort of cold, heavy fragment of his brain was reflecting:

"Stop before it is too late! Is she the match for you? She is spoilt, whimsical, sleeps till two o'clock in the afternoon, while you are a deacon's son, a district doctor. . . ."

"What of it?" he thought. "I don't care."

"Besides, if you marry her," the fragment went on, "then her relations will make you give up the district work and live in the town."

"After all," he thought, "if it must be the town, the town it must be. They will give a dowry; we can establish ourselves suitably."

At last Ekaterina Ivanovna came in, dressed for the ball, with a low neck, looking fresh and pretty; and Startsev admired her so much, and went into such ecstasies, that he could say nothing, but simply stared at her and laughed.

She began saying good-bye, and he--he had no reason for staying now--got up, saying that it was time for him to go home; his patients were waiting for him.

"Well, there's no help for that," said Ivan Petrovitch. "Go, and you might take Kitten to the club on the way."

It was spotting with rain; it was very dark, and they could only tell where the horses were by Panteleimon's husky cough. The hood of the carriage was put up.

"I stand upright; you lie down right; he lies all right," said Ivan Petrovitch as he put his daughter into the carriage.

They drove off.

"I was at the cemetery yesterday," Startsev began. "How ungenerous and merciless it was on your part! . . ."

"You went to the cemetery?"

"Yes, I went there and waited almost till two o'clock. I suffered  
. . ."

"Well, suffer, if you cannot understand a joke."

Ekaterina Ivanovna, pleased at having so cleverly taken in a man who was in love with her, and at being the object of such intense love, burst out laughing and suddenly uttered a shriek of terror, for, at that very minute, the horses turned sharply in at the gate of the club, and the carriage almost tilted over. Startsev put his arm round Ekaterina Ivanovna's waist; in her fright she nestled up to him, and he could not restrain himself, and passionately kissed her on the lips and on the chin, and hugged her more tightly.

"That's enough," she said drily.

And a minute later she was not in the carriage, and a policeman near the lighted entrance of the club shouted in a detestable voice to Panteleimon:

"What are you stopping for, you crow? Drive on."

Startsev drove home, but soon afterwards returned. Attired in another man's dress suit and a stiff white tie which kept sawing at his neck and trying to slip away from the collar, he was sitting at midnight in the club drawing-room, and was saying with enthusiasm to Ekaterina Ivanovna.

"Ah, how little people know who have never loved! It seems to me that no one has ever yet written of love truly, and I doubt whether this tender, joyful, agonising feeling can be described, and any one who has once experienced it would not attempt to put it into words. What is the use of preliminaries and introductions? What is the use of unnecessary fine words? My love is immeasurable. I beg, I beseech you," Startsev brought out at last, "be my wife!"

"Dmitri Ionitch," said Ekaterina Ivanovna, with a very grave face, after a moment's thought--"Dmitri Ionitch, I am very grateful to you for the honour. I respect you, but . . ." she got up and continued standing, "but, forgive me, I cannot be your wife. Let us talk seriously. Dmitri Ionitch, you know I love art beyond everything in life. I adore music; I love it frantically; I have dedicated my whole life to it. I want to be an artist; I want fame, success, freedom, and you want me to go on living in this town, to go on living this empty, useless life, which has become insufferable to me. To become a wife--oh, no, forgive me! One must strive towards a lofty, glorious goal, and married life would put me in bondage for ever. Dmitri Ionitch" (she faintly smiled as she pronounced his name; she

thought of "Alexey Feofilaktitch")--"Dmitri Ionitch, you are a good, clever, honourable man; you are better than any one. . ." Tears came into her eyes. "I feel for you with my whole heart, but . . . but you will understand. . ."

And she turned away and went out of the drawing-room to prevent herself from crying.

Startsev's heart left off throbhing uneasily. Going out of the club into the street, he first of all tore off the stiff tie and drew a deep breath. He was a little ashamed and his vanity was wounded--he had not expected a refusal--and could not believe that all his dreams, his hopes and yearnings, had led him up to such a stupid end, just as in some little play at an amateur performance, and he was sorry for his feeling, for that love of his, so sorry that he felt as though he could have burst into sobs or have violently belaboured Panteleimon's broad back with his umbrella.

For three days he could not get on with anything, he could not eat nor sleep; but when the news reached him that Ekaterina Ivanovna had gone away to Moscow to enter the Conservatoire, he grew calmer and lived as before.

Afterwards, remembering sometimes how he had wandered about the cemetery or how he had driven all over the town to get a dress suit, he stretched lazily and said:

"What a lot of trouble, though!"

## IV

Four years had passed. Startsev already had a large practice in the town. Every morning he hurriedly saw his patients at Dyalizh, then he drove in to see his town patients. By now he drove, not with a pair, but with a team of three with bells on them, and he returned home late at night. He had grown broader and stouter, and was not very fond of walking, as he was somewhat asthmatic. And Panteleimon had grown stout, too, and the broader he grew, the more mournfully he sighed and complained of his hard luck: he was sick of driving! Startsev used to visit various households and met many people, but did not become intimate with any one. The inhabitants irritated him by their conversation, their views of life, and even their appearance. Experience taught him by degrees that while he played cards or lunched with one of these people, the man was a peaceable, friendly, and even intelligent human being; that as soon as one talked of anything not eatable, for instance, of politics or science, he would be completely at a loss, or would expound a philosophy so stupid and ill-natured that there was nothing else to do but wave one's hand in despair and go away. Even when Startsev tried to talk to liberal citizens, saying, for instance, that humanity, thank God, was progressing, and that one day it would be possible to dispense with passports and capital punishment, the liberal citizen would look at him askance and ask him mistrustfully: "Then any one could murder any one he chose in the open street?" And when, at tea or supper, Startsev observed in company that one should work, and that one ought not to live without working, every one took this as a reproach, and began to get angry and argue aggressively. With all that, the inhabitants did nothing, absolutely nothing, and took no interest in anything, and it was quite impossible to think of anything to say. And Startsev avoided conversation, and confined himself to eating and playing *vint*; and when there was a family festivity in some household and he was invited to a meal, then he sat and ate in silence, looking at his plate.

And everything that was said at the time was uninteresting, unjust, and stupid; he felt irritated and disturbed, but held his tongue, and, because he sat glumly silent and looked at his plate, he was nicknamed in the town "the haughty Pole," though he never had been a Pole.

All such entertainments as theatres and concerts he declined, but he played *vint* every evening for three hours with enjoyment. He had another diversion to which he took imperceptibly, little by little: in the evening he would take out of his pockets the notes he had gained by his practice, and sometimes there were stuffed in his pockets notes--yellow and green, and smelling of scent and vinegar and incense and fish oil--up to the value of seventy roubles; and when they amounted to some hundreds he took them to the Mutual Credit Bank and deposited the money there to his account.

He was only twice at the Turkins' in the course of the four years after Ekaterina Ivanovna had gone away, on each occasion at the invitation of Vera Iosifovna, who was still undergoing treatment for migraine. Every summer Ekaterina Ivanovna came to stay with her parents, but he did not once see her; it somehow never happened.

But now four years had passed. One still, warm morning a letter was brought to the hospital. Vera Iosifovna wrote to Dmitri Ionitch that she was missing him very much, and begged him to come and see them, and to relieve her sufferings; and, by the way, it was her birthday. Below was a postscript: "I join in mother's request.--K."

Startsev considered, and in the evening he went to the Turkins'.

"How do you do, if you please?" Ivan Petrovitch met him, smiling with his eyes only.  
"Bongjour."

Vera Iosifovna, white-haired and looking much older, shook Startsev's hand, sighed affectedly, and said:

"You don't care to pay attentions to me, doctor. You never come and see us; I am too old for you. But now some one young has come; perhaps she will be more fortunate."

And Kitten? She had grown thinner, paler, had grown handsomer and more graceful; but now she was Ekaterina Ivanovna, not Kitten; she had lost the freshness and look of childish naïveté. And in her expression and manners there was something new--guilty and diffident, as though she did not feel herself at home here in the Turkins' house.

"How many summers, how many winters!" she said, giving Startsev her hand, and he could see that her heart was beating with excitement; and looking at him intently and curiously, she went on: "How much stouter you are! You look sunburnt and more manly, but on the whole you have changed very little."

Now, too, he thought her attractive, very attractive, but there was something lacking in her, or else something superfluous--he could not himself have said exactly what it was, but something prevented him from feeling as before. He did not like her pallor, her new expression, her faint smile, her voice, and soon afterwards he disliked her clothes, too, the low chair in which she was sitting; he disliked something in the past when he had almost married her. He thought of his love, of the dreams and the hopes which had troubled him four years before--and he felt awkward.

They had tea with cakes. Then Vera Iosifovna read aloud a novel; she read of things that never happen in real life, and Startsev listened, looked at her handsome grey head, and waited for her to finish.

"People are not stupid because they can't write novels, but because they can't conceal it when they do," he thought.

"Not badsome," said Ivan Petrovitch.

Then Ekaterina Ivanovna played long and noisily on the piano, and when she finished she was profusely thanked and warmly praised.

"It's a good thing I did not marry her," thought Startsev.

She looked at him, and evidently expected him to ask her to go into the garden, but he remained silent.

"Let us have a talk," she said, going up to him. "How are you getting on? What are you doing? How are things? I have been thinking about you all these days," she went on nervously. "I wanted to write to you, wanted to come myself to see you at Dyalizh. I quite made up my mind to go, but afterwards I thought better of it. God knows what your attitude is towards me now; I have been looking forward to seeing you to-day with such emotion. For goodness' sake let us go into the garden."

They went into the garden and sat down on the seat under the old maple, just as they had done four years before. It was dark.

"How are you getting on?" asked Ekaterina Ivanovna.

"Oh, all right; I am jogging along," answered Startsev.

And he could think of nothing more. They were silent.

"I feel so excited!" said Ekaterina Ivanovna, and she hid her face in her hands. "But don't pay attention to it. I am so happy to be at home; I am so glad to see every one. I can't get used to it. So many memories! I thought we should talk without stopping till morning."

Now he saw her face near, her shining eyes, and in the darkness she looked younger than in the room, and even her old childish expression seemed to have come back to her. And indeed she was looking at him with naïve curiosity, as though she wanted to get a closer view and understanding of the man who had loved her so ardently, with such tenderness, and so unsuccessfully; her eyes thanked him for that love. And he remembered all that had been, every minute detail; how he had wandered about the cemetery, how he had returned home in the morning exhausted, and he suddenly felt sad and regretted the past. A warmth began glowing in his heart.

"Do you remember how I took you to the dance at the club?" he asked. "It was dark and rainy then. . . ."

The warmth was glowing now in his heart, and he longed to talk, to rail at life. . . .

"Ech!" he said with a sigh. "You ask how I am living. How do we live here? Why, not at all. We grow old, we grow stout, we grow slack. Day after day passes; life slips by without colour, without expressions, without thoughts. . . . In the daytime working for gain, and in the evening the club, the company of card-players, alcoholic, raucous-voiced gentlemen whom I can't endure. What is there nice in it?"

"Well, you have work--a noble object in life. You used to be so fond of talking of your hospital. I was such a queer girl then; I imagined myself such a great pianist. Nowadays all young ladies play the piano, and I played, too, like everybody else, and there was nothing special about me. I am just such a pianist as my mother is an authoress. And of course I didn't understand you then, but afterwards in Moscow I often thought of you. I thought of no one but you. What happiness to be a district doctor; to help the suffering; to be serving the people! What happiness!" Ekaterina Ivanovna repeated with enthusiasm. "When I thought of you in Moscow, you seemed to me so ideal, so lofty. . . ."

Startsev thought of the notes he used to take out of his pockets in the evening with such pleasure, and the glow in his heart was quenched.

He got up to go into the house. She took his arm.

"You are the best man I've known in my life," she went on. "We will see each other and talk, won't we? Promise me. I am not a pianist; I am not in error about myself now, and I will not play before you or talk of music."

When they had gone into the house, and when Startsev saw in the lamplight her face, and her sad, grateful, searching eyes fixed upon him, he felt uneasy and thought again:

"It's a good thing I did not marry her then."

He began taking leave.

"You have no human right to go before supper," said Ivan Petrovitch as he saw him off. "It's extremely perpendicular on your part. Well, now, perform!" he added, addressing Pava in the hall.

Pava, no longer a boy, but a young man with moustaches, threw himself into an attitude, flung up his arm, and said in a tragic voice:

"Unhappy woman, die!"

All this irritated Startsev. Getting into his carriage, and looking at the dark house and garden which had once been so precious and so dear, he thought of everything at once--Vera Iosifovna's novels and Kitten's noisy playing, and Ivan Petrovitch's jokes and Pava's tragic posturing, and thought if the most talented people in the town were so futile, what must the town be?

Three days later Pava brought a letter from Ekaterina Ivanovna.

"You don't come and see us--why?" she wrote to him. "I am afraid that you have changed towards us. I am afraid, and I am terrified at the very thought of it. Reassure me; come and tell me that everything is well."

"I must talk to you.--Your E. I."

----

He read this letter, thought a moment, and said to Pava:

"Tell them, my good fellow, that I can't come to-day; I am very busy. Say I will come in three days or so."

But three days passed, a week passed; he still did not go. Happening once to drive past the Turkins' house, he thought he must go in, if only for a moment, but on second thoughts . . . did not go in.

And he never went to the Turkins' again.

## V

Several more years have passed. Startsev has grown stouter still, has grown corpulent, breathes heavily, and already walks with his head thrown back. When stout and red in the face, he drives with his bells and his team of three horses, and Panteleimon, also stout and red in the face with his thick beefy neck, sits on the box, holding his arms stiffly out before him as though they were made of wood, and shouts to those he meets: "Keep to the ri-i-ight!" it is an impressive picture; one might think it was not a mortal, but some heathen deity in his chariot. He has an immense practice in the town, no time to breathe, and already has an estate and two houses in the town, and he is looking out for a third more profitable; and when at the Mutual Credit Bank he is told of a house that is for sale, he goes to the house without ceremony, and, marching through all the rooms, regardless of half-dressed women and children who gaze at him in amazement and alarm, he prods at the doors with his stick, and says:

"Is that the study? Is that a bedroom? And what's here?"

And as he does so he breathes heavily and wipes the sweat from his brow.

He has a great deal to do, but still he does not give up his work as district doctor; he is greedy for gain, and he tries to be in all places at once. At Dyalizh and in the town he is called simply "Ionitch": "Where is Ionitch off to?" or "Should not we call in Ionitch to a consultation?"

Probably because his throat is covered with rolls of fat, his voice has changed; it has become thin and sharp. His temper has changed, too: he has grown ill-humoured and irritable. When he sees his patients he is usually out of temper; he impatiently taps the floor with his stick, and shouts in his disagreeable voice:

"Be so good as to confine yourself to answering my questions! Don't talk so much!"

He is solitary. He leads a dreary life; nothing interests him.

During all the years he had lived at Dyalizh his love for Kitten had been his one joy, and probably his last. In the evenings he plays vint at the club, and then sits alone at a big table and has supper. Ivan, the oldest and most respectable of the waiters, serves him, hands him Lafitte No. 17, and every one at the club--the members of the committee, the cook and waiters--know what he likes and what he doesn't like and do their very utmost to satisfy him, or else he is sure to fly into a rage and bang on the floor with his stick.

As he eats his supper, he turns round from time to time and puts in his spoke in some conversation:

"What are you talking about? Eh? Whom?"

And when at a neighbouring table there is talk of the Turkins, he asks:

"What Turkins are you speaking of? Do you mean the people whose daughter plays on the piano?"

That is all that can be said about him.

And the Turkins? Ivan Petrovitch has grown no older; he is not changed in the least, and still makes jokes and tells anecdotes as of old. Vera Iosifovna still reads her novels aloud to her visitors with eagerness and touching simplicity. And Kitten plays the piano for four hours every day. She has grown visibly older, is constantly ailing, and every autumn goes to the Crimea with her mother. When Ivan Petrovitch sees them off at the station, he wipes his tears as the train starts, and shouts:

"Good-bye, if you please."

And he waves his handkerchief.

## THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY

IT is, as a rule, after losing heavily at cards or after a drinking-bout when an attack of dyspepsia is setting in that Stepan Stepanitch Zhilin wakes up in an exceptionally gloomy frame of mind. He looks sour, rumpled, and dishevelled; there is an expression of displeasure on his grey face, as though he were offended or disgusted by something. He dresses slowly, sips his Vichy water deliberately, and begins walking about the rooms.

"I should like to know what b-b-beast comes in here and does not shut the door!" he grumbles angrily, wrapping his dressing-gown about him and spitting loudly. "Take away that paper! Why is it lying about here? We keep twenty servants, and the place is more untidy than a pot-house. Who was that ringing? Who the devil is that?"

"That's Anfissa, the midwife who brought our Fedya into the world," answers his wife.

"Always hanging about . . . these cadging toadies!"

"There's no making you out, Stepan Stepanitch. You asked her yourself, and now you scold."

"I am not scolding; I am speaking. You might find something to do, my dear, instead of sitting with your hands in your lap trying to pick a quarrel. Upon my word, women are beyond my comprehension! Beyond my comprehension! How can they waste whole days doing nothing? A man works like an ox, like a b-beast, while his wife, the partner of his life, sits like a pretty doll, sits and does nothing but watch for an opportunity to quarrel with her husband by way of diversion. It's time to drop these schoolgirlish ways, my dear. You are not a schoolgirl, not a young lady; you are a wife and mother! You turn away? Aha! It's not agreeable to listen to the bitter truth!"

"It's strange that you only speak the bitter truth when your liver is out of order."

"That's right; get up a scene."

"Have you been out late? Or playing cards?"

"What if I have? Is that anybody's business? Am I obliged to give an account of my doings to any one? It's my own money I lose, I suppose? What I spend as well as what is spent in this house belongs to me--me. Do you hear? To me!"

And so on, all in the same style. But at no other time is Stepan Stepanitch so reasonable, virtuous, stern or just as at dinner, when all his household are sitting about him. It usually begins with the soup. After swallowing the first spoonful Zhilin suddenly frowns and puts down his spoon.

"Damn it all!" he mutters; "I shall have to dine at a restaurant, I suppose."

"What's wrong?" asks his wife anxiously. "Isn't the soup good?"

"One must have the taste of a pig to eat hogwash like that! There's too much salt in it; it smells of dirty rags . . . more like bugs than onions. . . . It's simply revolting, Anfissa Ivanovna," he says, addressing the midwife. "Every day I give no end of money for housekeeping. . . . I deny myself everything, and this is what they provide for my dinner! I suppose they want me to give up the office and go into the kitchen to do the cooking myself."

"The soup is very good to-day," the governess ventures timidly.

"Oh, you think so?" says Zhilin, looking at her angrily from under his eyelids. "Every one to his taste, of course. It must be confessed our tastes are very different, Varvara Vassilyevna. You, for instance, are satisfied with the behaviour of this boy" (Zhilin with a tragic gesture points to his son Fedya); "you are delighted with him, while I . . . I am disgusted. Yes!"

Fedya, a boy of seven with a pale, sickly face, leaves off eating and drops his eyes. His face grows paler still.

"Yes, you are delighted, and I am disgusted. Which of us is right, I cannot say, but I venture to think as his father, I know my own son better than you do. Look how he is sitting! Is that the way decently brought up children sit? Sit properly."

Fedya tilts his chin up, cranes his neck, and fancies that he is holding himself better. Tears come into his eyes.

"Eat your dinner! Hold your spoon properly! You wait. I'll show you, you horrid boy! Don't dare to whimper! Look straight at me!"

Fedya tries to look straight at him, but his face is quivering and his eyes fill with tears.

"A-ah! . . . you cry? You are naughty and then you cry? Go and stand in the corner, you beast!"

"But . . . let him have his dinner first," his wife intervenes.

"No dinner for him! Such bla . . . such rascals don't deserve dinner!"

Fedya, wincing and quivering all over, creeps down from his chair and goes into the corner.

"You won't get off with that!" his parent persists. "If nobody else cares to look after your bringing up, so be it; I must begin. . . . I won't let you be naughty and cry at dinner, my lad! Idiot! You must do your duty! Do you understand? Do your duty! Your father works

and you must work, too! No one must eat the bread of idleness! You must be a man! A m-man!"

"For God's sake, leave off," says his wife in French. "Don't nag at us before outsiders, at least. . . . The old woman is all ears; and now, thanks to her, all the town will hear of it."

"I am not afraid of outsiders," answers Zhilin in Russian. "Anfissa Ivanovna sees that I am speaking the truth. Why, do you think I ought to be pleased with the boy? Do you know what he costs me? Do you know, you nasty boy, what you cost me? Or do you imagine that I coin money, that I get it for nothing? Don't howl! Hold your tongue! Do you hear what I say? Do you want me to whip you, you young ruffian?"

Fedya wails aloud and begins to sob.

"This is insufferable," says his mother, getting up from the table and flinging down her dinner-napkin. "You never let us have dinner in peace! Your bread sticks in my throat."

And putting her handkerchief to her eyes, she walks out of the dining-room.

"Now she is offended," grumbles Zhilin, with a forced smile. "She's been spoilt. . . . That's how it is, Anfissa Ivanovna; no one likes to hear the truth nowadays. . . . It's all my fault, it seems."

Several minutes of silence follow. Zhilin looks round at the plates, and noticing that no one has yet touched their soup, heaves a deep sigh, and stares at the flushed and uneasy face of the governess.

"Why don't you eat, Varvara Vassilyevna?" he asks. "Offended, I suppose? I see. . . . You don't like to be told the truth. You must forgive me, it's my nature; I can't be a hypocrite. . . . I always blurt out the plain truth" (a sigh). "But I notice that my presence is unwelcome. No one can eat or talk while I am here. . . . Well, you should have told me, and I would have gone away. . . . I will go."

Zhilin gets up and walks with dignity to the door. As he passes the weeping Fedya he stops.

"After all that has passed here, you are free," he says to Fedya, throwing back his head with dignity. "I won't meddle in your bringing up again. I wash my hands of it! I humbly apologise that as a father, from a sincere desire for your welfare, I have disturbed you and your mentors. At the same time, once for all I disclaim all responsibility for your future. . . ."

Fedya wails and sobs more loudly than ever. Zhilin turns with dignity to the door and departs to his bedroom.

When he wakes from his after-dinner nap he begins to feel the stings of conscience. He is ashamed to face his wife, his son, Anfissa Ivanovna, and even feels very wretched when he recalls the scene at dinner, but his amour-propre is too much for him; he has not the manliness to be frank, and he goes on sulking and grumbling.

Waking up next morning, he feels in excellent spirits, and whistles gaily as he washes. Going into the dining-room to breakfast, he finds there Fedya, who, at the sight of his father, gets up and looks at him helplessly.

"Well, young man?" Zhilin greets him good-humouredly, sitting down to the table. "What have you got to tell me, young man? Are you all right? Well, come, chubby; give your father a kiss."

With a pale, grave face Fedya goes up to his father and touches his cheek with his quivering lips, then walks away and sits down in his place without a word.

## THE BLACK MONK

I

ANDREY VASSILITCH KOVRIN, who held a master's degree at the University, had exhausted himself, and had upset his nerves. He did not send for a doctor, but casually, over a bottle of wine, he spoke to a friend who was a doctor, and the latter advised him to spend the spring and summer in the country. Very opportunely a long letter came from Tanya Pesotsky, who asked him to come and stay with them at Borissovka. And he made up his mind that he really must go.

To begin with--that was in April--he went to his own home, Kovrinka, and there spent three weeks in solitude; then, as soon as the roads were in good condition, he set off, driving in a carriage, to visit Pesotsky, his former guardian, who had brought him up, and was a horticulturist well known all over Russia. The distance from Kovrinka to Borissovka was reckoned only a little over fifty miles. To drive along a soft road in May in a comfortable carriage with springs was a real pleasure.

Pesotsky had an immense house with columns and lions, off which the stucco was peeling, and with a footman in swallow-tails at the entrance. The old park, laid out in the English style, gloomy and severe, stretched for almost three-quarters of a mile to the river, and there ended in a steep, precipitous clay bank, where pines grew with bare roots that looked like shaggy paws; the water shone below with an unfriendly gleam, and the peewits flew up with a plaintive cry, and there one always felt that one must sit down and write a ballad. But near the house itself, in the courtyard and orchard, which together with the nurseries covered ninety acres, it was all life and gaiety even in bad weather. Such marvellous roses, lilies, camellias; such tulips of all possible shades, from glistening white to sooty black--such a wealth of flowers, in fact, Kovrin had never seen anywhere as at Pesotsky's. It was only the beginning of spring, and the real glory of the flower-beds was still hidden away in the hot-houses. But even the flowers along the avenues, and here and there in the flower-beds, were enough to make one feel, as one walked about the garden, as though one were in a realm of tender colours, especially in the early morning when the dew was glistening on every petal.

What was the decorative part of the garden, and what Pesotsky contemptuously spoke of as rubbish, had at one time in his childhood given Kovrin an impression of fairyland.

Every sort of caprice, of elaborate monstrosity and mockery at Nature was here. There were espaliers of fruit-trees, a pear-tree in the shape of a pyramidal poplar, spherical oaks and lime-trees, an apple-tree in the shape of an umbrella, plum-trees trained into arches, crests, candelabra, and even into the number 1862--the year when Pesotsky first took up horticulture. One came across, too, lovely, graceful trees with strong, straight stems like palms, and it was only by looking intently that one could recognise these trees as gooseberries or currants. But what made the garden most cheerful and gave it a lively air,

was the continual coming and going in it, from early morning till evening; people with wheelbarrows, shovels, and watering-cans swarmed round the trees and bushes, in the avenues and the flower-beds, like ants. . . .

Kovrin arrived at Pesotsky's at ten o'clock in the evening. He found Tanya and her father, Yegor Semyonitch, in great anxiety. The clear starlight sky and the thermometer foretold a frost towards morning, and meanwhile Ivan Karlovitch, the gardener, had gone to the town, and they had no one to rely upon. At supper they talked of nothing but the morning frost, and it was settled that Tanya should not go to bed, and between twelve and one should walk through the garden, and see that everything was done properly, and Yegor Semyonitch should get up at three o'clock or even earlier.

Kovrin sat with Tanya all the evening, and after midnight went out with her into the garden. It was cold. There was a strong smell of burning already in the garden. In the big orchard, which was called the commercial garden, and which brought Yegor Semyonitch several thousand clear profit, a thick, black, acrid smoke was creeping over the ground and, curling around the trees, was saving those thousands from the frost. Here the trees were arranged as on a chessboard, in straight and regular rows like ranks of soldiers, and this severe pedantic regularity, and the fact that all the trees were of the same size, and had tops and trunks all exactly alike, made them look monotonous and even dreary. Kovrin and Tanya walked along the rows where fires of dung, straw, and all sorts of refuse were smouldering, and from time to time they were met by labourers who wandered in the smoke like shadows. The only trees in flower were the cherries, plums, and certain sorts of apples, but the whole garden was plunged in smoke, and it was only near the nurseries that Kovrin could breathe freely.

"Even as a child I used to sneeze from the smoke here," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "but to this day I don't understand how smoke can keep off frost."

"Smoke takes the place of clouds when there are none . . ." answered Tanya.

"And what do you want clouds for?"

"In overcast and cloudy weather there is no frost."

"You don't say so."

He laughed and took her arm. Her broad, very earnest face, chilled with the frost, with her delicate black eyebrows, the turned-up collar of her coat, which prevented her moving her head freely, and the whole of her thin, graceful figure, with her skirts tucked up on account of the dew, touched him.

"Good heavens! she is grown up," he said. "When I went away from here last, five years ago, you were still a child. You were such a thin, longlegged creature, with your hair hanging on your shoulders; you used to wear short frocks, and I used to tease you, calling you a heron. . . . What time does!"

"Yes, five years!" sighed Tanya. "Much water has flowed since then. Tell me, Andryusha, honestly," she began eagerly, looking him in the face: "do you feel strange with us now? But why do I ask you? You are a man, you live your own interesting life, you are somebody . . . To grow apart is so natural! But however that may be, Andryusha, I want you to think of us as your people. We have a right to that."

"I do, Tanya."

"On your word of honour?"

"Yes, on my word of honour."

"You were surprised this evening that we have so many of your photographs. You know my father adores you. Sometimes it seems to me that he loves you more than he does me. He is proud of you. You are a clever, extraordinary man, you have made a brilliant career for yourself, and he is persuaded that you have turned out like this because he brought you up. I don't try to prevent him from thinking so. Let him."

Dawn was already beginning, and that was especially perceptible from the distinctness with which the coils of smoke and the tops of the trees began to stand out in the air.

"It's time we were asleep, though," said Tanya, "and it's cold, too." She took his arm. "Thank you for coming, Andryusha. We have only uninteresting acquaintances, and not many of them. We have only the garden, the garden, the garden, and nothing else. Standards, half-standards," she laughed. "Aports, Reinettes, Borovinkas, budded stocks, grafted stocks. . . All, all our life has gone into the garden. I never even dream of anything but apples and pears. Of course, it is very nice and useful, but sometimes one longs for something else for variety. I remember that when you used to come to us for the summer holidays, or simply a visit, it always seemed to be fresher and brighter in the house, as though the covers had been taken off the lustres and the furniture. I was only a little girl then, but yet I understood it."

She talked a long while and with great feeling. For some reason the idea came into his head that in the course of the summer he might grow fond of this little, weak, talkative creature, might be carried away and fall in love; in their position it was so possible and natural! This thought touched and amused him; he bent down to her sweet, preoccupied face and hummed softly:

'"Onyegin, I won't conceal it;  
I madly love Tatiana. . . ."

By the time they reached the house, Yegor Semyonitch had got up. Kovrin did not feel sleepy; he talked to the old man and went to the garden with him. Yegor Semyonitch was a tall, broad-shouldered, corpulent man, and he suffered from asthma, yet he walked so fast that it was hard work to hurry after him. He had an extremely preoccupied air; he was

always hurrying somewhere, with an expression that suggested that if he were one minute late all would be ruined!

"Here is a business, brother . . ." he began, standing still to take breath. "On the surface of the ground, as you see, is frost; but if you raise the thermometer on a stick fourteen feet above the ground, there it is warm. . . . Why is that?"

"I really don't know," said Kovrin, and he laughed.

"H'm! . . . One can't know everything, of course. . . . However large the intellect may be, you can't find room for everything in it. I suppose you still go in chiefly for philosophy?"

"Yes, I lecture in psychology; I am working at philosophy in general."

"And it does not bore you?"

"On the contrary, it's all I live for."

"Well, God bless you! . . ." said Yegor Semyonitch, meditatively stroking his grey whiskers. "God bless you! . . . I am delighted about you . . . delighted, my boy. . . ."

But suddenly he listened, and, with a terrible face, ran off and quickly disappeared behind the trees in a cloud of smoke.

"Who tied this horse to an apple-tree?" Kovrin heard his despairing, heart-rending cry. "Who is the low scoundrel who has dared to tie this horse to an apple-tree? My God, my God! They have ruined everything; they have spoilt everything; they have done everything filthy, horrible, and abominable. The orchard's done for, the orchard's ruined. My God!"

When he came back to Kovrin, his face looked exhausted and mortified.

"What is one to do with these accursed people?" he said in a tearful voice, flinging up his hands. "Styopka was carting dung at night, and tied the horse to an apple-tree! He twisted the reins round it, the rascal, as tightly as he could, so that the bark is rubbed off in three places. What do you think of that! I spoke to him and he stands like a post and only blinks his eyes. Hanging is too good for him."

Growing calmer, he embraced Kovrin and kissed him on the cheek.

"Well, God bless you! . . . God bless you! . . ." he muttered. "I am very glad you have come. Unutterably glad. . . . Thank you."

Then, with the same rapid step and preoccupied face, he made the round of the whole garden, and showed his former ward all his greenhouses and hot-houses, his covered-in garden, and two apiaries which he called the marvel of our century.

While they were walking the sun rose, flooding the garden with brilliant light. It grew warm. Foreseeing a long, bright, cheerful day, Kovrin recollected that it was only the beginning of May, and that he had before him a whole summer as bright, cheerful, and long; and suddenly there stirred in his bosom a joyous, youthful feeling, such as he used to experience in his childhood, running about in that garden. And he hugged the old man and kissed him affectionately. Both of them, feeling touched, went indoors and drank tea out of old-fashioned china cups, with cream and satisfying krendels made with milk and eggs; and these trifles reminded Kovrin again of his childhood and boyhood. The delightful present was blended with the impressions of the past that stirred within him; there was a tightness at his heart; yet he was happy.

He waited till Tanya was awake and had coffee with her, went for a walk, then went to his room and sat down to work. He read attentively, making notes, and from time to time raised his eyes to look out at the open windows or at the fresh, still dewy flowers in the vases on the table; and again he dropped his eyes to his book, and it seemed to him as though every vein in his body was quivering and fluttering with pleasure.

## II

In the country he led just as nervous and restless a life as in town. He read and wrote a great deal, he studied Italian, and when he was out for a walk, thought with pleasure that he would soon sit down to work again. He slept so little that every one wondered at him; if he accidentally dozed for half an hour in the daytime, he would lie awake all night, and, after a sleepless night, would feel cheerful and vigorous as though nothing had happened.

He talked a great deal, drank wine, and smoked expensive cigars. Very often, almost every day, young ladies of neighbouring families would come to the Pesotskys', and would sing and play the piano with Tanya; sometimes a young neighbour who was a good violinist would come, too. Kovrin listened with eagerness to the music and singing, and was exhausted by it, and this showed itself by his eyes closing and his head falling to one side.

One day he was sitting on the balcony after evening tea, reading. At the same time, in the drawing-room, Tanya taking soprano, one of the young ladies a contralto, and the young man with his violin, were practising a well-known serenade of Braga's. Kovrin listened to the words--they were Russian--and could not understand their meaning. At last, leaving his book and listening attentively, he understood: a maiden, full of sick fancies, heard one night in her garden mysterious sounds, so strange and lovely that she was obliged to recognise them as a holy harmony which is unintelligible to us mortals, and so flies back to heaven. Kovrin's eyes began to close. He got up, and in exhaustion walked up and down the drawing-room, and then the dining-room. When the singing was over he took Tanya's arm, and with her went out on the balcony.

"I have been all day thinking of a legend," he said. "I don't remember whether I have read it somewhere or heard it, but it is a strange and almost grotesque legend. To begin with, it is somewhat obscure. A thousand years ago a monk, dressed in black, wandered about the desert, somewhere in Syria or Arabia. . . . Some miles from where he was, some fisherman saw another black monk, who was moving slowly over the surface of a lake. This second monk was a mirage. Now forget all the laws of optics, which the legend does not recognise, and listen to the rest. From that mirage there was cast another mirage, then from that other a third, so that the image of the black monk began to be repeated endlessly from one layer of the atmosphere to another. So that he was seen at one time in Africa, at another in Spain, then in Italy, then in the Far North. . . . Then he passed out of the atmosphere of the earth, and now he is wandering all over the universe, still never coming into conditions in which he might disappear. Possibly he may be seen now in Mars or in some star of the Southern Cross. But, my dear, the real point on which the whole legend hangs lies in the fact that, exactly a thousand years from the day when the monk walked in the desert, the mirage will return to the atmosphere of the earth again and will appear to men. And it seems that the thousand years is almost up . . . According to the legend, we may look out for the black monk to-day or to-morrow."

"A queer mirage," said Tanya, who did not like the legend.

"But the most wonderful part of it all," laughed Kovrin, "is that I simply cannot recall where I got this legend from. Have I read it somewhere? Have I heard it? Or perhaps I dreamed of the black monk. I swear I don't remember. But the legend interests me. I have been thinking about it all day."

Letting Tanya go back to her visitors, he went out of the house, and, lost in meditation, walked by the flower-beds. The sun was already setting. The flowers, having just been watered, gave forth a damp, irritating fragrance. Indoors they began singing again, and in the distance the violin had the effect of a human voice. Kovrin, racking his brains to remember where he had read or heard the legend, turned slowly towards the park, and unconsciously went as far as the river. By a little path that ran along the steep bank, between the bare roots, he went down to the water, disturbed the peewits there and frightened two ducks. The last rays of the setting sun still threw light here and there on the gloomy pines, but it was quite dark on the surface of the river. Kovrin crossed to the other side by the narrow bridge. Before him lay a wide field covered with young rye not yet in blossom. There was no living habitation, no living soul in the distance, and it seemed as though the little path, if one went along it, would take one to the unknown, mysterious place where the sun had just gone down, and where the evening glow was flaming in immensity and splendour.

"How open, how free, how still it is here!" thought Kovrin, walking along the path. "And it feels as though all the world were watching me, hiding and waiting for me to understand it. . . ."

But then waves began running across the rye, and a light evening breeze softly touched his uncovered head. A minute later there was another gust of wind, but stronger--the rye began rustling, and he heard behind him the hollow murmur of the pines. Kovrin stood still in amazement. From the horizon there rose up to the sky, like a whirlwind or a waterspout, a tall black column. Its outline was indistinct, but from the first instant it could be seen that it was not standing still, but moving with fearful rapidity, moving straight towards Kovrin, and the nearer it came the smaller and the more distinct it was. Kovrin moved aside into the rye to make way for it, and only just had time to do so.

A monk, dressed in black, with a grey head and black eyebrows, his arms crossed over his breast, floated by him. . . . His bare feet did not touch the earth. After he had floated twenty feet beyond him, he looked round at Kovrin, and nodded to him with a friendly but sly smile. But what a pale, fearfully pale, thin face! Beginning to grow larger again, he flew across the river, collided noiselessly with the clay bank and pines, and passing through them, vanished like smoke.

"Why, you see," muttered Kovrin, "there must be truth in the legend."

Without trying to explain to himself the strange apparition, glad that he had succeeded in seeing so near and so distinctly, not only the monk's black garments, but even his face and eyes, agreeably excited, he went back to the house.

In the park and in the garden people were moving about quietly, in the house they were playing--so he alone had seen the monk. He had an intense desire to tell Tanya and Yegor Semyonitch, but he reflected that they would certainly think his words the ravings of delirium, and that would frighten them; he had better say nothing.

He laughed aloud, sang, and danced the mazurka; he was in high spirits, and all of them, the visitors and Tanya, thought he had a peculiar look, radiant and inspired, and that he was very interesting.

### III

After supper, when the visitors had gone, he went to his room and lay down on the sofa: he wanted to think about the monk. But a minute later Tanya came in.

"Here, Andryusha; read father's articles," she said, giving him a bundle of pamphlets and proofs. "They are splendid articles. He writes capitally."

"Capitally, indeed!" said Yegor Semyonitch, following her and smiling constrainedly; he was ashamed. "Don't listen to her, please; don't read them! Though, if you want to go to sleep, read them by all means; they are a fine soporific."

"I think they are splendid articles," said Tanya, with deep conviction. "You read them, Andryusha, and persuade father to write oftener. He could write a complete manual of horticulture."

Yegor Semyonitch gave a forced laugh, blushed, and began uttering the phrases usually made us of by an embarrassed author. At last he began to give way.

"In that case, begin with Gaucher's article and these Russian articles," he muttered, turning over the pamphlets with a trembling hand, "or else you won't understand. Before you read my objections, you must know what I am objecting to. But it's all nonsense . . . tiresome stuff. Besides, I believe it's bedtime."

Tanya went away. Yegor Semyonitch sat down on the sofa by Kovrin and heaved a deep sigh.

"Yes, my boy . . ." he began after a pause. "That's how it is, my dear lecturer. Here I write articles, and take part in exhibitions, and receive medals. . . . Pesotsky, they say, has apples the size of a head, and Pesotsky, they say, has made his fortune with his garden. In short, 'Kotcheby is rich and glorious.' But one asks oneself: what is it all for? The garden is certainly fine, a model. It's not really a garden, but a regular institution, which is of the greatest public importance because it marks, so to say, a new era in Russian agriculture and Russian industry. But, what's it for? What's the object of it?"

"The fact speaks for itself."

"I do not mean in that sense. I meant to ask: what will happen to the garden when I die? In the condition in which you see it now, it would not be maintained for one month without me. The whole secret of success lies not in its being a big garden or a great number of labourers being employed in it, but in the fact that I love the work. Do you understand? I love it perhaps more than myself. Look at me; I do everything myself. I work from morning to night: I do all the grafting myself, the pruning myself, the planting myself. I do it all myself: when any one helps me I am jealous and irritable till I am rude. The whole secret lies in loving it--that is, in the sharp eye of the master; yes, and in the

master's hands, and in the feeling that makes one, when one goes anywhere for an hour's visit, sit, ill at ease, with one's heart far away, afraid that something may have happened in the garden. But when I die, who will look after it? Who will work? The gardener? The labourers? Yes? But I will tell you, my dear fellow, the worst enemy in the garden is not a hare, not a cockchafer, and not the frost, but any outside person."

"And Tanya?" asked Kovrin, laughing. "She can't be more harmful than a hare? She loves the work and understands it."

"Yes, she loves it and understands it. If after my death the garden goes to her and she is the mistress, of course nothing better could be wished. But if, which God forbid, she should marry," Yegor Semyonitch whispered, and looked with a frightened look at Kovrin, "that's just it. If she marries and children come, she will have no time to think about the garden. What I fear most is: she will marry some fine gentleman, and he will be greedy, and he will let the garden to people who will run it for profit, and everything will go to the devil the very first year! In our work females are the scourge of God!"

Yegor Semyonitch sighed and paused for a while.

"Perhaps it is egoism, but I tell you frankly: I don't want Tanya to get married. I am afraid of it! There is one young dandy comes to see us, bringing his violin and scraping on it; I know Tanya will not marry him, I know it quite well; but I can't bear to see him! Altogether, my boy, I am very queer. I know that."

Yegor Semyonitch got up and walked about the room in excitement, and it was evident that he wanted to say something very important, but could not bring himself to it.

"I am very fond of you, and so I am going to speak to you openly," he decided at last, thrusting his hands into his pockets. "I deal plainly with certain delicate questions, and say exactly what I think, and I cannot endure so-called hidden thoughts. I will speak plainly: you are the only man to whom I should not be afraid to marry my daughter. You are a clever man with a good heart, and would not let my beloved work go to ruin; and the chief reason is that I love you as a son, and I am proud of you. If Tanya and you could get up a romance somehow, then--well! I should be very glad and even happy. I tell you this plainly, without mincing matters, like an honest man."

Kovrin laughed. Yegor Semyonitch opened the door to go out, and stood in the doorway.

"If Tanya and you had a son, I would make a horticulturist of him," he said, after a moment's thought. "However, this is idle dreaming. Goodnight."

Left alone, Kovrin settled himself more comfortably on the sofa and took up the articles. The title of one was "On Intercropping"; of another, "A few Words on the Remarks of Monsieur Z. concerning the Trenching of the Soil for a New Garden"; a third, "Additional Matter concerning Grafting with a Dormant Bud"; and they were all of the same sort. But what a restless, jerky tone! What nervous, almost hysterical passion! Here

was an article, one would have thought, with most peaceable and impersonal contents: the subject of it was the Russian Antonovsky Apple. But Yegor Semyonitch began it with "Audiatur altera pars," and finished it with "Sapienti sat"; and between these two quotations a perfect torrent of venomous phrases directed "at the learned ignorance of our recognised horticultural authorities, who observe Nature from the height of their university chairs," or at Monsieur Gaucher, "whose success has been the work of the vulgar and the dilettanti." "And then followed an inappropriate, affected, and insincere regret that peasants who stole fruit and broke the branches could not nowadays be flogged.

"It is beautiful, charming, healthy work, but even in this there is strife and passion," thought Kovrin, "I suppose that everywhere and in all careers men of ideas are nervous, and marked by exaggerated sensitiveness. Most likely it must be so."

He thought of Tanya, who was so pleased with Yegor Semyonitch's articles. Small, pale, and so thin that her shoulder-blades stuck out, her eyes, wide and open, dark and intelligent, had an intent gaze, as though looking for something. She walked like her father with a little hurried step. She talked a great deal and was fond of arguing, accompanying every phrase, however insignificant, with expressive mimicry and gesticulation. No doubt she was nervous in the extreme.

Kovrin went on reading the articles, but he understood nothing of them, and flung them aside. The same pleasant excitement with which he had earlier in the evening danced the mazurka and listened to the music was now mastering him again and rousing a multitude of thoughts. He got up and began walking about the room, thinking about the black monk. It occurred to him that if this strange, supernatural monk had appeared to him only, that meant that he was ill and had reached the point of having hallucinations. This reflection frightened him, but not for long.

"But I am all right, and I am doing no harm to any one; so there is no harm in my hallucinations," he thought; and he felt happy again.

He sat down on the sofa and clasped his hands round his head. Restraining the unaccountable joy which filled his whole being, he then paced up and down again, and sat down to his work. But the thought that he read in the book did not satisfy him. He wanted something gigantic, unfathomable, stupendous. Towards morning he undressed and reluctantly went to bed: he ought to sleep.

When he heard the footsteps of Yegor Semyonitch going out into the garden, Kovrin rang the bell and asked the footman to bring him some wine. He drank several glasses of Lafitte, then wrapped himself up, head and all; his consciousness grew clouded and he fell asleep.

## IV

Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya often quarrelled and said nasty things to each other.

They quarrelled about something that morning. Tanya burst out crying and went to her room. She would not come down to dinner nor to tea. At first Yegor Semyonitch went about looking sulky and dignified, as though to give every one to understand that for him the claims of justice and good order were more important than anything else in the world; but he could not keep it up for long, and soon sank into depression. He walked about the park dejectedly, continually sighing: "Oh, my God! My God!" and at dinner did not eat a morsel. At last, guilty and conscience-stricken, he knocked at the locked door and called timidly:

"Tanya! Tanya!"

And from behind the door came a faint voice, weak with crying but still determined:

"Leave me alone, if you please."

The depression of the master and mistress was reflected in the whole household, even in the labourers working in the garden. Kovrin was absorbed in his interesting work, but at last he, too, felt dreary and uncomfortable. To dissipate the general ill-humour in some way, he made up his mind to intervene, and towards evening he knocked at Tanya's door. He was admitted.

"Fie, fie, for shame!" he began playfully, looking with surprise at Tanya's tear-stained, woebegone face, flushed in patches with crying. "Is it really so serious? Fie, fie!"

"But if you knew how he tortures me!" she said, and floods of scalding tears streamed from her big eyes. "He torments me to death," she went on, wringing her hands. "I said nothing to him . . . nothing . . . I only said that there was no need to keep . . . too many labourers . . . if we could hire them by the day when we wanted them. You know . . . you know the labourers have been doing nothing for a whole week. . . . I . . . I . . . only said that, and he shouted and . . . said . . . a lot of horrible insulting things to me. What for?"

"There, there," said Kovrin, smoothing her hair. "You've quarrelled with each other, you've cried, and that's enough. You must not be angry for long--that's wrong . . . all the more as he loves you beyond everything."

"He has . . . has spoiled my whole life," Tanya went on, sobbing. "I hear nothing but abuse and . . . insults. He thinks I am of no use in the house. Well! He is right. I shall go away to-morrow; I shall become a telegraph clerk. . . . I don't care. . . ."

"Come, come, come. . . . You mustn't cry, Tanya. You mustn't, dear . . . You are both hot-tempered and irritable, and you are both to blame. Come along; I will reconcile you."

Kovrin talked affectionately and persuasively, while she went on crying, twitching her shoulders and wringing her hands, as though some terrible misfortune had really befallen her. He felt all the sorrier for her because her grief was not a serious one, yet she suffered extremely. What trivialities were enough to make this little creature miserable for a whole day, perhaps for her whole life! Comforting Tanya, Kovrin thought that, apart from this girl and her father, he might hunt the world over and would not find people who would love him as one of themselves, as one of their kindred. If it had not been for those two he might very likely, having lost his father and mother in early childhood, never to the day of his death have known what was meant by genuine affection and that naïve, uncritical love which is only lavished on very close blood relations; and he felt that the nerves of this weeping, shaking girl responded to his half-sick, overstrained nerves like iron to a magnet. He never could have loved a healthy, strong, rosy-cheeked woman, but pale, weak, unhappy Tanya attracted him.

And he liked stroking her hair and her shoulders, pressing her hand and wiping away her tears. . . . At last she left off crying. She went on for a long time complaining of her father and her hard, insufferable life in that house, entreating Kovrin to put himself in her place; then she began, little by little, smiling, and sighing that God had given her such a bad temper. At last, laughing aloud, she called herself a fool, and ran out of the room.

When a little later Kovrin went into the garden, Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya were walking side by side along an avenue as though nothing had happened, and both were eating rye bread with salt on it, as both were hungry.

## V

Glad that he had been so successful in the part of peacemaker, Kovrin went into the park. Sitting on a garden seat, thinking, he heard the rattle of a carriage and a feminine laugh--visitors were arriving. When the shades of evening began falling on the garden, the sounds of the violin and singing voices reached him indistinctly, and that reminded him of the black monk. Where, in what land or in what planet, was that optical absurdity moving now?

Hardly had he recalled the legend and pictured in his imagination the dark apparition he had seen in the rye-field, when, from behind a pine-tree exactly opposite, there came out noiselessly, without the slightest rustle, a man of medium height with uncovered grey head, all in black, and barefooted like a beggar, and his black eyebrows stood out conspicuously on his pale, death-like face. Nodding his head graciously, this beggar or pilgrim came noiselessly to the seat and sat down, and Kovrin recognised him as the black monk.

For a minute they looked at one another, Kovrin with amazement, and the monk with friendliness, and, just as before, a little slyness, as though he were thinking something to himself.

"But you are a mirage," said Kovrin. "Why are you here and sitting still? That does not fit in with the legend."

"That does not matter," the monk answered in a low voice, not immediately turning his face towards him. "The legend, the mirage, and I are all the products of your excited imagination. I am a phantom."

"Then you don't exist?" said Kovrin.

"You can think as you like," said the monk, with a faint smile. "I exist in your imagination, and your imagination is part of nature, so I exist in nature."

"You have a very old, wise, and extremely expressive face, as though you really had lived more than a thousand years," said Kovrin. "I did not know that my imagination was capable of creating such phenomena. But why do you look at me with such enthusiasm? Do you like me?"

"Yes, you are one of those few who are justly called the chosen of God. You do the service of eternal truth. Your thoughts, your designs, the marvellous studies you are engaged in, and all your life, bear the Divine, the heavenly stamp, seeing that they are consecrated to the rational and the beautiful--that is, to what is eternal."

"You said 'eternal truth.' . . . But is eternal truth of use to man and within his reach, if there is no eternal life?"

"There is eternal life," said the monk.

"Do you believe in the immortality of man?"

"Yes, of course. A grand, brilliant future is in store for you men. And the more there are like you on earth, the sooner will this future be realised. Without you who serve the higher principle and live in full understanding and freedom, mankind would be of little account; developing in a natural way, it would have to wait a long time for the end of its earthly history. You will lead it some thousands of years earlier into the kingdom of eternal truth--and therein lies your supreme service. You are the incarnation of the blessing of God, which rests upon men."

"And what is the object of eternal life?" asked Kovrin.

"As of all life--enjoyment. True enjoyment lies in knowledge, and eternal life provides innumerable and inexhaustible sources of knowledge, and in that sense it has been said: 'In My Father's house there are many mansions.'"

"If only you knew how pleasant it is to hear you!" said Kovrin, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

"I am very glad."

"But I know that when you go away I shall be worried by the question of your reality. You are a phantom, an hallucination. So I am mentally deranged, not normal?"

"What if you are? Why trouble yourself? You are ill because you have overworked and exhausted yourself, and that means that you have sacrificed your health to the idea, and the time is near at hand when you will give up life itself to it. What could be better? That is the goal towards which all divinely endowed, noble natures strive."

"If I know I am mentally affected, can I trust myself?"

"And are you sure that the men of genius, whom all men trust, did not see phantoms, too? The learned say now that genius is allied to madness. My friend, healthy and normal people are only the common herd. Reflections upon the neurasthenia of the age, nervous exhaustion and degeneracy, et cetera, can only seriously agitate those who place the object of life in the present--that is, the common herd."

"The Romans used to say: Mens sana in corpore sano."

"Not everything the Greeks and the Romans said is true. Exaltation, enthusiasm, ecstasy--all that distinguishes prophets, poets, martyrs for the idea, from the common folk--is repellent to the animal side of man--that is, his physical health. I repeat, if you want to be healthy and normal, go to the common herd."

"Strange that you repeat what often comes into my mind," said Kovrin. "It is as though you had seen and overheard my secret thoughts. But don't let us talk about me. What do you mean by 'eternal truth'?"

The monk did not answer. Kovrin looked at him and could not distinguish his face. His features grew blurred and misty. Then the monk's head and arms disappeared; his body seemed merged into the seat and the evening twilight, and he vanished altogether.

"The hallucination is over," said Kovrin; and he laughed. "It's a pity."

He went back to the house, light-hearted and happy. The little the monk had said to him had flattered, not his vanity, but his whole soul, his whole being. To be one of the chosen, to serve eternal truth, to stand in the ranks of those who could make mankind worthy of the kingdom of God some thousands of years sooner--that is, to free men from some thousands of years of unnecessary struggle, sin, and suffering; to sacrifice to the idea everything--youth, strength, health; to be ready to die for the common weal--what an exalted, what a happy lot! He recalled his past--pure, chaste, laborious; he remembered what he had learned himself and what he had taught to others, and decided that there was no exaggeration in the monk's words.

Tanya came to meet him in the park: she was by now wearing a different dress.

"Are you here?" she said. "And we have been looking and looking for you. . . . But what is the matter with you?" she asked in wonder, glancing at his radiant, ecstatic face and eyes full of tears. "How strange you are, Andryusha!"

"I am pleased, Tanya," said Kovrin, laying his hand on her shoulders. "I am more than pleased: I am happy. Tanya, darling Tanya, you are an extraordinary, nice creature. Dear Tanya, I am so glad, I am so glad!"

He kissed both her hands ardently, and went on:

"I have just passed through an exalted, wonderful, unearthly moment. But I can't tell you all about it or you would call me mad and not believe me. Let us talk of you. Dear, delightful Tanya! I love you, and am used to loving you. To have you near me, to meet you a dozen times a day, has become a necessity of my existence; I don't know how I shall get on without you when I go back home."

"Oh," laughed Tanya, "you will forget about us in two days. We are humble people and you are a great man."

"No; let us talk in earnest!" he said. "I shall take you with me, Tanya. Yes? Will you come with me? Will you be mine?"

"Come," said Tanya, and tried to laugh again, but the laugh would not come, and patches of colour came into her face.

She began breathing quickly and walked very quickly, but not to the house, but further into the park.

"I was not thinking of it . . . I was not thinking of it," she said, wringing her hands in despair.

And Kovrin followed her and went on talking, with the same radiant, enthusiastic face:

"I want a love that will dominate me altogether; and that love only you, Tanya, can give me. I am happy! I am happy!"

She was overwhelmed, and huddling and shrinking together, seemed ten years older all at once, while he thought her beautiful and expressed his rapture aloud:

"How lovely she is!"

## VI

Learning from Kovrin that not only a romance had been got up, but that there would even be a wedding, Yegor Semyonitch spent a long time in pacing from one corner of the room to the other, trying to conceal his agitation. His hands began trembling, his neck swelled and turned purple, he ordered his racing droshky and drove off somewhere. Tanya, seeing how he lashed the horse, and seeing how he pulled his cap over his ears, understood what he was feeling, shut herself up in her room, and cried the whole day.

In the hot-houses the peaches and plums were already ripe; the packing and sending off of these tender and fragile goods to Moscow took a great deal of care, work, and trouble. Owing to the fact that the summer was very hot and dry, it was necessary to water every tree, and a great deal of time and labour was spent on doing it. Numbers of caterpillars made their appearance, which, to Kovrin's disgust, the labourers and even Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya squashed with their fingers. In spite of all that, they had already to book autumn orders for fruit and trees, and to carry on a great deal of correspondence. And at the very busiest time, when no one seemed to have a free moment, the work of the fields carried off more than half their labourers from the garden. Yegor Semyonitch, sunburnt, exhausted, ill-humoured, galloped from the fields to the garden and back again; cried that he was being torn to pieces, and that he should put a bullet through his brains.

Then came the fuss and worry of the trousseau, to which the Pesotskys attached a good deal of importance. Every one's head was in a whirl from the snipping of the scissors, the rattle of the sewing-machine, the smell of hot irons, and the caprices of the dressmaker, a huffy and nervous lady. And, as ill-luck would have it, visitors came every day, who had to be entertained, fed, and even put up for the night. But all this hard labour passed unnoticed as though in a fog. Tanya felt that love and happiness had taken her unawares, though she had, since she was fourteen, for some reason been convinced that Kovrin would marry her and no one else. She was bewildered, could not grasp it, could not believe herself. . . . At one minute such joy would swoop down upon her that she longed to fly away to the clouds and there pray to God, at another moment she would remember that in August she would have to part from her home and leave her father; or, goodness knows why, the idea would occur to her that she was worthless--insignificant and unworthy of a great man like Kovrin--and she would go to her room, lock herself in, and cry bitterly for several hours. When there were visitors, she would suddenly fancy that Kovrin looked extraordinarily handsome, and that all the women were in love with him and envying her, and her soul was filled with pride and rapture, as though she had vanquished the whole world; but he had only to smile politely at any young lady for her to be trembling with jealousy, to retreat to her room--and tears again. These new sensations mastered her completely; she helped her father mechanically, without noticing peaches, caterpillars or labourers, or how rapidly the time was passing.

It was almost the same with Yegor Semyonitch. He worked from morning till night, was always in a hurry, was irritable, and flew into rages, but all of this was in a sort of spellbound dream. It seemed as though there were two men in him: one was the real

Yegor Semyonitch, who was moved to indignation, and clutched his head in despair when he heard of some irregularity from Ivan Karlovitch the gardener; and another--not the real one--who seemed as though he were half drunk, would interrupt a business conversation at half a word, touch the gardener on the shoulder, and begin muttering:

"Say what you like, there is a great deal in blood. His mother was a wonderful woman, most high-minded and intelligent. It was a pleasure to look at her good, candid, pure face; it was like the face of an angel. She drew splendidly, wrote verses, spoke five foreign languages, sang. . . . Poor thing! she died of consumption. The Kingdom of Heaven be hers."

The unreal Yegor Semyonitch sighed, and after a pause went on:

"When he was a boy and growing up in my house, he had the same angelic face, good and candid. The way he looks and talks and moves is as soft and elegant as his mother's. And his intellect! We were always struck with his intelligence. To be sure, it's not for nothing he's a Master of Arts! It's not for nothing! And wait a bit, Ivan Karlovitch, what will he be in ten years' time? He will be far above us!"

But at this point the real Yegor Semyonitch, suddenly coming to himself, would make a terrible face, would clutch his head and cry:

"The devils! They have spoilt everything! They have ruined everything! They have spoilt everything! The garden's done for, the garden's ruined!"

Kovrin, meanwhile, worked with the same ardour as before, and did not notice the general commotion. Love only added fuel to the flames. After every talk with Tanya he went to his room, happy and triumphant, took up his book or his manuscript with the same passion with which he had just kissed Tanya and told her of his love. What the black monk had told him of the chosen of God, of eternal truth, of the brilliant future of mankind and so on, gave peculiar and extraordinary significance to his work, and filled his soul with pride and the consciousness of his own exalted consequence. Once or twice a week, in the park or in the house, he met the black monk and had long conversations with him, but this did not alarm him, but, on the contrary, delighted him, as he was now firmly persuaded that such apparitions only visited the elect few who rise up above their fellows and devote themselves to the service of the idea.

One day the monk appeared at dinner-time and sat in the dining-room window. Kovrin was delighted, and very adroitly began a conversation with Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya of what might be of interest to the monk; the black-robed visitor listened and nodded his head graciously, and Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya listened, too, and smiled gaily without suspecting that Kovrin was not talking to them but to his hallucination.

Imperceptibly the fast of the Assumption was approaching, and soon after came the wedding, which, at Yegor Semyonitch's urgent desire, was celebrated with "a flourish"--that is, with senseless festivities that lasted for two whole days and nights. Three

thousand roubles' worth of food and drink was consumed, but the music of the wretched hired band, the noisy toasts, the scurrying to and fro of the footmen, the uproar and crowding, prevented them from appreciating the taste of the expensive wines and wonderful delicacies ordered from Moscow.

## VII

One long winter night Kovrin was lying in bed, reading a French novel. Poor Tanya, who had headaches in the evenings from living in town, to which she was not accustomed, had been asleep a long while, and, from time to time, articulated some incoherent phrase in her restless dreams.

It struck three o'clock. Kovrin put out the light and lay down to sleep, lay for a long time with his eyes closed, but could not get to sleep because, as he fancied, the room was very hot and Tanya talked in her sleep. At half-past four he lighted the candle again, and this time he saw the black monk sitting in an arm-chair near the bed.

"Good-morning," said the monk, and after a brief pause he asked: "What are you thinking of now?"

"Of fame," answered Kovrin. "In the French novel I have just been reading, there is a description of a young savant, who does silly things and pines away through worrying about fame. I can't understand such anxiety."

"Because you are wise. Your attitude towards fame is one of indifference, as towards a toy which no longer interests you."

"Yes, that is true."

"Renown does not allure you now. What is there flattering, amusing, or edifying in their carving your name on a tombstone, then time rubbing off the inscription together with the gilding? Moreover, happily there are too many of you for the weak memory of mankind to be able to retain your names."

"Of course," assented Kovrin. "Besides, why should they be remembered? But let us talk of something else. Of happiness, for instance. What is happiness?"

When the clock struck five, he was sitting on the bed, dangling his feet to the carpet, talking to the monk:

"In ancient times a happy man grew at last frightened of his happiness --it was so great!-- and to propitiate the gods he brought as a sacrifice his favourite ring. Do you know, I, too, like Polykrates, begin to be uneasy of my happiness. It seems strange to me that from morning to night I feel nothing but joy; it fills my whole being and smothers all other feelings. I don't know what sadness, grief, or boredom is. Here I am not asleep; I suffer from sleeplessness, but I am not dull. I say it in earnest; I begin to feel perplexed."

"But why?" the monk asked in wonder. "Is joy a supernatural feeling? Ought it not to be the normal state of man? The more highly a man is developed on the intellectual and moral side, the more independent he is, the more pleasure life gives him. Socrates,

Diogenes, and Marcus Aurelius, were joyful, not sorrowful. And the Apostle tells us: 'Rejoice continually'; 'Rejoice and be glad.'"

"But will the gods be suddenly wrathful?" Kovrin jested; and he laughed. "If they take from me comfort and make me go cold and hungry, it won't be very much to my taste."

Meanwhile Tanya woke up and looked with amazement and horror at her husband. He was talking, addressing the arm-chair, laughing and gesticulating; his eyes were gleaming, and there was something strange in his laugh.

"Andryusha, whom are you talking to?" she asked, clutching the hand he stretched out to the monk. "Andryusha! Whom?"

"Oh! Whom?" said Kovrin in confusion. "Why, to him. . . . He is sitting here," he said, pointing to the black monk.

"There is no one here . . . no one! Andryusha, you are ill!"

Tanya put her arm round her husband and held him tight, as though protecting him from the apparition, and put her hand over his eyes.

"You are ill!" she sobbed, trembling all over. "Forgive me, my precious, my dear one, but I have noticed for a long time that your mind is clouded in some way. . . . You are mentally ill, Andryusha  
. . . ."

Her trembling infected him, too. He glanced once more at the arm-chair, which was now empty, felt a sudden weakness in his arms and legs, was frightened, and began dressing.

"It's nothing, Tanya; it's nothing," he muttered, shivering. "I really am not quite well . . . it's time to admit that."

"I have noticed it for a long time . . . and father has noticed it," she said, trying to suppress her sobs. "You talk to yourself, smile somehow strangely . . . and can't sleep. Oh, my God, my God, save us!" she said in terror. "But don't be frightened, Andryusha; for God's sake don't be frightened. . . ."

She began dressing, too. Only now, looking at her, Kovrin realised the danger of his position--realised the meaning of the black monk and his conversations with him. It was clear to him now that he was mad.

Neither of them knew why they dressed and went into the dining-room: she in front and he following her. There they found Yegor Semyonitch standing in his dressing-gown and with a candle in his hand. He was staying with them, and had been awakened by Tanya's sobs.

"Don't be frightened, Andryusha," Tanya was saying, shivering as though in a fever; "don't be frightened. . . . Father, it will all pass over. . . . it will all pass over. . . ."

Kovrin was too much agitated to speak. He wanted to say to his father-in-law in a playful tone: "Congratulate me; it appears I have gone out of my mind"; but he could only move his lips and smile bitterly.

At nine o'clock in the morning they put on his jacket and fur coat, wrapped him up in a shawl, and took him in a carriage to a doctor.

## VIII

Summer had come again, and the doctor advised their going into the country. Kovrin had recovered; he had left off seeing the black monk, and he had only to get up his strength. Staying at his father-in-law's, he drank a great deal of milk, worked for only two hours out of the twenty-four, and neither smoked nor drank wine.

On the evening before Elijah's Day they had an evening service in the house. When the deacon was handing the priest the censer the immense old room smelt like a graveyard, and Kovrin felt bored. He went out into the garden. Without noticing the gorgeous flowers, he walked about the garden, sat down on a seat, then strolled about the park; reaching the river, he went down and then stood lost in thought, looking at the water. The sullen pines with their shaggy roots, which had seen him a year before so young, so joyful and confident, were not whispering now, but standing mute and motionless, as though they did not recognise him. And, indeed, his head was closely cropped, his beautiful long hair was gone, his step was lagging, his face was fuller and paler than last summer.

He crossed by the footbridge to the other side. Where the year before there had been rye the oats stood, reaped, and lay in rows. The sun had set and there was a broad stretch of glowing red on the horizon, a sign of windy weather next day. It was still. Looking in the direction from which the year before the black monk had first appeared, Kovrin stood for twenty minutes, till the evening glow had begun to fade. . . .

When, listless and dissatisfied, he returned home the service was over. Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya were sitting on the steps of the verandah, drinking tea. They were talking of something, but, seeing Kovrin, ceased at once, and he concluded from their faces that their talk had been about him.

"I believe it is time for you to have your milk," Tanya said to her husband.

"No, it is not time yet . . ." he said, sitting down on the bottom step. "Drink it yourself; I don't want it."

Tanya exchanged a troubled glance with her father, and said in a guilty voice:

"You notice yourself that milk does you good."

"Yes, a great deal of good!" Kovrin laughed. "I congratulate you: I have gained a pound in weight since Friday." He pressed his head tightly in his hands and said miserably: "Why, why have you cured me? Preparations of bromide, idleness, hot baths, supervision, cowardly consternation at every mouthful, at every step--all this will reduce me at last to idiocy. I went out of my mind, I had megalomania; but then I was cheerful, confident, and even happy; I was interesting and original. Now I have become more sensible and stolid, but I am just like every one else: I am--mediocrity; I am weary of life. . . . Oh, how

cruelly you have treated me! . . . I saw hallucinations, but what harm did that do to any one? I ask, what harm did that do any one?"

"Goodness knows what you are saying!" sighed Yegor Semyonitch. "It's positively wearisome to listen to it."

"Then don't listen."

The presence of other people, especially Yegor Semyonitch, irritated Kovrin now; he answered him drily, coldly, and even rudely, never looked at him but with irony and hatred, while Yegor Semyonitch was overcome with confusion and cleared his throat guiltily, though he was not conscious of any fault in himself. At a loss to understand why their charming and affectionate relations had changed so abruptly, Tanya huddled up to her father and looked anxiously in his face; she wanted to understand and could not understand, and all that was clear to her was that their relations were growing worse and worse every day, that of late her father had begun to look much older, and her husband had grown irritable, capricious, quarrelsome and uninteresting. She could not laugh or sing; at dinner she ate nothing; did not sleep for nights together, expecting something awful, and was so worn out that on one occasion she lay in a dead faint from dinner-time till evening. During the service she thought her father was crying, and now while the three of them were sitting together on the terrace she made an effort not to think of it.

"How fortunate Buddha, Mahomed, and Shakespeare were that their kind relations and doctors did not cure them of their ecstasy and their inspiration," said Kovrin. "If Mahomed had taken bromide for his nerves, had worked only two hours out of the twenty-four, and had drunk milk, that remarkable man would have left no more trace after him than his dog. Doctors and kind relations will succeed in stupefying mankind, in making mediocrity pass for genius and in bringing civilisation to ruin. If only you knew," Kovrin said with annoyance, "how grateful I am to you."

He felt intense irritation, and to avoid saying too much, he got up quickly and went into the house. It was still, and the fragrance of the tobacco plant and the marvel of Peru floated in at the open window. The moonlight lay in green patches on the floor and on the piano in the big dark dining-room. Kovrin remembered the raptures of the previous summer when there had been the same scent of the marvel of Peru and the moon had shone in at the window. To bring back the mood of last year he went quickly to his study, lighted a strong cigar, and told the footman to bring him some wine. But the cigar left a bitter and disgusting taste in his mouth, and the wine had not the same flavour as it had the year before. And so great is the effect of giving up a habit, the cigar and the two gulps of wine made him giddy, and brought on palpitations of the heart, so that he was obliged to take bromide.

Before going to bed, Tanya said to him:

"Father adores you. You are cross with him about something, and it is killing him. Look at him; he is ageing, not from day to day, but from hour to hour. I entreat you,

Andryusha, for God's sake, for the sake of your dead father, for the sake of my peace of mind, be affectionate to him."

"I can't, I don't want to."

"But why?" asked Tanya, beginning to tremble all over. "Explain why."

"Because he is antipathetic to me, that's all," said Kovrin carelessly; and he shrugged his shoulders. "But we won't talk about him: he is your father."

"I can't understand, I can't," said Tanya, pressing her hands to her temples and staring at a fixed point. "Something incomprehensible, awful, is going on in the house. You have changed, grown unlike yourself. . . . You, clever, extraordinary man as you are, are irritated over trifles, meddle in paltry nonsense. . . . Such trivial things excite you, that sometimes one is simply amazed and can't believe that it is you. Come, come, don't be angry, don't be angry," she went on, kissing his hands, frightened of her own words. "You are clever, kind, noble. You will be just to father. He is so good."

"He is not good; he is just good-natured. Burlesque old uncles like your father, with well-fed, good-natured faces, extraordinarily hospitable and queer, at one time used to touch me and amuse me in novels and in farces and in life; now I dislike them. They are egoists to the marrow of their bones. What disgusts me most of all is their being so well-fed, and that purely bovine, purely hoggish optimism of a full stomach."

Tanya sat down on the bed and laid her head on the pillow.

"This is torture," she said, and from her voice it was evident that she was utterly exhausted, and that it was hard for her to speak. "Not one moment of peace since the winter. . . . Why, it's awful! My God! I am wretched."

"Oh, of course, I am Herod, and you and your father are the innocents. Of course."

His face seemed to Tanya ugly and unpleasant. Hatred and an ironical expression did not suit him. And, indeed, she had noticed before that there was something lacking in his face, as though ever since his hair had been cut his face had changed, too. She wanted to say something wounding to him, but immediately she caught herself in this antagonistic feeling, she was frightened and went out of the bedroom.

## IX

Kovrin received a professorship at the University. The inaugural address was fixed for the second of December, and a notice to that effect was hung up in the corridor at the University. But on the day appointed he informed the students' inspector, by telegram, that he was prevented by illness from giving the lecture.

He had haemorrhage from the throat. He was often spitting blood, but it happened two or three times a month that there was a considerable loss of blood, and then he grew extremely weak and sank into a drowsy condition. This illness did not particularly frighten him, as he knew that his mother had lived for ten years or longer suffering from the same disease, and the doctors assured him that there was no danger, and had only advised him to avoid excitement, to lead a regular life, and to speak as little as possible.

In January again his lecture did not take place owing to the same reason, and in February it was too late to begin the course. It had to be postponed to the following year.

By now he was living not with Tanya, but with another woman, who was two years older than he was, and who looked after him as though he were a baby. He was in a calm and tranquil state of mind; he readily gave in to her, and when Varvara Nikolaevna--that was the name of his friend--decided to take him to the Crimea, he agreed, though he had a presentiment that no good would come of the trip.

They reached Sevastopol in the evening and stopped at an hotel to rest and go on the next day to Yalta. They were both exhausted by the journey. Varvara Nikolaevna had some tea, went to bed and was soon asleep. But Kovrin did not go to bed. An hour before starting for the station, he had received a letter from Tanya, and had not brought himself to open it, and now it was lying in his coat pocket, and the thought of it excited him disagreeably. At the bottom of his heart he genuinely considered now that his marriage to Tanya had been a mistake. He was glad that their separation was final, and the thought of that woman who in the end had turned into a living relic, still walking about though everything seemed dead in her except her big, staring, intelligent eyes--the thought of her roused in him nothing but pity and disgust with himself. The handwriting on the envelope reminded him how cruel and unjust he had been two years before, how he had worked off his anger at his spiritual emptiness, his boredom, his loneliness, and his dissatisfaction with life by revenging himself on people in no way to blame. He remembered, also, how he had torn up his dissertation and all the articles he had written during his illness, and how he had thrown them out of window, and the bits of paper had fluttered in the wind and caught on the trees and flowers. In every line of them he saw strange, utterly groundless pretension, shallow defiance, arrogance, megalomania; and they made him feel as though he were reading a description of his vices. But when the last manuscript had been torn up and sent flying out of window, he felt, for some reason, suddenly bitter and angry; he went to his wife and said a great many unpleasant things to her. My God, how he had tormented her! One day, wanting to cause her pain, he told her that her father had played a very unattractive part in their romance, that he had asked him to marry her.

Yegor Semyonitch accidentally overheard this, ran into the room, and, in his despair, could not utter a word, could only stamp and make a strange, bellowing sound as though he had lost the power of speech, and Tanya, looking at her father, had uttered a heart-rending shriek and had fallen into a swoon. It was hideous.

All this came back into his memory as he looked at the familiar writing. Kovrin went out on to the balcony; it was still warm weather and there was a smell of the sea. The wonderful bay reflected the moonshine and the lights, and was of a colour for which it was difficult to find a name. It was a soft and tender blending of dark blue and green; in places the water was like blue vitriol, and in places it seemed as though the moonlight were liquefied and filling the bay instead of water. And what harmony of colours, what an atmosphere of peace, calm, and sublimity!

In the lower storey under the balcony the windows were probably open, for women's voices and laughter could be heard distinctly. Apparently there was an evening party.

Kovrin made an effort, tore open the envelope, and, going back into his room, read:

"My father is just dead. I owe that to you, for you have killed him. Our garden is being ruined; strangers are managing it already --that is, the very thing is happening that poor father dreaded. That, too, I owe to you. I hate you with my whole soul, and I hope you may soon perish. Oh, how wretched I am! Insufferable anguish is burning my soul. . . . My curses on you. I took you for an extraordinary man, a genius; I loved you, and you have turned out a madman. . . ."

Kovrin could read no more, he tore up the letter and threw it away. He was overcome by an uneasiness that was akin to terror. Varvara Nikolaevna was asleep behind the screen, and he could hear her breathing. From the lower storey came the sounds of laughter and women's voices, but he felt as though in the whole hotel there were no living soul but him. Because Tanya, unhappy, broken by sorrow, had cursed him in her letter and hoped for his perdition, he felt eerie and kept glancing hurriedly at the door, as though he were afraid that the uncomprehended force which two years before had wrought such havoc in his life and in the life of those near him might come into the room and master him once more.

He knew by experience that when his nerves were out of hand the best thing for him to do was to work. He must sit down to the table and force himself, at all costs, to concentrate his mind on some one thought. He took from his red portfolio a manuscript containing a sketch of a small work of the nature of a compilation, which he had planned in case he should find it dull in the Crimea without work. He sat down to the table and began working at this plan, and it seemed to him that his calm, peaceful, indifferent mood was coming back. The manuscript with the sketch even led him to meditation on the vanity of the world. He thought how much life exacts for the worthless or very commonplace blessings it can give a man. For instance, to gain, before forty, a university chair, to be an ordinary professor, to expound ordinary and second-hand thoughts in dull, heavy, insipid language--in fact, to gain the position of a mediocre learned man, he, Kovrin, had had to

study for fifteen years, to work day and night, to endure a terrible mental illness, to experience an unhappy marriage, and to do a great number of stupid and unjust things which it would have been pleasant not to remember. Kovrin recognised clearly, now, that he was a mediocrity, and readily resigned himself to it, as he considered that every man ought to be satisfied with what he is.

The plan of the volume would have soothed him completely, but the torn letter showed white on the floor and prevented him from concentrating his attention. He got up from the table, picked up the pieces of the letter and threw them out of window, but there was a light wind blowing from the sea, and the bits of paper were scattered on the windowsill. Again he was overcome by uneasiness akin to terror, and he felt as though in the whole hotel there were no living soul but himself. . . . He went out on the balcony. The bay, like a living thing, looked at him with its multitude of light blue, dark blue, turquoise and fiery eyes, and seemed beckoning to him. And it really was hot and oppressive, and it would not have been amiss to have a bathe.

Suddenly in the lower storey under the balcony a violin began playing, and two soft feminine voices began singing. It was something familiar. The song was about a maiden, full of sick fancies, who heard one night in her garden mysterious sounds, so strange and lovely that she was obliged to recognise them as a holy harmony which is unintelligible to us mortals, and so flies back to heaven . . . . Kovrin caught his breath and there was a pang of sadness at his heart, and a thrill of the sweet, exquisite delight he had so long forgotten began to stir in his breast.

A tall black column, like a whirlwind or a waterspout, appeared on the further side of the bay. It moved with fearful rapidity across the bay, towards the hotel, growing smaller and darker as it came, and Kovrin only just had time to get out of the way to let it pass . . . . The monk with bare grey head, black eyebrows, barefoot, his arms crossed over his breast, floated by him, and stood still in the middle of the room.

"Why did you not believe me?" he asked reproachfully, looking affectionately at Kovrin. "If you had believed me then, that you were a genius, you would not have spent these two years so gloomily and so wretchedly."

Kovrin already believed that he was one of God's chosen and a genius; he vividly recalled his conversations with the monk in the past and tried to speak, but the blood flowed from his throat on to his breast, and not knowing what he was doing, he passed his hands over his breast, and his cuffs were soaked with blood. He tried to call Varvara Nikolaevna, who was asleep behind the screen; he made an effort and said:

"Tanya!"

He fell on the floor, and propping himself on his arms, called again:

"Tanya!"

He called Tanya, called to the great garden with the gorgeous flowers sprinkled with dew, called to the park, the pines with their shaggy roots, the rye-field, his marvellous learning, his youth, courage, joy--called to life, which was so lovely. He saw on the floor near his face a great pool of blood, and was too weak to utter a word, but an unspeakable, infinite happiness flooded his whole being. Below, under the balcony, they were playing the serenade, and the black monk whispered to him that he was a genius, and that he was dying only because his frail human body had lost its balance and could no longer serve as the mortal garb of genius.

When Varvara Nikolaevna woke up and came out from behind the screen, Kovrin was dead, and a blissful smile was set upon his face.

## VOLODYA

AT five o'clock one Sunday afternoon in summer, Volodya, a plain, shy, sickly-looking lad of seventeen, was sitting in the arbour of the Shumihins' country villa, feeling dreary. His despondent thought flowed in three directions. In the first place, he had next day, Monday, an examination in mathematics; he knew that if he did not get through the written examination on the morrow, he would be expelled, for he had already been two years in the sixth form and had two and three-quarter marks for algebra in his annual report. In the second place, his presence at the villa of the Shumihins, a wealthy family with aristocratic pretensions, was a continual source of mortification to his amour-propre. It seemed to him that Madame Shumihin looked upon him and his maman as poor relations and dependents, that they laughed at his maman and did not respect her. He had on one occasion accidentally overheard Madame Shumihin, in the verandah, telling her cousin Anna Fyodorovna that his maman still tried to look young and got herself up, that she never paid her losses at cards, and had a partiality for other people's shoes and tobacco. Every day Volodya besought his maman not to go to the Shumihins', and drew a picture of the humiliating part she played with these gentlefolk. He tried to persuade her, said rude things, but she--a frivolous, pampered woman, who had run through two fortunes, her own and her husband's, in her time, and always gravitated towards acquaintances of high rank--did not understand him, and twice a week Volodya had to accompany her to the villa he hated.

In the third place, the youth could not for one instant get rid of a strange, unpleasant feeling which was absolutely new to him. . . . It seemed to him that he was in love with Anna Fyodorovna, the Shumihins' cousin, who was staying with them. She was a vivacious, loud-voiced, laughter-loving, healthy, and vigorous lady of thirty, with rosy cheeks, plump shoulders, a plump round chin and a continual smile on her thin lips. She was neither young nor beautiful--Volodya knew that perfectly well; but for some reason he could not help thinking of her, looking at her while she shrugged her plump shoulders and moved her flat back as she played croquet, or after prolonged laughter and running up and down stairs, sank into a low chair, and, half closing her eyes and gasping for breath, pretended that she was stifling and could not breathe. She was married. Her husband, a staid and dignified architect, came once a week to the villa, slept soundly, and returned to town. Volodya's strange feeling had begun with his conceiving an unaccountable hatred for the architect, and feeling relieved every time he went back to town.

Now, sitting in the arbour, thinking of his examination next day, and of his maman, at whom they laughed, he felt an intense desire to see Nyuta (that was what the Shumihins called Anna Fyodorovna), to hear her laughter and the rustle of her dress. . . . This desire was not like the pure, poetic love of which he read in novels and about which he dreamed every night when he went to bed; it was strange, incomprehensible; he was ashamed of it, and afraid of it as of something very wrong and impure, something which it was disagreeable to confess even to himself.

"It's not love," he said to himself. "One can't fall in love with women of thirty who are married. It is only a little intrigue . . . Yes, an intrigue. . . ."

Pondering on the "intrigue," he thought of his uncontrollable shyness, his lack of moustache, his freckles, his narrow eyes, and put himself in his imagination side by side with Nyuta, and the juxtaposition seemed to him impossible; then he made haste to imagine himself bold, handsome, witty, dressed in the latest fashion.

When his dreams were at their height, as he sat huddled together and looking at the ground in a dark corner of the arbour, he heard the sound of light footsteps. Some one was coming slowly along the avenue. Soon the steps stopped and something white gleamed in the entrance.

"Is there any one here?" asked a woman's voice.

Volodya recognised the voice, and raised his head in a fright.

"Who is here?" asked Nyuta, going into the arbour. "Ah, it is you, Volodya? What are you doing here? Thinking? And how can you go on thinking, thinking, thinking? . . . That's the way to go out of your mind!"

Volodya got up and looked in a dazed way at Nyuta. She had only just come back from bathing. Over her shoulder there was hanging a sheet and a rough towel, and from under the white silk kerchief on her head he could see the wet hair sticking to her forehead. There was the cool damp smell of the bath-house and of almond soap still hanging about her. She was out of breath from running quickly. The top button of her blouse was undone, so that the boy saw her throat and bosom.

"Why don't you say something?" said Nyuta, looking Volodya up and down. "It's not polite to be silent when a lady talks to you. What a clumsy seal you are though, Volodya! You always sit, saying nothing, thinking like some philosopher. There's not a spark of life or fire in you! You are really horrid! . . . At your age you ought to be living, skipping, and jumping, chattering, flirting, falling in love."

Volodya looked at the sheet that was held by a plump white hand, and thought. . . .

"He's mute," said Nyuta, with wonder; "it is strange, really. . . . Listen! Be a man! Come, you might smile at least! Phew, the horrid philosopher!" she laughed. "But do you know, Volodya, why you are such a clumsy seal? Because you don't devote yourself to the ladies. Why don't you? It's true there are no girls here, but there is nothing to prevent your flirting with the married ladies! Why don't you flirt with me, for instance?"

Volodya listened and scratched his forehead in acute and painful irresolution.

"It's only very proud people who are silent and love solitude," Nyuta went on, pulling his hand away from his forehead. "You are proud, Volodya. Why do you look at me like that

from under your brows? Look me straight in the face, if you please! Yes, now then, clumsy seal!"

Volodya made up his mind to speak. Wanting to smile, he twitched his lower lip, blinked, and again put his hand to his forehead.

"I . . . I love you," he said.

Nyuta raised her eyebrows in surprise, and laughed.

"What do I hear?" she sang, as prima-donnas sing at the opera when they hear something awful. "What? What did you say? Say it again, say it again. . . ."

"I . . . I love you!" repeated Volodya.

And without his will's having any part in his action, without reflection or understanding, he took half a step towards Nyuta and clutched her by the arm. Everything was dark before his eyes, and tears came into them. The whole world was turned into one big, rough towel which smelt of the bathhouse.

"Bravo, bravo!" he heard a merry laugh. "Why don't you speak? I want you to speak! Well?"

Seeing that he was not prevented from holding her arm, Volodya glanced at Nyuta's laughing face, and clumsily, awkwardly, put both arms round her waist, his hands meeting behind her back. He held her round the waist with both arms, while, putting her hands up to her head, showing the dimples in her elbows, she set her hair straight under the kerchief and said in a calm voice:

"You must be tactful, polite, charming, and you can only become that under feminine influence. But what a wicked, angry face you have! You must talk, laugh. . . . Yes, Volodya, don't be surly; you are young and will have plenty of time for philosophising. Come, let go of me; I am going. Let go."

Without effort she released her waist, and, humming something, walked out of the arbour. Volodya was left alone. He smoothed his hair, smiled, and walked three times to and fro across the arbour, then he sat down on the bench and smiled again. He felt insufferably ashamed, so much so that he wondered that human shame could reach such a pitch of acuteness and intensity. Shame made him smile, gesticulate, and whisper some disconnected words.

He was ashamed that he had been treated like a small boy, ashamed of his shyness, and, most of all, that he had had the audacity to put his arms round the waist of a respectable married woman, though, as it seemed to him, he had neither through age nor by external quality, nor by social position any right to do so.

He jumped up, went out of the arbour, and, without looking round, walked into the recesses of the garden furthest from the house.

"Ah! only to get away from here as soon as possible," he thought, clutching his head.  
"My God! as soon as possible."

The train by which Volodya was to go back with his maman was at eight-forty. There were three hours before the train started, but he would with pleasure have gone to the station at once without waiting for his maman.

At eight o'clock he went to the house. His whole figure was expressive of determination: what would be, would be! He made up his mind to go in boldly, to look them straight in the face, to speak in a loud voice, regardless of everything.

He crossed the terrace, the big hall and the drawing-room, and there stopped to take breath. He could hear them in the dining-room, drinking tea. Madame Shumihin, maman, and Nyuta were talking and laughing about something.

Volodya listened.

"I assure you!" said Nyuta. "I could not believe my eyes! When he began declaring his passion and--just imagine!--put his arms round my waist, I should not have recognised him. And you know he has a way with him! When he told me he was in love with me, there was something brutal in his face, like a Circassian."

"Really!" gasped maman, going off into a peal of laughter. "Really! How he does remind me of his father!"

Volodya ran back and dashed out into the open air.

"How could they talk of it aloud!" he wondered in agony, clasping his hands and looking up to the sky in horror. "They talk aloud in cold blood . . . and maman laughed! . . . Maman! My God, why didst Thou give me such a mother? Why?"

But he had to go to the house, come what might. He walked three times up and down the avenue, grew a little calmer, and went into the house.

"Why didn't you come in in time for tea?" Madame Shumihin asked sternly.

"I am sorry, it's . . . it's time for me to go," he muttered, not raising his eyes. "Maman, it's eight o'clock!"

"You go alone, my dear," said his maman languidly. "I am staying the night with Lili. Goodbye, my dear. . . . Let me make the sign of the cross over you."

She made the sign of the cross over her son, and said in French, turning to Nyuta:

"He's rather like Lermontov . . . isn't he?"

Saying good-bye after a fashion, without looking any one in the face, Volodya went out of the dining-room. Ten minutes later he was walking along the road to the station, and was glad of it. Now he felt neither frightened nor ashamed; he breathed freely and easily.

About half a mile from the station, he sat down on a stone by the side of the road, and gazed at the sun, which was half hidden behind a barrow. There were lights already here and there at the station, and one green light glimmered dimly, but the train was not yet in sight. It was pleasant to Volodya to sit still without moving, and to watch the evening coming little by little. The darkness of the arbour, the footsteps, the smell of the bath-house, the laughter, and the waist--all these rose with amazing vividness before his imagination, and all this was no longer so terrible and important as before.

"It's of no consequence. . . . She did not pull her hand away, and laughed when I held her by the waist," he thought. "So she must have liked it. If she had disliked it she would have been angry  
. . . ."

And now Volodya felt sorry that he had not had more boldness there in the arbour. He felt sorry that he was so stupidly going away, and he was by now persuaded that if the same thing happened again he would be bolder and look at it more simply.

And it would not be difficult for the opportunity to occur again. They used to stroll about for a long time after supper at the Shumihins'. If Volodya went for a walk with Nyuta in the dark garden, there would be an opportunity!

"I will go back," he thought, "and will go by the morning train to-morrow. . . . I will say I have missed the train."

And he turned back. . . . Madame Shumihin, Maman, Nyuta, and one of the nieces were sitting on the verandah, playing vint. When Volodya told them the lie that he had missed the train, they were uneasy that he might be late for the examination day, and advised him to get up early. All the while they were playing he sat on one side, greedily watching Nyuta and waiting. . . . He already had a plan prepared in his mind: he would go up to Nyuta in the dark, would take her by the hand, then would embrace her; there would be no need to say anything, as both of them would understand without words.

But after supper the ladies did not go for a walk in the garden, but went on playing cards. They played till one o'clock at night, and then broke up to go to bed.

"How stupid it all is!" Volodya thought with vexation as he got into bed. "But never mind; I'll wait till to-morrow . . . to-morrow in the arbour. It doesn't matter. . . ."

He did not attempt to go to sleep, but sat in bed, hugging his knees and thinking. All thought of the examination was hateful to him. He had already made up his mind that they would expel him, and that there was nothing terrible about his being expelled. On the contrary, it was a good thing--a very good thing, in fact. Next day he would be as free as a bird; he would put on ordinary clothes instead of his school uniform, would smoke openly, come out here, and make love to Nyuta when he liked; and he would not be a schoolboy but "a young man." And as for the rest of it, what is called a career, a future, that was clear; Volodya would go into the army or the telegraph service, or he would go into a chemist's shop and work his way up till he was a dispenser. . . . There were lots of callings. An hour or two passed, and he was still sitting and thinking. . . .

Towards three o'clock, when it was beginning to get light, the door creaked cautiously and his maman came into the room.

"Aren't you asleep?" she asked, yawning. "Go to sleep; I have only come in for a minute. . . . I am only fetching the drops. . . ."

"What for?"

"Poor Lili has got spasms again. Go to sleep, my child, your examination's to-morrow. . . ."

She took a bottle of something out of the cupboard, went to the window, read the label, and went away.

"Marya Leontyevna, those are not the drops!" Volodya heard a woman's voice, a minute later. "That's convallaria, and Lili wants morphine. Is your son asleep? Ask him to look for it. . . ."

It was Nyuta's voice. Volodya turned cold. He hurriedly put on his trousers, flung his coat over his shoulders, and went to the door.

"Do you understand? Morphine," Nyuta explained in a whisper. "There must be a label in Latin. Wake Volodya; he will find it."

Maman opened the door and Volodya caught sight of Nyuta. She was wearing the same loose wrapper in which she had gone to bathe. Her hair hung loose and disordered on her shoulders, her face looked sleepy and dark in the half-light. . . .

"Why, Volodya is not asleep," she said. "Volodya, look in the cupboard for the morphine, there's a dear! What a nuisance Lili is! She has always something the matter."

Maman muttered something, yawned, and went away.

"Look for it," said Nyuta. "Why are you standing still?"

Volodya went to the cupboard, knelt down, and began looking through the bottles and boxes of medicine. His hands were trembling, and he had a feeling in his chest and stomach as though cold waves were running all over his inside. He felt suffocated and giddy from the smell of ether, carbolic acid, and various drugs, which he quite unnecessarily snatched up with his trembling fingers and spilled in so doing.

"I believe maman has gone," he thought. "That's a good thing . . . a good thing . . ."

"Will you be quick?" said Nyuta, drawling.

"In a minute. . . . Here, I believe this is morphine," said Volodya, reading on one of the labels the word "morph . . ." "Here it is!"

Nyuta was standing in the doorway in such a way that one foot was in his room and one was in the passage. She was tidying her hair, which was difficult to put in order because it was so thick and long, and looked absent-mindedly at Volodya. In her loose wrap, with her sleepy face and her hair down, in the dim light that came into the white sky not yet lit by the sun, she seemed to Volodya captivating, magnificent. . . . Fascinated, trembling all over, and remembering with relish how he had held that exquisite body in his arms in the arbour, he handed her the bottle and said:

"How wonderful you are!"

"What?"

She came into the room.

"What?" she asked, smiling.

He was silent and looked at her, then, just as in the arbour, he took her hand, and she looked at him with a smile and waited for what would happen next.

"I love you," he whispered.

She left off smiling, thought a minute, and said:

"Wait a little; I think somebody is coming. Oh, these schoolboys!" she said in an undertone, going to the door and peeping out into the passage. "No, there is no one to be seen. . . ."

She came back.

Then it seemed to Volodya that the room, Nyuta, the sunrise and himself--all melted together in one sensation of acute, extraordinary, incredible bliss, for which one might give up one's whole life and face eternal torments. . . . But half a minute passed and all

that vanished. Volodya saw only a fat, plain face, distorted by an expression of repulsion, and he himself suddenly felt a loathing for what had happened.

"I must go away, though," said Nyuta, looking at Volodya with disgust. "What a wretched, ugly . . . fie, ugly duckling!"

How unseemly her long hair, her loose wrap, her steps, her voice seemed to Volodya now! . . .

"'Ugly duckling' . . ." he thought after she had gone away. "I really am ugly . . . everything is ugly."

The sun was rising, the birds were singing loudly; he could hear the gardener walking in the garden and the creaking of his wheelbarrow . . . and soon afterwards he heard the lowing of the cows and the sounds of the shepherd's pipe. The sunlight and the sounds told him that somewhere in this world there is a pure, refined, poetical life. But where was it? Volodya had never heard a word of it from his maman or any of the people round about him.

When the footman came to wake him for the morning train, he pretended to be asleep. . . .

"Bother it! Damn it all!" he thought.

He got up between ten and eleven.

Combing his hair before the looking-glass, and looking at his ugly face, pale from his sleepless night, he thought:

"It's perfectly true . . . an ugly duckling!"

When maman saw him and was horrified that he was not at his examination, Volodya said:

"I overslept myself, maman. . . . But don't worry, I will get a medical certificate."

Madame Shumihin and Nyuta waked up at one o'clock. Volodya heard Madame Shumihin open her window with a bang, heard Nyuta go off into a peal of laughter in reply to her coarse voice. He saw the door open and a string of nieces and other toadies (among the latter was his maman) file into lunch, caught a glimpse of Nyuta's freshly washed laughing face, and, beside her, the black brows and beard of her husband the architect, who had just arrived.

Nyuta was wearing a Little Russian dress which did not suit her at all, and made her look clumsy; the architect was making dull and vulgar jokes. The rissoles served at lunch had too much onion in them--so it seemed to Volodya. It also seemed to him that Nyuta laughed loudly on purpose, and kept glancing in his direction to give him to understand

that the memory of the night did not trouble her in the least, and that she was not aware of the presence at table of the "ugly duckling."

At four o'clock Volodya drove to the station with his maman. Foul memories, the sleepless night, the prospect of expulsion from school, the stings of conscience--all roused in him now an oppressive, gloomy anger. He looked at maman's sharp profile, at her little nose, and at the raincoat which was a present from Nyuta, and muttered:

"Why do you powder? It's not becoming at your age! You make yourself up, don't pay your debts at cards, smoke other people's tobacco . . . It's hateful! I don't love you . . . I don't love you!"

He was insulting her, and she moved her little eyes about in alarm, flung up her hands, and whispered in horror:

"What are you saying, my dear! Good gracious! the coachman will hear! Be quiet or the coachman will hear! He can overhear everything."

"I don't love you . . . I don't love you!" he went on breathlessly. "You've no soul and no morals. . . . Don't dare to wear that raincoat! Do you hear? Or else I will tear it into rags. . . ."

"Control yourself, my child," maman wept; "the coachman can hear!"

"And where is my father's fortune? Where is your money? You have wasted it all. I am not ashamed of being poor, but I am ashamed of having such a mother. . . . When my schoolfellows ask questions about you, I always blush."

In the train they had to pass two stations before they reached the town. Volodya spent all the time on the little platform between two carriages and shivered all over. He did not want to go into the compartment because there the mother he hated was sitting. He hated himself, hated the ticket collectors, the smoke from the engine, the cold to which he attributed his shivering. And the heavier the weight on his heart, the more strongly he felt that somewhere in the world, among some people, there was a pure, honourable, warm, refined life, full of love, affection, gaiety, and serenity. . . . He felt this and was so intensely miserable that one of the passengers, after looking in his face attentively, actually asked:

"You have the toothache, I suppose?"

In the town maman and Volodya lived with Marya Petrovna, a lady of noble rank, who had a large flat and let rooms to boarders. Maman had two rooms, one with windows and two pictures in gold frames hanging on the walls, in which her bed stood and in which she lived, and a little dark room opening out of it in which Volodya lived. Here there was a sofa on which he slept, and, except that sofa, there was no other furniture; the rest of the room was entirely filled up with wicker baskets full of clothes, cardboard hat-

boxes, and all sorts of rubbish, which maman preserved for some reason or other. Volodya prepared his lessons either in his mother's room or in the "general room," as the large room in which the boarders assembled at dinner-time and in the evening was called.

On reaching home he lay down on his sofa and put the quilt over him to stop his shivering. The cardboard hat-boxes, the wicker baskets, and the other rubbish, reminded him that he had not a room of his own, that he had no refuge in which he could get away from his mother, from her visitors, and from the voices that were floating up from the "general room." The satchel and the books lying about in the corners reminded him of the examination he had missed. . . . For some reason there came into his mind, quite inappropriately, Mentone, where he had lived with his father when he was seven years old; he thought of Biarritz and two little English girls with whom he ran about on the sand. . . . He tried to recall to his memory the colour of the sky, the sea, the height of the waves, and his mood at the time, but he could not succeed. The English girls flitted before his imagination as though they were living; all the rest was a medley of images that floated away in confusion. . . .

"No; it's cold here," thought Volodya. He got up, put on his overcoat, and went into the "general room."

There they were drinking tea. There were three people at the samovar: maman; an old lady with tortoiseshell pince-nez, who gave music lessons; and Avgustin Mihalitch, an elderly and very stout Frenchman, who was employed at a perfumery factory.

"I have had no dinner to-day," said maman. "I ought to send the maid to buy some bread."

"Dunyasha!" shouted the Frenchman.

It appeared that the maid had been sent out somewhere by the lady of the house.

"Oh, that's of no consequence," said the Frenchman, with a broad smile. "I will go for some bread myself at once. Oh, it's nothing."

He laid his strong, pungent cigar in a conspicuous place, put on his hat and went out. After he had gone away maman began telling the music teacher how she had been staying at the Shumihins', and how warmly they welcomed her.

"Lili Shumihin is a relation of mine, you know," she said. "Her late husband, General Shumihin, was a cousin of my husband. And she was a Baroness Kolb by birth. . . ."

"Maman, that's false!" said Volodya irritably. "Why tell lies?"

He knew perfectly well that what his mother said was true; in what she was saying about General Shumihin and about Baroness Kolb there was not a word of lying, but

nevertheless he felt that she was lying. There was a suggestion of falsehood in her manner of speaking, in the expression of her face, in her eyes, in everything.

"You are lying," repeated Volodya; and he brought his fist down on the table with such force that all the crockery shook and maman's tea was spilt over. "Why do you talk about generals and baronesses? It's all lies!"

The music teacher was disconcerted, and coughed into her handkerchief, affecting to sneeze, and maman began to cry.

"Where can I go?" thought Volodya.

He had been in the street already; he was ashamed to go to his schoolfellows. Again, quite incongruously, he remembered the two little English girls. . . . He paced up and down the "general room," and went into Avgustin Mihalitch's room. Here there was a strong smell of ethereal oils and glycerine soap. On the table, in the window, and even on the chairs, there were a number of bottles, glasses, and wineglasses containing fluids of various colours. Volodya took up from the table a newspaper, opened it and read the title Figaro. . . . There was a strong and pleasant scent about the paper. Then he took a revolver from the table. . . .

"There, there! Don't take any notice of it." The music teacher was comforting maman in the next room. "He is young! Young people of his age never restrain themselves. One must resign oneself to that."

"No, Yevgenya Andreyevna; he's too spoilt," said maman in a singsong voice. "He has no one in authority over him, and I am weak and can do nothing. Oh, I am unhappy!"

Volodya put the muzzle of the revolver to his mouth, felt something like a trigger or spring, and pressed it with his finger. . . . Then felt something else projecting, and once more pressed it. Taking the muzzle out of his mouth, he wiped it with the lapel of his coat, looked at the lock. He had never in his life taken a weapon in his hand before. . . .

"I believe one ought to raise this . . ." he reflected. "Yes, it seems so."

Avgustin Mihalitch went into the "general room," and with a laugh began telling them about something. Volodya put the muzzle in his mouth again, pressed it with his teeth, and pressed something with his fingers. There was a sound of a shot. . . . Something hit Volodya in the back of his head with terrible violence, and he fell on the table with his face downwards among the bottles and glasses. Then he saw his father, as in Mentone, in a top-hat with a wide black band on it, wearing mourning for some lady, suddenly seize him by both hands, and they fell headlong into a very deep, dark pit.

Then everything was blurred and vanished.

## AN ANONYMOUS STORY

I

THROUGH causes which it is not the time to go into in detail, I had to enter the service of a Petersburg official called Orlov, in the capacity of a footman. He was about five and thirty, and was called Georgy\* Ivanitch.

\*Both g's hard, as in "Gorgon"; e like ai in rain.

I entered this Orlov's service on account of his father, a prominent political man, whom I looked upon as a serious enemy of my cause. I reckoned that, living with the son, I should--from the conversations I should hear, and from the letters and papers I should find on the table--learn every detail of the father's plans and intentions.

As a rule at eleven o'clock in the morning the electric bell rang in my footman's quarters to let me know that my master was awake. When I went into the bedroom with his polished shoes and brushed clothes, Georgy Ivanitch would be sitting in his bed with a face that looked, not drowsy, but rather exhausted by sleep, and he would gaze off in one direction without any sign of satisfaction at having waked. I helped him to dress, and he let me do it with an air of reluctance without speaking or noticing my presence; then with his head wet with washing, smelling of fresh scent, he used to go into the dining-room to drink his coffee. He used to sit at the table, sipping his coffee and glancing through the newspapers, while the maid Polya and I stood respectfully at the door gazing at him. Two grown-up persons had to stand watching with the gravest attention a third drinking coffee and munching rusks. It was probably ludicrous and grotesque, but I saw nothing humiliating in having to stand near the door, though I was quite as well born and well educated as Orlov himself.

I was in the first stage of consumption, and was suffering from something else, possibly even more serious than consumption. I don't know whether it was the effect of my illness or of an incipient change in my philosophy of life of which I was not conscious at the time, but I was, day by day, more possessed by a passionate, irritating longing for ordinary everyday life. I yearned for mental tranquillity, health, fresh air, good food. I was becoming a dreamer, and, like a dreamer, I did not know exactly what I wanted. Sometimes I felt inclined to go into a monastery, to sit there for days together by the window and gaze at the trees and the fields; sometimes I fancied I would buy fifteen acres of land and settle down as a country gentleman; sometimes I inwardly vowed to take up science and become a professor at some provincial university. I was a retired navy lieutenant; I dreamed of the sea, of our squadron, and of the corvette in which I had made the cruise round the world. I longed to experience again the indescribable feeling when, walking in the tropical forest or looking at the sunset in the Bay of Bengal, one is thrilled with ecstasy and at the same time homesick. I dreamed of mountains, women, music, and, with the curiosity of a child, I looked into people's faces, listened to their

voices. And when I stood at the door and watched Orlov sipping his coffee, I felt not a footman, but a man interested in everything in the world, even in Orlov.

In appearance Orlov was a typical Petersburger, with narrow shoulders, a long waist, sunken temples, eyes of an indefinite colour, and scanty, dingy-coloured hair, beard and moustaches. His face had a stale, unpleasant look, though it was studiously cared for. It was particularly unpleasant when he was asleep or lost in thought. It is not worth while describing a quite ordinary appearance; besides, Petersburg is not Spain, and a man's appearance is not of much consequence even in love affairs, and is only of value to a handsome footman or coachman. I have spoken of Orlov's face and hair only because there was something in his appearance worth mentioning. When Orlov took a newspaper or book, whatever it might be, or met people, whoever they be, an ironical smile began to come into his eyes, and his whole countenance assumed an expression of light mockery in which there was no malice. Before reading or hearing anything he always had his irony in readiness, as a savage has his shield. It was an habitual irony, like some old liquor brewed years ago, and now it came into his face probably without any participation of his will, as it were by reflex action. But of that later.

Soon after midday he took his portfolio, full of papers, and drove to his office. He dined away from home and returned after eight o'clock. I used to light the lamp and candles in his study, and he would sit down in a low chair with his legs stretched out on another chair, and, reclining in that position, would begin reading. Almost every day he brought in new books with him or received parcels of them from the shops, and there were heaps of books in three languages, to say nothing of Russian, which he had read and thrown away, in the corners of my room and under my bed. He read with extraordinary rapidity. They say: "Tell me what you read, and I'll tell you who you are." That may be true, but it was absolutely impossible to judge of Orlov by what he read. It was a regular hotchpotch. Philosophy, French novels, political economy, finance, new poets, and publications of the firm Posrednik\*--and he read it all with the same rapidity and with the same ironical expression in his eyes.

\* I.e., Tchertkov and others, publishers of Tolstoy, who issued good literature for peasants' reading.

After ten o'clock he carefully dressed, often in evening dress, very rarely in his kammer-junker's uniform, and went out, returning in the morning.

Our relations were quiet and peaceful, and we never had any misunderstanding. As a rule he did not notice my presence, and when he talked to me there was no expression of irony on his face--he evidently did not look upon me as a human being.

I only once saw him angry. One day--it was a week after I had entered his service--he came back from some dinner at nine o'clock; his face looked ill-humoured and exhausted. When I followed him into his study to light the candles, he said to me:

"There's a nasty smell in the flat."

"No, the air is fresh," I answered.

"I tell you, there's a bad smell," he answered irritably.

"I open the movable panes every day."

"Don't argue, blockhead!" he shouted.

I was offended, and was on the point of answering, and goodness knows how it would have ended if Polya, who knew her master better than I did, had not intervened.

"There really is a disagreeable smell," she said, raising her eyebrows. "What can it be from? Stepan, open the pane in the drawing-room, and light the fire."

With much bustle and many exclamations, she went through all the rooms, rustling her skirts and squeezing the sprayer with a hissing sound. And Orlov was still out of humour; he was obviously restraining himself not to vent his ill-temper aloud. He was sitting at the table and rapidly writing a letter. After writing a few lines he snorted angrily and tore it up, then he began writing again.

"Damn them all!" he muttered. "They expect me to have an abnormal memory!"

At last the letter was written; he got up from the table and said, turning to me:

"Go to Znamensky Street and deliver this letter to Zinaida Fyodorovna Krasnovsky in person. But first ask the porter whether her husband --that is, Mr. Krasnovsky--has returned yet. If he has returned, don't deliver the letter, but come back. Wait a minute! . . . If she asks whether I have any one here, tell her that there have been two gentlemen here since eight o'clock, writing something."

I drove to Znamensky Street. The porter told me that Mr. Krasnovsky had not yet come in, and I made my way up to the third storey. The door was opened by a tall, stout, drab-coloured flunkey with black whiskers, who in a sleepy, churlish, and apathetic voice, such as only flunkies use in addressing other flunkies, asked me what I wanted. Before I had time to answer, a lady dressed in black came hurriedly into the hall. She screwed up her eyes and looked at me.

"Is Zinaida Fyodorovna at home?" I asked.

"That is me," said the lady.

"A letter from Georgy Ivanitch."

She tore the letter open impatiently, and holding it in both hands, so that I saw her sparkling diamond rings, she began reading. I made out a pale face with soft lines, a

prominent chin, and long dark lashes. From her appearance I should not have judged the lady to be more than five and twenty.

"Give him my thanks and my greetings," she said when she had finished the letter. "Is there any one with Georgy Ivanitch?" she asked softly, joyfully, and as though ashamed of her mistrust.

"Two gentlemen," I answered. "They're writing something."

"Give him my greetings and thanks," she repeated, bending her head sideways, and, reading the letter as she walked, she went noiselessly out. I saw few women at that time, and this lady of whom I had a passing glimpse made an impression on me. As I walked home I recalled her face and the delicate fragrance about her, and fell to dreaming. By the time I got home Orlov had gone out.

## II

And so my relations with my employer were quiet and peaceful, but still the unclean and degrading element which I so dreaded on becoming a footman was conspicuous and made itself felt every day. I did not get on with Polya. She was a well-fed and pampered hussy who adored Orlov because he was a gentleman and despised me because I was a footman. Probably, from the point of view of a real flunkey or cook, she was fascinating, with her red cheeks, her turned-up nose, her coquettish glances, and the plumpness, one might almost say fatness, of her person. She powdered her face, coloured her lips and eyebrows, laced herself in, and wore a bustle, and a bangle made of coins. She walked with little rippling steps; as she walked she swayed, or, as they say, wriggled her shoulders and back. The rustle of her skirts, the creaking of her stays, the jingle her bangle and the vulgar smell of lip salve, toilet vinegar, and scent stolen from her master, aroused me whilst I was doing the rooms with her in the morning a sensation as though I were taking part with her in some abomination.

Either because I did not steal as she did, or because I displayed no desire to become her lover, which she probably looked upon as an insult, or perhaps because she felt that I was a man of a different order, she hated me from the first day. My inexperience, my appearance --so unlike a flunkey--and my illness, seemed to her pitiful and excited her disgust. I had a bad cough at that time, and sometimes at night I prevented her from sleeping, as our rooms were only divided by a wooden partition, and every morning she said to me:

"Again you didn't let me sleep. You ought to be in hospital instead of in service."

She so genuinely believed that I was hardly a human being, but something infinitely below her, that, like the Roman matrons who were not ashamed to bathe before their slaves, she sometimes went about in my presence in nothing but her chemise.

Once when I was in a happy, dreamy mood, I asked her at dinner (we had soup and roast meat sent in from a restaurant every day)

"Polya, do you believe in God?"

"Why, of course!"

"Then," I went on, "you believe there will be a day of judgment, and that we shall have to answer to God for every evil action?"

She gave me no reply, but simply made a contemptuous grimace, and, looking that time at her cold eyes and over-fed expression, I realised that for her complete and finished personality no God, no conscience, no laws existed, and that if I had had to set fire to the house, to murder or to rob, I could not have hired a better accomplice.

In my novel surroundings I felt very uncomfortable for the first week at Orlov's before I got used to being addressed as "thou," and being constantly obliged to tell lies (saying "My master is not at home" when he was). In my flunkey's swallow-tail I felt as though I were in armour. But I grew accustomed to it in time. Like a genuine footman, I waited at table, tidied the rooms, ran and drove about on errands of all sorts. When Orlov did not want to keep an appointment with Zinaida Fyodorovna, or when he forgot that he had promised to go and see her, I drove to Znamensky Street, put a letter into her hands and told a lie. And the result of it all was quite different from what I had expected when I became a footman. Every day of this new life of mine was wasted for me and my cause, as Orlov never spoke of his father, nor did his visitors, and all I could learn of the statesman's doings was, as before, what I could glean from the newspapers or from correspondence with my comrades. The hundreds of notes and papers I used to find in the study and read had not the remotest connection with what I was looking for. Orlov was absolutely uninterested in his father's political work, and looked as though he had never heard of it, or as though his father had long been dead.

### III

Every Thursday we had visitors.

I ordered a piece of roast beef from the restaurant and telephoned to Eliseyev's to send us caviare, cheese, oysters, and so on. I bought playing-cards. Polya was busy all day getting ready the tea-things and the dinner service. To tell the truth, this spurt of activity came as a pleasant change in our idle life, and Thursdays were for us the most interesting days.

Only three visitors used to come. The most important and perhaps the most interesting was the one called Pekarsky--a tall, lean man of five and forty, with a long hooked nose, with a big black beard, and a bald patch on his head. His eyes were large and prominent, and his expression was grave and thoughtful like that of a Greek philosopher. He was on the board of management of some railway, and also had some post in a bank; he was a consulting lawyer in some important Government institution, and had business relations with a large number of private persons as a trustee, chairman of committees, and so on. He was of quite a low grade in the service, and modestly spoke of himself as a lawyer, but he had a vast influence. A note or card from him was enough to make a celebrated doctor, a director of a railway, or a great dignitary see any one without waiting; and it was said that through his protection one might obtain even a post of the Fourth Class, and get any sort of unpleasant business hushed up. He was looked upon as a very intelligent man, but his was a strange, peculiar intelligence. He was able to multiply 213 by 373 in his head instantaneously, or turn English pounds into German marks without help of pencil or paper; he understood finance and railway business thoroughly, and the machinery of Russian administration had no secrets for him; he was a most skilful pleader in civil suits, and it was not easy to get the better of him at law. But that exceptional intelligence could not grasp many things which are understood even by some stupid people. For instance, he was absolutely unable to understand why people are depressed, why they weep, shoot themselves, and even kill others; why they fret about things that do not affect them personally, and why they laugh when they read Gogol or Shtchedrin . . . . Everything abstract, everything belonging to the domain of thought and feeling, was to him boring and incomprehensible, like music to one who has no ear. He looked at people simply from the business point of view, and divided them into competent and incompetent. No other classification existed for him. Honesty and rectitude were only signs of competence. Drinking, gambling, and debauchery were permissible, but must not be allowed to interfere with business. Believing in God was rather stupid, but religion ought be safeguarded, as the common people must have some principle to restrain them, otherwise they would not work. Punishment is only necessary as deterrent. There was no need to go away for holidays, as it was just as nice in town. And so on. He was a widower and had no children, but lived on a large scale, as though he had a family, and paid thousand roubles a year for his flat.

The second visitor, Kukushkin, an actual civil councillor though a young man, was short, and was conspicuous for his extremely unpleasant appearance, which was due to the disproportion between his fat, puffy body and his lean little face. His lips were puckered

up suavely, and his little trimmed moustaches looked as though they had been fixed on with glue. He was a man with the manners of a lizard. He did not walk, but, as it were, crept along with tiny steps, squirming and sniggering, and when he laughed he showed his teeth. He was a clerk on special commissions, and did nothing, though he received a good salary, especially in the summer, when special and lucrative jobs were found for him. He was a man of personal ambition, not only to the marrow of his bones, but more fundamentally--to the last drop of his blood; but even in his ambitions he was petty and did not rely on himself, but was building his career on the chance favour flung him by his superiors. For the sake of obtaining some foreign decoration, or for the sake of having his name mentioned in the newspapers as having been present at some special service in the company of other great personages, he was ready to submit to any kind of humiliation, to beg, to flatter, to promise. He flattered Orlov and Pekarsky from cowardice, because he thought they were powerful; he flattered Polya and me because we were in the service of a powerful man. Whenever I took off his fur coat he tittered and asked me: "Stepan, are you married?" and then unseemly vulgarities followed--by way of showing me special attention. Kukushkin flattered Orlov's weaknesses, humoured his corrupted and blasé ways; to please him he affected malicious raillery and atheism, in his company criticised persons before whom in other places he would slavishly grovel. When at supper they talked of love and women, he pretended to be a subtle and perverse voluptuary. As a rule, one may say, Petersburg rakes are fond of talking of their abnormal tastes. Some young actual civil councillor is perfectly satisfied with the embraces of his cook or of some unhappy street-walker on the Nevsky Prospect, but to listen to him you would think he was contaminated by all the vices of East and West combined, that he was an honourary member of a dozen iniquitous secret societies and was already marked by the police. Kukushkin lied about himself in an unconscionable way, and they did not exactly disbelieve him, but paid little heed to his incredible stories.

The third guest was Gruzin, the son of a worthy and learned general; a man of Orlov's age, with long hair, short-sighted eyes, and gold spectacles. I remember his long white fingers, that looked like a pianist's; and, indeed, there was something of a musician, of a virtuoso, about his whole figure. The first violins in orchestras look just like that. He used to cough, suffered from migraine, and seemed invalidish and delicate. Probably at home he was dressed and undressed like a baby. He had finished at the College of Jurisprudence, and had at first served in the Department of Justice, then he was transferred to the Senate; he left that, and through patronage had received a post in the Department of Crown Estates, and had soon afterwards given that up. In my time he was serving in Orlov's department; he was his head-clerk, but he said that he should soon exchange into the Department of Justice again. He took his duties and his shifting about from one post to another with exceptional levity, and when people talked before him seriously of grades in the service, decorations, salaries, he smiled good-naturedly and repeated Prutkov's aphorism: "It's only in the Government service you learn the truth." He had a little wife with a wrinkled face, who was very jealous of him, and five weedy-looking children. He was unfaithful to his wife, he was only fond of his children when he saw them, and on the whole was rather indifferent to his family, and made fun of them. He and his family existed on credit, borrowing wherever they could at every opportunity, even from his superiors in the office and porters in people's houses. His was a flabby

nature; he was so lazy that he did not care what became of himself, and drifted along heedless where or why he was going. He went where he was taken. If he was taken to some low haunt, he went; if wine was set before him, he drank--if it were not put before him, he abstained; if wives were abused in his presence, he abused his wife, declaring she had ruined his life--when wives were praised, he praised his and said quite sincerely: "I am very fond of her, poor thing!" He had no fur coat and always wore a rug which smelt of the nursery. When at supper he rolled balls of bread and drank a great deal of red wine, absorbed in thought, strange to say, I used to feel almost certain that there was something in him of which perhaps he had a vague sense, though in the bustle and vulgarity of his daily life he had not time to understand and appreciate it. He played a little on the piano. Sometimes he would sit down at the piano, play a chord or two, and begin singing softly:

"What does the coming day bring to me?"

But at once, as though afraid, he would get up and walk from the piano.

The visitors usually arrived about ten o'clock. They played cards in Orlov's study, and Polya and I handed them tea. It was only on these occasions that I could gauge the full sweetness of a flunkey's life. Standing for four or five hours at the door, watching that no one's glass should be empty, changing the ash-trays, running to the table to pick up the chalk or a card when it was dropped, and, above all, standing, waiting, being attentive without venturing to speak, to cough, to smile--is harder, I assure you, is harder than the hardest of field labour. I have stood on watch at sea for four hours at a stretch on stormy winter nights, and to my thinking it is an infinitely easier duty.

They used to play cards till two, sometimes till three o'clock at night, and then, stretching, they would go into the dining-room to supper, or, as Orlov said, for a snack of something. At supper there was conversation. It usually began by Orlov's speaking with laughing eyes of some acquaintance, of some book he had lately been reading, of a new appointment or Government scheme. Kukushkin, always ingratiating, would fall into his tone, and what followed was to me, in my mood at that time, a revolting exhibition. The irony of Orlov and his friends knew no bounds, and spared no one and nothing. If they spoke of religion, it was with irony; they spoke of philosophy, of the significance and object of life--irony again, if any one began about the peasantry, it was with irony.

There is in Petersburg a species of men whose specialty it is to jeer at every aspect of life; they cannot even pass by a starving man or a suicide without saying something vulgar. But Orlov and his friends did not jeer or make jokes, they talked ironically. They used to say that there was no God, and personality was completely lost at death; the immortals only existed in the French Academy. Real good did not and could not possibly exist, as its existence was conditional upon human perfection, which was a logical absurdity. Russia was a country as poor and dull as Persia. The intellectual class was hopeless; in Pekarsky's opinion the overwhelming majority in it were incompetent persons, good for nothing. The people were drunken, lazy, thievish, and degenerate. We had no science, our literature was uncouth, our commerce rested on swindling--"No selling without cheating." And everything was in that style, and everything was a subject for laughter.

Towards the end of supper the wine made them more good-humoured, and they passed to more lively conversation. They laughed over Gruzin's family life, over Kukushkin's conquests, or at Pekarsky, who had, they said, in his account book one page headed Charity and another Physiological Necessities. They said that no wife was faithful; that there was no wife from whom one could not, with practice, obtain caresses without leaving her drawing-room while her husband was sitting in his study close by; that girls in their teens were perverted and knew everything. Orlov had preserved a letter of a schoolgirl of fourteen: on her way home from school she had "hooked an officer on the Nevsky," who had, it appears, taken her home with him, and had only let her go late in the evening; and she hastened to write about this to her school friend to share her joy with her. They maintained that there was not and never had been such a thing as moral purity, and that evidently it was unnecessary; mankind had so far done very well without it. The harm done by so-called vice was undoubtedly exaggerated. Vices which are punished by our legal code had not prevented Diogenes from being a philosopher and a teacher. Cæsar and Cicero were profligates and at the same time great men. Cato in his old age married a young girl, and yet he was regarded as a great ascetic and a pillar of morality.

At three or four o'clock the party broke up or they went off together out of town, or to Officers' Street, to the house of a certain Varvara Ossipovna, while I retired to my quarters, and was kept awake a long while by coughing and headache.

## IV

Three weeks after I entered Orlov's service--it was Sunday morning, I remember--somebody rang the bell. It was not yet eleven, and Orlov was still asleep. I went to open the door. You can imagine my astonishment when I found a lady in a veil standing at the door on the landing.

"Is Georgy Ivanitch up?" she asked.

From her voice I recognised Zinaida Fyodorovna, to whom I had taken letters in Znamensky Street. I don't remember whether I had time or self-possession to answer her--I was taken aback at seeing her. And, indeed, she did not need my answer. In a flash she had darted by me, and, filling the hall with the fragrance of her perfume, which I remember to this day, she went on, and her footsteps died away. For at least half an hour afterwards I heard nothing. But again some one rang. This time it was a smartly dressed girl, who looked like a maid in a wealthy family, accompanied by our house porter. Both were out of breath, carrying two trunks and a dress-basket.

"These are for Zinaida Fyodorovna," said the girl.

And she went down without saying another word. All this was mysterious, and made Polya, who had a deep admiration for the pranks of her betters, smile slyly to herself; she looked as though she would like to say, "So that's what we're up to," and she walked about the whole time on tiptoe. At last we heard footsteps; Zinaida Fyodorovna came quickly into the hall, and seeing me at the door of my room, said:

"Stepan, take Georgy Ivanitch his things."

When I went in to Orlov with his clothes and his boots, he was sitting on the bed with his feet on the bearskin rug. There was an air of embarrassment about his whole figure. He did not notice me, and my menial opinion did not interest him; he was evidently perturbed and embarrassed before himself, before his inner eye. He dressed, washed, and used his combs and brushes silently and deliberately, as though allowing himself time to think over his position and to reflect, and even from his back one could see he was troubled and dissatisfied with himself.

They drank coffee together. Zinaida Fyodorovna poured out coffee for herself and for Orlov, then she put her elbows on the table and laughed.

"I still can't believe it," she said. "When one has been a long while on one's travels and reaches a hotel at last, it's difficult to believe that one hasn't to go on. It is pleasant to breathe freely."

With the expression of a child who very much wants to be mischievous, she sighed with relief and laughed again.

"You will excuse me," said Orlov, nodding towards the coffee. "Reading at breakfast is a habit I can't get over. But I can do two things at once--read and listen."

"Read away. . . . You shall keep your habits and your freedom. But why do you look so solemn? Are you always like that in the morning, or is it only to-day? Aren't you glad?"

"Yes, I am. But I must own I am a little overwhelmed."

"Why? You had plenty of time to prepare yourself for my descent upon you. I've been threatening to come every day."

"Yes, but I didn't expect you to carry out your threat to-day."

"I didn't expect it myself, but that's all the better. It's all the better, my dear. It's best to have an aching tooth out and have done with it."

"Yes, of course."

"Oh, my dear," she said, closing her eyes, "all is well that ends well; but before this happy ending, what suffering there has been! My laughing means nothing; I am glad, I am happy, but I feel more like crying than laughing. Yesterday I had to fight a regular battle," she went on in French. "God alone knows how wretched I was. But I laugh because I can't believe in it. I keep fancying that my sitting here drinking coffee with you is not real, but a dream."

Then, still speaking French, she described how she had broken with her husband the day before and her eyes were alternately full of tears and of laughter while she gazed with rapture at Orlov. She told him her husband had long suspected her, but had avoided explanations; they had frequent quarrels, and usually at the most heated moment he would suddenly subside into silence and depart to his study for fear that in his exasperation he might give utterance to his suspicions or she might herself begin to speak openly. And she had felt guilty, worthless, incapable of taking a bold and serious step, and that had made her hate herself and her husband more every day, and she had suffered the torments of hell. But the day before, when during a quarrel he had cried out in a tearful voice, "My God, when will it end?" and had walked off to his study, she had run after him like a cat after a mouse, and, preventing him from shutting the door, she had cried that she hated him with her whole soul. Then he let her come into the study and she had told him everything, had confessed that she loved some one else, that that some one else was her real, most lawful husband, and that she thought it her true duty to go away to him that very day, whatever might happen, if she were to be shot for it.

"There's a very romantic streak in you," Orlov interrupted, keeping his eyes fixed on the newspaper.

She laughed and went on talking without touching her coffee. Her cheeks glowed and she was a little embarrassed by it, and she looked in confusion at Polya and me. From what she went on to say I learnt that her husband had answered her with threats, reproaches, and finally tears, and that it would have been more accurate to say that she, and not he, had been the attacking party.

"Yes, my dear, so long as I was worked up, everything went all right," she told Orlov; "but as night came on, my spirits sank. You don't believe in God, George, but I do believe a little, and I fear retribution. God requires of us patience, magnanimity, self-sacrifice, and here I am refusing to be patient and want to remodel my life to suit myself. Is that right? What if from the point of view of God it's wrong? At two o'clock in the night my husband came to me and said: 'You dare not go away. I'll fetch you back through the police and make a scandal.' And soon afterwards I saw him like a shadow at my door. 'Have mercy on me! Your elopement may injure me in the service.' Those words had a coarse effect upon me and made me feel stiff all over. I felt as though the retribution were beginning already; I began crying and trembling with terror. I felt as though the ceiling would fall upon me, that I should be dragged off to the police-station at once, that you would grow cold to me--all sorts of things, in fact! I thought I would go into a nunnery or become a nurse, and give up all thought of happiness, but then I remembered that you loved me, and that I had no right to dispose of myself without your knowledge; and everything in my mind was in a tangle--I was in despair and did not know what to do or think. But the sun rose and I grew happier. As soon as it was morning I dashed off to you. Ah, what I've been through, dear one! I haven't slept for two nights!"

She was tired out and excited. She was sleepy, and at the same time she wanted to talk endlessly, to laugh and to cry, and to go to a restaurant to lunch that she might feel her freedom.

"You have a cosy flat, but I am afraid it may be small for the two of us," she said, walking rapidly through all the rooms when they had finished breakfast. "What room will you give me? I like this one because it is next to your study."

At one o'clock she changed her dress in the room next to the study, which from that time she called hers, and she went off with Orlov to lunch. They dined, too, at a restaurant, and spent the long interval between lunch and dinner in shopping. Till late at night I was opening the door to messengers and errand-boys from the shops. They bought, among other things, a splendid pier-glass, a dressing-table, a bedstead, and a gorgeous tea service which we did not need. They bought a regular collection of copper saucepans, which we set in a row on the shelf in our cold, empty kitchen. As we were unpacking the tea service Polya's eyes gleamed, and she looked at me two or three times with hatred and fear that I, not she, would be the first to steal one of these charming cups. A lady's writing-table, very expensive and inconvenient, came too. It was evident that Zinaida Fyodorovna contemplated settling with us for good, and meant to make the flat her home.

She came back with Orlov between nine and ten. Full of proud consciousness that she had done something bold and out of the common, passionately in love, and, as she

imagined, passionately loved, exhausted, looking forward to a sweet sound sleep, Zinaida Fyodorovna was revelling in her new life. She squeezed her hands together in the excess of her joy, declared that everything was delightful, and swore that she would love Orlov for ever; and these vows, and the naïve, almost childish confidence that she too was deeply loved and would be loved forever, made her at least five years younger. She talked charming nonsense and laughed at herself.

"There's no other blessing greater than freedom!" she said, forcing herself to say something serious and edifying. "How absurd it is when you think of it! We attach no value to our own opinion even when it is wise, but tremble before the opinion of all sorts of stupid people. Up to the last minute I was afraid of what other people would say, but as soon as I followed my own instinct and made up my mind to go my own way, my eyes were opened, I overcame my silly fears, and now I am happy and wish every one could be as happy!"

But her thoughts immediately took another turn, and she began talking of another flat, of wallpapers, horses, a trip to Switzerland and Italy. Orlov was tired by the restaurants and the shops, and was still suffering from the same uneasiness that I had noticed in the morning. He smiled, but more from politeness than pleasure, and when she spoke of anything seriously, he agreed ironically: "Oh, yes."

"Stepan, make haste and find us a good cook," she said to me.

"There's no need to be in a hurry over the kitchen arrangements," said Orlov, looking at me coldly. "We must first move into another flat."

We had never had cooking done at home nor kept horses, because, as he said, "he did not like disorder about him," and only put up with having Polya and me in his flat from necessity. The so-called domestic hearth with its everyday joys and its petty cares offended his taste as vulgarity; to be with child, or to have children and talk about them, was bad form, like a petty bourgeois. And I began to feel very curious to see how these two creatures would get on together in one flat--she, domestic and home-loving with her copper saucepans and her dreams of a good cook and horses; and he, fond of saying to his friends that a decent and orderly man's flat ought, like a warship, to have nothing in it superfluous--no women, no children, no rags, no kitchen utensils.

## V

Then I will tell you what happened the following Thursday. That day Zinaida Fyodorovna dined at Content's or Donon's. Orlov returned home alone, and Zinaida Fyodorovna, as I learnt afterwards, went to the Petersburg Side to spend with her old governess the time visitors were with us. Orlov did not care to show her to his friends. I realised that at breakfast, when he began assuring her that for the sake of her peace of mind it was essential to give up his Thursday evenings.

As usual the visitors arrived at almost the same time.

"Is your mistress at home, too?" Kukushkin asked me in a whisper.

"No, sir," I answered.

He went in with a sly, oily look in his eyes, smiling mysteriously, rubbing his hands, which were cold from the frost.

"I have the honour to congratulate you," he said to Orlov, shaking all over with ingratiating, obsequious laughter. "May you increase and multiply like the cedars of Lebanon."

The visitors went into the bedroom, and were extremely jocose on the subject of a pair of feminine slippers, the rug that had been put down between the two beds, and a grey dressing-jacket that hung at the foot of the bedstead. They were amused that the obstinate man who despised all the common place details of love had been caught in feminine snares in such a simple and ordinary way.

"He who pointed the finger of scorn is bowing the knee in homage," Kukushkin repeated several times. He had, I may say in parenthesis, an unpleasant habit of adorning his conversation with texts in Church Slavonic. "Sh-sh!" he said as they went from the bedroom into the room next to the study. "Sh-sh! Here Gretchen is dreaming of her Faust."

He went off into a peal of laughter as though he had said something very amusing. I watched Gruzin, expecting that his musical soul would not endure this laughter, but I was mistaken. His thin, good-natured face beamed with pleasure. When they sat down to play cards, he, lisping and choking with laughter, said that all that "dear George" wanted to complete his domestic felicity was a cherry-wood pipe and a guitar. Pekarsky laughed sedately, but from his serious expression one could see that Orlov's new love affair was distasteful to him. He did not understand what had happened exactly.

"But how about the husband?" he asked in perplexity, after they had played three rubbers.

"I don't know," answered Orlov.

Pekarsky combed his big beard with his fingers and sank into thought, and he did not speak again till supper-time. When they were seated at supper, he began deliberately, drawling every word:

"Altogether, excuse my saying so, I don't understand either of you. You might love each other and break the seventh commandment to your heart's content--that I understand. Yes, that's comprehensible. But why make the husband a party to your secrets? Was there any need for that?"

"But does it make any difference?"

"Hm! . . ." Pekarsky mused. "Well, then, let me tell you this, my friend," he went on, evidently thinking hard: "if I ever marry again and you take it into your head to seduce my wife, please do it so that I don't notice it. It's much more honest to deceive a man than to break up his family life and injure his reputation. I understand. You both imagine that in living together openly you are doing something exceptionally honourable and advanced, but I can't agree with that . . . what shall I call it? . . . romantic attitude?"

Orlov made no reply. He was out of humour and disinclined to talk. Pekarsky, still perplexed, drummed on the table with his fingers, thought a little, and said:

"I don't understand you, all the same. You are not a student and she is not a dressmaker. You are both of you people with means. I should have thought you might have arranged a separate flat for her."

"No, I couldn't. Read Turgenev."

"Why should I read him? I have read him already."

"Turgenev teaches us in his novels that every exalted, noble-minded girl should follow the man she loves to the ends of the earth, and should serve his idea," said Orlov, screwing up his eyes ironically. "The ends of the earth are poetic license; the earth and all its ends can be reduced to the flat of the man she loves. . . . And so not to live in the same flat with the woman who loves you is to deny her her exalted vocation and to refuse to share her ideals. Yes, my dear fellow, Turgenev wrote, and I have to suffer for it."

"What Turgenev has got to do with it I don't understand," said Gruzin softly, and he shrugged his shoulders. "Do you remember, George, how in 'Three Meetings' he is walking late in the evening somewhere in Italy, and suddenly hears, 'Vieni pensando a me segretamente,'" Gruzin hummed. "It's fine."

"But she hasn't come to settle with you by force," said Pekarsky. "It was your own wish."

"What next! Far from wishing it, I never imagined that this would ever happen. When she said she was coming to live with me, I thought it was a charming joke on her part."

Everybody laughed.

"I couldn't have wished for such a thing," said Orlov in the tone of a man compelled to justify himself. "I am not a Turgenev hero, and if I ever wanted to free Bulgaria I shouldn't need a lady's company. I look upon love primarily as a necessity of my physical nature, degrading and antagonistic to my spirit; it must either be satisfied with discretion or renounced altogether, otherwise it will bring into one's life elements as unclean as itself. For it to be an enjoyment and not a torment, I will try to make it beautiful and to surround it with a mass of illusions. I should never go and see a woman unless I were sure beforehand that she would be beautiful and fascinating; and I should never go unless I were in the mood. And it is only in that way that we succeed in deceiving one another, and fancying that we are in love and happy. But can I wish for copper saucepans and untidy hair, or like to be seen myself when I am unwashed or out of humour? Zinaida Fyodorovna in the simplicity of her heart wants me to love what I have been shunning all my life. She wants my flat to smell of cooking and washing up; she wants all the fuss of moving into another flat, of driving about with her own horses; she wants to count over my linen and to look after my health; she wants to meddle in my personal life at every instant, and to watch over every step; and at the same time she assures me genuinely that my habits and my freedom will be untouched. She is persuaded that, like a young couple, we shall very soon go for a honeymoon --that is, she wants to be with me all the time in trains and hotels, while I like to read on the journey and cannot endure talking in trains."

"You should give her a talking to," said Pekarsky.

"What! Do you suppose she would understand me? Why, we think so differently. In her opinion, to leave one's papa and mamma or one's husband for the sake of the man one loves is the height of civic virtue, while I look upon it as childish. To fall in love and run away with a man to her means beginning a new life, while to my mind it means nothing at all. Love and man constitute the chief interest of her life, and possibly it is the philosophy of the unconscious at work in her. Try and make her believe that love is only a simple physical need, like the need of food or clothes; that it doesn't mean the end of the world if wives and husbands are unsatisfactory; that a man may be a profligate and a libertine, and yet a man of honour and a genius; and that, on the other hand, one may abstain from the pleasures of love and at the same time be a stupid, vicious animal! The civilised man of to-day, even among the lower classes --for instance, the French workman--spends ten sous on dinner, five sous on his wine, and five or ten sous on woman, and devotes his brain and nerves entirely to his work. But Zinaida Fyodorovna assigns to love not so many sous, but her whole soul. I might give her a talking to, but she would raise a wail in answer, and declare in all sincerity that I had ruined her, that she had nothing left to live for."

"Don't say anything to her," said Pekarsky, "but simply take a separate flat for her, that's all."

"That's easy to say."

There was a brief silence.

"But she is charming," said Kukushkin. "She is exquisite. Such women imagine that they will be in love for ever, and abandon themselves with tragic intensity."

"But one must keep a head on one's shoulders," said Orlov; "one must be reasonable. All experience gained from everyday life and handed down in innumerable novels and plays, uniformly confirms the fact that adultery and cohabitation of any sort between decent people never lasts longer than two or at most three years, however great the love may have been at the beginning. That she ought to know. And so all this business of moving, of saucepans, hopes of eternal love and harmony, are nothing but a desire to delude herself and me. She is charming and exquisite--who denies it? But she has turned my life upside down; what I have regarded as trivial and nonsensical till now she has forced me to raise to the level of a serious problem; I serve an idol whom I have never looked upon as God. She is charming--exquisite, but for some reason now when I am going home, I feel uneasy, as though I expected to meet with something inconvenient at home, such as workmen pulling the stove to pieces and blocking up the place with heaps of bricks. In fact, I am no longer giving up to love a sous, but part of my peace of mind and my nerves. And that's bad."

"And she doesn't hear this villain!" sighed Kukushkin. "My dear sir," he said theatrically, "I will relieve you from the burdensome obligation to love that adorable creature! I will wrest Zinaida Fyodorovna from you!"

"You may . . ." said Orlov carelessly.

For half a minute Kukushkin laughed a shrill little laugh, shaking all over, then he said:

"Look out; I am in earnest! Don't you play the Othello afterwards!"

They all began talking of Kukushkin's indefatigable energy in love affairs, how irresistible he was to women, and what a danger he was to husbands; and how the devil would roast him in the other world for his immorality in this. He screwed up his eyes and remained silent, and when the names of ladies of their acquaintance were mentioned, he held up his little finger--as though to say they mustn't give away other people's secrets.

Orlov suddenly looked at his watch.

His friends understood, and began to take their leave. I remember that Gruzin, who was a little drunk, was wearisomely long in getting off. He put on his coat, which was cut like children's coats in poor families, pulled up the collar, and began telling some long-winded story; then, seeing he was not listened to, he flung the rug that smelt of the nursery over one shoulder, and with a guilty and imploring face begged me to find his hat.

"George, my angel," he said tenderly. "Do as I ask you, dear boy; come out of town with us!"

"You can go, but I can't. I am in the position of a married man now."

"She is a dear, she won't be angry. My dear chief, come along! It's glorious weather; there's snow and frost. . . . Upon my word, you want shaking up a bit; you are out of humour. I don't know what the devil is the matter with you. . . ."

Orlov stretched, yawned, and looked at Pekarsky.

"Are you going?" he said, hesitating.

"I don't know. Perhaps."

"Shall I get drunk? All right, I'll come," said Orlov after some hesitation. "Wait a minute; I'll get some money."

He went into the study, and Gruzin slouched in, too, dragging his rug after him. A minute later both came back into the hall. Gruzin, a little drunk and very pleased, was crumpling a ten-rouble note in his hands.

"We'll settle up to-morrow," he said. "And she is kind, she won't be cross. . . . She is my Lisotchka's godmother; I am fond of her, poor thing! Ah, my dear fellow!" he laughed joyfully, and pressing his forehead on Pekarsky's back. "Ah, Pekarsky, my dear soul! *Advocatissimus*--as dry as a biscuit, but you bet he is fond of women. . . ."

"Fat ones," said Orlov, putting on his fur coat. "But let us get off, or we shall be meeting her on the doorstep."

"'Vieni pensando a me segretamente,'" hummed Gruzin.

At last they drove off: Orlov did not sleep at home, and returned next day at dinner-time.

## VI

Zinaida Fyodorovna had lost her gold watch, a present from her father. This loss surprised and alarmed her. She spent half a day going through the rooms, looking helplessly on all the tables and on all the windows. But the watch had disappeared completely.

Only three days afterwards Zinaida Fyodorovna, on coming in, left her purse in the hall. Luckily for me, on that occasion it was not I but Polya who helped her off with her coat. When the purse was missed, it could not be found in the hall.

"Strange," said Zinaida Fyodorovna in bewilderment. "I distinctly remember taking it out of my pocket to pay the cabman . . . and then I put it here near the looking-glass. It's very odd!"

I had not stolen it, but I felt as though I had stolen it and had been caught in the theft. Tears actually came into my eyes. When they were seated at dinner, Zinaida Fyodorovna said to Orlov in French:

"There seem to be spirits in the flat. I lost my purse in the hall to-day, and now, lo and behold, it is on my table. But it's not quite a disinterested trick of the spirits. They took out a gold coin and twenty roubles in notes."

"You are always losing something; first it's your watch and then it's your money . . ." said Orlov. "Why is it nothing of the sort ever happens to me?"

A minute later Zinaida Fyodorovna had forgotten the trick played by the spirits, and was telling with a laugh how the week before she had ordered some notepaper and had forgotten to give her new address, and the shop had sent the paper to her old home at her husband's, who had to pay twelve roubles for it. And suddenly she turned her eyes on Polya and looked at her intently. She blushed as she did so, and was so confused that she began talking of something else.

When I took in the coffee to the study, Orlov was standing with his back to the fire and she was sitting in an arm-chair facing him.

"I am not in a bad temper at all," she was saying in French. "But I have been putting things together, and now I see it clearly. I can give you the day and the hour when she stole my watch. And the purse? There can be no doubt about it. Oh!" she laughed as she took the coffee from me. "Now I understand why I am always losing my handkerchiefs and gloves. Whatever you say, I shall dismiss the magpie to-morrow and send Stepan for my Sofya. She is not a thief and has not got such a repulsive appearance."

"You are out of humour. To-morrow you will feel differently, and will realise that you can't discharge people simply because you suspect them."

"It's not suspicion; it's certainty," said Zinaida Fyodorovna. "So long as I suspected that unhappy-faced, poor-looking valet of yours, I said nothing. It's too bad of you not to believe me, George."

"If we think differently about anything, it doesn't follow that I don't believe you. You may be right," said Orlov, turning round and flinging his cigarette-end into the fire, "but there is no need to be excited about it, anyway. In fact, I must say, I never expected my humble establishment would cause you so much serious worry and agitation. You've lost a gold coin: never mind--you may have a hundred of mine; but to change my habits, to pick up a new housemaid, to wait till she is used to the place--all that's a tedious, tiring business and does not suit me. Our present maid certainly is fat, and has, perhaps, a weakness for gloves and handkerchiefs, but she is perfectly well behaved, well trained, and does not shriek when Kukushkin pinches her."

"You mean that you can't part with her? . . . Why don't you say so?"

"Are you jealous?"

"Yes, I am," said Zinaida Fyodorovna, decidedly.

"Thank you."

"Yes, I am jealous," she repeated, and tears glistened in her eyes. "No, it's something worse . . . which I find it difficult to find a name for." She pressed her hands on her temples, and went on impulsively. "You men are so disgusting! It's horrible!"

"I see nothing horrible about it."

"I've not seen it; I don't know; but they say that you men begin with housemaids as boys, and get so used to it that you feel no repugnance. I don't know, I don't know, but I have actually read . . . George, of course you are right," she said, going up to Orlov and changing to a caressing and imploring tone. "I really am out of humour to-day. But, you must understand, I can't help it. She disgusts me and I am afraid of her. It makes me miserable to see her."

"Surely you can rise above such paltriness?" said Orlov, shrugging his shoulders in perplexity, and walking away from the fire. "Nothing could be simpler: take no notice of her, and then she won't disgust you, and you won't need to make a regular tragedy out of a trifle."

I went out of the study, and I don't know what answer Orlov received. Whatever it was, Polya remained. After that Zinaida Fyodorovna never applied to her for anything, and evidently tried to dispense with her services. When Polya handed her anything or even passed by her, jingling her bangle and rustling her skirts, she shuddered.

I believe that if Gruzin or Pekarsky had asked Orlov to dismiss Polya he would have done so without the slightest hesitation, without troubling about any explanations. He was easily persuaded, like all indifferent people. But in his relations with Zinaida Fyodorovna he displayed for some reason, even in trifles, an obstinacy which sometimes was almost irrational. I knew beforehand that if Zinaida Fyodorovna liked anything, it would be certain not to please Orlov. When on coming in from shopping she made haste to show him with pride some new purchase, he would glance at it and say coldly that the more unnecessary objects they had in the flat, the less airy it would be. It sometimes happened that after putting on his dress clothes to go out somewhere, and after saying good-bye to Zinaida Fyodorovna, he would suddenly change his mind and remain at home from sheer perversity. I used to think that he remained at home then simply in order to feel injured.

"Why are you staying?" said Zinaida Fyodorovna, with a show of vexation, though at the same time she was radiant with delight. "Why do you? You are not accustomed to spending your evenings at home, and I don't want you to alter your habits on my account. Do go out as usual, if you don't want me to feel guilty."

"No one is blaming you," said Orlov.

With the air of a victim he stretched himself in his easy-chair in the study, and shading his eyes with his hand, took up a book. But soon the book dropped from his hand, he turned heavily in his chair, and again screened his eyes as though from the sun. Now he felt annoyed that he had not gone out.

"May I come in?" Zinaida Fyodorovna would say, coming irresolutely into the study. "Are you reading? I felt dull by myself, and have come just for a minute . . . to have a peep at you."

I remember one evening she went in like that, irresolutely and inappropriately, and sank on the rug at Orlov's feet, and from her soft, timid movements one could see that she did not understand his mood and was afraid.

"You are always reading . . ." she said cajolingly, evidently wishing to flatter him. "Do you know, George, what is one of the secrets of your success? You are very clever and well-read. What book have you there?"

Orlov answered. A silence followed for some minutes which seemed to me very long. I was standing in the drawing-room, from which I could watch them, and was afraid of coughing.

"There is something I wanted to tell you," said Zinaida Fyodorovna, and she laughed; "shall I? Very likely you'll laugh and say that I flatter myself. You know I want, I want horribly to believe that you are staying at home to-night for my sake . . . that we might spend the evening together. Yes? May I think so?"

"Do," he said, screening his eyes. "The really happy man is he who thinks not only of what is, but of what is not."

"That was a long sentence which I did not quite understand. You mean happy people live in their imagination. Yes, that's true. I love to sit in your study in the evening and let my thoughts carry me far, far away. . . . It's pleasant sometimes to dream. Let us dream aloud, George."

"I've never been at a girls' boarding-school; I never learnt the art."

"You are out of humour?" said Zinaida Fyodorovna, taking Orlov's hand. "Tell me why. When you are like that, I'm afraid. I don't know whether your head aches or whether you are angry with me. . . ."

Again there was a silence lasting several long minutes.

"Why have you changed?" she said softly. "Why are you never so tender or so gay as you used to be at Znamensky Street? I've been with you almost a month, but it seems to me as though we had not yet begun to live, and have not yet talked of anything as we ought to. You always answer me with jokes or else with a long cold lecture like a teacher. And there is something cold in your jokes. . . . Why have you given up talking to me seriously?"

"I always talk seriously."

"Well, then, let us talk. For God's sake, George. . . . Shall we?"

"Certainly, but about what?"

"Let us talk of our life, of our future," said Zinaida Fyodorovna dreamily. "I keep making plans for our life, plans and plans--and I enjoy doing it so! George, I'll begin with the question, when are you going to give up your post?"

"What for?" asked Orlov, taking his hand from his forehead.

"With your views you cannot remain in the service. You are out of place there."

"My views?" Orlov repeated. "My views? In conviction and temperament I am an ordinary official, one of Shtchedrin's heroes. You take me for something different, I venture to assure you."

"Joking again, George!"

"Not in the least. The service does not satisfy me, perhaps; but, anyway, it is better for me than anything else. I am used to it, and in it I meet men of my own sort; I am in my place there and find it tolerable."

"You hate the service and it revolts you."

"Indeed? If I resign my post, take to dreaming aloud and letting myself be carried away into another world, do you suppose that that world would be less hateful to me than the service?"

"You are ready to libel yourself in order to contradict me." Zinaida Fyodorovna was offended and got up. "I am sorry I began this talk."

"Why are you angry? I am not angry with you for not being an official. Every one lives as he likes best."

"Why, do you live as you like best? Are you free? To spend your life writing documents that are opposed to your own ideas," Zinaida Fyodorovna went on, clasping her hands in despair: "to submit to authority, congratulate your superiors at the New Year, and then cards and nothing but cards: worst of all, to be working for a system which must be distasteful to you--no, George, no! You should not make such horrid jokes. It's dreadful. You are a man of ideas, and you ought to be working for your ideas and nothing else."

"You really take me for quite a different person from what I am," sighed Orlov.

"Say simply that you don't want to talk to me. You dislike me, that's all," said Zinaida Fyodorovna through her tears.

"Look here, my dear," said Orlov admonishingly, sitting up in his chair. "You were pleased to observe yourself that I am a clever, well-read man, and to teach one who knows does nothing but harm. I know very well all the ideas, great and small, which you mean when you call me a man of ideas. So if I prefer the service and cards to those ideas, you may be sure I have good grounds for it. That's one thing. Secondly, you have, so far as I know, never been in the service, and can only have drawn your ideas of Government service from anecdotes and indifferent novels. So it would not be amiss for us to make a compact, once for all, not to talk of things we know already or of things about which we are not competent to speak."

"Why do you speak to me like that?" said Zinaida Fyodorovna, stepping back as though in horror. "What for? George, for God's sake, think what you are saying!"

Her voice quivered and broke; she was evidently trying to restrain her tears, but she suddenly broke into sobs.

"George, my darling, I am perishing!" she said in French, dropping down before Orlov, and laying her head on his knees. "I am miserable, I am exhausted. I can't bear it, I can't bear it. . . . In my childhood my hateful, depraved stepmother, then my husband, now you . . . you! . . . You meet my mad love with coldness and irony. . . . And that horrible,

insolent servant," she went on, sobbing. "Yes, yes, I see: I am not your wife nor your friend, but a woman you don't respect because she has become your mistress. . . . I shall kill myself!"

I had not expected that her words and her tears would make such an impression on Orlov. He flushed, moved uneasily in his chair, and instead of irony, his face wore a look of stupid, schoolboyish dismay.

"My darling, you misunderstood me," he muttered helplessly, touching her hair and her shoulders. "Forgive me, I entreat you. I was unjust and I hate myself."

"I insult you with my whining and complaints. You are a true, generous . . . rare man--I am conscious of it every minute; but I've been horribly depressed for the last few days. . . ."

Zinaida Fyodorovna impulsively embraced Orlov and kissed him on the cheek.

"Only please don't cry," he said.

"No, no. . . . I've had my cry, and now I am better."

"As for the servant, she shall be gone to-morrow," he said, still moving uneasily in his chair.

"No, she must stay, George! Do you hear? I am not afraid of her now. . . . One must rise above trifles and not imagine silly things. You are right! You are a wonderful, rare person!"

She soon left off crying. With tears glistening on her eyelashes, sitting on Orlov's knee, she told him in a low voice something touching, something like a reminiscence of childhood and youth. She stroked his face, kissed him, and carefully examined his hands with the rings on them and the charms on his watch-chain. She was carried away by what she was saying, and by being near the man she loved, and probably because her tears had cleared and refreshed her soul, there was a note of wonderful candour and sincerity in her voice. And Orlov played with her chestnut hair and kissed her hands, noiselessly pressing them to his lips.

Then they had tea in the study, and Zinaida Fyodorovna read aloud some letters. Soon after midnight they went to bed. I had a fearful pain in my side that night, and I not get warm or go to sleep till morning. I could hear Orlov go from the bedroom into his study. After sitting there about an hour, he rang the bell. In my pain and exhaustion I forgot all the rules and conventions, and went to his study in my night attire, barefooted. Orlov, in his dressing-gown and cap, was standing in the doorway, waiting for me.

"When you are sent for you should come dressed," he said sternly. "Bring some fresh candles."

I was about to apologise, but suddenly broke into a violent cough, and clutched at the side of the door to save myself from falling.

"Are you ill?" said Orlov.

I believe it was the first time of our acquaintance that he addressed me not in the singular--goodness knows why. Most likely, in my night clothes and with my face distorted by coughing, I played my part poorly, and was very little like a flunkey.

"If you are ill, why do you take a place?" he said.

"That I may not die of starvation," I answered.

"How disgusting it all is, really!" he said softly, going up to his table.

While hurriedly getting into my coat, I put up and lighted fresh candles. He was sitting at the table, with feet stretched out on a low chair, cutting a book.

I left him deeply engrossed, and the book did not drop out of his hands as it had done in the evening.

## VII

Now that I am writing these lines I am restrained by that dread of appearing sentimental and ridiculous, in which I have been trained from childhood; when I want to be affectionate or to say anything tender, I don't know how to be natural. And it is that dread, together with lack of practice, that prevents me from being able to express with perfect clearness what was passing in my soul at that time.

I was not in love with Zinaida Fyodorovna, but in the ordinary human feeling I had for her, there was far more youth, freshness, and joyousness than in Orlov's love.

As I worked in the morning, cleaning boots or sweeping the rooms, I waited with a thrill at my heart for the moment when I should hear her voice and her footsteps. To stand watching her as she drank her coffee in the morning or ate her lunch, to hold her fur coat for her in the hall, and to put the goloshes on her little feet while she rested her hand on my shoulder; then to wait till the hall porter rang up for me, to meet her at the door, cold, and rosy, powdered with the snow, to listen to her brief exclamations about the frost or the cabman--if only you knew how much all that meant to me! I longed to be in love, to have a wife and child of my own. I wanted my future wife to have just such a face, such a voice. I dreamed of it at dinner, and in the street when I was sent on some errand, and when I lay awake at night. Orlov rejected with disgust children, cooking, copper saucepans, and feminine knicknacks and I gathered them all up, tenderly cherished them in my dreams, loved them, and begged them of destiny. I had visions of a wife, a nursery, a little house with garden paths. . . .

I knew that if I did love her I could never dare hope for the miracle of her returning my love, but that reflection did not worry me. In my quiet, modest feeling akin to ordinary affection, there was no jealousy of Orlov or even envy of him, since I realised that for a wreck like me happiness was only to be found in dreams.

When Zinaida Fyodorovna sat up night after night for her George, looking immovably at a book of which she never turned a page, or when she shuddered and turned pale at Polya's crossing the room, I suffered with her, and the idea occurred to me to lance this festering wound as quickly as possible by letting her know what was said here at supper on Thursdays; but--how was it to be done? More and more often I saw her tears. For the first weeks she laughed and sang to herself, even when Orlov was not at home, but by the second month there was a mournful stillness in our flat broken only on Thursday evenings.

She flattered Orlov, and to wring from him a counterfeit smile or kiss, was ready to go on her knees to him, to fawn on him like a dog. Even when her heart was heaviest, she could not resist glancing into a looking-glass if she passed one and straightening her hair. It seemed strange to me that she could still take an interest in clothes and go into ecstasies over her purchases. It did not seem in keeping with her genuine grief. She paid attention to the fashions and ordered expensive dresses. What for? On whose account? I

particularly remember one dress which cost four hundred roubles. To give four hundred roubles for an unnecessary, useless dress while women for their hard day's work get only twenty kopecks a day without food, and the makers of Venice and Brussels lace are only paid half a franc a day on the supposition that they can earn the rest by immorality! And it seemed strange to me that Zinaida Fyodorovna was not conscious of it; it vexed me. But she had only to go out of the house for me to find excuses and explanations for everything, and to be waiting eagerly for the hall porter to ring for me.

She treated me as a flunkey, a being of a lower order. One may pat a dog, and yet not notice it; I was given orders and asked questions, but my presence was not observed. My master and mistress thought it unseemly to say more to me than is usually said to servants; if when waiting at dinner I had laughed or put in my word in the conversation, they would certainly have thought I was mad and have dismissed me. Zinaida Fyodorovna was favourably disposed to me, all the same. When she was sending me on some errand or explaining to me the working of a new lamp or anything of that sort, her face was extraordinarily kind, frank, and cordial, and her eyes looked me straight in the face. At such moments I always fancied she remembered with gratitude how I used to bring her letters to Znamensky Street. When she rang the bell, Polya, who considered me her favourite and hated me for it, used to say with a jeering smile:

"Go along, \_your\_ mistress wants you."

Zinaida Fyodorovna considered me as a being of a lower order, and did not suspect that if any one in the house were in a humiliating position it was she. She did not know that I, a footman, was unhappy on her account, and used to ask myself twenty times a day what was in store for her and how it would all end. Things were growing visibly worse day by day. After the evening on which they had talked of his official work, Orlov, who could not endure tears, unmistakably began to avoid conversation with her; whenever Zinaida Fyodorovna began to argue, or to beseech him, or seemed on the point of crying, he seized some plausible excuse for retreating to his study or going out. He more and more rarely slept at home, and still more rarely dined there: on Thursdays he was the one to suggest some expedition to his friends. Zinaida Fyodorovna was still dreaming of having the cooking done at home, of moving to a new flat, of travelling abroad, but her dreams remained dreams. Dinner was sent in from the restaurant. Orlov asked her not to broach the question of moving until after they had come back from abroad, and apropos of their foreign tour, declared that they could not go till his hair had grown long, as one could not go trailing from hotel to hotel and serving the idea without long hair.

To crown it all, in Orlov's absence, Kukushkin began calling at the flat in the evening. There was nothing exceptional in his behaviour, but I could never forget the conversation in which he had offered to cut Orlov out. He was regaled with tea and red wine, and he used to titter and, anxious to say something pleasant, would declare that a free union was superior in every respect to legal marriage, and that all decent people ought really to come to Zinaida Fyodorovna and fall at her feet.

## VIII

Christmas was spent drearily in vague anticipations of calamity. On New Year's Eve Orlov unexpectedly announced at breakfast that he was being sent to assist a senator who was on a revising commission in a certain province.

"I don't want to go, but I can't find an excuse to get off," he said with vexation. "I must go; there's nothing for it."

Such news instantly made Zinaida Fyodorovna's eyes look red. "Is it for long?" she asked.

"Five days or so."

"I am glad, really, you are going," she said after a moment's thought. "It will be a change for you. You will fall in love with some one on the way, and tell me about it afterwards."

At every opportunity she tried to make Orlov feel that she did not restrict his liberty in any way, and that he could do exactly as he liked, and this artless, transparent strategy deceived no one, and only unnecessarily reminded Orlov that he was not free.

"I am going this evening," he said, and began reading the paper.

Zinaida Fyodorovna wanted to see him off at the station, but he dissuaded her, saying that he was not going to America, and not going to be away five years, but only five days--possibly less.

The parting took place between seven and eight. He put one arm round her, and kissed her on the lips and on the forehead.

"Be a good girl, and don't be depressed while I am away," he said in a warm, affectionate tone which touched even me. "God keep you!"

She looked greedily into his face, to stamp his dear features on her memory, then she put her arms gracefully round his neck and laid her head on his breast.

"Forgive me our misunderstandings," she said in French. "Husband and wife cannot help quarrelling if they love each other, and I love you madly. Don't forget me. . . . Wire to me often and fully."

Orlov kissed her once more, and, without saying a word, went out in confusion. When he heard the click of the lock as the door closed, he stood still in the middle of the staircase in hesitation and glanced upwards. It seemed to me that if a sound had reached him at that moment from above, he would have turned back. But all was quiet. He straightened his coat and went downstairs irresolutely.

The sledges had been waiting a long while at the door. Orlov got into one, I got into the other with two portmanteaus. It was a hard frost and there were fires smoking at the cross-roads. The cold wind nipped my face and hands, and took my breath away as we drove rapidly along; and, closing my eyes, I thought what a splendid woman she was. How she loved him! Even useless rubbish is collected in the courtyards nowadays and used for some purpose, even broken glass is considered a useful commodity, but something so precious, so rare, as the love of a refined, young, intelligent, and good woman is utterly thrown away and wasted. One of the early sociologists regarded every evil passion as a force which might by judicious management be turned to good, while among us even a fine, noble passion springs up and dies away in impotence, turned to no account, misunderstood or vulgarised. Why is it?

The sledges stopped unexpectedly. I opened my eyes and I saw that we had come to a standstill in Sergievsky Street, near a big house where Pekarsky lived. Orlov got out of the sledge and vanished into the entry. Five minutes later Pekarsky's footman came out, bareheaded, and, angry with the frost, shouted to me:

"Are you deaf? Pay the cabmen and go upstairs. You are wanted!"

At a complete loss, I went to the first storey. I had been to Pekarsky's flat before--that is, I had stood in the hall and looked into the drawing-room, and, after the damp, gloomy street, it always struck me by the brilliance of its picture-frames, its bronzes and expensive furniture. To-day in the midst of this splendour I saw Gruzin, Kukushkin, and, after a minute, Orlov.

"Look here, Stepan," he said, coming up to me. "I shall be staying here till Friday or Saturday. If any letters or telegrams come, you must bring them here every day. At home, of course you will say that I have gone, and send my greetings. Now you can go."

When I reached home Zinaida Fyodorovna was lying on the sofa in the drawing-room, eating a pear. There was only one candle burning in the candelabra.

"Did you catch the train?" asked Zinaida Fyodorovna.

"Yes, madam. His honour sends his greetings."

I went into my room and I, too, lay down. I had nothing to do, and I did not want to read. I was not surprised and I was not indignant. I only racked my brains to think why this deception was necessary. It is only boys in their teens who deceive their mistresses like that. How was it that a man who had thought and read so much could not imagine anything more sensible? I must confess I had by no means a poor opinion of his intelligence. I believe if he had had to deceive his minister or any other influential person he would have put a great deal of skill and energy into doing so; but to deceive a woman, the first idea that occurred to him was evidently good enough. If it succeeded--well and

good; if it did not, there would be no harm done--he could tell some other lie just as quickly and simply, with no mental effort.

At midnight when the people on the floor overhead were moving their chairs and shouting hurrah to welcome the New Year, Zinaida Fyodorovna rang for me from the room next to the study. Languid from lying down so long, she was sitting at the table, writing something on a scrap of paper.

"I must send a telegram," she said, with a smile. "Go to the station as quick as you can and ask them to send it after him."

Going out into the street, I read on the scrap of paper:

"May the New Year bring new happiness. Make haste and telegraph; I miss you dreadfully. It seems an eternity. I am only sorry I can't send a thousand kisses and my very heart by telegraph. Enjoy yourself, my darling.--ZINA."

I sent the telegram, and next morning I gave her the receipt.

## IX

The worst of it was that Orlov had thoughtlessly let Polya, too, into the secret of his deception, telling her to bring his shirts to Sergievsky Street. After that, she looked at Zinaida Fyodorovna with a malignant joy and hatred I could not understand, and was never tired of snorting with delight to herself in her own room and in the hall.

"She's outstayed her welcome; it's time she took herself off!" she would say with zest.  
"She ought to realise that herself . . ."

She already divined by instinct that Zinaida Fyodorovna would not be with us much longer, and, not to let the chance slip, carried off everything she set her eyes on--smelling-bottles, tortoise-shell hairpins, handkerchiefs, shoes! On the day after New Year's Day, Zinaida Fyodorovna summoned me to her room and told me in a low voice that she missed her black dress. And then she walked through all the rooms, with a pale, frightened, and indignant face, talking to herself:

"It's too much! It's beyond everything. Why, it's unheard-of insolence!"

At dinner she tried to help herself to soup, but could not--her hands were trembling. Her lips were trembling, too. She looked helplessly at the soup and at the little pies, waiting for the trembling to pass off, and suddenly she could not resist looking at Polya.

"You can go, Polya," she said. "Stepan is enough by himself."

"I'll stay; I don't mind," answered Polya.

"There's no need for you to stay. You go away altogether," Zinaida Fyodorovna went on, getting up in great agitation. "You may look out for another place. You can go at once."

"I can't go away without the master's orders. He engaged me. It must be as he orders."

"You can take orders from me, too! I am mistress here!" said Zinaida Fyodorovna, and she flushed crimson.

"You may be the mistress, but only the master can dismiss me. It was he engaged me."

"You dare not stay here another minute!" cried Zinaida Fyodorovna, and she struck the plate with her knife. "You are a thief! Do you hear?"

Zinaida Fyodorovna flung her dinner-napkin on the table, and with a pitiful, suffering face, went quickly out of the room. Loudly sobbing and wailing something indistinct, Polya, too, went away. The soup and the grouse got cold. And for some reason all the restaurant dainties on the table struck me as poor, thievish, like Polya. Two pies on a plate had a particularly miserable and guilty air. "We shall be taken back to the restaurant

to-day," they seemed to be saying, "and to-morrow we shall be put on the table again for some official or celebrated singer."

"She is a fine lady, indeed," I heard uttered in Polya's room. "I could have been a lady like that long ago, but I have some self-respect! We'll see which of us will be the first to go!"

Zinaida Fyodorovna rang the bell. She was sitting in her room, in the corner, looking as though she had been put in the corner as a punishment.

"No telegram has come?" she asked.

"No, madam."

"Ask the porter; perhaps there is a telegram. And don't leave the house," she called after me. "I am afraid to be left alone."

After that I had to run down almost every hour to ask the porter whether a telegram had come. I must own it was a dreadful time! To avoid seeing Polya, Zinaida Fyodorovna dined and had tea in her own room; it was here that she slept, too, on a short sofa like a half-moon, and she made her own bed. For the first days I took the telegrams; but, getting no answer, she lost her faith in me and began telegraphing herself. Looking at her, I, too, began impatiently hoping for a telegram. I hoped he would contrive some deception, would make arrangements, for instance, that a telegram should be sent to her from some station. If he were too much engrossed with cards or had been attracted by some other woman, I thought that both Gruzin and Kukushkin would remind him of us. But our expectations were vain. Five times a day I would go in to Zinaida Fyodorovna, intending to tell her the truth. But her eyes looked piteous as a fawn's, her shoulders seemed to droop, her lips were moving, and I went away again without saying a word. Pity and sympathy seemed to rob me of all manliness. Polya, as cheerful and well satisfied with herself as though nothing had happened, was tidying the master's study and the bedroom, rummaging in the cupboards, and making the crockery jingle, and when she passed Zinaida Fyodorovna's door, she hummed something and coughed. She was pleased that her mistress was hiding from her. In the evening she would go out somewhere, and rang at two or three o'clock in the morning, and I had to open the door to her and listen to remarks about my cough. Immediately afterwards I would hear another ring; I would run to the room next to the study, and Zinaida Fyodorovna, putting her head out of the door, would ask, "Who was it rung?" while she looked at my hands to see whether I had a telegram.

When at last on Saturday the bell rang below and she heard the familiar voice on the stairs, she was so delighted that she broke into sobs. She rushed to meet him, embraced him, kissed him on the breast and sleeves, said something one could not understand. The hall porter brought up the portmanteaus; Polya's cheerful voice was heard. It was as though some one had come home for the holidays.

"Why didn't you wire?" asked Zinaida Fyodorovna, breathless with joy. "Why was it? I have been in misery; I don't know how I've lived through it. . . . Oh, my God!"

"It was very simple! I returned with the senator to Moscow the very first day, and didn't get your telegrams," said Orlov. "After dinner, my love, I'll give you a full account of my doings, but now I must sleep and sleep. . . . I am worn out with the journey."

It was evident that he had not slept all night; he had probably been playing cards and drinking freely. Zinaida Fyodorovna put him to bed, and we all walked about on tiptoe all that day. The dinner went off quite satisfactorily, but when they went into the study and had coffee the explanation began. Zinaida Fyodorovna began talking of something rapidly in a low voice; she spoke in French, and her words flowed like a stream. Then I heard a loud sigh from Orlov, and his voice.

"My God!" he said in French. "Have you really nothing fresher to tell me than this everlasting tale of your servant's misdeeds?"

"But, my dear, she robbed me and said insulting things to me."

"But why is it she doesn't rob me or say insulting things to me? Why is it I never notice the maids nor the porters nor the footmen? My dear, you are simply capricious and refuse to know your own mind. . . . I really begin to suspect that you must be in a certain condition. When I offered to let her go, you insisted on her remaining, and now you want me to turn her away. I can be obstinate, too, in such cases. You want her to go, but I want her to remain. That's the only way to cure you of your nerves."

"Oh, very well, very well," said Zinaida Fyodorovna in alarm. "Let us say no more about that. . . . Let us put it off till to-morrow. . . . Now tell me about Moscow. . . . What is going on in Moscow?"

## X

After lunch next day--it was the seventh of January, St. John the Baptist's Day--Orlov put on his black dress coat and his decoration to go to visit his father and congratulate him on his name day. He had to go at two o'clock, and it was only half-past one when he had finished dressing. What was he to do for that half-hour? He walked about the drawing-room, declaiming some congratulatory verses which he had recited as a child to his father and mother.

Zinaida Fyodorovna, who was just going out to a dressmaker's or to the shops, was sitting, listening to him with a smile. I don't know how their conversation began, but when I took Orlov his gloves, he was standing before her with a capricious, beseeching face, saying:

"For God's sake, in the name of everything that's holy, don't talk of things that everybody knows! What an unfortunate gift our intellectual thoughtful ladies have for talking with enthusiasm and an air of profundity of things that every schoolboy is sick to death of! Ah, if only you would exclude from our conjugal programme all these serious questions! How grateful I should be to you!"

"We women may not dare, it seems, to have views of our own."

"I give you full liberty to be as liberal as you like, and quote from any authors you choose, but make me one concession: don't hold forth in my presence on either of two subjects: the corruption of the upper classes and the evils of the marriage system. Do understand me, at last. The upper class is always abused in contrast with the world of tradesmen, priests, workmen and peasants, Sidors and Nikitas of all sorts. I detest both classes, but if I had honestly to choose between the two, I should without hesitation, prefer the upper class, and there would be no falsity or affectation about it, since all my tastes are in that direction. Our world is trivial and empty, but at any rate we speak French decently, read something, and don't punch each other in the ribs even in our most violent quarrels, while the Sidors and the Nikitas and their worships in trade talk about 'being quite agreeable,' 'in a jiffy,' 'blast your eyes,' and display the utmost license of pothouse manners and the most degrading superstition."

"The peasant and the tradesman feed you."

"Yes, but what of it? That's not only to my discredit, but to theirs too. They feed me and take off their caps to me, so it seems they have not the intelligence and honesty to do otherwise. I don't blame or praise any one: I only mean that the upper class and the lower are as bad as one another. My feelings and my intelligence are opposed to both, but my tastes lie more in the direction of the former. Well, now for the evils of marriage," Orlov went on, glancing at his watch. "It's high time for you to understand that there are no evils in the system itself; what is the matter is that you don't know yourselves what you want from marriage. What is it you want? In legal and illegal cohabitation, in every sort of

union and cohabitation, good or bad, the underlying reality is the same. You ladies live for that underlying reality alone: for you it's everything; your existence would have no meaning for you without it. You want nothing but that, and you get it; but since you've taken to reading novels you are ashamed of it: you rush from pillar to post, you recklessly change your men, and to justify this turmoil you have begun talking of the evils of marriage. So long as you can't and won't renounce what underlies it all, your chief foe, your devil --so long as you serve that slavishly, what use is there in discussing the matter seriously? Everything you may say to me will be falsity and affectation. I shall not believe you."

I went to find out from the hall porter whether the sledge was at the door, and when I came back I found it had become a quarrel. As sailors say, a squall had blown up.

"I see you want to shock me by your cynicism today," said Zinaida Fyodorovna, walking about the drawing-room in great emotion. "It revolts me to listen to you. I am pure before God and man, and have nothing to repent of. I left my husband and came to you, and am proud of it. I swear, on my honour, I am proud of it!"

"Well, that's all right, then!"

"If you are a decent, honest man, you, too, ought to be proud of what I did. It raises you and me above thousands of people who would like to do as we have done, but do not venture through cowardice or petty prudence. But you are not a decent man. You are afraid of freedom, and you mock the promptings of genuine feeling, from fear that some ignoramus may suspect you of being sincere. You are afraid to show me to your friends; there's no greater infliction for you than to go about with me in the street. . . . Isn't that true? Why haven't you introduced me to your father or your cousin all this time? Why is it? No, I am sick of it at last," cried Zinaida Fyodorovna, stamping. "I demand what is mine by right. You must present me to your father."

"If you want to know him, go and present yourself. He receives visitors every morning from ten till half-past."

"How base you are!" said Zinaida Fyodorovna, wringing her hands in despair. "Even if you are not sincere, and are not saying what you think, I might hate you for your cruelty. Oh, how base you are!"

"We keep going round and round and never reach the real point. The real point is that you made a mistake, and you won't acknowledge it aloud. You imagined that I was a hero, and that I had some extraordinary ideas and ideals, and it has turned out that I am a most ordinary official, a cardplayer, and have no partiality for ideas of any sort. I am a worthy representative of the rotten world from which you have run away because you were revolted with its triviality and emptiness. Recognise it and be just: don't be indignant with me, but with yourself, as it is your mistake, and not mine."

"Yes, I admit I was mistaken."

"Well, that's all right, then. We've reached that point at last, thank God. Now hear something more, if you please: I can't rise to your level--I am too depraved; you can't descend to my level, either, for you are too exalted. So there is only one thing left to do. . . ."

"What?" Zinaida Fyodorovna asked quickly, holding her breath and turning suddenly as white as a sheet of paper.

"To call logic to our aid. . . ."

"Georgy, why are you torturing me?" Zinaida Fyodorovna said suddenly in Russian in a breaking voice. "What is it for? Think of my misery . . . ."

Orlov, afraid of tears, went quickly into his study, and I don't know why--whether it was that he wished to cause her extra pain, or whether he remembered it was usually done in such cases--he locked the door after him. She cried out and ran after him with a rustle of her skirt.

"What does this mean?" she cried, knocking at his door. "What . . . what does this mean?" she repeated in a shrill voice breaking with indignation. "Ah, so this is what you do! Then let me tell you I hate you, I despise you! Everything is over between us now."

I heard hysterical weeping mingled with laughter. Something small in the drawing-room fell off the table and was broken. Orlov went out into the hall by another door, and, looking round him nervously, he hurriedly put on his great-coat and went out.

Half an hour passed, an hour, and she was still weeping. I remembered that she had no father or mother, no relations, and here she was living between a man who hated her and Polya, who robbed her--and how desolate her life seemed to me! I do not know why, but I went into the drawing-room to her. Weak and helpless, looking with her lovely hair like an embodiment of tenderness and grace, she was in anguish, as though she were ill; she was lying on a couch, hiding her face, and quivering all over.

"Madam, shouldn't I fetch a doctor?" I asked gently.

"No, there's no need . . . it's nothing," she said, and she looked at me with her tear-stained eyes. "I have a little headache. . . . Thank you."

I went out, and in the evening she was writing letter after letter, and sent me out first to Pekarsky, then to Gruzin, then to Kukushkin, and finally anywhere I chose, if only I could find Orlov and give him the letter. Every time I came back with the letter she scolded me, entreated me, thrust money into my hand--as though she were in a fever. And all the night she did not sleep, but sat in the drawing-room, talking to herself.

Orlov returned to dinner next day, and they were reconciled.

The first Thursday afterwards Orlov complained to his friends of the intolerable life he led; he smoked a great deal, and said with irritation:

"It is no life at all; it's the rack. Tears, wailing, intellectual conversations, begging for forgiveness, again tears and wailing; and the long and the short of it is that I have no flat of my own now. I am wretched, and I make her wretched. Surely I haven't to live another month or two like this? How can I? But yet I may have to."

"Why don't you speak, then?" said Pekarsky.

"I've tried, but I can't. One can boldly tell the truth, whatever it may be, to an independent, rational man; but in this case one has to do with a creature who has no will, no strength of character, and no logic. I cannot endure tears; they disarm me. When she cries, I am ready to swear eternal love and cry myself."

Pekarsky did not understand; he scratched his broad forehead in perplexity and said:

"You really had better take another flat for her. It's so simple!"

"She wants me, not the flat. But what's the good of talking?" sighed Orlov. "I only hear endless conversations, but no way out of my position. It certainly is a case of 'being guilty without guilt.' I don't claim to be a mushroom, but it seems I've got to go into the basket. The last thing I've ever set out to be is a hero. I never could endure Turgenev's novels; and now, all of a sudden, as though to spite me, I've heroism forced upon me. I assure her on my honour that I'm not a hero at all, I adduce irrefutable proofs of the same, but she doesn't believe me. Why doesn't she believe me? I suppose I really must have something of the appearance of a hero."

"You go off on a tour of inspection in the provinces," said Kukushkin, laughing.

"Yes, that's the only thing left for me."

A week after this conversation Orlov announced that he was again ordered to attend the senator, and the same evening he went off with his portmanteaus to Pekarsky.

## XI

An old man of sixty, in a long fur coat reaching to the ground, and a beaver cap, was standing at the door.

"Is Georgy Ivanitch at home?" he asked.

At first I thought it was one of the moneylenders, Gruzin's creditors, who sometimes used to come to Orlov for small payments on account; but when he came into the hall and flung open his coat, I saw the thick brows and the characteristically compressed lips which I knew so well from the photographs, and two rows of stars on the uniform. I recognised him: it was Orlov's father, the distinguished statesman.

I answered that Georgy Ivanitch was not at home. The old man pursed up his lips tightly and looked into space, reflecting, showing me his dried-up, toothless profile.

"I'll leave a note," he said; "show me in."

He left his goloshes in the hall, and, without taking off his long, heavy fur coat, went into the study. There he sat down before the table, and, before taking up the pen, for three minutes he pondered, shading his eyes with his hand as though from the sun--exactly as his son did when he was out of humour. His face was sad, thoughtful, with that look of resignation which I have only seen on the faces of the old and religious. I stood behind him, gazed at his bald head and at the hollow at the nape of his neck, and it was clear as daylight to me that this weak old man was now in my power. There was not a soul in the flat except my enemy and me. I had only to use a little physical violence, then snatch his watch to disguise the object of the crime, and to get off by the back way, and I should have gained infinitely more than I could have imagined possible when I took up the part of a footman. I thought that I could hardly get a better opportunity. But instead of acting, I looked quite unconcernedly, first at his bald patch and then at his fur, and calmly meditated on this man's relation to his only son, and on the fact that people spoiled by power and wealth probably don't want to die. . . .

"Have you been long in my son's service?" he asked, writing a large hand on the paper.

"Three months, your High Excellency."

He finished the letter and stood up. I still had time. I urged myself on and clenched my fists, trying to wring out of my soul some trace of my former hatred; I recalled what a passionate, implacable, obstinate hate I had felt for him only a little while before. . . . But it is difficult to strike a match against a crumbling stone. The sad old face and the cold glitter of his stars roused in me nothing but petty, cheap, unnecessary thoughts of the transitoriness of everything earthly, of the nearness of death. . . .

"Good-day, brother," said the old man. He put on his cap and went out.

There could be no doubt about it: I had undergone a change; I had become different. To convince myself, I began to recall the past, but at once I felt uneasy, as though I had accidentally peeped into a dark, damp corner. I remembered my comrades and friends, and my first thought was how I should blush in confusion if ever I met any of them. What was I now? What had I to think of and to do? Where was I to go? What was I living for?

I could make nothing of it. I only knew one thing--that I must make haste to pack my things and be off. Before the old man's visit my position as a flunkey had a meaning; now it was absurd. Tears dropped into my open portmanteau; I felt insufferably sad; but how I longed to live! I was ready to embrace and include in my short life every possibility open to man. I wanted to speak, to read, and to hammer in some big factory, and to stand on watch, and to plough. I yearned for the Nevsky Prospect, for the sea and the fields--for every place to which my imagination travelled. When Zinaida Fyodorovna came in, I rushed to open the door for her, and with peculiar tenderness took off her fur coat. The last time!

We had two other visitors that day besides the old man. In the evening when it was quite dark, Gruzin came to fetch some papers for Orlov. He opened the table-drawer, took the necessary papers, and, rolling them up, told me to put them in the hall beside his cap while he went in to see Zinaida Fyodorovna. She was lying on the sofa in the drawing-room, with her arms behind her head. Five or six days had already passed since Orlov went on his tour of inspection, and no one knew when he would be back, but this time she did not send telegrams and did not expect them. She did not seem to notice the presence of Polya, who was still living with us. "So be it, then," was what I read on her passionless and very pale face. Like Orlov, she wanted to be unhappy out of obstinacy. To spite herself and everything in the world, she lay for days together on the sofa, desiring and expecting nothing but evil for herself. Probably she was picturing to herself Orlov's return and the inevitable quarrels with him; then his growing indifference to her, his infidelities; then how they would separate; and perhaps these agonising thoughts gave her satisfaction. But what would she have said if she found out the actual truth?

"I love you, Godmother," said Gruzin, greeting her and kissing her hand. "You are so kind! And so dear George has gone away," he lied. "He has gone away, the rascal!"

He sat down with a sigh and tenderly stroked her hand.

"Let me spend an hour with you, my dear," he said. "I don't want to go home, and it's too early to go to the Birshovs'. The Birshovs are keeping their Katya's birthday to-day. She is a nice child!"

I brought him a glass of tea and a decanter of brandy. He slowly and with obvious reluctance drank the tea, and returning the glass to me, asked timidly:

"Can you give me . . . something to eat, my friend? I have had no dinner."

We had nothing in the flat. I went to the restaurant and brought him the ordinary rouble dinner.

"To your health, my dear," he said to Zinaida Fyodorovna, and he tossed off a glass of vodka. "My little girl, your godchild, sends you her love. Poor child! she's rickety. Ah, children, children!" he sighed. "Whatever you may say, Godmother, it is nice to be a father. Dear George can't understand that feeling."

He drank some more. Pale and lean, with his dinner-napkin over his chest like a little pinafore, he ate greedily, and raising his eyebrows, kept looking guiltily, like a little boy, first at Zinaida Fyodorovna and then at me. It seemed as though he would have begun crying if I had not given him the grouse or the jelly. When he had satisfied his hunger he grew more lively, and began laughingly telling some story about the Birshov household, but perceiving that it was tiresome and that Zinaida Fyodorovna was not laughing, he ceased. And there was a sudden feeling of dreariness. After he had finished his dinner they sat in the drawing-room by the light of a single lamp, and did not speak; it was painful to him to lie to her, and she wanted to ask him something, but could not make up her mind to. So passed half an hour. Gruzin glanced at his watch.

"I suppose it's time for me to go."

"No, stay a little. . . . We must have a talk."

Again they were silent. He sat down to the piano, struck one chord, then began playing, and sang softly, "What does the coming day bring me?" but as usual he got up suddenly and tossed his head.

"Play something," Zinaida Fyodorovna asked him.

"What shall I play?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders. "I have forgotten everything. I've given it up long ago."

Looking at the ceiling as though trying to remember, he played two pieces of Tchaikovsky with exquisite expression, with such warmth, such insight! His face was just as usual--neither stupid nor intelligent--and it seemed to me a perfect marvel that a man whom I was accustomed to see in the midst of the most degrading, impure surroundings, was capable of such purity, of rising to a feeling so lofty, so far beyond my reach. Zinaida Fyodorovna's face glowed, and she walked about the drawing-room in emotion.

"Wait a bit, Godmother; if I can remember it, I will play you something," he said; "I heard it played on the violoncello."

Beginning timidly and picking out the notes, and then gathering confidence, he played Saint-Saëns's "Swan Song." He played it through, and then played it a second time.

"It's nice, isn't it?" he said.

Moved by the music, Zinaida Fyodorovna stood beside him and asked:

"Tell me honestly, as a friend, what do you think about me?"

"What am I to say?" he said, raising his eyebrows. "I love you and think nothing but good of you. But if you wish that I should speak generally about the question that interests you," he went on, rubbing his sleeve near the elbow and frowning, "then, my dear, you know . . . To follow freely the promptings of the heart does not always give good people happiness. To feel free and at the same time to be happy, it seems to me, one must not conceal from oneself that life is coarse, cruel, and merciless in its conservatism, and one must retaliate with what it deserves--that is, be as coarse and as merciless in one's striving for freedom. That's what I think."

"That's beyond me," said Zinaida Fyodorovna, with a mournful smile. "I am exhausted already. I am so exhausted that I wouldn't stir a finger for my own salvation."

"Go into a nunnery."

He said this in jest, but after he had said it, tears glistened in Zinaida Fyodorovna's eyes and then in his.

"Well," he said, "we've been sitting and sitting, and now we must go. Good-bye, dear Godmother. God give you health."

He kissed both her hands, and stroking them tenderly, said that he should certainly come to see her again in a day or two. In the hall, as he was putting on his overcoat, that was so like a child's pelisse, he fumbled long in his pockets to find a tip for me, but found nothing there.

"Good-bye, my dear fellow," he said sadly, and went away.

I shall never forget the feeling that this man left behind him.

Zinaida Fyodorovna still walked about the room in her excitement. That she was walking about and not still lying down was so much to the good. I wanted to take advantage of this mood to speak to her openly and then to go away, but I had hardly seen Gruzin out when I heard a ring. It was Kukushkin.

"Is Georgy Ivanitch at home?" he said. "Has he come back? You say no? What a pity! In that case, I'll go in and kiss your mistress's hand, and so away. Zinaida Fyodorovna, may I come in?" he cried. "I want to kiss your hand. Excuse my being so late."

He was not long in the drawing-room, not more than ten minutes, but I felt as though he were staying a long while and would never go away. I bit my lips from indignation and

annoyance, and already hated Zinaida Fyodorovna. "Why does she not turn him out?" I thought indignantly, though it was evident that she was bored by his company.

When I held his fur coat for him he asked me, as a mark of special good-will, how I managed to get on without a wife.

"But I don't suppose you waste your time," he said, laughingly. "I've no doubt Polya and you are as thick as thieves. . . . You rascal!"

In spite of my experience of life, I knew very little of mankind at that time, and it is very likely that I often exaggerated what was of little consequence and failed to observe what was important. It seemed to me it was not without motive that Kukushkin tittered and flattered me. Could it be that he was hoping that I, like a flunkey, would gossip in other kitchens and servants' quarters of his coming to see us in the evenings when Orlov was away, and staying with Zinaida Fyodorovna till late at night? And when my tittle-tattle came to the ears of his acquaintance, he would drop his eyes in confusion and shake his little finger. And would not he, I thought, looking at his little honeyed face, this very evening at cards pretend and perhaps declare that he had already won Zinaida Fyodorovna from Orlov?

That hatred which failed me at midday when the old father had come, took possession of me now. Kukushkin went away at last, and as I listened to the shuffle of his leather goloshes, I felt greatly tempted to fling after him, as a parting shot, some coarse word of abuse, but I restrained myself. And when the steps had died away on the stairs, I went back to the hall, and, hardly conscious of what I was doing, took up the roll of papers that Gruzin had left behind, and ran headlong downstairs. Without cap or overcoat, I ran down into the street. It was not cold, but big flakes of snow were falling and it was windy.

"Your Excellency!" I cried, catching up Kukushkin. "Your Excellency!"

He stopped under a lamp-post and looked round with surprise. "Your Excellency!" I said breathless, "your Excellency!"

And not able to think of anything to say, I hit him two or three times on the face with the roll of paper. Completely at a loss, and hardly wondering--I had so completely taken him by surprise--he leaned his back against the lamp-post and put up his hands to protect his face. At that moment an army doctor passed, and saw how I was beating the man, but he merely looked at us in astonishment and went on. I felt ashamed and I ran back to the house.

## XII

With my head wet from the snow, and gasping for breath, I ran to my room, and immediately flung off my swallow-tails, put on a reefer jacket and an overcoat, and carried my portmanteau out into the passage; I must get away! But before going I hurriedly sat down and began writing to Orlov:

"I leave you my false passport," I began. "I beg you to keep it as a memento, you false man, you Petersburg official!

"To steal into another man's house under a false name, to watch under the mask of a flunkey this person's intimate life, to hear everything, to see everything in order later on, unasked, to accuse a man of lying--all this, you will say, is on a level with theft. Yes, but I care nothing for fine feelings now. I have endured dozens of your dinners and suppers when you said and did what you liked, and I had to hear, to look on, and be silent. I don't want to make you a present of my silence. Besides, if there is not a living soul at hand who dares to tell you the truth without flattery, let your flunkey Stepan wash your magnificent countenance for you."

I did not like this beginning, but I did not care to alter it. Besides, what did it matter?

The big windows with their dark curtains, the bed, the crumpled dress coat on the floor, and my wet footprints, looked gloomy and forbidding. And there was a peculiar stillness.

Possibly because I had run out into the street without my cap and goloshes I was in a high fever. My face burned, my legs ached. . . . My heavy head drooped over the table, and there was that kind of division in my thought when every idea in the brain seemed dogged by its shadow.

"I am ill, weak, morally cast down," I went on; "I cannot write to you as I should like to. From the first moment I desired to insult and humiliate you, but now I do not feel that I have the right to do so. You and I have both fallen, and neither of us will ever rise up again; and even if my letter were eloquent, terrible, and passionate, it would still seem like beating on the lid of a coffin: however one knocks upon it, one will not wake up the dead! No efforts could warm your accursed cold blood, and you know that better than I do. Why write? But my mind and heart are burning, and I go on writing; for some reason I am moved as though this letter still might save you and me. I am so feverish that my thoughts are disconnected, and my pen scratches the paper without meaning; but the question I want to put to you stands before me as clear as though in letters of flame.

"Why I am prematurely weak and fallen is not hard to explain. Like Samson of old, I have taken the gates of Gaza on my shoulders to carry them to the top of the mountain, and only when I was exhausted, when youth and health were quenched in me forever, I noticed that that burden was not for my shoulders, and that I had deceived myself. I have been, moreover, in cruel and continual pain. I have endured cold, hunger, illness, and loss

of liberty. Of personal happiness I know and have known nothing. I have no home; my memories are bitter, and my conscience is often in dread of them. But why have you fallen--you? What fatal, diabolical causes hindered your life from blossoming into full flower? Why, almost before beginning life, were you in such haste to cast off the image and likeness of God, and to become a cowardly beast who backs and scares others because he is afraid himself? You are afraid of life--as afraid of it as an Oriental who sits all day on a cushion smoking his hookah. Yes, you read a great deal, and a European coat fits you well, but yet with what tender, purely Oriental, pasha-like care you protect yourself from hunger, cold, physical effort, from pain and uneasiness! How early your soul has taken to its dressing-gown! What a cowardly part you have played towards real life and nature, with which every healthy and normal man struggles! How soft, how snug, how warm, how comfortable--and how bored you are! Yes, it is deathly boredom, unrelieved by one ray of light, as in solitary confinement; but you try to hide from that enemy, too, you play cards eight hours out of twenty-four.

"And your irony? Oh, but how well I understand it! Free, bold, living thought is searching and dominating; for an indolent, sluggish mind it is intolerable. That it may not disturb your peace, like thousands of your contemporaries, you made haste in youth to put it under bar and bolt. Your ironical attitude to life, or whatever you like to call it, is your armour; and your thought, fettered and frightened, dare not leap over the fence you have put round it; and when you jeer at ideas which you pretend to know all about, you are like the deserter fleeing from the field of battle, and, to stifle his shame, sneering at war and at valour. Cynicism stifles pain. In some novel of Dostoevsky's an old man tramples underfoot the portrait of his dearly loved daughter because he had been unjust to her, and you vent your foul and vulgar jeers upon the ideas of goodness and truth because you have not the strength to follow them. You are frightened of every honest and truthful hint at your degradation, and you purposely surround yourself with people who do nothing but flatter your weaknesses. And you may well, you may well dread the sight of tears!

"By the way, your attitude to women. Shamelessness has been handed down to us in our flesh and blood, and we are trained to shamelessness; but that is what we are men for--to subdue the beast in us. When you reached manhood and all ideas became known to you, you could not have failed to see the truth; you knew it, but you did not follow it; you were afraid of it, and to deceive your conscience you began loudly assuring yourself that it was not you but woman that was to blame, that she was as degraded as your attitude to her. Your cold, scabrous anecdotes, your coarse laughter, all your innumerable theories concerning the underlying reality of marriage and the definite demands made upon it, concerning the ten sous the French workman pays his woman; your everlasting attacks on female logic, lying, weakness and so on--doesn't it all look like a desire at all costs to force woman down into the mud that she may be on the same level as your attitude to her? You are a weak, unhappy, unpleasant person!"

Zinaida Fyodorovna began playing the piano in the drawing-room, trying to recall the song of Saint Saëns that Gruzin had played. I went and lay on my bed, but remembering

that it was time for me to go, I got up with an effort and with a heavy, burning head went to the table again.

"But this is the question," I went on. "Why are we worn out? Why are we, at first so passionate so bold, so noble, and so full of faith, complete bankrupts at thirty or thirty-five? Why does one waste in consumption, another put a bullet through his brains, a third seeks forgetfulness in vodka and cards, while the fourth tries to stifle his fear and misery by cynically trampling underfoot the pure image of his fair youth? Why is it that, having once fallen, we do not try to rise up again, and, losing one thing, do not seek something else? Why is it?

"The thief hanging on the Cross could bring back the joy of life and the courage of confident hope, though perhaps he had not more than an hour to live. You have long years before you, and I shall probably not die so soon as one might suppose. What if by a miracle the present turned out to be a dream, a horrible nightmare, and we should wake up renewed, pure, strong, proud of our righteousness? Sweet visions fire me, and I am almost breathless with emotion. I have a terrible longing to live. I long for our life to be holy, lofty, and majestic as the heavens above. Let us live! The sun doesn't rise twice a day, and life is not given us again--clutch at what is left of your life and save it. . . ."

I did not write another word. I had a multitude of thoughts in my mind, but I could not connect them and get them on to paper. Without finishing the letter, I signed it with my name and rank, and went into the study. It was dark. I felt for the table and put the letter on it. I must have stumbled against the furniture in the dark and made a noise.

"Who is there?" I heard an alarmed voice in the drawing-room.

And the clock on the table softly struck one at the moment.

### XIII

For at least half a minute I fumbled at the door in the dark, feeling for the handle; then I slowly opened it and walked into the drawing-room. Zinaida Fyodorovna was lying on the couch, and raising herself on her elbow, she looked towards me. Unable to bring myself to speak, I walked slowly by, and she followed me with her eyes. I stood for a little time in the dining-room and then walked by her again, and she looked at me intently and with perplexity, even with alarm. At last I stood still and said with an effort:

"He is not coming back."

She quickly got on to her feet, and looked at me without understanding.

"He is not coming back," I repeated, and my heart beat violently. "He will not come back, for he has not left Petersburg. He is staying at Pekarsky's."

She understood and believed me--I saw that from her sudden pallor, and from the way she laid her arms upon her bosom in terror and entreaty. In one instant all that had happened of late flashed through her mind; she reflected, and with pitiless clarity she saw the whole truth. But at the same time she remembered that I was a flunkey, a being of a lower order. . . . A casual stranger, with hair ruffled, with face flushed with fever, perhaps drunk, in a common overcoat, was coarsely intruding into her intimate life, and that offended her. She said to me sternly:

"It's not your business: go away."

"Oh, believe me!" I cried impetuously, holding out my hands to her. "I am not a footman; I am as free as you."

I mentioned my name, and, speaking very rapidly that she might not interrupt me or go away, explained to her who I was and why I was living there. This new discovery struck her more than the first. Till then she had hoped that her footman had lied or made a mistake or been silly, but now after my confession she had no doubts left. From the expression of her unhappy eyes and face, which suddenly lost its softness and beauty and looked old, I saw that she was insufferably miserable, and that the conversation would lead to no good; but I went on impetuously:

"The senator and the tour of inspection were invented to deceive you. In January, just as now, he did not go away, but stayed at Pekarsky's, and I saw him every day and took part in the deception. He was weary of you, he hated your presence here, he mocked at you . . . If you could have heard how he and his friends here jeered at you and your love, you would not have remained here one minute! Go away from here! Go away."

"Well," she said in a shaking voice, and moved her hand over her hair. "Well, so be it."

Her eyes were full of tears, her lips were quivering, and her whole face was strikingly pale and distorted with anger. Orlov's coarse, petty lying revolted her and seemed to her contemptible, ridiculous: she smiled and I did not like that smile.

"Well," she repeated, passing her hand over her hair again, "so be it. He imagines that I shall die of humiliation, and instead of that I am . . . amused by it. There's no need for him to hide." She walked away from the piano and said, shrugging her shoulders: "There's no need. . . . It would have been simpler to have it out with me instead of keeping in hiding in other people's flats. I have eyes; I saw it myself long ago. . . . I was only waiting for him to come back to have things out once for all."

Then she sat down on a low chair by the table, and, leaning her head on the arm of the sofa, wept bitterly. In the drawing-room there was only one candle burning in the candelabra, and the chair where she was sitting was in darkness; but I saw how her head and shoulders were quivering, and how her hair, escaping from her combs, covered her neck, her face, her arms. . . . Her quiet, steady weeping, which was not hysterical but a woman's ordinary weeping, expressed a sense of insult, of wounded pride, of injury, and of something helpless, hopeless, which one could not set right and to which one could not get used. Her tears stirred an echo in my troubled and suffering heart; I forgot my illness and everything else in the world; I walked about the drawing-room and muttered distractedly:

"Is this life? . . . Oh, one can't go on living like this, one can't. . . . Oh, it's madness, wickedness, not life."

"What humiliation!" she said through her tears. "To live together, to smile at me at the very time when I was burdensome to him, ridiculous in his eyes! Oh, how humiliating!"

She lifted up her head, and looking at me with tear-stained eyes through her hair, wet with her tears, and pushing it back as it prevented her seeing me, she asked:

"They laughed at me?"

"To these men you were laughable--you and your love and Turgenev; they said your head was full of him. And if we both die at once in despair, that will amuse them, too; they will make a funny anecdote of it and tell it at your requiem service. But why talk of them?" I said impatiently. "We must get away from here--I cannot stay here one minute longer."

She began crying again, while I walked to the piano and sat down.

"What are we waiting for?" I asked dejectedly. "It's two o'clock."

"I am not waiting for anything," she said. "I am utterly lost."

"Why do you talk like that? We had better consider together what we are to do. Neither you nor I can stay here. Where do you intend to go?"

Suddenly there was a ring at the bell. My heart stood still. Could it be Orlov, to whom perhaps Kukushkin had complained of me? How should we meet? I went to open the door. It was Polya. She came in shaking the snow off her pelisse, and went into her room without saying a word to me. When I went back to the drawing-room, Zinaida Fyodorovna, pale as death, was standing in the middle of the room, looking towards me with big eyes.

"Who was it?" she asked softly.

"Polya," I answered.

She passed her hand over her hair and closed her eyes wearily.

"I will go away at once," she said. "Will you be kind and take me to the Petersburg Side? What time is it now?"

"A quarter to three."

## XIV

When, a little afterwards, we went out of the house, it was dark and deserted in the street. Wet snow was falling and a damp wind lashed in one's face. I remember it was the beginning of March; a thaw had set in, and for some days past the cabmen had been driving on wheels. Under the impression of the back stairs, of the cold, of the midnight darkness, and the porter in his sheepskin who had questioned us before letting us out of the gate, Zinaida Fyodorovna was utterly cast down and dispirited. When we got into the cab and the hood was put up, trembling all over, she began hurriedly saying how grateful she was to me.

"I do not doubt your good-will, but I am ashamed that you should be troubled," she muttered. "Oh, I understand, I understand. . . . When Gruzin was here to-day, I felt that he was lying and concealing something. Well, so be it. But I am ashamed, anyway, that you should be troubled."

She still had her doubts. To dispel them finally, I asked the cabman to drive through Sergievsky Street; stopping him at Pekarsky's door, I got out of the cab and rang. When the porter came to the door, I asked aloud, that Zinaida Fyodorovna might hear, whether Georgy Ivanitch was at home.

"Yes," was the answer, "he came in half an hour ago. He must be in bed by now. What do you want?"

Zinaida Fyodorovna could not refrain from putting her head out.

"Has Georgy Ivanitch been staying here long?" she asked.

"Going on for three weeks."

"And he's not been away?"

"No," answered the porter, looking at me with surprise.

"Tell him, early to-morrow," I said, "that his sister has arrived from Warsaw. Good-bye."

Then we drove on. The cab had no apron, the snow fell on us in big flakes, and the wind, especially on the Neva, pierced us through and through. I began to feel as though we had been driving for a long time, that for ages we had been suffering, and that for ages I had been listening to Zinaida Fyodorovna's shuddering breath. In semi-delirium, as though half asleep, I looked back upon my strange, incoherent life, and for some reason recalled a melodrama, "The Parisian Beggars," which I had seen once or twice in my childhood. And when to shake off that semi-delirium I peeped out from the hood and saw the dawn, all the images of the past, all my misty thoughts, for some reason, blended in me into one distinct, overpowering thought: everything was irrevocably over for Zinaida Fyodorovna

and for me. This was as certain a conviction as though the cold blue sky contained a prophecy, but a minute later I was already thinking of something else and believed differently.

"What am I now?" said Zinaida Fyodorovna, in a voice husky with the cold and the damp. "Where am I to go? What am I to do? Gruzin told me to go into a nunnery. Oh, I would! I would change my dress, my face, my name, my thoughts . . . everything-- everything, and would hide myself for ever. But they will not take me into a nunnery. I am with child."

"We will go abroad together to-morrow," I said.

"That's impossible. My husband won't give me a passport."

"I will take you without a passport."

The cabman stopped at a wooden house of two storeys, painted a dark colour. I rang. Taking from me her small light basket--the only luggage we had brought with us-- Zinaida Fyodorovna gave a wry smile and said:

"These are my bijoux."

But she was so weak that she could not carry these bijoux.

It was a long while before the door was opened. After the third or fourth ring a light gleamed in the windows, and there was a sound of steps, coughing and whispering; at last the key grated in the lock, and a stout peasant woman with a frightened red face appeared at the door. Some distance behind her stood a thin little old woman with short grey hair, carrying a candle in her hand. Zinaida Fyodorovna ran into the passage and flung her arms round the old woman's neck.

"Nina, I've been deceived," she sobbed loudly. "I've been coarsely, foully deceived! Nina, Nina!"

I handed the basket to the peasant woman. The door was closed, but still I heard her sobs and the cry "Nina!"

I got into the cab and told the man to drive slowly to the Nevsky Prospect. I had to think of a night's lodging for myself.

Next day towards evening I went to see Zinaida Fyodorovna. She was terribly changed. There were no traces of tears on her pale, terribly sunken face, and her expression was different. I don't know whether it was that I saw her now in different surroundings, far from luxurious, and that our relations were by now different, or perhaps that intense grief had already set its mark upon her; she did not strike me as so elegant and well dressed as before. Her figure seemed smaller; there was an abruptness and excessive nervousness

about her as though she were in a hurry, and there was not the same softness even in her smile. I was dressed in an expensive suit which I had bought during the day. She looked first of all at that suit and at the hat in my hand, then turned an impatient, searching glance upon my face as though studying it.

"Your transformation still seems to me a sort of miracle," she said. "Forgive me for looking at you with such curiosity. You are an extraordinary man, you know."

I told her again who I was, and why I was living at Orlov's, and I told her at greater length and in more detail than the day before. She listened with great attention, and said without letting me finish:

"Everything there is over for me. You know, I could not refrain from writing a letter. Here is the answer."

On the sheet which she gave there was written in Orlov's hand:

"I am not going to justify myself. But you must own that it was your mistake, not mine. I wish you happiness, and beg you to make haste and forget.

"Yours sincerely,

"G. O.

"P. S.--I am sending on your things."

The trunks and baskets despatched by Orlov were standing in the passage, and my poor little portmanteau was there beside them.

"So . . ." Zinaida Fyodorovna began, but she did not finish.

We were silent. She took the note and held it for a couple of minutes before her eyes, and during that time her face wore the same haughty, contemptuous, proud, and harsh expression as the day before at the beginning of our explanation; tears came into her eyes--not timid, bitter tears, but proud, angry tears.

"Listen," she said, getting up abruptly and moving away to the window that I might not see her face. "I have made up my mind to go abroad with you tomorrow."

"I am very glad. I am ready to go to-day."

"Accept me as a recruit. Have you read Balzac?" she asked suddenly, turning round. "Have you? At the end of his novel 'Père Goriot' the hero looks down upon Paris from the top of a hill and threatens the town: 'Now we shall settle our account,' and after this he begins a new life. So when I look out of the train window at Petersburg for the last time, I shall say, 'Now we shall settle our account!'"

Saying this, she smiled at her jest, and for some reason shuddered all over.

## XV

At Venice I had an attack of pleurisy. Probably I had caught cold in the evening when we were rowing from the station to the Hotel Bauer. I had to take to my bed and stay there for a fortnight. Every morning while I was ill Zinaida Fyodorovna came from her room to drink coffee with me, and afterwards read aloud to me French and Russian books, of which we had bought a number at Vienna. These books were either long, long familiar to me or else had no interest for me, but I had the sound of a sweet, kind voice beside me, so that the meaning of all of them was summed up for me in the one thing--I was not alone. She would go out for a walk, come back in her light grey dress, her light straw hat, gay, warmed by the spring sun; and sitting by my bed, bending low down over me, would tell me something about Venice or read me those books--and I was happy.

At night I was cold, ill, and dreary, but by day I revelled in life --I can find no better expression for it. The brilliant warm sunshine beating in at the open windows and at the door upon the balcony, the shouts below, the splash of oars, the tinkle of bells, the prolonged boom of the cannon at midday, and the feeling of perfect, perfect freedom, did wonders with me; I felt as though I were growing strong, broad wings which were bearing me God knows whither. And what charm, what joy at times at the thought that another life was so close to mine! that I was the servant, the guardian, the friend, the indispensable fellow-traveller of a creature, young, beautiful, wealthy, but weak, lonely, and insulted! It is pleasant even to be ill when you know that there are people who are looking forward to your convalescence as to a holiday. One day I heard her whispering behind the door with my doctor, and then she came in to me with tear-stained eyes. It was a bad sign, but I was touched, and there was a wonderful lightness in my heart.

But at last they allowed me to go out on the balcony. The sunshine and the breeze from the sea caressed and fondled my sick body. I looked down at the familiar gondolas, which glide with feminine grace smoothly and majestically as though they were alive, and felt all the luxury of this original, fascinating civilisation. There was a smell of the sea. Some one was playing a stringed instrument and two voices were singing. How delightful it was! How unlike it was to that Petersburg night when the wet snow was falling and beating so rudely on our faces. If one looks straight across the canal, one sees the sea, and on the wide expanse towards the horizon the sun glittered on the water so dazzlingly that it hurt one's eyes to look at it. My soul yearned towards that lovely sea, which was so akin to me and to which I had given up my youth. I longed to live--to live--and nothing more.

A fortnight later I began walking freely. I loved to sit in the sun, and to listen to the gondoliers without understanding them, and for hours together to gaze at the little house where, they said, Desdemona lived--a naïve, mournful little house with a demure expression, as light as lace, so light that it looked as though one could lift it from its place with one hand. I stood for a long time by the tomb of Canova, and could not take my eyes off the melancholy lion. And in the Palace of the Doges I was always drawn to the corner where the portrait of the unhappy Marino Faliero was painted over with black. "It is fine

to be an artist, a poet, a dramatist," I thought, "but since that is not vouchsafed to me, if only I could go in for mysticism! If only I had a grain of some faith to add to the unruffled peace and serenity that fills the soul!"

In the evening we ate oysters, drank wine, and went out in a gondola. I remember our black gondola swayed softly in the same place while the water faintly gurgled under it. Here and there the reflection of the stars and the lights on the bank quivered and trembled. Not far from us in a gondola, hung with coloured lanterns which were reflected in the water, there were people singing. The sounds of guitars, of violins, of mandolins, of men's and women's voices, were audible in the dark. Zinaida Fyodorovna, pale, with a grave, almost stern face, was sitting beside me, compressing her lips and clenching her hands. She was thinking about something; she did not stir an eyelash, nor hear me. Her face, her attitude, and her fixed, expressionless gaze, and her incredibly miserable, dreadful, and icy-cold memories, and around her the gondolas, the lights, the music, the song with its vigorous passionate cry of "Jam-mo! Jam-mo!"--what contrasts in life! When she sat like that, with tightly clasped hands, stony, mournful, I used to feel as though we were both characters in some novel in the old-fashioned style called "The Ill-fated," "The Abandoned," or something of the sort. Both of us: she--the ill-fated, the abandoned; and I--the faithful, devoted friend, the dreamer, and, if you like it, a superfluous man, a failure capable of nothing but coughing and dreaming, and perhaps sacrificing myself.

But who and what needed my sacrifices now? And what had I to sacrifice, indeed?

When we came in in the evening we always drank tea in her room and talked. We did not shrink from touching on old, unhealed wounds--on the contrary, for some reason I felt a positive pleasure in telling her about my life at Orlov's, or referring openly to relations which I knew and which could not have been concealed from me.

"At moments I hated you," I said to her. "When he was capricious, condescending, told you lies, I marvelled how it was you did not see, did not understand, when it was all so clear! You kissed his hands, you knelt to him, you flattered him . . ."

"When I . . . kissed his hands and knelt to him, I loved him . . ." she said, blushing crimson.

"Can it have been so difficult to see through him? A fine sphinx! A sphinx indeed--a kammer-junker! I reproach you for nothing, God forbid," I went on, feeling I was coarse, that I had not the tact, the delicacy which are so essential when you have to do with a fellow-creature's soul; in early days before I knew her I had not noticed this defect in myself. "But how could you fail to see what he was," I went on, speaking more softly and more diffidently, however.

"You mean to say you despise my past, and you are right," she said, deeply stirred. "You belong to a special class of men who cannot be judged by ordinary standards; your moral requirements are exceptionally rigorous, and I understand you can't forgive things. I

understand you, and if sometimes I say the opposite, it doesn't mean that I look at things differently from you; I speak the same old nonsense simply because I haven't had time yet to wear out my old clothes and prejudices. I, too, hate and despise my past, and Orlov and my love. . . . What was that love? It's positively absurd now," she said, going to the window and looking down at the canal. "All this love only clouds the conscience and confuses the mind. The meaning of life is to be found only in one thing--fighting. To get one's heel on the vile head of the serpent and to crush it! That's the meaning of life. In that alone or in nothing."

I told her long stories of my past, and described my really astounding adventures. But of the change that had taken place in me I did not say one word. She always listened to me with great attention, and at interesting places she rubbed her hands as though vexed that it had not yet been her lot to experience such adventures, such joys and terrors. Then she would suddenly fall to musing and retreat into herself, and I could see from her face that she was not attending to me.

I closed the windows that looked out on the canal and asked whether we should not have the fire lighted.

"No, never mind. I am not cold," she said, smiling listlessly. "I only feel weak. Do you know, I fancy I have grown much wiser lately. I have extraordinary, original ideas now. When I think of my past, of my life then . . . people in general, in fact, it is all summed up for me in the image of my stepmother. Coarse, insolent, soulless, false, depraved, and a morphia maniac too. My father, who was feeble and weak-willed, married my mother for her money and drove her into consumption; but his second wife, my stepmother, he loved passionately, insanely. . . . What I had to put up with! But what is the use of talking! And so, as I say, it is all summed up in her image. . . . And it vexes me that my stepmother is dead. I should like to meet her now!"

"Why?"

"I don't know," she answered with a laugh and a graceful movement of her head. "Good-night. You must get well. As soon as you are well, we'll take up our work. . . . It's time to begin."

After I had said good-night and had my hand on the door-handle, she said:

"What do you think? Is Polya still living there?"

"Probably."

And I went off to my room. So we spent a whole month. One grey morning when we both stood at my window, looking at the clouds which were moving up from the sea, and at the darkening canal, expecting every minute that it would pour with rain, and when a thick, narrow streak of rain covered the sea as though with a muslin veil, we both felt suddenly dreary. The same day we both set off for Florence.

## XVI

It was autumn, at Nice. One morning when I went into her room she was sitting on a low chair, bent together and huddled up, with her legs crossed and her face hidden in her hands. She was weeping bitterly, with sobs, and her long, unbrushed hair fell on her knees. The impression of the exquisite marvellous sea which I had only just seen and of which I wanted to tell her, left me all at once, and my heart ached.

"What is it?" I asked; she took one hand from her face and motioned me to go away.

"What is it?" I repeated, and for the first time during our acquaintance I kissed her hand.

"No, it's nothing, nothing," she said quickly. "Oh, it's nothing, nothing. . . . Go away. . . . You see, I am not dressed."

I went out overwhelmed. The calm and serene mood in which I had been for so long was poisoned by compassion. I had a passionate longing to fall at her feet, to entreat her not to weep in solitude, but to share her grief with me, and the monotonous murmur of the sea already sounded a gloomy prophecy in my ears, and I foresaw fresh tears, fresh troubles, and fresh losses in the future. "What is she crying about? What is it?" I wondered, recalling her face and her agonised look. I remembered she was with child. She tried to conceal her condition from other people, and also from herself. At home she went about in a loose wrapper or in a blouse with extremely full folds over the bosom, and when she went out anywhere she laced herself in so tightly that on two occasions she fainted when we were out. She never spoke to me of her condition, and when I hinted that it might be as well to see a doctor, she flushed crimson and said not a word.

When I went to see her next time she was already dressed and had her hair done.

"There, there," I said, seeing that she was ready to cry again. "We had better go to the sea and have a talk."

"I can't talk. Forgive me, I am in the mood now when one wants to be alone. And, if you please, Vladimir Ivanitch, another time you want to come into my room, be so good as to give a knock at the door."

That "be so good" had a peculiar, unfeminine sound. I went away. My accursed Petersburg mood came back, and all my dreams were crushed and crumpled up like leaves by the heat. I felt I was alone again and there was no nearness between us. I was no more to her than that cobweb to that palm-tree, which hangs on it by chance and which will be torn off and carried away by the wind. I walked about the square where the band was playing, went into the Casino; there I looked at overdressed and heavily perfumed women, and every one of them glanced at me as though she would say: "You are alone; that's all right." Then I went out on the terrace and looked for a long time at the sea. There was not one sail on the horizon. On the left bank, in the lilac-coloured mist,

there were mountains, gardens, towers, and houses, the sun was sparkling over it all, but it was all alien, indifferent, an incomprehensible tangle.

## XVII

She used as before to come into my room in the morning to coffee, but we no longer dined together, as she said she was not hungry; and she lived only on coffee, tea, and various trifles such as oranges and caramels.

And we no longer had conversations in the evening. I don't know why it was like this. Ever since the day when I had found her in tears she had treated me somehow lightly, at times casually, even ironically, and for some reason called me "My good sir." What had before seemed to her terrible, heroic, marvellous, and had stirred her envy and enthusiasm, did not touch her now at all, and usually after listening to me, she stretched and said:

"Yes, 'great things were done in days of yore,' my good sir."

It sometimes happened even that I did not see her for days together. I would knock timidly and guiltily at her door and get no answer; I would knock again--still silence. . . . I would stand near the door and listen; then the chambermaid would pass and say coldly, "Madame est partie." Then I would walk about the passages of the hotel, walk and walk. . . . English people, full-bosomed ladies, waiters in swallow-tails. . . . And as I keep gazing at the long striped rug that stretches the whole length of the corridor, the idea occurs to me that I am playing in the life of this woman a strange, probably false part, and that it is beyond my power to alter that part. I run to my room and fall on my bed, and think and think, and can come to no conclusion; and all that is clear to me is that I want to live, and that the plainer and the colder and the harder her face grows, the nearer she is to me, and the more intensely and painfully I feel our kinship. Never mind "My good sir," never mind her light careless tone, never mind anything you like, only don't leave me, my treasure. I am afraid to be alone.

Then I go out into the corridor again, listen in a tremor. . . . I have no dinner; I don't notice the approach of evening. At last about eleven I hear the familiar footstep, and at the turn near the stairs Zinaida Fyodorovna comes into sight.

"Are you taking a walk?" she would ask as she passes me. "You had better go out into the air. . . . Good-night!"

"But shall we not meet again to-day?"

"I think it's late. But as you like."

"Tell me, where have you been?" I would ask, following her into the room.

"Where? To Monte Carlo." She took ten gold coins out of her pocket and said: "Look, my good sir; I have won. That's at roulette."

"Nonsense! As though you would gamble."

"Why not? I am going again to-morrow."

I imagined her with a sick and morbid face, in her condition, tightly laced, standing near the gaming-table in a crowd of cocottes, of old women in their dotage who swarm round the gold like flies round the honey. I remembered she had gone off to Monte Carlo for some reason in secret from me.

"I don't believe you," I said one day. "You wouldn't go there."

"Don't agitate yourself. I can't lose much."

"It's not the question of what you lose," I said with annoyance. "Has it never occurred to you while you were playing there that the glitter of gold, all these women, young and old, the croupiers, all the surroundings--that it is all a vile, loathsome mockery at the toiler's labour, at his bloody sweat?"

"If one doesn't play, what is one to do here?" she asked. "The toiler's labour and his bloody sweat--all that eloquence you can put off till another time; but now, since you have begun, let me go on. Let me ask you bluntly, what is there for me to do here, and what am I to do?"

"What are you to do?" I said, shrugging my shoulders. "That's a question that can't be answered straight off."

"I beg you to answer me honestly, Vladimir Ivanitch," she said, and her face looked angry. "Once I have brought myself to ask you this question, I am not going to listen to stock phrases. I am asking you," she went on, beating her hand on the table, as though marking time, "what ought I to do here? And not only here at Nice, but in general?"

I did not speak, but looked out of window to the sea. My heart was beating terribly.

"Vladimir Ivanitch," she said softly and breathlessly; it was hard for her to speak-- "Vladimir Ivanitch, if you do not believe in the cause yourself, if you no longer think of going back to it, why . . . why did you drag me out of Petersburg? Why did you make me promises, why did you rouse mad hopes? Your convictions have changed; you have become a different man, and nobody blames you for it--our convictions are not always in our power. But . . . but, Vladimir Ivanitch, for God's sake, why are you not sincere?" she went on softly, coming up to me. "All these months when I have been dreaming aloud, raving, going into raptures over my plans, remodelling my life on a new pattern, why didn't you tell me the truth? Why were you silent or encouraged me by your stories, and behaved as though you were in complete sympathy with me? Why was it? Why was it necessary?"

"It's difficult to acknowledge one's bankruptcy," I said, turning round, but not looking at her. "Yes, I have no faith; I am worn out. I have lost heart. . . . It is difficult to be truthful—very difficult, and I held my tongue. God forbid that any one should have to go through what I have been through."

I felt that I was on the point of tears, and ceased speaking.

"Vladimir Ivanitch," she said, and took me by both hands, "you have been through so much and seen so much of life, you know more than I do; think seriously, and tell me, what am I to do? Teach me! If you haven't the strength to go forward yourself and take others with you, at least show me where to go. After all, I am a living, feeling, thinking being. To sink into a false position . . . to play an absurd part . . . is painful to me. I don't reproach you, I don't blame you; I only ask you."

Tea was brought in.

"Well?" said Zinaida Fyodorovna, giving me a glass. "What do you say to me?"

"There is more light in the world than you see through your window," I answered. "And there are other people besides me, Zinaida Fyodorovna."

"Then tell me who they are," she said eagerly. "That's all I ask of you."

"And I want to say, too," I went on, "one can serve an idea in more than one calling. If one has made a mistake and lost faith in one, one may find another. The world of ideas is large and cannot be exhausted."

"The world of ideas!" she said, and she looked into my face sarcastically. "Then we had better leave off talking. What's the use? . . ."

She flushed.

"The world of ideas!" she repeated. She threw her dinner-napkin aside, and an expression of indignation and contempt came into her face. "All your fine ideas, I see, lead up to one inevitable, essential step: I ought to become your mistress. That's what's wanted. To be taken up with ideas without being the mistress of an honourable, progressive man, is as good as not understanding the ideas. One has to begin with that . . . that is, with being your mistress, and the rest will come of itself."

"You are irritated, Zinaida Fyodorovna," I said.

"No, I am sincere!" she cried, breathing hard. "I am sincere!"

"You are sincere, perhaps, but you are in error, and it hurts me to hear you."

"I am in error?" she laughed. "Any one else might say that, but not you, my dear sir! I may seem to you indelicate, cruel, but I don't care: you love me? You love me, don't you?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Yes, shrug your shoulders!" she went on sarcastically. "When you were ill I heard you in your delirium, and ever since these adoring eyes, these sighs, and edifying conversations about friendship, about spiritual kinship. . . . But the point is, why haven't you been sincere? Why have you concealed what is and talked about what isn't? Had you said from the beginning what ideas exactly led you to drag me from Petersburg, I should have known. I should have poisoned myself then as I meant to, and there would have been none of this tedious farce. . . . But what's the use of talking!"

With a wave of the hand she sat down.

"You speak to me as though you suspected me of dishonourable intentions," I said, offended.

"Oh, very well. What's the use of talking! I don't suspect you of intentions, but of having no intentions. If you had any, I should have known them by now. You had nothing but ideas and love. For the present--ideas and love, and in prospect--me as your mistress. That's in the order of things both in life and in novels. . . . Here you abused him," she said, and she slapped the table with her hand, "but one can't help agreeing with him. He has good reasons for despising these ideas."

"He does not despise ideas; he is afraid of them," I cried. "He is a coward and a liar."

"Oh, very well. He is a coward and a liar, and deceived me. And you? Excuse my frankness; what are you? He deceived me and left me to take my chance in Petersburg, and you have deceived me and abandoned me here. But he did not mix up ideas with his deceit, and you . . ."

"For goodness' sake, why are you saying this?" I cried in horror, wringing my hands and going up to her quickly. "No, Zinaida Fyodorovna, this is cynicism. You must not be so despairing; listen to me," I went on, catching at a thought which flashed dimly upon me, and which seemed to me might still save us both. "Listen. I have passed through so many experiences in my time that my head goes round at the thought of them, and I have realised with my mind, with my racked soul, that man finds his true destiny in nothing if not in self-sacrificing love for his neighbour. It is towards that we must strive, and that is our destination! That is my faith!"

I wanted to go on to speak of mercy, of forgiveness, but there was an insincere note in my voice, and I was embarrassed.

"I want to live!" I said genuinely. "To live, to live! I want peace, tranquillity; I want warmth--this sea here--to have you near. Oh, how I wish I could rouse in you the same thirst for life! You spoke just now of love, but it would be enough for me to have you near, to hear your voice, to watch the look in your face . . . !"

She flushed crimson, and to hinder my speaking, said quickly:

"You love life, and I hate it. So our ways lie apart."

She poured herself out some tea, but did not touch it, went into the bedroom, and lay down.

"I imagine it is better to cut short this conversation," she said to me from within.  
"Everything is over for me, and I want nothing . . . What more is there to say?"

"No, it's not all over!"

"Oh, very well! . . . I know! I am sick of it. . . . That's enough."

I got up, took a turn from one end of the room to the other, and went out into the corridor. When late at night I went to her door and listened, I distinctly heard her crying.

Next morning the waiter, handing me my clothes, informed me, with a smile, that the lady in number thirteen was confined. I dressed somehow, and almost fainting with terror ran to Zinaida Fyodorovna. In her room I found a doctor, a midwife, and an elderly Russian lady from Harkov, called Darya Milhailovna. There was a smell of ether. I had scarcely crossed the threshold when from the room where she was lying I heard a low, plaintive moan, and, as though it had been wafted me by the wind from Russia, I thought of Orlov, his irony, Polya, the Neva, the drifting snow, then the cab without an apron, the prediction I had read in the cold morning sky, and the despairing cry "Nina! Nina!"

"Go in to her," said the lady.

I went in to see Zinaida Fyodorovna, feeling as though I were the father of the child. She was lying with her eyes closed, looking thin and pale, wearing a white cap edged with lace. I remember there were two expressions on her face: one--cold, indifferent, apathetic; the other--a look of childish helplessness given her by the white cap. She did not hear me come in, or heard, perhaps, but did not pay attention. I stood, looked at her, and waited.

But her face was contorted with pain; she opened her eyes and gazed at the ceiling, as though wondering what was happening to her. . . . There was a look of loathing on her face.

"It's horrible . . ." she whispered.

"Zinaida Fyodorovna." I spoke her name softly. She looked at me indifferently, listlessly, and closed her eyes. I stood there a little while, then went away.

At night, Darya Mihailovna informed me that the child, a girl, was born, but that the mother was in a dangerous condition. Then I heard noise and bustle in the passage. Darya Mihailovna came to me again and with a face of despair, wringing her hands, said:

"Oh, this is awful! The doctor suspects that she has taken poison! Oh, how badly Russians do behave here!"

And at twelve o'clock the next day Zinaida Fyodorovna died.

## XVIII

Two years had passed. Circumstances had changed; I had come to Petersburg again and could live here openly. I was no longer afraid of being and seeming sentimental, and gave myself up entirely to the fatherly, or rather idolatrous feeling roused in me by Sonya, Zinaida Fyodorovna's child. I fed her with my own hands, gave her her bath, put her to bed, never took my eyes off her for nights together, and screamed when it seemed to me that the nurse was just going to drop her. My thirst for normal ordinary life became stronger and more acute as time went on, but wider visions stopped short at Sonya, as though I had found in her at last just what I needed. I loved the child madly. In her I saw the continuation of my life, and it was not exactly that I fancied, but I felt, I almost believed, that when I had cast off at last my long, bony, bearded frame, I should go on living in those little blue eyes, that silky flaxen hair, those dimpled pink hands which stroked my face so lovingly and were clasped round my neck.

Sonya's future made me anxious. Orlov was her father; in her birth certificate she was called Krasnovsky, and the only person who knew of her existence, and took interest in her--that is, I--was at death's door. I had to think about her seriously.

The day after I arrived in Petersburg I went to see Orlov. The door was opened to me by a stout old fellow with red whiskers and no moustache, who looked like a German. Polya, who was tidying the drawing-room, did not recognise me, but Orlov knew me at once.

"Ah, Mr. Revolutionist!" he said, looking at me with curiosity, and laughing. "What fate has brought you?"

He was not changed in the least: the same well-groomed, unpleasant face, the same irony. And a new book was lying on the table just as of old, with an ivory paper-knife thrust in it. He had evidently been reading before I came in. He made me sit down, offered me a cigar, and with a delicacy only found in well-bred people, concealing the unpleasant feeling aroused by my face and my wasted figure, observed casually that I was not in the least changed, and that he would have known me anywhere in spite of my having grown a beard. We talked of the weather, of Paris. To dispose as quickly as possible of the oppressive, inevitable question, which weighed upon him and me, he asked:

"Zinaida Fyodorovna is dead?"

"Yes," I answered.

"In childbirth?"

"Yes, in childbirth. The doctor suspected another cause of death, but . . . it is more comforting for you and for me to think that she died in childbirth."

He sighed decorously and was silent. The angel of silence passed over us, as they say.

"Yes. And here everything is as it used to be--no changes," he said briskly, seeing that I was looking about the room. "My father, as you know, has left the service and is living in retirement; I am still in the same department. Do you remember Pekarsky? He is just the same as ever. Gruzin died of diphtheria a year ago. . . . Kukushkin is alive, and often speaks of you. By the way," said Orlov, dropping his eyes with an air of reserve, "when Kukushkin heard who you were, he began telling every one you had attacked him and tried to murder him . . . and that he only just escaped with his life."

I did not speak.

"Old servants do not forget their masters. . . . It's very nice of you," said Orlov jocosely. "Will you have some wine and some coffee, though? I will tell them to make some."

"No, thank you. I have come to see you about a very important matter, Georgy Ivanitch."

"I am not very fond of important matters, but I shall be glad to be of service to you. What do you want?"

"You see," I began, growing agitated, "I have here with me Zinaida Fyodorovna's daughter. . . . Hitherto I have brought her up, but, as you see, before many days I shall be an empty sound. I should like to die with the thought that she is provided for."

Orlov coloured a little, frowned a little, and took a cursory and sullen glance at me. He was unpleasantly affected, not so much by the "important matter" as by my words about death, about becoming an empty sound.

"Yes, it must be thought about," he said, screening his eyes as though from the sun.  
"Thank you. You say it's a girl?"

"Yes, a girl. A wonderful child!"

"Yes. Of course, it's not a lap-dog, but a human being. I understand we must consider it seriously. I am prepared to do my part, and am very grateful to you."

He got up, walked about, biting his nails, and stopped before a picture.

"We must think about it," he said in a hollow voice, standing with his back to me. "I shall go to Pekarsky's to-day and will ask him to go to Krasnovsky's. I don't think he will make much ado about consenting to take the child."

"But, excuse me, I don't see what Krasnovsky has got to do with it," I said, also getting up and walking to a picture at the other end of the room.

"But she bears his name, of course!" said Orlov.

"Yes, he may be legally obliged to accept the child--I don't know; but I came to you, Georgy Ivanitch, not to discuss the legal aspect."

"Yes, yes, you are right," he agreed briskly. "I believe I am talking nonsense. But don't excite yourself. We will decide the matter to our mutual satisfaction. If one thing won't do, we'll try another; and if that won't do, we'll try a third--one way or another this delicate question shall be settled. Pekarsky will arrange it all. Be so good as to leave me your address and I will let you know at once what we decide. Where are you living?"

Orlov wrote down my address, sighed, and said with a smile:

"Oh, Lord, what a job it is to be the father of a little daughter! But Pekarsky will arrange it all. He is a sensible man. Did you stay long in Paris?"

"Two months."

We were silent. Orlov was evidently afraid I should begin talking of the child again, and to turn my attention in another direction, said:

"You have probably forgotten your letter by now. But I have kept it. I understand your mood at the time, and, I must own, I respect that letter. 'Damnable cold blood,' 'Asiatic,' 'coarse laugh'--that was charming and characteristic," he went on with an ironical smile. "And the fundamental thought is perhaps near the truth, though one might dispute the question endlessly. That is," he hesitated, "not dispute the thought itself, but your attitude to the question--your temperament, so to say. Yes, my life is abnormal, corrupted, of no use to any one, and what prevents me from beginning a new life is cowardice--there you are quite right. But that you take it so much to heart, are troubled, and reduced to despair by it--that's irrational; there you are quite wrong."

"A living man cannot help being troubled and reduced to despair when he sees that he himself is going to ruin and others are going to ruin round him."

"Who doubts it! I am not advocating indifference; all I ask for is an objective attitude to life. The more objective, the less danger of falling into error. One must look into the root of things, and try to see in every phenomenon a cause of all the other causes. We have grown feeble, slack--degraded, in fact. Our generation is entirely composed of neurasthenics and whimperers; we do nothing but talk of fatigue and exhaustion. But the fault is neither yours nor mine; we are of too little consequence to affect the destiny of a whole generation. We must suppose for that larger, more general causes with a solid raison d'être from the biological point of view. We are neurasthenics, flabby, renegades, but perhaps it's necessary and of service for generations that will come after us. Not one hair falls from the head without the will of the Heavenly Father--in other words, nothing happens by chance in Nature and in human environment. Everything has its cause and is inevitable. And if so, why should we worry and write despairing letters?"

"That's all very well," I said, thinking a little. "I believe it will be easier and clearer for the generations to come; our experience will be at their service. But one wants to live apart from future generations and not only for their sake. Life is only given us once, and one wants to live it boldly, with full consciousness and beauty. One wants to play a striking, independent, noble part; one wants to make history so that those generations may not have the right to say of each of us that we were nonentities or worse. . . . I believe what is going on about us is inevitable and not without a purpose, but what have I to do with that inevitability? Why should my ego be lost?"

"Well, there's no help for it," sighed Orlov, getting up and, as it were, giving me to understand that our conversation was over.

I took my hat.

"We've only been sitting here half an hour, and how many questions we have settled, when you come to think of it!" said Orlov, seeing me into the hall. "So I will see to that matter. . . . I will see Pekarsky to-day. . . . Don't be uneasy."

He stood waiting while I put on my coat, and was obviously relieved at the feeling that I was going away.

"Georgy Ivanitch, give me back my letter," I said.

"Certainly."

He went to his study, and a minute later returned with the letter. I thanked him and went away.

The next day I got a letter from him. He congratulated me on the satisfactory settlement of the question. Pekarsky knew a lady, he wrote, who kept a school, something like a kindergarten, where she took quite little children. The lady could be entirely depended upon, but before concluding anything with her it would be as well to discuss the matter with Krasnovsky--it was a matter of form. He advised me to see Pekarsky at once and to take the birth certificate with me, if I had it. "Rest assured of the sincere respect and devotion of your humble servant. . . ."

I read this letter, and Sonya sat on the table and gazed at me attentively without blinking, as though she knew her fate was being decided.

## THE HUSBAND

IN the course of the manœuvres the N---- cavalry regiment halted for a night at the district town of K----. Such an event as the visit of officers always has the most exciting and inspiring effect on the inhabitants of provincial towns. The shopkeepers dream of getting rid of the rusty sausages and "best brand" sardines that have been lying for ten years on their shelves; the inns and restaurants keep open all night; the Military Commandant, his secretary, and the local garrison put on their best uniforms; the police flit to and fro like mad, while the effect on the ladies is beyond all description.

The ladies of K----, hearing the regiment approaching, forsook their pans of boiling jam and ran into the street. Forgetting their morning deshabille and general untidiness, they rushed breathless with excitement to meet the regiment, and listened greedily to the band playing the march. Looking at their pale, ecstatic faces, one might have thought those strains came from some heavenly choir rather than from a military brass band.

"The regiment!" they cried joyfully. "The regiment is coming!"

What could this unknown regiment that came by chance to-day and would depart at dawn to-morrow mean to them?

Afterwards, when the officers were standing in the middle of the square, and, with their hands behind them, discussing the question of billets, all the ladies were gathered together at the examining magistrate's and vying with one another in their criticisms of the regiment. They already knew, goodness knows how, that the colonel was married, but not living with his wife; that the senior officer's wife had a baby born dead every year; that the adjutant was hopelessly in love with some countess, and had even once attempted suicide. They knew everything. When a pock-marked soldier in a red shirt darted past the windows, they knew for certain that it was Lieutenant Rymzov's orderly running about the town, trying to get some English bitter ale on tick for his master. They had only caught a passing glimpse of the officers' backs, but had already decided that there was not one handsome or interesting man among them. . . . Having talked to their hearts' content, they sent for the Military Commandant and the committee of the club, and instructed them at all costs to make arrangements for a dance.

Their wishes were carried out. At nine o'clock in the evening the military band was playing in the street before the club, while in the club itself the officers were dancing with the ladies of K----. The ladies felt as though they were on wings. Intoxicated by the dancing, the music, and the clank of spurs, they threw themselves heart and soul into making the acquaintance of their new partners, and quite forgot their old civilian friends. Their fathers and husbands, forced temporarily into the background, crowded round the meagre refreshment table in the entrance hall. All these government cashiers, secretaries, clerks, and superintendents--stale, sickly-looking, clumsy figures--were perfectly well aware of their inferiority. They did not even enter the ball-room, but contented

themselves with watching their wives and daughters in the distance dancing with the accomplished and graceful officers.

Among the husbands was Shalikov, the tax-collector--a narrow, spiteful soul, given to drink, with a big, closely cropped head, and thick, protruding lips. He had had a university education; there had been a time when he used to read progressive literature and sing students' songs, but now, as he said of himself, he was a tax-collector and nothing more.

He stood leaning against the doorpost, his eyes fixed on his wife, Anna Pavlovna, a little brunette of thirty, with a long nose and a pointed chin. Tightly laced, with her face carefully powdered, she danced without pausing for breath--danced till she was ready to drop exhausted. But though she was exhausted in body, her spirit was inexhaustible. . . . One could see as she danced that her thoughts were with the past, that faraway past when she used to dance at the "College for Young Ladies," dreaming of a life of luxury and gaiety, and never doubting that her husband was to be a prince or, at the worst, a baron.

The tax-collector watched, scowling with spite. . . .

It was not jealousy he was feeling. He was ill-humoured--first, because the room was taken up with dancing and there was nowhere he could play a game of cards; secondly, because he could not endure the sound of wind instruments; and, thirdly, because he fancied the officers treated the civilians somewhat too casually and disdainfully. But what above everything revolted him and moved him to indignation was the expression of happiness on his wife's face.

"It makes me sick to look at her!" he muttered. "Going on for forty, and nothing to boast of at any time, and she must powder her face and lace herself up! And frizzing her hair! Flirting and making faces, and fancying she's doing the thing in style! Ugh! you're a pretty figure, upon my soul!"

Anna Pavlovna was so lost in the dance that she did not once glance at her husband.

"Of course not! Where do we poor country bumpkins come in!" sneered the tax-collector.

"We are at a discount now. . . . We're clumsy seals, unpolished provincial bears, and she's the queen of the ball! She has kept enough of her looks to please even officers. . . They'd not object to making love to her, I dare say!"

During the mazurka the tax-collector's face twitched with spite. A black-haired officer with prominent eyes and Tartar cheekbones danced the mazurka with Anna Pavlovna. Assuming a stern expression, he worked his legs with gravity and feeling, and so crooked his knees that he looked like a jack-a-dandy pulled by strings, while Anna Pavlovna, pale and thrilled, bending her figure languidly and turning her eyes up, tried to look as though she scarcely touched the floor, and evidently felt herself that she was not on earth, not at the local club, but somewhere far, far away--in the clouds. Not only her face but her

whole figure was expressive of beatitude . . . . The tax-collector could endure it no longer; he felt a desire to jeer at that beatitude, to make Anna Pavlovna feel that she had forgotten herself, that life was by no means so delightful as she fancied now in her excitement. . . .

"You wait; I'll teach you to smile so blissfully," he muttered. "You are not a boarding-school miss, you are not a girl. An old fright ought to realise she is a fright!"

Petty feelings of envy, vexation, wounded vanity, of that small, provincial misanthropy engendered in petty officials by vodka and a sedentary life, swarmed in his heart like mice. Waiting for the end of the mazurka, he went into the hall and walked up to his wife. Anna Pavlovna was sitting with her partner, and, flirting her fan and coquettishly dropping her eyelids, was describing how she used to dance in Petersburg (her lips were pursed up like a rosebud, and she pronounced "at home in Pütürsburg").

"Anyuta, let us go home," croaked the tax-collector.

Seeing her husband standing before her, Anna Pavlovna started as though recalling the fact that she had a husband; then she flushed all over: she felt ashamed that she had such a sickly-looking, ill-humoured, ordinary husband.

"Let us go home," repeated the tax-collector.

"Why? It's quite early!"

"I beg you to come home!" said the tax-collector deliberately, with a spiteful expression.

"Why? Has anything happened?" Anna Pavlovna asked in a flutter.

"Nothing has happened, but I wish you to go home at once. . . . I wish it; that's enough, and without further talk, please."

Anna Pavlovna was not afraid of her husband, but she felt ashamed on account of her partner, who was looking at her husband with surprise and amusement. She got up and moved a little apart with her husband.

"What notion is this?" she began. "Why go home? Why, it's not eleven o'clock."

"I wish it, and that's enough. Come along, and that's all about it."

"Don't be silly! Go home alone if you want to."

"All right; then I shall make a scene."

The tax-collector saw the look of beatitude gradually vanish from his wife's face, saw how ashamed and miserable she was--and he felt a little happier.

"Why do you want me at once?" asked his wife.

"I don't want you, but I wish you to be at home. I wish it, that's all."

At first Anna Pavlovna refused to hear of it, then she began entreating her husband to let her stay just another half-hour; then, without knowing why, she began to apologise, to protest--and all in a whisper, with a smile, that the spectators might not suspect that she was having a tiff with her husband. She began assuring him she would not stay long, only another ten minutes, only five minutes; but the tax-collector stuck obstinately to his point.

"Stay if you like," he said, "but I'll make a scene if you do."

And as she talked to her husband Anna Pavlovna looked thinner, older, plainer. Pale, biting her lips, and almost crying, she went out to the entry and began putting on her things.

"You are not going?" asked the ladies in surprise. "Anna Pavlovna, you are not going, dear?"

"Her head aches," said the tax-collector for his wife.

Coming out of the club, the husband and wife walked all the way home in silence. The tax-collector walked behind his wife, and watching her downcast, sorrowful, humiliated little figure, he recalled the look of beatitude which had so irritated him at the club, and the consciousness that the beatitude was gone filled his soul with triumph. He was pleased and satisfied, and at the same time he felt the lack of something; he would have liked to go back to the club and make every one feel dreary and miserable, so that all might know how stale and worthless life is when you walk along the streets in the dark and hear the slush of the mud under your feet, and when you know that you will wake up next morning with nothing to look forward to but vodka and cards. Oh, how awful it is!

And Anna Pavlovna could scarcely walk. . . . She was still under the influence of the dancing, the music, the talk, the lights, and the noise; she asked herself as she walked along why God had thus afflicted her. She felt miserable, insulted, and choking with hate as she listened to her husband's heavy footsteps. She was silent, trying to think of the most offensive, biting, and venomous word she could hurl at her husband, and at the same time she was fully aware that no word could penetrate her tax-collector's hide. What did he care for words? Her bitterest enemy could not have contrived for her a more helpless position.

And meanwhile the band was playing and the darkness was full of the most rousing, intoxicating dance-tunes.

**THE END**

# The House With The Mezzanine

(A PAINTER'S STORY)

by Anton Chekhov

It happened nigh on seven years ago, when I was living in one of the districts of the J. province, on the estate of Bielokurov, a landowner, a young man who used to get up early, dress himself in a long overcoat, drink beer in the evenings, and all the while complain to me that he could nowhere find any one in sympathy with his ideas. He lived in a little house in the orchard, and I lived in the old manor-house, in a huge pillared hall where there was no furniture except a large divan, on which I slept, and a table at which I used to play patience. Even in calm weather there was always a moaning in the chimney, and in a storm the whole house would rock and seem as though it must split, and it was quite terrifying, especially at night, when all the ten great windows were suddenly lit up by a flash of lightning.

Doomed by fate to permanent idleness, I did positively nothing. For hours together I would sit and look through the windows at the sky, the birds, the trees and read my letters over and over again, and then for hours together I would sleep. Sometimes I would go out and wander aimlessly until evening.

Once on my way home I came unexpectedly on a strange farmhouse. The sun was already setting, and the lengthening shadows were thrown over the ripening corn. Two rows of closely planted tall fir-trees stood like two thick walls, forming a sombre, magnificent avenue. I climbed the fence and walked up the avenue, slipping on the fir needles which lay two inches thick on the ground. It was still, dark, and only here and there in the tops of the trees shimmered a bright gold light casting the colours of the rainbow on a spider's web. The smell of the firs was almost suffocating. Then I turned into an avenue of limes. And here too were desolation and decay; the dead leaves rustled mournfully beneath my feet, and there were lurking shadows among the trees. To the right, in an old orchard, a goldhammer sang a faint reluctant song, and he too must have been old. The lime-trees soon came to an end and I came to a white house with a terrace and a mezzanine, and suddenly a vista opened upon a farmyard with a pond and a bathing-shed, and a row of green willows, with a village beyond, and above it stood a tall, slender belfry, on which glowed a cross catching the light of the setting sun. For a moment I was possessed with a sense of enchantment, intimate, particular, as though I had seen the scene before in my childhood.

By the white-stone gate surmounted with stone lions, which led from the yard into the field, stood two girls. One of them, the elder, thin, pale, very handsome, with masses of chestnut hair and a little stubborn mouth, looked rather prim and scarcely glanced at me; the other, who was quite

young--seventeen or eighteen, no more, also thin and pale, with a big mouth and big eyes, looked at me in surprise, as I passed, said something in English and looked confused, and it seemed to me that I had always known their dear faces. And I returned home feeling as though I had awoke from a pleasant dream.

Soon after that, one afternoon, when Bielokurov and I were walking near the house, suddenly there came into the yard a spring-carriage in which sat one of the two girls, the elder. She had come to ask for subscriptions to a fund for those who had suffered in a recent fire. Without looking at us, she told us very seriously how many houses had been burned down in Sianov, how many men, women, and children had been left without shelter, and what had been done by the committee of which she was a member. She gave us the list for us to write our names, put it away, and began to say good-bye.

"You have completely forgotten us, Piotr Petrovich," she said to Bielokurov, as she gave him her hand. "Come and see us, and if Mr. N. (she said my name) would like to see how the admirers of his talent live and would care to come and see us, then mother and I would be very pleased."

I bowed.

When she had gone Piotr Petrovich began to tell me about her. The girl, he said, was of a good family and her name was Lydia Volchaninov, and the estate, on which she lived with her mother and sister, was called, like the village on the other side of the pond, Sholkovka. Her father had once occupied an eminent position in Moscow and died a privy councillor. Notwithstanding their large means, the Volchaninovs always lived in the village, summer and winter, and Lydia was a teacher in the Zemstvo School at Sholkovka and earned twenty-five roubles a month. She only spent what she earned on herself and was proud of her independence.

"They are an interesting family," said Bielokurov. "We ought to go and see them. They will be very glad to see you."

One afternoon, during a holiday, we remembered the Volchaninovs and went over to Sholkovka. They were all at home. The mother, Ekaterina Pavlovna, had obviously once been handsome, but now she was stouter than her age warranted, suffered from asthma, was melancholy and absent-minded as she tried to entertain me with talk about painting. When she heard from her daughter that I might perhaps come over to Sholkovka, she hurriedly called to mind a few of my landscapes which she had seen in exhibitions in Moscow, and now she asked what I had tried to express in them. Lydia, or as she was called at home, Lyda, talked more to Bielokurov than to me. Seriously and without a smile, she asked him why he did not work for the Zemstvo and why up till now he had never been to a Zemstvo meeting.

"It is not right of you, Piotr Petrovich," she said reproachfully. "It is not right. It is a shame."

"True, Lyda, true," said her mother. "It is not right."

"All our district is in Balaguin's hands," Lyda went on, turning to me. "He is the chairman of the council and all the jobs in the district are given to his nephews and brothers-in-law, and he does exactly as he likes. We ought to fight him. The young people ought to form a strong party; but you see what our young men are like. It is a shame, Piotr Petrovich."

The younger sister, Genya, was silent during the conversation about the Zemstvo. She did not take part in serious conversations, for by the family she was not considered grown-up, and they gave her her baby-name, Missyuss, because as a child she used to call her English governess that. All the time she examined me curiously and when I looked at the photograph-album she explained: "This is my uncle.... That is my godfather," and fingered the portraits, and at the same time touched me with her shoulder in a childlike way, and I could see her small, undeveloped bosom, her thin shoulders, her long, slim waist tightly drawn in by a belt.

We played croquet and lawn-tennis, walked in the garden, had tea, and then a large supper. After the huge pillared hall, I felt out of tune in the small cosy house, where there were no oleographs on the walls and the servants were treated considerably, and everything seemed to me young and pure, through the presence of Lyda and Missyuss, and everything was decent and orderly. At supper Lyda again talked to Bielokurov about the Zemstvo, about Balaguin, about school libraries. She was a lively, sincere, serious girl, and it was interesting to listen to her, though she spoke at length and in a loud voice--perhaps because she was used to holding forth at school. On the other hand, Piotr Petrovich, who from his university days had retained the habit of reducing any conversation to a discussion, spoke tediously, slowly, and deliberately, with an obvious desire to be taken for a clever and progressive man. He gesticulated and upset the sauce with his sleeve and it made a large pool on the table-cloth, though nobody but myself seemed to notice it.

When we returned home the night was dark and still.

"I call it good breeding," said Bielokurov, with a sigh, "not so much not to upset the sauce on the table, as not to notice it when some one else has done it. Yes. An admirable intellectual family. I'm rather out of touch with nice people. Ah! terribly. And all through business, business, business!"

He went on to say what hard work being a good farmer meant. And I thought: What a stupid, lazy lout! When we talked seriously he would drag it out with his awful drawl--er, er, er--and he works just as he talks--slowly, always behindhand, never up to time; and as for his being

businesslike, I don't believe it, for he often keeps letters given him to post for weeks in his pocket.

"The worst of it is," he murmured as he walked along by my side, "the worst of it is that you go working away and never get any sympathy from anybody."

## II

I began to frequent the Volchaninovs' house. Usually I sat on the bottom step of the veranda. I was filled with dissatisfaction, vague discontent with my life, which had passed so quickly and uninterestingly, and I thought all the while how good it would be to tear out of my breast my heart which had grown so weary. There would be talk going on on the terrace, the rustling of dresses, the fluttering of the pages of a book. I soon got used to Lyda receiving the sick all day long, and distributing books, and I used often to go with her to the village, bareheaded, under an umbrella. And in the evening she would hold forth about the Zemstvo and schools. She was very handsome, subtle, correct, and her lips were thin and sensitive, and whenever a serious conversation started she would say to me drily:

"This won't interest you."

I was not sympathetic to her. She did not like me because I was a landscape-painter, and in my pictures did not paint the suffering of the masses, and I seemed to her indifferent to what she believed in. I remember once driving along the shore of the Baikal and I met a Bouryat girl, in shirt and trousers of Chinese cotton, on horseback: I asked her if she would sell me her pipe and, while we were talking, she looked with scorn at my European face and hat, and in a moment she got bored with talking to me, whooped and galloped away. And in exactly the same way Lyda despised me as a stranger. Outwardly she never showed her dislike of me, but I felt it, and, as I sat on the bottom step of the terrace, I had a certain irritation and said that treating the peasants without being a doctor meant deceiving them, and that it is easy to be a benefactor when one owns four thousand acres.

Her sister, Missyuss, had no such cares and spent her time in complete idleness, like myself. As soon as she got up in the morning she would take a book and read it on the terrace, sitting far back in a lounge chair so that her feet hardly touched the ground, or she would hide herself with her book in the lime-walk, or she would go through the gate into the field. She would read all day long, eagerly poring over the book, and only through her looking fatigued, dizzy, and pale sometimes, was it possible to guess how much her reading exhausted her. When she saw me come she would blush a little and leave her book, and, looking into my face with her big eyes, she would tell me of things that had happened, how the chimney in the servants' room had caught fire, or how the labourer had caught a large fish in the pond. On week-days she usually wore a bright-coloured blouse and a dark-blue skirt. We

used to go out together and pluck cherries for jam, in the boat, and when she jumped to reach a cherry, or pulled the oars, her thin, round arms would shine through her wide sleeves. Or I would make a sketch and she would stand and watch me breathlessly.

One Sunday, at the end of June, I went over to the Volchaninovs in the morning about nine o'clock. I walked through the park, avoiding the house, looking for mushrooms, which were very plentiful that summer, and marking them so as to pick them later with Genya. A warm wind was blowing. I met Genya and her mother, both in bright Sunday dresses, going home from church, and Genya was holding her hat against the wind. They told me they were going to have tea on the terrace.

As a man without a care in the world, seeking somehow to justify his constant idleness, I have always found such festive mornings in a country house universally attractive. When the green garden, still moist with dew, shines in the sun and seems happy, and when the terrace smells of mignonette and oleander, and the young people have just returned from church and drink tea in the garden, and when they are all so gaily dressed and so merry, and when you know that all these healthy, satisfied, beautiful people will do nothing all day long, then you long for all life to be like that. So I thought then as I walked through the garden, quite prepared to drift like that without occupation or purpose, all through the day, all through the summer.

Genya carried a basket and she looked as though she knew that she would find me there. We gathered mushrooms and talked, and whenever she asked me a question she stood in front of me to see my face.

"Yesterday," she said, "a miracle happened in our village. Pelagueya, the cripple, has been ill for a whole year, and no doctors or medicines were any good, but yesterday an old woman muttered over her and she got better."

"That's nothing," I said. "One should not go to sick people and old women for miracles. Is not health a miracle? And life itself? A miracle is something incomprehensible."

"And you are not afraid of the incomprehensible?"

"No. I like to face things I do not understand and I do not submit to them. I am superior to them. Man must think himself higher than lions, tigers, stars, higher than anything in nature, even higher than that which seems incomprehensible and miraculous. Otherwise he is not a man, but a mouse which is afraid of everything."

Genya thought that I, as an artist, knew a great deal and could guess what I did not know. She wanted me to lead her into the region of the eternal and the beautiful, into the highest world, with which, as she thought, I was perfectly familiar, and she talked to me of God, of eternal life, of the miraculous. And I, who did not admit that I and my imagination would perish for ever, would reply: "Yes. Men

are immortal. Yes, eternal life awaits us." And she would listen and believe me and never asked for proof.

As we approached the house she suddenly stopped and said:

"Our Lyda is a remarkable person, isn't she? I love her dearly and would gladly sacrifice my life for her at any time. But tell me"--Genya touched my sleeve with her finger--"but tell me, why do you argue with her all the time? Why are you so irritated?"

"Because she is not right."

Genya shook her head and tears came to her eyes.

"How incomprehensible!" she muttered.

At that moment Lyda came out, and she stood by the balcony with a riding-whip in her hand, and looked very fine and pretty in the sunlight as she gave some orders to a farm-hand. Bustling about and talking loudly, she tended two or three of her patients, and then with a businesslike, preoccupied look she walked through the house, opening one cupboard after another, and at last went off to the attic; it took some time to find her for dinner and she did not come until we had finished the soup. Somehow I remember all these, little details and love to dwell on them, and I remember the whole of that day vividly, though nothing particular happened. After dinner Genya read, lying in her lounge chair, and I sat on the bottom step of the terrace. We were silent. The sky was overcast and a thin fine rain began to fall. It was hot, the wind had dropped, and it seemed the day would never end. Ekaterina Pavlovna came out on to the terrace with a fan, looking very sleepy.

"O, mamma," said Genya, kissing her hand. "It is not good for you to sleep during the day."

They adored each other. When one went into the garden, the other would stand on the terrace and look at the trees and call: "Hello!" "Genya!" or "Mamma, dear, where are you?" They always prayed together and shared the same faith, and they understood each other very well, even when they were silent. And they treated other people in exactly the same way. Ekaterina Pavlovna also soon got used to me and became attached to me, and when I did not turn up for a few days she would send to inquire if I was well. And she too used to look admiringly at my sketches, and with the same frank loquacity she would tell me things that happened, and she would confide her domestic secrets to me.

She revered her elder daughter. Lyda never came to her for caresses, and only talked about serious things: she went her own way and to her mother and sister she was as sacred and enigmatic as the admiral, sitting in his cabin, to his sailors.

"Our Lyda is a remarkable person," her mother would often say; "isn't she?"

And, now, as the soft rain fell, we spoke of Lyda:

"She is a remarkable woman," said her mother, and added in a low voice like a conspirator's as she looked round, "such as she have to be looked for with a lamp in broad daylight, though you know, I am beginning to be anxious. The school, pharmacies, books--all very well, but why go to such extremes? She is twenty-three and it is time for her to think seriously about herself. If she goes on with her books and her pharmacies she won't know how life has passed.... She ought to marry."

Genya, pale with reading, and with her hair ruffled, looked up and said, as if to herself, as she glanced at her mother:

"Mamma, dear, everything depends on the will of God."

And once more she plunged into her book.

Bielokurov came over in a *poddiovka*, wearing an embroidered shirt. We played croquet and lawn-tennis, and when it grew dark we had a long supper, and Lyda once more spoke of her schools and Balaguin, who had got the whole district into his own hands. As I left the Volchaninovs that night I carried away an impression of a long, long idle day, with a sad consciousness that everything ends, however long it may be. Genya took me to the gate, and perhaps, because she had spent the whole day with me from the beginning to end, I felt somehow lonely without her, and the whole kindly family was dear to me: and for the first time during the whole of that summer I had a desire to work.

"Tell me why you lead such a monotonous life," I asked Bielokurov, as we went home. "My life is tedious, dull, monotonous, because I am a painter, a queer fish, and have been worried all my life with envy, discontent, disbelief in my work: I am always poor, I am a vagabond, but you are a wealthy, normal man, a landowner, a gentleman--why do you live so tamely and take so little from life? Why, for instance, haven't you fallen in love with Lyda or Genya?"

"You forget that I love another woman," answered Bielokurov.

He meant his mistress, Lyabor Ivanovna, who lived with him in the orchard house. I used to see the lady every day, very stout, podgy, pompous, like a fatted goose, walking in the garden in a Russian head-dress, always with a sunshade, and the servants used to call her to meals or tea. Three years ago she rented a part of his house for the summer, and stayed on to live with Bielokurov, apparently for ever. She was ten years older than he and managed him very strictly, so that he had to ask her permission to go out. She would often sob and make horrible noises like a man with a cold, and then I used to send and tell her that I'm if she did not stop I would go away. Then she would stop.

When we reached home, Bielokurov sat down on the divan and frowned and brooded, and I began to pace up and down the hall, feeling a sweet stirring in me, exactly like the stirring of love. I wanted to talk about the Volchaninovs.

"Lyda could only fall in love with a Zemstvo worker like herself, some one who is run off his legs with hospitals and schools," I said. "For the sake of a girl like that a man might not only become a Zemstvo worker, but might even become worn out, like the tale of the iron boots. And Missyuss? How charming Missyuss is!"

Bielokurov began to talk at length and with his drawling er-er-ers of the disease of the century--pessimism. He spoke confidently and argumentatively. Hundreds of miles of deserted, monotonous, blackened steppe could not so forcibly depress the mind as a man like that, sitting and talking and showing no signs of going away.

"The point is neither pessimism nor optimism," I said irritably, "but that ninety-nine out of a hundred have no sense."

Bielokurov took this to mean himself, was offended, and went away.

### III

"The Prince is on a visit to Maloziomov and sends you his regards," said Lyda to her mother, as she came in and took off her gloves. "He told me many interesting things. He promised to bring forward in the Zemstvo Council the question of a medical station at Maloziomov, but he says there is little hope." And turning to me, she said: "Forgive me, I keep forgetting that you are not interested."

I felt irritated.

"Why not?" I asked and shrugged my shoulders. "You don't care about my opinion, but I assure you, the question greatly interests me."

"Yes?"

"In my opinion there is absolutely no need for a medical station at Maloziomov."

My irritation affected her: she gave a glance at me, half closed her eyes and said:

"What is wanted then? Landscapes?"

"Not landscapes either. Nothing is wanted there."

She finished taking off her gloves and took up a newspaper which had just come by post; a moment later, she said quietly, apparently controlling herself:

"Last week Anna died in childbirth, and if a medical man had been available she would have lived. However, I suppose landscape-painters are entitled to their opinions."

"I have a very definite opinion, I assure you," said I, and she took refuge behind the newspaper, as though she did not wish to listen. "In my opinion medical stations, schools, libraries, pharmacies, under existing conditions, only lead to slavery. The masses are caught in a vast chain: you do not cut it but only add new links to it. That is my opinion."

She looked at me and smiled mockingly, and I went on, striving to catch the thread of my ideas.

"It does not matter that Anna should die in childbirth, but it does matter that all these Annas, Mavras, Pelagueyas, from dawn to sunset should be grinding away, ill from overwork, all their lives worried about their starving sickly children; all their lives they are afraid of death and disease, and have to be looking after themselves; they fade in youth, grow old very early, and die in filth and dirt; their children as they grow up go the same way and hundreds of years slip by and millions of people live worse than animals--in constant dread of never having a crust to eat; but the horror of their position is that they have no time to think of their souls, no time to remember that they are made in the likeness of God; hunger, cold, animal fear, incessant work, like drifts of snow block all the ways to spiritual activity, to the very thing that distinguishes man from the animals, and is the only thing indeed that makes life worth living. You come to their assistance with hospitals and schools, but you do not free them from their fetters; on the contrary, you enslave them even more, since by introducing new prejudices into their lives, you increase the number of their demands, not to mention the fact that they have to pay the Zemstvo for their drugs and pamphlets, and therefore, have to work harder than ever."

"I will not argue with you," said Lyda. "I have heard all that." She put down her paper. "I will only tell you one thing, it is no good sitting with folded hands. It is true, we do not save mankind, and perhaps we do make mistakes, but we do what we can and we are right. The highest and most sacred truth for an educated being--is to help his neighbours, and we do what we can to help. You do not like it, but it is impossible to please everybody."

"True, Lyda, true," said her mother.

In Lyda's presence her courage always failed her, and as she talked she would look timidly at her, for she was afraid of saying something foolish or out of place: and she never contradicted, but would always agree: "True, Lyda, true."

"Teaching peasants to read and write, giving them little moral pamphlets and medical assistance, cannot decrease either ignorance or mortality, just as the light from your windows cannot illuminate this huge garden," I said. "You give nothing by your interference in the lives of these

people. You only create new demands, and a new compulsion to work."

"Ah! My God, but we must do something!" said Lyda exasperatedly, and I could tell by her voice that she thought my opinions negligible and despised me.

"It is necessary," I said, "to free people from hard physical work. It is necessary to relieve them of their yoke, to give them breathing space, to save them from spending their whole lives in the kitchen or the byre, in the fields; they should have time to take thought of their souls, of God and to develop their spiritual capacities. Every human being's salvation lies in spiritual activity--in his continual search for truth and the meaning of life. Give them some relief from rough, animal labour, let them feel free, then you will see how ridiculous at bottom your pamphlets and pharmacies are. Once a human being is aware of his vocation, then he can only be satisfied with religion, service, art, and not with trifles like that."

"Free them from work?" Lyda gave a smile. "Is that possible?"

"Yes.... Take upon yourself a part of their work. If we all, in town and country, without exception, agreed to share the work which is being spent by mankind in the satisfaction of physical demands, then none of us would have to work more than two or three hours a day. If all of us, rich and poor, worked three hours a day the rest of our time would be free. And then to be still less dependent on our bodies, we should invent machines to do the work and we should try to reduce our demands to the minimum. We should toughen ourselves and our children should not be afraid of hunger and cold, and we should not be anxious about their health, as Anna, Maria, Pelagueya were anxious. Then supposing we did not bother about doctors and pharmacies, and did away with tobacco factories and distilleries--what a lot of free time we should have! We should give our leisure to service and the arts. Just as peasants all work together to repair the roads, so the whole community would work together to seek truth and the meaning of life, and, I am sure of it--truth would be found very soon, man would get rid of his continual, poignant, depressing fear of death and even of death itself."

"But you contradict yourself," said Lyda. "You talk about service and deny education."

"I deny the education of a man who can only use it to read the signs on the public houses and possibly a pamphlet which he is incapable of understanding--the kind of education we have had from the time of Riurik: and village life has remained exactly as it was then. Not education is wanted but freedom for the full development of spiritual capacities. Not schools are wanted but universities."

"You deny medicine too."

"Yes. It should only be used for the investigation of diseases, as natural phenomenon, not for their cure. It is no good curing diseases if you don't cure their causes. Remove the chief cause--physical labour, and there will be no diseases. I don't acknowledge the science which cures," I went on excitedly. "Science and art, when they are true, are directed not to temporary or private purposes, but to the eternal and the general--they seek the truth and the meaning of life, they seek God, the soul, and when they are harnessed to passing needs and activities, like pharmacies and libraries, then they only complicate and encumber life. We have any number of doctors, pharmacists, lawyers, and highly educated people, but we have no biologists, mathematicians, philosophers, poets. All our intellectual and spiritual energy is wasted on temporary passing needs.... Scientists, writers, painters work and work, and thanks to them the comforts of life grow greater every day, the demands of the body multiply, but we are still a long way from the truth and man still remains the most rapacious and unseemly of animals, and everything tends to make the majority of mankind degenerate and more and more lacking in vitality. Under such conditions the life of an artist has no meaning and the more talented he is, the more strange and incomprehensible his position is, since it only amounts to his working for the amusement of the predatory, disgusting animal, man, and supporting the existing state of things. And I don't want to work and will not.... Nothing is wanted, so let the world go to hell."

"Missyuss, go away," said Lyda to her sister, evidently thinking my words dangerous to so young a girl.

Genya looked sadly at her sister and mother and went out.

"People generally talk like that," said Lyda, "when they want to excuse their indifference. It is easier to deny hospitals and schools than to come and teach."

"True, Lyda, true," her mother agreed.

"You say you will not work," Lyda went on. "Apparently you set a high price on your work, but do stop arguing. We shall never agree, since I value the most imperfect library or pharmacy, of which you spoke so scornfully just now, more than all the landscapes in the world." And at once she turned to her mother and began to talk in quite a different tone: "The Prince has got very thin, and is much changed since the last time he was here. The doctors are sending him to Vichy."

She talked to her mother about the Prince to avoid talking to me. Her face was burning, and, in order to conceal her agitation, she bent over the table as if she were short-sighted and made a show of reading the newspaper. My presence was distasteful to her. I took my leave and went home.

IV

All was quiet outside: the village on the other side of the pond was already asleep, not a single light was to be seen, and on the pond there was only the faint reflection of the stars. By the gate with the stone lions stood Genya, waiting to accompany me.

"The village is asleep," I said, trying to see her face in the darkness, and I could see her dark sad eyes fixed on me.

"The innkeeper and the horse-stealers are sleeping quietly, and decent people like ourselves quarrel and irritate each other."

It was a melancholy August night--melancholy because it already smelled of the autumn: the moon rose behind a purple cloud and hardly lighted the road and the dark fields of winter corn on either side. Stars fell frequently, Genya walked beside me on the road and tried not to look at the sky, to avoid seeing the falling stars, which somehow frightened her.

"I believe you are right," she said, trembling in the evening chill. "If people could give themselves to spiritual activity, they would soon burst everything."

"Certainly. We are superior beings, and if we really knew all the power of the human genius and lived only for higher purposes then we should become like gods. But this will never be. Mankind will degenerate and of their genius not a trace will be left."

When the gate was out of sight Genya stopped and hurriedly shook my hand.

"Good night," she said, trembling; her shoulders were covered only with a thin blouse and she was shivering with cold. "Come to-morrow."

I was filled with a sudden dread of being left alone with my inevitable dissatisfaction with myself and people, and I, too, tried not to see the falling stars.

"Stay with me a little longer," I said. "Please."

I loved Genya, and she must have loved me, because she used to meet me and walk with me, and because she looked at me with tender admiration. How thrillingly beautiful her pale face was, her thin nose, her arms, her slenderness, her idleness, her constant reading. And her mind? I suspected her of having an unusual intellect: I was fascinated by the breadth of her views, perhaps because she thought differently from the strong, handsome Lyda, who did not love me. Genya liked me as a painter, I had conquered her heart by my talent, and I longed passionately to paint only for her, and I dreamed of her as my little queen, who would one day possess with me the trees, the fields, the river, the dawn, all Nature, wonderful and fascinating, with whom, as with them, I have felt helpless and useless.

"Stay with me a moment longer," I called. "I implore you."

I took off my overcoat and covered her childish shoulders. Fearing that she would look queer and ugly in a man's coat, she began to laugh and threw it off, and as she did so, I embraced her and began to cover her face, her shoulders, her arms with kisses.

"Till to-morrow," she whispered timidly as though she was afraid to break the stillness of the night. She embraced me: "We have no secrets from one another. I must tell mamma and my sister.... Is it so terrible? Mamma will be pleased. Mamma loves you, but Lyda!"

She ran to the gates.

"Good-bye," she called out.

For a couple of minutes I stood and heard her running. I had no desire to go home, there was nothing there to go for. I stood for a while lost in thought, and then quietly dragged myself back, to have one more look at the house in which she lived, the dear, simple, old house, which seemed to look at me with the windows of the mezzanine for eyes, and to understand everything. I walked past the terrace, sat down on a bench by the lawn-tennis court, in the darkness under an old elm-tree, and looked at the house. In the windows of the mezzanine, where Missyuss had her room, shone a bright light, and then a faint green glow. The lamp had been covered with a shade. Shadows began to move.... I was filled with tenderness and a calm satisfaction, to think that I could let myself be carried away and fall in love, and at the same time I felt uneasy at the thought that only a few yards away in one of the rooms of the house lay Lyda who did not love me, and perhaps hated me. I sat and waited to see if Genya would come out. I listened attentively and it seemed to me they were sitting in the mezzanine.

An hour passed. The green light went out, and the shadows were no longer visible. The moon hung high above the house and lit the sleeping garden and the avenues: I could distinctly see the dahlias and roses in the flower-bed in front of the house, and all seemed to be of one colour. It was very cold. I left the garden, picked up my overcoat in the road, and walked slowly home.

Next day after dinner when I went to the Volchaninovs', the glass door was wide open. I sat down on the terrace expecting Genya to come from behind the flower-bed or from one of the avenues, or to hear her voice come from out of the rooms; then I went into the drawing-room and the dining-room. There was not a soul to be seen. From the dining-room I went down a long passage into the hall, and then back again. There were several doors in the passage and behind one of them I could hear Lyda's voice:

"To the crow somewhere ... God ..." --she spoke slowly and distinctly, and was probably dictating--" ... God sent a piece of cheese.... To the crow ... somewhere.... Who is there?" she called out suddenly as she heard my footsteps.

"It is I."

"Oh! excuse me. I can't come out just now. I am teaching Masha."

"Is Ekaterina Pavlovna in the garden?"

"No. She and my sister left to-day for my Aunt's in Penga, and in the winter they are probably going abroad." She added after a short silence: "To the crow somewhere God sent a piece of cheese. Have you got that?"

I went out into the hall, and, without a thought in my head, stood and looked out at the pond and the village, and still I heard:

"A piece of cheese.... To the crow somewhere God sent a piece of cheese."

And I left the house by the way I had come the first time, only reversing the order, from the yard into the garden, past the house, then along the lime-walk. Here a boy overtook me and handed me a note: "I have told my sister everything and she insists on my parting from you," I read. "I could not hurt her by disobeying. God will give you happiness. If you knew how bitterly mamma and I have cried."

Then through the fir avenue and the rotten fence. ...Over the fields where the corn was ripening and the quails screamed, cows and shackled horses now were browsing. Here and there on the hills the winter corn was already showing green. A sober, workaday mood possessed me and I was ashamed of all I had said at the Volchaninovs', and once more it became tedious to go on living. I went home, packed my things, and left that evening for Petersburg.

\* \* \*

I never saw the Volchaninovs again. Lately on my way to the Crimea I met Bielokurov at a station. As of old he was in a poddiovka, wearing an embroidered shirt, and when I asked after his health, he replied: "Quite well, thanks be to God." He began to talk. He had sold his estate and bought another, smaller one in the name of Lyabov Ivanovna. He told me a little about the Volchaninovs. Lyda, he said, still lived at Sholkovka and taught the children in the school; little by little she succeeded in gathering round herself a circle of sympathetic people, who formed a strong party, and at the last Zemstvo election they drove out Balaguin, who up till then had had the whole district in his hands. Of Genya Bielokurov said that she did not live at home and he did not know where she was.

I have already begun to forget about the house with the mezzanine, and only now and then, when I am working or reading, suddenly--without rhyme or reason--I remember

the green light in the window, and the sound of my own footsteps as I walked through the fields that night, when I was in love, rubbing my hands to keep them warm. And even more rarely, when I am sad and lonely, I begin already to recollect and it seems to me that I, too, am being remembered and waited for, and that we shall meet....

Missyuss, where are you?

## **Ward No. 6**

by Anton Chekhov

### I

In the hospital yard there stands a small lodge surrounded by a perfect forest of burdocks, nettles, and wild hemp. Its roof is rusty, the chimney is tumbling down, the steps at the front-door are rotting away and overgrown with grass, and there are only traces left of the stucco. The front of the lodge faces the hospital; at the back it looks out into the open country, from which it is separated by the grey hospital fence with nails on it. These nails, with their points upwards, and the fence, and the lodge itself, have that peculiar, desolate, God-forsaken look which is only found in our hospital and prison buildings.

If you are not afraid of being stung by the nettles, come by the narrow footpath that leads to the lodge, and let us see what is going on inside. Opening the first door, we walk into the entry. Here along the walls and by the stove every sort of hospital rubbish lies littered about. Mattresses, old tattered dressing-gowns, trousers, blue striped shirts, boots and shoes no good for anything --all these remnants are piled up in heaps, mixed up and crumpled, mouldering and giving out a sickly smell.

The porter, Nikita, an old soldier wearing rusty good-conduct stripes, is always lying on the litter with a pipe between his teeth. He has a grim, surly, battered-looking face, overhanging eyebrows which give him the expression of a sheep-dog of the steppes, and a red nose; he is short and looks thin and scraggy, but he is of imposing deportment and his fists are vigorous. He belongs to the class of simple-hearted, practical, and dull-witted people, prompt in carrying out orders, who like discipline better than anything in the world, and so are convinced that it is their duty to beat people. He showers blows on the face, on the chest, on the back, on whatever comes first, and is convinced that there would be no order in the place if he did not.

Next you come into a big, spacious room which fills up the whole lodge except for the entry. Here the walls are painted a dirty blue, the ceiling is as sooty as in a hut without a chimney--it is evident that in the winter the stove smokes and the room is full of fumes. The windows are disfigured by iron gratings on the inside. The wooden floor is grey and full of splinters. There is a stench of sour cabbage, of

smouldering wicks, of bugs, and of ammonia, and for the first minute this stench gives you the impression of having walked into a menagerie.

There are bedsteads screwed to the floor. Men in blue hospital dressing-gowns, and wearing nightcaps in the old style, are sitting and lying on them. These are the lunatics.

There are five of them in all here. Only one is of the upper class, the rest are all artisans. The one nearest the door--a tall, lean workman with shining red whiskers and tear-stained eyes--sits with his head propped on his hand, staring at the same point. Day and night he grieves, shaking his head, sighing and smiling bitterly. He takes a part in conversation and usually makes no answer to questions; he eats and drinks mechanically when food is offered him. From his agonizing, throbbing cough, his thinness, and the flush on his cheeks, one may judge that he is in the first stage of consumption. Next to him is a little, alert, very lively old man, with a pointed beard and curly black hair like a negro's. By day he walks up and down the ward from window to window, or sits on his bed, cross-legged like a Turk, and, ceaselessly as a bullfinch whistles, softly sings and titters. He shows his childish gaiety and lively character at night also when he gets up to say his prayers --that is, to beat himself on the chest with his fists, and to scratch with his fingers at the door. This is the Jew Moiseika, an imbecile, who went crazy twenty years ago when his hat factory was burnt down.

And of all the inhabitants of Ward No. 6, he is the only one who is allowed to go out of the lodge, and even out of the yard into the street. He has enjoyed this privilege for years, probably because he is an old inhabitant of the hospital--a quiet, harmless imbecile, the buffoon of the town, where people are used to seeing him surrounded by boys and dogs. In his wretched gown, in his absurd night-cap, and in slippers, sometimes with bare legs and even without trousers, he walks about the streets, stopping at the gates and little shops, and begging for a copper. In one place they will give him some kvass, in another some bread, in another a copper, so that he generally goes back to the ward feeling rich and well fed. Everything that he brings back Nikita takes from him for his own benefit. The soldier does this roughly, angrily turning the Jew's pockets inside out, and calling God to witness that he will not let him go into the street again, and that breach of the regulations is worse to him than anything in the world.

Moiseika likes to make himself useful. He gives his companions water, and covers them up when they are asleep; he promises each of them to bring him back a kopeck, and to make him a new cap; he feeds with a spoon his neighbour on the left, who is paralyzed. He acts in this way, not from compassion nor from any considerations of a humane kind, but through imitation, unconsciously dominated by Gromov, his neighbour on the right hand.

Ivan Dmitritch Gromov, a man of thirty-three, who is a gentleman by birth, and has been a court usher and provincial secretary, suffers from the mania of persecution. He either lies curled up in bed, or walks from corner to corner as though for exercise; he very rarely sits down. He is always excited, agitated, and overwrought by a sort of vague, undefined expectation. The faintest rustle in the entry or shout in the yard is enough to make him raise his head and begin listening: whether they are coming for him, whether they are looking for him. And at such times his face expresses the utmost uneasiness and repulsion.

I like his broad face with its high cheek-bones, always pale and unhappy, and reflecting, as though in a mirror, a soul tormented by conflict and long-continued terror. His grimaces are strange and abnormal, but the delicate lines traced on his face by profound, genuine suffering show intelligence and sense, and there is a warm and healthy light in his eyes. I like the man himself, courteous, anxious to be of use, and extraordinarily gentle to everyone except Nikita. When anyone drops a button or a spoon, he jumps up from his bed quickly and picks it up; every day he says good-morning to his companions, and when he goes to bed he wishes them good-night.

Besides his continually overwrought condition and his grimaces, his madness shows itself in the following way also. Sometimes in the evenings he wraps himself in his dressing-gown, and, trembling all over, with his teeth chattering, begins walking rapidly from corner to corner and between the bedsteads. It seems as though he is in a violent fever. From the way he suddenly stops and glances at his companions, it can be seen that he is longing to say something very important, but, apparently reflecting that they would not listen, or would not understand him, he shakes his head impatiently and goes on pacing up and down. But soon the desire to speak gets the upper hand of every consideration, and he will let himself go and speak fervently and passionately. His talk is disordered and feverish like

delirium, disconnected, and not always intelligible, but, on the other hand, something extremely fine may be felt in it, both in the words and the voice. When he talks you recognize in him the lunatic and the man. It is difficult to reproduce on paper his insane talk. He speaks of the baseness of mankind, of violence trampling on justice, of the glorious life which will one day be upon earth, of the window-gratings, which remind him every minute of the stupidity and cruelty of oppressors. It makes a disorderly, incoherent potpourri of themes old but not yet out of date.

## II

Some twelve or fifteen years ago an official called Gromov, a highly respectable and prosperous person, was living in his own house in the principal street of the town. He had two sons, Sergey and Ivan. When Sergey was a student in his fourth year he was taken ill with galloping consumption and died, and his death was, as it were, the first of a whole series of calamities which suddenly showered on the Gromov family. Within a week of Sergey's funeral the old father was put on trial for fraud and misappropriation, and he died of typhoid in the prison hospital soon afterwards. The house, with all their belongings, was sold by auction, and Ivan Dmitritch and his mother were left entirely without means.

Hitherto in his father's lifetime, Ivan Dmitritch, who was studying in the University of Petersburg, had received an allowance of sixty or seventy roubles a month, and had had no conception of poverty; now he had to make an abrupt change in his life. He had to spend his time from morning to night giving lessons for next to nothing, to work at copying, and with all that to go hungry, as all his earnings were sent to keep his mother. Ivan Dmitritch could not stand such a life; he lost heart and strength, and, giving up the university, went home.

Here, through interest, he obtained the post of teacher in the district school, but could not get on with his colleagues, was not liked by the boys, and soon gave up the post. His mother died. He was for six months without work, living on nothing but bread and water; then he became a court usher. He kept this post until he was dismissed owing to his illness.

He had never even in his young student days given the impression of being perfectly healthy. He had always been pale, thin, and given to catching cold; he ate little and slept badly. A single glass of wine went

to his head and made him hysterical. He always had a craving for society, but, owing to his irritable temperament and suspiciousness, he never became very intimate with anyone, and had no friends. He always spoke with contempt of his fellow-townspeople, saying that their coarse ignorance and sleepy animal existence seemed to him loathsome and horrible. He spoke in a loud tenor, with heat, and invariably either with scorn and indignation, or with wonder and enthusiasm, and always with perfect sincerity. Whatever one talked to him about he always brought it round to the same subject: that life was dull and stifling in the town; that the townspeople had no lofty interests, but lived a dingy, meaningless life, diversified by violence, coarse profligacy, and hypocrisy; that scoundrels were well fed and clothed, while honest men lived from hand to mouth; that they needed schools, a progressive local paper, a theatre, public lectures, the co-ordination of the intellectual elements; that society must see its failings and be horrified. In his criticisms of people he laid on the colours thick, using only black and white, and no fine shades; mankind was divided for him into honest men and scoundrels: there was nothing in between. He always spoke with passion and enthusiasm of women and of love, but he had never been in love.

In spite of the severity of his judgments and his nervousness, he was liked, and behind his back was spoken of affectionately as Vanya. His innate refinement and readiness to be of service, his good breeding, his moral purity, and his shabby coat, his frail appearance and family misfortunes, aroused a kind, warm, sorrowful feeling. Moreover, he was well educated and well read; according to the townspeople's notions, he knew everything, and was in their eyes something like a walking encyclopedia.

He had read a great deal. He would sit at the club, nervously pulling at his beard and looking through the magazines and books; and from his face one could see that he was not reading, but devouring the pages without giving himself time to digest what he read. It must be supposed that reading was one of his morbid habits, as he fell upon anything that came into his hands with equal avidity, even last year's newspapers and calendars. At home he always read lying down.

### III

One autumn morning Ivan Dmitritch, turning up the collar of his greatcoat and splashing through the mud, made his way by side-streets and back lanes to see

some artisan, and to collect some payment that was owing. He was in a gloomy mood, as he always was in the morning. In one of the side-streets he was met by two convicts in fetters and four soldiers with rifles in charge of them. Ivan Dmitritch had very often met convicts before, and they had always excited feelings of compassion and discomfort in him; but now this meeting made a peculiar, strange impression on him. It suddenly seemed to him for some reason that he, too, might be put into fetters and led through the mud to prison like that. After visiting the artisan, on the way home he met near the post office a police superintendent of his acquaintance, who greeted him and walked a few paces along the street with him, and for some reason this seemed to him suspicious. At home he could not get the convicts or the soldiers with their rifles out of his head all day, and an unaccountable inward agitation prevented him from reading or concentrating his mind. In the evening he did not light his lamp, and at night he could not sleep, but kept thinking that he might be arrested, put into fetters, and thrown into prison. He did not know of any harm he had done, and could be certain that he would never be guilty of murder, arson, or theft in the future either; but was it not easy to commit a crime by accident, unconsciously, and was not false witness always possible, and, indeed, miscarriage of justice? It was not without good reason that the agelong experience of the simple people teaches that beggary and prison are ills none can be safe from. A judicial mistake is very possible as legal proceedings are conducted nowadays, and there is nothing to be wondered at in it. People who have an official, professional relation to other men's sufferings--for instance, judges, police officers, doctors --in course of time, through habit, grow so callous that they cannot, even if they wish it, take any but a formal attitude to their clients; in this respect they are not different from the peasant who slaughters sheep and calves in the back-yard, and does not notice the blood. With this formal, soulless attitude to human personality the judge needs but one thing--time--in order to deprive an innocent man of all rights of property, and to condemn him to penal servitude. Only the time spent on performing certain formalities for which the judge is paid his salary, and then--it is all over. Then you may look in vain for justice and protection in this dirty, wretched little town a hundred and fifty miles from a railway station! And, indeed, is it not absurd even to think of justice when every kind of violence is accepted by society as a rational and consistent necessity, and every act of mercy--for instance, a verdict of acquittal--calls forth

a perfect outburst of dissatisfied and revengeful feeling?

In the morning Ivan Dmitritch got up from his bed in a state of horror, with cold perspiration on his forehead, completely convinced that he might be arrested any minute. Since his gloomy thoughts of yesterday had haunted him so long, he thought, it must be that there was some truth in them. They could not, indeed, have come into his mind without any grounds whatever.

A policeman walking slowly passed by the windows: that was not for nothing. Here were two men standing still and silent near the house. Why were they silent? And agonizing days and nights followed for Ivan Dmitritch. Everyone who passed by the windows or came into the yard seemed to him a spy or a detective. At midday the chief of the police usually drove down the street with a pair of horses; he was going from his estate near the town to the police department; but Ivan Dmitritch fancied every time that he was driving especially quickly, and that he had a peculiar expression: it was evident that he was in haste to announce that there was a very important criminal in the town. Ivan Dmitritch started at every ring at the bell and knock at the gate, and was agitated whenever he came upon anyone new at his landlady's; when he met police officers and gendarmes he smiled and began whistling so as to seem unconcerned. He could not sleep for whole nights in succession expecting to be arrested, but he snored loudly and sighed as though in deep sleep, that his landlady might think he was asleep; for if he could not sleep it meant that he was tormented by the stings of conscience--what a piece of evidence! Facts and common sense persuaded him that all these terrors were nonsense and morbidity, that if one looked at the matter more broadly there was nothing really terrible in arrest and imprisonment--so long as the conscience is at ease; but the more sensibly and logically he reasoned, the more acute and agonizing his mental distress became. It might be compared with the story of a hermit who tried to cut a dwelling-place for himself in a virgin forest; the more zealously he worked with his axe, the thicker the forest grew. In the end Ivan Dmitritch, seeing it was useless, gave up reasoning altogether, and abandoned himself entirely to despair and terror.

He began to avoid people and to seek solitude. His official work had been distasteful to him before: now it became unbearable to him. He was afraid they would somehow get him into trouble, would put a

bribe in his pocket unnoticed and then denounce him, or that he would accidentally make a mistake in official papers that would appear to be fraudulent, or would lose other people's money. It is strange that his imagination had never at other times been so agile and inventive as now, when every day he thought of thousands of different reasons for being seriously anxious over his freedom and honour; but, on the other hand, his interest in the outer world, in books in particular, grew sensibly fainter, and his memory began to fail him.

In the spring when the snow melted there were found in the ravine near the cemetery two half-decomposed corpses--the bodies of an old woman and a boy bearing the traces of death by violence. Nothing was talked of but these bodies and their unknown murderers. That people might not think he had been guilty of the crime, Ivan Dmitritch walked about the streets, smiling, and when he met acquaintances he turned pale, flushed, and began declaring that there was no greater crime than the murder of the weak and defenceless. But this duplicity soon exhausted him, and after some reflection he decided that in his position the best thing to do was to hide in his landlady's cellar. He sat in the cellar all day and then all night, then another day, was fearfully cold, and waiting till dusk, stole secretly like a thief back to his room. He stood in the middle of the room till daybreak, listening without stirring. Very early in the morning, before sunrise, some workmen came into the house. Ivan Dmitritch knew perfectly well that they had come to mend the stove in the kitchen, but terror told him that they were police officers disguised as workmen. He slipped stealthily out of the flat, and, overcome by terror, ran along the street without his cap and coat. Dogs raced after him barking, a peasant shouted somewhere behind him, the wind whistled in his ears, and it seemed to Ivan Dmitritch that the force and violence of the whole world was massed together behind his back and was chasing after him.

He was stopped and brought home, and his landlady sent for a doctor. Doctor Andrey Yefimitch, of whom we shall have more to say hereafter, prescribed cold compresses on his head and laurel drops, shook his head, and went away, telling the landlady he should not come again, as one should not interfere with people who are going out of their minds. As he had not the means to live at home and be nursed, Ivan Dmitritch was soon sent to the hospital, and was there put into the ward for venereal patients. He could not sleep at night, was full of whims and

fancies, and disturbed the patients, and was soon afterwards, by Andrey Yefimitch's orders, transferred to Ward No. 6.

Within a year Ivan Dmitritch was completely forgotten in the town, and his books, heaped up by his landlady in a sledge in the shed, were pulled to pieces by boys.

#### IV

Ivan Dmitritch's neighbour on the left hand is, as I have said already, the Jew Moiseika; his neighbour on the right hand is a peasant so rolling in fat that he is almost spherical, with a blankly stupid face, utterly devoid of thought. This is a motionless, glutinous, unclean animal who has long ago lost all powers of thought or feeling. An acrid, stifling stench always comes from him.

Nikita, who has to clean up after him, beats him terribly with all his might, not sparing his fists; and what is dreadful is not his being beaten--that one can get used to--but the fact that this stupefied creature does not respond to the blows with a sound or a movement, nor by a look in the eyes, but only sways a little like a heavy barrel.

The fifth and last inhabitant of Ward No. 6 is a man of the artisan class who had once been a sorter in the post office, a thinnish, fair little man with a good-natured but rather sly face. To judge from the clear, cheerful look in his calm and intelligent eyes, he has some pleasant idea in his mind, and has some very important and agreeable secret. He has under his pillow and under his mattress something that he never shows anyone, not from fear of its being taken from him and stolen, but from modesty. Sometimes he goes to the window, and turning his back to his companions, puts something on his breast, and bending his head, looks at it; if you go up to him at such a moment, he is overcome with confusion and snatches something off his breast. But it is not difficult to guess his secret.

"Congratulate me," he often says to Ivan Dmitritch; "I have been presented with the Stanislav order of the second degree with the star. The second degree with the star is only given to foreigners, but for some reason they want to make an exception for me," he says with a smile, shrugging his shoulders in perplexity. "That I must confess I did not expect."

"I don't understand anything about that," Ivan Dmitritch replies morosely.

"But do you know what I shall attain to sooner or later?" the former sorter persists, screwing up his eyes slyly. "I shall certainly get the Swedish 'Polar Star.' That's an order it is worth working for, a white cross with a black ribbon. It's very beautiful."

Probably in no other place is life so monotonous as in this ward. In the morning the patients, except the paralytic and the fat peasant, wash in the entry at a big tub and wipe themselves with the skirts of their dressing-gowns; after that they drink tea out of tin mugs which Nikita brings them out of the main building. Everyone is allowed one mugful. At midday they have soup made out of sour cabbage and boiled grain, in the evening their supper consists of grain left from dinner. In the intervals they lie down, sleep, look out of window, and walk from one corner to the other. And so every day. Even the former sorter always talks of the same orders.

Fresh faces are rarely seen in Ward No. 6. The doctor has not taken in any new mental cases for a long time, and the people who are fond of visiting lunatic asylums are few in this world. Once every two months Semyon Lazaritch, the barber, appears in the ward. How he cuts the patients' hair, and how Nikita helps him to do it, and what a trepidation the lunatics are always thrown into by the arrival of the drunken, smiling barber, we will not describe.

No one even looks into the ward except the barber. The patients are condemned to see day after day no one but Nikita.

A rather strange rumour has, however, been circulating in the hospital of late.

It is rumoured that the doctor has begun to visit Ward No. 6.

#### V

A strange rumour!

Dr. Andrey Yefimitch Ragin is a strange man in his way. They say that when he was young he was very religious, and prepared himself for a clerical career, and that when he had finished his studies at the high school in 1863 he intended to enter a theological academy, but that his father, a surgeon and doctor of medicine, jeered at him and declared point-blank that

he would disown him if he became a priest. How far this is true I don't know, but Andrey Yefimitch himself has more than once confessed that he has never had a natural bent for medicine or science in general.

However that may have been, when he finished his studies in the medical faculty he did not enter the priesthood. He showed no special devoutness, and was no more like a priest at the beginning of his medical career than he is now.

His exterior is heavy--coarse like a peasant's, his face, his beard, his flat hair, and his coarse, clumsy figure, suggest an overfed, intemperate, and harsh innkeeper on the highroad. His face is surly-looking and covered with blue veins, his eyes are little and his nose is red. With his height and broad shoulders he has huge hands and feet; one would think that a blow from his fist would knock the life out of anyone, but his step is soft, and his walk is cautious and insinuating; when he meets anyone in a narrow passage he is always the first to stop and make way, and to say, not in a bass, as one would expect, but in a high, soft tenor: "I beg your pardon!" He has a little swelling on his neck which prevents him from wearing stiff starched collars, and so he always goes about in soft linen or cotton shirts. Altogether he does not dress like a doctor. He wears the same suit for ten years, and the new clothes, which he usually buys at a Jewish shop, look as shabby and crumpled on him as his old ones; he sees patients and dines and pays visits all in the same coat; but this is not due to niggardliness, but to complete carelessness about his appearance.

When Andrey Yefimitch came to the town to take up his duties the "institution founded to the glory of God" was in a terrible condition. One could hardly breathe for the stench in the wards, in the passages, and in the courtyards of the hospital. The hospital servants, the nurses, and their children slept in the wards together with the patients. They complained that there was no living for beetles, bugs, and mice. The surgical wards were never free from erysipelas. There were only two scalpels and not one thermometer in the whole hospital; potatoes were kept in the baths. The superintendent, the housekeeper, and the medical assistant robbed the patients, and of the old doctor, Andrey Yefimitch's predecessor, people declared that he secretly sold the hospital alcohol, and that he kept a regular harem consisting of nurses and female patients. These disorderly proceedings were perfectly well known in

the town, and were even exaggerated, but people took them calmly; some justified them on the ground that there were only peasants and working men in the hospital, who could not be dissatisfied, since they were much worse off at home than in the hospital--they couldn't be fed on woodcocks! Others said in excuse that the town alone, without help from the Zemstvo, was not equal to maintaining a good hospital; thank God for having one at all, even a poor one. And the newly formed Zemstvo did not open infirmaries either in the town or the neighbourhood, relying on the fact that the town already had its hospital.

After looking over the hospital Andrey Yefimitch came to the conclusion that it was an immoral institution and extremely prejudicial to the health of the townspeople. In his opinion the most sensible thing that could be done was to let out the patients and close the hospital. But he reflected that his will alone was not enough to do this, and that it would be useless; if physical and moral impurity were driven out of one place, they would only move to another; one must wait for it to wither away of itself. Besides, if people open a hospital and put up with having it, it must be because they need it; superstition and all the nastiness and abominations of daily life were necessary, since in process of time they worked out to something sensible, just as manure turns into black earth. There was nothing on earth so good that it had not something nasty about its first origin.

When Andrey Yefimitch undertook his duties he was apparently not greatly concerned about the irregularities at the hospital. He only asked the attendants and nurses not to sleep in the wards, and had two cupboards of instruments put up; the superintendent, the housekeeper, the medical assistant, and the erysipelas remained unchanged.

Andrey Yefimitch loved intelligence and honesty intensely, but he had no strength of will nor belief in his right to organize an intelligent and honest life about him. He was absolutely unable to give orders, to forbid things, and to insist. It seemed as though he had taken a vow never to raise his voice and never to make use of the imperative. It was difficult for him to say. "Fetch" or "Bring"; when he wanted his meals he would cough hesitatingly and say to the cook, "How about tea? . . ." or "How about dinner? . . ." To dismiss the superintendent or to tell him to leave off stealing, or to abolish the unnecessary parasitic post altogether, was absolutely beyond his powers. When Andrey Yefimitch was deceived or flattered, or

accounts he knew to be cooked were brought him to sign, he would turn as red as a crab and feel guilty, but yet he would sign the accounts. When the patients complained to him of being hungry or of the roughness of the nurses, he would be confused and mutter guiltily: "Very well, very well, I will go into it later . . . Most likely there is some misunderstanding . . ."

At first Andrey Yefimitch worked very zealously. He saw patients every day from morning till dinner-time, performed operations, and even attended confinements. The ladies said of him that he was attentive and clever at diagnosing diseases, especially those of women and children. But in process of time the work unmistakably wearied him by its monotony and obvious uselessness. To-day one sees thirty patients, and to-morrow they have increased to thirty-five, the next day forty, and so on from day to day, from year to year, while the mortality in the town did not decrease and the patients did not leave off coming. To be any real help to forty patients between morning and dinner was not physically possible, so it could but lead to deception. If twelve thousand patients were seen in a year it meant, if one looked at it simply, that twelve thousand men were deceived. To put those who were seriously ill into wards, and to treat them according to the principles of science, was impossible, too, because though there were principles there was no science; if he were to put aside philosophy and pedantically follow the rules as other doctors did, the things above all necessary were cleanliness and ventilation instead of dirt, wholesome nourishment instead of broth made of stinking, sour cabbage, and good assistants instead of thieves; and, indeed, why hinder people dying if death is the normal and legitimate end of everyone? What is gained if some shop-keeper or clerk lives an extra five or ten years? If the aim of medicine is by drugs to alleviate suffering, the question forces itself on one: why alleviate it? In the first place, they say that suffering leads man to perfection; and in the second, if mankind really learns to alleviate its sufferings with pills and drops, it will completely abandon religion and philosophy, in which it has hitherto found not merely protection from all sorts of trouble, but even happiness. Pushkin suffered terrible agonies before his death, poor Heine lay paralyzed for several years; why, then, should not some Andrey Yefimitch or Matryona Savishna be ill, since their lives had nothing of importance in them, and would have been entirely empty and like the life of an amoeba except for suffering?

Oppressed by such reflections, Andrey Yefimitch relaxed his efforts and gave up visiting the hospital every day.

## VI

His life was passed like this. As a rule he got up at eight o'clock in the morning, dressed, and drank his tea. Then he sat down in his study to read, or went to the hospital. At the hospital the out-patients were sitting in the dark, narrow little corridor waiting to be seen by the doctor. The nurses and the attendants, tramping with their boots over the brick floors, ran by them; gaunt-looking patients in dressing-gowns passed; dead bodies and vessels full of filth were carried by; the children were crying, and there was a cold draught. Andrey Yefimitch knew that such surroundings were torture to feverish, consumptive, and impressionable patients; but what could be done? In the consulting-room he was met by his assistant, Sergey Sergeyitch--a fat little man with a plump, well-washed shaven face, with soft, smooth manners, wearing a new loosely cut suit, and looking more like a senator than a medical assistant. He had an immense practice in the town, wore a white tie, and considered himself more proficient than the doctor, who had no practice. In the corner of the consulting-room there stood a large ikon in a shrine with a heavy lamp in front of it, and near it a candle-stand with a white cover on it. On the walls hung portraits of bishops, a view of the Svyatogorsky Monastery, and wreaths of dried cornflowers. Sergey Sergeyitch was religious, and liked solemnity and decorum. The ikon had been put up at his expense; at his instructions some one of the patients read the hymns of praise in the consulting-room on Sundays, and after the reading Sergey Sergeyitch himself went through the wards with a censer and burned incense.

There were a great many patients, but the time was short, and so the work was confined to the asking of a few brief questions and the administration of some drugs, such as castor-oil or volatile ointment. Andrey Yefimitch would sit with his cheek resting in his hand, lost in thought and asking questions mechanically. Sergey Sergeyitch sat down too, rubbing his hands, and from time to time putting in his word.

"We suffer pain and poverty," he would say, "because we do not pray to the merciful God as we should. Yes!"

Andrey Yefimitch never performed any operation when he was seeing patients; he had long ago given up doing so, and the sight of blood upset him. When he had to open a child's mouth in order to look at its throat, and the child cried and tried to defend itself with its little hands, the noise in his ears made his head go round and brought tears to his eyes. He would make haste to prescribe a drug, and motion to the woman to take the child away.

He was soon wearied by the timidity of the patients and their incoherence, by the proximity of the pious Sergey Sergeyitch, by the portraits on the walls, and by his own questions which he had asked over and over again for twenty years. And he would go away after seeing five or six patients. The rest would be seen by his assistant in his absence.

With the agreeable thought that, thank God, he had no private practice now, and that no one would interrupt him, Andrey Yefimitch sat down to the table immediately on reaching home and took up a book. He read a great deal and always with enjoyment. Half his salary went on buying books, and of the six rooms that made up his abode three were heaped up with books and old magazines. He liked best of all works on history and philosophy; the only medical publication to which he subscribed was *The Doctor*, of which he always read the last pages first. He would always go on reading for several hours without a break and without being weary. He did not read as rapidly and impulsively as Ivan Dmitritch had done in the past, but slowly and with concentration, often pausing over a passage which he liked or did not find intelligible. Near the books there always stood a decanter of vodka, and a salted cucumber or a pickled apple lay beside it, not on a plate, but on the baize table-cloth. Every half-hour he would pour himself out a glass of vodka and drink it without taking his eyes off the book. Then without looking at it he would feel for the cucumber and bite off a bit.

At three o'clock he would go cautiously to the kitchen door; cough, and say, "Daryushka, what about dinner? . . ."

After his dinner--a rather poor and untidily served one--Andrey Yefimitch would walk up and down his rooms with his arms folded, thinking. The clock would strike four, then five, and still he would be walking up and down thinking. Occasionally the kitchen door would creak, and the red and sleepy face of Daryushka would appear.

"Andrey Yefimitch, isn't it time for you to have your beer?" she would ask anxiously.

"No, it's not time yet . . ." he would answer. "I'll wait a little . . . I'll wait a little . . ."

Towards the evening the postmaster, Mihail Averyanitch, the only man in town whose society did not bore Andrey Yefimitch, would come in. Mihail Averyanitch had once been a very rich landowner, and had served in the calvary, but had come to ruin, and was forced by poverty to take a job in the post office late in life. He had a hale and hearty appearance, luxuriant grey whiskers, the manners of a well-bred man, and a loud, pleasant voice. He was good-natured and emotional, but hot-tempered. When anyone in the post office made a protest, expressed disagreement, or even began to argue, Mihail Averyanitch would turn crimson, shake all over, and shout in a voice of thunder, "Hold your tongue!" so that the post office had long enjoyed the reputation of an institution which it was terrible to visit. Mihail Averyanitch liked and respected Andrey Yefimitch for his culture and the loftiness of his soul; he treated the other inhabitants of the town superciliously, as though they were his subordinates.

"Here I am," he would say, going in to Andrey Yefimitch. "Good evening, my dear fellow! I'll be bound, you are getting sick of me, aren't you?"

"On the contrary, I am delighted," said the doctor. "I am always glad to see you."

The friends would sit on the sofa in the study and for some time would smoke in silence.

"Daryushka, what about the beer?" Andrey Yefimitch would say.

They would drink their first bottle still in silence, the doctor brooding and Mihail Averyanitch with a gay and animated face, like a man who has something very interesting to tell. The doctor was always the one to begin the conversation.

"What a pity," he would say quietly and slowly, not looking his friend in the face (he never looked anyone in the face)--"what a great pity it is that there are no people in our town who are capable of carrying on intelligent and interesting conversation, or care to do so. It is an immense privation for us. Even the educated class do not rise above vulgarity;

the level of their development, I assure you, is not a bit higher than that of the lower orders."

"Perfectly true. I agree."

"You know, of course," the doctor went on quietly and deliberately, "that everything in this world is insignificant and uninteresting except the higher spiritual manifestations of the human mind. Intellect draws a sharp line between the animals and man, suggests the divinity of the latter, and to some extent even takes the place of the immortality which does not exist. Consequently the intellect is the only possible source of enjoyment. We see and hear of no trace of intellect about us, so we are deprived of enjoyment. We have books, it is true, but that is not at all the same as living talk and converse. If you will allow me to make a not quite apt comparison: books are the printed score, while talk is the singing."

"Perfectly true."

A silence would follow. Daryushka would come out of the kitchen and with an expression of blank dejection would stand in the doorway to listen, with her face propped on her fist.

"Eh!" Mihail Averyanitch would sigh. "To expect intelligence of this generation!"

And he would describe how wholesome, entertaining, and interesting life had been in the past. How intelligent the educated class in Russia used to be, and what lofty ideas it had of honour and friendship; how they used to lend money without an IOU, and it was thought a disgrace not to give a helping hand to a comrade in need; and what campaigns, what adventures, what skirmishes, what comrades, what women! And the Caucasus, what a marvellous country! The wife of a battalion commander, a queer woman, used to put on an officer's uniform and drive off into the mountains in the evening, alone, without a guide. It was said that she had a love affair with some princeling in the native village.

"Queen of Heaven, Holy Mother..." Daryushka would sigh.

"And how we drank! And how we ate! And what desperate liberals we were!"

Andrey Yefimitch would listen without hearing; he was musing as he sipped his beer.

"I often dream of intellectual people and conversation with them," he said suddenly, interrupting Mihail Averyanitch. "My father gave me an excellent education, but under the influence of the ideas of the sixties made me become a doctor. I believe if I had not obeyed him then, by now I should have been in the very centre of the intellectual movement. Most likely I should have become a member of some university. Of course, intellect, too, is transient and not eternal, but you know why I cherish a partiality for it. Life is a vexatious trap; when a thinking man reaches maturity and attains to full consciousness he cannot help feeling that he is in a trap from which there is no escape. Indeed, he is summoned without his choice by fortuitous circumstances from non-existence into life . . . what for? He tries to find out the meaning and object of his existence; he is told nothing, or he is told absurdities; he knocks and it is not opened to him; death comes to him--also without his choice. And so, just as in prison men held together by common misfortune feel more at ease when they are together, so one does not notice the trap in life when people with a bent for analysis and generalization meet together and pass their time in the interchange of proud and free ideas. In that sense the intellect is the source of an enjoyment nothing can replace."

"Perfectly true."

Not looking his friend in the face, Andrey Yefimitch would go on, quietly and with pauses, talking about intellectual people and conversation with them, and Mihail Averyanitch would listen attentively and agree: "Perfectly true."

"And you do not believe in the immortality of the soul?" he would ask suddenly.

"No, honoured Mihail Averyanitch; I do not believe it, and have no grounds for believing it."

"I must own I doubt it too. And yet I have a feeling as though I should never die. Oh, I think to myself: 'Old fogey, it is time you were dead!' But there is a little voice in my soul says: 'Don't believe it; you won't die.'"

Soon after nine o'clock Mihail Averyanitch would go away. As he put on his fur coat in the entry he would say with a sigh:

"What a wilderness fate has carried us to, though, really! What's most vexatious of all is to have to die here. Ech! . ."

## VII

After seeing his friend out Andrey Yefimitch would sit down at the table and begin reading again. The stillness of the evening, and afterwards of the night, was not broken by a single sound, and it seemed as though time were standing still and brooding with the doctor over the book, and as though there were nothing in existence but the books and the lamp with the green shade. The doctor's coarse peasant-like face was gradually lighted up by a smile of delight and enthusiasm over the progress of the human intellect. Oh, why is not man immortal? he thought. What is the good of the brain centres and convolutions, what is the good of sight, speech, self-consciousness, genius, if it is all destined to depart into the soil, and in the end to grow cold together with the earth's crust, and then for millions of years to fly with the earth round the sun with no meaning and no object? To do that there was no need at all to draw man with his lofty, almost godlike intellect out of non-existence, and then, as though in mockery, to turn him into clay. The transmutation of substances! But what cowardice to comfort oneself with that cheap substitute for immortality! The unconscious processes that take place in nature are lower even than the stupidity of man, since in stupidity there is, anyway, consciousness and will, while in those processes there is absolutely nothing. Only the coward who has more fear of death than dignity can comfort himself with the fact that his body will in time live again in the grass, in the stones, in the toad. To find one's immortality in the transmutation of substances is as strange as to prophesy a brilliant future for the case after a precious violin has been broken and become useless.

When the clock struck, Andrey Yefimitch would sink back into his chair and close his eyes to think a little. And under the influence of the fine ideas of which he had been reading he would, unawares, recall his past and his present. The past was hateful--better not to think of it. And it was the same in the present as in the past. He knew that at the very time when his thoughts were floating together with the cooling earth round the sun, in the main building beside his abode people were suffering in sickness and physical impurity: someone perhaps could not sleep and was making war upon the insects, someone was being infected by erysipelas, or moaning over too tight a

bandage; perhaps the patients were playing cards with the nurses and drinking vodka. According to the yearly return, twelve thousand people had been deceived; the whole hospital rested as it had done twenty years ago on thieving, filth, scandals, gossip, on gross quackery, and, as before, it was an immoral institution extremely injurious to the health of the inhabitants. He knew that Nikita knocked the patients about behind the barred windows of Ward No. 6, and that Moiseika went about the town every day begging alms.

On the other hand, he knew very well that a magical change had taken place in medicine during the last twenty-five years. When he was studying at the university he had fancied that medicine would soon be overtaken by the fate of alchemy and metaphysics; but now when he was reading at night the science of medicine touched him and excited his wonder, and even enthusiasm. What unexpected brilliance, what a revolution! Thanks to the antiseptic system operations were performed such as the great Pirogov had considered impossible even *in spe*. Ordinary Zemstvo doctors were venturing to perform the resection of the kneecap; of abdominal operations only one per cent. was fatal; while stone was considered such a trifle that they did not even write about it. A radical cure for syphilis had been discovered. And the theory of heredity, hypnotism, the discoveries of Pasteur and of Koch, hygiene based on statistics, and the work of Zemstvo doctors!

Psychiatry with its modern classification of mental diseases, methods of diagnosis, and treatment, was a perfect Elborus in comparison with what had been in the past. They no longer poured cold water on the heads of lunatics nor put strait-waistcoats upon them; they treated them with humanity, and even, so it was stated in the papers, got up balls and entertainments for them. Andrey Yefimitch knew that with modern tastes and views such an abomination as Ward No. 6 was possible only a hundred and fifty miles from a railway in a little town where the mayor and all the town council were half-illiterate tradesmen who looked upon the doctor as an oracle who must be believed without any criticism even if he had poured molten lead into their mouths; in any other place the public and the newspapers would long ago have torn this little Bastille to pieces.

"But, after all, what of it?" Andrey Yefimitch would ask himself, opening his eyes. "There is the antiseptic system, there is Koch, there is Pasteur, but the essential reality is not altered a bit; ill-health and

mortality are still the same. They get up balls and entertainments for the mad, but still they don't let them go free; so it's all nonsense and vanity, and there is no difference in reality between the best Vienna clinic and my hospital." But depression and a feeling akin to envy prevented him from feeling indifferent; it must have been owing to exhaustion. His heavy head sank on to the book, he put his hands under his face to make it softer, and thought: "I serve in a pernicious institution and receive a salary from people whom I am deceiving. I am not honest, but then, I of myself am nothing, I am only part of an inevitable social evil: all local officials are pernicious and receive their salary for doing nothing. . . . And so for my dishonesty it is not I who am to blame, but the times.... If I had been born two hundred years later I should have been different. . . ."

When it struck three he would put out his lamp and go into his bedroom; he was not sleepy.

### VIII

Two years before, the Zemstvo in a liberal mood had decided to allow three hundred roubles a year to pay for additional medical service in the town till the Zemstvo hospital should be opened, and the district doctor, Yevgeny Fyodoritch Hobotov, was invited to the town to assist Andrey Yefimitch. He was a very young man--not yet thirty--tall and dark, with broad cheek-bones and little eyes; his forefathers had probably come from one of the many alien races of Russia. He arrived in the town without a farthing, with a small portmanteau, and a plain young woman whom he called his cook. This woman had a baby at the breast. Yevgeny Fyodoritch used to go about in a cap with a peak, and in high boots, and in the winter wore a sheepskin. He made great friends with Sergey Sergeyitch, the medical assistant, and with the treasurer, but held aloof from the other officials, and for some reason called them aristocrats. He had only one book in his lodgings, "The Latest Prescriptions of the Vienna Clinic for 1881." When he went to a patient he always took this book with him. He played billiards in the evening at the club: he did not like cards. He was very fond of using in conversation such expressions as "endless bobbery," "canting soft soap," "shut up with your finicking. . . ."

He visited the hospital twice a week, made the round of the wards, and saw out-patients. The complete absence of antiseptic treatment and the cupping roused his indignation, but he did not introduce any new system, being afraid of offending Andrey

Yefimitch. He regarded his colleague as a sly old rascal, suspected him of being a man of large means, and secretly envied him. He would have been very glad to have his post.

### IX

On a spring evening towards the end of March, when there was no snow left on the ground and the starlings were singing in the hospital garden, the doctor went out to see his friend the postmaster as far as the gate. At that very moment the Jew Moiseika, returning with his booty, came into the yard. He had no cap on, and his bare feet were thrust into goloshes; in his hand he had a little bag of coppers.

"Give me a kopeck!" he said to the doctor, smiling, and shivering with cold. Andrey Yefimitch, who could never refuse anyone anything, gave him a ten-kopeck piece.

"How bad that is!" he thought, looking at the Jew's bare feet with their thin red ankles. "Why, it's wet."

And stirred by a feeling akin both to pity and disgust, he went into the lodge behind the Jew, looking now at his bald head, now at his ankles. As the doctor went in, Nikita jumped up from his heap of litter and stood at attention.

"Good-day, Nikita," Andrey Yefimitch said mildly. "That Jew should be provided with boots or something, he will catch cold."

"Certainly, your honour. I'll inform the superintendent."

"Please do; ask him in my name. Tell him that I asked."

The door into the ward was open. Ivan Dmitritch, lying propped on his elbow on the bed, listened in alarm to the unfamiliar voice, and suddenly recognized the doctor. He trembled all over with anger, jumped up, and with a red and wrathful face, with his eyes starting out of his head, ran out into the middle of the road.

"The doctor has come!" he shouted, and broke into a laugh. "At last! Gentlemen, I congratulate you. The doctor is honouring us with a visit! Cursed reptile!" he shrieked, and stamped in a frenzy such as had never been seen in the ward before. "Kill the reptile!

No, killing's too good. Drown him in the midden-pit!"

Andrey Yefimitch, hearing this, looked into the ward from the entry and asked gently: "What for?"

"What for?" shouted Ivan Dmitritch, going up to him with a menacing air and convulsively wrapping himself in his dressing-gown. "What for? Thief!" he said with a look of repulsion, moving his lips as though he would spit at him. "Quack! hangman!"

"Calm yourself," said Andrey Yefimitch, smiling guiltily. "I assure you I have never stolen anything; and as to the rest, most likely you greatly exaggerate. I see you are angry with me. Calm yourself, I beg, if you can, and tell me coolly what are you angry for?"

"What are you keeping me here for?"

"Because you are ill."

"Yes, I am ill. But you know dozens, hundreds of madmen are walking about in freedom because your ignorance is incapable of distinguishing them from the sane. Why am I and these poor wretches to be shut up here like scapegoats for all the rest? You, your assistant, the superintendent, and all your hospital rabble, are immeasurably inferior to every one of us morally; why then are we shut up and you not? Where's the logic of it?"

"Morality and logic don't come in, it all depends on chance. If anyone is shut up he has to stay, and if anyone is not shut up he can walk about, that's all. There is neither morality nor logic in my being a doctor and your being a mental patient, there is nothing but idle chance."

"That twaddle I don't understand . . ." Ivan Dmitritch brought out in a hollow voice, and he sat down on his bed.

Moiseika, whom Nikita did not venture to search in the presence of the doctor, laid out on his bed pieces of bread, bits of paper, and little bones, and, still shivering with cold, began rapidly in a singsong voice saying something in Yiddish. He most likely imagined that he had opened a shop.

"Let me out," said Ivan Dmitritch, and his voice quivered.

"I cannot."

"But why, why?"

"Because it is not in my power. Think, what use will it be to you if I do let you out? Go. The townspeople or the police will detain you or bring you back."

"Yes, yes, that's true," said Ivan Dmitritch, and he rubbed his forehead. "It's awful! But what am I to do, what?"

Andrey Yefimitch liked Ivan Dmitritch's voice and his intelligent young face with its grimaces. He longed to be kind to the young man and soothe him; he sat down on the bed beside him, thought, and said:

"You ask me what to do. The very best thing in your position would be to run away. But, unhappily, that is useless. You would be taken up. When society protects itself from the criminal, mentally deranged, or otherwise inconvenient people, it is invincible. There is only one thing left for you: to resign yourself to the thought that your presence here is inevitable."

"It is no use to anyone."

"So long as prisons and madhouses exist someone must be shut up in them. If not you, I. If not I, some third person. Wait till in the distant future prisons and madhouses no longer exist, and there will be neither bars on the windows nor hospital gowns. Of course, that time will come sooner or later."

Ivan Dmitritch smiled ironically.

"You are jesting," he said, screwing up his eyes. "Such gentlemen as you and your assistant Nikita have nothing to do with the future, but you may be sure, sir, better days will come! I may express myself cheaply, you may laugh, but the dawn of a new life is at hand; truth and justice will triumph, and--our turn will come! I shall not live to see it, I shall perish, but some people's great-grandsons will see it. I greet them with all my heart and rejoice, rejoice with them! Onward! God be your help, friends!"

With shining eyes Ivan Dmitritch got up, and stretching his hands towards the window, went on with emotion in his voice:

"From behind these bars I bless you! Hurrah for truth and justice! I rejoice!"

"I see no particular reason to rejoice," said Andrey Yefimitch, who thought Ivan Dmitritch's movement theatrical, though he was delighted by it. "Prisons and madhouses there will not be, and truth, as you have just expressed it, will triumph; but the reality of things, you know, will not change, the laws of nature will still remain the same. People will suffer pain, grow old, and die just as they do now. However magnificent a dawn lighted up your life, you would yet in the end be nailed up in a coffin and thrown into a hole."

"And immortality?"

"Oh, come, now!"

"You don't believe in it, but I do. Somebody in Dostoevsky or Voltaire said that if there had not been a God men would have invented him. And I firmly believe that if there is no immortality the great intellect of man will sooner or later invent it."

"Well said," observed Andrey Yefimitch, smiling with pleasure; its a good thing you have faith. With such a belief one may live happily even shut up within walls. You have studied somewhere, I presume?"

"Yes, I have been at the university, but did not complete my studies."

"You are a reflecting and a thoughtful man. In any surroundings you can find tranquillity in yourself. Free and deep thinking which strives for the comprehension of life, and complete contempt for the foolish bustle of the world--those are two blessings beyond any that man has ever known. And you can possess them even though you lived behind threefold bars. Diogenes lived in a tub, yet he was happier than all the kings of the earth."

"Your Diogenes was a blockhead," said Ivan Dmitritch morosely. "Why do you talk to me about Diogenes and some foolish comprehension of life?" he cried, growing suddenly angry and leaping up. "I love life; I love it passionately. I have the mania of persecution, a continual agonizing terror; but I have moments when I am overwhelmed by the thirst for life, and then I am afraid of going mad. I want dreadfully to live, dreadfully!"

He walked up and down the ward in agitation, and said, dropping his voice:

"When I dream I am haunted by phantoms. People come to me, I hear voices and music, and I fancy I am walking through woods or by the seashore, and I long so passionately for movement, for interests . . . Come, tell me, what news is there?" asked Ivan Dmitritch; "what's happening?"

"Do you wish to know about the town or in general?"

"Well, tell me first about the town, and then in general."

"Well, in the town it is appallingly dull. . . . There's no one to say a word to, no one to listen to. There are no new people. A young doctor called Hobotov has come here recently."

"He had come in my time. Well, he is a low cad, isn't he?"

"Yes, he is a man of no culture. It's strange, you know. . . . Judging by every sign, there is no intellectual stagnation in our capital cities; there is a movement--so there must be real people there too; but for some reason they always send us such men as I would rather not see. It's an unlucky town!"

"Yes, it is an unlucky town," sighed Ivan Dmitritch, and he laughed. "And how are things in general? What are they writing in the papers and reviews?"

It was by now dark in the ward. The doctor got up, and, standing, began to describe what was being written abroad and in Russia, and the tendency of thought that could be noticed now. Ivan Dmitritch listened attentively and put questions, but suddenly, as though recalling something terrible, clutched at his head and lay down on the bed with his back to the doctor.

"What's the matter?" asked Andrey Yefimitch.

"You will not hear another word from me," said Ivan Dmitritch rudely. "Leave me alone."

"Why so?"

"I tell you, leave me alone. Why the devil do you persist?"

Andrey Yefimitch shrugged his shoulders, heaved a sigh, and went out. As he crossed the entry he said: "You might clear up here, Nikita . . . there's an awfully stuffy smell."

"Certainly, your honour."

"What an agreeable young man!" thought Andrey Yefimitch, going back to his flat. "In all the years I have been living here I do believe he is the first I have met with whom one can talk. He is capable of reasoning and is interested in just the right things."

While he was reading, and afterwards, while he was going to bed, he kept thinking about Ivan Dmitritch, and when he woke next morning he remembered that he had the day before made the acquaintance of an intelligent and interesting man, and determined to visit him again as soon as possible.

## X

Ivan Dmitritch was lying in the same position as on the previous day, with his head clutched in both hands and his legs drawn up. His face was not visible.

"Good-day, my friend," said Andrey Yefimitch. "You are not asleep, are you?"

"In the first place, I am not your friend," Ivan Dmitritch articulated into the pillow; "and in the second, your efforts are useless; you will not get one word out of me."

"Strange," muttered Andrey Yefimitch in confusion. "Yesterday we talked peacefully, but suddenly for some reason you took offence and broke off all at once. . . . Probably I expressed myself awkwardly, or perhaps gave utterance to some idea which did not fit in with your convictions. . . ."

"Yes, a likely idea!" said Ivan Dmitritch, sitting up and looking at the doctor with irony and uneasiness. His eyes were red. "You can go and spy and probe somewhere else, it's no use your doing it here. I knew yesterday what you had come for."

"A strange fancy," laughed the doctor. "So you suppose me to be a spy?"

"Yes, I do. . . . A spy or a doctor who has been charged to test me--it's all the same ----"

"Oh excuse me, what a queer fellow you are really!"

The doctor sat down on the stool near the bed and shook his head reproachfully.

"But let us suppose you are right," he said, "let us suppose that I am treacherously trying to trap you into saying something so as to betray you to the police. You would be arrested and then tried. But would you be any worse off being tried and in prison than you are here? If you are banished to a settlement, or even sent to penal servitude, would it be worse than being shut up in this ward? I imagine it would be no worse. . . . What, then, are you afraid of?"

These words evidently had an effect on Ivan Dmitritch. He sat down quietly.

It was between four and five in the afternoon--the time when Andrey Yefimitch usually walked up and down his rooms, and Daryushka asked whether it was not time for his beer. It was a still, bright day.

"I came out for a walk after dinner, and here I have come, as you see," said the doctor. "It is quite spring."

"What month is it? March?" asked Ivan Dmitritch.

"Yes, the end of March."

"Is it very muddy?"

"No, not very. There are already paths in the garden."

"It would be nice now to drive in an open carriage somewhere into the country," said Ivan Dmitritch, rubbing his red eyes as though he were just awake, "then to come home to a warm, snug study, and . . . and to have a decent doctor to cure one's headache. . . . It's so long since I have lived like a human being. It's disgusting here! Insufferably disgusting!"

After his excitement of the previous day he was exhausted and listless, and spoke unwillingly. His fingers twitched, and from his face it could be seen that he had a splitting headache.

"There is no real difference between a warm, snug study and this ward," said Andrey Yefimitch. "A man's peace and contentment do not lie outside a man, but in himself."

"What do you mean?"

"The ordinary man looks for good and evil in external things-- that is, in carriages, in studies--but a thinking man looks for it in himself."

"You should go and preach that philosophy in Greece, where it's warm and fragrant with the scent of pomegranates, but here it is not suited to the climate. With whom was it I was talking of Diogenes? Was it with you?"

"Yes, with me yesterday."

"Diogenes did not need a study or a warm habitation; it's hot there without. You can lie in your tub and eat oranges and olives. But bring him to Russia to live: he'd be begging to be let indoors in May, let alone December. He'd be doubled up with the cold."

"No. One can be insensible to cold as to every other pain. Marcus Aurelius says: 'A pain is a vivid idea of pain; make an effort of will to change that idea, dismiss it, cease to complain, and the pain will disappear.' That is true. The wise man, or simply the reflecting, thoughtful man, is distinguished precisely by his contempt for suffering; he is always contented and surprised at nothing."

"Then I am an idiot, since I suffer and am discontented and surprised at the baseness of mankind."

"You are wrong in that; if you will reflect more on the subject you will understand how insignificant is all that external world that agitates us. One must strive for the comprehension of life, and in that is true happiness."

"Comprehension . . ." repeated Ivan Dmitritch frowning. "External, internal. . . . Excuse me, but I don't understand it. I only know," he said, getting up and looking angrily at the doctor--"I only know that God has created me of warm blood and nerves, yes, indeed! If organic tissue is capable of life it must react to every stimulus. And I do! To pain I respond with tears and outcries, to baseness with indignation, to filth with loathing. To my mind, that is just what is called life. The lower the organism, the less sensitive it is, and the more feebly it reacts to stimulus; and the higher it is, the more responsively and vigorously it reacts to reality. How is it you don't know that? A doctor, and not know such trifles! To despise suffering, to be always contented, and to be surprised at nothing, one must reach this condition"--and Ivan Dmitritch pointed to the peasant who was a mass of

fat--"or to harden oneself by suffering to such a point that one loses all sensibility to it-- that is, in other words, to cease to live. You must excuse me, I am not a sage or a philosopher," Ivan Dmitritch continued with irritation, "and I don't understand anything about it. I am not capable of reasoning."

"On the contrary, your reasoning is excellent."

"The Stoics, whom you are parodying, were remarkable people, but their doctrine crystallized two thousand years ago and has not advanced, and will not advance, an inch forward, since it is not practical or living. It had a success only with the minority which spends its life in savouring all sorts of theories and ruminating over them; the majority did not understand it. A doctrine which advocates indifference to wealth and to the comforts of life, and a contempt for suffering and death, is quite unintelligible to the vast majority of men, since that majority has never known wealth or the comforts of life; and to despise suffering would mean to it despising life itself, since the whole existence of man is made up of the sensations of hunger, cold, injury, and a Hamlet-like dread of death. The whole of life lies in these sensations; one may be oppressed by it, one may hate it, but one cannot despise it. Yes, so, I repeat, the doctrine of the Stoics can never have a future; from the beginning of time up to to-day you see continually increasing the struggle, the sensibility to pain, the capacity of responding to stimulus."

Ivan Dmitritch suddenly lost the thread of his thoughts, stopped, and rubbed his forehead with vexation.

"I meant to say something important, but I have lost it," he said. "What was I saying? Oh, yes! This is what I mean: one of the Stoics sold himself into slavery to redeem his neighbour, so, you see, even a Stoic did react to stimulus, since, for such a generous act as the destruction of oneself for the sake of one's neighbour, he must have had a soul capable of pity and indignation. Here in prison I have forgotten everything I have learned, or else I could have recalled something else. Take Christ, for instance: Christ responded to reality by weeping, smiling, being sorrowful and moved to wrath, even overcome by misery. He did not go to meet His sufferings with a smile, He did not despise death, but prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane that this cup might pass Him by."

Ivan Dmitritch laughed and sat down.

"Granted that a man's peace and contentment lie not outside but in himself," he said, "granted that one must despise suffering and not be surprised at anything, yet on what ground do you preach the theory? Are you a sage? A philosopher?"

"No, I am not a philosopher, but everyone ought to preach it because it is reasonable."

"No, I want to know how it is that you consider yourself competent to judge of 'comprehension,' contempt for suffering, and so on. Have you ever suffered? Have you any idea of suffering? Allow me to ask you, were you ever thrashed in your childhood?"

"No, my parents had an aversion for corporal punishment."

"My father used to flog me cruelly; my father was a harsh, sickly Government clerk with a long nose and a yellow neck. But let us talk of you. No one has laid a finger on you all your life, no one has scared you nor beaten you; you are as strong as a bull. You grew up under your father's wing and studied at his expense, and then you dropped at once into a sinecure. For more than twenty years you have lived rent free with heating, lighting, and service all provided, and had the right to work how you pleased and as much as you pleased, even to do nothing. You were naturally a flabby, lazy man, and so you have tried to arrange your life so that nothing should disturb you or make you move. You have handed over your work to the assistant and the rest of the rabble while you sit in peace and warmth, save money, read, amuse yourself with reflections, with all sorts of lofty nonsense, and" (Ivan Dmitritch looked at the doctor's red nose) "with boozing; in fact, you have seen nothing of life, you know absolutely nothing of it, and are only theoretically acquainted with reality; you despise suffering and are surprised at nothing for a very simple reason: vanity of vanities, the external and the internal, contempt for life, for suffering and for death, comprehension, true happiness--that's the philosophy that suits the Russian slaggard best. You see a peasant beating his wife, for instance. Why interfere? Let him beat her, they will both die sooner or later, anyway; and, besides, he who beats injures by his blows, not the person he is beating, but himself. To get drunk is stupid and unseemly, but if you drink you die, and if you don't drink you die. A peasant woman comes with toothache . . . well, what of it? Pain is the idea of

pain, and besides 'there is no living in this world without illness; we shall all die, and so, go away, woman, don't hinder me from thinking and drinking vodka.' A young man asks advice, what he is to do, how he is to live; anyone else would think before answering, but you have got the answer ready: strive for 'comprehension' or for true happiness. And what is that fantastic 'true happiness'? There's no answer, of course. We are kept here behind barred windows, tortured, left to rot; but that is very good and reasonable, because there is no difference at all between this ward and a warm, snug study. A convenient philosophy. You can do nothing, and your conscience is clear, and you feel you are wise . . . . No, sir, it is not philosophy, it's not thinking, it's not breadth of vision, but laziness, fakirism, drowsy stupefaction. Yes," cried Ivan Dmitritch, getting angry again, "you despise suffering, but I'll be bound if you pinch your finger in the door you will howl at the top of your voice."

"And perhaps I shouldn't howl," said Andrey Yefimitch, with a gentle smile.

"Oh, I dare say! Well, if you had a stroke of paralysis, or supposing some fool or bully took advantage of his position and rank to insult you in public, and if you knew he could do it with impunity, then you would understand what it means to put people off with comprehension and true happiness."

"That's original," said Andrey Yefimitch, laughing with pleasure and rubbing his hands. "I am agreeably struck by your inclination for drawing generalizations, and the sketch of my character you have just drawn is simply brilliant. I must confess that talking to you gives me great pleasure. Well, I've listened to you, and now you must graciously listen to me."

## XI

The conversation went on for about an hour longer, and apparently made a deep impression on Andrey Yefimitch. He began going to the ward every day. He went there in the mornings and after dinner, and often the dusk of evening found him in conversation with Ivan Dmitritch. At first Ivan Dmitritch held aloof from him, suspected him of evil designs, and openly expressed his hostility. But afterwards he got used to him, and his abrupt manner changed to one of condescending irony.

Soon it was all over the hospital that the doctor, Andrey Yefimitch, had taken to visiting Ward No. 6. No one--neither Sergey Sergeyitch, nor Nikita, nor the nurses--could conceive why he went there, why he stayed there for hours together, what he was talking about, and why he did not write prescriptions. His actions seemed strange. Often Mihail Averyanitch did not find him at home, which had never happened in the past, and Daryushka was greatly perturbed, for the doctor drank his beer now at no definite time, and sometimes was even late for dinner.

One day--it was at the end of June--Dr. Hobotov went to see Andrey Yefimitch about something. Not finding him at home, he proceeded to look for him in the yard; there he was told that the old doctor had gone to see the mental patients. Going into the lodge and stopping in the entry, Hobotov heard the following conversation:

"We shall never agree, and you will not succeed in converting me to your faith," Ivan Dmitritch was saying irritably; "you are utterly ignorant of reality, and you have never known suffering, but have only like a leech fed beside the sufferings of others, while I have been in continual suffering from the day of my birth till to-day. For that reason, I tell you frankly, I consider myself superior to you and more competent in every respect. It's not for you to teach me."

"I have absolutely no ambition to convert you to my faith," said Andrey Yefimitch gently, and with regret that the other refused to understand him. "And that is not what matters, my friend; what matters is not that you have suffered and I have not. Joy and suffering are passing; let us leave them, never mind them. What matters is that you and I think; we see in each other people who are capable of thinking and reasoning, and that is a common bond between us however different our views. If you knew, my friend, how sick I am of the universal senselessness, ineptitude, stupidity, and with what delight I always talk with you! You are an intelligent man, and I enjoyed your company."

Hobotov opened the door an inch and glanced into the ward; Ivan Dmitritch in his night-cap and the doctor Andrey Yefimitch were sitting side by side on the bed. The madman was grimacing, twitching, and convulsively wrapping himself in his gown, while the doctor sat motionless with bowed head, and his face was red and look helpless and sorrowful. Hobotov

shrugged his shoulders, grinned, and glanced at Nikita. Nikita shrugged his shoulders too.

Next day Hobotov went to the lodge, accompanied by the assistant. Both stood in the entry and listened.

"I fancy our old man has gone clean off his chump!" said Hobotov as he came out of the lodge.

"Lord have mercy upon us sinners!" sighed the decorous Sergey Sergeyitch, scrupulously avoiding the puddles that he might not muddy his polished boots. "I must own, honoured Yevgeny Fyodoritch, I have been expecting it for a long time."

## XII

After this Andrey Yefimitch began to notice a mysterious air in all around him. The attendants, the nurses, and the patients looked at him inquisitively when they met him, and then whispered together. The superintendent's little daughter Masha, whom he liked to meet in the hospital garden, for some reason ran away from him now when he went up with a smile to stroke her on the head. The postmaster no longer said, "Perfectly true," as he listened to him, but in unaccountable confusion muttered, "Yes, yes, yes . . ." and looked at him with a grieved and thoughtful expression; for some reason he took to advising his friend to give up vodka and beer, but as a man of delicate feeling he did not say this directly, but hinted it, telling him first about the commanding officer of his battalion, an excellent man, and then about the priest of the regiment, a capital fellow, both of whom drank and fell ill, but on giving up drinking completely regained their health. On two or three occasions Andrey Yefimitch was visited by his colleague Hobotov, who also advised him to give up spirituous liquors, and for no apparent reason recommended him to take bromide.

In August Andrey Yefimitch got a letter from the mayor of the town asking him to come on very important business. On arriving at the town hall at the time fixed, Andrey Yefimitch found there the military commander, the superintendent of the district school, a member of the town council, Hobotov, and a plump, fair gentleman who was introduced to him as a doctor. This doctor, with a Polish surname difficult to pronounce, lived at a pedigree stud-farm twenty miles away, and was now on a visit to the town.

"There's something that concerns you," said the member of the town council, addressing Andrey Yefimitch after they had all greeted one another and sat down to the table. "Here Yevgeny Fyodoritch says that there is not room for the dispensary in the main building, and that it ought to be transferred to one of the lodges. That's of no consequence--of course it can be transferred, but the point is that the lodge wants doing up."

"Yes, it would have to be done up," said Andrey Yefimitch after a moment's thought. "If the corner lodge, for instance, were fitted up as a dispensary, I imagine it would cost at least five hundred roubles. An unproductive expenditure!"

Everyone was silent for a space.

"I had the honour of submitting to you ten years ago," Andrey Yefimitch went on in a low voice, "that the hospital in its present form is a luxury for the town beyond its means. It was built in the forties, but things were different then. The town spends too much on unnecessary buildings and superfluous staff. I believe with a different system two model hospitals might be maintained for the same money."

"Well, let us have a different system, then!" the member of the town council said briskly.

"I have already had the honour of submitting to you that the medical department should be transferred to the supervision of the Zemstvo."

"Yes, transfer the money to the Zemstvo and they will steal it," laughed the fair-haired doctor.

"That's what it always comes to," the member of the council assented, and he also laughed.

Andrey Yefimitch looked with apathetic, lustreless eyes at the fair-haired doctor and said: "One should be just."

Again there was silence. Tea was brought in. The military commander, for some reason much embarrassed, touched Andrey Yefimitch's hand across the table and said: "You have quite forgotten us, doctor. But of course you are a hermit: you don't play cards and don't like women. You would be dull with fellows like us."

They all began saying how boring it was for a decent person to live in such a town. No theatre, no music,

and at the last dance at the club there had been about twenty ladies and only two gentlemen. The young men did not dance, but spent all the time crowding round the refreshment bar or playing cards.

Not looking at anyone and speaking slowly in a low voice, Andrey Yefimitch began saying what a pity, what a terrible pity it was that the townspeople should waste their vital energy, their hearts, and their minds on cards and gossip, and should have neither the power nor the inclination to spend their time in interesting conversation and reading, and should refuse to take advantage of the enjoyments of the mind. The mind alone was interesting and worthy of attention, all the rest was low and petty. Hobotov listened to his colleague attentively and suddenly asked:

"Andrey Yefimitch, what day of the month is it?"

Having received an answer, the fair-haired doctor and he, in the tone of examiners conscious of their lack of skill, began asking Andrey Yefimitch what was the day of the week, how many days there were in the year, and whether it was true that there was a remarkable prophet living in Ward No. 6.

In response to the last question Andrey Yefimitch turned rather red and said: "Yes, he is mentally deranged, but he is an interesting young man."

They asked him no other questions.

When he was putting on his overcoat in the entry, the military commander laid a hand on his shoulder and said with a sigh:

"It's time for us old fellows to rest!"

As he came out of the hall, Andrey Yefimitch understood that it had been a committee appointed to enquire into his mental condition. He recalled the questions that had been asked him, flushed crimson, and for some reason, for the first time in his life, felt bitterly grieved for medical science.

"My God. . ." he thought, remembering how these doctors had just examined him; "why, they have only lately been hearing lectures on mental pathology; they had passed an examination--what's the explanation of this crass ignorance? They have not a conception of mental pathology!"

And for the first time in his life he felt insulted and moved to anger.

In the evening of the same day Mihail Averyanitch came to see him. The postmaster went up to him without waiting to greet him, took him by both hands, and said in an agitated voice:

"My dear fellow, my dear friend, show me that you believe in my genuine affection and look on me as your friend!" And preventing Andrey Yefimitch from speaking, he went on, growing excited: "I love you for your culture and nobility of soul. Listen to me, my dear fellow. The rules of their profession compel the doctors to conceal the truth from you, but I blurt out the plain truth like a soldier. You are not well! Excuse me, my dear fellow, but it is the truth; everyone about you has been noticing it for a long time. Dr. Yevgeny Fyodoritch has just told me that it is essential for you to rest and distract your mind for the sake of your health. Perfectly true! Excellent! In a day or two I am taking a holiday and am going away for a sniff of a different atmosphere. Show that you are a friend to me, let us go together! Let us go for a jaunt as in the good old days."

"I feel perfectly well," said Andrey Yefimitch after a moment's thought. "I can't go away. Allow me to show you my friendship in some other way."

To go off with no object, without his books, without his Daryushka, without his beer, to break abruptly through the routine of life, established for twenty years--the idea for the first minute struck him as wild and fantastic, but he remembered the conversation at the Zemstvo committee and the depressing feelings with which he had returned home, and the thought of a brief absence from the town in which stupid people looked on him as a madman was pleasant to him.

"And where precisely do you intend to go?" he asked.

"To Moscow, to Petersburg, to Warsaw. . . . I spent the five happiest years of my life in Warsaw. What a marvellous town! Let us go, my dear fellow!"

### XIII

A week later it was suggested to Andrey Yefimitch that he should have a rest--that is, send in his resignation--a suggestion he received with indifference, and a week later still, Mihail Averyanitch and he were sitting in a posting carriage driving to the nearest railway station. The days were

cool and bright, with a blue sky and a transparent distance. They were two days driving the hundred and fifty miles to the railway station, and stayed two nights on the way. When at the posting station the glasses given them for their tea had not been properly washed, or the drivers were slow in harnessing the horses, Mihail Averyanitch would turn crimson, and quivering all over would shout:

"Hold your tongue! Don't argue!"

And in the carriage he talked without ceasing for a moment, describing his campaigns in the Caucasus and in Poland. What adventures he had had, what meetings! He talked loudly and opened his eyes so wide with wonder that he might well be thought to be lying. Moreover, as he talked he breathed in Andrey Yefimitch's face and laughed into his ear. This bothered the doctor and prevented him from thinking or concentrating his mind.

In the train they travelled, from motives of economy, third-class in a non-smoking compartment. Half the passengers were decent people. Mihail Averyanitch soon made friends with everyone, and moving from one seat to another, kept saying loudly that they ought not to travel by these appalling lines. It was a regular swindle! A very different thing riding on a good horse: one could do over seventy miles a day and feel fresh and well after it. And our bad harvests were due to the draining of the Pinsk marshes; altogether, the way things were done was dreadful. He got excited, talked loudly, and would not let others speak. This endless chatter to the accompaniment of loud laughter and expressive gestures wearied Andrey Yefimitch.

"Which of us is the madman?" he thought with vexation. "I, who try not to disturb my fellow-passengers in any way, or this egoist who thinks that he is cleverer and more interesting than anyone here, and so will leave no one in peace?"

In Moscow Mihail Averyanitch put on a military coat without epaulettes and trousers with red braid on them. He wore a military cap and overcoat in the street, and soldiers saluted him. It seemed to Andrey Yefimitch, now, that his companion was a man who had flung away all that was good and kept only what was bad of all the characteristics of a country gentleman that he had once possessed. He liked to be waited on even when it was quite unnecessary. The matches would be lying before him on the table, and he would see them and shout to the waiter to give

him the matches; he did not hesitate to appear before a maid-servant in nothing but his underclothes; he used the familiar mode of address to all footmen indiscriminately, even old men, and when he was angry called them fools and blockheads. This, Andrey Yefimitch thought, was like a gentleman, but disgusting.

First of all Mihail Averyanitch led his friend to the Iversky Madonna. He prayed fervently, shedding tears and bowing down to the earth, and when he had finished, heaved a deep sigh and said:

"Even though one does not believe it makes one somehow easier when one prays a little. Kiss the ikon, my dear fellow."

Andrey Yefimitch was embarrassed and he kissed the image, while Mihail Averyanitch pursed up his lips and prayed in a whisper, and again tears came into his eyes. Then they went to the Kremlin and looked there at the Tsar-cannon and the Tsar-bell, and even touched them with their fingers, admired the view over the river, visited St. Saviour's and the Rumyantsev museum.

They dined at Tyestov's. Mihail Averyanitch looked a long time at the menu, stroking his whiskers, and said in the tone of a gourmand accustomed to dine in restaurants:

"We shall see what you give us to eat to-day, angel!"

#### XIV

The doctor walked about, looked at things, ate and drank, but he had all the while one feeling: annoyance with Mihail Averyanitch. He longed to have a rest from his friend, to get away from him, to hide himself, while the friend thought it was his duty not to let the doctor move a step away from him, and to provide him with as many distractions as possible. When there was nothing to look at he entertained him with conversation. For two days Andrey Yefimitch endured it, but on the third he announced to his friend that he was ill and wanted to stay at home for the whole day; his friend replied that in that case he would stay too--that really he needed rest, for he was run off his legs already. Andrey Yefimitch lay on the sofa, with his face to the back, and clenching his teeth, listened to his friend, who assured him with heat that sooner or later France would certainly thrash Germany, that there were a great many scoundrels in Moscow, and that it was impossible to

judge of a horse's quality by its outward appearance. The doctor began to have a buzzing in his ears and palpitations of the heart, but out of delicacy could not bring himself to beg his friend to go away or hold his tongue. Fortunately Mihail Averyanitch grew weary of sitting in the hotel room, and after dinner he went out for a walk.

As soon as he was alone Andrey Yefimitch abandoned himself to a feeling of relief. How pleasant to lie motionless on the sofa and to know that one is alone in the room! Real happiness is impossible without solitude. The fallen angel betrayed God probably because he longed for solitude, of which the angels know nothing. Andrey Yefimitch wanted to think about what he had seen and heard during the last few days, but he could not get Mihail Averyanitch out of his head.

"Why, he has taken a holiday and come with me out of friendship, out of generosity," thought the doctor with vexation; "nothing could be worse than this friendly supervision. I suppose he is good-natured and generous and a lively fellow, but he is a bore. An insufferable bore. In the same way there are people who never say anything but what is clever and good, yet one feels that they are dull-witted people."

For the following days Andrey Yefimitch declared himself ill and would not leave the hotel room; he lay with his face to the back of the sofa, and suffered agonies of weariness when his friend entertained him with conversation, or rested when his friend was absent. He was vexed with himself for having come, and with his friend, who grew every day more talkative and more free-and-easy; he could not succeed in attuning his thoughts to a serious and lofty level.

"This is what I get from the real life Ivan Dmitritch talked about," he thought, angry at his own pettiness. "It's of no consequence, though. . . . I shall go home, and everything will go on as before . . . ."

It was the same thing in Petersburg too; for whole days together he did not leave the hotel room, but lay on the sofa and only got up to drink beer.

Mihail Averyanitch was all haste to get to Warsaw.

"My dear man, what should I go there for?" said Andrey Yefimitch in an imploring voice. "You go alone and let me get home! I entreat you!"

"On no account," protested Mihail Averyanitch. "It's a marvellous town."

Andrey Yefimitch had not the strength of will to insist on his own way, and much against his inclination went to Warsaw. There he did not leave the hotel room, but lay on the sofa, furious with himself, with his friend, and with the waiters, who obstinately refused to understand Russian; while Mihail Averyanitch, healthy, hearty, and full of spirits as usual, went about the town from morning to night, looking for his old acquaintances. Several times he did not return home at night. After one night spent in some unknown haunt he returned home early in the morning, in a violently excited condition, with a red face and tousled hair. For a long time he walked up and down the rooms muttering something to himself, then stopped and said:

"Honour before everything."

After walking up and down a little longer he clutched his head in both hands and pronounced in a tragic voice: "Yes, honour before everything! Accursed be the moment when the idea first entered my head to visit this Babylon! My dear friend," he added, addressing the doctor, "you may despise me, I have played and lost; lend me five hundred roubles!"

Andrey Yefimitch counted out five hundred roubles and gave them to his friend without a word. The latter, still crimson with shame and anger, incoherently articulated some useless vow, put on his cap, and went out. Returning two hours later he flopped into an easy-chair, heaved a loud sigh, and said:

"My honour is saved. Let us go, my friend; I do not care to remain another hour in this accursed town. Scoundrels! Austrian spies!"

By the time the friends were back in their own town it was November, and deep snow was lying in the streets. Dr. Hobotov had Andrey Yefimitch's post; he was still living in his old lodgings, waiting for Andrey Yefimitch to arrive and clear out of the hospital apartments. The plain woman whom he called his cook was already established in one of the lodges.

Fresh scandals about the hospital were going the round of the town. It was said that the plain woman had quarrelled with the superintendent, and that the latter had crawled on his knees before her begging

forgiveness. On the very first day he arrived Andrey Yefimitch had to look out for lodgings.

"My friend," the postmaster said to him timidly, "excuse an indiscreet question: what means have you at your disposal?"

Andrey Yefimitch, without a word, counted out his money and said: "Eighty-six roubles."

"I don't mean that," Mihail Averyanitch brought out in confusion, misunderstanding him; "I mean, what have you to live on?"

"I tell you, eighty-six roubles . . . I have nothing else."

Mihail Averyanitch looked upon the doctor as an honourable man, yet he suspected that he had accumulated a fortune of at least twenty thousand. Now learning that Andrey Yefimitch was a beggar, that he had nothing to live on he was for some reason suddenly moved to tears and embraced his friend.

## XV

Andrey Yefimitch now lodged in a little house with three windows. There were only three rooms besides the kitchen in the little house. The doctor lived in two of them which looked into the street, while Daryushka and the landlady with her three children lived in the third room and the kitchen. Sometimes the landlady's lover, a drunken peasant who was rowdy and reduced the children and Daryushka to terror, would come for the night. When he arrived and established himself in the kitchen and demanded vodka, they all felt very uncomfortable, and the doctor would be moved by pity to take the crying children into his room and let them lie on his floor, and this gave him great satisfaction.

He got up as before at eight o'clock, and after his morning tea sat down to read his old books and magazines: he had no money for new ones. Either because the books were old, or perhaps because of the change in his surroundings, reading exhausted him, and did not grip his attention as before. That he might not spend his time in idleness he made a detailed catalogue of his books and gummed little labels on their backs, and this mechanical, tedious work seemed to him more interesting than reading. The monotonous, tedious work lulled his thoughts to sleep in some unaccountable way, and the time passed quickly while he thought of nothing. Even

sitting in the kitchen, peeling potatoes with Daryushka or picking over the buckwheat grain, seemed to him interesting. On Saturdays and Sundays he went to church. Standing near the wall and half closing his eyes, he listened to the singing and thought of his father, of his mother, of the university, of the religions of the world; he felt calm and melancholy, and as he went out of the church afterwards he regretted that the service was so soon over. He went twice to the hospital to talk to Ivan Dmitritch. But on both occasions Ivan Dmitritch was unusually excited and ill-humoured; he bade the doctor leave him in peace, as he had long been sick of empty chatter, and declared, to make up for all his sufferings, he asked from the damned scoundrels only one favour--solitary confinement. Surely they would not refuse him even that? On both occasions when Andrey Yefimitch was taking leave of him and wishing him good-night, he answered rudely and said:

"Go to hell!"

And Andrey Yefimitch did not know now whether to go to him for the third time or not. He longed to go.

In old days Andrey Yefimitch used to walk about his rooms and think in the interval after dinner, but now from dinner-time till evening tea he lay on the sofa with his face to the back and gave himself up to trivial thoughts which he could not struggle against. He was mortified that after more than twenty years of service he had been given neither a pension nor any assistance. It is true that he had not done his work honestly, but, then, all who are in the Service get a pension without distinction whether they are honest or not. Contemporary justice lies precisely in the bestowal of grades, orders, and pensions, not for moral qualities or capacities, but for service whatever it may have been like. Why was he alone to be an exception? He had no money at all. He was ashamed to pass by the shop and look at the woman who owned it. He owed thirty-two roubles for beer already. There was money owing to the landlady also. Daryushka sold old clothes and books on the sly, and told lies to the landlady, saying that the doctor was just going to receive a large sum of money.

He was angry with himself for having wasted on travelling the thousand roubles he had saved up. How useful that thousand roubles would have been now! He was vexed that people would not leave him in peace. Hobotov thought it his duty to look in on his

sick colleague from time to time. Everything about him was revolting to Andrey Yefimitch--his well-fed face and vulgar, condescending tone, and his use of the word "colleague," and his high top-boots; the most revolting thing was that he thought it was his duty to treat Andrey Yefimitch, and thought that he really was treating him. On every visit he brought a bottle of bromide and rhubarb pills.

Mihail Averyanitch, too, thought it his duty to visit his friend and entertain him. Every time he went in to Andrey Yefimitch with an affectation of ease, laughed constrainedly, and began assuring him that he was looking very well to-day, and that, thank God, he was on the highroad to recovery, and from this it might be concluded that he looked on his friend's condition as hopeless. He had not yet repaid his Warsaw debt, and was overwhelmed by shame; he was constrained, and so tried to laugh louder and talk more amusingly. His anecdotes and descriptions seemed endless now, and were an agony both to Andrey Yefimitch and himself.

In his presence Andrey Yefimitch usually lay on the sofa with his face to the wall, and listened with his teeth clenched; his soul was oppressed with rankling disgust, and after every visit from his friend he felt as though this disgust had risen higher, and was mounting into his throat.

To stifle petty thoughts he made haste to reflect that he himself, and Hobotov, and Mihail Averyanitch, would all sooner or later perish without leaving any trace on the world. If one imagined some spirit flying by the earthly globe in space in a million years he would see nothing but clay and bare rocks. Everything--culture and the moral law--would pass away and not even a burdock would grow out of them. Of what consequence was shame in the presence of a shopkeeper, of what consequence was the insignificant Hobotov or the wearisome friendship of Mihail Averyanitch? It was all trivial and nonsensical.

But such reflections did not help him now. Scarcely had he imagined the earthly globe in a million years, when Hobotov in his high top-boots or Mihail Averyanitch with his forced laugh would appear from behind a bare rock, and he even heard the shamefaced whisper: "The Warsaw debt. . . I will repay it in a day or two, my dear fellow, without fail. . . ."

One day Mihail Averyanitch came after dinner when Andrey Yefimitch was lying on the sofa. It so happened that Hobotov arrived at the same time with his bromide. Andrey Yefimitch got up heavily and sat down, leaning both arms on the sofa.

"You have a much better colour to-day than you had yesterday, my dear man," began Mihail Averyanitch. "Yes, you look jolly. Upon my soul, you do!"

"It's high time you were well, dear colleague," said Hobotov, yawning. "I'll be bound, you are sick of this bobbery."

"And we shall recover," said Mihail Averyanitch cheerfully. "We shall live another hundred years! To be sure!"

"Not a hundred years, but another twenty," Hobotov said reassuringly. "It's all right, all right, colleague; don't lose heart. . . . Don't go piling it on!"

"We'll show what we can do," laughed Mihail Averyanitch, and he slapped his friend on the knee. "We'll show them yet! Next summer, please God, we shall be off to the Caucasus, and we will ride all over it on horseback--trot, trot, trot! And when we are back from the Caucasus I shouldn't wonder if we will all dance at the wedding." Mihail Averyanitch gave a sly wink. "We'll marry you, my dear boy, we'll marry you. . . ."

Andrey Yefimitch felt suddenly that the rising disgust had mounted to his throat, his heart began beating violently.

"That's vulgar," he said, getting up quickly and walking away to the window. "Don't you understand that you are talking vulgar nonsense?"

He meant to go on softly and politely, but against his will he suddenly clenched his fists and raised them above his head.

"Leave me alone," he shouted in a voice unlike his own, blushing crimson and shaking all over. "Go away, both of you!"

Mihail Averyanitch and Hobotov got up and stared at him first with amazement and then with alarm.

"Go away, both!" Andrey Yefimitch went on shouting. "Stupid people! Foolish people! I don't

want either your friendship or your medicines, stupid man! Vulgar! Nasty!"

Hobotov and Mihail Averyanitch, looking at each other in bewilderment, staggered to the door and went out. Andrey Yefimitch snatched up the bottle of bromide and flung it after them; the bottle broke with a crash on the door-frame.

"Go to the devil!" he shouted in a tearful voice, running out into the passage. "To the devil!"

When his guests were gone Andrey Yefimitch lay down on the sofa, trembling as though in a fever, and went on for a long while repeating: "Stupid people! Foolish people!"

When he was calmer, what occurred to him first of all was the thought that poor Mihail Averyanitch must be feeling fearfully ashamed and depressed now, and that it was all dreadful. Nothing like this had ever happened to him before. Where was his intelligence and his tact? Where was his comprehension of things and his philosophical indifference?

The doctor could not sleep all night for shame and vexation with himself, and at ten o'clock next morning he went to the post office and apologized to the postmaster.

"We won't think again of what has happened," Mihail Averyanitch, greatly touched, said with a sigh, warmly pressing his hand. "Let bygones be bygones. Lyubavkin," he suddenly shouted so loud that all the postmen and other persons present started, "hand a chair; and you wait," he shouted to a peasant woman who was stretching out a registered letter to him through the grating. "Don't you see that I am busy? We will not remember the past," he went on, affectionately addressing Andrey Yefimitch; "sit down, I beg you, my dear fellow."

For a minute he stroked his knees in silence, and then said:

"I have never had a thought of taking offence. Illness is no joke, I understand. Your attack frightened the doctor and me yesterday, and we had a long talk about you afterwards. My dear friend, why won't you treat your illness seriously? You can't go on like this . . . Excuse me speaking openly as a friend," whispered Mihail Averyanitch. "You live in the most unfavourable surroundings, in a crowd, in uncleanness, no one to look after you, no money for

proper treatment. . . . My dear friend, the doctor and I implore you with all our hearts, listen to our advice: go into the hospital! There you will have wholesome food and attendance and treatment. Though, between ourselves, Yevgeny Fyodoritch is *mauvais ton*, yet he does understand his work, you can fully rely upon him. He has promised me he will look after you."

Andrey Yefimitch was touched by the postmaster's genuine sympathy and the tears which suddenly glittered on his cheeks.

"My honoured friend, don't believe it!" he whispered, laying his hand on his heart; "don't believe them. It's all a sham. My illness is only that in twenty years I have only found one intelligent man in the whole town, and he is mad. I am not ill at all, it's simply that I have got into an enchanted circle which there is no getting out of. I don't care; I am ready for anything."

"Go into the hospital, my dear fellow."

"I don't care if it were into the pit."

"Give me your word, my dear man, that you will obey Yevgeny Fyodoritch in everything."

"Certainly I will give you my word. But I repeat, my honoured friend, I have got into an enchanted circle. Now everything, even the genuine sympathy of my friends, leads to the same thing--to my ruin. I am going to my ruin, and I have the manliness to recognize it."

"My dear fellow, you will recover."

"What's the use of saying that?" said Andrey Yefimitch, with irritation. "There are few men who at the end of their lives do not experience what I am experiencing now. When you are told that you have something such as diseased kidneys or enlarged heart, and you begin being treated for it, or are told you are mad or a criminal --that is, in fact, when people suddenly turn their attention to you--you may be sure you have got into an enchanted circle from which you will not escape. You will try to escape and make things worse. You had better give in, for no human efforts can save you. So it seems to me."

Meanwhile the public was crowding at the grating. That he might not be in their way, Andrey Yefimitch got up and began to take leave. Mihail Averyanitch made him promise on his honour once more, and escorted him to the outer door.

Towards evening on the same day Hobotov, in his sheepskin and his high top-boots, suddenly made his appearance, and said to Andrey Yefimitch in a tone as though nothing had happened the day before:

"I have come on business, colleague. I have come to ask you whether you would not join me in a consultation. Eh?"

Thinking that Hobotov wanted to distract his mind with an outing, or perhaps really to enable him to earn something, Andrey Yefimitch put on his coat and hat, and went out with him into the street. He was glad of the opportunity to smooth over his fault of the previous day and to be reconciled, and in his heart thanked Hobotov, who did not even allude to yesterday's scene and was evidently sparing him. One would never have expected such delicacy from this uncultured man.

"Where is your invalid?" asked Andrey Yefimitch.

"In the hospital. . . . I have long wanted to show him to you. A very interesting case."

They went into the hospital yard, and going round the main building, turned towards the lodge where the mental cases were kept, and all this, for some reason, in silence. When they went into the lodge Nikita as usual jumped up and stood at attention.

"One of the patients here has a lung complication." Hobotov said in an undertone, going into the yard with Andrey Yefimitch. "You wait here, I'll be back directly. I am going for a stethoscope."

And he went away.

## XVII

It was getting dusk. Ivan Dmitritch was lying on his bed with his face thrust unto his pillow; the paralytic was sitting motionless, crying quietly and moving his lips. The fat peasant and the former sorter were asleep. It was quiet.

Andrey Yefimitch sat down on Ivan Dmitritch's bed and waited. But half an hour passed, and instead of Hobotov, Nikita came into the ward with a dressing-gown, some underlinen, and a pair of slippers in a heap on his arm.

"Please change your things, your honour," he said softly. "Here is your bed; come this way," he added, pointing to an empty bedstead which had obviously recently been brought into the ward. "It's all right; please God, you will recover."

Andrey Yefimitch understood it all. Without saying a word he crossed to the bed to which Nikita pointed and sat down; seeing that Nikita was standing waiting, he undressed entirely and he felt ashamed. Then he put on the hospital clothes; the drawers were very short, the shirt was long, and the dressing-gown smelt of smoked fish.

"Please God, you will recover," repeated Nikita, and he gathered up Andrey Yefimitch's clothes into his arms, went out, and shut the door after him.

"No matter . . ." thought Andrey Yefimitch, wrapping himself in his dressing-gown in a shamefaced way and feeling that he looked like a convict in his new costume. "It's no matter. . . . It does not matter whether it's a dress-coat or a uniform or this dressing-gown."

But how about his watch? And the notebook that was in the side-pocket? And his cigarettes? Where had Nikita taken his clothes? Now perhaps to the day of his death he would not put on trousers, a waistcoat, and high boots. It was all somehow strange and even incomprehensible at first. Andrey Yefimitch was even now convinced that there was no difference between his landlady's house and Ward No. 6, that everything in this world was nonsense and vanity of vanities. And yet his hands were trembling, his feet were cold, and he was filled with dread at the thought that soon Ivan Dmitritch would get up and see that he was in a dressing-gown. He got up and walked across the room and sat down again.

Here he had been sitting already half an hour, an hour, and he was miserably sick of it: was it really possible to live here a day, a week, and even years like these people? Why, he had been sitting here, had walked about and sat down again; he could get up and look out of window and walk from corner to corner again, and then what? Sit so all the time, like a post, and think? No, that was scarcely possible.

Andrey Yefimitch lay down, but at once got up, wiped the cold sweat from his brow with his sleeve and felt that his whole face smelt of smoked fish. He walked about again.

"It's some misunderstanding . . ." he said, turning out the palms of his hands in perplexity. "It must be cleared up. There is a misunderstanding."

Meanwhile Ivan Dmitritch woke up; he sat up and propped his cheeks on his fists. He spat. Then he glanced lazily at the doctor, and apparently for the first minute did not understand; but soon his sleepy face grew malicious and mocking.

"Aha! so they have put you in here, too, old fellow?" he said in a voice husky from sleepiness, screwing up one eye. "Very glad to see you. You sucked the blood of others, and now they will suck yours. Excellent!"

"It's a misunderstanding . . ." Andrey Yefimitch brought out, frightened by Ivan Dmitritch's words; he shrugged his shoulders and repeated: "It's some misunderstanding."

Ivan Dmitritch spat again and lay down.

"Cursed life," he grumbled, "and what's bitter and insulting, this life will not end in compensation for our sufferings, it will not end with apotheosis as it would in an opera, but with death; peasants will come and drag one's dead body by the arms and the legs to the cellar. Ugh! Well, it does not matter. . . . We shall have our good time in the other world. . . . I shall come here as a ghost from the other world and frighten these reptiles. I'll turn their hair grey."

Moiseika returned, and, seeing the doctor, held out his hand.

"Give me one little kopeck," he said.

## XVIII

Andrey Yefimitch walked away to the window and looked out into the open country. It was getting dark, and on the horizon to the right a cold crimson moon was mounting upwards. Not far from the hospital fence, not much more than two hundred yards away, stood a tall white house shut in by a stone wall. This was the prison.

"So this is real life," thought Andrey Yefimitch, and he felt frightened.

The moon and the prison, and the nails on the fence, and the far-away flames at the bone-charring factory were all terrible. Behind him there was the sound of a sigh. Andrey Yefimitch looked round and saw a man

with glittering stars and orders on his breast, who was smiling and slyly winking. And this, too, seemed terrible.

Andrey Yefimitch assured himself that there was nothing special about the moon or the prison, that even sane persons wear orders, and that everything in time will decay and turn to earth, but he was suddenly overcome with desire; he clutched at the grating with both hands and shook it with all his might. The strong grating did not yield.

Then that it might not be so dreadful he went to Ivan Dmitritch's bed and sat down.

"I have lost heart, my dear fellow," he muttered, trembling and wiping away the cold sweat, "I have lost heart."

"You should be philosophical," said Ivan Dmitritch ironically.

"My God, my God. . . . Yes, yes. . . . You were pleased to say once that there was no philosophy in Russia, but that all people, even the paltriest, talk philosophy. But you know the philosophizing of the paltriest does not harm anyone," said Andrey Yefimitch in a tone as if he wanted to cry and complain. "Why, then, that malignant laugh, my friend, and how can these paltry creatures help philosophizing if they are not satisfied? For an intelligent, educated man, made in God's image, proud and loving freedom, to have no alternative but to be a doctor in a filthy, stupid, wretched little town, and to spend his whole life among bottles, leeches, mustard plasters! Quackery, narrowness, vulgarity! Oh, my God!"

"You are talking nonsense. If you don't like being a doctor you should have gone in for being a statesman."

"I could not, I could not do anything. We are weak, my dear friend. . . . I used to be indifferent. I reasoned boldly and soundly, but at the first coarse touch of life upon me I have lost heart. . . . Prostration. . . . We are weak, we are poor creatures. . . . and you, too, my dear friend, you are intelligent, generous, you drew in good impulses with your mother's milk, but you had hardly entered upon life when you were exhausted and fell ill. . . . Weak, weak!"

Andrey Yefimitch was all the while at the approach of evening tormented by another persistent sensation besides terror and the feeling of resentment. At last he realized that he was longing for a smoke and for beer.

"I am going out, my friend," he said. "I will tell them to bring a light; I can't put up with this. . . . I am not equal to it. . . ."

Andrey Yefimitch went to the door and opened it, but at once Nikita jumped up and barred his way.

"Where are you going? You can't, you can't!" he said. "It's bedtime."

"But I'm only going out for a minute to walk about the yard," said Andrey Yefimitch.

"You can't, you can't; it's forbidden. You know that yourself."

"But what difference will it make to anyone if I do go out?" asked Andrey Yefimitch, shrugging his shoulders. "I don't understand. Nikita, I must go out!" he said in a trembling voice. "I must."

"Don't be disorderly, it's not right," Nikita said peremptorily.

"This is beyond everything," Ivan Dmitritch cried suddenly, and he jumped up. "What right has he not to let you out? How dare they keep us here? I believe it is clearly laid down in the law that no one can be deprived of freedom without trial! It's an outrage! It's tyranny!"

"Of course it's tyranny," said Andrey Yefimitch, encouraged by Ivan Dmitritch's outburst. "I must go out, I want to. He has no right! Open, I tell you."

"Do you hear, you dull-witted brute?" cried Ivan Dmitritch, and he banged on the door with his fist. "Open the door, or I will break it open! Torturer!"

"Open the door," cried Andrey Yefimitch, trembling all over; "I insist!"

"Talk away!" Nikita answered through the door, "talk away. . . ."

"Anyhow, go and call Yevgeny Fyodoritch! Say that I beg him to come for a minute!"

"His honour will come of himself to-morrow."

"They will never let us out," Ivan Dmitritch was going on meanwhile. "They will leave us to rot here! Oh, Lord, can there really be no hell in the next world, and will these wretches be forgiven? Where is justice? Open the door, you wretch! I am choking!" he cried in a hoarse voice, and flung himself upon the door. "I'll dash out my brains, murderers!"

Nikita opened the door quickly, and roughly with both his hands and his knee shoved Andrey Yefimitch back, then swung his arm and punched him in the face with his fist. It seemed to Andrey Yefimitch as though a huge salt wave enveloped him from his head downwards and dragged him to the bed; there really was a salt taste in his mouth: most likely the blood was running from his teeth. He waved his arms as though he were trying to swim out and clutched at a bedstead, and at the same moment felt Nikita hit him twice on the back.

Ivan Dmitritch gave a loud scream. He must have been beaten too.

Then all was still, the faint moonlight came through the grating, and a shadow like a net lay on the floor. It was terrible. Andrey Yefimitch lay and held his breath: he was expecting with horror to be struck again. He felt as though someone had taken a sickle, thrust it into him, and turned it round several times in his breast and bowels. He bit the pillow from pain and clenched his teeth, and all at once through the chaos in his brain there flashed the terrible unbearable thought that these people, who seemed now like black shadows in the moonlight, had to endure such pain day by day for years. How could it have happened that for more than twenty years he had not known it and had refused to know it? He knew nothing of pain, had no conception of it, so he was not to blame, but his conscience, as inexorable and as rough as Nikita, made him turn cold from the crown of his head to his heels. He leaped up, tried to cry out with all his might, and to run in haste to kill Nikita, and then Hobotov, the superintendent and the assistant, and then himself; but no sound came from his chest, and his legs would not obey him. Gasping for breath, he tore at the dressing-gown and the shirt on his breast, rent them, and fell senseless on the bed.

## XIX

Next morning his head ached, there was a droning in his ears and a feeling of utter weakness all over. He

was not ashamed at recalling his weakness the day before. He had been cowardly, had even been afraid of the moon, had openly expressed thoughts and feelings such as he had not expected in himself before; for instance, the thought that the paltry people who philosophized were really dissatisfied. But now nothing mattered to him.

He ate nothing; he drank nothing. He lay motionless and silent.

"It is all the same to me," he thought when they asked him questions. "I am not going to answer. . . . It's all the same to me."

After dinner Mihail Averyanitch brought him a quarter pound of tea and a pound of fruit pastilles. Daryushka came too and stood for a whole hour by the bed with an expression of dull grief on her face. Dr. Hobotov visited him. He brought a bottle of bromide and told Nikita to fumigate the ward with something.

Towards evening Andrey Yefimitch died of an apoplectic stroke. At first he had a violent shivering fit and a feeling of sickness; something revolting as it seemed, penetrating through his whole body, even to his finger-tips, strained from his stomach to his head and flooded his eyes and ears. There was a greenness before his eyes. Andrey Yefimitch understood that his end had come, and remembered that Ivan Dmitritch, Mihail Averyanitch, and millions of people believed in immortality. And what if it really existed? But he did not want immortality--and he thought of it only for one instant. A herd of deer, extraordinarily beautiful and graceful, of which he had been reading the day before, ran by him; then a peasant woman stretched out her hand to him with a registered letter . . . . Mihail Averyanitch said something, then it all vanished, and Andrey Yefimitch sank into oblivion for ever.

The hospital porters came, took him by his arms and legs, and carried him away to the chapel.

There he lay on the table, with open eyes, and the moon shed its light upon him at night. In the morning Sergey Sergeyitch came, prayed piously before the crucifix, and closed his former chief's eyes.

Next day Andrey Yefimitch was buried. Mihail Averyanitch and Daryushka were the only people at the funeral.

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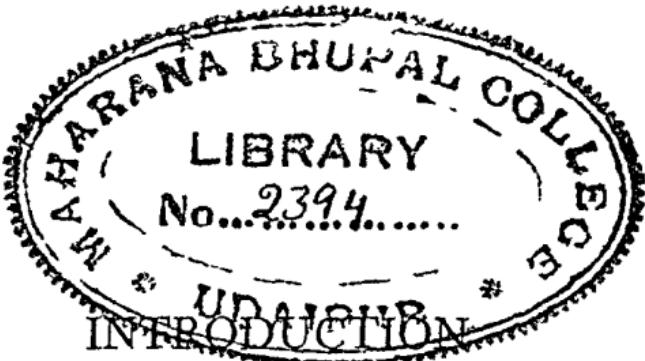
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8 Endsleigh Gardens, W.C. I



CHEKHOV'S works have probably never enjoyed such a degree of popularity in his own country as they do in England to-day. There is an ever increasing demand for his admirable short stories, and his plays, despite their gloomy and depressing character—so contrary to all that English audiences require when they go to the theatre—have attained great success and attracted large numbers of people to the little theatre at Barnes, as well as to the West End houses where they have been given.

Deeming that the time has now come when readers, who have shown so much admiration for his works, would like to have a deeper insight into the development of this remarkable genius, we are here offering, for the first time in English, a translation of one of his early works, which is perhaps his most ambitious effort—at least with regard to length and to complexity of plot. "The Shooting Party" was written in 1885, in the early and difficult period of Chekhov's life. While still a student at the University, he found himself obliged to support his family with his pen, and when he wrote this novel he was only beginning to make his way to the forefront of literature.

Anton Chekhov was only sixteen years old when his father failed in the business he had carried on for many years in Taganrog, and was obliged to go to Moscow in search of employment. Shortly after his mother and his younger brother and sister joined the father, and Anton was left to complete his course of studies at the Taganrog Gymnasium. During the three years he remained in Taganrog Anton lived as tutor in the family of a Mr Selivanov, who had bought the Chekhov's house at the auction of their property. In

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1879, having gone through all the classes of the Gymnasium, Anton joined his family in Moscow, where he entered the University to study medicine. At that time his father had a small post in a merchant's office, and lived and was boarded in his employer's house. Two of Chekhov's elder brothers had left the home some years before, and Anton found himself at the head of the family, which was in great straits. In order to help in its support every one of the children did what they could. It was then that Anton Chekhov began writing his short stories for a number of provincial newspapers and magazines. These stories attracted general attention, and the editors of the Press of the two capitals soon asked him to contribute to their magazines also. The stories and sketches he wrote at that time appeared above the *nom de plume* of Antosha Tchekhonte, a nickname that had been given him at school. They are chiefly of a humorous character and mostly of an ephemeral nature, having been dashed off in haste as potboilers. There is a marked difference between these early works and the tales he wrote during the last fifteen years of his short life.

In the year 1885 the first collection of Chekhov's tales appeared in book form, it was followed by several other volumes of stories, and in 1899 Chekhov sold the copyright of all his works, that had already been published or that he might yet write, to the publishing firm of A. F. Marks. By the terms of the contract which he made with Marks he ceded to them the exclusive rights of publishing his works in book form, but he retained the right of first publishing in periodicals any stories he might write in the future. He was then at the height of his popularity, and all the best magazines and newspapers were eager to obtain contributions from his pen.

A re-issue of Chekhov's complete works was also contemplated, subject to the selection and revision of the author. This project was carried out by Marks in an edition that formed eleven volumes. This edition comprises all

Chekhov's best works, selected by himself from the very voluminous contributions he had made to the periodical Press during the twenty years he had devoted his talents to literature, and this collection may be looked upon as representing the works by which Chekhov wished to be remembered. In the choice of the 240 novelettes and stories that are comprised in these volumes the author evidently applied very strict criticism, with the result that they are of an astonishingly high and even standard of merit. The task of selection was no easy one for the author, as his writings were so numerous, and were scattered in many periodicals and newspapers. But few of the early stories were included in these volumes. However, after his death in 1904, there was a general demand for a more complete edition of his works, and regrets were expressed that so many of his stories, written in early life, were hidden away in old periodicals inaccessible to his admirers. For this reason his publisher, A. F. Marks, decided to add several supplementary volumes containing all that could be found of the early writings of this popular author, to the already published collected works. In a prefatory notice the editor of these volumes says that the desire of having all that Chekhov had written was very natural, as everything that had come from his pen was dear to his friends, no matter at what time it had been written, nor however critically the author, in his maturer years, might have looked upon these works, as they show the development and the extraordinary growth of his fine and subtle talent and his outlook on the world at various periods of his life. Besides the desire to have everything Chekhov had written there were also just grounds for thinking that, if he had not been cut off so prematurely by death, he would himself have added the greater number of these stories and sketches to his collected works.

In the opinion of the critics Chekhov's early works are also "documents of Russian life collected by a great

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literary artist with rare knowledge and care illuminated with conscious discernment and thoughtful humour and exploring depths of human grief and suffering that touch the heart of the reader profoundly. Besides it must be added that in these forgotten tales there are many glimpses of the real Chekhov qualities, of his poetic imagination, his meditative sadness, his subtle spiritual nature and entirely truthful portrayal of actualities."

Three hundred and fifty tales are published in these supplementary volumes. They vary in length from the novelette to mere sketches of barely a page and they were all written between the years 1880 and 1888. Many of them had been carefully collected by Chekhov himself with the assistance of his friends, the rest were unearthed by the assiduity of the publishers. They are arranged as much as possible chronologically and most of them are dated.

These youthful efforts of an author, who afterwards attained to such world-wide popularity, are interesting as showing the development and growth of his remarkable talents and the change of his method from the light sketches written, for provincial newspapers and humorous magazines to the stories he produced in his maturer years, and though not equal in power to the latter, many of them are well worth reading.

Among these works there are several of considerable length, and "The Shooting Party," which we now offer to the English reader, has almost the dimensions of a novel and it is more in the style of the sensation novels of the time when it was written, than the episodic character of Chekhov's later works, and though we find in it occasional awkward blendings of conventional phraseology with snatches of brilliant impressionism—one of the peculiar features of this work,—it already shows many of the author's characteristics.

At that time Chekhov had been supplementing his slender income by reporting law cases for the Press, and the insight

he obtained into the backwash of many a crime probably weighed on his mind until it found expression in the present work, which is perhaps the blackest indictment of the proceedings of Russian provincial Law Courts that has ever been written. Besides these descriptions he gives us graphic pictures of the looseness of provincial life in the heart of Russia which is sad and hopeless in the extreme. The story is written in the first person and the hero makes his confessions with a cynical frankness which rivals that of Jean Jacques Rousseau himself. He is supposed to be an examining magistrate, a functionary, who in Russia performs the combined duties of a coroner and a magistrate; he it is who is called upon to make the preliminary investigations of criminal cases, and who draws up the first reports. Chekhov himself plays the part of editor and offers his comments and reflections on the events and on the manner in which they are described in footnotes signed with his initials. The characters are drawn with much of the Chekhov touch and, as in so many of his works, they are all more or less failures or degenerates, and there is little of lighter elements to relieve the tragic gloom, however the dramatic interest is well sustained throughout and carries the reader on so that he is not likely to lay the book aside before he reaches the end.

In this novel one notices here and there signs of inexperience in the construction and the development of a plot, with all its intricacies, a fact of which Chekhov seemed well aware, as in many of his letters he mentions that he always felt difficulties assailing him when he arrived at the middle of a long story, and thought he was only fit to write short ones. It shows the development of his art, so unlike that of the old masters of literature, who employed a large canvas and filled in all the details in order to produce their effects, while his style resembles rather that of the impressionists, who with a few bold strokes bring out the salient points of what they wish to depict. We find already short word-pictures of nature, that give the

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necessary atmosphere, a few pregnant words, that denote the mood, while acts and deeds express character without lengthy analysis and long descriptions. The Shooting Party shows signs of the perfecting of his technique and an increase of his power and for that reason it will be a precious document for every student of Chekhov, one of the great masters whose works did so much towards the evolution of the modern short story.

A. E. C.

# THE SHOOTING PARTY

## PRELUDE

**O**N an April day of the year 1880 the doorkeeper Andrey came into my private room and told me in a mysterious whisper that a gentleman had come to the editorial office and demanded insistently to see the editor.

"He appears to be a chinovnik,"\* Andrey added. "He has a cockade. . . ."

"Ask him to come another time," I said, "I am busy to-day. Tell him the editor only receives on Saturdays."

"He was here the day before yesterday and asked for you. He says his business is urgent. He begs, almost with tears in his eyes, to see you. He says he is not free on Saturday. . . . Will you receive him?"

I sighed, laid down my pen, and settled myself in my chair to receive the gentleman with the cockade. Young authors, and in general everybody who is not initiated into the secrets of the profession, are generally so overcome by holy awe at the words "editorial office" that they make you wait a considerable time for them. After the editor's "Show him in," they cough and blow their noses for a long time, open the door very slowly, come into the room still more slowly, and thus rob you of no little time. The gentleman with the cockade did not make me wait. The door had scarcely had time to close after Andrey before I saw in my office a tall, broad-shouldered man holding a paper parcel in one hand and a cap with a cockade in the other.

\* A government official.

P R E L U D E

This man, who had succeeded in obtaining an interview with me, plays a very prominent part in my story. It is necessary to describe his appearance

He was, as I have already said, tall and broad-shouldered and as vigorous as a fine cart horse. His whole body seemed to exhale health and strength. His face was rosy, his hands large, his chest broad and as muscular as a strong boy's. He was over forty. He was dressed with taste, according to the last fashion, in a new tweed suit, evidently just come from the tailor's. A thick gold watch-chain with breloques hung across his chest, and on his little finger a diamond ring sparkled with brilliant tiny stars. But, what is most important, and so essential to the hero of a novel or story, with the slightest pretension to respectability, is that he was extremely handsome. I am neither a woman nor an artist. I have but little understanding of manly beauty, but the appearance of the gentleman with the cockade made an impression on me. His large muscular face remained for ever impressed on my memory. On that face you could see a real Greek nose with a slight hook, thin lips and nice blue eyes from which shone goodness and something else, for which it is difficult to find an appropriate name. That "something" can be seen in the eyes of little animals when they are sad or ill. Something imploring, childish, resignedly suffering.

... Cunning or very clever people never have such eyes.

His whole face seemed to breathe candour, a broad, simple nature, and truth. If it be not a falsehood that the face is the mirror of the soul, I could have sworn from the very first day of my acquaintance with the gentleman with the cockade that he was unable to lie. I might even have betted that he could not lie. Whether I should have lost my bet or not, the reader will see further on.

His chestnut hair and beard were thick and soft as silk. It is often said that soft hair is the sign of a sweet, sensitive, "silken" soul. Criminals and wicked obstinate characters

have, in most cases, harsh hair If this be true or not the reader will also see further on. Neither the expression of his face, nor the softness of his beard was as soft and delicate in this gentleman with the cockade as the movements of his huge form These movements seemed to denote education, lightness, grace, and if you will forgive the expression, something womanly It would cause my hero but a slight effort to bend a horseshoe or to flatten out a tin sardine box, with his fist and at the same time not one of his movements showed his physical strength He took hold of the door handle or of his hat, as if they were butterflies—delicately, carefully, hardly touching them with his fingers He walked noiselessly, he pressed my hand feebly. When looking at him you forgot that he was as strong as Goliath, and that he could lift with one hand weights that five men like our office servant Andrey could not have moved Looking at his light movements, it was impossible to believe that he was strong and heavy Spencer might have called him a model of grace.

When he entered my office he became confused His delicate, sensitive nature was probably shocked by my frowning, dissatisfied face

"For God's sake forgive me!" he began in a soft, mellow baritone voice "I have broken in upon you not at the appointed time, and I have forced you to make an exception for me You are very busy! But, Mr. Editor, you see, this is how the case stands To-morrow I must start for Odessa on very important business . . . If I had been able to put off this journey till Saturday, I can assure you I would not have asked you to make this exception for me. I submit to rules because I love order . . ."

"How much he talks!" I thought as I stretched out my hand towards the pen, showing by this movement I was pressed for time (I was terribly bored by visitors just then)

"I will only take up a moment of your time," my hero continued in an apologetic tone. "But first allow me to

## PRELUDE

introduce myself . . . Ivan Petrovich Kamyshev, Bachelor of Law and former examining magistrate. I have not the honour of belonging to the fellowship of authors, nevertheless I appear before you from motives that are purely those of a writer Notwithstanding his forty years, you have before you a man who wishes to be a beginner . . . Better late than never!"

"Very pleased . . . What can I do for you?"

The man wishing to be a beginner sat down and continued, looking at the floor with his imploring eyes:

"I have brought you a short story which I would like to see published in your journal Mr Editor, I will tell you quite candidly I have not written this story to attain an author's celebrity, nor for the sake of sweet-sounding words I am too old for these good things I venture on the writer's path from purely commercial motives . . . I want to earn something . . . At the present moment I have absolutely no occupation I was a magistrate in the S—— district for more than five years, but I did not make a fortune, nor did I keep my innocence either . . ."

Kamyshev glanced at me with his kind eyes and laughed gently

"Service is tiresome . . . I served and served till I was quite fed up, and chucked it I have no occupation now, sometimes I have nothing to eat. . . . If, despite its unworthiness, you will publish my story, you will do me more than a great favour . . . You will help me . . . A journal is not an alms-house, nor an old-age asylum . . . I know that, but . . . won't you be so kind . . ."

"He is lying," I thought

The breloques and the diamond ring on his little finger belied his having written for the sake of a piece of bread Besides, a slight cloud passed over Kamyshev's face such as only an experienced eye can trace on the faces of people who seldom lie.

"What is the subject of your story?" I asked.

"The subject? What can I tell you? The subject is not new. . . . Love and murder . . . But read it, you will see. . . . 'From the Notes of an Examining Magistrate.' . . ."

I probably frowned, for Kamyshev looked confused, his eyes began to blink, he started and continued speaking rapidly:

"My story is written in the conventional style of former examining magistrates, but . . . you will find in it facts, the truth. . . . All that is written, from beginning to end, happened before my eyes . . . Indeed, I was not only a witness but one of the actors."

"The truth does not matter . . . It is not absolutely necessary to see a thing to describe it . That is unimportant. The fact is our poor readers have long been fed up with Gaboriau and Shklyarevsky.\* They are tired of all those mysterious murders, those artful devices of the detectives, and the extraordinary resourcefulness of the examining magistrate. The reading public, of course, varies, but I am talking of the public that reads our newspaper. What is the title of your story?"

"The Shooting Party."

"Hm! . . . That's not serious, you know. . . . And, to be quite frank with you, I have such an amount of copy on hand that it is quite impossible to accept new things, even if they are of undoubted merit."

"Pray accept my work, . . . You say it is not serious, but . . . it is difficult to give a title to a thing before you have seen it . . . Besides, is it possible you cannot admit that an examining magistrate can write serious works?"

All this Kamyshev said stammeringly, twisting a pencil about between his fingers and looking at his feet. He

\* A. A. Shklyarevsky was a well-known Russian author who wrote a number of novels and tales on criminal and detective subjects in the years 1860-80.—A. Ch.

## PRELUDE

finished by blinking his eyes and becoming exceedingly confused I was sorry for him

"All right, leave it," I said "But I can't promise that your story will be read very soon. You will have to wait . . ."

"How long?"

"I don't know Look in . . . in about two to three months . . ."

"That's pretty long But I dare not insist. . . Let it be as you say . . ."

Kamyshev rose and took up his cap

"Thank you for the audience," he said. "I will now go home and dwell in hope Three months of hope! However, I am boring you I have the honour to bid you good-bye!"

"One word more, please," I said as I turned over the pages of his thick copy-book, which were written in a very small handwriting. "You write here in the first person

You therefore mean the examining magistrate to be yourself?"

"Yes, but under another name The part I play in this story is somewhat scandalous . . . It would have been awkward to give my own name . . . In three months, then?"

"Yes, not earlier, please . . . Good-bye!"

The former examining magistrate bowed gallantly, turned the door handle gingerly, and disappeared, leaving his work on my writing table I took up the copy-book and put it away in the table drawer

Handsome Kamyshev's story reposed in my table drawer for two months One day, when leaving my office to go to the country, I remembered it and took it with me

When I was seated in the railway coach I opened the copy-book and began to read from the middle The middle interested me That same evening, notwithstanding my want of leisure, I read the whole story from the beginning to the words "The End," which were written with a great

flourish. That night I read the whole story through again, and at sunrise I was walking about the terrace from corner to corner, rubbing my temples as if I wanted to rub out of my head some new and painful thoughts that had suddenly entered my mind. The thoughts were really painful, unbearably sharp. It appeared to me that I, neither an examining magistrate nor even a psychological juryman, had discovered the terrible secret of a man, a secret that did not concern me in the slightest degree. I paced the terrace and tried to persuade myself not to believe in my discovery . . .

Kamyshev's story did not appear in my newspaper for reasons that I will explain at the end of my talk with the reader. I shall meet the reader once again. Now, when I am leaving him for a long time, I offer Kamyshev's story for his perusal.

This story is not remarkable in any way. It has many lengthy passages and many inequalities . . . The author is too fond of effects and strong expressions . . . It is evident that he is writing for the first time, his hand is unaccustomed, uneducated. Nevertheless his narrative reads easily. There is a plot, a meaning, too, and what is most important, it is original, very characteristic and what may be called *sui generis*. It also possesses certain literary qualities. It is worth reading. Here it is.

# THE SHOOTING PARTY

FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF AN EXAMINING MAGISTRATE

## I

"**T**HE husband killed his wife! Oh, how stupid you are! Give me some sugar!"

These cries awoke me I stretched myself, feeling indisposition and heaviness in every limb One can lie upon one's legs or arms until they are numb, but now it seemed to me that my whole body, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, was benumbed An afternoon snooze in a sultry, dry atmosphere amid the buzzing and humming of flies and mosquitoes does not act in an invigorating manner but has an enervating effect Broken and bathed in perspiration, I rose and went to the window. The sun was still high and baked with the same ardour it had done three hours before Many hours still remained until sunset and the coolness of evening

"The husband killed his wife!"

"Stop lying, Ivan Dem'yanych!" I said as I gave a slight tap to Ivan Dem'yanych's nose "Husbands kill their wives only in novels and in the tropics, where African passions boil over, my dear For us such horrors as thefts and burglaries or people living on false passports are quite enough"

"Thefts and burglaries!" Ivan Dem'yanych murmured through his hooked nose "Oh, how stupid you are!"

"What's to be done, my dear? In what way are we mortals to blame for our brain having its limits? Besides, Ivan Dem'yanych, it is no sin to be a fool in such a temperature. You're my clever darling, but doubtless your brain, too, gets addled and stupid in such heat"

My parrot is not called Polly or by any other of the names given to birds, but he is called Ivan Dem'yanych. He got this name quite by chance. One day, when my man Polycarp was cleaning the cage, he suddenly made a discovery without which my noble bird would still have been called Polly. My lazy servant was suddenly blessed with the idea that my parrot's beak was very like the nose of our village shopkeeper, Ivan Dem'yanych, and from that time the name and patronymic of our long-nosed shopkeeper stuck to my parrot. From that day Polycarp and the whole village christened my extraordinary bird "Ivan Dem'yanych." By Polycarp's will the bird became a personage, and the shopkeeper lost his own name, and to the end of his days he will be known among the villagers under the nickname of the "magistrate's parrot."

I had bought Ivan Dem'yanych from the mother of my predecessor, the examining magistrate, Pospelov, who had died shortly before my appointment. I bought him together with some old oak furniture, various rubbishy kitchen utensils, and in general the whole of the household gods that remained after the deceased. My walls are still decorated with photographs of his relatives, and the portrait of the former occupant is still hanging above my bed. The departed, a lean, muscular man with a red moustache and a thick under-lip, sits looking at me with staring eyes from his faded nutwood frame all the time I am lying on his bed. I had not taken down a single photograph, I had left the house just as I found it. I am too lazy to think of my own comfort, and I don't prevent either corpses or living men from hanging on my walls if the latter wish to do so.\*

Ivan Dem'yanych found it as sultry as I did. He fluffed out his feathers, spread his wings, and shrieked out

\* I beg the reader to excuse such expressions. Kamyshev's story is rich in them, and if I do not omit them it is only because I thought it necessary in the interest of the characterization of the author to print his story *in toto*. —A Ch.

the phrases he had been taught by my predecessor, Pospelov, and by Polycarp To occupy in some way my after-dinner leisure, I sat down in front of the cage and began to watch the movements of my parrot, who was industriously trying, but without success, to escape from the torments he suffered from the suffocating heat and the insects that dwelt among his feathers . . . The poor thing seemed very unhappy

"At what time does he awake ? " was borne to me in a bass voice from the lobby

"That depends ! " Polycarp's voice answered " Sometimes he wakes at five o'clock, and sometimes he sleeps like a log till morning . . . Everybody knows he has nothing to do."

" You're his valet, I suppose ? "

" His servant. Now don't bother me, hold your tongue. Don't you see I'm reading ? "

I peeped into the lobby My Polycarp was there, lolling on the large red trunk, and, as usual, reading a book. With his sleepy, unblinking eyes fixed attentively on his book, he was moving his lips and frowning He was evidently irritated by the presence of the stranger, a tall, bearded muzhik, who was standing near the trunk persistently trying to inveigle him into conversation. At my appearance the muzhik took a step away from the trunk and drew himself up at attention Polycarp looked dissatisfied, and without removing his eyes from the book he rose slightly

" What do you want ? " I asked the muzhik

" I have come from the Count, your honour. The Count sends you his greetings, and begs you to come to him at once . . . "

" Has the Count arrived ? " I asked, much astonished

" Just so, your honour. . . . He arrived last night . . . Here's a letter, sir. . . . "

" What the devil has brought him back ! " my Polycarp grumbled. " Two summers we've lived peacefully without

him, and this year he'll again make a pigsty of the district  
We'll again not escape without shame "

" Hold your tongue, your opinion is not asked ! "

" I need not be asked . . . I'll speak unasked You'll again come home from him in drunken disorder and bathe in the lake just as you are, in all your clothes. . . . I've to clean them afterwards ! They cannot be cleaned in three days ! "

" What's the Count doing now ? " I asked the muzhik.

" He was just sitting down to dinner when he sent me to you . . . Before dinner he fished from the bathing house sir . . . What answer is there ? "

I opened the letter and read the following

" My Dear Lecoq.—If you are still alive, well, and have not forgotten your ever-drunken friend, do not delay a moment Array yourself in your clothing and fly to me. I only arrived last night and am already dying from ennui. The impatience I feel to see you knows no bounds I myself wanted to drive over to see you and carry you off to my den, but the heat has fettered all my limbs I am sitting on one spot fanning myself Well, how are you ? How is your clever Ivan Dem'yanych ? Are you still at war with your pedant, Polycarp ? Come quickly and tell me everything —Your A. K."

It was not necessary to look at the signature to recognize the drunken, sprawling, ugly handwriting of my friend, Count Alevey Karnéev The shortness of the letter, its pretension to a certain playfulness and vivacity proved that my friend, with his limited capacities, must have torn up much notepaper before he was able to compose this epistle.

The pronoun " which " was absent from this letter, and adverbs were carefully avoided—both being grammatical forms that were seldom achieved by the Count at a single sitting.

" What answer is there, sir ? " the muzhik repeated.

At first I did not reply to this question, and every clean-

minded man in my place would have hesitated too. The Count was fond of me, and quite sincerely obtruded his friendship on me. I, on my part, felt nothing like friendship for the Count; I even disliked him. It would therefore have been more honest to reject his friendship once for all than to go to him and dissimulate. Besides, to go to the Count's meant to plunge once more into the life my Polycarp had characterized as a "pigsty," which two years before during the Count's residence on his estate and until he left for Petersburg had injured my good health and had dried up my brain. That loose, unaccustomed life so full of show and drunken madness, had not had time to shatter my constitution, but it had made me notorious in the whole Government . . . I was popular . . .

My reason told me the whole truth, a blush of shame for the not distant past suffused my face, my heart sank with fear that I would not possess sufficient manliness to refuse to go to the Count's, but I did not hesitate long. The struggle lasted not more than a minute.

"Give my compliments to the Count," I said to his messenger, "and thank him for thinking of me . . . Tell him I am busy, and that . . . Tell him that I . . ."

And at the very moment my tongue was about to pronounce a decisive "No," I was suddenly overpowered by a feeling of dullness . . . The young man, full of life, strength and desires, who by the decrees of fate had been cast into this forest village, was seized by a sensation of ennui, of loneliness. . . .

I remembered the Count's gardens with the exuberant vegetation of their cool conservatories, and the semi-darkness of the narrow, neglected avenues . . . Those avenues protected from the sun by arches of the entwined branches of old limes know me well, they also know the women who sought my love and semi-darkness . . . I remembered the luxurious drawing-room with the sweet indolence of its velvet sofas, heavy curtains and thick carpets, soft as down, with the laziness so loved by young

healthy animals . There recurred to my mind my drunken audacity that knew no limits to its boundless satanic pride, and contempt of life My large body wearied by sleep again longed for movement .

" Tell him I'll come ! "

The muzhik bowed and retired

" If I'd known, I wouldn't have let that devil in ! " Polycarp grumbled, quickly turning over the pages of his book in an objectless manner

" Put that book away and go and saddle Zorka," I said  
" Look sharp ! "

" Look sharp ! Oh, of course, certainly . . . I'm just going to rush off . . . It would be all right to go on business, but he'll go to break the devil's horns ! "

This was said in an undertone, but loud enough for me to hear it Having whispered this impertinence, my servant drew himself up before me and waited for me to flare up in reply, but I pretended not to have heard his words My silence was the best and sharpest arms I could use in my contests with Polycarp This contemptuous manner of allowing his venomous words to pass unheeded disarmed him and cut the ground away from under his feet As a punishment it acted better than a box on the ear or a flood of vituperation . . . When Polycarp had gone into the yard to saddle Zorka, I peeped into the book which he had been prevented from reading It was *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Dumas' terrible romance . . . My civilized fool read everything, beginning with the signboards of the public houses and finishing with Auguste Comte, which was lying in my trunk together with other neglected books that I did not read , but of the whole mass of written and printed matter he only approved of terrible, strongly exciting novels with " celebrated personages," poison and subterranean passages , all the rest he dubbed " nonsense " I shall have again to recur to his reading, now I had to ride off A quarter of an hour later the hoofs of my Zorka were raising the dust on the road from the village

to the Count's estate. The sun was near setting, but the heat and the sultriness were still felt. The hot air was dry and motionless, although my road led along the banks of an enormous lake. . On my right I saw the great expanse of water, on the left my sight was caressed by the young vernal foliage of an oak forest, nevertheless, my cheeks suffered the dryness of Sahara "If there could only be a storm!" I thought, dreaming of a good cool downpour.

The lake slept peacefully. It did not greet with a single sound the flight of my Zorka, and it was only the piping of a young snipe that broke the grave-like silence of the motionless giant. The sun looked at itself in it as in a huge mirror, and shed a blinding light on the whole of its breadth that extended from my road to the opposite distant banks. And it seemed to my blinded eyes that nature received light from the lake and not from the sun.

The sultriness impelled to slumber the whole of that life in which the lake and its green banks so richly abounded. The birds had hidden themselves, the fish did not splash in the water, the field crickets and the grasshoppers waited in silence for coolness to set in. All around was a waste. From time to time my Zorka bore me into a thick cloud of littoral mosquitoes, and far away on the lake, scarcely moving, I could see the three black boats belonging to old Mikhey, our fisherman, who leased the fishing rights of the whole lake.

I DID not ride in a straight line as I had to make a circuit along the road that skirted the round lake

It was only possible to go in a straight line by boat, while those who went by the road had to make a large round and the distance was almost eight versts farther All the way, when looking at the lake, I could see beyond it the opposite clayey banks, on which the bright strip of a blossoming cherry orchard gleamed white, while farther still I could see the roofs of the Count's barns dotted all over with many coloured pigeons, and rising still higher the small white belfry of the Count's chapel At the foot of the clayey banks was the bathing house with sailcloth nailed on the sides and sheets hanging to dry on its railings I saw all this, and it appeared to me as if only a verst separated me from my friend the Count, while in order to reach his estate I had to ride about sixteen versts

On the way, I thought of my strange relations to the Count It was interesting for me to give myself an account of how we stood and try to settle it, but, alas ! that account was a task beyond my strength However much I thought, I could come to no satisfactory decision, and at last I arrived at the conclusion that I was but a bad judge of myself and of man in general. The people who knew both the Count and me explained our mutual connexion The narrow-browed, who see nothing beyond the tip of their nose, were fond of asserting that the illustrious Count found in the " poor and undistinguished " magistrate a congenial hanger-on and boon companion To their understanding I, the writer of these lines, fawned and cringed before the Count for the sake of the crumbs and scraps that fell from his table In their opinion the illustrious

millionaire, who was both the bugbear and the envy of the whole of the S—— district, was very clever and liberal; otherwise his gracious condescension that went as far as friendship for an indigent magistrate and the genuine liberalism that made the Count tolerate my familiarity in addressing him as "thou," would be quite incomprehensible. Cleverer people explained our intimacy by our common "spiritual interests." The Count and I were of the same age. We had finished our studies in the same university, we were both jurists, and we both knew very little. I knew a little, but the Count had forgotten and drowned in alcohol the little he had ever known. We were both proud, and by virtue of some reason which was only known to ourselves, we shunned the world like misanthropes. We were both indifferent to the opinion of the world—that is of the S—— district—we were both immoral, and would certainly both end badly. These were the "spiritual interests" that united us. This was all that the people who knew us could say about our relations.

They would, of course, have spoken differently had they known how weak, soft and yielding was the nature of my friend, the Count, and how strong and hard was mine. They would have had much to say had they known how fond this infirm man was of me, and how I disliked him! He was the first to offer his friendship and I was the first to say "thou" to him, but with what a difference in the tone! In a fit of kindly feeling he embraced me, and asked me timidly to be his friend. I, on the other hand, once seized by a feeling of contempt and aversion, said to him:

"Canst thou not cease jabbering nonsense?"

And he accepted this "thou" as an expression of friendship and submitted to it from that time, repaying me with an honest, brotherly "thou."

Yes, it would have been better and more honest had I turned my Zorka's head homewards and ridden back to Polycarp and my Ivan Dem'yanych.

Afterwards I often thought : " How much misfortune I would have avoided bearing on my shoulders, how much good I would have brought to my neighbours if on that night I had had the resolution to turn back, if only my Zorka had gone mad and had carried me far away from that terribly large lake ! What numbers of tormenting recollections which now cause my hand to quit the pen and seize my head would not have pressed so heavily on my mind ! " But I must not anticipate, all the more as farther on I shall often have to pause on misfortunes. Now for gaiety . . .

My Zorka bore me into the gates of the Count's yard At the very gates she stumbled, and I, losing the stirrup, almost fell to the ground

" An ill omen, sir ! " a muzhik, who was standing at one of the doors of the Count's long line of stables, called to me

I believe that a man falling from a horse may break his neck, but I do not believe in prognostications Having given the bridle to the muzhik, I beat the dust off my top-boots with my riding-whip and ran into the house Nobody met me All the doors and windows of the rooms were wide open, nevertheless the air in the house was heavy, and had a strange smell It was a mixture of the odour of ancient, deserted apartments with the tart narcotic scent of hothouse plants that have but recently been brought from the conservatories into the rooms . In the drawing-room, two tumbled cushions were lying on one of the sofas that was covered with a light blue silk material, and on a round table before the sofa I saw a glass containing a few drops of a liquid that exhaled an odour of strong Riga balsam All this denoted that the house was inhabited, but I did not meet a living soul in any of the eleven rooms that I traversed The same desertion that was round the lake reigned in the house . .

A glass door led into the garden from the so-called

"mosaic" drawing-room. I opened it with noise and went down the marble stairs into the garden I had gone but a few steps through the avenue when I met Nastasia, an old woman of ninety, who had formerly been the Count's nurse. This little wrinkled old creature, forgotten by death, had a bald head and piercing eyes When you looked at her face you involuntarily remembered the nickname "Scops-Owl" that had been given her in the village. . . . When she saw me she trembled and almost dropped a glass of milk she was carrying in both hands

"How do you do, Scops?" I said to her

She gave me a sidelong glance and silently went on her way. . . . I seized her by the shoulder

"Don't be afraid, fool. Where's the Count?"

The old woman pointed to her ear

"Are you deaf? How long have you been deaf?"

Despite her great age, the old woman heard and saw very well, but she found it useful to calumniate her senses. I shook my finger at her and let her go

Having gone on a few steps farther, I heard voices, and soon after saw people At the spot where the avenue widened out and formed an open space surrounded by iron benches and shaded by tall white acacias, stood a table on which a samovar shone brightly People were seated at the table, talking. I went quietly across the grass to the open space and, hiding behind a lilac bush, searched for the Count with my eyes

My friend, Count Karnéev, was seated at the table on a folding cane-bottomed chair, drinking tea He was dressed in the same many-coloured dressing-gown in which I had seen him two years before, and he wore a straw hat His face had a troubled, concentrated expression, and it was very wrinkled, so that a man not acquainted with him might have imagined he was troubled at that moment by some serious thought or anxiety . The Count had not changed at all in appearance during the two years since last we met He had the same small thin body, as frail and

wizened as the body of a corn-crake. He had the same narrow, consumptive shoulders, surmounted by a small red-haired head. His small nose was as red as formerly, and his cheeks were flabby and hanging like rags, as they had been two years before. On his face there was nothing of boldness, strength or manliness . . . All was weak, apathetic and languid. The only imposing thing about him was his long, drooping moustache. Somebody had told my friend that a long moustache was very becoming to him. He believed it, and every morning since then he had measured how much longer the growth on his pale lips had become. With this moustache he reminded you of a moustached but very young and puny kitten.

Sitting next to the Count at the table was a stout man with a large closely-cropped head and very dark eyebrows, who was unknown to me. His face was fat and shone like a ripe melon. His moustache was longer than the Count's, his forehead was low, his lips were compressed, and his eyes gazed lazily into the sky . . . The features of his face were bloated, but nevertheless they were as hard as dried-up skin. The type was not Russian . . . The stout man was without his coat or waistcoat, and on his shirt there were dark spots caused by perspiration. He was not drinking tea but Seltzer water.

At a respectful distance from the table a short, thick-set man with a stout red neck and sticking out ears was standing. This man was Urbenin, the Count's bailiff. In honour of the Count's arrival he was dressed in a new black suit and was now suffering torments. The perspiration was pouring in streams from his red, sunburnt face. Next to the bailiff stood the muzhik, who had come to me with the letter. It was only here I noticed that this muzhik had only one eye. Standing at attention, not allowing himself the slightest movement, he was like a statue, and waited to be questioned.

"Kusma, you deserve to be thrashed black and blue with your own whip," the bailiff said to him in his re-

proachful soft bass voice, pausing between each word  
“ Is it possible to execute the master’s orders in such a .  
careless way. You ought to have requested him to come  
here at once and to have found out when he could be  
expected ”

“ Yes, yes, yes . . . ” the Count exclaimed nervously  
“ You ought to have found out everything ! He said  
‘ I’ll come ! ’ But that’s not enough ! I want him at  
once ! Pos-i-tively at once ! You asked him to come, but  
he did not understand ! ”

“ Why do you require him ? ” the fat man asked the  
Count.

“ I want to see him ! ”

“ Only that ? To my mind, Alexey, that magistrate  
would do far better if he remained at home to-day. I have  
no wish for guests ”

I opened my eyes What was the meaning of that  
masterful, authoritative “ I ” ?

“ But he’s not a guest ! ” my friend said in an imploring  
tone “ He won’t prevent you from resting after the  
journey. I beg you not to stand on ceremonies with him.  
. . . You’ll like him at once, my dear boy, and you’ll  
soon be friends with him ! ”

I came out of my hiding place behind the lilac bushes  
and went up to the tables The Count saw and recognized  
me, and his face brightened with a pleased smile.

“ Here he is ! Here he is ! ” he exclaimed, getting red  
with pleasure, and he jumped up from the table. “ How  
good of you to come ! ”

He ran towards me, seized me in his arms, embraced me  
and scratched my cheeks several times with his bristly  
moustache. These kisses were followed by lengthy  
shaking of my hand and long looks into my eyes

“ You, Sergey, have not changed at all ! You’re still  
the same ! The same handsome and strong fellow !  
Thank you for accepting my invitation and coming at  
once ! ”

When released from the Count's embrace, I greeted the bailiff, who was an old friend of mine, and sat down at the table.

"Oh, Golubchek!"\* the Count continued in an excitedly anxious tone. "If you only knew how delighted I am to see your serious countenance again. You are not acquainted? Allow me to introduce you—my good friend, Kaetan Kazimirovich Pshekhotsky. And this," he continued, introducing me to the fat man, "is my good old friend, Sergey Petrovich Zinov'ev! Our magistrate"

The stout, dark-browed man rose slightly from his seat and offered me his fat, and terribly sweaty hand.

"Very pleased," he mumbled, examining me from head to foot. "Very glad!"

Having given vent to his feelings and become calm again, the Count filled a glass with cold, dark brown tea for me and moved a box of biscuits towards my hand.

"Eat. When passing through Moscow I bought them at Einem's. I'm very angry with you, Serezha, so angry that I wanted to quarrel with you!. Not only have you not written me a line during the whole of the past two years, but you did not even think a single one of my letters worth answering! That's not friendly!"

"I don't know how to write letters," I said. "Besides, I have no time for letter writing. Can you tell me what could I have written to you about?"

"There must have been many things!"

"Indeed, there was nothing. I admit of only three sorts of letters: love, congratulatory, and business letters. The first I did not write to you because you are not a woman, and I am not in love with you, the second you don't require; and from the third category we are relieved as from our birth we have never had any business connexion together."

"That's about true," the Count said, agreeing readily and quickly with everything. "but all the same, you

\* Little dove, a much used term of endearment.

might have written, if only a line. . . . And what's more, as Pêtr Egorych tells me, all these two years you've not set foot here, as though you were living a thousand versts away or disdained my property. You might have lived here, shot over my grounds. Many things might have happened here while I was away."

The Count spoke much and long. When once he began talking about anything, his tongue chattered on without ceasing and without end, quite regardless of the triviality or insignificance of his subject.

In the utterance of sounds he was as untiring as my Ivan Dem'yanych. I could hardly stand him for that facility. This time he was stopped by his butler, Il'ya, a tall, thin man in a well-worn, much-stained livery, who brought the Count a wineglass of vodka and half a tumbler of water on a silver tray. The Count swallowed the vodka, washed it down with some water, making a grimace with a shake of the head.

"So it seems you have not yet stopped tippling vodka!" I said.

"No, Serezha, I have not."

"Well, you might at least drop that drunken habit of making faces and shaking your head! It's disgusting!"

"My dear boy, I'm going to drop everything. . . . The doctors have forbidden me to drink. I drink now only because it's unhealthy to drop habits all at once. . . . It must be done gradually. . . ."

I looked at the Count's unhealthy, worn face, at the wineglass, at the butler in yellow shoes. I looked at the dark-browed Pole, who from the very first moment for some reason had appeared to me to be a scoundrel and a blackguard. I looked at the one-eyed muzhik, who stood there at attention, and a feeling of dread and of oppression came over me. . . . I suddenly wanted to leave this dirty atmosphere, having first opened the Count's eyes to all the unlimited antipathy I felt for him. . . . There was a moment when I was ready to rise and depart. . . . But

## THE SHOOTING PARTY

I did not go away . . . I was prevented (I'm ashamed to confess it!) by physical laziness . . .

"Give me a glass of vodka, too!" I said to Il'ya.

Long shadows began to be cast on the avenue and on the open space where we were sitting . . .

The distant croaking of frogs, the cawing of crows and the singing of orioles greeted the setting of the sun A gay evening was just beginning

"Tell Urbenin to sit down," I whispered to the Count, "He's standing before you like a boy"

"Oh, I never thought of that! Petr Egorych," the Count addressed his bailiff, "sit down, please! Why are you standing there?"

Urbenin sat down, casting a grateful glance at me He who was always healthy and gay appeared to me now to be ill and dull. His face seemed wrinkled and sleepy, his eyes looked at us lazily and as if unwillingly

"Well, Petr Egorych, what's new here? Any pretty girls, eh?" Karnéev asked him "Isn't there something special . . . something out of the common?"

"It's always the same, your Excellency . . ."

"Are there no new . . . nice little girls, Petr Egorych?" Moral Petr Egorych blushed.

"I don't know, your Excellency. . . . I don't occupy myself with that . . ."

"There are, your Excellency," broke in the deep bass voice of one-eyed Kuz'ma, who had been silent all the time. "And quite worth notice, too."

"Are they pretty?"

"There are all sorts, your Excellency, for all tastes . . . There are dark ones and fair ones—all sorts . . ."

"O, ho! . . . Stop a minute, stop a minute . . . I remember you now. . . . My former Leporello, a sort of secretary Your name's Kuz'ma, I think?"

"Yes, your Excellency. . . ."

"I remember, I remember. . . Well, and what have you now in view? Something new, all peasant girls?"

"Mostly peasants, of course, but there are finer ones, too . . ."

"Where have you found finer ones . . ." Il'ya asked, winking at Kuz'ma.

"At Easter the postman's sister-in-law came to stay with him . . . Nastasia Ivanovna. . . . A girl all on springs I myself would like to eat her, but money is wanted. . . . Cheeks like peaches, and all the rest as good . . . There's something finer than that, too It's only waiting for you, your Excellency. Young, plump, jolly . . . a beauty! Such a beauty, your Excellency, as you've scarcely found in Petersburg . . ."

"Who is it?"

"Olenka, the forester Skvortsov's daughter."

Urbenin's chair cracked under him. Supporting himself with his hands on the table, purple in the face, the bailiff rose slowly and turned towards one-eyed Kuz'ma. The expression on his face of dullness and fatigue had given place to one of great anger.

"Hold your tongue, serf!" he grumbled "One-eyed vermin! Say what you please, but don't dare to touch respectable people!"

"I'm not touching you, Pëtr Egorych," Kuz'ma said imperturbably.

"I'm not talking about myself, blockhead! Besides. . . . Forgive me, your Excellency," the bailiff turned to the Count, "forgive me for making a scene, but I would beg your Excellency to forbid your Leporello, as you were pleased to call him, to extend his zeal to persons who are worthy of all respect!"

"I don't understand . . ." the Count lisped naively. "He has said nothing very offensive."

Insulted and excited to a degree, Urbenin went away from the table and stood with his side towards us. With his arms crossed on his breast and his eyes blinking, hiding his purple face from us behind the branches of the bushes, he stood plunged in thought.

Had not this man a presentiment that in the near future his moral feelings would have to suffer offences a thousand times more bitter ?

"I don't understand what has offended him !" the Count whispered in my ear "What a caution ! There was nothing offensive in what was said "

After two years of sober life, the glass of vodka acted on me in a slightly intoxicating manner A feeling of lightness, of pleasure, was diffused in my brain and through my whole body Added to this, I began to feel the coolness of evening, which little by little was supplanting the sultriness of the day. I proposed to take a stroll. The Count and his new Polish friend had their coats brought from the house, and we set off Urbenin followed us

### III

THE Count's gardens in which we were walking are worthy of special description owing to their striking luxuriousness. From a botanical or an economical point of view, and in many other ways, they are richer and grander than any other gardens I have ever seen. Besides the above-mentioned avenue with its green vaults, you found in them everything that capricious indulgence can demand from pleasure gardens. You found here every variety of indigenous and foreign fruit tree, beginning with the wild cherry and plum and finishing with apricots that were the size of a goose's egg. You came across mulberry trees, barberry bushes, and even olive trees at every step. Here there were half-ruined, moss-grown grottoes, fountains, little ponds destined for goldfish and tame carp, hillocks, pavilions and costly conservatories. . And all this rare luxury which had been collected by the hands of grandfathers and fathers, all this wealth of large, full roses, poetical grottoes and endless avenues, was barbarously abandoned to neglect, and given over to the power of weeds, the thievish hatchet and the rooks who unceremoniously built their ugly nests on the branches of rare trees! The lawful possessor of all this wealth walked beside me, and the muscles of his lean, satiated face were no more moved by the sight of this neglect, this crying human slovenliness, than if he had not been the owner of these gardens. Once only, by way of making some remark, he said to his bailiff that it would not be a bad thing if the paths were sanded. He noticed the absence of the sand that was not wanted by anybody, but he did not notice the bare trees that had been frozen in the hard winters, or the cows that were walking about

in the garden In reply to his remark, Urbenin said it would require ten men to keep the garden in order, and as his Excellency was not pleased to reside on his estate, the outlay on the garden would be a useless and unproductive luxury The Count, of course, agreed with this argument

"Besides, I must confess I have no time for it!" Urbenin said with a wave of the hand "All the summer in the fields, and in winter selling the corn in town . . . There's no time for gardens here!"

The charm of the principal, the so-called "main avenue," consisted in its old broad-spreading limes, and in the masses of tulips that stretched out in two variegated borders at each side of its whole length and finished at the end in a yellow spot. This was a yellow stone pavilion, which at one time had contained a refreshment room, billiards, skittles and other games We wandered, without any object, towards this pavilion At its door we were met by a live creature which somewhat unsettled the nerves of my companion, who was never very courageous

"A snake!" the Count shrieked, seizing me by the hand and turning pale "Look!"

The Pole stepped back, and then stood stock still with his arms outstretched as if he wanted to bar the way for the apparition. On the upper step of the half-crumbled stone stair there lay a young snake of our ordinary Russian species When it saw us it raised its head and moved. The Count shrieked again and hid behind me

"Don't be afraid, your Excellency . . ." Urbenin said lazily as he placed his foot on the first step.

"But if it bites?"

"It won't bite Besides, the danger from the bite of these snakes is much exaggerated I was once bitten by an old snake, and, as you see, I didn't die. The sting of a man is worse than a snake's!" Urbenin said with a sigh, wishing to point a moral

Indeed, the bailiff had not had time to mount two or three steps before the snake stretched out to its full length,

and with the rapidity of lightning vanished into a crevice between two stones. When we entered the pavilion we saw another living creature. Lying on the torn and faded cloth of the old billiard table there was an elderly man of middle height in a blue jacket, striped trousers, and a jockey cap. He was sleeping sweetly and quietly. Around his toothless gaping mouth and on his pointed nose flies were making themselves at home. Thin as a skeleton, with an open mouth, lying there immovable, he looked like a corpse that had only just been brought in from the mortuary to be dissected.

"Franz!" said Urbenin, poking him. "Franz!"

After being poked five or six times, Franz shut his mouth, sat up, looked round at us, and lay down again. A minute later his mouth was again open and the flies that were walking about his nose were again disturbed by the slight vibration of his snores.

"He's asleep, the lewd swine!" Urbenin sighed.

"Is he not our gardener, Tricher?" the Count asked.

"No other. . . . That's how he is every day. . . . He sleeps like a dead man all day and plays cards all night. I was told he gambled last night till six in the morning."

"What do they play?"

"Games of hazard. Chiefly stukolka."

"Well, such gentlemen work badly. They draw their wages for nothing!"

"It was not to complain, your Excellency," Urbenin hastened to say, "that I told you this, or to express my dissatisfaction, it was only . . . I am only sorry that so capable a man is a slave to his passions. He really is a hard-working man, capable too . . . He does not receive wages for nothing."

We glanced again at the gambler Franz and left the pavilion. We then turned towards the garden gate and went into the fields.

There are but few novels in which the garden gate does not play an important part. If you have not noticed this,

you have only to inquire of my man Polycarp, who in his lifetime has swallowed multitudes of terrible and not terrible novels, and he will doubtless confirm this insignificant but characteristic fact

My novel has also not escaped the inevitable garden gate. But my gate is different from others in this, that my pen will have to lead through it many unfortunate and scarcely any happy people, and even this in a direction contrary to the one found in other novels. And what is worse, I had once to describe this gate not as a novel-writer but as an examining magistrate. In my novel more criminals than lovers will pass through it.

A quarter of an hour later, supporting ourselves on our walking sticks, we wound our way up the hill to what is known as the "Stone Grave." In the surrounding villages there is a legend that under this heap of stones there reposes the body of a Tartar Khan, who, fearing that after his death the enemy would desecrate his ashes, had ordered that a mound of stones was to be made above his body. This legend, however, is scarcely correct. The layers of stone, their size and relative position, exclude the possibility of man's hand having had a part in the formation of this mound. It stands solitary in the midst of fields and has the aspect of an overturned dome.

From the top of this mound we could see the lake to the whole of its captivating extent and indescribable beauty. The sun, no longer reflected in it, had set, leaving behind a broad purple stripe that illuminated the surroundings with a pleasing rosy-yellow tint. The Count's manor and homestead with their houses, church and gardens, lay at our feet, and on the other side of the lake the little village where it was my fate to live looked grey in the distance. As before, the surface of the lake was without a ripple. Old Mikhey's little boats, separated from one another, were hurrying towards the shore.

To the left of my little village the buildings of the railway station stood out dark beneath the smoke from the

engines, and behind us at the foot of the Stone Grave the road was bordered on either side by towering old poplars This road leads to the Count's forest that extends to the very horizon

The Count and I stood on the top of the hill. Urbenin and the Pole being heavy men preferred to wait for us on the road below

"Who's that cove ?" I asked the Count, nodding towards the Pole "Where did you pick him up ?"

"He's a very nice fellow, Serezha, very nice !" the Count said in an agitated voice "You'll soon be the best of friends "

"Oh, that's not likely ! Why does he never speak ?"

"He is silent by nature ! But he's very clever !"

"But what sort of a man is he ?"

"I became acquainted with him in Moscow He is very nice You'll hear all about it afterwards, Serezha ; don't ask now. Let's go down "

We descended the hill and went along the road towards the forest. It began to be perceptibly darker. The cry of the cuckoo, and the tired vocal warbles of a possibly youthful nightingale were heard in the forest

"Hollo ! Hollo ! Catch me !" we heard a high-pitched voice of a child shout as we approached the forest

A little girl of about five with hair as white as flax, dressed in a sky-blue frock, ran out of the wood When she saw us she laughed aloud, and with a skip and a jump put her arms round Urbenin's knee Urbenin lifted her up and kissed her cheek.

"My daughter Sasha !" he said "Let me introduce her !"

Sasha was pursued out of the wood by a schoolboy of about fifteen, Urbenin's son When he saw us he pulled off his cap hesitatingly, put it on, and pulled it off again. He was followed quietly by a red spot This red spot attracted our attention at once. "What a beautiful apparition !" the Count exclaimed, catching hold of my

hand "Look! How charming! What girl is this? I did not know that my forests were inhabited by such naiads!"

I looked round at Urbenin in order to ask him who this girl was, and, strange to say, it was only at that moment I noticed that he was terribly drunk. He was as red as a crawfish, he tottered and, seizing my elbow, he whispered into my ear, exhaling the fumes of spirit on me.

"Sergey Petrovich, I implore you prevent the Count from making any further remarks about this girl! He may, from habit say too much, she is a most worthy person!"

This "most worthy person" was represented by a girl of about nineteen, with beautiful fair hair, kind blue eyes and long curls. She was dressed in a bright red frock, made in a fashion that was neither that of a child nor of a young girl. Her legs, straight as needles, in red stockings, were shod with tiny shoes that were small as a child's. All the time I was admiring her she moved about her well-rounded shoulders coquettishly, as if they were cold or as if my gaze bit her.

"Such a young face, and such developed contours!" whispered the Count, who from his earliest youth had lost the capacity of respecting women, and never looked at them otherwise than from the point of view of a spoilt animal.

I remember that a good feeling was ignited in my breast. I was still a poet, and in the company of the woods, of a May night, and the first twinkling of the evening stars, I could only look at a woman as a poet does . . . I looked at "the girl in red" with the same veneration I was accustomed to look upon the forests, the hills and the blue sky. I still had a certain amount of the sentimentality I had inherited from my German mother.

"Who is she?" the Count asked.

"She is the daughter of our forester Skvortsov, your Excellency!" Urbenin replied.

"Is she the Olenka, the one-eyed muzhik spoke of?"

Yes, he mentioned her name," the bailiff answered, looking at me with large, imploring eyes

The girl in red let us go past her, turning away without taking any notice of us Her eyes were looking at something at the side, but I, a man who knows women, felt her pupils resting on my face

"Which of them is the Count?" I heard her whisper behind us.

"That one with the long moustache," the schoolboy answered

And we heard silvery laughter behind us It was the laughter of disenchantment She had thought that the Count, the owner of these immense forests and the broad lake, was I, and not that pigmy with the worn face and long moustache

I heard a deep sigh issue from Urbenin's powerful breast. That iron man could scarcely move

"Dismiss the bailiff," I whispered to the Count "He is ill or—drunk."

"Petr Egorych, you seem to be unwell," the Count said, turning to Urbenin. "I do not require you just now, so I will not detain you any longer."

"Your Excellency need not trouble about me. Thank you for your attention, but I am not ill"

I looked back. The red spot had not moved, but was looking after us.

Poor, fair little head! Did I think on that quiet, peaceful May evening that she would afterwards become the heroine of my troubled romance?

Now, while I write these lines, the autumn rain beats fiercely against my warm windows, and the wind howls above me. I gaze at the dark window and on the dark background of night beyond, trying by the strength of my imagination to conjure up again the charming image of my heroine . . . I see her with her innocent, childish, naive, kind little face and loving eyes, and I wish to throw down

my pen and tear up and burn all that I have already written

But here, next to my inkstand, is her photograph. Here, the fair little head is represented in all the vain majesty of a beautiful but deeply-fallen woman. Her weary eyes, proud of their depravity, are motionless. Here she is just the serpent, the harm of whose bite Urbenin would scarcely have called exaggerated.

She gave a kiss to the storm, and the storm broke the flower at the very roots. Much was taken, but too dearly was it paid for. The reader will forgive her her sins !

## IV

**W**E walked through the wood

The pines were dull in their silent monotony.

They all grow in the same way, one like the others, and at every season of the year they retain the same appearance, knowing neither death nor the renewal of spring. Still, they are attractive in their moroseness. immovable, soundless they seem to think mournful thoughts.

"Hadn't we better turn back?" the Count suggested

This question received no reply It was all the same to the Pole where he was Urbenin did not consider his voice decisive, and I was too much delighted with the coolness of the forest and its resinous air to wish to turn back Besides, it was necessary to kill time till night, even by a simple walk The thoughts of the approaching wild night were accompanied by a sweet sinking of the heart I am afraid to confess that I thought of it, and had already mentally a foretaste of its enjoyments Judging by the impatience with which the Count constantly looked at his watch, it was evident that he, too, was tormented by expectations We felt that we understood each other.

Near the forester's house, which nestled between pines on a small square open space, we were met by the loud-sounding bark of two small fiery-yellow dogs, of a breed that was unknown to me , they were as glossy and supple as eels. Recognizing Urbenin, they joyfully wagged their tails and ran towards him, from which one could deduce that the bailiff often visited the forester's house. Here, too, near the house, we were met by a lad without boots or cap, with large freckles on his astonished face. For a moment he looked at us in silence with staring eyes, then,

evidently recognizing the Count, he gave an exclamation and rushed headlong into the house

"I know what he's gone for," the Count said, laughing.  
"I remember him      It's Mit'ka"

The Count was not mistaken. In less than a minute Mit'ka came out of the house carrying a tray with a glass of vodka and a tumbler half full of water

"For your good health, your Excellency!" he said, a broad grin suffusing the whole of his stupid, astonished face

The Count drank off the vodka, washed it down with water in lieu of a snack, but this time he made no wry face A hundred paces from the house there was an iron seat, as old as the pines above it We sat down on it and contemplated the May evening in all its tranquil beauty . . . The frightened crows flew cawing above our heads, the song of nightingales was borne towards us from all sides ; these were the only sounds that broke the pervading stillness

The Count does not know how to be silent, even on such a calm spring evening, when the voice of man is the least agreeable sound

"I don't know if you will be satisfied?" he said to me  
"I have ordered a fish-soup and game for supper. With the vodka we shall have cold sturgeon and sucking-pig with horse-radish"

As if angered at this prosaic observation, the poetical pines suddenly shook their tops and a gentle rustle passed through the wood. A fresh breeze swept over the glade and played with the grass

"Down, down!" Urbenin cried to the flame-coloured dogs, who were preventing him from lighting his cigarette with their caresses "I think we shall have rain before night I feel it in the air. It was so terribly hot to-day that it does not require a learned professor to prophesy rain. It will be a good thing for the corn"

"What's the use of corn to you," I thought, "if the Count will spend it all on drink? The rain need not trouble about it."

Once more a light breeze passed over the forest, but this time it was stronger. The pines and the grass rustled louder.

"Let us go home."

We rose and strolled lazily back towards the little house

"It is better to be this fair-haired Olenka," I said, addressing myself to Urbenin, "and to live here with the beasts than to be a magistrate and live among men . . . It's more peaceful. Is it not so, Petr Egorych?"

"It's all the same what one is, Sergey Petrovich, if only the soul is at peace."

"Is pretty Olenka's soul at peace?"

"God alone knows the secrets of other people's souls, but I think she has nothing to trouble her. She has not much to worry her, and no more sins than an infant . . . She's a very good girl! Ah, now the sky is at last beginning to talk of rain. . . ."

A rumble was heard, somewhat like the sound of a distant vehicle or the rattle of a game of skittles. Somewhere, far beyond the forest, there was a peal of thunder. Mit'ka, who had been watching us the whole time, shuddered and crossed himself.

"A thunderstorm!" the Count exclaimed with a start. "What a surprise! The rain will overtake us on our way home. . . . How dark it is! I said we ought to have turned back! And you wouldn't, and went on and on."

"We might wait in the cottage till the storm is over," I suggested.

"Why in the cottage?" Urbenin said hastily, and his eyes blinked in a strange manner. "It will rain all night, so you'll have to remain all night in the cottage! Please, don't trouble. . . . Go quietly on, and Mit'ka shall run on and order your carriage to come to meet you."

"Never mind, perhaps it won't rain all night . . . Storm clouds usually pass by quickly. . . . Besides, I don't know the new forester as yet, and I'd also like to

have a chat with this Olenka . . . and find out what sort of a dickey bird she is . . . ”

“ I’ve no objections ! ” the Count agreed

“ How can you go there, if—if the place is not—not in order ? ” Urbenin mumbled anxiously “ Why should your Excellency sit there in a stuffy room when you could be at home ? I don’t understand what pleasure that can be ! . . . How can you get to know the forester if he is ill ? . . . ”

It was very evident that the bailiff strongly objected to our going into the forester’s house He even spread his arms as if he wanted to bar the way. . . . I understood by his face that he had reasons for preventing us from going in I respect other people’s reasons and secrets, but on this occasion my curiosity was greatly excited I persisted, and we entered the house.

“ Walk into the drawing-room, please,” bare-footed Mit’ka spluttered almost choking with delight.

Try to imagine the very smallest drawing-room in the world, with unpainted deal walls These walls are hung all over with oleographs from the “ Niva,” photographs in frames made of shells, and testimonials One testimonial is from a certain baron, expressing his gratitude for many years of service , all the others are for horses Here and there ivy climbs up the wall. . . . In a corner a small lamp, whose tiny blue flame is faintly reflected on the silver mounting, burns peacefully before a little icon Chairs that have evidently been only recently bought are pressed close together round the walls Too many had been purchased, and they had been squeezed together, as there was nowhere else to put them. . . . Here, also, there are armchairs and a sofa in snow-white covers with flounces and laces, crowded up with a polished round table. A tame hare dozes on the sofa . . . The room is cosy, clean and warm . . . The presence of a woman can be noticed everywhere. Even the whatnot with books has a look of innocence and womanliness , it appears to be

anxious to say that there is nothing on its shelves but wishy-washy novels and mawkish verse . . . The charm of such warm, cosy rooms is not so much felt in spring as in autumn, when you look for a refuge from the cold and dampness.

After much loud snivelling, blowing, and noisy striking of matches, Mit'ka lit two candles and placed them on the table as carefully as if they had been milk. We sat down in the arm-chairs, looked at each other, and laughed.

"Nikolai Efimych is ill in bed," Urbenin said, to explain the absence of the master, "and Olga Nikolaevna has probably gone to accompany my children . . ."

"Mit'ka, are the doors shut?" we heard a weak tenor voice asking from the next room

"They're all shut, Nikolai Efimych!" Mit'ka shouted hoarsely, and he rushed headlong into the next room

"That's right! See that they are all shut," the same weak voice said again. "And locked—firmly locked . . . If thieves break in, you must tell me. . . . I'll shoot the villains with my gun . . . the scoundrels!"

"Certainly, Nikolai Efimych!"

We laughed and looked inquiringly at Urbenin. He grew very red, and in order to hide his confusion he began to arrange the curtains of the windows. . . . What does this dream mean? We again looked at each other.

We had no time for perplexity. Hasty steps were heard outside, then a noise in the porch and the slamming of doors. And the "girl in red" rushed into the room

"I love the thunder in early May," she sang in a loud, shrill soprano voice, and she cut short her song with a burst of laughter, but when she saw us she suddenly stood still and was silent,—she became embarrassed, and went as quietly as a lamb into the room in which the voice of Nikolai Efimych, her father, had been heard.

"She did not expect to see you," Urbenin said, laughing.

A few minutes later she again came quietly into the room, sat down on the chair nearest the door and began

to examine us She stared at us boldly, not as if we were new people for her, but as if we were animals in the Zoological Gardens For a minute we too looked at her in silence without moving. . . I would have agreed to sit still and look at her for a whole hour in this way—she was so lovely that evening As fresh as the air, rosy, breathing rapidly, her bosom rising and falling, her curls scattered wildly on her forehead, on her shoulders, and on her right hand that was raised to arrange her collar , with large, sparkling eyes . . And all this was found on one little body that a single glance could envelop If you glanced for a moment at this small object you saw more than you would if you looked for a whole century at the endless horizon . . She looked at me seriously, from my feet upwards, inquiringly , when her eyes left me and passed to the Count or to the Pole I began to read in them the contrary a glance that passed from the head to the feet, and laughter. . .

I was the first to speak

“Allow me to introduce myself,” I said, rising and going up to her. “Zinov’ev . . . And let me introduce my friend, Count Karnéev . . We beg you to pardon us for breaking into your nice little house without an invitation . . We would, of course, never have done so if the storm had not driven us in. . .”

“But that won’t cause our little house to tumble down ! ” she said, laughing and giving me her hand.

She displayed her splendid white teeth I sat down on a chair next to her, and told her how quite unexpectedly the storm had overtaken us on our walk. Our conversation began with the weather—the beginning of all beginnings While we were talking, Mit’ka had had time to offer the Count two glasses of vodka with the inseparable tumbler of water. Thinking that I was not looking at him, the Count made a sweet grimace and shook his head after each glass

“Perhaps you would like some refreshments ? ” Olenka

asked me, and, not waiting for an answer, she left the room

The first drops of rain rattled against the panes . . . I went up to the windows . . . It was now quite dark, and through the glass I could see nothing but the raindrops creeping down and the reflection of my own nose There was a flash of lightning, which illuminated some of the nearest pines.

"Are the doors shut ?" I heard the same tenor voice ask again. "Mit'ka, come here, you vile-spirited scoundrel ! Shut the doors ! Oh, Lord, what torments !"

A peasant woman with an enormous, tightly tied-in stomach and a stupid, troubled face came into the room, and, having bowed low to the Count, she spread a white table-cloth on the table. Mit'ka followed her carefully carrying a tray with various *hors d'œuvres*. A minute later, we had vodka, rum, cheese, and a dish of some sort of roasted bird on the table before us. The Count drank a glass of vodka, but he would not eat anything. The Pole smelt the bird mistrustfully, and then began to carve it

"The rain has begun ! Look !" I said to Olenka, who had re-entered the room

"The girl in red" came up to the window where I was standing, and at that very moment we were illuminated by a white flash of light. . . . There was a fearful crash above us, and it appeared to me that something large and heavy had been torn from the sky and had fallen to earth with a terrible racket . . . The window panes and the wineglasses that were standing before the Count jingled and emitted their tinkling sound . . . The thunderclap was a loud one.

"Aré you afraid of thunder-storms ?" I asked Olenka.

She only pressed her cheek to her round shoulders and looked at me with childish confidence

"I'm afraid," she whispered after a moment's reflection. "My mother was killed by a storm. . . . The newspapers even wrote about it. . . . My mother was going through

the fields, crying . . . She had a very bitter life in this world God had compassion on her and killed her with His heavenly electricity ”

“ How do you know that there is electricity there ? ”

“ I have learned . . . Do you know ? People who have been killed by a storm or in war, or who have died after a difficult confinement go to paradise . . . This is not written anywhere in books, but it is true My mother is now in paradise ! I think the thunder will also kill me some day, and I shall go to paradise too . . . Are you a cultivated man ? ”

“ Yes ”

“ Then you will not laugh. . . . This is how I should like to die to dress in the most costly fashionable frock, like the one I saw the other day on our rich lady, the land-owner Sheffer ; to put bracelets on my arms . . . Then to go to the very summit of the ‘ Stone Grave ’ and allow myself to be killed by the lightning, so that all the people could see it . . . A terrible peal of thunder, and then, you know, the end ! ”

“ What an odd fancy ! ” I said, laughing and looking into her eyes that were full of holy horror at this terrible but effective death. “ Then you don’t want to die in an ordinary dress ? ”

“ No ! . . . ” Olenka shook her head “ And so that everybody should see me ”

“ The frock you are in is far better than any fashionable and expensive dress . . . It suits you In it you look like the red flower of the green woods ”

“ No, that is not true ! ” And Olenka sighed ingenuously “ This frock is a cheap one , it can’t be pretty ”

The Count came up to our window with the evident intention of talking to pretty Olenka My friend could speak three European languages, but he did not know how to talk to women. He stood near us awkwardly, smiling in an inane manner ; then he lowed,—inarticulately, “ Er—yes,”—and retraced his steps to the decanter of vodka.

" You were singing ' I love the thunder in early May,' " I said to Olenka. " Have those verses been set to music ? "

" No, I sing all the verses I know to my own melodies."

I happened by chance to glance back Urbenin was looking at us. In his eyes I read hatred and animosity. passions that were not at all in keeping with his kind, meek face.

" Can he be jealous ? " I thought

The poor fellow caught my inquiring glance, rose from his chair and went into the lobby to look for something . . . Even by his gait one could see that he was agitated. The peals of thunder became louder and louder, more prolonged, and oftener repeated . . . The lightning unceasingly illuminated the sky, the pines and the wet earth with its pleasant but blinding light . . . The rain was not likely to end soon. I left the window and went up to the bookshelves and began to examine Olenka's library. " Tell me what you read, and I will tell you what you are," I said. But out of the goods that were so symmetrically ranged on the shelves it was difficult to arrive at any estimate of Olenka's mental capacities or " educational standard." There was a strange medley on those shelves. Three anthologies, one book of Börne's, Evtushevsky's arithmetic, the second volume of Lermontov's works, Shklyarevsky, a number of the magazine *Work*, a cookery book, *Skladchina* . . . I might enumerate other books for you, but at the moment I took *Skladchina* from the shelf and began to turn over the pages. The door leading into the next room opened, and a person entered the drawing-room, who at once diverted my attention from Olenka's standard of culture. This person was a tall, muscular man in a print dressing-gown and torn slippers, with an original countenance. His face, covered all over with blue veins, was ornamented with a pair of sergeant's moustaches and whiskers, and had in general a strong resemblance to a bird. His whole face seemed to be drawn forwards, as if trying to concentrate

itself in the tip of the nose. Such faces are like the spout of a pitcher. This person's small head was set on a long thin throat, with a large Adam's-apple, and shook about like the nesting-box of a starling in the wind. . . . This strange man looked round on us all with his dim green eyes, and then let them rest on the Count.

"Are the doors shut?" he asked in an imploring voice

The Count looked at me and shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't trouble, papasha!" Olenka answered "They are all shut. . . . Go back to your room!"

"Is the barn door shut?"

"He's a little queer. . . . It takes him sometimes," Urbenin whispered to me as he came in from the lobby. "He's afraid of thieves, and always troubling about the doors, as you see."

"Nikolai Efimych," he continued, addressing this strange apparition, "go back to your room and go to bed! Don't trouble, everything is shut up!"

"And are the windows shut?"

Nikolai Efimych hastily looked to see if the windows were properly bolted, and then without taking any notice of us he shuffled off into his own room

"The poor fellow has these attacks sometimes," Urbenin began to explain as soon as he had left the room. "He's a good, capable man; he has a family, too—such a misfortune! Almost every summer he is a little out of his mind . . ."

I looked at Olenka. She became confused, and hiding her face from us began to put in order again her books that I had disarranged. She was evidently ashamed of her mad father

"The carriage is there, your Excellency! Now you can drive home, if you wish!"

"Where has that carriage come from?" I asked.

"I sent for it. . . ."

A minute later I was sitting with the Count in the

carriage, listening to the peals of thunder and feeling very angry.

"We've been nicely turned out of the little house by that Pétr Egorych, the devil take him!" I grumbled, getting really angry. "So he's prevented us from examining Olenka properly! I would not have eaten her! . . . The old fool! The whole time he was bursting with jealousy. . . . He's in love with that girl . . ."

"Yes, yes, yes . . . Would you believe it, I noticed that, too! He would not let us go into the house from jealousy. And he sent for the carriage only from jealousy. . . . Ha, ha, ha!"

"The later love comes the more it burns . . . Besides, brother, it's difficult not to fall in love with this girl in red, if one sees her every day as we saw her to-day! She's devilish pretty! But she's not for his net . . . He ought to understand it and not be jealous of others so egoistically. . . . Why can't he love and not stand in the way of others, all the more as he must know she's not destined for him? . . . What an old blockhead!"

"Do you remember how enraged he was when Kuz'ma mentioned her name at tea-time?" the Count sniggered. "I thought he was going to thrash us all . . . A man does not defend the good fame of a woman so hotly if he's indifferent to her. . . ."

"Some men will, brother . . . But this is not the question . . . What's important is this. . . If he can command us in the way he has done to-day, what does he do with the small people, with those who are at his disposal? Doubtless, the stewards, the butlers, the huntsmen and the rest of the small fry are prevented by him from even approaching her! Love and jealousy make a man unjust, heartless, misanthropical . . . I don't mind betting that for the sake of this Olenka he has worried more than one of the people under his control. It will, therefore, be wise on your part if you put less trust in his complaints of the people in your service and his demands

for the dismissal of this or that one. In general, to limit his power for a time . . . Love will pass—well, and then there will be nothing to fear He's a kind and honest fellow . . .”

“ And what do you think of her papa ? ” the Count asked, laughing

“ A madman . . . He ought to be in a madhouse and not looking after forests In general you won't be far from the truth if you put up a signboard : ‘ Madhouse ’ over the gate of your estate . . . You have a real Bedlam here ! This forester, the Scops-Owl, Franz, who is mad on cards, this old man in love, an excitable girl, a drunken Count. . . . What do you want more ? ”

“ Why, this forester receives a salary ! How can he do his work if he is mad ? ”

“ Urbenin evidently only keeps him for his daughter's sake . . . Urbenin says that Nikolai Efimych has these attacks every summer. . . . That's not likely. . . . This forester is ill, not every summer, but always . . . By good luck, your Pëtr Egorych seldom lies, and he gives himself away when he does lie about anything . . . ”

“ Last year Urbenin informed me that our old forester Akhmet'ev was going to become a monk on Mount Athos, and he recommended me to take the ‘ experienced, honest and worthy Skvortsov ’ . . . I, of course, agreed as I always do Letters are not faces : they do not give themselves away when they lie

The carriage drove into the courtyard and stopped at the front door We alighted. The rain had stopped. The thunder cloud, scintillating with lightning and emitting angry grumbles, was hurrying towards the north-east and uncovering more and more the dark blue star-spangled sky. It was like a heavily armed power which having ravaged the country and imposed a terrible tribute, was rushing on to new conquests . . . The small clouds that remained behind were chasing after it as if fearing

to be unable to catch it up . . . Nature had its peace restored to it.

And that peace seemed astonished at the calm, aromatic air, so full of softness, of the melodies of nightingales, at the silence of the sleeping gardens and the caressing light of the rising moon. The lake awoke after the day's sleep, and by gentle murmurs brought memories of itself to man's hearing. . . .

At such a time it is good to drive through the fields in a comfortable calash or to be rowing on the lake . . . But we went into the house. . . . There another sort of poetry was awaiting us.

A MAN who under the influence of mental pain or unbearably oppressive suffering sends a bullet through his own head is called a suicide ; but for those who give freedom to their pitiful, soul-debasing passions in the holy days of spring and youth, there is no name in man's vocabulary. After the bullet follows the peace of the grave : ruined youth is followed by years of grief and painful recollections. He who has profaned his spring will understand the present condition of my soul. I am not yet old, or grey, but I no longer live. Psychiaters tell us that a soldier, who was wounded at Waterloo, went mad, and afterwards assured everybody—and believed it himself—that he had died at Waterloo, and that what was now considered to be him was only his shadow, a reflection of the past. I am now experiencing something resembling this semi-death. . . .

"I am very glad that you ate nothing at the forester's and haven't spoilt your appetite," the Count said to me as we entered the house. "We shall have an excellent supper. . . . Like old times. . . . Serve supper!" He gave the order to Il'ya who was helping him to take off his coat and put on a dressing-gown.

We went into the dining-room. Here on the side-table life was already bubbling over. Bottles of every colour and of every imaginable size were standing in rows as on the shelves of a theatre refreshment-room, reflecting on their sides the light of the lamps while awaiting our attention. All sorts of salted and pickled viands and various *hors d'œuvres* stood on another table with a decanter of vodka and another of English bitters. Near the wine

bottles there were two dishes, one of sucking pig and the other of cold sturgeon.

"Well, gentlemen," the Count began as he poured out three glasses of vodka and shivered as if from cold "To our good health! Kaetan Kazimirovich, take your glass!"

I drank mine off, the Pole only shook his head negatively He moved the dish of sturgeon towards himself, smelt it, and began to eat.

I must apologize to the reader. I have now to describe something not at all "romantic"

"Well, come on . . . they drank another," the Count said, and filled the glasses again "Fire away, Lecoq!"

I took up my wineglass, looked at it and put it down again

"The devil take it, it's long since I drank," I said "Shouldn't we remember old times?"

Without further reflection, I filled five glasses and emptied them one after another into my mouth That was the only way I knew how to drink Small schoolboys learn how to smoke cigarettes from big ones: the Count looked at me, poured out five glasses for himself, and, bending forwards in the form of an arch, frowning and shaking his head, he drank them off My five glasses appeared to him to be bravado, but I drank them not at all to display my talent for drinking . . . I wanted to get drunk, to get properly, thoroughly drunk . . . Drunk as I had not been for a long time while living in my village Having drunk them, I sat down to table and began to discuss the sucking pig.

Intoxication was not long in succeeding I soon felt a slight giddiness. There was a pleasant feeling of coolness in my chest—and a happy, expansive condition set in. Without any visible transition I suddenly became very gay. The feeling of emptiness and dullness gave place to a sensation of thorough joy and gaiety I smiled I

suddenly wanted chatter, laughter, people around me. As I chewed the sucking pig I began to feel the fullness of life, almost the self-sufficiency of life, almost happiness.

"Why don't you drink anything?" I asked the Pole

"He never drinks," the Count said "Don't force him to"

"But surely you can drink something!"

The Pole put a large bit of sturgeon into his mouth and shook his head negatively. His silence incensed me.

"I say, Kaetan . . . what's your patronymic? . . . why are you always silent?" I asked him. "I have not had the pleasure of hearing your voice as yet"

His two eyebrows that resembled the outstretched wings of a swallow were raised and he gazed at me

"Do you wish me to speak?" he asked with a strong Polish accent

"Very much."

"Why do you wish it?"

"Why, indeed! On board steamers at dinner strangers and people who are not acquainted converse together, and here are we, who have known one another for several hours, looking at each other and not exchanging a single word! What does that look like?"

The Pole remained silent

"Why are you silent?" I asked again after waiting a moment "Answer something, can't you?"

"I do not wish to answer you I hear laughter in your voice, and I do not like derision"

"He's not laughing at all," the Count interposed in alarm "Where did you fish up that notion, Kaetan? He's quite friendly . . ."

"Counts and Princes have never spoken to me in such a tone!" Kaetan said, frowning. "I don't like that tone"

"Consequently, you will not honour me with your

conversation?" I continued to worry him as I emptied another glass and laughed.

"Do you know my real reason for coming here?" the Count broke in, desirous of changing the conversation. "I haven't told you as yet? In Petersburg I went to the doctor who has always treated me, to consult him about my health. He auscultated, knocked and pressed me everywhere, and said: 'You're not a coward!' Well, you know, though I'm no coward, I grew pale 'I'm not a coward,' I replied"

"Cut it short, brother. . . . That's tiresome"

"He told me I should soon die if I did not go away from Petersburg! My liver is quite diseased from too much drink. . . . So I decided to come here It would have been silly to remain there This estate is so fine - so rich . . . The climate alone is worth a fortune! . . . Here, at least, I can occupy myself with my own affairs Work is the best, the most efficacious medicine Kaetan, is that not true? I shall look after the estate and chuck drink . . . The doctor did not allow me a single glass not one!"

"Well, then, don't drink"

"I don't drink . . . To-day is the last time, in honour of meeting you again"—the Count stretched towards me and gave me a smacking kiss on the cheek—"my dear, good friend To-morrow—not a drop! To-day, Bacchus takes leave of me for ever. . . . Serezha, let us have a farewell glass of cognac together?"

We drank a glass of cognac

"I shall get well, Serezha, golabchik, and I shall look after the estate. . . . Rational agriculture! Urbenin—is good, kind . . . he understands everything, but is he the master? He's a routinist! We must send for magazines, read, look into everything, take part in the agricultural and dairy exhibitions, but he is not educated for that! Is it possible he can be in love with Olenka? Ha-ha! I shall look into everything and keep him as my

assistant . I shall take part in the elections ; I shall entertain society . . . Eh ? Even here one can live happily ! What do you think ? Now there you are, laughing again ! Already laughing ! One really can't talk with you about anything ! "

I was gay, I was amused. The Count amused me , the candles, the bottles amused me , the stucco hares and ducks that ornamented the walls of the dining-room amused me. . The only thing that did not amuse me was the sober face of Kaetan Kazimirovich The presence of this man irritated me

" Can't you send that Polish nobleman to the devil ? " I whispered to the Count

" What ? For God's sake ! . " the Count murmured, seizing both my hands as if I had been about to beat his Pole " Let him sit there ! "

" I can't look at him ! I say," I continued, addressing Pshekhotsky, " you refused to talk to me , but forgive me. I have not yet given up hope of being more closely acquainted with your conversational capacities "

" Leave him alone ! " the Count said, pulling me by the sleeve " I implore you ! "

" I shall not stop worrying you until you answer me," I continued " Why are you frowning ? Is it possible that you still hear laughter in my voice ? "

" If I had drunk as much as you have, I would talk to you ; but as it is we are not a proper pair," the Pole replied.

" That we are not a pair is what was to be proved . . . That is exactly what I wanted to say. A goose and a swine are no comrades ; the drunkard and the sober man are no kin , the drunkard disturbs the sober man, the sober man the drunkard. In the adjoining drawing-room there is a soft and excellent sofa It's a good thing to lie upon it after sturgeon with horse-radish My voice will not be heard there Do you not wish to retire to that room ? "

The Count clasped his hands and walked about the dining-room with blinking eyes.

He is a coward and is always afraid of "big" talk. I, on the contrary, when drunk, am amused by cross-purposes and discontentedness

"I don't understand! I don't un-der-stand!" the Count groaned, not knowing what to say or what to do.

He knew it was difficult to stop me.

"I am only slightly acquainted with you," I continued  
"Perhaps you are an excellent man, and therefore I don't wish to quarrel with you too soon . . . I won't quarrel with you I only invite you to understand that there is no place for a sober man among drunken ones. . . . The presence of a sober man has an irritating effect on the drunken organism! . . . Take that to heart!"

"Say whatever you like!" Pslekhotsky sighed  
"Nothing that you can say will provoke me, young man"

"So nothing will provoke you? Will you also not be offended if I call you an obstinate swine?"

The Pole grew red in the face—but only that The Count became pale, he came up to me, looked imploringly at me, and spread his arms

"Well, I beg you! Restrain your tongue!"

I had now quite entered into my drunken part, and wanted to go on, but fortunately at that moment the Count and the Pole heard footsteps and Urbenin entered the dining-room.

"I wish you all a good appetite!" he began. "I have come, your Excellency, to find out if you have any orders for me?"

"I have no orders so far, but a request," the Count replied. "I am very glad you have come, Pétr Egorych. . . . Sit down and have supper with us, and let us talk about the business of the estate. . . ."

Urbenin sat down. The Count drank off a glass of cognac and began to explain his plans for the future rational management of the estate He spoke very long

and wearisomely, often repeating himself and changing the subject. Urbenin listened to him lazily and attentively as serious people listen to the prattle of children and women. He ate his fish-soup, and looked sadly at his plate.

"I have brought some remarkable plans with me!" the Count said among other things. "Remarkable plans! I will show them to you if you wish it?"

Karnéev jumped up and ran into his study for the plans. Urbenin took advantage of his absence to pour out half a tumbler of vodka, gulped it down, and did not even take anything to eat after it.

"Disgusting stuff this vodka is!" he said, looking with abhorrence at the decanter.

"Why didn't you drink while the Count was here, Pëtr Egorych?" I asked him. "Is it possible that you were afraid to?"

"It is better to dissimulate, Sergei Petrovich, and drink in secret than to drink before the Count. You know what a strange character the Count has . . . If I stole twenty thousand from him and he knew it, he would say nothing owing to his carelessness, but if I forgot to give him an account of ten kopecks that I had spent or drank vodka in his presence, he would begin to lament that his bailiff was a robber. You know him well."

Urbenin half-filled the tumbler again and swigged it off.

"I think you did not drink formerly, Pëtr Egorych," I said.

"Yes, but now I drink . . . I drink terribly!" he whispered. "Terribly, day and night, not giving myself a moment's respite! Even the Count never drank to such an extent as I do now . . . It is dreadfully hard, Sergei Petrovich! God alone knows what a weight I have on my heart! It's just grief that makes me drink . . . I always liked and honoured you, Sergei Petrovich, and I can tell you quite candidly. . . . I'd often be glad to hang myself!"

"For what reason?"

"My own stupidity. . . . Not only children are stupid. . . . There are also fools at fifty. Don't ask the cause."

The Count re-entered the room and put a stop to his effusions

"A most excellent liqueur," he said, placing a pot-bellied bottle with the seal of the Benedictine monks on the table instead of "the remarkable plans" "When I passed through Moscow I got it at Depré's Have a glass, Sergei?"

"I thought you had gone to fetch the plans," I said

"I? What plans? Oh, yes! But, brother, the devil himself couldn't find anything in my portmanteaux . . . I rummaged and rummaged and gave it up as a bad job. . . . The liqueur is very nice Won't you have some, Serezha?"

Urbenin remained a little longer, then he took leave and went away. When he left we began to drink claret This wine quite finished me I became intoxicated in the way I had wished while riding to the Count's I became very bold, active and unusually gay. I wanted to do some extraordinary deed, something ludicrous, something that would astonish people . . . In such moments I thought I could swim across the lake, unravel the most entangled case, conquer any woman . . . The world and its life made me enthusiastic; I loved it, but at the same time I wanted to pick a quarrel with somebody, to consume him with venomous jests and ridicule . . . It was necessary to scoff at the comical black-browed Pole and the Count, to attack them with biting sarcasm, to turn them to dust .

"Why are you "silent?" I began again "Speak! I am listening to you! Ha-ha! I am awfully fond of hearing people with serious, sedate faces talk childish drivel! . . . It is such mockery, such mockery of the

brains of man! . . . The face does not correspond to the brains! In order not to lie, you ought to have the faces of idiots, and you have the countenances of Greek sages!"

I had not finished . . . My tongue was entangled by the thought that I was talking to people who were nullities, who were unworthy of even half a word! I required a hall filled with people, brilliant women, thousands of lights I rose, took my glass and began walking about the rooms When we indulge in debauchery, we do not limit ourselves to space We do not restrict ourselves only to the dining-room, but take the whole house and sometimes even the whole estate

I chose a Turkish divan in the "Mosaic hall," lay down on it and gave myself up to the power of my fantasy and to castles in the air Drunken thoughts, one more grandiose, more limitless than the other, took possession of my young brain A new world arose before me, full of stupefying delights and indescribable beauty

It only remained for me to talk in rhyme and to see visions

The Count came to me and sat down on a corner of the divan . . . He wanted to say something to me I had begun to read in his eyes the desire to communicate something special to me shortly after the five glasses of vodka described above. I knew of what he wanted to speak

"What a lot I have drunk to-day!" he said to me "This is more harmful to me than any sort of poison . . . But to-day it is for the last time . . . Upon my honour, the very last time . . . I have strength of will . . ."

"All right, all right. . . ."

"For the last . . . Serezha, my dear friend, for the last time . . . Shouldn't we send a telegram to town for the last time?"

"Why not? Send it. . . ."

"Let's have one last spree in the proper way. . . . Well, get up and write it"

The Count himself did not know how to write telegrams. They always came out too long and insufficient with him I rose and wrote :

" S— Restaurant London Karpov, manager of the chorus. Leave everything and come instantly by the two o'clock train —The Count."

" It is now a quarter to eleven," the Count said " The man will take three-quarters of an hour to ride to the station, maximum an hour. . . . Karpov will receive the telegram before one . . . Consequently they'll have time to catch the train . . . If they don't catch it, they can come by the goods train. Yes ! "

## VI

THE telegram was dispatched with one-eyed Kuz'ma Il'ya was ordered to send carriages to the station in about an hour In order to kill time, I began leisurely to light the lamps and candles in all the rooms, then I opened the piano and passed my fingers over the keys

After that, I remember, I lay down on the same divan and thought of nothing, only waving away with my hand the Count, who came and pestered me with his chatter. I was in a state of drowsiness, half-asleep, conscious only of the brilliant light of the lamps and feeling in a gay and quiet mood . . . The image of the "girl in red," with her head bent towards her shoulder, and her eyes filled with horror at the thought of that effective death, stood before me and quietly shook its little finger at me. . . . The image of another girl, with a pale, proud face, in a black dress, flitted past. She looked at me half-entreatingly, half-reproachfully

Later on I heard noise, laughter, running about. . . . Deep, dark eyes obscured the light. I saw their brilliancy, their laughter. . . . A joyful smile played about the luscious lips . . . That was how my gipsy Tina smiled.

"Is it you?" her voice asked. "You're asleep? Get up, darling . . . How long it is since I saw you last!"

I silently pressed her hand and drew her towards me . . .

"Let us go there . . . We have all come . . ."

"Stay! . . . I'm all right here, Tina . . ."

"But . . . there's too much light. . . . You're mad!

They can come . . ."

"I'll wring the neck of whoever comes! . . . I'm so

happy, Tina . . . Two years have passed since last we met . . ."

Somebody began to play the piano in the ballroom

"Akh' Moskva, Moskva, Moskva, white-stoned Moskva!" . . . several voices sang in chorus

"You see, they are all singing there . . . Nobody will come in . . ."

"Yes, yes . . ."

The meeting with Tina took away my drowsiness . . . Ten minutes later she led me into the ballroom, where the chorus was standing in a semi-circle . . . The Count, sitting astride on a chair, was beating time with his hands Pshekhotsky stood behind his chair, looking with astonished eyes at these singing birds I tore his balalaika out of Karpov's hands, struck the chords, and—

"Down the Volga . . . Down the mother Volga . . ."

"Down the Vo-o-o-lga!" the chorus chimed in

"Ay, burn, speak . . . speak . . ."

I waved my hand, and in an instant with the rapidity of lightning there was another transition . . .

"Nights of madness, nights of gladness . . ."

Nothing acts more irritatingly, more titillatingly on my nerves than such rapid transitions I trembled with rapture, and embracing Tina with one arm and waving the balalaika in the air with the other hand, I sang "Nights of madness" to the end . . . The balalaika fell noisily on the floor and was shivered into tiny fragments . . .

"Wine!"

After that my recollections are confused and chaotic. . . . Everything is mixed, confused, entangled; everything is dim, obscure . . . I remember the grey sky of early morning. . . . We are in a boat . . . The lake is slightly agitated, and seems to grumble at our debauchery.

. . . I am standing up in the middle of the boat, shaking it . . . Tina tries to convince me I may fall into the water, and implores me to sit down. . . . I deplore loudly that there are no waves on the lake as high as the "Stone

Grave," and frighten the martins that flit like white spots over the blue surface of the lake with my shouts . . . Then follows a long, sultry day, with its endless lunches, its ten-year-old liqueurs, its punches, . . . its debauches .

There are only a few moments I can remember of that day . . . I remember swinging with Tina in the garden I stand on one end of the board, she on the other I work energetically, with my whole body as much as my strength permits, and I don't exactly know what I want that Tina should fall from the swing and be killed, or that she should fly to the very clouds! Tina stands there, pale as death, but proud and self-loving, she has pressed her lips tightly together so as not to betray by a single sound the fear she feels We fly ever higher and higher, and I can't remember how it ended Then there follows a walk with Tina in a distant avenue of the park, with green vaults above that protect it from the sun A poetical twilight, black tresses, luscious lips, whispers . . .

Then the little contralto is walking beside me, a fair-haired girl with a sharp little nose, childlike eyes and a small waist I walk about with her until Tina, having followed us, makes me a scene . . . The gipsy is pale and maddened . She calls me "accursed," and, being offended, prepares to return to town. The Count, also pale and with trembling hands, runs along beside us, and, as usual, can't find the proper words to persuade Tina to remain . In the end she boxes my ears . . . Strange! I, who fly into a rage at the slightest offensive word said by a man, am quite indifferent to a box on the ear given me by a woman . . . There is again a long "after dinner," again a snake on the steps, again sleeping Franz with flies round his mouth, again the gate. . . . "The girl in red" is standing on the "Stone Grave," but perceiving us from afar, she disappears like a lizard.

By evening we had made it up with Tina and were again friends The evening was succeeded by the same sort of stormy night, with music, daring singing, with

nerve exciting transitions . . . and not a moment's sleep!

"This is self-destruction!" Urbenin whispered to me. He had come in for a moment to listen to our singing.

He was certainly right. Further, I remember: the Count and I are standing in the garden face to face, and quarrelling. Black-browed Kaetan is walking about near us all the time, taking no part in our jollifications, nevertheless he had also not slept but had followed us about like a shadow. . . . The sky is already brightening, and on the very summits of the highest trees the golden rays of the rising sun are beginning to shine. Around us is the chatter of sparrows, the songs of the starlings, and the rustle and flapping of wings that had become heavy during the night. . . . The lowing of the herds and the cries of the shepherds can be heard. A table with a marble slab stands before us. On the table are candles that give out a faint light. Ends of cigarettes, papers from sweets, broken wineglasses, orange peel . . .

"You must take it!" I say, pressing on the Count a parcel of rouble notes. "I will force you to take it!"

"But it was I who sent for them and not you!" The Count insisted, trying to catch hold of one of my buttons. "I am the master here . . . I treated you. Why should you pay? Can't you understand you even insult me by offering to do so?"

"I also engaged them, so I pay half. You won't take it? I don't understand such favours! Surely you don't think because you are as rich as the devil that you have the right to confer such favours on me? The devil take it! I engaged Karpov, and I will pay him! I want none of your halves! I wrote the telegram!"

"In a restaurant, Serezha, you may pay as much as you like, but my house is not a restaurant . . . Besides, I really don't understand why you are making all this fuss. I can't understand your insistent prodigality. You have

but little money, while I am rolling in wealth . . . Justice itself is on my side ! ”

“ Then you will not take it ? No ? Well, then, you needn’t ! . . . ”

I go up to the faintly burning candles and applying the banknotes to the flame set them on fire and fling them on the ground . Suddenly a groan is torn from Kaetan’s breast . He opens his eyes wide, he grows pale, and falling with the whole weight of his heavy body on the ground tries to extinguish the money with the palms of his hands . In this he succeeds.

“ I don’t understand ! ” he says, placing the slightly burnt notes in his pocket. “ To burn money ? As if it were last year’s chaff or love letters ! . . . It’s better that I should give it to the poor than let it be consumed by the flames ”

I go into the house . There in every room on the sofas and the carpets the weary gipsies are lying, overcome by fatigue . My Tina is sleeping on the divan in the “ mosaic drawing-room ”

She lies stretched out and breathing heavily. Her teeth clenched, her face pale . . . She is evidently dreaming of the swing . The Scops-owl is going through all the rooms, looking with her sharp eyes sardonically at the people who had so suddenly broken into the deadly quiet of this forgotten estate. . . . She is not going about and giving her old limbs so much trouble without an object

That is all that my memory retained after two wild nights ; all the rest had escaped my drunken brain, or is not appropriate for description . . . But this is enough !

At no other time had Zorka borne me with so much zest as on the morning after the burning of the banknotes . . . She also wanted to go home . The lake quietly rippled its sparkling waves in which the rising sun was reflected and prepared for its daily sleep . The woods and

the willows that border the lake stood motionless as if in morning prayer. It is difficult to describe the feelings that filled my soul at the time . . . Without entering into details, I will only say that I was unspeakably glad and at the same time almost consumed by shame when, turning out of the Count's homestead, I saw on the bank of the lake the holy old face, all wrinkled by honest work and illness, of venerable Mikhey In appearance Mikhey resembles the fishermen of the Bible His hair and beard are white as snow, and he gazes contemplatively at the sky. . . When he stands motionless on the bank and his eyes follow the chasing clouds, you can imagine that he sees angels in the sky . . I like such faces ! .

When I saw him I reined in Zorka and gave him my hand as if I wanted to cleanse myself by the touch of his honest, horny palm. . . He raised his small sagacious eyes on me and smiled

" How do you do, good master ! " he said, giving me his hand awkwardly " So you've ridden over again ? Or has that old rake come back ? "

" Yes, he's back "

" I thought so I can see it by your face . . Here I stand and look. . . The world's the world Vanity of vanities Look there ! That German ought to die, and he only thinks of vanities. . . Do you see ? "

The old man pointed with a stick at the Count's bathing-house. A boat was being rowed away quickly from the bathing-house A man in a jockey cap and a blue jacket was sitting in the boat It was Franz, the gardener

" Every morning he takes money to the island and hides it there The stupid fellow can't understand that for him sand and money have much the same value When he dies he can't take it with him Barin,\* give me a cigar ! "

\* Master, sir

I offered him my cigar case He took three cigarettes and put them into his breast pocket . .

" That's for my nephew . . He can smoke them "

Zorka moved impatiently, and galloped off I bowed to the old man in gratitude for having been allowed to rest my eyes on his face For a long time he stood looking after me

At home I was met by Polycarp With a contemptuous, a crushing glance, he measured my noble body as if he wanted to know whether this time I had bathed again in all my clothes, or not

" Congratulations ! " he grumbled " You've enjoyed yourself "

" Hold your tongue, fool ! " I said

His stupid face angered me I undressed quickly, covered myself up with the bedclothes and closed my eyes.

My head became giddy and the world was enveloped in mist. Familiar figures flitted through the mist . . The Count, snakes, Franz, flame-coloured dogs, " the girl in red," mad Nikolai Efimych

" The husband killed his wife ! Oh, how stupid you are ! "

" The girl in red " shook her finger at me, Tina obscured the light with her black eyes, and . . . I fell asleep

" **H**OW sweetly and tranquilly he sleeps ! When one gazes on this pale, tired face, on this childishly innocent smile, and listens to this regular breathing, one might think that it is not a magistrate who is lying here, but the personification of a quiet conscience ! One might think that Count Karnéev had not yet arrived, that there had been neither drunkenness nor gipsies, nor rows on the lake . . . Get up, you pernicious man ! You are unworthy of enjoying such a blessing as peaceful sleep ! Arise ! "

I opened my eyes and stretched myself voluptuously. . . . A broad sunbeam, in which countless white dust atoms were agitated and chased each other, streamed from the window on to my bed, causing the sunray itself to appear as if tinged with some dull whiteness . . . The ray disappeared and reappeared before my eyes, as Pavel Ivanovich Voznesensky, our charming district doctor, who was walking about my bedroom, came into or went out of the stream of light. In the long, unbuttoned frock-coat that flapped around him, as if hanging on a clothes rack, with his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his unusually long trousers, the doctor went from corner to corner of my room, from chair to chair, from portrait to portrait, screwing up his short-sighted eyes as he examined whatever came in his way. In accordance with his habit of sticking his nose and letting his eyes peer into everything, he either stooped down or stretched out, peeped into the washstand, into the folds of the closed blinds, into the chinks of the door, into the lamp . . . he seemed to be looking for something or wishing to assure himself

that everything was in order. . . When he looked attentively through his spectacles into a chink, or at a spot on the wallpaper, he frowned, assumed an anxious expression, and smelt it with his long nose . . All this he did quite mechanically, involuntarily, and from habit ; but at the same time, as his eyes passed rapidly from one object to another, he had the appearance of a connoisseur making an evaluation.

"Get up, don't you hear!" he called to me in his melodious tenor voice, as he looked into the soap-dish and removed a hair from the soap with his nail

"Ah, ah, ah! How do you do, Mr Screw!" I yawned, when I saw him bending over the washstand "What an age we haven't met!"

The whole district knew the doctor by the name of "Screw" from the habit he had of constantly screwing up his eyes I, too, called him by that nickname Seeing that I was awake, Voznesensky came and sat down on a corner of my bed and at once took up a box of matches and lifted it close to his screwed-up eyes

"Only lazy people and those with clear consciences sleep in that way," he said, "and as you are neither the one nor the other, it would be more seemly for you, my friend, to get up somewhat earlier. . . ."

"What o'clock is it?"

"Almost eleven"

"The devil take you, Screwy! Nobody asked you to wake me so early Do you know, I only got to sleep at past five to-day, and if not for you I would have slept on till evening."

"Indeed!" I heard Polycarp's bass voice say in the next room "He hasn't slept long enough yet! It's the second day he's sleeping, and it's still too little for him! Do you know what day it is?" Polycarp asked, coming into the bedroom and looking at me in the way clever people look at fools

"Wednesday," I said

" Of course, certainly ! It's been specially arranged for you that the week shall have two Wednesdays . . . "

" To-day's Thursday ! " the doctor said " So, my good fellow, you've been pleased to sleep through the whole of Wednesday Fine ! Very fine ! Allow me to ask you how much you drank ? "

" For twice twenty-four hours I had not slept, and I drank . . . I don't know how much I drank "

Having sent Polycarp away, I began to dress and describe to the doctor what I had lately experienced of " Nights of madness, nights of gladness " which are so delightful and sentimental in the songs and so unsightly in reality. In my description I tried not to go beyond the bounds of " light genre," to keep to facts and not to deviate into moralizing, although all this was contrary to the nature of a man who entertained a passion for inferences and results . . . I spoke with an air as if I was speaking about trifles that did not trouble me in the slightest degree. In order to spare the chaste ears of Pavel Ivanovich, and knowing his dislike of the Count, I suppressed much, touched lightly on a great deal but nevertheless, despite the playfulness of my tone and the style of caricature I gave to my narrative during the whole course of it, the doctor looked into my face seriously, shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders impatiently from time to time He never once smiled. It was evident that my " light genre " produced on him far from a light effect

" Why don't you laugh, Screwy ? " I asked when I had finished my description

" If it had not been you who had told me all this, and if there had not been a certain circumstance, I would not have believed a word of it It's all too abnormal, my friend ! "

" Of what circumstance are you speaking ? "

" Last evening the muzhik whom you had belaboured in such an indelicate way with an oar, came to me . . . Ivan Osipov. . . ."

"Ivan Osipov? . . ." I shrugged my shoulders. "It's the first time I hear his name!"

"A tall, red-haired man . . . with a freckled face. . . . Try to remember! You struck him on the head with an oar!"

"I can't remember anything! I don't know an Osipov. . . . I struck nobody with an oar . . . You've dreamed it all, uncle!"

"God grant that I dreamed it . . . He came to me with a report from the Karnéev district administration and asked me for a medical certificate. In the report it was stated that the wound was given him by you, and he does not lie. Can you remember now? The wound he had received was above the forehead, just where the hair begins . . . You got to the bone, my dear sir!"

"I can't remember!" I murmured . . . "Who is he? What's his occupation?"

"He's an ordinary muzhik from the Karnéev village. He rowed the boat when you were having your spree on the lake."

"Hm! Perhaps! I can't remember. . . . I was probably drunk, and somehow by chance . . ."

"No, sir, not by chance. . . . He said you got angry with him about something, you swore at him for a long time, and then getting furious you rushed at him and struck him before witnesses. . . . Besides, you shouted at him 'I'll kill you, you rascal!'"

I got very red, and began walking about from corner to corner of the room.

"For the life of me, I can't remember!" I said, trying with all my might to recall what had happened. "I can't remember! You say I 'got furious' . . . When drunk I become unpardonably nasty!"

"What can you want more!"

"The muzhik evidently wants to make a case of it, but that's not the most important. . . . The most important is the fact itself, the blows . . . Is it possible

that I'm capable of fighting? And why should I strike a poor *muzhik*? "

"Yes, sir! Of course, I could not give him a certificate, but I told him to apply to you . . . You'll manage to arrange the matter with him somehow . . . The wound is a slight one, but considering the case unofficially a wound in the head that goes as far as the skull is a serious affair. . . . There are often cases when an apparently trifling wound in the head which had been considered a slight one has ended with mortification of the bone of the skull and consequently with a journey *ad patres*!"

And, carried away by his subject, "Screw" rose from his seat and, walking about the room along the walls and waving his hands, he began to unload all his knowledge of surgical pathology for my benefit . . . Mortification of the bones of the skull, inflammation of the brain, death, and other horrors poured from his lips with endless explanations, macroscopic and microscopic processes, that accompany this misty and, for me, quite uninteresting *terra incognita*.

"Stop that effusion!" I cried, trying to stop his medical chatter. "Can't you understand how tiresome all this stuff is?"

"No matter that it's tiresome . . . Listen, and punish yourself. . . . Perhaps another time you will be more careful. It may teach you not to do such stupidities. If you don't arrange matters with this scabby Osipov, it may cost you your position! The priest of Themis to be tried for thrashing a man! . . . What a scandal!"

Pavel Ivanovich is the only man whose judgments I listen to with a light heart, without frowning, whom I allow to gaze inquiringly into my eyes and to thrust his investigating hand into the depths of my soul . . . We two are friends in the very best sense of the word; we respect each other, although we have between us accounts of the most unpleasant, the most delicate nature. . . . Like a black cat, a woman had passed between us. This

eternal *casus belli* had been the cause of reckonings between us, but did not make us quarrel, and we continued to be at peace "Screw" is a very nice fellow. I like his simple and far from plastic face, with its large nose, screwed-up eyes and thin, reddish beard I like his tall, thin, narrow-shouldered figure, on which his frock-coat and paletot hung as on a clothes-horse.

His badly made trousers formed ugly creases at the knees, and his boots were terribly trodden down at the heels, his white tie was always in the wrong place But do not think that he was slovenly . . . You had but to look once at his kind, concentrated face to understand that he had no time to trouble about his own appearance ; besides, he did not know how to . . . He was young, honest, not vain, and loved his medicine, and he was always moving about—this in itself is sufficient to explain to his advantage all the defects of his inelegant toilet He, like an artist, did not know the value of money, and imper-turbably sacrificed his own comfort and the blessings of life to one of his passions, and thus he gave the impression of being a man without means, who could scarcely make both ends meet . . . He neither smoked nor drank, he spent no money on women, but nevertheless the two thousand roubles he earned by his appointment at the hospital and by private practice passed through his hands as quickly as my money does when I am out on the spree Two passions drained him the passion of lending money, and the passion of ordering things he saw advertised in the newspapers. . . . He lent money to whoever asked for it, without any demur not uttering a single word about when it was to be returned It was not possible either by hook or by crook to eradicate in him his heedless trust in people's conscientiousness, and this confidence was even more apparent in his constantly ordering things that were lauded in newspaper advertisements. . . . He wrote for everything, the necessary and the unnecessary He wrote for books, telescopes, humorous magazines, dinner services

"composed of 100 articles," chronometers . . . And it was not surprising that the patients who came to Pavel Ivanovich mistook his room for an arsenal or for a museum. He had always been cheated, but his trust was as strong and unshakable as ever. He was a capital fellow, and we shall meet him more than once on the pages of this novel.

"Good gracious! What a time I have been sitting here!" he exclaimed suddenly, looking at the cheap watch with one lid he had ordered from Moscow, and which was "guaranteed for five years," but had already been repaired twice. "I must be off, friend! Good-bye! And mark my words, these sprees of the Count's will lead to no good! To say nothing about your health. . . . Oh, by-the-by! Shall you go to Tenevo to-morrow?"

"What's up there to-morrow?"

"The fête of the Church! Everybody will be there, so come too! You must positively come! I have promised that you will come. Don't make me a liar!"

It was not necessary to ask to whom he had given his word. We understood each other. The doctor then took leave, put on his well-worn overcoat, and went away.

I remained alone. . . . In order to drown the unpleasant thoughts that began to swarm in my head, I went to my writing-table and trying not to think nor to call myself to account, I began to open my post. The first envelope that caught my eye contained the following letter:

"My Darling Serezha,

"Forgive me for troubling you, but I am so surprised that I don't know to whom to apply. . . . It is shameful! Of course, now it will be impossible to get it back, and I'm not sorry, but judge for yourself if thieves are to enjoy indulgence, a respectable woman cannot feel safe anywhere. After you left I awoke on the divan and found many of my things were missing. Somebody had stolen my

bracelet, my gold studs, ten pearls out of my necklace, and had taken about a hundred roubles out of my purse I wanted to complain to the Count, but he was asleep, so I went away without doing so. This is very wrong ! The Count's house—and they steal as in a tavern ! Tell the Count I send you much love and kisses.

" Your loving,

" TINA "

That his Excellency's house was swarming with thieves was nothing new to me , and I added Tina's letter to the information I had already in my memory on this count Sooner or later I would be obliged to use this intelligence in a case . . . I knew who the thieves were.

## VIII

B LACK-EYED Tina's letter, her large sprawling handwriting, reminded me of the mosaic room and aroused in me desires such as a drunkard has for more drink, but I overcame them, and by the strength of my will I forced myself to work. At first I found it unspeakably dull to decipher the bold handwriting of the various commissaries, but gradually my attention became fixed on a burglary, and I began to work with delight. All day long I sat working at my table, and Polycarp passed behind me from time to time and looked suspiciously at my work. He had no confidence in my sobriety, and at any moment he expected to see me rise from the table and order Zorka to be saddled; but towards evening, seeing my persistence, he began to give credence to my good intentions, and the expression of moroseness on his face gave place to one of satisfaction . . . He began to walk about on tiptoe and to speak in whispers . . . When some young fellows passed my house, playing on the accordion, he went into the street and shouted :

" What do you young devils mean by making such a row here ? Can't you go another way ? Don't you know, you Mahomedans, that the master is working ? "

In the evening when he served the samovar in the dining-room, he quietly opened my door and called me graciously to come to tea

" Will you please come to tea ? " he said, sighing gently and smiling respectfully.

And while I was drinking my tea he came up behind me and kissed me on the shoulder

" Now that's better, Sergei Petrovich," he mumbled.  
" Why don't you let that white-eyebrowed devil be hanged,

may he be . . . Is it possible with your high understanding and your education to occupy yourself with pusillanimousness? Your work is noble . . . Everybody must glorify you, be afraid of you, but if you break people's heads with that devil and bathe in the lake in all your clothes, everyone will say 'He has no sense! He's an empty-headed fellow!' And so that reputation will be noised about the whole world! Foolhardiness is suitable for merchants, but not for noblemen . . . Noblemen require science and office. . . ."

"All right! Enough, enough . . . "

"Sergey Petrovich, don't keep company with that Count. If you want to have a friend, who could be better than Doctor Pavel Ivanovich? He goes about shabbily dressed, but how clever he is!"

I was melted by Polycarp's sincerity . . . I wanted to say an affectionate word to him . . .

"What novel are you reading now?" I asked

"'The Count of Monte Cristo,' That's a Count for you! That's a real Count! Not like your smut-Count!"

After tea I again sat down to work and worked until my eyelids began to droop and close my tired eyes . When I went to bed I ordered Polycarp to wake me at five o'clock

The next morning, before six o'clock, whistling gaily and knocking off the heads of the field flowers, I was walking towards Tenevo, where the fête of the church to which my friend "Screw" had invited me to come was being celebrated that day. It was a glorious morning. Happiness itself appeared to be hanging above the earth, and reflected in every dewdrop, enticed the soul of the passer-by to itself. The woods enwrapped in morning light, were quiet and motionless as if listening to my footsteps, and the chirping brotherhood of birds met me with expressions of mistrust and alarm . . . The air, impregnated with the evaporation of the fresh green, caressed my healthy lungs with its softness. I breathed it in, and

casting my enraptured eyes over the whole distant prospect, I felt the spring and youth, and it seemed to me that the young birches, the grass at the roadside, and the ceaselessly humming cockchafers shared these feelings with me

"Why is it that there in the world men crowd together in their miserable hovels, in their narrow and limited ideas," I thought, "while they have here so much space for life and thought? Why do they not come here?"

And my poetic imagination refused to be disturbed by thoughts of winter and of bread, those two sorrows that drive poets into cold, prosaic Petersburg and uncleanly Moscow, where fees are paid for verse, but no inspiration can be found.

Peasants' carts and landowners' britzkas hurrying to the liturgy or to market passed me constantly as I trudged along. All the time I had to take off my cap in answer to the courteous bows of the muzhiks and the landowners of my acquaintance. They all offered to give me a lift, but to walk was pleasanter than to drive, and I refused all their offers. Among others the Count's gardener, Franz, in a blue jacket and a jockey cap, passed me on a racing droshky. . . . He looked lazily at me with his sleepy, sour eyes and touched his cap in a still more lazy fashion. Behind him a twelve-gallon barrel with iron hoops, evidently for vodka, was tied to the droshky. . . . Franz's disagreeable phiz and his barrel somewhat disturbed my poetical mood, but very soon poetry triumphed again when I heard the sound of wheels behind me, and looking round I saw a heavy wagonette drawn by a pair of bays, and in the heavy wagonette, on a leathern cushion on a sort of box seat, was my new acquaintance, "the girl in red," who two days before had spoken to me about the "electricity that had killed her mother." Olenka's pretty, freshly washed and somewhat sleepy face beamed and blushed slightly when she saw me striding along the footpath that separated the wood from the road. She nodded

merrily to me and smiled in the affable manner of an old acquaintance

"Good morning!" I shouted to her.

She kissed her hand to me and disappeared from my sight, together with her heavy wagonette, without giving me enough time to admire her fresh, pretty face. This day she was not dressed in red. She wore a sort of dark green costume with large buttons and a broad-brimmed straw hat, but even in this garb she pleased me no less than she had done before. I would have talked to her with pleasure, and I would gladly have heard her voice. I wanted to gaze into her deep eyes in the brilliancy of the sun, as I had gazed into them that night by the flashes of lightning. I wanted to take her down from the ugly wagonette and propose that she should walk beside me for the rest of the way, and I certainly would have done so if it had not been for the "rules of society". For some reason it appeared to me that she would have gladly agreed to this proposal. It was not without some cause that she had twice looked back at me as the wagonette disappeared behind some old alders!

It was about six versts from the place of my abode to Tenevo—nothing of a distance for a young man on a fine morning. Shortly after six I was already making my way between loaded carts and the booths of the fair towards the Tenevo church. Notwithstanding the early hour and the fact that the liturgy in the church was not over as yet, the noise of trade was already in the air. The squeaking of cart wheels, the neighing of horses, the lowing of cattle, and the sounds of toy trumpets were intermixed with the cries of gipsy horse-dealers and the songs of muzhiks, who had already found time to get drunk. What numbers of gay, idle faces! What types! What beauty there was in the movements of these masses, bright with brilliant coloured dresses, on which the morning sun poured its light! All this many-thousand-headed crowd swarmed, moved, made a noise in order to finish the business they

had to do in a few hours, and to disperse by the evening, leaving after them, on the market place as a sort of remembrance, refuse of hay, oats spilt here and there, and nutshells. . . . The people, in dense crowds, were going to and coming from the church.

The cross that surmounts the church emitted golden rays, bright as those of the sun. It glittered and seemed to be aflame with golden fire. Beneath it the cupola of the church was burning with the same fire, and the freshly painted green dome shone in the sun, and beyond the sparkling cross the clear blue sky stretched out in the far distance. I passed through the crowds in the churchyard and entered the church. The liturgy had only just begun and the Gospel was being read. The silence of the church was only broken by the voice of the reader and the footsteps of the incensing deacon. The people stood silent and immovable, gazing with reverence through the wide-open holy gates of the altar and listening to the drawling voice of the reader. Village decorum, or, to speak more correctly, village propriety, strictly represses every inclination to violate the reverend quiet of the church. I always felt ashamed when in a church anything caused me to smile or speak. Unfortunately it is but seldom that I do not meet some of my acquaintances who, I regret to say, are only too numerous, and it generally happens that I have hardly entered the church before I am accosted by one of the "intelligentsia" who, after a long introduction about the weather, begins a conversation on his own trivial affairs. I answer "yes" and "no," but I am too considerate to refuse to give him any attention. My consideration often costs me dear. While I talk I glance bashfully at my neighbours who are praying, fearing that my idle chatter may wound them.

This time, as usual, I did not escape from acquaintances. When I entered the church I saw my heroine standing close to the door—that same "girl in red" whom I had met on the way to Tenevo.

Poor little thing! There she stood, red as a crawfish, and perspiring in the midst of the crowd, casting imploring glances on all those faces in the search for a deliverer. She had stuck fast in the densest crowd and, unable to move either forward or backward, looked like a bird who was being tightly squeezed in a fist. When she saw me she smiled bitterly and began nodding her pretty chin.

"For God's sake, escort me to the front!" she said, seizing hold of my sleeve. "It is terribly stuffy here—and so crowded . . . I beg you!"

"In front it will be as crowded," I replied.

"But there, all the people are well dressed and respectable. Here are only common people. A place is reserved for us in front . . . You, too, ought to be there . . ."

Consequently she was red not because it was stuffy and crowded in the church. Her little head was troubled by the question of precedence. I granted the vain girl's prayer, and by carefully pressing aside the people I was able to conduct her to the very dais near the altar on which the flower of our district *beau-monde* was collected. Having placed Olenka in a position that was in accordance with her aristocratic desires, I took up a post at the back of the *beau-monde* and began an inspection.

As usual, the men and women were whispering and giggling. The Justice of the Peace, Kalinin, gesticulating with his hands and shaking his head, was telling the land-owner, Deryaev, in an undertone all about his ailments. Deryaev was abusing the doctors almost aloud and advising the justice of the peace to be treated by a certain Evstrat Ivanych. The ladies, perceiving Olenka, pounced upon her as a good subject for their criticism and began whispering. There was only one girl who evidently was praying.

She was kneeling, with her black eyes fixed in front of her; she was moving her lips. She did not notice a curl of hair that had got loose under her hat and was hanging in disorder over her temple. She did not notice that Olenka and I had stopped beside her.

She was Nadezhda Nikolaevna, Justice Kalinin's daughter. When I spoke above of the woman, who, like a black cat, had run between the doctor and me, I was speaking of her. . . . The doctor, loved her as only such noble natures as my dear "Screw's" are able to love. Now he was standing beside her, as stiff as a pikestaff, with his hands at his sides and his neck stretched out. From time to time his loving eyes glanced inquiringly at her concentrated face. He seemed to be watching her prayer and in his eyes there shone a melancholy, passionate longing to be the object of her prayers. But, to his grief, he knew for whom she was praying. It was not for him. . . .

I made a sign to Pavel Ivanovich when he looked round at me, and we both left the church.

"Let's stroll about the market," I proposed.

We lighted our cigarettes and went towards the booths.

## IX

"**H**OW is Nadezhda Nikolaevna?" I asked the doctor as we entered a tent where playthings were sold.

"Pretty well . . . I think she's all right . . ." the doctor replied, frowning at a little soldier with a lilac face and a crimson uniform "She asked about you. . . ."

"What did she ask about me?"

"Things in general . . . She is angry that you have not been to see them for so long . . . she wants to see you and to inquire the cause of your sudden coldness towards their house. . . . You used to go there nearly every day and then—dropped them! As if cut off . . . You don't even bow!"

"That's not true, Screw. . . . Want of leisure is really the cause of my ceasing to go to the Kalminns. What's true is true! My connexion with that family is as excellent as formerly . . . I always bow if I happen to meet any one of them."

"However, last Thursday, when you met her father, for some reason you did not return his bow."

"I don't like that old blockhead of a Justice," I said, "and I can't look with equanimity at his phiz, but I still have the strength to bow to him and to press the hand he stretches out to me. Perhaps I did not notice him on Thursday, or I did not recognize him. You're not in a good humour to-day, Screw, and are trying to pick a quarrel!"

"I love you, my dear boy," Pavel Ivanovich sighed, "but I don't believe you. . . . 'Did not notice, did not recognize'! . . . I don't require your justifications nor your evasions. . . . What's the use of them when there's

so little truth in them? You're an excellent, a good man, but there's a little bit of a screw sticking in your sick brain that—forgive me for saying it—is capable of any offence"

"I'm humbly obliged"

"Don't be offended, golubchek . . . God grant that I may be mistaken, but you appear to me to be somewhat of a psychopath. Sometimes, quite in spite of your will and the dictates of your excellent nature, you have attacks of such desires and commit such acts that all who know you as a respectable man are quite nonplussed. You make one marvel how your highly moral principles, which I have the honour of knowing, can exist together with your sudden impulses, which, in the end, produce the most screaming abominations! . . . What animal is this?" Pavel Ivanovich asked the salesman abruptly in quite another tone, lifting close to his eyes a wooden animal with a man's nose, a mane, and a grey stripe down its back

"A lion," the salesman answered, yawning "Or perhaps some other sort of creature The deuce only knows!"

From the toy booths we went to the shops where textiles were sold and trade was already very brisk

"These toys only mislead children," the doctor said. "They give the falsest ideas of flora and fauna For example, this lion . . . striped, purple, and squeaking . . . Whoever heard of a lion that squeaks?"

"I say, Screwy," I began, "you evidently want to say something to me and you seem not to be able . . . Go ahead! . . . I like to hear you, even when you tell me unpleasant things. . . ."

"Whether pleasant or unpleasant, friend, you must listen to me. There is much I want to talk to you about."

"Begin. . . . I am transformed into one very large ear."

"I have already mentioned to you my supposition that you are a psychopath. Now have the goodness to listen to the proofs. . . . I will speak quite frankly, perhaps sometimes sharply. . . . My words may jar on you, but

don't be angry, friend. . . . You know my feelings for you I like you better than anybody else in the district.

. I speak not to reprove, nor to blame, nor to slay you Let us both be objective, friend . . Let us examine your psyche with an unprejudiced eye, as if it were a liver or a stomach . . "

" All right, let's be objective," I agreed

" Excellent! . Then let us begin with your connexion with Kalinin If you consult your memory it will tell you that you began to visit the Kalinins immediately after your arrival in our God-protected district. Your acquaintance was not sought by them At first you did not please the Justice of the Peace, owing to your arrogant manner, your sarcastic tone, and your friendship with the dissolute Count, and you would never have been in the Justice's house if you yourself had not paid him a visit You remember? You became acquainted with Nadezhda Nikolaevna, and you began to frequent the Justice's house almost every day . . Whenever one came to the house you were sure to be there . You were welcomed in the most cordial manner You were shown all possible marks of friendship—by the father, the mother, and the little sister They became as much attached to you as if you were a relative . . They were enraptured by you . you were made much of, they were in fits of laughter over your slightest witticism . You were for them the acme of wisdom, nobility, gentle manners You appeared to understand all this, and you reciprocated their attachment with attachment—you went there every day, even on the eve of holidays—the days of cleaning and bustle Lastly, the unhappy love that you aroused in Nadezhda's heart is no secret to you Is that not so? Well, then, you, knowing she was over head and ears in love with you, continued to go there day after day. . . And what happened then, friend? A year ago, for no apparent reason, you suddenly ceased visiting the house You were awaited for a week . . a month. . . .

They are still waiting for you, and you still don't appear . . . they write to you . . . you do not reply. . . You end by not even bowing. . . To you, who set so much store by decorum, such conduct must appear as the height of rudeness ! Why did you break off your connexion with the Kalinins in such a sharp and off hand manner ? Did they offend you ? No. . . Did they bore you ? In that case you might have broken off gradually, and not in such a sharp and insulting manner, for which there was no cause ”

“ I stopped visiting a house and therefore have become a psychopath ! ” I laughed. “ How naive you are, Screwy ! What difference is there if you suddenly cease an acquaintance or do so gradually ? It's even more honest to do so suddenly—there's less hypocrisy in it But what trifles all these are ! ”

“ Let us admit that all this is trifling, or that the cause of your sharp action is a secret that does not concern other people. But how can you explain your further conduct ? ”

“ For instance ? ”

“ For instance, you appeared one day at a meeting of our Zemstvo Board—I don't know what your business was there—and in reply to the president, who asked you how it came that you were no longer to be met at Kalinin's, you said . . . Try to remember what you said ! ‘ I'm afraid they want to marry me ! ’ That's what fell from your lips ! And this you said during the meeting in a loud and distinct voice, so that all the hundred men who were present could hear you ! Pretty ? In reply to your words laughter and various offensive witticisms about fishing for husbands could be heard on all sides Your words were caught up by a certain scamp, who went to Kalinin's and repeated them to Nadenka during dinner. . . . Why such an insult, Sergei Petrovich ? ”

Pavel Ivanovich barred the way He stood before me and continued looking at me with imploring, almost tearful eyes

" Why such an insult ? Why ? Because this charming girl loves you ? Let us admit that her father, like all fathers, had intentions on your person. . . . He is like all fathers, they all have an eye on you, on me, on Markuzin. . . . All parents are alike ! . . . There's not the slightest doubt that she is over head and ears in love ; perhaps she had hoped she would become your wife. . . . Is that a reason to give her such a sounding box on the ear ? Dyadinka, dyadinka ! \* Was it not you yourself who encouraged these intentions on your person ? You went there every day ; ordinary guests never go so often. In the daytime you went out fishing with her, in the evening you walked about the garden with her, jealously guarding your *tête-à-tête* . . . You learned that she loved you, and you made not the slightest change in your conduct

Was it possible after that not to suspect you of having good intentions ? I was convinced you would marry her ! And you—you complained—you laughed ! Why ? What had she done to you ? "

" Don't shout, Screwy, the people are staring at us," I said, getting round Pavel Ivanovich. " Let us change this conversation It's old women's chatter. I'll explain in a few words, and that must be enough for you ! I went to the Kalinin's house because I was dull and also because Nadenka interested me She's a very interesting girl

. . . Perhaps I might even have married her. But, finding out that you had preceded me ~~as~~<sup>sure</sup> candidate for her heart, that you were not indifferent ~~to~~<sup>to</sup> her, I decided to disappear . . . It would have been clear on my part to stand in the way of such a good fellow as ~~himself~~ <sup>himself</sup> . . . "

" Thanks for the favour ! I never asked you for this gracious gift, and, as far as I can judge by the expression of your face, you are now not speaking the truth ; you are talking nonsense not reflecting on what you say. . . . And besides, the fact of my being a good fellow did not hinder you on one of your last meetings with Nadenka to make

\* Little uncle, a familiar form of affectionate address

her some proposals in the summer-house, which would have brought no good to the excellent young fellow if he had married her."

"O-ho! Screwy, where did you find out about this proposal? It seems that your affairs are not going on badly, if such secrets are confided to you! . . . However, you've grown white with rage and almost look as if you were going to strike me. . . . And just now we agreed to be objective! Screwy, what a funny fellow you are! Well, we've had about enough of all this nonsense. . . . Let's go to the post office. . . ."

## X

WE went to the post office, which looked out gaily with its three little windows on to the market place. Through the grey paling gleamed the many coloured flower garden of our postmaster, Maxim Fedorovich, who was known in the whole district as a great connoisseur of all that concerned gardening and the art of laying out beds, borders, lawns, etc.

We found Maxim Fedorovich very pleasantly occupied Smiling, and red with pleasure, he was seated at his green table, turning over hundred-rouble notes as if they were a book Evidently even the sight of another man's money had a pleasing effect on his frame of mind

"How do you do, Maxim Fedorovich?" I said to him.  
"Where have you got such a pile of money?"

"It's to be sent to St. Petersburg," the postmaster replied, smiling sweetly, and he pointed his chin at the corner of the room where a dark figure was sitting on the only chair in the post office.

This dark figure rose when he saw me and came towards us I recognized my new acquaintance, my new enemy, whom I had so grievously insulted when I had got drunk at the Count's

"My best greetings!" he said.

"How are you, Kaetan Kazimirovich?" I answered, pretending not to notice his outstretched hand "How's the Count?"

"Thank God, he's quite well . . . He's only a little dull . . . He's expecting you to come every minute"

I read on Pshekhotsky's face the desire to converse with me How could that desire have arisen after the "swine"

with which I had treated him on that evening, and what caused this change of tone?

"What a lot of money you have!" I said, gazing at the packet of hundred-rouble notes he was sending away.

It seemed as if somebody had given a fillip to my brain! I noticed that one of the hundred-rouble notes had charred edges, and one corner had been quite burnt off. It was the hundred-rouble note which I had wanted to burn in the flame of a Chandor candle, when the Count refused to accept it from me as my share of the payment for the gipsies, and which Pshekhotsky had picked up when I flung it on the ground.

"It's better that I should give it to the poor, than let it be consumed by the flames," he had said then.

To what "poor" was he sending it now?

"Seven thousand five hundred roubles," Maxim Fedorovich counted in a drawling voice. "Quite right!"

It is ill to pry into the secrets of other people, but I wanted terribly to find out whose this money was and to whom this black-browed Pole was sending it to Petersburg. This money was certainly not his, and the Count had nobody to whom he would send it.

"He has plundered the drunken Count," I thought. "If deaf and silly Scops-Owl knows how to plunder the Count, what difficulty will this goose have in thrusting his paw into his pockets?"

"Oh, by-the-by, I'll also take this opportunity of sending some money," Pavel Ivanovich said hastily. "Do you know, gentlemen, it's quite incredible! For fifteen rouble you can get five things carriage free! A telescope, a chronometer, a calendar, and something more. . . . Maxim Fedorovich, kindly let me have a sheet of paper and an envelope!"

Screw sent off his fifteen roubles, I received my newspaper and a letter, and we left the post office.

We went towards the church. Screwy paced after me, as pale and dismal as an autumn day. The conversation

in which he had tried to show himself to be "objective" had excited him quite beyond all expectation

All the church bells were being rung An apparently endless crowd was slowly descending the steps that led from the church porch.

Ancient banners and a dark cross were held high above the crowd, at the head of the procession. The sun played gaily on the vestments of the priests, and the icon of the Holy Virgin emitted blinding rays. . . .

"Ah, there are our people!" the doctor said, pointing to the *beau-monde* of our district which had separated itself from the crowd and was standing aside

"Your people, but not mine," I said

"That's all the same . . . Let us join them . . ."

I approached my acquaintances and bowed The Justice of the Peace, Kalinin, a tall, broad-shouldered man with a grey beard and crawfish-like eyes, was standing in front of all the others, whispering something in his daughter's ear. Trying to appear as if he had not noticed me, he made not the slightest movement in answer to my general salute that had been made in his direction

"Good-bye, my angel," he said in a lachrymose voice as he kissed his daughter on the forehead "Drive home alone I shall be back by evening My visits will take but little time"

Having kissed his daughter again and smiled sweetly on the *beau-monde*, he frowned fiercely, and turning sharply round on one heel, towards a muzhik wearing the disc of a foreman, he said hoarsely to him :

"When will they allow my carriage to drive up?"

The muzhik became excited and waved his arms

"Look out!"

The crowd that was following the procession made way and the carriage of the Justice of the Peace drove up with chic and the sound of bells to where Kalinin was standing He sat down, bowed majestically, and alarming the crowd

by his "Look out!" he disappeared from sight without casting a single glance at me.

"What a majestic swine!" I whispered in the doctor's ear. "Come along!"

"Don't you want to say a word to Nadezhda Nicolaevna?" Pavel Ivanovich asked:

"It's time for me to go home. I'm in a hurry"

The doctor looked at me angrily, sighed, and turned away. I made a general bow and went towards the booths. As I was making my way through the dense crowd, I turned to look back at the Justice's daughter. She was looking after me and appeared to be trying whether I could bear her pure, searching gaze, so full of bitter injury and reproach.

Her eyes said: "Why?"

Something stirred in my breast, and I felt remorse and shame for my silly conduct. I suddenly felt a wish to return and caress and fondle with all the strength of my soft, and not yet quite corrupt, soul this girl who loved me passionately, and who had been so grievously wronged by me; and to tell her that it was not I who was in fault, but my accursed pride that prevented me from living, breathing or advancing a step. Silly, conceited, foppish pride, full of vanity! Could I, a frivolous man, stretch out the hand of reconciliation, when I knew and saw that every one of my movements was watched by the eyes of the district gossips and the "ill-omened old women"? Sooner let them laugh her to scorn and cover her with derisive glances and smiles, than undeceive them of the "inflexibility" of my character and the pride, which silly women admired so much in me.

Just before, when I had spoken with Pavel Ivanovich about the reasons that had caused me suddenly to cease my visits to the Kalinins, I had not been candid and quite inaccurate . . . I had held back the real reason; I had concealed it because I was ashamed of its triviality. . . . The cause was as tiny as a grain of dust. . . . It was this.

On the occasion of my last visit, after I had given up Zorka to the coachman and was entering the Kalinin's house, the following phrase reached my ears :

" Nadenka, where are you ? . . . Your betrothed has come ! "

These words were spoken by her father, the Justice of the Peace, who probably did not think that I might hear him. But I heard him, and my self-love was aroused.

" I her betrothed ? " I thought. " Who allowed you to call me her betrothed ? On what basis ? "

And something snapped in my breast. Pride rebelled within me, and I forgot all I had remembered when riding to Kalinin's. I forgot that I had allured the young girl, and I myself was being attracted by her to such a degree that I was unable to pass a single evening without her company. . . . I forgot her lovely eyes that never left my memory either by night or day, her kind smile, her melodious voice . . . I forgot the quiet summer evenings that will never return either for her or me. . . . Everything had crumbled away before the pressure of the devilish pride that had been aroused by the silly phrase of her simple-minded father. . . . I left the house in a rage, mounted Zorka, and galloped off, vowing to snub Kalinin, who without my permission had dared to consider me as his daughter's betrothed.

" Besides, Voznesensky is in love with her," I thought, trying to justify my sudden departure, as I rode home. " He began to twirl around her before I did, and they were considered to be engaged when I made her acquaintance. I won't interfere with him ! "

From that day I never put a foot in Kalinin's house, though there were moments when I suffered from longing to see Nadia, and my soul yearned for the renewal of the past . . . But the whole district knew of the rupture, knew that I had " bolted " from marriage. . . . How could my pride make concessions ?

Who can tell ? If Kalinin had not said those words,

and if I had not been so stupidly proud and touchy, perhaps I would not have had to look back, nor she to gaze at me with such eyes . . . But even those eyes were better, even the feeling of being wronged and of reproach was better, than what I saw in those eyes a few months after our meeting in the Tenevo church! The grief that shone in the depths of those black eyes now was only the beginning of the terrible misfortune that, like the sudden onrush of a train, swept that girl from the earth. They were like little flowers compared to those berries that were then already ripening in order to pour terrible poison into her frail body and anguished heart.

**W**HEN I left Tenevo I took the same road by which I had come. The sun showed it was already midday. As in the morning, peasants' carts and landowners' britzkas, beguiled my hearing by their squeaking and the metallic rumble of their bells. Again, the gardener, Franz, drove past me with his vodka barrel, but this time it was probably full. Again his eyes gave me a sour look, and he touched his cap. His nasty face jarred on me, but this time again the disagreeable impression that the meeting with him had made on me was entirely wiped away by the forester's daughter, Olenka, whose heavy wagonette caught me up.

"Give me a lift!" I called to her.

She nodded gaily to me and stopped her vehicle. I sat down beside her, and the wagonette rattled on along the road, which like a light stripe cut through the three vrsts of the Tenevo forest. For about two minutes we looked at each other in silence.

"What a pretty girl she really is!" I thought as I looked at her throat and chubby chin. "If I were told to choose between Nadenka and her, I would choose her. . . She's more natural, fresher, her nature is broader, bolder. . . If she fell into good hands, much could be made of her! . . The other is morose, visionary . . clever."

Lying at Olenka's feet there were two pieces of linen and several parcels.

"What a number of purchases you have made!" I said.  
"For what can you want so much linen?"

"That's not all I need!" Olenka replied. "I only bought these among all the rest. To-day I was a whole

hour buying things in the market ; to-morrow I must go to make purchases in the town . . . And then all this must be made up. . . . I say, don't you know any woman who would go out to sew ? "

" No, I think not. . . . But why have you to buy so many things ? Why have they to be sewn ? God knows your family is not large. . . . One, two . . . there, I've counted you all. . . ."

" How queer all you men are ! You don't understand anything ! Wait till you get married, you yourself will be angry then if after the wedding your wife comes to you all slovenly. I know Pētr Egorych is not in want of anything Still, it seems a bit awkward not to appear as a good housewife from the first. . . ."

" What has Petr Egorych to do with it ? "

" Hm ! . . . You are laughing at me, as if you don't know ! " Olenka said and blushed slightly.

" Young lady, you are talking in riddles "

" Have you really not heard ? Why, I am going to marry Pētr Egorych ! "

" Marry ? " I said in astonishment, making big eyes.

" What Pētr Egorych ? "

" Oh, good Lord ! Urbenin, of course ! "

I stared at her blushing and smiling face.

" You ? Going to marry . . . Urbenin ? What a joke ! "

" It's not a joke at all. . . . I really can't understand where you see the joke. . . ."

" You to marry . . . Urbenin . . . ", I repeated, getting pale, I really don't know why. " If this is not a joke, what is it ? "

" What joke ! I can't understand what is there extraordinary—what is there strange in it ? " Olenka said, pouting.

A minute passed in silence. . . . I gazed at the pretty girl, at her young, almost childish face, and was astonished that she could make such terrible jokes ! I instantly

pictured to myself Urbenin, elderly, fat, red-faced with his standing-out ears and hard hands, whose very touch could only scratch that young female body which had scarcely begun to live      Surely the thought of such a picture must frighten this pretty wood fay, who knew how to look poetically at the sky when it is reft by lightning and thunder growls angrily ! I, even I, was frightened !

" It's true he's a little old," Olenka sighed, " but he loves me . . His love is trustworthy."

" It's not a matter of trustworthy love, but of happiness. "

" I shall be happy with him . . He has means, thank God, and he's no pauper, no beggar, but a nobleman. Of course, I'm not in love with him, but are only those who marry for love happy ? Oh, I know those marriages for love ! "

" My child, when have you had time to stuff your brain with this terrible worldly wisdom ? " I asked. " Admitted that you are joking with me, but where have you learned to joke in such a coarse, old way ? . Where ? When ? "

Olenka looked at me with astonishment and shrugged her shoulders

" I don't understand what you are saying," she said  
" You don't like to see a young girl marry an old man ?  
Is that so ? "

Olenka suddenly blushed all over, her chin moved nervously, and without waiting for my answer she rattled on rapidly

" This does not please you ? Then have the goodness to go into the wood . into that dullness, where there is nothing except merlins and a mad father . . and wait there until a young suitor comes along ! It pleased you the other evening, but if you saw it in winter, when one only wishes . . that death might come—"

" Oh, all this is absurd, Olenka, all this is unripe, silly ! If you are not joking . . I don't even know what to say ! You had better be silent and not offend the air

with your tongue. I, in your place, would have hanged myself on seven aspens, and you buy linen . . . and smile Akh ! ”

“ In any case, he with his means will have father cured,” she whispered.

“ How much do you require for your father’s cure ? ” I cried “ Take it from me—a hundred ? Two hundred ? . . . A thousand ? Olenka, it’s not your father’s cure that you want ! ”

The news Olenka had communicated to me had excited me so much, that I had not even noticed that the wagonette had driven past my village, or how it had turned into the Count’s yard and stopped at the bailiff’s porch. When I saw the children run out, and the smile on Urbenin’s face, who also had rushed out to help Olenka down, I jumped out of the wagonette and ran into the Count’s house without even taking leave. Here further news awaited me.

" **H**OW opportune ! How opportune !" the Count cried as he greeted me and scratched my cheek with his long, pointed moustache " You could not have chosen a happier time ! We have only just sat down to luncheon. . . . Of course, you are acquainted. . . . You have doubtless often had collisions in your legal department. . . . Ha, ha ! "

With both hands the Count pointed to two men who, seated in soft armchairs, were partaking of cold tongue. In one I had the vexation of recognizing the Justice of the Peace, Kalinin ; the other, a little grey-haired man with a large moonlike bald pate, was my good friend, Babaev, a rich landowner who occupied the post of perpetual member of our district council. Having exchanged bows, I looked with astonishment at Kalinin I knew how much he disliked the Count and what reports he had set in circulation in the district about the man at whose table he was now eating tongue and green peas with such appetite and drinking ten-year-old liqueur. How could a respectable man explain such a visit ? The Justice of the Peace caught my glance and evidently understood it.

" I have devoted this day to visits," he said to me " I am driving round the whole district. . . . And, as you see, I have also called upon his Excellency . . . "

Il'ya brought a fourth cover. I sat down, drank a glass of vodka, and began to lunch.

" It's wrong, your Excellency, very wrong !" Kalinin said, continuing the conversation my entrance had interrupted " It's no sin for us little people, but you are an illustrious man, a rich man, a brilliant man. . . . It's a sin for you to fail "

"That's quite true; it's a sin," Babaev acquiesced.

"What's it all about?" I asked.

"Nikolai Ignat'ich has given me a good idea!" the Count said, nodding to the justice of the peace. "He came to me . . . We sat down to lunch, and I began complaining of being dull. . . ."

"And he complained to me of being dull," Kalinin interrupted the Count. "Dullness, melancholy . . . this and that. . . . In a word, disillusionment A sort of Onegin. 'Your Excellency,' I said, 'you're yourself to blame . . .' 'How so?' 'Quite simply. . . . In order not to be dull,' I said, 'accept some office . . . occupy yourself with the management of your estate . . . Farming is excellent, wonderful . . .' He tells me he intends to occupy himself with farming, but still he is dull. . . . What fails him is, so to speak, the entertaining, the stimulating element. There is not the—how am I to express myself?—er—strong sensations. . . ."

"Well, and what idea did you give him?"

"I really suggested no idea, I only reproached his Excellency. 'How is it your Excellency,' I said, 'that you, a young, cultivated, brilliant man, can live in such seclusion? Is it not a sin?' I asked. 'You go nowhere, you receive nobody, you are seen nowhere. . . . You live like an old man, or a hermit. . . . What would it cost you to arrange parties . . . so to speak, at homes?'"

"Why should he have at homes?" I asked.

"How can you ask? First, if his Excellency gave evening parties, he would become acquainted with society—study it, so to speak . . . Secondly, society would have the honour of becoming more closely acquainted with one of the richest of our landowners . . . There would be, so to speak, a mutual exchange of thoughts, conversation, gaiety. . . . And when one comes to think of it, how many cultivated young ladies and men we have among us! . . . What musical evenings, dances, picnics could be arranged! Only think! The reception rooms

are huge, there are pavilions in the gardens, and so on, and so on Nobody in the government ever dreamed of the private theatricals or the concerts that could be got up Yes, by God! Only imagine them! Now all this is lost, is buried in the earth; but then . . . one must only know how to! If I had his Excellency's means, I would show them how to live! And he says: 'Dull'! By God! it's laughable to listen to it. . . . It makes one feel ashamed . . ."

And Kalinin began to blink with his eyes, wishing to appear to be really ashamed . . .

"All this is quite just," the Count said, rising from his seat and thrusting his hands into his pockets. "I could give excellent evening parties . . . Concerts, private theatricals . . . all this could be arranged charmingly. Besides, these parties would not only entertain society, they would have an educational influence too! . . . Don't you think so?"

"Well, yes," I acquiesced "As soon as our young ladies see your moustachioed physiognomy they will at once be penetrated by the spirit of civilization . . ."

"Serezha, you're always joking," the Count said, somewhat offended, "and you never give me any friendly advice! Everything is laughable for you! My friend, it is about time to drop these student habits!"

The Count began to pace about the room from corner to corner, and to explain to me in long and tiresome suppositions the benefits that his evening parties might bring to humanity Music, literature, the drama, riding, shooting The shooting alone might unite all the best forces of the district!

"We shall revert to the subject," the Count said to Kalinin in taking leave of him after lunch.

"Then, if I understand your Excellency, the district may hope?" the Justice of the Peace inquired.

"Certainly, certainly. . . . I will develop this idea and

see what I can do. . . . I am happy . . . delighted  
You can tell everybody. . . ."

It was a sight to note the look of beatitude that was imprinted on the face of the Justice of the Peace as he took his seat in his carriage and said to the coachman " Go ! " He was so delighted that he even forgot our differences and in taking leave he called me " golubchek " and pressed my hand warmly.

After the visitors had left, the Count and I sat down to table again and continued our lunch. We lunched till seven o'clock in the evening, when the crockery was removed from the table and dinner was served. Young drunkards know how to shorten the time between meals. The whole time we drank and ate small pieces, by which means we sustained the appetite which would have failed us if we had entirely ceased to eat.

" Did you send money to anybody to-day ? " I asked the Count, remembering the packets of hundred-rouble notes I had seen in the morning in the Tenevo post office.

" I sent no money."

" Tell me, please, is your—what's his name?—new friend, Kazimir Kaetanych, or Kaetan Kazimirovich, a wealthy man ? "

" No, Serezha. He's a poor beggar ! But what a soul he has—what a heart ! You are wrong in speaking so disdainfully of him . . . and you bully him. Brother, you must learn to discriminate between people. Let's have another glass ? "

Pshekhotsky returned for dinner. When he saw me sitting at table and drinking, he frowned, and after turning about round our table for a time he seemed to think it best to retire to his own room. He refused to have any dinner, pleading a bad headache, but he expressed no objection when the Count advised him to go to bed and have his dinner there.

During the second course, Urbenin came in. I hardly recognized him. His broad red face beamed all over with

pleasure. A happy smile seemed to be playing on his sticking-out ears and on the thick fingers with which he was arranging his smart new necktie all the time.

"One of the cows is ill, your Excellency," he reported. "I sent for the vet, but it appears he had gone away somewhere. Wouldn't it be a good thing to send to town for the veterinary surgeon? If I send to him he will not listen and will not come, but if you write to him it will be quite a different matter. Perhaps it is a mere trifle, but it may be something serious."

"All right, I will write . . ." the Count grumbled.

"I congratulate you, Pētr Egorych," I said, rising and stretching out my hand to the bailiff.

"On what occasion?" he murmured.

"Why, you are about to get married!"

"Yes, yes, just fancy! He's going to get married!" the Count began, winking at blushing Urbenin. "What do you think of him? Ha, ha, ha! He was silent, never said a word, and then suddenly—this bombshell. And do you know whom he is going to marry? We guessed it that evening! Pētr Egorych, we settled then that in your scamp of a heart something improper was going on. When he looked at you and Olenka he said: 'That fellow's bitten!' Ha, ha! Sit down and have dinner with us, Pētr Egorych!"

Urbenin sat down carefully and respectfully and made a sign with his eyes to Il'ya to bring him a plate of soup. I poured him out a glass of vodka.

"I don't drink, sir," he said.

"Nonsense, you drink more than we do."

"I used to drink, but now I don't," the bailiff said, smiling. "Now, I mustn't drink . . . There's no cause. Thank God, everything is settled, satisfactorily everything is arranged, all exactly as my heart had desired, even better than I could have expected."

"Well, then, to your happiness you can drink this," I said, pouring him out a glass of sherry.

"This—why not? I really did drink hard. Now I can confess it to his Excellency. Sometimes from morning to night. When I rose in the morning I remembered it . . . well, naturally, I went to the cupboard at once. Now, thank God, I have nothing to drown in vodka."

Urbenin drank the glass of sherry. I poured out a second. He drank this one too, and imperceptibly got drunk. . . .

"I can scarcely believe it," he said, laughing a happy childish laugh. "I look at this ring and remember her words when she gave her consent—I can still scarcely believe it. . . . It seems laughable . . . How could I, at my age, with my appearance, hope that this deserving girl would not disdain to become mine . . . the mother of my orphan children? Why, she's a beauty, as you have been pleased to notice; an angel incorporate! Wonders without end! You have filled my glass again? Why not, for the last time . . . I drank to drown care, I will now drink to happiness. How I suffered, gentlemen! What grief I endured! I saw her first a year ago, and would you believe it—from that time I have not slept quietly a single night; there was not a single day on which I did not drown this—silly weakness with vodka . . . and scolded myself for this folly. . . . I sometimes looked at her through the window and admired her and . . . tore out the hair of my head. . . . At times I could have hanged myself . . . But, thank God, I ventured and proposed, and, do you know, it took me quite by surprise. Ha, ha! I heard, but I could not believe mine own ears. She said: 'I agree,' and it appeared to me like . . . 'Go to the devil, you old dotard!' . . . Afterward, when she kissed me, I was convinced. . . ."

At the recollection of that first kiss received from poetical Olenka, Urbenin closed his eyes and, despite his fifty years, he blushed like a boy. . . . this appeared disgusting to me.

"Gentlemen," he said, looking at us with happy, kind

eyes, "why don't you get married? Why are you wasting your lives, throwing them out of the window? Why do you shun that which is the greatest blessing of all who live upon the earth? The delight that debauchery gives is not a hundredth part of what a quiet family life would give you! Young men, your Excellency and you, Sergei Petrovich . . . I am happy now, and . . . God knows how I love you both! Forgive me for giving stupid advice but . . . I want you both to be happy! Why don't you get married? Family life is a blessing . . . It's every man's duty! . . ."

The happy and fond look on the face of the old man who was about to marry a young girl and was advising us to alter our dissolute existence for a quiet family life became unbearable to me.

"Yes," I said, "family life is a duty. I agree with you. And therefore you are acquitting yourself of this duty for the second time?"

"Yes, for the second time I am fond of family life in general. To be a bachelor or a widower is only half a life for me. Whatever you may say, gentlemen, wedlock is a great thing!"

"Certainly . . . even when the husband is almost three times as old as his wife?"

Urbenin blushed. The hand that was lifting a spoonful of soup to his mouth trembled, and the soup was pouring again into the plate.

"I understand what you want to say, Sergei Petrovich," he mumbled. "I thank you for your frankness. I ask myself: Is it not mean? I suffer! But where has one time to question oneself, to settle various questions when every moment one feels happy, when one forgets one's age, ugliness . . . the whole homo sum, Sergei Petrovich! And when for a second, thoughts run through my pate of the inequality of years, I don't break my head for an answer, but calm myself as well as I can. I think I have made Olga happy. I have given her a father and my

children a mother. Besides, all this is like a novel, and . . . my head feels giddy. It was wrong to make me drink sherry ”

Urbenin rose, wiped his face with his napkin, and sat down again. A minute later he gulped down another glass of sherry and looked at me for a long time with an imploring glance as if he were begging me for mercy, and suddenly his shoulders began to shake, and quite unexpectedly he burst into sobs like a boy.

“ It’s nothing . . . nothing ! ” he mumbled, trying to master his sobs. “ Don’t be uneasy. After your words my heart grew sick with a strange foreboding. But it is nothing.”

Urbenin’s foreboding was realized, realized so soon that I have not time to change my pen and begin a new page. From the next chapter my calm muse will change the expression of calmness on her face for one of passion and affliction. The introduction is finished and the drama begins.

The criminal will of man enters upon its rights.

### XIII

I REMEMBER a fine Sunday morning Through the windows of the Count's church the diaphanous blue sky could be seen and the whole of the church, from its painted cupola to its floor, was flooded by soft sunrays in which little clouds of incense played about gaily. . . . The songs of swallows and starlings were borne in through the open doors and windows . . . . One sparrow, evidently a very bold little fellow, flew in at the door, and having circled, chirping, several times round and round above our heads, flew out again through one of the windows . . . . In the church itself there was also singing. . . . They sang sweetly, with feeling, and with the enthusiasm for which our Little Russian singers are so celebrated when they feel themselves the heroes of the moment, and that all eyes are bent upon them . . . . The melodies were all gay and playful, like the soft, bright sunspots that played upon the walls and the clothes of the congregation . . . . In the unschooled but soft and fresh notes of the tenor my ear seemed to catch, despite the gay wedding melodies, deep, melancholy, chest chords It appeared as if this tenor was sorry to see that next to young, pretty and poetical Olenka there stood Urbenin, heavy, bear-like, and getting on in years. . . . And it was not only the tenor who was sorry to see this ill-assorted pair . . . . On many of the faces that lay within the field of my vision, notwithstanding all their efforts to appear gay and unconcerned, even an idiot could have read an expression of compassion.

Arrayed in a new dress suit, I stood behind Olenka, holding the crown over her head. I was pale and felt unwell . . . . I had a racking headache, the result of the

previous night's carouse and a pleasure party on the lake and the whole time I was looking to see if the hand that held the crown did not tremble . . . My soul felt the disagreeable presentiment of dread that is felt in a forest on a rainy autumn night I was vexed, disgusted, sorry. . . . Cats seemed to be scratching at my heart, somewhat resembling qualms of conscience . . . There in the depths, at the very bottom of my heart, a little devil was seated who obstinately, persistently whispered to me that if Olenka's marriage with clumsy Urbenin was a sin, I was the cause of that sin. . . . Where did such thoughts come from? How could I have saved this little fool from the unknown risks of her indubitable mistake? . . .

"Who knows?" whispered the little devil "Who should know better than you?"

In my time I have known many ill-assorted marriages. I have often stood before Pukirev's picture I have read numberless novels based on disagreements between husband and wife; besides, I have known the physiology that irrevocably punishes ill-assorted marriages, but never once in my whole life had I experienced that terrible spiritual condition from which I was unable to escape all the time I was standing behind Olenka, executing the functions of best man

"If my soul is agitated only by commiseration, how is it that I never felt that compassion before when I assisted at other weddings? . . ."

"There is no commiseration here," the little devil whispered, "but jealousy. . . ."

One can only be jealous of those one loves, but do I love the girl in red? If I loved all the girls I have met while living under the moon, my heart would not suffice; besides, it would be too much of a good thing. . . .

My friend Count Karnéev was standing quite at the back near the door behind the churchwarden's counter, selling wax tapers He was well groomed, with well smoothed hair, and exhaled a narcotic, suffocating odour of scents.

That day he looked such a darling that when I greeted him in the morning I could not refrain from saying :

" Alexey, to-day you are looking like an ideal quadrille dancer ! "

He greeted everybody who entered or left with the sweetest of smiles, and I heard the ponderous compliments with which he rewarded each lady who bought a candle from him. He, the spoilt child of Fortune, who never had copper coins, did not know how to handle them, and was constantly dropping on the floor five and three-kopeck pieces. Near him, leaning against the counter, Kalinin stood majestically with a Stanislav decoration on a ribbon round his neck. His countenance shone and beamed. He was pleased that his idea of " at homes " had fallen on good soil, and was already beginning to bear fruit. In the depths of his soul he was showering on Urbenin a thousand thanks, his marriage was an absurdity, but it was a good opportunity to get the first " at home " arranged.

Vain Olenka must have rejoiced. From the nuptial lectern to the doors of the high altar stretched out two rows of the most representative ladies of our district flower garden. The guests were decked out as smartly as they would have been if the Count himself was being married more elegantly. No spilets could not have been desired . . . The assembly consisted almost exclusively of aristocrats . Not a single priest's wife, not a single tradesman's wife . There were even among them ladies to whom Olenka would formerly never have considered herself entitled to bow . . . And Olenka's bridegroom—a bailiff, a privileged retainer ; but from this her vanity could not suffer. He was a nobleman and the possessor of a mortgaged estate in the neighbouring district . His father had been marshal of the district and he himself had for more than nine years been a magistrate in his own native district . . . What more could have been desired by the ambitious daughter of a personal nobleman ? Even the fact that her best man was known in the whole pro-

vince as a *bon vivant* and a Don Juan could tickle her pride . . . All the women were looking at him. . . . He was as showy as forty thousand best men thrown into one, and what was not the least important, he had not refused to be her best man, she, a simple little girl, when, as everybody knew, he had even refused aristocrats when they had asked him to be their best man. . . .

But vain Olenka did not rejoice . . . She was as pale as the linen she had but lately brought home from the Tenevo market. The hand in which she held the candle shook slightly and her chin trembled from time to time. In her eyes there was a certain dullness, as if something had suddenly astonished or frightened her. . . . There was not a sign of that gaiety which had shone in her eyes even the day before when she was running about the garden talking with enthusiasm of the sort of wallpaper she would have in her drawing-room, and saying on what days she would receive guests, and so on. Her face was now too serious, more serious than the solemn occasion demanded. . . .

Urbenin was in a new dress-suit. He was respectably dressed, but his hair was arranged as the orthodox Russians wore their hair in the year 'twelve. As usual, he was red in the face, and serious. His eyes prayed and the signs of the cross he made after every "Lord have mercy upon us" were not made in a mechanical manner.

Urbenin's children by his first marriage—the schoolboy Grisha and the little fair-haired girl Sasha,—were standing just behind me. They gazed at the back of their father's red head and at his standing-out ears, and their faces seemed to represent notes of interrogation. They could not understand why Aunt Olia had given herself to their father, and why he was taking her into his house. Sasha was only surprised, but the fourteen-year-old Grisha frowned and looked scowlingly at him. He would certainly have replied in the negative if his father had asked his permission to marry. . . .

The marriage service was performed with special solemnity. Three priests and two deacons officiated. The service lasted long, so long, indeed, that my arm was quite tired of holding the crown, and the ladies who love to see a wedding ceased looking at the bridal pair. The chief priest read the prayers, with pauses, without leaving out a single one. The choir sang something very long and complicated, the cantor took advantage of the occasion to display the compass of his voice, reading the Gospels with extra slowness. But at last the chief priest took the crown out of my hands . . . the young couple kissed each other. . . . The guests got excited, the straight lines were broken, congratulations, kisses and exclamations were heard. Urbenin, beaming and smiling, took his young wife on his arm, and we all went out into the air.

If anybody who was in the church with me finds this description incomplete and not quite accurate, let him set down these oversights to the headache from which I was suffering and the above-mentioned spiritual depression which prevented me from observing and noting. . . . Certainly, if I had known at the time that I would have to write a novel, I would not have looked at the floor as I did on that day, and I would not have paid attention to my headache!

Fate sometimes allows itself bitter and malignant jokes! The young couple had scarcely had time to leave the church when they were met by an unexpected and unwished for surprise. When the wedding procession, bright with many tints and colours in the sunlight, was proceeding from the church to the Count's house, Olenka suddenly made a backward step, stopped, and gave her husband's elbow such a violent pull that he staggered.

"He's been let out!" she said aloud, looking at me with terror.

Poor little thing! Her insane father, the forester Skvortsov, was running down the avenue to meet the procession. Waving his hands and stumbling along with

rolling, insane eyes, he presented a most unattractive picture. However, all this would possibly have been decent if he had not been in his print dressing-gown and downtrodden slippers, the raggedness of which was of ill accord with the elegant wedding finery of his daughter. His face looked sleepy, his dishevelled hair was blown about by the wind, his nightshirt was unbuttoned.

"Olenka!" he mumbled when he had come up to them.  
"Why have you left me?"

Olenka blushed scarlet and looked askance at the smiling ladies. The poor little thing was consumed by shame.

"Mit'ka did not lock the door!" the forester continued, turning to us. "It would not be difficult for robbers to get in! . . . The samovar was stolen out of the kitchen last summer, and now she wants us to be robbed again."

"I don't know who can have let him out!" Urbenin whispered to me. "I ordered him to be locked up . . . Golubchik, Sergei Petrovich, have pity on us, get us out of this awkward position somehow! Anyhow!"

"I know who stole your samovar," I said to the forester.  
"Come along, I'll show you where it is."

Taking Skvortsov round the waist, I led him towards the church. I took him into the churchyard and talked to him until, by my calculation, I thought the wedding procession ought to be in the house, then I left him without having told him where his stolen samovar was to be found.

Although this meeting with the madman was quite unexpected and extraordinary, it was soon forgotten . . . A new surprise that Fate had prepared for the young couple was still more unusual.

**A**N hour later we were all seated at long tables, dining.

To anybody who was accustomed to cobwebs, mildew and wild gipsy whoops in the Count's apartments it must have seemed strange to look on the workaday, prosaic crowd that now, by their habitual chatter, broke the usual silence of the ancient and deserted halls. This many coloured noisy throng looked like a flight of starlings which in flying past had alighted to rest in a neglected churchyard or—may the noble bird forgive me such a comparison!—a flight of storks that in the twilight of one of their migratory days had settled down on the ruins of a deserted castle.

I sat there hating that crowd which frivolously examined the decaying wealth of the Counts Karnéev. The mosaic walls, the carved ceilings, the rich Persian carpets and the rococo furniture excited enthusiasm and astonishment. A self-satisfied smile never left the Count's moustachioed face. He received the enthusiastic flattery of his guests as something that he deserved, though in reality all the riches and luxuries of his deserted mansion were not acquired in any way thanks to him, but on the contrary, he merited the bitterest reproaches and contempt for the barbarously dull indifference with which he treated all the wealth, that had been collected by his fathers and grandfathers, collected not in days, but in scores of years! It was only the mentally blind or the poor of spirit who could not see in every slab of damp marble, in every picture, in each dark corner of the Count's garden, the sweat, the tears and the callosities on the hands of the people whose children now swarmed in the little log huts

of the Count's miserable villages. . . Among all those people seated at the wedding feast, rich, independent people, people who might easily have told him the plainest truths, there was not one who would have told the Count that his self-satisfied grin was stupid and out of place. . . Everybody found it necessary to smile flatteringly and to burn paltry incense before him. If this was ordinary politeness (with us, many love to throw everything on politeness and propriety), I would prefer the churl who eats with his hands, who takes the bread from his neighbour's plate, and blows his nose between two fingers, to these dandies.

Urbenin smiled, but he had his own reasons for this. He smiled flatteringly, respectfully, and in a childlike, happy manner. His broad smiles were the result of a sort of dog's happiness. A devoted and loving dog, who had been fondled and petted, and now in sign of gratitude wagged its tail gaily and with sincerity.

Like Risler Senior in Alphonse Daudet's novel, beaming and rubbing his hands with delight, he gazed at his young wife, and from the superabundance of his feelings could not refrain from asking question after question

"Who could have thought that this young beauty would fall in love with an old man like myself? Is it possible she could not find anybody younger and more elegant? Women's hearts are incomprehensible!"

He even had the courage to turn to me and blurt out

"When one looks around, what an age this is we live in! He, he! When an old man can carry off such a fairy from under the nose of youth! Where have you all had your eyes? He, he. . . . Young men are not what they used to be!"

Not knowing what to do or how to express the feelings of gratitude that were overflowing in his broad breast, he was constantly jumping up, stretching out his glass towards the Count's glass and saying in a voice that trembled with emotion:

"Your Excellency, my feelings toward you are well known. This day you have done so much for me that my affection for you appears like nothing. How have I merited such a great favour, your Excellency, or that you should take such an interest in my joy? It is only Counts and bankers who celebrate their weddings in such a way! What luxury, what an assembly of notable guests! . . . Oh, what can I say! . . . Believe me, your Excellency, I shall never forget you, as I shall never forget this best and happiest day of my life."

And so on. . . . Olenka was evidently not pleased with her husband's florid respectfulness. One could see she was annoyed at his speeches, that raised smiles on the faces of the guests and even caused them to feel ashamed for him. Notwithstanding the glass of champagne she had drunk, she was still not gay, and morose as before. . . . She was as pale as she had been in church, and the same look of dread was in her eyes. . . . She was silent, she answered lazily to all the questions that were asked, scarcely smiled at the Count's witticisms, and she hardly touched the expensive dishes. . . . In proportion as Urbenin became slightly intoxicated and thought himself the happiest of mortals, her pretty face appeared more and more unhappy. It made me sorrowful to look at her, and in order not to look at her face I tried not to lift my eyes off my plate.

How could her sadness be explained? Was not regret beginning to gnaw at the poor girl's heart? Or perhaps her vanity had expected even greater pomp?

During the second course when I lifted my eyes and looked at her, I was painfully struck by her expression. The poor girl in trying to answer some of the Count's silly remarks, was making strenuous efforts to swallow something; sobs were welling up in her throat. She did not remove her handkerchief from her mouth, and looked at us timidly, like a frightened little animal, to see if we did not notice that she wanted to cry.

"Why are you looking so glum to-day?" the Count asked. "Oh, ho! Petr Egorych, it's your fault! Have the goodness to cheer your wife up! Ladies and gentlemen, I demand a kiss! Ha, ha! . . . The kiss I demand is, of course, not for me, but only . . . that they should kiss each other! Bitter!"

"Bitter!" echoed Kalinin.

Urbenin, smiling all over his red face, rose and began to blink. Olenka forced by the calls and the demands of the guests, rose slightly and offered her motionless, lifeless lips to Urbenin. He kissed her . . . Olenka pressed her lips together as if she feared they would be kissed another time, and glanced at me . . . Probably my look was an evil one. Catching my eye, she suddenly blushed, and taking up her handkerchief, she began to blow her nose, trying in that way to hide her terrible confusion. . . . The thought entered my mind that she was ashamed before me, ashamed of that kiss, ashamed of her marriage.

"What have I to do with you?" I thought, but at the same time I did not remove my eyes from her face, trying to discover the cause of her confusion.

The poor little thing could not stand my gaze. It is true the blush of shame soon left her face, but in place of it tears began to rise up in her eyes, real tears such as I had never before seen on her face. Pressing her handkerchief to her face, she rose and rushed out of the dining-room.

"Olga Nikolaevna has a bad headache," I hastened to say in order to explain her departure. "Already this morning she complained of her head . . ."

"Not at all, brother," the Count said jokingly. "A headache has nothing to do with it. It's all caused by the kiss, it has confused her. Ladies and gentlemen, I announce a severe reprimand for the bridegroom! He has not taught his bride how to kiss! Ha, ha, ha!"

The guests, delighted with the Count's wit, began to

laugh . . . But they ought not to have laughed. . . .

Five minutes passed, ten minutes passed, and the bride did not return. . . . A silence fell on the party . . . Even the Count ceased joking. . . . Olenka's absence was all the more striking as she had left suddenly without saying a word . . . To say nothing about etiquette, which had received a shock first of all, Olenka had left the table immediately after the kiss, so it was evident she was cross at having been forced to kiss her husband . . . It was impossible to suppose she had gone away because she was confused . . . One can be confused for a minute, for two, but not for an eternity, as the first ten minutes of her absence appeared to us all. What a number of evil thoughts entered into the half tipsy minds of the men, what scandals were being prepared by the charming ladies! The bride had risen and left the table! What an effective and scenic point for a drama in the provincial "fashionable world"!

Urbenin began to be uneasy and looked round

"Nerves. . . ." he muttered "Or perhaps something has gone wrong with her toilet. . . . Who can account for anything with these women? She'll come back directly—this very minute."

But when another ten minutes had passed and she had not appeared, he looked at me with such unhappy, imploring eyes that I was sorry for him

"Would it matter if I went to look for her?" his eyes asked "Won't you help me, golubchik, to get out of this horrible position? Of all here you are the cleverest, the boldest, the most ready-witted man Do help me!"

I saw the entreaty in his unhappy eyes and decided to help him. How I helped him the reader will see farther on. . . . I will only say that the bear who assisted the hermit in Krylov's fable loses all its animal majesty, becomes pale, and turns into an innocent infusoria when I think of myself in the part of the "obliging fool." . . . The resemblance between me and the bear consists only

in this that we both went to help quite sincerely without foreseeing any bad consequences from our help, but the difference between us is enormous . . . The stone with which I struck Urbenin's forehead was many times more weighty. . . .

"Where is Olga Nikolaevna ? " I asked the lackey who had brought round the salad.

"She went into the garden, sir," he replied.

"This is becoming quite impossible, mesdames ! " I said in a jocular tone, addressing myself to the ladies "The bride has gone away and my wine has become quite sour ! . . . I must go to look for her and bring her back, even if all her teeth were aching ! The best man is an official personage, and he is going to show his authority ! "

I rose, amid the loud applause of my friend the Count, left the dining-room and went into the garden. The hot rays of the midday sun poured straight upon my head, which was already excited by wine. Suffocating heat and sultriness seemed to strike me in the face. I went along one of the side avenues at a venture, and, whistling some sort of melody, I gave full scope to my capacities as an ordinary detective. I examined all the bushes, summer-houses and caves, and when I began to be tormented by the regret that I had turned to the right instead of to the left, I suddenly heard a strange sound. Somebody was laughing or crying. The sounds issued from one of the grottoes that I had left to examine last of all. Quickly entering it, I found the object of my search enveloped in dampness, the smell of mildew, mushrooms, and lime.

She stood there leaning against a wooden column that was covered with black moss, and lifting her eyes full of horror and despair on me, she tore at her hair. Tears poured from her eyes as from a sponge that is pressed.

"What have I done ? What have I done ? " she muttered

"Yes, Olia, what have you done ? " I said, standing before her with folded arms.

"Why did I marry him? Where were my eyes? Where was my sense?"

"Yes, Olia . . . It is difficult to explain your action. To explain it by inexperience is too indulgent; to explain it by depravity—I would rather not . . ."

"I only understood it to-day . . . only to-day! Why did I not understand it yesterday? Now all is irrevocable, all is lost! All, all! I might have married the man I love, the man who loves me!"

"Who is that, Olia?" I asked.

"You!" she said, looking me straight and openly in the eyes. "But I was too hasty! I was foolish! You are clever, noble, young. . . . You are rich! You appeared to me unattainable!"

"Well, that's enough, Olia," I said, taking her by the hand. "Wipe your little eyes and come along. . . . They are waiting for you there . . . Well, don't cry any more, don't cry. . . ." I kissed her hand . . . "That's enough, little girl! You have done a foolish thing and are now paying for it. . . . It was your fault. . . . Well, that's enough, be calm. . . ."

"But you love me? Yes? You are so big, so handsome! Don't you love me?"

"It's time to go, my darling . . ." I said, noticing to my great horror that I was kissing her forehead, taking her round the waist, that she was scorching me with her hot breath and that she was hanging round my neck.

"Enough!" I mumbled. "That must satisfy you!"

Five minutes later, when I carried her out of the grotto in my arms and troubled by new impressions put her on her feet, I saw Pshekhotsky standing almost at the entrance. . . . He stood there, looking at me maliciously and applauding silently. . . . I measured him with my glance, and giving Olga my arm, walked off towards the house.

"We'll see the last of you here to-day," I said, looking

back at Pshekhotsky. " You will have to pay for this spying ! "

My kisses had probably been ardent because Olga's face was burning as if ablaze. There were no traces of the recently shed tears to be seen on it

" Now, as the saying is, the ocean is but knee-deep for me," she murmured as we went together towards the house and she pressed my elbow convulsively. " This morning I did not know where to hide myself from terror, and now . . . now, my good giant, I don't know what to do from happiness ! My husband is sitting and waiting for me there. . . . Ha, ha ! . . . What's that to me ? If he were even a crocodile, a terrible serpent . . . I'm afraid of nothing ! I love you, and that's all I want to know ! "

I looked at her face, radiant with happiness, at her eyes, brim full of joyful, satisfied love, and my heart sank with fear for the future of this pretty and happy creature her love for me was but an extra impulse towards the abyss . . . How will this laughing woman with no thought for the future end ? . . . My heart misgave me and sank with a feeling that cannot be called either pity or sympathy, because it was stronger than these feelings I stopped and laid my hand on Olga's shoulder. . . . I had never before seen anything more beautiful, graceful and at the same time more pitiful . . . There was no time for reasoning, deliberation or thought, and, carried away by my feelings, I exclaimed.

" Olga, come home with me at once ! This instant ! "

" How ? What did you say ? " she asked, unable to understand my somewhat solemn tone.

" Let us drive to my house immediately ! "

Olga smiled and pointed to the house. . . .

" Well, and what of that ? " I said. " Isn't it all the same if I take you to-morrow or to-day ? But the sooner the better . . . Come ! "

" But . . . that's somehow strange——"

"Girl, you're afraid of the scandal? Yes, there'll be an unusual, a grandiose scandal, but a thousand scandals are better than that you should remain here! I won't leave you here! I can't leave you here! Olga, do you understand? Cast aside your faint-heartedness, your womanly logic, and obey me! Obey me if you do not desire your own ruin!"

Olga's eyes said that she did not understand me . . . Meanwhile time did not stop but went its course, and it was impossible for us to remain standing in the avenue while they were expecting us *there*. We had to decide. . . . I pressed to my heart "the girl in red," who actually was my wife now, and at that moment it appeared to me that I really loved her . . . loved her with a husband's love, that she was mine, and that her fate rested on my conscience . . . I saw that I was united with this creature for ever, irrevocably.

"Listen, my darling, my treasure!" I said. "It's a bold step . . . It will separate us from our nearest friends, it will call down upon our heads a thousand reproaches and tearful lamentations. Perhaps it will even spoil my career, it will cause me a thousand unsurmountable unpleasantnesses, but, my darling, it is settled! You will be my wife! . . . I want no better wife. God preserve me from all other women! I will make you happy; I will take care of you like the apple of my eye, as long as I live; I will educate you—make a woman of you! I promise you this, and here is my honest hand on it!"

I spoke with sincere passion, with feeling, like a stage lover acting the most pathetic scene of his part. I spoke very well, I seemed to be inspired by the touch of an eagle's wing that was soaring over our heads. My Olia took my outstretched hand, held it in her own small hands, and kissed it tenderly. But this was not a sign of assent. On the silly little face of an inexperienced woman who had never before heard such speech, there appeared a

look of perplexity. . . . She still could not understand me.

" You say I am to go to you ? " she said reflectively  
" I don't quite understand you      Don't you know  
what *he* would say ? "

" What have you to do with what *he* would say ? "

" How so ? No, Serezha ! Better say no more . . .  
Please leave that alone . . . You love me, and I want  
nothing more. With your love I'm ready to go to hell "

" But, little fool, how will you manage it ? "

" I shall live here, and you—why you will come every  
day. . . . I will come to meet you "

" But I can't imagine such a life for you without a  
shudder ! At night—he , in the day—I . . . No, that  
is impossible ! Olia, I love you so much at the present  
moment that . . . I am madly jealous . . . I never  
suspected I had the capacity for such feelings "

But what imprudence ! I had my arm round her waist,  
and she was stroking my hand tenderly at the time when  
at any moment one could expect somebody would be  
passing down the avenue and might see us

" Come," I said, removing my arm    " Put on your  
cloak and let us be off ! "

" How quickly you want to do things," she murmured  
in a tearful voice. " You hurry as if to a fire. And God  
only knows what you have invented ! To run away  
immediately after the marriage ! What will people  
say ? "

And Olenka shrugged her shoulders Her face wore  
such a look of perplexity, astonishment and incompre-  
hension that I only waved my hand and postponed settling  
her " life questions " to another moment. Besides, there  
was no time to continue our conversation · we were going  
up the stone stairs that led to the terrace and heard the  
sound of voices. At the dining-room door Olia arranged  
her hair, saw that her dress was in order, and went into  
the room   No signs of confusion could be noticed on her

face She entered the room much more boldly than I had expected

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have brought back the fugitive," I said as I sat down in my place "I found her with difficulty I'm quite tired out by this search I went into the garden, I looked around, and there she was walking about in the avenue . . . 'Why are you here?' I asked her 'Just so,' she answered 'It's so stuffy'"

Olia looked at me, at the guests, at her husband, and began to laugh. Something amused her, and she became gay I read on her face the wish to share with all that crowd of diners the sudden happiness that she had experienced ; and not being able to give expression to it in words, she poured it out in her laughter

"What a funny person I am!" she said "I am laughing, and I don't know why I am laughing. . . . Count, laugh!"

"Bitter," cried Kalinin

Urbenin coughed and looked inquiringly at Olia

"Well?" she said, with a momentary frown.

"They are calling out 'bitter,'" Urbenin smiled, and rising, he wiped his lips with his napkin

Olga rose too and allowed him to kiss her immovable lips . . . The kiss was a cold one, but it served to increase the fire that was smouldering in my breast and threatened every moment to burst into flame . . . I turned away and with compressed lips awaited the end of the dinner. . . . Fortunately the end was soon reached, otherwise I would not have been able to endure it.

"COME here!" I said to the Count rudely, going up to him after dinner

The Count looked at me with astonishment and followed me into the empty room to which I led him.

"What do you want, my dear friend?" he asked as he unbuttoned his waistcoat and hiccuped

"Choose one of us. . ." I said, scarcely able to stand on my feet from the rage that had mastered me "Either me or Pshekhotsky! If you don't promise me that in an hour that scoundrel shall leave your estate, I will never set my foot here again!. . . I give you half a minute to make your choice!"

The Count dropped the cigar out of his mouth and spread his arms. . .

"What's the matter with you, Serezha?" he asked, opening his eyes wide. "You look quite wild!"

"No useless words, if you please! I cannot endure that spy, scoundrel, rogue, your friend Pshekhotsky, and in the name of our close friendship I demand that he shall no longer be here, and instantly, too!"

"But what has he done to you?" the Count asked, much agitated. "Why are you attacking him?"

"I ask you again - me or him?"

"But, golubchik, you are placing me in a horribly awkward position. . . Stop! There's a feather on your dress coat! . . . You are demanding the impossible from me!"

"Good-bye!" I said "I am no longer acquainted with you"

And turning sharply on my heel, I went into the ante-room, put on my overcoat and hastened out of the house

When crossing the garden towards the servants' department, where I wanted to give the order to have my horse put to, I was stopped. Coming towards me with a small cup of coffee in her hand, I was met by Nadia Kalinin. She was also at Urbenin's wedding, but a sort of undefined fear had forced me to avoid speaking to her, and during the whole day I had not gone up to her, nor said a word to her.

"Sergey Petrovich!" she said in an unnaturally deep voice when in passing her I slightly raised my hat. "Stop!"

"What may your commands be?" I asked, as I came up to her.

"I have nothing to command. Besides, you are no lackey," she said, gazing straight into my eyes and becoming terribly pale. "You are hurrying somewhere, but if you have time might I detain you for a moment?"

"Certainly! . . . I can't understand why you ask it? . . ."

"In that case let us sit down. Sergey Petrovich," she continued, after we had seated ourselves. "All this day you have tried to avoid seeing me, and have gone round me, as if you were afraid of meeting me and as if on purpose, I had decided to speak to you. I am proud and egoistical . . . I do not know how to obtrude myself . . . but once in a lifetime one can sacrifice pride."

"To what do you refer?"

"I had decided to ask you. The question is humiliating, it is difficult for me . . . I don't know how I shall stand it. . . . Answer me without looking at me.

. . . Sergey Petrovich, is it possible you are not sorry for me?"

Nadia looked at me and slightly shook her head. Her face became paler. Her upper lip trembled and was drawn to one side.

"Sergey Petrovich! I always think that . . . you have been separated from me by some misunderstanding, some caprice . . . I think if we had an explanation, all

would go on as formerly. If I did not think it, I would not have strength to put you the question you are about to hear. Sergey Petrovich, I am unhappy . . . You must see it. . . . My life is no life All is dried up . . . And chiefly . . . this uncertainty one does not know, whether to hope or not Your conduct towards me is so incomprehensible that it is impossible to arrive at any certain conclusion Tell me, and I shall know what to do. . . . My life will then have an aim. . . . I shall then decide on something ”

“ Nadezhda Nikolaevna, you wish to ask me about something ? ” I said, preparing in my mind an answer to the question I had a presentiment was coming

“ Yes, I want to ask The question is humiliating . . . If anybody were listening to us they might think I was obtruding myself, in a word,—was a sort of Pushkin’s Tatjana. . . . But this question has been tortured from me . . . ”

The question was really forced from her by torture When Nadia turned her face towards me to put that question, I became frightened Nadia trembled, pressed her fingers together convulsively, and pressed from her lips with melancholy sadness the fatal words Her pallor was terrible.

“ May I hope ? ” she whispered at last “ Do not be afraid to tell me candidly. . . . Whatever the answer may be, it will be better than uncertainty What is it ? May I hope ? ”

She waited for an answer, meanwhile the state of my soul was such that I was incapable of making a sensible answer. Drunk, excited by the occurrence in the grotto, enraged by Pshekhotsky’s spying, and Olga’s indecision, and the stupid conversation I had had with the Count, I scarcely heard Nadia

“ May I hope ? ” she repeated “ Answer me ! ”

“ Ach, I can’t answer now, Nadezhda Nikolaevna ! ” I said with a wave of the hand as I rose “ I am incapable

at the present moment of giving any sort of answer. Forgive me, I neither heard nor understood you I am stupid and excited . It's really a pity you took the trouble ”

I again waved my hand and left Nadia It was only afterwards when I became calm again, that I understood how stupid and cruel I had been in not giving the girl an apswer to her simple and ingenuous question. Why did I not answer her ?

Now when I can look back dispassionately at the past, I do not explain my cruelty by the condition of my soul It appears to me that in not giving a straightforward answer I was coquetting and playing the fool It is difficult to understand the human soul, but it is still more difficult to understand one's own soul If I really was playing the fool, may God forgive me . Although to make game of another's suffering ought not to be forgiven.

## XVI

FOR three days I wandered about my rooms from corner to corner like a wolf in a cage, trying with all the strength of my unstable will to prevent myself from leaving the house. I did not touch the pile of papers that were lying on the table patiently awaiting my attention; I received nobody, I quarrelled with Polycarp; I was irritable. . . . I did not allow myself to go to the Count's estate, and this obstinacy cost me great nervous labour. A thousand times I took up my hat and as often threw it down again . . . Sometimes I decided to defy the whole world and go to Olga, whatever it might cost; at others I drenched myself with the cold decision to remain at home.

My reason told me not to go to the Count's estate. Since I had sworn to the Count never to set foot in his house again, could I sacrifice my self-love and pride? What would that moustachioed coxcomb think if, after our stupid conversation, I went to him as if nothing had happened? Would it not be a confession of my own injustice?

Besides, as an honest man I ought to break off all connexion with Olga. All further intercourse with her could only lead to her ruin. She had made a mistake in marrying Urbenin; in falling in love with me she had made another mistake. If she had a secret lover while living with her old husband, would she not be like a depraved doll? To say nothing about how abominable in principle, such a life is, it was necessary also to think of the consequences.

What a coward I am! I was afraid of the consequences,

I answered something, placed her on a chair opposite me, and began to contemplate her beauty. For a minute we looked at each other in silence.

" You are very pretty, Olia ! " I sighed. " It's a pity and an insult that you're so pretty ! "

" Why is it a pity ? "

" The devil only knows who's got you "

" But what do you want more ? Am not I yours ? Here I am . . . Listen, Serezha ! . . . Will you tell me the truth if I ask you ? "

" Of course, only the truth "

" Would you have married me if I had not married Pëtr Egorych ? "

" Probably not," I wanted to say, but why should I probe the painful wound in poor Olia's heart that was already so troubled ?

" Certainly," I said in the tone of a man speaking the truth.

Olia sighed and cast her eyes down.

" What a mistake I've made ! What a mistake ! And what's worst of all it can't be rectified ! I suppose I can't get divorced from him ? "

" You can't "

" I can't understand why I was in such a hurry ! We girls are so silly and giddy . . . There's nobody to whip us ! However, one can't undo the past, and to reason about it is useless . . . Neither reasoning nor tears are of any good Serezha, I cried all last night ! He was there . . . lying next to me, and I was thinking of you . . . I couldn't sleep . . . I wanted to run away in the night, even into the wood to father . . . It is better to live with a mad father than with this—what's his name ? "

" Reasoning won't help . . . Olia, you ought to have reasoned when you drove home with me from Tenevo, and were so happy at getting married to a rich man. . . . Its' too late to practice eloquence now. . . ."

"Too late. . . . Then let it be so!" Olga said with a decisive wave of the hand. It will be possible to live, if it is no worse . . . Good-bye, I must be off . . ."

"No, not good-bye. . . ."

I drew Olia towards me and covered her face with kisses, as if I were trying to reward myself for the lost three days. She pressed close against me like a cold lamb and warmed my face with her hot breath . . . There was stillness in the room . . .

"The husband killed his wife!" bawled my parrot.

Olia shivered, released herself from my embraces, and looked inquiringly at me.

"It's only the parrot, my soul," I said. "Calm yourself."

"The husband killed his wife!" Ivan Dem'yanych repeated again.

Olia rose, put on her hat in silence, and gave me her hand. Dread was written on her face.

"What if Urbenin gets to know?" she asked, looking at me with wide-open eyes. "He is capable of killing me."

"What nonsense!" I said, laughing. "What sort of a fellow would I be if I allowed him to kill you? He's hardly capable of such an unusual act as a murder . . . Are you going? Well, then, good-bye, my child! . . . I will wait . . . To-morrow, in the wood, near the house where you lived . . . Shall we meet there?" . . .

After seeing Olia off, I returned to my study, where I found Polycarp. He was standing in the middle of the room, he looked sternly at me and shook his head contemptuously.

"Sergei Petrovich, see that this sort of thing does not happen here again; I won't have it," he said in the tone of a severe parent. "I don't wish it . . ."

"What's 'it'?"

"That thing . . . You think I did not see? I saw everything. . . . See that she doesn't dare to come here."

again. This is no house for that sort of philandering. There are other places for that . . ."

I was in the best of humours, so Polycarp's spying and mentorial tone did not make me angry. I only laughed and sent him to the kitchen

I had hardly had time to collect my thoughts after Olga's visit when another guest arrived A carriage rattled up to my door and Polycarp, spitting to each side and with mumbled abuse announced the arrival of "that there fellow, may he be !!" etc, etc It was the Count, whom he hated with the whole strength of his soul The Count entered, looked tearfully at me, and shook his head

" You turn away. . . . You don't want to speak  
" "

" I don't turn away," I said

" I am so fond of you, Serezha, and you . . for a trifle! Why do you wound me? Why?"

The Count sat down, sighed, and shook his head

" Well, you've played the fool long enough!" I said  
" All right!"

I had a strong influence upon this weak, puny little man , it was as strong as my contempt for him . . My contemptuous tone never offended him , on the contrary . . When he heard my " All right !" he jumped up and embraced me

" I have brought him with me . . He is sitting in the carriage . . Do you wish him to apologize?"

" Do you know his fault?"

" No . . ."

" So much the better He needn't apologize, but you had better warn him that if ever a similar thing occurs, I'll not get excited, but I will take my own measures"

" Then, Serezha, it's peace? Excellent! That ought to have been long ago , the deuce only knows what you quarrelled about! Like two schoolgirls! Oh, by-the-by,

golubchek, haven't you got half a glass of vodka? My throat is terribly dry!"

I ordered vodka to be served. The Count drank two glasses, sprawled himself out on the sofa, and began to chatter.

"I say, brother, I just met Olia . . . A fine girl! I must tell you, I'm beginning to detest Urbenin . . . That means that Olenka is beginning to please me . . . She's devilish pretty! I think of making up to her."

"One ought not to touch the married ones!" I said with a sigh.

"Come now, he's an old man . . . It's no sin to juggle Petr Egorych out of his wife . . . She's no mate for him. . . He's like a dog, he can't eat it himself, and won't let others have it . . . I'm going to begin my siege to-day, I'll begin systematically . . . She's such a ducky—h'm!—quite chic, brother! One licks one's chops!"

The Count drank a third glass and continued

"Of the girls here, do you know who pleases me too? Nadenka, that fool Kalinin's daughter . . . A burning brunette, you know the sort, pale, with wonderful eyes . . . I must also cast my line there . . . I'm giving a party at Whitsuntide, a musical, vocal, literary evening on purpose to invite her . . . As it turns out, it's not so bad here, quite jolly! There's society, and women . . . and . . . May I have five winks here . . . only a moment?"

"You may . . . But how about Pshekhotsky in the carriage?"

"He may wait, the devil take him! . . . Brother, I myself don't like him!"

The Count raised himself on his elbow and said mysteriously

"I keep him only from necessity . . . because I must . . . May the devil take him!"

The Count's elbow gave way, his head sank on the cushion A minute later snores were heard.

In the evening after the Count had left, I had another visitor , the doctor, Pavil Ivanovich He came to inform me of Nadezhda Nikolaevna's illness and also that she had definitely refused him her hand The poor fellow was downhearted and went about like a drenched hen

**T**HE poetical month of May had passed. The lilacs and tulips were over, and fate decreed that with them the ecstasies of love, which, notwithstanding their guiltiness and painfulness, had yet occasionally afforded us sweet moments that can never be effaced from our memory, should likewise wither. There are moments for which one would give months, yea, even years!

On a June evening when the sun was already set, but its broad track in purple and gold still glowed in the distant West, foretelling a calm and clear day, for the morrow I rode on Zorka up to the house where Urbenin lived. On that evening the Count was giving a musical party. The guests were already arriving, but the Count was not at home; he had gone for a ride and had left word he would return soon.

A little later I was standing at the porch, holding my horse by the bridle and chatting with Urbenin's little daughter, Sasha. Urbenin himself was sitting on the steps with his head supported on his fists, looking into the distance, which could be seen through the open gates. He was gloomy and answered my questions reluctantly. I left him in peace and occupied myself with Sasha.

"Where is your new máma?" I asked her.

"She has gone out riding with the Count. She rides with him every day."

"Every day!" Urbenin grumbled with a sigh.

Much could be heard in that sigh. The same feelings could be heard in it that were agitating my soul and that I was trying to explain to myself, but was unable to do so, and therefore became lost in conjecture.

Every day Olga went out for rides with the Count. But that was a trifle Olga could not fall in love with the Count, and Urbenin's jealousy was groundless We ought not to have been jealous of the Count, but of something else which, however, I could not understand for a long time This "something else" built up a whole wall between Olga and me She continued to love me, but after the visit which has been described in the last chapter, she had not been to my house more than twice, and when we met in other places she flared up in a strange way and obstinately refused to answer my questions She returned my caresses with passion, but her movements were sudden and startled, so that our short rendezvous only left a feeling of painful perplexity in my mind. Her conscience was not clean, this was clear, but what was the real cause? Nothing could be read on Olga's guilty face.

"I hope your new máma is well?" I asked Sasha

"She's quite well Only in the night she had toothache She cried."

"She cried," Urbenin repeated, looking at Sasha  
"Did you see it? My darling, you only dreamed it"

Olga had not had toothache If she had cried it was not with pain, but for something else I wanted to continue talking to Sasha, but I did not succeed in this, as at that moment the noise of horses' hoofs was heard and we soon saw the riders—a man inelegantly jumping about in his saddle, and a graceful lady rider In order to hide my joy from Olga, I took Sasha into my arms and, smoothing her fair hair with my hand, I kissed her on the forehead

"Sasha, how pretty you are!" I said "And what nice curls you have!"

Olga cast a rapid glance at me, returned my bow in silence, and leaning on the Count's arm, entered the house Urbenin rose and followed her

Five minutes later the Count came out of the house

He was gay. I had never seen him so gay before. Even his face had a fresher look.

"Congratulate me," he said, giggling, as he took my arm

"What on?"

"On my conquest . . . One more ride like this, and I swear by the ashes of my noble ancestors I shall tear the petals from this flower."

"You have not torn them off yet?"

"As yet? . . . Almost! During ten minutes, 'Thy hand in my hand,' " the Count sang, "and . . . not once did she draw it away. . . . I kissed it! Wait for tomorrow. Now let us go They are expecting me. Oh, by-the-by, golubchek, I want to talk to you about something. Tell me, old man, is it true what people say—that you are . . . that you entertain evil intentions with regard to Nadenka Kalinin?"

"Why?"

"If that were true, I won't come in your way It's not in my principles to put a spoke in another's wheels If, however, you have no sort of intentions, then of course——"

"I have none."

"Merci, my soul!"

The Count thought of killing two hares at the same time, and was firmly convinced that he would succeed. On the evening I am describing I watched the chase of these two hares. The chase was stupid and as comical as a good caricature. When watching it one could only laugh or be revolted at the Count's vulgarity, but nobody could have thought that this schoolboy chase would end with the moral fall of some, the ruin and the crimes of others!

The Count not only killed two hares, but more! He killed them, but he did not get their skins and their flesh

I saw him secretly press Olga's hand, who received him each time with a friendly smile and looked after him with a contemptuous grimace Once, evidently wishing to

show that there were no secrets between us, he even kissed her hand in my presence

"What a blockhead!" she whispered into my ear, and wiped her hand

"I say, Olga," I asked, when the Count had gone away, "I think there is something you want to tell me. What is it?"

I looked searchingly into her face. She blushed scarlet and began to blink in a frightened manner, like a cat who has been caught stealing.

"Olga," I said sternly, "you must tell me! I demand it!"

"Yes, there is something I want to tell you," she whispered. "I love you—I can't live without you—but . . .

. . . my darling, don't come to see me any more. Don't love me any more, and don't call me Olia. It can't go on.

. . . It's impossible. . . . And don't let anybody see that you love me."

"But why is this?"

"I want it. The reasons you need not know, and I won't tell you. Go . . . Leave me!"

I did not leave her, and she herself was obliged to bring our conversation to an end. Taking the arm of her husband, who was passing us at that moment, she nodded to me with a hypocritical smile, and went away.

The Count's other hare—Nadenka Kalinin—was honoured that evening by the Count's special attention. The whole evening he hovered around her, he told her anecdotes, he was witty, he flirted with her, and she, pale and exhausted, drew her lips to one side in a forced smile. The justice of the peace, Kalinin, watched them all the time, stroking his beard and coughing importantly. That the Count was paying court to his daughter was agreeable to him. "He has a Count as son-in-law!" What thought could be sweeter for a provincial *bien-vivant*? From the moment that the Count began to pay court to his daughter he had grown at least three feet in height in his own

estimation. And with what stately glances he measured me, how maliciously he coughed when he talked to me! "So you stood on ceremonies and went away—it was all one to us! Now we have a Count!"

The day after the party I was again at the Count's estate. This time I did not talk with Sasha but with her brother, the schoolboy. The boy led me into the garden and poured out his whole soul to me. These confidences were the result of my questions as to how he got on with his "new mother."

"She's your good acquaintance," he began, nervously unbuttoning his uniform. "You will repeat it to her, but I don't care. You may tell her whatever you like! She's spiteful, she's base!"

He told me that Olga had taken his room from him, she had sent away their old nurse who had served at Urbenin's for ten years, she was always screaming about something and always angry.

"Yesterday you admired sister Sasha's hair . . . Hadn't she pretty hair? Just like flax! This morning she cut it all off!"

"That was jealousy," I thus explained to myself Olga's invasion into the hairdresser's domain.

"She was evidently envious that you had praised Sasha's hair and not her own," the boy said in confirmation of my thought. "She worries papasha, too. Papasha is spending a terrible lot of money on her, and is neglecting his work . . . He has again begun to drink! Again! She's a little fool. . . . She cries all day that she has to live in poverty in such a small house. Is it papasha's fault that he has little money?"

The boy told me many sad things. He saw that which his blinded father did not see or did not want to see. In the poor boy's opinion his father was wronged, his sister was wronged, his old nurse had been wronged. He had been deprived of his little den where he had been used to occupy himself with his books, and feed the

goldfinches he had caught. Everybody had been wronged, everybody was laughed at by his stupid and all-powerful stepmother! But the poor boy could not have imagined the terrible wrong that his young stepmother would inflict on his family, and of which I was witness that very evening after my talk with him. Everything else grew dim before that wrong, the cropping of Sasha's hair appeared as a mere trifle in comparison with it.

## XVIII

LATE at night I was sitting with the Count. As usual, we were drinking. The Count was quite drunk, I only slightly.

"To-day I was allowed accidentally to touch her waist," he mumbled. "To-morrow, therefore, we can begin to go further."

"Well, and Nadia? How do things stand with Nadia?"

"We are progressing! I've only begun with her as yet. So far, we are passing through the period of conversations with the eyes. I love to read in her sad black eyes, brother. Something is written there that words are unable to express, that only the soul can understand. Let's have another drink!"

"It seems that you please her since she has the patience to listen to you for hours at a time. You also please her papa!"

"Her papa? Are you talking about that blockhead? Ha, ha! The simpleton suspects me of honourable intentions!"

The Count coughed and drank.

"He thinks I'll marry her! To say nothing of my not being able to marry, when one considers the question honestly it would be more honest in me to seduce a girl than to marry her. . . An eternal life with a drunken, coughing, semi-old man . . br-r-r! My wife would pine away, or she would run away the next day. . . What noise is that?"

The Count and I jumped up. Several doors were slammed to, and almost at the same moment Olga rushed into the room. She was as white as snow, and trembled like a chord that had been struck violently. Her hair was

falling loose around her. The pupils of her eyes were dilated. She was out of breath and was crumpling in her hand the front pleats of her dressing-gown.

"Olga, what is the matter with you?" I asked, seizing her by the hand and turning pale.

The Count ought to have been surprised at this familiar form of address, but he did not hear it. His whole person was turned into one large note or interrogation, and with open mouth and staring eyes he stood looking at Olga as if she were an apparition.

"What has happened?" I asked.

"He beats me!" Olga said, and fell sobbing on to an armchair. "He beats me!"

"Who is he?"

"My husband! I can't live with him! I have left him!"

"This is revolting!" the Count exclaimed, and he struck the table with his fist. "What right has he? This is tyranny! This . . . the devil only knows what it is! To beat his wife? To beat! What did he do it for?"

"For nothing, for nothing at all," Olga said, wiping away her tears. "I pulled my handkerchief out of my pocket, and the letter you sent me yesterday fell on the floor . . . He seized it and read it . . . and began to beat me . . . He clutched my hand and crushed it—look, there are still red spots on it—and demanded an explanation . . . Instead of explaining, I ran here . . . Can't you defend me? He has not the right to treat his wife so roughly! I'm no cook! I'm a noblewoman!"

The Count paced about the room and jabbered with his drunken, muddling tongue some sort of nonsense which when rendered into sober language was intended to mean "of the status of women in Russia."

"This is barbarous! This is New Zealand! Does this muzhik also think that at his funeral his wife will have her throat cut? Savages when they go into the next world take their wives with them!"

I could not recover from my surprise. How was this sudden visit of Olga's in a nightdress to be understood? What was I to think—what to decide? If she had been beaten, if her dignity had been wounded, why had she not run away to her father or to the housekeeper? . Lastly why not to me, who was certainly near to her? And had she really been insulted? My heart told me of the innocence of simple-minded Urbenin, and understanding the truth, it sank with the pain that the stupefied husband must have been feeling at that time Without asking any questions, not knowing where to commence, I began to soothe Olga and offered her wine

"What a mistake I made! What a mistake!" she sighed between her tears, lifting the wineglass to her lips "What sanctimoniousness he feigned when he was courting me! I thought he was an angel and not a man!"

"So you wanted him to be pleased with the letter that fell out of your pocket?" I asked "You wanted him to burst out laughing?"

"Don't let us talk about it!" the Count interrupted "Whatever might have been, his action was dastardly all the same! Women are not treated in that way. I'll challenge him! I'll teach him! Olga Nikolaevna, believe me he'll have to suffer for this!"

The Count gobbled like a young turkey cock, although he had no authority to come between husband and wife I kept silent and did not contradict him, because I knew that to take vengeance for another man's wife was limited to drunken ebullitions of words between four walls, and that everything about the duel would be forgotten the next day. But why was Olga silent? . . I did not wish to think that she was not loth to have the proposed service rendered her by the Count. I did not wish to think that this silly, beautiful cat had so little dignity, that she would willingly consent to the drunken Count being judge between man and wife

"I'll mix him with the dirt!" piped this newly-fledged

knight-errant "I'll end by boxing his ears! I'll do it to-morrow!"

And she did not stop the mouth of that blackguard, who in his drunken mood was insulting a man whose only blame was that he had made a mistake and was now being duped Urbenin had seized and pressed her hand very roughly, and this had caused her scandalous flight to the Count's house, and now, when before her eyes this drunken and morally degenerate creature was defaming the honest name and pouring filthy slops on a man, who at that time must have been languishing in melancholy and uncertainty, knowing that he was deceived, she did not even move a hair of her eyebrows!

While the Count was pouring out his wrath and Olga was wiping her eyes, the manservant brought in some roast partridges The Count put half a partridge on his guest's plate. She shook her head negatively and then mechanically took up her knife and fork and began to eat The partridge was followed by a large glass of wine, and soon there were no-more signs of tears with the exception of red spots near the eyes and occasional deep sighs

Soon we heard laughter . . . Olga laughed like a consoled child who had forgotten its injury And the Count looking at her laughed too.

"Do you know what I have thought of?" he began, sitting down next to her "I want to arrange private theatricals. We shall act plays in which there are good women's parts Eh? What do you say to that?"

They began to talk about the private theatricals How ill this silly chatter accorded with the terror that had but lately been depicted on Olga's face, when only an hour before she had rushed into the room, pale and weeping, with flowing hair! How cheap were those terrors, those tears!

Meanwhile time went on. The clock struck twelve Respectable women go to bed at that time Olga ought to have gone away long since But the clock struck half-

past twelve ; it struck one, and she was still sitting there chatting with the Count

" It's time to go to bed," I said, looking at my watch. " I'm off ! . . . Olga Nikolaevna, will you permit me to escort you ? "

Olga looked at me and then at the Count

" Where am I to go ? " she murmured " I can't go to him ! "

" Yes, yes ; of course, you can't go to him," the Count said. " Who can answer for his not beating you again ? No, no ! "

I walked about the room All was quiet I paced from corner to corner and my friend and my mistress followed my steps with their eyes I seemed to understand this quiet and these glances There was something expectant and impatient in them I put my hat on the table and sat down on the sofa

" So, sir," the Count mumbled and rubbed his hands impatiently " So, sir . . . Things are like this . . ."

The clock struck half-past one The Count looked quickly at the clock, frowned and began to walk about the room I could see by the glances he cast on me that he wanted to say something, something important but ticklish and unpleasant

" I say, Serezha ! " he at last picked up courage, sat down next to me, and whispered in my ear " Golubchek, don't be offended . . Of course, you will understand my position, and you won't find my request strange or rude "

" Tell me quickly. No need to mince matters ! "

" You see how things stand how Go away, golubchek ! You are interfering with us . . She will remain with me . Forgive me for sending you away, but . you will understand my impatience ! "

" All right ! "

My friend was loathsome If I had not been fastidious, perhaps I would have crushed him like a beetle, when he, shivering as if with fever, asked me to leave him alone

with Urbenin's wife. He, the debilitated anchorite, steeped through and through with spirits and disease, wanted to take the poetic "girl in red" who dreamed of an effective death and had been nurtured by the forests and the angry lake! No, she must be miles away from him!

I went up to her.

"I am going," I said

She nodded her head

"Am I to go away? Yes?" I asked, trying to read the truth in her lovely, blushing little face "Yes?"

With the very slightest movement of her long black eyelashes she answered "Yes"

"You have considered well?"

She turned away from me, as one turns away from an annoying wind She did not want to speak Why should she speak? It is impossible to answer a long subject briefly, and there was neither time nor place for long speeches

I took up my hat and left the room without taking leave. Afterwards, Olga told me that immediately after my departure, as soon as the sound of my steps became mingled with the noise of the wind in the garden, the drunken Count was pressing her in his embrace And she, closing her eyes and stopping up her mouth and nostrils, was scarcely able to keep her feet from a feeling of disgust There was even a moment when she had almost torn herself away from his embraces and rushed into the lake There were moments when she tore her hair and wept It is not easy to sell oneself

When I left the house and went towards the stables, I had to pass the bailiff's house I looked in at the window Petr Egorych was seated at a table by the dim light of a smoking oil lamp that had been turned up too high I did not see his face It was covered by his hands But the whole of his robust, awkward figure displayed so much sorrow, anguish and despair that it was not necessary to

see the face to understand the condition of his soul. Two bottles stood before him ; one was empty, the other only just begun. They were both vodka bottles. The poor devil was seeking peace not in himself, nor in other people, but in alcohol.

Five minutes later I was riding home. The darkness was terrible. The lake blustered wrathfully and seemed to be angry that I, such a sinner, who had just been the witness of a sinful deed, should dare to infringe its austere peace. I could not see the lake for the darkness. It seemed as if an unseen monster was roaring, that the very darkness which enveloped me was roaring too.

I pulled up Zorka, closed my eyes, and meditated to the roaring of the monster.

"What if I returned at once and destroyed them ? "

Terrible wrath raged in my soul . . . All the little of goodness and honesty that remained in me after long years of a depraved life, all that corruption had left, all that I guarded and cherished, that I was proud of, was insulted, spat upon, splashed with filth !

I had known venal women before, I had bought them, studied them, but they had not had the innocent rosy cheeks and sincere blue eyes that I had seen on the May morning when I walked through the wood to the Tenevo fair. I myself, corrupt to the marrow of my bones, had forgiven, had preached tolerance of everything vicious, and I was indulgent to weakness . . . I was convinced that it was impossible to demand of dirt that it should not be dirt, and that one cannot blame those ducats which from the force of circumstances have fallen into the mire. But I had not known before that ducats could melt in the mire and be blended with it into a single mass. Consequently gold could also dissolve !

. A strong gust of wind blew off my hat and bore it into the surrounding darkness. In its flight my hat touched Zorka's head. She took fright, reared on her hind legs and galloped off along the familiar road.

When I reached home I threw myself on the bed. Polycarp suggested that I should undress, and he got sworn at and called a "devil" for no earthly reason

"Devil yourself!" Polycarp grumbled as he went away from my bed

"What did you say? What did you say?" I shouted.

"None so deaf as those who will not hear!"

"Oh, ho! You dare to be impudent!" I thundered and poured out all my bile on my poor lackey. "Get out! That no trace of you be left, scoundrel! Out with you!"

And without waiting for my man to leave the room, I fell on the bed and began to sob like a boy. My overstrained nerves could bear no more. Powerless wrath, wounded feelings, jealousy—all had to have vent in one way or another.

"The husband killed his wife!" squalled my parrot, raising his yellow feathers

| Under the influence of this cry the thought entered my head that Urbenin might really kill his wife

Falling asleep, I dreamed of murders. My nightmare was suffocating and painful. It appeared to me that my hands were stroking something cold, and I had only to open my eyes to see a corpse. I dreamed that Urbenin was standing at the head of my bed, looking at me with imploring eyes

## XIX

AFTER the night that is described above a calm set in

I remained at home, only allowing myself to leave the house or ride about on business Heaps of work had accumulated, therefore it was impossible for me to be dull From morning till night I sat at my writing-table scribbling, or examining people who had fallen into my magisterial claws I was no longer drawn to Karnéevka, the Count's estate

I thought no more of Olga That which falls from the load is lost ; and she was just what had fallen from my load and was, as I thought, irrecoverably lost I thought no more about her and did not want to think about her

"Silly, vicious trash ! " I said to myself whenever her memory arose in my mind in the midst of my strenuous work

Occasionally, however, when I lay down to sleep or when I awoke in the morning, I remembered various moments of our acquaintance, and the short connexion I had had with Olga I remembered the "Stone Grave," the little house in the wood in which "the girl in red" lived, the road to Tenevo, the meeting in the grotto and my heart began to beat faster I experienced bitter heartache . . . But it was not for long The bright memories were soon obliterated under the weight of the gloomy ones What poetry of the past could withstand the filth of the present ? And now, when I had finished with Olga, I looked upon this "poetry" quite differently to formerly . . . Now I looked upon it as an optical illusion, a lie, hypocrisy . . and it lost half its charm in my eyes

The Count had become quite repugnant to me I was glad not to see him, and I was always angry when his moustachioed face rose timidly to my mind Every day he sent me letters in which he implored me not to sulk but to come to see the no longer "solitary hermit" Had I listened to his letters, I would have been doing a displeasure to myself

"It's finished!" I thought "Thank God! . . It bored me . . ."

I decided to break off all connexion with the Count, and this decision did not cost me the slightest struggle Now I was not at all the same man that I had been three weeks before, when after the quarrel about Pshekhotsky I could scarcely bring myself to sit at home There was no attraction now

Sitting always at home bored me at last, and I wrote to Doctor Pavil Ivanovich, asking him to come and have a chat. For some reason I received no reply to this letter, so I wrote another. But the second received the same answer as the first. Evidently dear "Screw" pretended to be angry . . The poor fellow having received a refusal from Nadenka Kalinin, looked upon me as the cause of his misfortune He had the right to be angry, and if he had never been angry before it was merely because he did not know how to

"When had he time to learn?" I thought, being perplexed at not receiving answers to my letters

In the third week of obstinate seclusion in my own house the Count paid me a visit Having scolded me for not riding over to see him nor sending him answers to his letters, he stretched himself out on the sofa and before he began to snore he spoke on his favourite theme—on women.

"I understand," he began languidly, screwing up his eyes and placing his hands under his head, "that you are delicate and susceptible You don't come to me from fear of breaking into our duet . . interfering . An unwelcome guest is worse than a Tartar, a guest during the

honeymoon is worse than a horned devil I understand you. But, my dear friend, you forget that you are a friend and not a guest, that you are loved, esteemed By your presence you would only complete the harmony. . . And what harmony, my dear brother ! A harmony that I am unable to describe to you ! ”

The Count pulled his hands out from under his head and began to wave them about

“ I myself am unable to understand if I am living happily or not The devil himself would not be able to understand it There are certainly moments when one would give half one's life for a ' bis,' but on the other hand there are days when one paces the rooms from corner to corner, as if beside oneself and ready to cry. . . ”

“ For what reason ? ”

“ Brother, I can't understand that Olga She's a sort of ague and not a woman. In ague one has either fever or shivering fits That's how she is ; five changes every day She is either gay or so dull that she swallows her tears and prays. . . . Sometimes she loves me, sometimes she doesn't There are moments when she caresses me as no woman has ever caressed me in my whole life But sometimes it is like this : You awake unexpectedly, you open your eyes, and you see a face turned on you . . . such a terrible, such a savage face . . . a face that is all distorted with malignancy and aversion . . . When one sees such a thing all the enchantment vanishes. . . . And she often looks at me in that way. . . . ”

“ With aversion ? ”

“ Well, yes! . . . I can't understand it. . . She swears that she came to me only for love, and still hardly a night passes that I do not see that face. How is it to be explained ? I begin to think, though of course I don't want to believe it, that she can't bear me and has given herself to me for those rags which I buy for her now She's terribly fond of rags ! She's capable of standing before the mirror from morning to evening in a new frock ;

she is capable of crying for days and nights about a spoilt flounce . . . She's terribly vain! What chiefly pleases her in me is that I'm a Count. She would never have loved me had I not been a Count. Never a dinner or supper passes that she does not reproach me with tears in her eyes, for not surrounding myself with aristocratic society. You see, she would like to reign in that society . . . A strange girl!"

The Count fixed his dim eyes on the ceiling and became pensive. I noticed, to my great astonishment, that this time, as an exception, he was sober. This struck and even touched me.

" You are quite normal to-day," I said. " You are not drunk, and you don't ask for vodka. What's the meaning of this dream?"

" Yes, so it is! I had no time to drink, I've been thinking . . . I must tell you, Serezha, I'm seriously in love; it's no joke. I am terribly fond of her. It's quite natural, too . . . She's a rare woman, not of the ordinary sort, to say nothing of her appearance. Not much intellect, to be sure, but what feeling, elegance, freshness! She can't be compared with my former Amalias, Angelicas, and Grushas, whose love I have enjoyed till now. She's something from another world, a world I do not know."

" Philosophizing!" I laughed.

" I'm captivated, I've almost fallen in love! But now I see it is useless to try to square a naught. It was only a mask that raised false expectations in me. The pink cheeks of innocence proved to be rouge, the kiss of love—the request to buy a new frock . . . I took her into my house like a wife, and she behaves like a mistress who is paid with money. But it's enough now. I am restraining my soul's expectations, and am beginning to see in Olga a mistress . . . Enough!"

" Well, why not? How about the husband?"

" The husband? Hm! . . . What do you think he's about?"

"I think it is impossible to imagine a more unhappy man"

"You think that? Quite uselessly. . . He's such a scoundrel, such a rascal, that I am not at all sorry for him. . . A rascal can never be unhappy, he'll always find his way out"

"Why do you abuse him in that way?"

"Because he's a rogue You know that I esteemed him, that I trusted him as a friend. . . I and you too—in general everybody considered him an honest, respectable man who was incapable of cheating Meanwhile he has been robbing, plundering me! Taking advantage of his position of bailiff, he disposed of my property as he liked The only things he did not take were those that could not be moved from their places"

I, who knew Urbenin to be a man in the highest degree honest and disinterested, jumped up as if I had been stung when I heard these words spoken by the Count, and went up to him

"Have you caught him in the act of stealing?" I asked

"No, but I know of his thievish tricks from trustworthy sources"

"May I ask from what sources?"

"You needn't be uneasy I would not accuse a man without cause Olga has told me all about him Even before she became his wife she saw with her own eyes what loads of slaughtered fowls and geese he sent to town. She saw how my geese and fowls were sent as presents to a certain benefactor where his son, the schoolboy, lodged. More than that, she saw flour, millet and lard being dispatched there. Admitted that all these are trifles, but did these trifles belong to him? Here we have not a question of value but of principle Principles were trespassed against There's more, sir! She saw in his cupboard packets of money. In answer to her question whose money it was and where he had got it, he begged her not to mention to anybody that he had

money. My dear fellow, you know he's as poor as a church mouse! His salary is scarcely sufficient for his board. Can you explain to me where this money came from?"

"And you, stupid fool, believe this little vermin?" I cried, stirred to the depths of my soul "She is not satisfied with having run away from him and disgraced him in the eyes of the whole district She must now betray him! What an amount of meanness is contained in that small and fragile body! Fowls, geese, millet . . Master, master! Your political economicistic feelings, your agricultural stupidity are offended that at holiday time he sent a present of a slaughtered bird which the foxes or polecats would have eaten, if it had not been killed, and given away, but have you even once checked the huge accounts that Urbenin has handed in? Have you ever counted up the thousands and the tens of thousands? No? Then what is the use of talking to you? You are stupid and a beast You would be glad to incriminate the husband of your mistress, but you don't know how!"

"My connexion with Olga has nothing to do with the matter. If he's her husband or not her husband is all one, but since he has robbed me, I must plainly call him a thief. But let us leave this roguery alone Tell me, is it honest or dishonest to receive a salary and for whole days to lie about dead drunk? He is drunk every day There wasn't a single day that I did not see him reeling about! Low and disgusting! Decent people don't act in that way."

"It's just because he's decent that he gets drunk," I said.

"You have a kind of passion for taking the part of such gentlemen. But I have decided to be unmerciful I paid him off to-day and told him to clear out and make room for another. My patience is exhausted!"

I considered it unnecessary to try to convince the Count

that he was unjust, unpractical and stupid. It was not for me to defend Urbenin against the Count.

Five days later I heard that Urbenin with his schoolboy son and his little daughter had gone to live in the town. I was told that he drove to town drunk, half dead, and that he had twice fallen out of the cart. The schoolboy and Sasha had cried all the way.

## XX

SHORTLY after Urbenin had left, I was obliged to go to the Count's estate, quite against my will. One of the Count's stables had been broken into at night and several valuable saddles had been carried off by the thieves. The examining magistrate, that is I, had been informed and *nolens-volens*, I was obliged to go there.

I found the Count drunk and angry. He was wandering about the rooms seeking a refuge from his melancholy but could not find one.

"I am worried by that Olga!" he said waving his hand. "She got angry with me this morning and she left the house threatening to drown herself! And, as you see, there are no signs of her yet. I know she won't drown herself. Still, it is nasty of her. Yesterday, all day long, she was rubbing her eyes and breaking crockery; the day before she over-ate herself with chocolate. The devil only knows what such natures are!"

I comforted the Count as well as I could and sat down to dinner with him.

"No, it's time to give up such childishness," he kept mumbling during dinner. "It's high time, for it is all stupid and ridiculous. Besides, I must also confess she is beginning to bore me with her sudden changes. I want something quiet, orderly, modest, you know—something like Nadenka Kalinin . . . a splendid girl!"

After dinner when I was walking in the garden I met the "drowned girl." When she saw me she became very red and (a strange woman) she began to laugh with joy. The shame on her face was mingled with pleasure, sorrow with happiness. For a moment she looked at me askance,

then she rushed towards me and hung on my neck without saying a word

"I love you!" she whispered, clinging to my neck  
"I have been so sad without you I should have died if you had not come"

I embraced her and silently led her to one of the summer-houses Ten minutes later when parting from her, I took out of my pocket a twenty-five-rouble note and handed it to her She opened her eyes wide

"What is that for?"

"I am paying you for to-day's love"

Olga did not understand and continued to look at me with astonishment

"You see, there are women who love for money," I explained "They are venal They must be paid for with money Take it! If you take money from others, why don't you want to take anything from me? I wish for no favours!"

Olga did not understand my cynicism in insulting her in this way. She did not know life as yet, and she did not understand the meaning of "venal women"

**I**T was a fine August day.

The sun warmed as in summer, and the blue sky fondly enticed you to wander far afield, but the air already bore presages of autumn. In the green foliage of the pensive forest the worn-out leaves were already assuming golden tints and the darkening fields looked melancholy and sad.

A dull presentiment of inevitable autumn weighed heavily on us all. It was not difficult to foresee the nearness of a catastrophe. The roll of thunder and the rain must soon come to refresh the sultry atmosphere. It is sultry before a thunderstorm when dark leaden clouds approach in the sky, and moral sultriness was oppressing us all. It was apparent in everything—in our movements, in our smiles, in our speech.

I was driving in a light wagonette. The daughter of the Justice of the Peace, Nadinka, was sitting beside me. She was white as snow, her chin and lips trembled as they do before tears, her deep eyes were full of sorrow, while all the time she laughed and tried to appear very gay.

In front and behind us a number of vehicles of all sorts, of all times, of all sizes were moving in the same direction. Ladies and men on horseback were riding on either side. Count Karnéev, clad in a green shooting costume that looked more like a buffoon's than a sportsman's, bending slightly forward and to one side, galloped about unmercifully on his black horse. Looking at his bent body and at the expression of pain that constantly appeared on his lean face, one could have thought that he was riding for the first time. A new double-barrelled gun was

slung across his back, and at his side he had a game-bag in which a wounded woodcock tossed about

Olga Urbenin was the ornament of the cavalcade Seated on a black horse, which the Count had given her, dressed in a black riding-habit, with a white feather in her hat, she no longer resembled that "girl in red" who had met us in the wood only a few months before Now there was something majestic, something of the *grande dame* in her figure Each flourish of her whip, each smile was calculated to look aristocratic and majestic In her movements, in her smiles there was something provocative, something incendiary She held her head high in a foppishly arrogant manner, and from the height of her mount poured contempt on the whole company, as if in disdain of the loud remarks that were sent after her by our virtuous ladies Coquettling with her impudence and her position "at the Count's," she seemed to defy everybody, just as if she did not know that the Count was already tired of her, and was only awaiting the moment when he could disentangle himself from her

"The Count wants to send me away!" she said to me with a loud laugh when the cavalcade rode out of the yard Therefore she knew her position and she understood it.

But why that loud laugh? I looked at her and was perplexed. Where could this dweller in the forests have found so much push? When had she found time to sit her horse with so much grace, to move her nostrils proudly, and to show off with commanding gestures?

"A depraved woman is like a swine," Doctor Pavel Ivanovich said to me "If you set her down to table she puts her legs on it."

But his explanation was too simple Nobody could be more infatuated with Olga than I was, and I was the first to be ready to throw stones at her, still, the uneasy voice of truth whispered to me that this was not push nor the swagger of a prosperous and satisfied woman, but

the despairing presentiment of the near and inevitable catastrophe

We were returning from the shoot to which we had gone early in the morning. The sport had been bad. Near the marshes, on which we had set great hopes, we met a party of sportsmen, who told us the game was wild. Three woodcocks and one duckling was all the game we were able to send to the other world as the whole result of ten guns. At last one of the lady riders had an attack of toothache and we were obliged to hurry back. We returned along a good road that passed through the fields on which the sheaves of newly reaped rye were looking yellow against the background of the dark, gloomy forests. Near the horizon the church and houses of the Count's estate gleamed white. To their right the mirror-like surface of the lake stretched out wide, and to the left the "Stone Grave" rose darkly . . .

"What a terrible woman!" Nadinka whispered to me every time Olga came up to our wagonette. "What a terrible woman! She's as bad as she's pretty! . . . How long ago is it since you were best man at her wedding? She has not had time to wear out her wedding shoes, and she is already wearing another man's silk and is flaunting in another man's diamonds. If she has such instincts it would have been more tactful had she waited a year or two . . ."

"She's in a hurry to live! She has no time to wait!" I sighed.

"Do you know what has become of her husband?"

"I hear he is drinking . . ."

"Yes. . . . The day before yesterday father was in town and saw him driving in a droshky. His head was hanging to one side, he was without a hat, and his face was dirty . . . He's a lost man! He's terribly poor, I hear; they have nothing to eat, the flat is not paid for. Poor little Sasha is for days without food. Father described all this to the Count . . . You know the Count!"

He is honest, kind, but he is not fond of thinking about anything, or reasoning 'I'll send him a hundred roubles,' he said. And he did it at once I don't think he could have insulted Urbenin more than by sending this money . . . He'll feel insulted by the Count's gift and will drink all the more "

"Yes, the Count is stupid," I said "He might have sent him the money through me, and in my name"

"He had no right to send him money! Have I the right to feed you if I am strangling you, and you hate me?"

"That is quite true . . ."

We were silent and pensive The thought of Urbenin's fate was always very painful to me , now when his ruined wife was caracoling before my eyes, this thought aroused in me a whole train of sad reflections . . . What would become of him and of his children ? In what way would she end ? In what moral puddle would this pitiful, puny Count end his days ?

The creature seated next to me was the only one who was respectable and worthy of esteem There were only two people in our district whom I was capable of liking and respecting, and who alone had the right of turning from me because they stood higher than I did . These were Nadezhda Kalinin and Doctor Pavil Ivanovich . What awaited them ?

"Nadezhda Nikolaevna," I said to her, "quite without wishing it, I have caused you no little sorrow, and less than anybody else have I the right to expect your confidence. But I swear to you nobody will understand you as well as I can Your sorrow is my sorrow, your joy is my joy If I ask you a question, don't suspect it is from idle curiosity. Tell me, my dear, why do you allow this pigmy Count to approach you ? What prevents you from sending him away and not listening to his abominable amiabilities ? His courting is no honour to a respectable woman ! Why do you give these scoundrels the right to couple your name with his ? "

Nadinka looked at me with her bright eyes, and evidently reading sincerity in my face, she smiled gaily.

"What do they say?" she asked

"They say your papa and you are trying to catch the Count, and that in the end you'll find the Count is only pulling your leg."

"They speak so because they don't know the Count!" Nadinka flared up "The shameless slanderers! They are used to seeing only the bad side of people. The good is inaccessible for their understanding."

"And have you found the good in him?"

"Yes, I have found it! You are the first who ought to know. I would not have let him approach me if I had not been certain of his honourable intentions!"

"Consequently your affairs have already reached 'honourable intentions,'" I said with astonishment. "Soon! And on what are they based—these honourable intentions?"

"Do you wish to know?" she asked, and her eyes sparkled "Those scoundrels do not lie. I wish to marry him! Don't look so surprised, and don't laugh! You will say that to get married without love is dishonest and so on. It has already been said a thousand times, but . . . what am I to do? To feel that one is a useless bit of furniture in this world is very hard . . . It's hard to live without an object. . . When this man, whom you dislike so much, will have made me his wife, I shall have an object in life. I will improve him, I will teach him to leave off drinking, I will teach him to work . . . Look at him! He does not look like a man now, and I will make a man of him!"

"Et cetera, et cetera," I said "You will take care of his enormous fortune, you will do acts of charity. . . The whole of the district will bless you, and will look upon you as a good angel sent down to comfort the miserable. . . You will be the mother and the educator of his

children . . . Yes, a great work indeed! You are a clever girl, but you reason like a schoolgirl!"

"My idea may be worthless, it may be ludicrous and naïve, but I live by it . . Under its influence I have become well and gay. . Do not disenchant me! Let me disenchant myself, but not now, at some other time . . afterwards, in the distant future . . Let us change the subject!"

"Just one more indiscreet question! Do you expect him to propose?"

"Yes . To judge by the note I received from him to-day, my fate will be decided this evening . . to-day.

. . He writes that he has something very important to say to me . The happiness of the whole of his life depends upon my answer"

"Thank you for your frankness," I said

The meaning of the note that Nadia had received was quite clear to me A base proposal awaited the poor girl I decided to save her from that ordeal

"We have already arrived at our wood," the Count said, coming up to our wagonette. "Nadezhda Nikolaevna, would you not wish to make a halt here?"

And without waiting for an answer he clapped his hands and ordered in a loud, shaky voice

"Ha-a-It!"

We settled ourselves down in the skirts of the wood The sun had sunk behind the trees, illuminating with purple and gold only the summits of the very highest alders and playing on the golden cross of the Count's church that could be seen in the distance Flocks of frightened orioles and sparrow hawks soared over our heads One of the men fired into them, alarming this feathered kingdom, still more, which aroused an indefatigable bird concert This sort of concert has its charms in the spring and summer, but when you feel the approach of the cold autumn, in the air, it only irritates the nerves and reminds one of their near migration.

The coolness of evening spread from the dense forest  
The ladies' noses became blue and the chilly Count began  
rubbing his hands Nothing at that moment could be  
more appropriate than the odour of charcoal in the samovars  
and the clatter of the tea service One-eyed Kuz'ma,  
puffing and panting and stumbling about in the long grass,  
dragged forward a case of cognac We began to warm  
ourselves

A long outing in the fresh cool air acts on the appetite  
better than any appetising drops, and after it the balyk,\*  
the caviar, the roast partridge and the other viands were  
as caressing to the sight as roses are on an early spring  
morning

" You are wise to-day," I said to the Count as I helped  
myself to a slice of balyk " Wise as you have never been  
before. It would have been difficult to arrange things  
better. . . ."

" We have arranged it together, the Count and I,"  
Kalinin said with a giggle as he winked towards the coach-  
men, who were getting the hampers and baskets of pro-  
visions, wines and crockery out of the vehicles " The  
little picnic will be a great success . . . Towards the end  
there will be champagne ! "

On this occasion the face of the Justice of the Peace shone  
with satisfaction as it had never shone before Did he  
not expect that in the evening his Nadinka would have a  
proposal made to her? Did he not have the champagne  
prepared in order to drink the health of the young couple?  
I looked attentively at his face and, as usual, I could read  
nothing there but careless satisfaction, satiety, and the  
stupid self-importance that was suffused over the whole  
of his portly figure.

We fell upon the *hors d'œuvres* gaily Only two of the  
guests looked with indifference on the luxurious viands  
that were spread out on carpets before us these two were  
Olga and Nadezhda Kalinin The first was standing to

\* Salted and smoked sturgeon.

one side leaning against the back of a wagonette, motionless and silently gazing at the game-bag that the Count had thrown on the ground. In the game-bag a wounded woodcock was moving about. Olga watched the movements of the unfortunate bird and seemed to be expecting its death.

Nadia was sitting next to me and looked with indifference on the gaily chewing mouths.

"When will all this be over?" her tired eyes said.

I offered her a sandwich with caviar. She thanked me and put it to one side. She evidently did not wish to eat.

"Olga Nikolaevna, why don't you sit down?" the Count called to Olga.

Olga did not answer but continued to stare as immovable as a statue, looking at the bird.

"What heartless people there are," I said, going up to Olga. "Is it possible that you, a woman, are capable of watching with indifference the suffering of this woodcock? Instead of looking at his contortions, it would be better if you ordered it to be dispatched."

"Others suffer; let him suffer too," Olga answered, frowning, without looking at me.

"Who else is suffering?"

"Leave me in peace!" she said hoarsely. "I am not disposed to speak to you to-day . . . nor with your friend, that fool the Count! Go away from me!"

She glanced at me with eyes that were full of wrath and tears. Her face was pale, her lips trembled.

"What a change!" I said as I lifted up the game-bag and wrung the woodcock's neck. "What a tone! I am astounded! Quite astounded!"

"Leave me in peace, I tell you! I'm not in the humour for jokes!"

"What's the matter with you, my enchantress?"

Olga looked at me from head to foot and turned her back on me.

"Only depraved and venal women are spoken to in that

tone," she continued " You consider me such an one . . . well, then, go to those saints! . . . I am worse and baser than any other here . . . When you were driving with that virtuous Nadinka you were afraid to look at me . . . Well, then, go to her! What are you waiting for? Go!"

" Yes, you are worse and baser than any other here," I said, feeling that I was gradually being mastered by rage  
" Yes, you are depraved and venal "

" Yes, I remember how you offered me damned money. . . . Then I did not know its meaning, now I understand . . ."

Rage mastered me completely. And this rage was as strong as the love had been that at one time was beginning to be born in me for " the girl in red ". And who could—what stone could have remained indifferent? I saw before me beauty that had been cast by merciless fate into the mire. No mercy was shown to either youth, beauty or grace . . . Now, when this woman appeared to me more beautiful than ever, I felt what a loss nature had sustained in her person, and my soul was filled with painful anger at the injustice of fate and the order of things . . .

In moments of anger I am unable to control myself. I do not know what more Olga would have had to hear from me if she had not turned her back upon me and gone away. She walked slowly towards the trees and soon disappeared behind them . . . It appeared to me that she was crying . . .

" Ladies and gentlemen," I heard Kalinin making a speech " On this day when we all have met for . . . for . . . in order to unite . . . we are assembled here, we are all acquainted with each other, we are all enjoying ourselves and this long desired union we owe to nobody else but to our luminary, to the star of our province. . . . Count, don't get confused . . . The ladies understand of whom I am speaking. . . . He, he he! Well, ladies

and gentlemen, let us continue As we owe all this to our enlightened, to our youthful youthful . . . Count Karnéev, I propose that we drink this glass to . . . But who is driving this way? Who is it?"

A calash was driving from the direction of the Count's house towards the clearing where we were seated

"Who can it be?" the Count said in astonishment, turning his field glass on the calash "Hm! strange!"

. It must be someone passing by . Oh, no! I see Kaetan Kazimirovich's face With whom is he?"

Suddenly the Count sprang up as if he had been stung His face became deadly pale, and the field glass fell from his hand His eyes strayed around like the eyes of an entrapped mouse, and they rested sometimes on me, sometimes on Nadia, as if looking for aid Not everybody noticed his confusion as the attention of most was directed on the approaching calash.

"Serezha, come here for a minute!" he whispered to me, seizing hold of my arm and leading me to one side "Golubchek, I implore you as a friend, as the best of men! . . . No questions, no interrogating glances, no astonishment! I will tell you all afterwards! I swear that not an iota will remain a secret from you! . . . It is such a misfortune in my life, such a misfortune, that I am unable to find words to express it! You will know all, but no questions now! Help me!"

Meanwhile the calash came nearer and nearer. . . . At last it stopped, and the Count's stupid secret became the property of the whole district Pshekhotsky, clad in a new unbleached silk suit, panting and smiling, crawled out of the calash. After him a young lady of about three-and-twenty sprang out adroitly. She was a tall, graceful, fair woman with regular but not sympathetic features, and with dark blue eyes. I only remember those dark blue expressionless eyes, a powdered nose, a heavy, luxurious dress and several massive bracelets on each arm. . . . I remember

that the scent of the evening dampness and the spilt cognac had to give way before the penetrating odour of some sort of perfume.

"What a numerous party!" the stranger said in broken Russian "It must be very gay! How do you do, Alexis?"

She went up to Alexis and offered him her cheek, which the Count smacked hastily and glanced uneasily at his guests

"My wife, let me introduce her!" he mumbled "And these, Zosia, are my good friends. . . . Hm, hm! . . . I've a cough!"

"And I have only just arrived! Kaetan advised me to rest! But I said 'Why should I rest since I slept the whole way here! I would sooner go to the shooting party!' I dressed and here I am . . . Kaetan, where are my cigarettes?"

Pshekhotsky sprang forward and handed the fair lady her golden cigarette case

"And this is my wife's brother . . ." the Count continued to mumble, pointing at Pshekhotsky. "Why don't you help me?" and he gave me a poke in the ribs. "Help me out, for God's sake!"

I have been told that Kalinin fainted, and that Nadia, who wished to help him, could not rise from her seat I have been told many got into their vehicles and drove away. All this I did not see I remember that I went into the wood, and searching for a footpath, without looking in front, I went where my feet led me \*

When I came out of the wood, bits of clay were hanging to my feet, and I was covered with dirt I had probably been obliged to jump over brooks, but I could not remember this fact. It seemed to me as though I had been severely beaten with sticks; I felt so weary and exhausted.

\* At this point of Kamyshev's manuscript a hundred lines have been effaced —A Ch

I ought to have gone to the Count's stable yard, mounted my Zorka and ridden away. But I did not do so, and went home on foot I could not bring myself to see the Count or his accursed estate \*

My road led along the banks of the lake That watery monster was already beginning to roar out its evening song High waves with white crests covered the whole of its vast extent In the air there was noise and rumbling. A cold, damp wind penetrated to my very bones To the left lay the angry lake , from the right came the monotonous noise of the austere forest I felt myself alone with nature as if I had been confronted with it It appeared as if the whole of its wrath, the whole of these noises and roars, was directed only on my head In other circumstances I might have felt timidity, but now I scarcely noticed the giants that surrounded me What was the wrath of nature compared with the storm that was raging within me ? †

\* At this place of the manuscript, a pretty girl's face, with an expression of horror on it, is drawn in pen and ink All that is written below it has been carefully blotted out The upper half of the next page is also scratched out and only one word "temple," can be deciphered through the dense ink blots —A Ch

† Here again there are erasures —A Ch

**W**HEN I reached home I fell upon my bed without undressing

"Shameless eyes, again he has bathed in the lake in all his clothes!" grumbled Polycarp as he pulled off my wet and dirty garments "Again a punishment for me! Again we have the noble, the educated, worse than any chimney-sweep . . . I don't know what they taught you in the 'versity!"

I, who could not bear the human voice or man's face, wanted to shout at Polycarp that he should leave me in peace, but the words died away on my lips My tongue was as enfeebled and powerless as the rest of my body Though it was painful for me, still I was obliged to let Polycarp pull off all my clothes, even to my wet underlinen

"He might turn round at least," my servant grumbled as he rolled me over from side to side like a small doll. "To-morrow I'll give warning! Never again . . . for no amount of money! I, old fool, have had enough of this! May the devil take me if I remain any longer!"

The fresh warm linen did not warm or calm me I trembled so much with rage and fear, that my very teeth chattered My fear was inexplicable I was not frightened by apparitions or by spectres risen from the grave, not even by the portrait of Pospelov, my predecessor, which was hanging just above my head He never took his lifeless eyes off my face, and seemed to wink at me But I was quite unaffected when I looked at him My future was not brilliant, but all the same I could say with great probability that there was nothing that threatened me, that there were no black clouds near Death was not to

be expected soon ; I had no terrible diseases, and I took no heed of personal misfortunes . . . What did I fear, then, and why did my teeth chatter ?

I could not even understand my wrath . . .

The Count's "secret" could not have enraged me so greatly I had nothing to do with the Count, nor with the marriage, which he had concealed from me

' It only remains to explain the condition of my soul at that time by fatigue and nervous derangement That is the only explanation I can find

When Polycarp left the room I covered myself up to the head and wanted to sleep It was dark and quiet. The parrot moved about restlessly in its cage, and the regular ticking of the hanging clock in Polycarp's room could be heard through the wall Peace and quiet reigned everywhere else Physical and moral exhaustion over-powered me, and I began to doze . . . I felt that a certain weight gradually fell from me, and hateful images melted into mist I remember I even began to dream I dreamed that on a bright winter morning I was walking in the Nevsky of Petersburg and, having nothing to do, looked into the shop windows My heart was light and gay . . . I had not to hurry anywhere I had nothing to do, I was absolutely free. The consciousness that I was far from my village, far from the Count's estate and from the cold and sullen lake, made me feel all the more peaceful and gay I stopped before one of the largest windows and began to examine ladies' hats. The hats were familiar to me. . . I had seen Olga in one of them, Nadia in another ; a third I had seen on the day of the shooting party on the fair-haired head of that Zosia, who had arrived so unexpectedly . . . Familiar faces smiled at me under the hats . . . When I wanted to say something to them they all three blended together into one large red face This face moved its eyes angrily and stuck out its tongue . . . Somebody pressed my neck from behind . . .

"The husband killed his wife!" the red face shouted  
I shuddered, cried out, and jumped out of my bed as if  
I had been stung I had terrible palpitations of the heart,  
a cold sweat came out on my brow

"The husband killed his wife!" the parrot repeated  
again "Give me some sugar! How stupid you are!  
Fool!"

"It was only the parrot," I said to calm myself as I got  
into bed again. "Thank God!"

I heard a monotonous murmur . . . It was the rain  
pattering on the roof . . . The clouds I had seen when  
walking on the banks of the lake had now covered the  
whole sky There were slight flashes of lightning that  
lighted up the portrait of the late Pospelov . . . The  
thunder rumbled just over my bed . . .

"The last thunderstorm of this summer," I thought.

I remembered one of the first storms . . . Just the  
same sort of thunder had rumbled overhead in the forest  
the first time I was in the forester's house . . . The "girl  
in red" and I were standing at the window then, looking  
out at the pine trees that were illuminated by the lightning.  
Dread shone in the eyes of that beautiful creature. She  
told me her mother had been killed by lightning, and that  
she herself was thirsting for an effective death. . . . She  
wanted to be dressed like the richest lady of the district.  
She understood that luxurious dress suited her beauty.  
And, conscious of her vain majesty, she wanted to mount  
to the top of the "Stone Grave" and there meet an  
effective death.

Her wish had . . . though not on the sto . . . \*

Losing all hope of falling asleep, I rose and sat down on  
the bed. The quiet murmur of the rain gradually changed  
into the angry roar I was so fond of hearing when my soul  
was free from dread and wrath. . . . Now this roar

\* Here, unfortunately, there are again erasures. It is evident  
Kamyshev blotted out not at the time of writing but afterwards.  
At the end of the novel I will draw special attention to these  
erasures —A Ch.

appeared to me to be ominous. One clap of thunder succeeded the other without intermission.

"The husband killed his wife!" croaked the parrot.

Those were its last words . . . Closing my eyes in pusillanimous fear, I groped my way in the dark to the cage and hurled it into a corner

"May the devil take you!" I cried, when I heard the clatter of the falling cage and the squeak of the parrot

Poor, noble bird! That flight into the corner cost it dear. The next day the cage contained only a cold corpse Why did I kill it? If its favourite phrase about a husband who killed his wife remin \*

My predecessor's mother when she gave up the lodgings to me made me pay for the whole of the furniture, not excepting the photographs of people I did not know But she did not take a kopeck from me for the expensive parrot On the eve of her departure for Finland she passed the whole night taking leave of her noble bird I remember the sobs and the lamentations that accompanied this leave-taking. I remember the tears she shed when asking me to take care of her friend until her return I gave her my word of honour that her parrot would not regret having made my acquaintance And I had not kept that word! I had killed the bird I can imagine what the old woman would say if she knew of the fate of her screamer!

\* Here nearly a whole page is carelessly blotted out Only a few words are spared, which give no clue to the meaning of what is obliterated —A Ch

## XXIII

SOMEBODY tapped gently at my window. The little house in which I lived stood on the high road, and was one of the first houses in the village, and I often heard a tap at my window, especially in bad weather when a wayfarer sought a night's lodging. This time it was no wayfarer who knocked at my window. I went up to the window and waited there for a flash of lightning, when I saw the dark silhouette of a tall thin man. He was standing before the window and seemed to be shivering with cold. I opened the window.

"Who is there? What do you want?" I asked.

"Sergey Petrovich, it's I!" I heard a plaintive voice, such as people have who are starved with cold and fright.

"It's I! I've come to you, dear friend!"

To my great astonishment, I recognized in the plaintive voice of the dark silhouette the voice of my friend Doctor Pavel Ivanovich. This visit of "Screw's," who led a regular life and went to bed before twelve, was quite incomprehensible. What could have caused him to change his rules and appear at my house at two o'clock in the night, and in such weather too?

"What do you want?" I asked, at the same time in the bottom of my heart sending this unexpected guest to the devil.

"Forgive me, golubchik. . . I wanted to knock at the door, but your Polycarp is sure to be sleeping like a dead man now, so I decided to tap at the window."

"But what do you want?"

Pavil Ivanovich came close up to my window and mumbled something incomprehensible. He was trembling, and looked like a drunken man.

"I am listening!" I said, losing my patience

"You . . . you are angry, I see; but . . . if you only knew all that has happened you would cease to be angry at your sleep being disturbed by visitors at an unseemly hour. It's no time for sleep now. Oh, my God, my God! I have lived in the world for thirty years, and to-day is the first time I am so terribly unhappy! I am unhappy, Sergey Petrovich!"

"Ach! but what has happened? And what have I to do with it? I myself can scarcely stand on my legs. . . . I can't be bothered about others!"

"Sergey Petrovich!" Screw said in a plaintive voice, stretching out towards my head his hand wet with rain, "Honest man! My friend!"

And then I heard a man crying. The doctor wept

"Pavel Ivanovich, go home!" I said after a short silence "I can't talk with you now. . . . I am afraid of my own mood, and of yours. We won't understand each other. . . ."

"My dear friend!" the doctor said in an imploring voice, "Marry her."

"You've gone mad!" I said, and banged the window to

First the parrot, then the doctor suffered from my mood I did not ask him to come in, and I slammed the window in his face. Two rude and indecorous sallies for which I would have challenged anybody, even a woman, to a duel \* But meek and good-natured "Screw" had no ideas about duels He did not know what it is to be angry.

About two minutes later there was a flash of lightning, and glancing out of the window I saw the bent figure of my guest. His pose this time was one of supplication, of expectancy, the pose of a beggar watching for alms

\* The last sentence is written above some erased lines in which, however, one can decipher "would have torn his head from his shoulders and broken all the windows"—A Ch

He was probably waiting for me to pardon him, and to allow him to say what he had to communicate.

Fortunately my conscience was moved ; I was sorry for myself, sorry that nature had implanted in me so much violence and meanness My base soul as well as my healthy body were as hard as flint.\*

I went to the window and opened it

"Come into the room !" I said

"Never ! . . . Every minute is precious ! Poor Nadia has poisoned herself, and the doctor cannot leave her side

. . . With difficulty we saved the poor thing. . . . Such a misfortune ! And you don't want to hear it and slam the window to !"

" Still she is alive ? "

" 'Still' ! . . . My good friend, that is not the way to speak about misfortunes ! Who could have supposed that such a clever, honest nature would want to depart this life on account of such a creature as that Count ? No, my friend, it is a misfortune for men that women cannot be perfect ! However clever a woman may be, with whatever perfections she may be endowed, she has still a screw in her that prevents her and other people from living . . . For instance, let us take Nadia. . . . Why did she do it ? Self-love, nothing but self-love ! Unhealthy self-love ! In order to wound you she conceived the idea of marrying this Count. . . . She neither wanted his money nor his title . . . she only wanted to satisfy her monstrous self-love. . . . Suddenly a failure ! You know that *his* wife has arrived . . . It appears that this debauchee is married. . . . And people say that women are more enduring, that they know how to suffer better than men ! Where is there

\* Here follows a pretentiously-plastic explanation of the spiritual endurance of the author. The sight of human affliction, blood post-mortem examinations, etc , etc , he maintains, produce no effect on him The whole of this passage bears the imprint of boastful *naïveté* and insincerity. It astonishes by its coarseness, and I have deleted it As a characterization of Kamyshev it has no importance —A Ch.

endurance here, when such a miserable cause makes them snatch up sulphur matches? This is not endurance, it is vanity!"

"You will catch cold . . . "

"What I have just seen is worse than any cold . . . Those eyes, that pallor. . . . Oh! To unsuccessful love, to the unsuccessful attempt to mortify you is now added unsuccessful suicide. . . . It is difficult to imagine greater misfortunes! . . . My dear fellow, if you have but a drop of compassion, if . . . if you would see her . . . Well, why should you not go to her? You love her! Even if you do not love her, why should you not sacrifice your leisure to her? Human life is precious, and for it one can give . . . all! Save her life!"

Somebody knocked loudly at my door I shuddered . . . My heart bled . . . I do not believe in presentiments, but this time my alarm was not without cause. . . . Somebody was knocking at my door from without . . .

"Who is there?" I cried out of the window

"I come to beg your favour!"

"What do you want?"

"A letter from the Count, your Honour! There has been a murder!"

A dark figure muffled up in a sheepskin coat came to the window and, swearing at the weather, handed me a letter. . . . I hurried away from the window, lit a candle, and read the following "For God's sake forget everything in the world and come at once! Olga has been murdered. I have lost my head and am going mad—Yours, A K"

Olga murdered! My head grew dizzy, and it was black before my eyes, from this short phrase . . . I sat down on the bed and my hands fell at my sides I was unable to reason!

"Is that you, Pavel Ivanovich?" I heard the voice of the muzhik who had been sent to me ask "I was just

going to drive on to you. . . . I have a letter for you, too "

Five minutes later "Screw" and I were driving in a closed carriage towards the Count's estate. The rain rattled on the roof of the carriage, and the whole time there were blinding flashes of lightning in front of us.

## XXIV

**W**E heard the roar of the lake  
The last act of the drama was just beginning,  
and two of the actors were driving to see a  
harrowing sight.

"Well, and what do you think awaits us?" I asked dear Pavel Ivanovich

"I can't imagine . . . I don't know . . ."

"I also don't know . . ."

"Hamlet once regretted that the Lord of heaven and earth had forbidden the sin of suicide, in like manner I regret that fate has made me a doctor . . . I regret it deeply!"

"I fear that, in my turn, I must regret that I am an examining magistrate," I said "If the Count has not made a mistake and confounded murder with suicide, and if Olga has really been murdered, my poor nerves will have much to suffer!"

"You can refuse this affair!"

I looked inquiringly at Pavel Ivanovich, but, of course, owing to the darkness, I could see nothing . . . How could he know that I could refuse this affair? I was Olga's lover, but who knew it, with the exception of Olga herself and perhaps also Pshekhotsky, who had favoured me once with applause?

"Why do you think I can refuse?" I asked "Screw!"

"You could fall ill, or tender your resignation. All this is not dishonourable, because there is somebody to take your place. A doctor is placed in quite other conditions."

"Only that?" I thought

Our carriage, after a long, wearisome drive over the

clayey roads stopped at last before the porch Two windows just above the porch were brightly illuminated Through the one on the right side, which was in Olga's room, a dim light issued All the other windows looked like black spots On the stairs we met the Scops-Owl She looked at me with her piercing little eyes, and her wrinkled face became more wrinkled in an evil, mocking smile

Her eyes seemed to say " You'll have a great surprise ! "

She probably thought we had come to carouse, and we did not know there was grief in the house

" Let me draw your attention to this," I said to Pavil Ivanovich, as I pulled the cap off the old woman's head and exposed her completely bare pate. " This old witch is ninety years old, my good soul If some day you and I had to make a post-mortem examination of her, we should arrive at very different conclusions You would find senile atrophy of the brain, and I would assure you that she was the cleverest and the most cunning creature in the whole district . . . The devil in petticoats ! "

I was astounded when I entered the ballroom. The picture I saw there was quite unexpected All the chairs and sofas were occupied by people. . . Groups of people were standing about in the corners and near the windows . . . Where had they all come from? If anybody had told me I would meet these people there, I would have laughed at him. Their presence was so improbable and out of place in the Count's house at that time, when in one of the rooms Olga was either dying or already lying dead. They were the gipsy chorus of the chief gipsy Karpov from the restaurant " London " ; the same chorus which is known to the reader from one of the first chapters of this book

When I entered the room my old friend Tina, having recognized me, left one of the groups and came towards me with a cry of joy A smile spread over her pale and dark complexioned cheeks when I gave her my hand, and

tears rose to her eyes when she wanted to tell me something . . . Tears prevented her from speaking, and I was not able to obtain a single word from her I turned to the other gipsies, and they explained their presence in the house in this way. In the morning the Count had sent them a telegram demanding that the whole chorus should be at the Count's estate without fail by nine o'clock that evening In execution of this order they had taken the train and had been in this hall by eight o'clock

"We had thought to afford pleasure to his Excellency and his guests . . . We know so many new songs! . . And suddenly. . . "

"And suddenly a muzhik arrived on horseback, with the news that a brutal murder had been committed at the shooting party and with the order to prepare a bed for Olga Nikolaevna. The muzhik was not believed, because he was as drunk as a swine, but when a noise was heard on the stairs and a black figure was borne through the dancing hall, there was no more possibility to doubt . . ."

"And now we don't know what to do! We can't remain here . . . When the priest comes it is time for gay people to depart. . . Besides, all the chorus girls are alarmed and crying . . . They can't be in the same house with a corpse . . . We must go away, but they won't give us horses! His Excellency the Count is lying ill in bed and will not see anybody, and the servants only laugh at us when we ask for horses. . . How can we go on foot in such weather and on such a dark night? The servants are in general terribly rude! When we asked for a samovar for our ladies they sent us to the devil . . ."

All these complaints ended in tearful requests to my magnanimity Could I not obtain vehicles to enable them to depart from this "accursed" house?

"If the horses are not in the paddocks, and the coachmen have not been sent somewhere, you shall get away," I said  
"I'll give the order. . . ."

The poor people, dressed out in their burlesque costumes, and accustomed to coquet with their swaggering manners, looked very awkward with their sober countenances and undecided poses. My promise to get them sent to the station somewhat encouraged them. The whispers of the men turned into loud talk, and the women ceased crying.

## XXV

**T**HEN I went to the Count's study, and as I passed through a whole suite of dark, unlighted rooms, I looked into one of the numerous doors I saw a touching picture At a table near a boiling samovar Zosia and her brother Pshekhotsky were seated . . . Zosia, dressed in a light blouse but still wearing the same bracelets and rings, was smelling at a scent bottle and sipping tea from her cup with fastidious languor Her eyes were red with weeping . . . Probably the occurrences at the shooting party had shaken her nerves very much, and had spoilt her frame of mind for a long time to come Pshekhotsky, with his usual wooden face, was lapping up his tea in large gulps from the saucer and saying something to his sister. To judge from the mentor-like expression of his face, he was trying to calm her and persuade her not to cry

I naturally found the Count with entirely shattered nerves. This puny and flabby man looked thinner and more fallen in than ever. . . He was pale, and his lips trembled as if with ague His head was tied up in a white pocket-handkerchief, which exhaled a strong odour of vinegar that filled the whole room. When I entered the room he jumped up from the sofa, on which he was lying, and rushed towards me wrapped up in the folds of his dressing-gown.

" Oh ! oh ! " he began, trembling and in a choking voice.  
" Well ? "

And uttering some inarticulate sounds, he pulled me by the sleeve to the sofa and, waiting till I was seated, he pressed against me like a frightened dog and began to pour out all his grievances.

"Who could have expected it? Eh? Wait a moment, golubchik, I'll cover myself up with the plaid . . . I have fever. . . Murdered, poor thing! And how brutally murdered! She's still alive, but the village doctor says she'll die this night. . . A terrible day! . . . She arrived without rhyme or reason, that . . . wife of mine . . . may the devil take her! . . . That was my most unfortunate mistake, Serezha; I was married in Petersburg when drunk I hid it from you. I was ashamed of it, but there—she has arrived, and you can see her for yourself. . . Look and be punished Oh, the accursed weakness! Under the influence of the moment and vodka, I'm capable of doing anything you like! The arrival of my wife is the first present, the scandal with Olga the second . . . I'm expecting a third . . . I know what will happen next . . . I know! I'll go mad! . . ."

Having drunk three glasses of vodka and called himself an ass, a scoundrel and a drunkard, the Count began in a whimpering voice and a confused manner to describe the drama that had taken place at the shooting party. . . What he told me was approximately the following. About twenty or thirty minutes after I had left, when the astonishment at Zosia's arrival had somewhat subsided, and when Zosia herself, having made acquaintance with the guests, began to play the part of hostess, the company suddenly heard a piercing, heartrending shriek This shriek came from the forest and was repeated four times It was so extraordinary that the people who heard it sprang to their feet, the dogs began to bark, and the horses pricked up their ears The shriek was unnatural, but the Count was able to recognize in it a woman's voice . . . There were notes of despair and terror in it. . . .

Women must shriek in that way when they see a ghost, or at the sudden death of a child . . . The alarmed guests looked at the Count, the Count looked at them . . . For about three minutes there was the silence of the grave.

While the ladies and gentlemen looked at each other, the coachmen and lackeys rushed towards the place from which the cry had come. The first messenger of grief was the old manservant, Il'ya. He ran back to the clearing from the forest, with a pale face, dilated pupils, and wanted to say something, but breathlessness and excitement prevented him from speaking. At last, overcoming his agitation, he crossed himself and said:

"The missis has been murdered!"

"What missis? Who had murdered her?"

But Il'ya made no reply to these questions . . . The part of the second messenger fell to the lot of a man who was not expected and whose appearance caused general surprise. Both the sudden appearance and the look of this man were astonishing. When the Count saw him, and remembered that Olga was walking about in the forest, his heart sank, and from a terrible presentiment his legs gave way under him.

It was Pétr Egorych Urbenin, the Count's former bailiff and Olga's husband. At first the company heard heavy footsteps and the cracking of brushwood . . . It seemed as if a bear was making his way from the forest to the clearing. Then the heavy form of unfortunate Pétr Egorych came in sight. When he came out of the forest and saw the company assembled on the clearing, he stepped back and stopped as if he were rooted to the ground. For about two minutes he remained silent and motionless, and in this way gave the people time to examine him properly. He had his usual grey jacket on and trousers that were already well worn. He was without a hat, and his matted hair stuck to his sweaty brow and temples. . . . His face, which was usually purple and often almost blue, was now quite pale . . . His eyes looked around senselessly, staring wildly . . . His hands and lips trembled . . .

But what was the most astonishing and what instantly attracted the attention of the stupefied spectators were

his blood-stained hands . . . Both his hands and shirt cuffs were thickly covered with blood, as if they had been washed in a bath of blood

Three minutes Urbenin remained dumbfounded, and then, as if awakening from a dream, he sat down on the grass cross-legged and groaned The dogs, scenting something unwonted, surrounded him and raised a bark . . . Having glanced round the assembled company with dim eyes, Urbenin covered his face with both hands and again there was silence .

"Olga, Olga, what have you done!" he groaned.

Heartrending sobs were torn from his breast and shook his broad shoulders When he removed the hands from his face the whole company saw the marks of blood that they had left on his cheeks and forehead

When he got to this place the Count waved his hands convulsively, seized a glass of vodka, drank it off, and continued .

"From that point my recollections become mixed You can well understand all these events had so stunned me that I had lost the power of thinking. . . I can remember nothing that happened afterwards! I only remember that the men brought some sort of a body in a torn, blood-stained dress out of the wood . . . I could not look at it! They put it into a calash and drove off

. . . I did not hear either groans or weeping They say that the small dagger which she always carried about with her had been thrust into her side . . . You remember it? I had given it to her It was a blunt dagger—blunter than the edge of this glass What strength was necessary to plunge it in! Brother, I liked Caucasian arms, but now may the deuce take all those arms! To-morrow I will order them all to be thrown away"

The Count drank another glass of vodka and continued

"But what a shame! What an abomination! We brought her to the house. . . . You can understand our

despair, our horror, when suddenly, may the devil take all the gipsies, we heard gay singing! . . . They were all ranged in a row, singing at the top of their voices! . . . You see, they wanted to receive us with chic, but it turned out quite misplaced. . . . It was like Ivanushka-the-fool, who, meeting a funeral, became excited and shouted: 'Pull away, you can't pull it over!' Yes, brother! I wanted to entertain my guests and had ordered the gipsies, and what a muddle came of it! Not gipsies ought to have been sent for but doctors and priests. And now I don't know what to do! What am I to do? I don't know any of these formalities and customs. I don't know whom to call in, for whom to send . . . Perhaps the police ought to come, the Public Prosecutor . . . How the devil can I know? Thank goodness, Father Jeremiah, having heard about the scandal, came to give her the Communion. I should never have thought of sending for him. I implore you, dear friend, make all the necessary arrangements! By God, I'm going mad! The arrival of my wife, the murderer . . . Brrr' . . . Where is my wife now? Have you seen her?"

"I've seen her. She's drinking tea with Pshekhotsky."

"With her brother, you say. . . . Pshekhotsky, he's a rogue! When I ran away from Petersburg secretly, he found out about my flight and has stuck to me. What an amount of money he has been able to squeeze out of me during the whole of this time no one can calculate!"

I had not time to talk long to the Count. I rose and went to the door.

"Listen," the Count stopped me. "I say, Serezha . . . that Urbenin won't stab me?"

"Did he stab Olga, then?"

"To be sure, he . . . I can't understand, however, how he came there! What the deuce brought him to the forest? And why just to that forest? Admitting that he hid himself there and waited for us, but how could he

know that I wanted to stop just in that place and not in any other?"

"You don't understand anything," I said "By-the-by, once for all I must beg you. . . . If I undertake this case, please don't tell me your opinions Have the goodness to answer my questions and nothing more"

## XXVI

**W**HEN I left the Count I went to the room where Olga was lying . \*

A little blue lamp was burning in the room and faintly lighted up her face . . . It was impossible either to read or write by its light Olga was lying on her bed, her head bandaged up One could only see her pale sharp nose and the eyelids that closed her eyes. At the moment I entered the room her bosom was bared and the doctors were placing a bag of ice on it † Olga was therefore still alive Two doctors were attending on her. When I entered, Pavel Ivanovich, screwing up his eyes, was auscultating her heart with much panting and puffing

The district doctor, who looked a worn-out and sickly man, was sitting pensively near the bed in an arm-chair and seemed to be feeling her pulse Father Jeremiah, who had just finished his work, was wrapping up the cross in his stole and preparing to depart

"Petr Egorych, do not grieve!" he said with a sigh and looked towards the corner of the room "Everything is God's will Turn for protection to God"

Urbenin was seated on a stool in a corner of the room. He was so much changed that I hardly recognized him. Want of work and drink during the last month had told as much on his clothes as on his appearance ; his clothes were worn out, his face too

\* Here two lines are blotted out —A Ch

† I draw the reader's attention to a certain circumstance Kamyshev, who loved on every occasion, even in his disputes with Polycarp, to descant on the condition of his soul says not a word of the impression made on him by the sight of the dying Olga think this omission was intentional.—A Ch.

The poor fellow sat there motionless, supporting his head on his fists and never taking his eyes off the bed . . . His hands and face were still stained with blood . . . He had forgotten to wash them . . .

Oh, the prediction of my soul and of my poor bird !

Whenever the noble bird which I had killed screamed out his phrase about the husband who killed his wife, Urbenin's figure always arose before my mind's eye. Why? . . . I knew that jealous husbands often kill their unfaithful wives , at the same time I knew that such men as Urbenin do not kill people . . . And I drove away the thought of the possibility of Olga being killed by her husband as something absurd

" Was it he or not he ? " I asked myself as I looked at his unhappy face

And to speak candidly I did not give myself an affirmative answer, despite the Count's story and the blood I saw on his hands and face

" If he had killed her he would have washed off that blood long ago," I said to myself, remembering the following proposition of a magistrate of my acquaintance : " A murderer cannot bear the blood of his victim "

If I had wished to tax my memory I could have remembered many aphorisms of a similar nature, but I must not anticipate or fill my mind with premature conclusions.

" My respects ! " the district doctor said to me. " I am very glad you have come . . . Please can you tell me who is master here ? "

" There is no master . . . Chaos reigns here," I answered

" A very good apophthegm, but it does not assist me," the district doctor answered with bitterness " For the last three hours I have been asking, imploring to have a bottle of port or champagne sent here and not a soul has deigned to listen to my prayer ! They are all as deaf as posts ! They have only just brought the ice I ordered three hours ago What does it mean ? A woman is

dying here, and they only seem to laugh ! The Count is pleased to sit in his study drinking liqueurs, and they can't bring even a wineglass here ! I wanted to send to the chemist in the town, and I was told all the horses are worn out, and there's nobody who can go as they are all drunk . . . I wanted to send to my hospital for medicines and bandages and they favoured me with a fellow who could hardly stand on his legs I sent him two hours ago, and what do you think ? They tell me he has only just started ! Is that not disgusting ? They're all drunk, rude, ill-bred ! . . . They all seem idiots ! By God, it is the first time in my life I've come across such heartless people ! "

The doctor's indignation was justifiable He had not exaggerated, rather the contrary . . . A whole night would have been too short a time for pouring out one's gall on all the disorders and malpractices that could be found on the Count's estate The servants were all abominable having been demoralized by the want of work and supervision Among them there was not a single man-servant who could not have served as a type of a servant who had lived long and feathered his nest in the Count's service.

I went off to get some wine Having distributed three or four cuffs, I succeeded in obtaining both champagne and Valerian drops, to the unspeakable delight of the doctors An hour later \* the doctor's assistant came from the hospital bringing with him all that was necessary.

Pavel Ivanovich succeeded in pouring into Olga's mouth a tablespoon of champagne She made an effort to swallow

\* I must draw the reader's attention to a very important circumstance During from two to three hours M Kamyshev only walks about from room to room, shares the doctor's indignation about the servants, boxes their ears to right and left, and so on Can you recognize in him an examining magistrate ? He evidently was in no hurry, and was only trying to kill time Evidently he knew who the murderer was Besides, there are the quite unnecessary searches made in the Scops-Owl's room and the examination of the gypsies, that appear more like banter than cross-questioning, and could only have been undertaken to pass the time —A Ch.

and groaned Then they injected some sort of drops under the skin.

" Olga Nikolaevna ! " the district doctor shouted into her ear " Olga Ni-ko-la-evna ! "

" It is difficult to expect her to regain consciousness ! " Pavel Ivanovich said with a sigh " The loss of blood has been great, besides the blow she received on the head with some blunt instrument must have caused concussion of the brain "

It is not my business to decide if there had been concussion of the brain or not, but Olga opened her eyes and asked for something to drink . . . The stimulants had had effect

" Now you can ask her whatever you require . . . " Pavel Ivanovich said, nudging my elbow " Ask "

I went up to the bed Olga's eyes were turned on me.

" Where am I ? " she asked.

" Olga Nikolaevna ! " I began, " do you know me ? "

During several seconds Olga looked at me and then closed her eyes.

" Yes ! " she groaned " Yes ! "

" I am Zinov'ev, the examining magistrate I had the honour of being acquainted with you, and if you remember, I was best man at your wedding. . . . "

" Is it thou ? " Olga whispered, stretching out her left arm. " Sit down . . . "

" She is delirious ! " Screw sighed

" I am Zinov'ev, the magistrate," I continued " If you remember, I was at the shooting party. How do you feel ? "

" Ask essential questions ! " the district doctor whispered to me. " I cannot answer for the consciousness being lasting. . . . "

" I beg you not to teach me ! " I said in an offended tone " I know what I have to say. . . . Olga Nikolaevna," I continued, turning to her, " I beg you to remember the events of the past day. I will help you. . . . At one

o'clock you mounted your horse and rode out with a large party to a shoot . . . The shoot lasted for about four hours . . . Then there was a halt on a clearing in the forest. . . . Do you remember?"

"And thou . . . and thou didst . . . kill . . ."

"The woodcock? After I had killed the wounded woodcock you frowned and went away from the rest of the party . . . You went into the forest . . .\* Now try to collect all your strength and to exert your memory. During your walk in the wood you were assaulted by a person unknown to us. I ask you, as the examining magistrate, who was it?"

Olga opened her eyes and looked at me.

"Tell us the name of that man! There are three other persons in the room besides me . . ."

Olga shook her head negatively.

"You must name him," I continued. "He will suffer a severe punishment. The law will make him pay dearly for his brutality! He will be sent to penal servitude † . . . I am waiting."

Olga smiled and shook her head negatively. The further examination produced no results. I was not able to obtain another word from Olga, not a single movement. At a quarter to five she passed away.

\* This avoidance of questions of the first importance could only have had one object, to gain time and to await a loss of consciousness, when Olga would be unable to name the murderer. It is a characteristic process and it is astonishing that the doctors did not set the right value on it —A Ch

† At the first glance all this appears naive. It is evident Kamyshev wanted to make Olga understand what serious consequences her declaration would have for the murderer. If the murderer was dear to her, *ergo*—she must remain silent —A Ch

## XXVII

A BOUT seven o'clock in the morning the village elder and his assistants, whom I had sent for, arrived from the village. It was impossible to drive to the scene of the crime - the rain that had begun in the night was still pouring down in buckets. Little puddles had become lakes. The grey sky looked gloomy, and there was no promise of sunlight. The soaked trees appeared dejected with their drooping branches, and sprinkled a whole shower of large drops at every gust of wind. It was impossible to go there. Besides, it might have been useless. The trace of the crime, such as bloodstains, human footprints, etc., had probably been washed away during the night. But the formalities demanded that the scene of the crime should be examined, and I deferred this visit until the arrival of the police, and in the meantime I made out a draft of the official report of the case, and occupied myself with the examination of witnesses. First of all I examined the gipsies. The poor singers had passed the whole night sitting up in the ballrooms expecting to have horses given them to convey them to the station. But horses were not provided; the servants, when asked, only sent them to the devil, warning them at the same time that his Excellency had forbidden anybody to be admitted to him. They were also not given the samovar they asked for in the morning. The more than singular and indefinite position in which they found themselves in a strange house in which a corpse was lying, the uncertainty as to when they could get away, and the damp melancholy weather had driven the gipsies, both men and women,

into such a state of distress that in one night they had become thin and pale. They wandered about from room to room, evidently much alarmed and expecting some serious issue. By my examination I only increased their anxiety. First because my lengthy examination delayed their departure from the accursed house indefinitely, and secondly it alarmed them. The simple people, imagining that they were seriously suspected of the murder, began to assure me with tears in their eyes, that they were not guilty and knew nothing about the matter. Tina, seeing me as an official personage, quite forgot our former connexion, and while speaking to me trembled and almost fainted with fright like a whipped little girl. In reply to my request not to be excited, and my assurance that I saw in them nothing but witnesses, the assistants of justice, they informed me in one voice that they had never been witnesses, that they knew nothing, and that they trusted that in future God would deliver them from all close acquaintance with judicial people.

I asked them by what road they had driven from the station, had they not passed through that part of the forest where the murder had been committed, had any member of their party quitted it for even a short time, and had they not heard Olga's heartrending shriek \* This examination led to nothing. The gipsies, alarmed by it, only sent two members of the chorus to the village to hire vehicles. The poor people wanted terribly to get away. For their misfortune there was already much talk in the village about the murder in the forest, and these swarthy messengers were looked at with suspicion; they were arrested and brought to me. It was only towards evening that the harassed chorus was able to get free from this nightmare and breathe freely, as having hired five peasants' carts at three times the proper fare, they drove away from the Count's house. Afterwards they were paid for

\* If all this was necessary for M. Kamyshev, would it not have been easier to question the coachmen who had driven the gipsies  
—A. Ch.

their visit, but nobody paid them for the moral suffering that they had endured in the Count's apartments . . .

Having examined them, I made a search in the Scops Owl's room \* In her trunks I found quantities of all sorts of old woman's rubbish, but although I looked through all the old caps and darned stockings, I found neither money nor valuables that the old woman had stolen from the Count or his guests . . . Nor did I find the things that had been stolen from Tina some time before. . . . Evidently the old witch had another hiding-place only known to herself.

I will not give here the preliminary report I drafted about the information I had obtained or the searches I had made. . . . It was long ; besides, I have forgotten most of it. I will only give a general idea of it. First of all I described the condition in which I found Olga, and I gave an account of every detail of my examination of her. By this examination it was evident that Olga was quite conscious when she answered me and purposely concealed the name of the murderer. She did not *want* that the murderer should suffer the penalty, and this inevitably led to the supposition that the criminal was near and dear to her.

The examination of her clothes, which I made together with the commissary of the rural police who arrived very soon, produced very much . . . The jacket of her riding habit, made of velvet with a silk lining, was still moist. The right side in which there was the hole made by the dagger was saturated with blood and in places bore marks of clotted blood. . . . The loss of blood had been very great, and it was astonishing that Olga had not died on the spot. The left side was also blood-stained. The left sleeve was torn at the shoulder and at the wrist . . . The two upper buttons were torn off, and at our examination

\* Why ? We can admit that all this was done by the examining magistrate in a drunken or sleepy condition, but why write about it. Would it not have been better to hide from the reader these gross mistakes ?—A. Ch.

we did not find them. The skirt of the riding habit, made of black cashmere, was found to be terribly crumpled; it had been crumpled when they had carried Olga out of the wood to the vehicle and from the vehicle to her bed. Then it had been pulled off, rolled into a disorderly heap, and flung under the bed. It was torn at the waistband. This tear was about ten inches long and in the length, and had probably been made while she was being carried or when it was pulled off, it might also have been made during her lifetime. Olga, who did not like mending, and not knowing to whom to give the habit to be mended, might have hidden away the tear under her bodice. I don't think any signs could be seen in this of the savage rage of the criminal, on which the assistant public prosecutor laid such special emphasis in his speech at the trial. The right side of the belt and the right-hand pocket were saturated with blood. The pocket-handkerchief and the gloves, that were in this pocket, were like two formless lumps of a rusty colour. The whole of the riding-habit, to the very end of the skirt, was bespattered with spots of blood of various forms and sizes . . . Most of them, as it was afterwards explained, were the impressions of the blood-stained fingers and palms belonging to the coachmen and lackeys who had carried Olga . . . The chemise was bloody, especially on the right side on which there was a hole produced by the cut of an instrument. There, as also on the left shoulder of the bodice, and near the wrists there were rents, and the wristband was almost torn off.

The things that Olga had worn, such as her gold watch, a long gold chain, a diamond brooch, ear-rings, rings and a purse containing silver coins, were found with the clothes. It was clear the crime had not been committed with the intent of robbery.

The results of the post-mortem examination, made by "Screw" and the district doctor in my presence on the day after Olga's death, were set down in a very long report, of which I give here only a general outline. The doctors

found that the external injuries were as follows on the left side of the head, at the juncture of the temporal and the parietal bones, there was a wound of about one and a-half inches in length that went as far as the bone. The edges of the wound were not smooth nor rectilinear . . . It had been inflicted by a blunt instrument, probably as we subsequently decided by the haft of the dagger. On the neck at the level of the lower cervical vertebrae a red line was visible that had the form of a semicircle and extended across the back half of the neck. On the whole length of this line there were injuries to the skin and slight bruises. On the left arm, an inch and a half above the wrist, four blue spots were found. One was on the back of the hand and the three others on the lower side. They were caused by pressure, probably of fingers . . . This was confirmed by the little scratch made by a nail that was visible on one spot. The reader will remember that the place where these spots were found corresponds with the place where the left sleeve and the left cuff of the bodice of the riding-habit were torn. . . . Between the fourth and fifth ribs on an imaginary vertical line drawn from the centre of the armpit there was a large gaping wound of an inch in length. The edges were smooth, as if cut and steeped with liquid and clotted blood . . . The wound was deep . . . It was made by a sharp instrument, and as it appeared from the preliminary information, by the dagger which exactly corresponded in width with the size of the wound.

The interior examination gave as result a wound in the right lung and the pleura, inflammation of the lung and haemorrhage in the cavity of the pleura.

As far as I can remember, the doctors arrived approximately at the following conclusion. (a) death was caused by anaemia consequent on a great loss of blood, the loss of blood was explained by the presence of a gaping wound on the right side of the breast. (b) the wound on the head must be considered a serious injury, and the wound in the

breast as undoubtedly mortal, the latter must be reckoned as the immediate cause of death (c) The wound on the head was given with a blunt instrument, the wound in the breast by a sharp and probably a double-edged one (d) the deceased could not have inflicted all the above-mentioned injuries upon herself with her own hand, and (e) there probably had been no offence against feminine honour

In order not to put it off till Doomsday and then repeat myself, I will give the reader at once the picture of the murder I sketched while under the impression of the first inspections, two or three examinations, and the perusal of the report of the post-mortem examination

Olga, having left the rest of the party, walked about the wood Lost in a reverie or plunged in her own sad thoughts—the reader will remember her mood on that ill-fated evening—she wandered deep into the forest. There she was met by the murderer When she was standing under a tree, occupied with her own thoughts, the man came up and spoke to her . . . This man did not awaken suspicions in her, otherwise she would have called for help, but that cry would not have been heart-rending While talking to her the murderer seized hold of her left arm with such strength that he tore the sleeve of her bodice and her chemise and left a mark in the form of four spots It was at that moment probably that she shrieked, and this was the shriek heard by the party . . . She shrieked from pain and evidently because she read in the face and movements of the murderer what his intentions were Either wishing that she should not shriek again, or perhaps acting under the influence of wrathful feelings, he seized the breast of her dress near the collar, which is proved by the two upper buttons that were torn off and the red line the doctors found on her body. The murderer in clutching at her breast and shaking her, had tightened the gold watch-chain she wore round her neck . . . The friction and the pressure of the chain produced the red line Then

the murderer dealt her a blow on the head with some blunt weapon, for example, a stick or even the scabbard of the dagger that hung from Olga's girdle. Then flying into a passion, or finding that one wound was insufficient, he drew the dagger and plunged it into her right side with force—I say with force, because the dagger was blunt.

This was the gloomy aspect of the picture that I had the right to draw on the strength of the above-mentioned data. The question who was the murderer was evidently not difficult to determine and seemed to resolve itself. First the murderer was not guided by covetous motives but something else . . . Therefore it was impossible to suspect some wandering vagabond or ragamuffin, who might be fishing in the lake. The shriek of his victim could not have disarmed a robber . to take off the brooch and the watch was the work of a second.

Secondly, Olga had purposely not told me the name of the murderer, which she would not have done if the murderer had been a common robber. Evidently the murderer was dear to her, and she did not wish that he should suffer severe punishment on her account . . . Such people could only have been her mad father , her husband, whom she did not love, but before whom she felt herself guilty , or the Count, to whom perhaps in her soul she felt under obligations. . Her mad father was sitting at home in his little house in the forest on the evening of the murder, as his servant affirmed afterwards, composing a letter to the chief of the district police, requesting him to overcome the imaginary robbers who surrounded his house day and night . . The Count had never left his guests before and at the moment the murder was committed. Therefore, the whole weight of suspicion fell on unfortunate Urbenin His unexpected appearance, his mien, and all the rest could only serve as good evidence.

Thirdly, during the last months Olga's life had been one continuous romance. And this romance was of the

sort that usually ends with crime and capital punishment. An old, doting husband, unfaithfulness, jealousy, blows, flight to the lover-Count, two months after the marriage. . . . If the beautiful heroine of such a romance is killed, do not look for robbers or rascals, but search for the heroes of the romance. On this third count the most suitable hero-murderer was again Urbenin.

## XXVIII

I MADE the preliminary examinations in the mosaic room in which I had loved at one time to loll on the soft divan and pay court to gipsies.

The first person, I examined was Urbenin. He was brought to me from Olga's room, where he continued to sit on a stool in a corner and never removed his eyes from the empty bed . . . For a moment he stood before me in silence, looking at me with indifference, then probably thinking that I wanted to speak to him in my character of examining magistrate, he said in the tired voice of a man who was broken by grief and anguish :

"Sergei Petrovich, examine the other witnesses first, please, and me afterwards . . . I can't . . ."

Urbenin considered himself a witness, or thought that he would be considered one . . .

"No, I require to examine you just now," I said. "Be seated, please. . . ."

Urbenin sat down opposite to me and bent his head. He was weary and ill, he answered reluctantly, and it was only with difficulty I was able to squeeze his deposition out of him.

He deposed that he was Pétr Egorych Urbenin, nobleman, fifty years of age, belonging to the Orthodox Faith. That he owned an estate in the neighbouring K—district where he belonged to the electorate, and had served for the last triennials as honorary magistrate. Being ruined, he had mortgaged his estate and had considered it necessary to go into service. He had entered the Count's service as bailiff six years ago. Liking agriculture, he was not ashamed of being in the service of a

private individual, and considered that it was only the foolish who were ashamed of work He received his salary from the Count regularly, and he had nothing to complain of He had a son and daughter from his first marriage, etc , etc , etc.

He had married Olga because he was passionately in love with her. He had struggled long and painfully with his feelings, but neither common sense nor the logic of a practical elderly mind—in fact, nothing had effect he was obliged to succumb to his feelings and he got married He knew that Olga did not marry him for love, but considering her to be moral in the highest degree, he decided to content himself with her faithfulness and friendship, which he had hoped to merit

When he came to the place where his disenchantment and the wrongs done to his grey hairs began, Urbenin asked permission not to speak of “the past which God will forgive her” or at least to defer the conversation about that to a future time

“ I can’t . . . It’s hard . . . Besides, you yourself saw it ”

“ Very well, let us leave it for another time . . . Only tell me now, did you beat your wife ? It is reported that one day, finding a note from the Count in her possession, you struck her . . . ”

“ That is not true . . . I only seized her by the arm, she began to cry, and that same evening she went to complain . . . ”

“ Did you know of her connexion with the Count ? ”

“ I have begged that this subject should be deferred . . . And what is the use of it ? ”

“ Answer me only this one question, which is of great importance. . . . Was your wife’s connexion with the Count known to you ? ”

“ Undoubtedly. . . . ”

“ I shall write that down, and all the rest concerning your wife’s unfaithfulness can be left for the next time.

. . . Now we will revert to another question. Will you explain to me how it came that you were in the forest where Olga Nikolaevna was murdered? . . . You were as you say, in the town . . . How did you appear in the forest?"

"Yes, sir, I had been living in town with a cousin ever since I lost my place. . . . I passed my time in looking for a place and in drinking to forget my sorrows . . . I had been drinking specially hard this last month. For example, I can't remember what happened last week as I was always drunk . . . The day before yesterday I got drunk too . . . In a word I am lost . . . Irremediably lost! . . ."

"You wanted to tell me how it was that you appeared yesterday in the forest?"

"Yes, sir . . . I awoke yesterday morning early, about four o'clock. My head was aching from the previous day's drink, I had pains in all my limbs as if I had fever. . . . I lay on my bed and saw through the window the sun rise, and I remembered . . . many things

A weight was on my heart . . . Suddenly I wanted to see her . . . to see her once more, perhaps for the last time. I was seized by wrath and melancholy . . . I drew from my pocket the hundred-rouble note the Count had sent me. I looked at it, and then trampled it underfoot . . . I trampled on it till I decided to go and fling this charity into his face. However hungry and ragged I may be, I cannot sell my honour, and every attempt to buy it I consider a personal insult. So you see, sir, I wanted to have a look at Olga and fling the money into the ugly mug of that seducer. And this longing overpowered me to such an extent that I almost went out of my mind. I had no money to drive here, I could not spend *his* hundred roubles on myself. I started on foot. By good luck a muzhik I know overtook me, and drove me eighteen versts for ten kopecks, otherwise I might still have been trudging along. The muzhik set [me down] in] Tenevo.

From there I came here on foot and arrived about four o'clock "

" Did anybody see you here at that time ? "

" Yes, sir. The watchman, Nikolai, was sitting at the gate and told me the masters were not at home, they had all gone out shooting. I was almost worn out with fatigue, but the desire to see my wife was stronger than my pains I had to go on foot without a moment's rest to the place where they were shooting I did not go by the road, but started through the forest. I know every tree, and it would be as difficult for me to lose myself in the Count's forests as it would be in my own house "

" But going through the forest and not by the road you might have missed the shooting party "

" No, sir, I kept so close to the road all the time that I could not only hear the shots but the conversations too "

" Consequently you did not expect to meet your wife in the forest ? "

Urbenin looked at me with astonishment, and, after thinking for a short time, he replied .

" Pardon me, but that is a strange question One can't expect to meet a wolf, and to expect a terrible misfortune is equally impossible God sends them unexpectedly. For example, this dreadful occurrence . . . I was walking through the Ol'khovsky wood, not expecting any grief because I have grief enough as it is, when suddenly I heard a strange shriek. The shriek was so piercing that it appeared to me as if somebody had cut into my ear. . . . I ran towards the cry. . . ."

Urbenin's mouth was drawn to one side, his chin trembled, his eyes blinked, and he began to sob

" I ran towards the cry, and suddenly I saw . . . Olga lying on the ground Her hair and forehead were bloody, her face terrible. I began to shout, to call her by her name. . . . She did not move. . . . I kissed her, I raised her up. . . ."

Urbenin choked and covered his face with his hands. After a minute he continued :

" I did not see the scoundrel . . . When I was running towards her I heard somebody's hasty footsteps. He was probably running away "

" All this is an excellent invention, Petr Egorych," I said. " But do you know magistrates have little belief in such rare occurrences as the coincidence of the murder with your accidental walk, etc It's not badly invented, but it explains very little."

" What do you mean by invented ? " Urbenin asked, opening his eyes wide " I have invented nothing, sir. . . ."

Suddenly Urbenin got very red and rose

" It appears that you suspect me . . ." he mumbled. " Of course, anybody can suspect, but you, Sergei Petrovich, have known me long . . . It's a sin for you to brand me with such a suspicion . . . But you know me "

" I know you, certainly . . but my private opinion is here of no avail . The law reserves the right of private opinion for the jurymen, the examining magistrate has only to deal with evidence. There is much evidence, Petr Egorych "

Urbenin cast an alarmed look at me and shrugged his shoulders

" Whatever the evidence may be," he said, " you must understand . . . Now, could I ? . . . I ! Besides whom ? ! I might be able to kill a quail or a woodcock, but a human being . . a woman who was dearer to me than life, my salvation . the very thought of whom illuminates my gloomy nature like the sun . And suddenly you suspect me ! "

Urbenin waved his hand resignedly and sat down again.

" As it is, I long for death, and you wrong me besides ! If an unknown functionary wronged me, I'd say nothing,

but you, Sergei Petrovich! . . . May I go away, sir?"

" You may. . . . I shall examine you again to-morrow and in the meantime, Pëtr Egorych, I must put you under arrest. . . . I hope that before to-morrow's examination you will have had time to appreciate the importance of all the evidence there is against you, and you will not waste time uselessly, but confess I am convinced that Olga Nikolaevna was murdered by you . . . I have nothing more to say to you to-day . . . You may go "

Having said this I bent over my papers . . . Urbenin looked at me in perplexity, rose, and stretched out his arms in a strange way.

" Are you joking . . . or serious? " he asked

" This is no time for joking," I said " You may go "

Urbenin remained standing before me I looked up at him He was pale and looked with perplexity at my papers.

" Why are your hands blood-stained, Pëtr Egorych? " I asked.

He looked down at his hands on which there still were marks of blood, and he moved his fingers.

" Why there is blood? . . . Hm . . . If this is part of the evidence, it is but poor evidence . . . When I lifted up blood-stained Olga I could not help dirtying my hands with blood. I was not wearing gloves."

" You just told me that when you found your wife all bloody, you called for help. . . . How is it that nobody heard your cries? "

" I don't know, I was so stunned by the sight of Olia, that I was unable to cry aloud . . . Besides, I know nothing. . . . It is useless for me to try to exculpate myself, and it's not in my principles to do so "

" You would hardly have shouted. . . . Having killed

your wife, you ran away, and were terribly astonished when you saw people on the clearing."

"I never noticed your people. I paid no heed to people."

With this my examination for that day was concluded. After that Urbenin was confined in one of the outhouses on the Count's estate and watched.

**O**N the second or third day the Assistant Public Prosecutor, Polugradov, arrived post-haste from the town ; he is a man I cannot think of without spoiling my frame of mind. Imagine a tall, lean man, of about thirty, clean shaven, smartly dressed, and with hair curled like a sheep's ; his features were thin, but so dry and unexpressive that it was not difficult to guess the emptiness and foppishness of the individual to whom they belonged ; his voice was low, sugary, and mawkishly polite.

He arrived early in the morning, with two portmanteaux in a hired calash. First of all he inquired with a very concerned face, complaining affectedly of fatigue, if a room had been prepared for him in the Count's house. By my orders a small but very cosy and light room had been assigned to him, where everything he might need, beginning with a marble washstand, and ending with matches had been arranged.

"I—I say, my good fellow ! Bring me some hot water!" he began while settling down in his room, and fastidiously sniffing the air ; "Some hot water, please, I say, young man!"

Before beginning work he washed, dressed, and arranged his hair for a long time ; he even brushed his teeth with some sort of red powder, and occupied about three minutes in trimming his sharp, pink nails.

"Well, sir," he said at last, settling down to work, and turning over the leaves of our report. "What's it all about?"

I told him what was the matter not leaving out a single detail. . . :

"Have you been to the scene of the crime?"

"No, I have not been there yet."

The Assistant Public Prosecutor frowned, passed his white womanish hand over his freshly washed brow, and began walking about the room

"I can't understand your reason for not having been there," he mumbled "I should suppose that was the first thing that ought to have been done Did you forget or thought it unnecessary?"

"Neither the one nor the other . yesterday I waited for the police, and intend to go to-day"

"Now nothing remains there · it has rained all these days, and you have given the criminal time to obliterate his traces Of course you placed a guard at the spot ? No ? I don't understand ! "

And the dandy shrugged his shoulders authoritatively.

" You'd better drink your tea, it's getting cold," I said, in a tone of indifference.

" I like it cold "

The Assistant of the Public Prosecutor bent over the papers, and with a loud sniff he began to read aloud in an undertone, occasionally jotting down his remarks and corrections Two or three times his mouth was drawn to one side in a sarcastic smile . for some reason neither my official report nor the doctors' pleased this cunning rogue \* In this sleek, well-brushed, and cleanly-washed government official, stuffed full of conceit and a high opinion of his own worth, the pedant was clearly apparent.

By midday we were on the scene of the crime. It was raining hard Of course we neither found spots nor traces , all had been washed away by the rain By some chance I found one of the buttons that were missing on Olga's riding habit, and the Assistant Prosecutor picked up a sort of reddish pulp, that subsequently proved to be a red wrapper from a packet of tobacco. At first we

\* Kamyshev abuses the Assistant Public Prosecutor quite without cause The only thing in which this prosecutor can be blamed is that his face did not please M Kamyshev. It would have been more honest to admit inexperience or intentional mistakes —A. Ch.

stumbled upon a bush which had two twigs broken at one side. The Assistant Prosecutor was delighted at finding these twigs They might have been broken by the criminal and would therefore indicate the way he had gone after killing Olga But the joy of the Prosecutor was unfounded we soon found a number of bushes with broken twigs and nibbled leaves , it turned out that a herd of cattle had passed over the scene of the murder

After making a plan of the place and questioning the coachmen, we had taken with us as to the position in which they had found Olga we returned to the house with long faces An onlooker might have noticed a certain laziness and apathy in our movements while we were examining the scene of the crime . Perhaps our movements were paralysed to a certain extent by the conviction that the criminal was already in our hands, and therefore it was unnecessary to enter on any Lecoq-like analysis

On his return from the forest Polugradov again passed a long time in washing and dressing, and he again called for hot water Having finished his toilet he expressed a wish to examine Urbenin once more Poor Pëtr Egorych had nothing new to tell us at this examination ; as before he denied his guilt, and thought nothing of our evidence.

"I am astonished that I can be suspected," he said, shrugging his shoulders " Strange ! "

" My good fellow, don't play the *naïf*," Polugradov said to him " Nobody is suspected without cause, and if somebody is suspected there is good cause for it ! "

" Whatever the causes may be, however strong the evidence may be, one must reason in a humane manner ! Don't you understand, I can't murder ? I can't . . . Consequently what is your evidence worth ? "

" Well ! " and the Assistant Prosecutor waved his hand : " what a trouble these educated criminals are ; one can make a muzhik understand, but try to talk to one of these ! ' I can't ' . . . ' in a humane manner ' . . . there they go strumming on psychology ! "

"I am no criminal," Urbenin said quite offended, "I beg you to be more careful in your expressions. . ."

"Hold your tongue, my good fellow! We have no time to apologize nor to listen to your dissatisfaction. . . If you don't wish to confess, you need not confess, but allow us to consider you a liar . . ."

"As you like," Urbenin grumbled " You can do with me what you like now . . . You have the power. . ."

Urbenin made a gesture of indifference, and continued to look out of the window.

"Besides, it's all the same to me · my life is lost "

"Listen to me, Pétr Egorych," I said, "yesterday and the day before you were so overcome by grief, that you were scarcely able to keep on your legs, and you were hardly able to give more than laconic answers ; to-day, on the contrary, you have such a blooming, of course, only comparatively blooming, and gay appearance, and even strike out into idle talk Usually sorrowful people have no wish to talk, while you not only launch out into long conversations, but even make all sorts of trivial complaints In what way can such a sudden change be explained ? "

"And how do you explain it ? " Urbenin asked, screwing up his eyes at me in a derisive manner.

"I explain it in this way · that you have forgotten your part It is difficult to act for any length of time ; one either forgets one's part, or it bores one. . . ."

"Consequently, that was all an invention," said Urbenin, smiling ; "and it does honour to your perspicacity . . Yes, you are right ; a great change has taken place in me. . . ."

"Can you explain it to us ? "

"Certainly, I see no cause for hiding it Yesterday I was so entirely broken and oppressed by my grief, that I thought of taking my life . . of going mad . . but this night I thought better of it . . the thought entered my mind that death had saved Olia from a life of depravity, that it had torn her out of the dirty hands of that good-

for-nothing who has ruined me ; I am not jealous of death ; it is better for Olga to belong to death, than to the Count. This thought cheered and strengthened me : now there is no longer the same weight on my soul ”

“ Cleverly invented,” Polugradov murmured under his breath, as he sat swinging his leg, “ he is never at a loss for an answer ! ”

“ I feel that I am speaking the truth, and I can’t understand that you cultivated men cannot see the difference between truth and dissimulation ! However, prejudice is too strong a feeling , under its influence it is difficult not to err ; I can understand your position, I can imagine what will be, when trusting in your evidence, I am brought up for trial I can imagine how, taking into consideration my brutal physiognomy, my drunkenness . . . My physiognomy is not brutal, but prejudice will have its own. . . ”

“ Very well, very well, enough,” Polugradov said, bending over his papers, “ Go ! ” . . . ”

After Urbenin had left, we proceeded to examine the Count. His Excellency was pleased to come to the examination in his dressing-gown, with a vinegar bandage on his head , having been introduced to Polugradov he sank into an armchair, and began to give his evidence .

“ I shall tell you everything from the very beginning . Well, and how is your President Lionsky, getting on ? Has he still not divorced his wife ? I made his acquaintance in Petersburg, quite by chance Gentlemen, why don’t you order something to be brought ? Somehow it’s jollier to talk with a glass of cognac before you. . I have not the slightest doubt that Urbenin committed this murder ”

And the Count told us all that the reader already knows At the request of the prosecutor he told us all the details of his life with Olga, and described the delights of living with a beautiful woman, and was so carried away by his subject, that he smacked his lips, and winked several times From his evidence I learned a very important detail that is

unknown to the reader. I learned that Urbenin while living in the town had constantly bombarded the Count with letters; in some letters he cursed him, in others he implored him to return his wife to him, promising to forget all wrongs, and dishonour; the poor devil caught at these letters like a drowning man catches at straws

The Assistant Prosecutor examined two or three of the coachmen and then, having had a very good dinner, he gave me a long list of instructions, and drove away. Before leaving he went into the adjoining house where Urbenin was confined, and told him that our suspicions of his guilt had become certainties. Urbenin only shrugged his shoulders, and asked permission to be present at his wife's funeral; this permission was granted him.

Polugradov did not lie to Urbenin. Yes, our suspicions had become convictions, we were convinced that we knew who the criminal was, and that he was already in our hands; but this conviction did not abide with us for long! . . .

### XXX

ONE fine morning, just as I was sealing up a parcel which I was about to send by the guard, who was to take Urbenin to the town, where he was to be imprisoned in the castle-prison, I heard a terrible noise. Looking out of the window I saw an amusing sight : some dozen strong young fellows were dragging one-eyed Kuz'ma out of the servants' kitchen.

Kuz'ma pale and dishevelled had his feet firmly planted on the ground, and being deprived of the use of his arms, butted at his adversaries with his large head

"Your Honour, please go there !" Il'ya said to me, in great alarm, "he . . . does not want to come !"

"Who does not want to come ? "

"The murderer "

"What murderer ? "

"Kuz'ma . . . He committed the murder, your Honour . . . Pētr Egorych is suffering unjustly. . . . By God, sir "

I went into the yard and walked towards the servant's kitchen, where Kuz'ma, who had torn himself out of the strong arms of his opponents, was administering cuffs to right and left

"What's the matter ? " I asked, when I came up to the crowd

And I was told something very strange and unexpected

"Your Honour, Kuz'ma killed her ! "

"They lie !" Kuz'ma shouted "May God kill me if they don't lie ! "

"But why did you, son of a devil, wash off the blood, if your conscience is clear ? Stop a moment, his Honour will examine all this ! "

The breaker-in, Trifon, riding past the river, saw Kuz'ma washing something carefully in the water. At first Trifon thought he was washing linen, but looking more attentively he saw it was a poddevka\* and a waistcoat. He thought this strange : garments of cloth are not washed

" What are you doing ? " Trifon called to him

Kuz'ma became confused. Looking more attentively, Trifon noticed brown spots on the poddevka.

" I guessed at once that it must be blood . . . I went into the kitchen and told our people , they watched, and saw him at night hanging out the poddevka to dry Of course they took fright Why should he wash it, if he is not guilty ? He must have something on his soul, he is trying to hide . . . We thought and thought, and decided to bring him to your Honour . . . We pull him along, and he backs and spits into our eyes. Why should he back if he is not guilty ? "

From further examination it appeared that just before the murder, at the time when the Count and his guests were sitting in the clearing, drinking tea, Kuz'ma had gone into the forest He had not aided in carrying Olga, and therefore could not have got dirtied with blood at that time.

When he was brought to my room Kuz'ma was so excited that at first he could not utter a word ; turning up the white of his single eye he crossed himself and mumbled oaths

" Be calm ; tell me what you know and I will let you go," I said to him.

Kuz'ma fell at my feet, stammered and calling on God.

" May I perish if it's I. . . . May neither my father nor my mother . . . Your Honour ! May God destroy my soul . . ."

" You went into the forest ? "

" That's quite true, sir, I went. . . . I had served cognac to the guests and, forgive me, I had tipped a little ; it went

\* A sleeveless overcoat worn by coachmen and peasants.

to my head, and I wanted to lie down , I went, lay down, and fell asleep. . . . But who killed her, or how I don't know, so help me God . . . It's the truth I'm telling you ! ”

“ But why did you wash off the blood ? ”

“ I was afraid that people might imagine . . . that I might be taken as a witness . . . ”

“ How did the blood come on to your poddevka ? ”

“ I don't know, your Honour.”

“ How is it possible you can't know ? Isn't the poddevka yours ? ”

“ Yes, certainly it's mine, but I don't know I saw the blood when I woke up again ”

“ So, then, I suppose you dirtied the poddevka with blood in your sleep ? ”

“ Just so. . . .”

“ Well, my man, go and think it over . You're talking nonsense , think well and tell me to-morrow . . . Go ! ”

The following morning, when I awoke, I was informed that Kuz'ma wanted to speak to me. I ordered him to be brought in

“ Have you bethought yourself ? ” I asked him

“ Just so, I've bethought myself . . . ”

“ How did the blood get on your poddevka ? ”

“ Your Honour, I remember as if in a dream . I remember something, as in a fog, but if it is true or not I can't say.”

“ What do you remember ? ”

Kuz'ma turned up his eye, thought, and said .

“ Extraordinary . . . it's like in a dream or a fog . . . I lay upon the grass drunk and dozing I was not quite asleep. . . . I only heard somebody was passing, trampling heavily with his feet . . . I opened my eyes and saw, as if I was unconscious, or in a dream ; a gentleman came up to me, he bends over me and wiped his hands in my skirts . . . he wiped them in my poddevka, and then rubbed his hand on my waistcoat. . . . so ”

" What gentleman was it ? "

" I don't know ; I only remember it was not a muzhik, but a gentleman . . . in gentleman's clothes , but what gentleman it was, what sort of face he had I can't remember at all."

" What was the colour of his clothes ? "

" Who can say ! Perhaps it was white, perhaps black . . . I only remember it was a gentleman, and that's all I can remember. . . Ah, yes, I can remember ! When he bent down and wiped his hands he said . 'Drunken swine ! ' "

" You dreamt this ? "

" I don't know . . . perhaps I dreamt it . . . But then where did the blood come from ? "

" Was the gentleman you saw like Pét r Egorych ? "

" It appears to me he wasn't . . . but perhaps it was. . . . But he would not swear and call people swine "

" Try to remember . . . Go, sit down and think . . . Perhaps you may succeed in remembering "

" I'll try " . . .

## XXXI

**T**HIS unexpected eruption of one-eyed Kuz'ma into the almost finished romance produced an entanglement that it was scarcely possible to unravel I was quite bewildered, and did not know how I was to understand Kuz'ma He denied positively any guilt , besides, the preliminary investigations were against his guilt Olga had been murdered not from motives of greed, according to the doctors " it was probable " that no attempt against her honour had been made ; it was only possible to admit that Kuz'ma had killed her and had not availed himself of one of these reasons because he was very drunk and had lost his reasoning powers All this did not tally with the setting of the murder

But if Kuz'ma was not guilty, why had he not explained the presence of blood on his poddevka, and why had he invented dreams and hallucinations ? Why had he implicated this gentleman, whom he had seen and heard, but had forgotten so entirely that he could not even remember the colour of his clothes ?

Polugradov hurried back post haste.

" Now you see, sir ! " he said, " if you had examined the scene of the crime at once, believe me all would have been plain now, as plain as a pikestaff ! If you had examined all the servants at once, we could then have known who had carried Olga Nikolaevna and who had not And now we can't even find out at what distance from the scene of the crime this drunkard was lying ! "

He cross-questioned Kuz'ma for about two hours, but could get nothing new out of him ; he only said that while half asleep he had seen a gentleman, that the gentleman

had wiped his hands on the skirts of his poddevka and had sworn at him as a "drunken swine," but he could not say who this gentleman was, nor what his face and clothes were like.

"How much cognac did you drink?"

"I finished half a bottle."

"Perhaps it was not cognac?"

"No, sir, it was real fine champagne"

"So you even know the names of wines!" the Assistant Prosecutor said, laughing

"How should I not know them? I've served these masters for more than thirty years, thank God! I've had time to learn. . . ."

For some reason the Assistant Prosecutor required that Kuz'ma should be confronted with Urbenin . . . Kuz'ma looked for a long time at Urbenin, shook his head and said:

"No, I can't remember . . . perhaps it was Pëtr Egorych, perhaps it was not. . . . Who can say?"

Polugradov shrugged his shoulders and drove away, leaving me to choose which was the right one of the two murderers.

The investigations were protracted. . . . Urbenin and Kuz'ma were imprisoned in the guard-house of the village in which I lived. Poor Pëtr Egorych lost courage very much, he grew thin and grey and fell into a religious mood; two or three times he sent to beg me to let him see the laws about punishments; it was evident he was interested in the extent of the punishment that awaited him

"What will become of my children?" he asked me at one of the examinations "If I were alone your mistake would not grieve me very much; but I must live . . . live for the children! They will perish without me. Besides, I . . . I am not able to part from them! What are you doing with me?"

When the guards said "thou" to him, and when he had to go a couple of times, from my village to the town and

back on foot under escort, in the sight of all the people who knew him, he became despondent and nervous.

"These are not jurists," he cried so that he was heard in the whole of the guard-house. "They are nothing but cruel, heartless boys, without mercy either for people or truth! I know why I am confined here, I know it! By casting the blame on me they want to hide the real culprit! The Count killed her; and if it was not the Count, it was his hireling!"

When he heard that Kuz'ma had been arrested, he was at first very pleased

"Now the hireling has been found!" he said to me  
"Now he's been found!"

But soon, when he saw he was not released and when he was informed of Kuz'ma's testimony, he again became depressed.

"Now I'm lost," he said, "definitely lost. In order to get out of prison this one-eyed devil will be sure sooner or later to name me and say it was I who wiped my hands in his skirts. But you yourself saw that my hands had not been wiped!"

Sooner or later our suspicions would have to be elucidated.

About the end of November of that year, when snow began to drift before my windows and the lake looked like an endless white desert, Kuz'ma wanted to see me; he sent the guard to me to say he had "bethought himself." I ordered him to be brought to me

"I am very pleased that you have at last bethought yourself," I greeted him. "It is high time to finish with this dissembling and this leading us all by the nose like little children. Well, of what have you bethought yourself?"

Kuz'ma did not answer; he stood in the middle of my room in silence, staring at me without winking. . . . Fright shone in his eyes; his whole person showed signs of great fright; he was pale and trembling, and a cold perspiration poured down his face.

"Well, speak! What have you remembered?" I asked again.

"Something, so extraordinary, that nothing can be more wonderful," he said "Yesterday I remembered what sort of a tie that gentleman was wearing, and this night I was thinking and remembered his face"

"Then who was it?"

"I'm afraid to say, your Honour; allow me not to speak: it's too strange and wonderful, I think I must have dreamt it or imagined it. . . ."

"Well, what have you imagined?"

"No, allow me not to speak If I tell you, you'll condemn me. . . . Allow me to think, and I'll tell you to-morrow. Fearful!"

"Pshaw!" I began to get angry "Why did you trouble me if you can't speak? Why did you come here?"

"I thought I would tell you, but now I'm afraid No, your Honour, please let me go . . . I'd better tell you to-morrow . . . If I tell you, you'll get so angry that I'd sooner go to Siberia—you'll condemn me "

I got angry and ordered Kuz'ma \* to be taken away. In the evening of that very day, in order not to lose time and to put an end to this tiresome "case about the murder," I went to the guard-house and cheated Urbenin by telling him that Kuz'ma had named him as the murderer.

"I expected it," Urbenin said with a wave of his hand.  
"It's all one to me. . . ."

Solitary confinement had greatly affected Urbenin's health, he had grown yellow and had lost almost half his weight. I promised him to order the guards to allow him to walk about the corridors in the day and even in the night

\* A fine examining magistrate! Instead of continuing the examination and extorting the necessary evidence, he gets angry—an occupation that does not enter into the duties of an official. Besides, I put little trust in all this . . . Even if M Kamyshev cared so little about his duties, simple, human curiosity ought to have obliged him to continue the examination —A Ch'

"There's no fear of your trying to escape," I said

Urbenin thanked me, and after my departure he walked about the corridor, his door was no longer kept locked

On leaving him I knocked at the door behind which Kuz'ma was seated.

"Well, have you bethought yourself yet?" I asked

"No, sir," a weak voice answered "Let the Prosecutor come, I will tell him, but I won't tell you"

"As you like!"

The next morning all was settled

The watchman Egor came running to me and informed me that one-eyed Kuz'ma had been found in his bed dead. I hastened to the guard-house to assure myself of the fact. The strong, big muzhik, who but the day before was full of health and in order to get free had invented all sorts of tales, was as stark and cold as a stone . . . I will not stop to describe the horror the guards and I felt, it will be understood by the reader Kuz'ma was precious for me both as accuser and as witness, for the warders he was a prisoner for whose death or flight they would be severely punished . . . Our horror was only increased when at the post-mortem examination it was discovered that he had died a violent death. . . . Kuz'ma had died from suffocation . . . Once convinced that he had been suffocated, I began to search for the culprit, and I had not to search long. . . . He was near. . . .

"You scoundrel! It was not enough for you to kill your wife," I said, "but you must take the life of the man who convicted you! And you continue to act your dirty, roguish comedy!"

Urbenin grew deadly pale and began to shake. . . .

"You lie!" he cried, striking himself on the breast with his fist

"I do not lie! You shed crocodile tears at our evidence and made game of it. . . . There were moments when I almost wished to believe you more than our evidence. . . . Oh, you are a good actor! . . . But now I won't

believe you, even should blood flow from your eyes instead of these play-actor's false tears! Say that you killed Kuz'ma!"

" You are either drunk or are laughing at me ! Sergei Petrovich, all patience and submissiveness has its limits , I can bear this no longer ! "

And Urbenin, with flashing eyes, struck the table with his clenched fist.

" Yesterday I had the imprudence to give you more liberty," I continued, " by allowing you that which no other prisoner is allowed, to walk about the corridors. And now it appears, out of gratitude you went to the door of that unfortunate Kuz'ma and suffocated a sleeping man ! Do you know that you have destroyed not only Kuz'ma , the warders will also be ruined on your account."

" What have I done, good God ? " Urbenin said, seizing hold of his head

" Do you want the proofs ? I will give them . . . By my orders your door was left open . . . The foolish warders opened the door and forgot to hide the lock . . . All the cells are opened with the same key . . . In the night you took your key and going into the corridor, you opened your neighbour's door with it. . . Having smothered him, you locked the door and put the key into your own lock "

" Why should I smother him ? Why ? "

" Because he denounced you. . . If yesterday I had not given you this news, he would have been alive now. . . It is sinful and shameful, Pét'r Egorych ! "

" Sergei Petrovich, young man," the murderer suddenly said in a soft, tender voice, seizing me by the hand, " you are an honest and respectable man ! Do not ruin and stain yourself with false suspicions and over-hasty accusations ! You cannot understand how cruelly and painfully you have wounded me by casting upon my soul, which is in no way guilty, a new accusation . . . I am a martyr, Sergei Petrovich ! Fear to wrong a martyr ! The time

will come when you will have to beg my pardon, and that time will be soon . . . You can't really want to accuse me ! But this pardon will not satisfy you . . . Instead of assailing me so terribly with insults, it would have been better if in a humane—I will not say a friendly—way (you have already renounced all friendly relations) you had questioned me . . . As a witness and your assistant, I would have brought more profit to justice than in the role of the accused If we even take this new accusation . I could tell you much I did not sleep last night, and heard everything ”

“ What did you hear ? ”

“ Last night, at about two o'clock . . . all was dark. . . . I heard somebody walking about the corridor very gently, and constantly touching my door . . . he walked and walked, and then opened my door and came in ”

“ Who was it ? ”

“ I don't know , it was dark—I did not see . . . He stood for about a minute and went away again . . . exactly as you said . . . He took the key out of my door and opened the next cell Two minutes later I heard a guttural sound and then a bustle I thought it was the warder walking about and bustling and the sounds I took for snores, otherwise I would have made a noise ”

“ Fables,” I said. “ There was nobody here but you who could have killed Kuz'ma. The warders were all asleep. The wife of one of them, who could not sleep the whole night, has given evidence that all three warders slept like dead men all the night and never left their beds for a minute ; the poor fellows did not know that such brutes could be found in this miserable guard-house. They have been serving here for more than twenty years, and during all that time they have never had a single case of a prisoner having escaped, to say nothing of such an abomination as a murder Now, thanks to you, their life has been turned upside down ; I, too, will have to suffer

## THE SHOOTING PARTY

on your account because I did not send you to the town prison, and even gave you the liberty of walking about the corridors. Thank you!"

This was my last conversation with Urbenin. I never spoke to him again, if I do not count the two or three answers I gave to the questions he put to me when he was seated in the dock.

## XXXII

I HAVE said that my novel is a story of crime, and now, when the case of the murder of Olga Urbenin is complicated by another murder, in many ways mysterious and incomprehensible, the reader is entitled to expect that the novel will enter upon its most interesting and exciting phase. The discovery of the criminal, and the reasons for his crime, offer a wide field for the display of ingenuity and sharp-wittedness. Here evil will and cunning are at war with knowledge and skill, a war that is interesting in all its manifestations. . . .

I led the war and the reader has the right to expect me to describe the means that led to my victory, and he is doubtless expecting all sorts of detective finesses such as shine in the novels of Gaboriau and our Shklyarevsky; and I am ready to satisfy the reader's expectations, but . . . one of the chief characters leaves the field of battle without waiting for the end of the combat—he is not made a participator in the victory; all that he had done so far was lost for him—and he goes over into the crowd of spectators. That character in the drama is your humble servant. On the day following the above conversation with Urbenin I received an invitation, or, more correctly speaking, an order to hand in my resignation. The tittle-tattle and talk of our district gossips had done its work.

The murder in the guard-house, the evidence that the Assistant Prosecutor had collected, unknown to me, from the servants, and, if the reader still remembers it, the blow I had dealt a muzhik on the head with an oar on the occasion of one of our former revels, had all greatly contributed to my dismissal. The muzhik started the case. All sorts of alterations took place. In the course

of two days I had to hand over the case of the murder to the magistrate for specially important affairs.

Thanks to the talk and the newspaper reports, the entire attention of the Prosecutor was aroused. The Prosecutor himself came to the Count's estate every other day and assisted at the examinations. The official reports of our doctors were sent to the medical board and higher. There was even a question of having the bodies exhumed and having a fresh post-mortem examination, which, by the way, would have led to nothing.

Urbenin was taken a couple of times to the chief town of the government to have his mental capacities tested, and both times he was found quite normal. I was given the part of witness.\* The new examining magistrates were so carried away by their zeal that even my Polycarp was called up as witness.

A year after my resignation, when I was living in Moscow, I received a summons to appear at the trial of the Urbenin case. I was glad of the opportunity of seeing again the places to which I was drawn by habit, and I went. The Count, who was residing in Petersburg, did not go there, but sent a medical certificate instead.

The case was tried in our district town in a division of the Court of Justice Polugradov—that same Polugradov who cleaned his teeth four times a day with red powder—conducted the prosecution; a certain Smirnyayev, a tall, lean, fair-haired man with a sentimental face and long straight hair, acted for the defence. The jury was exclusively composed of shopkeepers and peasants, of whom only four could read and write; the others, when they were given to read Urbenin's letters to his wife, sweated and got confused. The chief juryman was Ivan Dem'yanych, the shopkeeper from my village, after whom my late parrot had been named.

\* A part that was certainly better suited to M. Kamyshev than the part of examining magistrate: in the Urbenin case he could not be examining magistrate.—A. Ch.

When I came into the court I did not recognize Urbenin, he had become quite grey, and his body had grown twenty years older I had expected to read on his face indifference for his fate and apathy, but I was mistaken. Urbenin was deeply interested in the trial, he brought in an exception against three of the jurymen, gave long explanations, and questioned the witnesses, he absolutely denied any guilt, and he questioned all the witnesses, who did not give evidence in his favour, very minutely.

The witness Pshekhotsky deposed that I had had a connexion with the late Olga

"That's a lie!" Urbenin shouted "He lies! I don't trust my wife, but I trust him!"

When I gave my evidence the counsel for the defence asked me in what relations I stood to Olga, and informed me of the evidence that Pshekhotsky, who had on one occasion applauded me, had given To have spoken the truth would have been to give evidence in favour of the accused The more depraved the wife, the more lenient the jury is towards the Othello-husband I understood this. . . . On the other hand, if I spoke the truth I would have wounded Urbenin. . . . in hearing it he would have felt an incurable pain . . . I thought it better to lie.

I said "No"

In his speech the Public Prosecutor described Olga's murder in vivid colours and drew especial attention to the brutality of the murderer, to his malignancy. . . . "An old, worn-out voluptuary saw a girl, young and pretty. Knowing the whole horror of her position in the house of her mad father, he enticed her to come to him by a bit of bread, a dwelling, and some bright-coloured rags. . . . She agreed. An old, well-to-do husband is easier to be borne than a mad father and poverty But she was young, and youth, gentlemen of the jury, possesses its own inalienable rights . . . A girl brought up on novels, in the midst of nature, sooner or later was bound to fall in love . . ." And so on in the same style. It finished up

with "He who had not given her anything more than his age and bright coloured rags, seeing his prize slipping away from him, falls into the fury of a brute, to whose nose a red-hot iron had been applied. He had loved in a brutish way and he must hate in a brutish way," etc., etc.

In charging Urbenin with Kuz'ma's murder, Polugradov drew special attention to those thief-like processes, well thought out and weighed, that accompanied the murder of a "sleeping man who the day before had had the imprudence to give testimony against him." "I suppose you cannot doubt that Kuz'ma wanted to tell the Public Prosecutor something specially concerning him."

The counsel for the defence, Smirnyaev, did not deny Urbenin's guilt, he only begged them to admit that Urbenin had acted under the influence of a state of temporary insanity, and to have indulgence for him. When describing how painful the feelings of jealousy are, he cited as an example Shakespeare's "Othello". He looked at that "all-human type from every side, giving extracts from various critics, and got into such a maze that the presiding judge had to stop him with the remark that "a knowledge of foreign literature was not obligatory for the jurymen".

Taking advantage of having the last word, Urbenin called God to witness that he was not guilty either in deed or thought.

"It is all the same to me where I am—in this district where everything reminds me of my unmerited shame and of my wife, or in penal servitude; but it is the fate of my children that is troubling me."

And, turning to the public, Urbenin began to cry, and begged that his children might be cared for.

"Take them. The Count will not lose the opportunity of vaunting his generosity, but I have already warned the children; they will not accept a crumb from him."

Then, noticing me among the public, he looked at me with suppliant eyes and said:

"Defend my children from the Count's favours!"

He apparently had quite forgotten the impending verdict, and his thoughts were only centred on his children. He talked about them until he was stopped by the presiding judge.

The jury were not long in consultation. Urbenin was found guilty, without extenuating circumstances on any count.

He was condemned to the loss of all civil rights, transportation and hard labour for fifteen years.

So dearly had he to pay for his having met on a fine May morning the poetical "girl in red."

More than eight years have passed since the events described above happened. Some of the actors in the drama are dead and decomposed, others are bearing the punishment of their sins, others are wearily dragging on life, struggling with dullness and awaiting death from day to day.

Much is changed during these eight years . . . Count Karnéev, who has never ceased to entertain the sincerest friendship for me, has sunk into utter drunkenness. His estate which was the scene of the drama has passed from him into the hands of his wife and Pshekhotsky. He is now poor, and is supported by me. Sometimes of an evening, lying on the sofa in my room in the boarding-house, he likes to remember the good old times.

"It would be fine to listen to the gipsies now!" he murmurs. "Serezha, send for some cognac!"

I am also changed. My strength is gradually deserting me, and I feel youth and health leaving my body. I no longer possess the same physical strength, I have not the same alertness, the same endurance which I was proud of displaying formerly, when I could carouse night after night and could drink quantities which now I could hardly lift.

Wrinkles are appearing on my face one after the other:

my hair is getting thin, my voice is becoming coarse and less strong . . . Life is finished. . .

I remember the past as if it were yesterday. I see places and people's faces as if in a mist I have not the power to regard them impartially. I love and hate them with the former intensity, and never a day passes that I, being filled with feelings of indignation or hatred, do not seize hold of my head. As formerly, I consider the Count odious, Olga infamous, Kalinin ludicrous owing to his stupid presumption. Evil I hold to be evil, sin to be sin.

But not infrequently there are moments when, looking intently at a portrait that is standing on my writing-table, feel an irresistible desire to walk with the "girl in red" through the forest, under the sounds of the tall pines, and to press her to my breast regardless of everything In such moments I forgive the lies, the fall into the dirty abyss, I am ready to forgive everything, if only a small part of the past could be repeated once more. . . . Wearied of the dullness of town, I want to hear once again the roar of the giant lake and gallop along its banks on my Zorka.

I would forgive and forget everything if I could once again go along the road to Tenevo and meet the gardener Franz with his vodka barrel and jockey-cap . . . There are moments when I am even ready to press the blood-stained hand of good-natured Petr Egorych, and talk with him about religion, the harvest and the enlightenment of the people. . . . I would like to meet "Screw" and his Nadenka again. . . .

Life is mad, licentious, turbulent—like a lake on an August night . . . Many victims have disappeared for ever beneath its dark waves . . . Heavy dregs lie at the bottom.

But why, at certain moments, do I love it? Why do I forgive it, and in my soul hurry towards it like an affectionate son, like a bird released from a cage?

At this moment the life I see from the window of my

room in these chambers reminds me of a grey circle ; it is grey in colour without any light or shade . . .

But, if I close my eyes and remember the past, I see a rainbow formed by the sun's spectrum      Yes, it is stormy there, but it is lighter too

S ZINOV'EV.

THE END

## POSTSCRIPT

At the bottom of the manuscript there is written:

DEAR SIR, MR EDITOR! I beg you to publish the novel (or story, if you prefer it) which I submit to you herewith, as far as possible, in its entirety, without abridgment, cuts or additions. However, changes can be made with the consent of the author. In case you find it unsuitable I beg you to keep the MSS to be returned. My address (temporary) is Moscow in the Anglia Chambers, on the Tverskoy Ivan Petrovich Kamyshev P.S.—The fee is at the discretion of the Editor.

Year and date

Now that the reader has become acquainted with Kamyshev's novel I will continue my interrupted talk with him. First of all, I must inform the reader that the promise I made to him in the beginning of this novel has not been kept: Kamyshev's novel has not been printed without omissions, not *in toto*, as I promised, but it is considerably shortened. The fact is, that the "Shooting Party" could not be printed in the newspaper which was mentioned in the first chapter of this work, the newspaper ceased to exist when the manuscript was sent to press. The present editorial board, in accepting Kamyshev's novel, found it impossible to publish it without cuts. During the time it was appearing, every chapter that was sent to me in proof was accompanied by the request to "make changes". However, not wishing to take on my soul the sin of changing another man's work, I found it better and more profitable to leave out whole passages rather than to make changes of unsuitable places. With

my assent the editor left out many places that shocked by their cynicism, length, or the carelessness of their literary style These omissions and cuts demanded both care and time, which is the cause that many chapters were late Among other passages we left out two descriptions of nocturnal orgies One of these orgies took place in the Count's house, the other on the lake We also left out a description of Polycarp's library and of the original manner in which he read , this passage was found too much drawn out and exaggerated

The chapter I stood up for most of all and which the editor chiefly disliked was one in which the desperate card gambling that was the rage among the Count's servants was minutely described The most passionate gamblers were the gardener Franz and the old woman nicknamed the Scops-Owl While Kamyshev was conducting the investigations he passed by one of the summer-houses, and looking in he saw mad play going on , the players were the Scops-Owl, Franz and—Pshekhotsky. They were playing "Stukolka," at twenty kopeck points and a fine that reached thirty roubles Kamyshev joined the players and "cleared them out " as if they had been partridges Franz, who had lost everything but wished to continue, went to the island where he had hidden his money Kamyshev followed him, marked where he had concealed his money, and afterwards robbed the gardener, not leaving a kopeck in his hoard The money he had taken he gave to the fisherman Mikhey This strange charity admirably characterizes this hare-brained magistrate, but it is written so carelessly and the conversation of the gamblers glitters with such pearls of obscenity that the editor would not even consent to have alterations made

The description of certain meetings of Olga and Kamyshev are omitted ; an explanation between him and Nadenka Kalinin, etc , etc , are also left out But I think what is printed is sufficient to characterize my hero. *Sapienti sat.* . . .

Exactly three months later the door-keeper Andrey announced the arrival of the gentleman "with the cockade."

"Ask him in!" I said.

Kamyshev entered, the same rosy-cheeked, handsome and healthy man he had been three months before. His steps, as formerly, were noiseless . . . He put down his hat on the window with so much care that one might have imagined that he had deposited something heavy . . Out of his eyes there shone, as before, something childlike and infinitely good-natured

"I am again troubling you!" he began smiling, and he sat down carefully. "For God's sake, forgive me! Well, what? What sentence has been passed on my manuscript?"

"Guilty, but deserving of indulgence," I replied

Kamyshev laughed and blew his nose in a scented handkerchief.

"Consequently, banishment into the flames of the fireplace?" he asked.

"No, why such strictness? It does not merit punitive measures; we will employ a corrective treatment"

"Must it be corrected?"

"Yes, certain things . . . By mutual consent . . ."

We were silent for a quarter of a minute. I had terrible palpitations of the heart and my temples throbbed, but to show that I was agitated did not enter into my plans

"By mutual consent," I repeated. "Last time you told me that you had taken the subject of your novel from real occurrences"

"Yes, and I am ready to confirm it now. If you have read my novel, may I have the honour of introducing myself as Zinov'ev?"

"Consequently, you were best-man at Olga Nikolaevna's wedding."

"Both best-man and friend of the house. Am I not sympathetic in this manuscript?" Kamyshev laughed, stroked his knees and got very red. "A fine fellow, eh?"

I ought to have been flogged, but there was nobody to do it."

"So, sir. . . . I liked your novel: it is better and more interesting than most novels of crimes. Only by mutual consent you and I must make some essential changes in it."

"That's possible. For example, what do you consider requires change?"

"The very *habitus* of the novel, its character. It has, as in all novels treating of crimes, everything. crime, evidence, an inquest, even fifteen years' penal servitude as a dessert, but the most essential thing is lacking."

"What is that?"

"The real culprit is not in it . . ."

Kamyshev made large eyes and rose

"Candidly speaking, I don't understand you," he said after a short pause "If you do not consider the man who commits murder and strangles a real culprit, then . . . I don't know who ought to be considered culpable. Criminals are, of course, the product of society, and society is guilty, but . . . if one is to devote oneself to the higher considerations one must cease writing novels and write reports

"Akh, what sort of higher considerations are there here! It was not Urbenin who committed the murder!"

"How so?" Kamyshev asked, approaching nearer to me

"Not Urbenin!"

"Perhaps *Errare humanum est*—and magistrates are not perfect. there are often errors of justice under the moon You consider that we were mistaken?"

"No, you did not make a mistake; you wished to make a mistake."

"Forgive me, I again do not understand," and Kamyshev smiled. "If you find that the inquest led to a mistake, and even, if I understand you right, to a premeditated mistake, it would be interesting to know

your point of view Who was the murderer in your opinion?"

"You!"

Kamyshev looked at me with astonishment, almost with terror, grew very red and stepped back. Then turning away, he went to the window and began to laugh.

"Here's a nice go!" he muttered, breathing on the glass and nervously drawing figures on it

I watched his hand as he drew, and it appeared to me that I recognized in it the only iron, muscular hand that, with a single effort, would have been able to strangle sleeping Kuz'ma, or mangle Olga's frail body. The thought that I saw before me a murderer filled my soul with unwonted feelings of horror and fear — not for myself—no! — but for him, for this handsome and graceful giant . . . in general for man . . .

"You murdered them!" I repeated

"If you are not joking, allow me to congratulate you on the discovery," Kamyshev said laughing, but still not looking at me. "However, judging by your trembling voice, and your paleness, it is difficult to suppose that you are joking. What a nervous man you are!"

Kamyshev turned his flushed face towards me and, forcing himself to smile, he continued

"It is interesting how such an idea could have come into your head! Have I written something like that in my novel? By God, that's interesting . . . Tell me, please! . It really is interesting once in a lifetime to try what it feels like to be looked upon as a murderer"

"You are a murderer," I said, "and you are not able to hide it. In the novel you lied, and now you are proving yourself but a poor actor."

"This is really quite interesting, upon my word, it would be curious to hear . . ."

"If you are curious, then listen"

I jumped up and began walking about the room in great

agitation Kamyshev looked out of the door and closed it tight By this precaution he gave himself away

"What are you afraid of?" I asked.

Kamyshev became confused, coughed and shrugged his shoulders

"I'm not afraid of anything, I only . . . only looked—looked out of the door So you wanted this too! Well, now tell me!"

"May I put you some questions?

"As many as you like."

"I warn you that I am no magistrate, and I am no master in cross-examination; do not expect order or system, and therefore please do not disconcert or puzzle me. First tell me where you disappeared after you had left the clearing on which the shooting party was feasting?"

"In the novel it is mentioned: I went home"

"In the novel the description of the way you went is carefully effaced. Did you not go through the forest?"

"Yes"

"Consequently, you could have met Olga?"

"Yes, I could," Kamyshev said smiling.

"And you met her."

"No, I did not meet her."

"In your investigations you forgot to question one very important witness, and that was yourself. . . . Did you hear the shriek of the victim?"

"No. . . . Well, baten'ka,\* you don't know how to cross examine at all"

This familiar baten'ka jarred on me; it accorded but ill with the apologies and the disconcertion with which our conversation had begun Soon I noticed that Kamyshev looked upon me with condescension,—from above—and almost with admiration of my inexperience in extricating myself from the number of questions that were troubling me.

"Let us admit that you did not meet Olga in the forest,"

\* The diminutive of otets—father, a very familiar form of address.

I continued, " though it was more difficult for Urbenin to meet Olga than for you, as Urbenin did not know she was in the forest, and, therefore, did not look for her, while you, being drunk and maddened would probably have looked for her. You certainly did look for her, otherwise what would be your object in going home through the forest instead of by the road? . . . But let us admit that you did not meet her. . . . How is your gloomy, your almost mad frame of mind, in the evening of the ill-fated day, to be explained? What induced you to kill the parrot, who cried out about the husband who killed his wife? I think he reminded you of your own evil deed. That night you were summoned to the Count's house, and instead of beginning your investigations at once, you delayed until the police arrived almost four and twenty hours later, and you yourself probably never noticed it . . . Only those magistrates who already know who the criminal is can delay in that way. . . . The criminal was known to you. . . . Further,—Olga did not mention the name of the murderer because he was dear to her . . . If her husband had been the murderer she would have named him. If she had been capable of informing against him to her lover the Count, it would not have cost her anything to accuse him of murder—she did not love him, and he was not dear to her. . . . She loved you, and it was just you, who were dear to her . . . she wanted to spare you . . . Allow me to ask why did you delay asking her a straight question when she regained consciousness for a moment? Why did you ask her all sorts of questions that had nothing to do with the matter? Allow me to think you did this only to mark time, in order to prevent her from naming you. Then Olga dies . . . In your novel you do not say a word about the impression that her death made on you. . . . In this I see caution: you do not forget to write about the number of glasses you emptied, but such an important event as the death of "the girl in red" passes in the novel without leaving any traces. . . . Why?"

"Go on, go on. . ."

"You made all your investigations in a most slovenly way. . . . It is hard to admit, that you, a clever and very cunning man, did not do so purposely. All your investigations remind one of a letter that is purposely written with grammatical errors. The exaggeration gives you away. . . . Why did you not examine the scene of the crime? Not because you forgot to do so, or considered it unimportant, but because you waited for the rain to wash away your traces. You write little about the examination of the servants. Consequently, Kuz'ma was not examined by you until he was caught washing his poddevka. . . . You evidently had no cause to mix him up in the affair. Why did you not question any of the guests, who had been feasting with you on the clearing? They had seen the blood stains on Urbenin, and had heard Olga's shriek,—they ought to have been examined. But you did not do it, because one of them might have remembered at his examination, that shortly before the murder you had suddenly gone into the forest and been lost. Afterwards they probably were questioned, but this circumstance had already been forgotten by them. . . ."

"Cute!" Kamyshev said, rubbing his hands, "go on, go on!"

"Is it possible that what has already been said is not enough for you? To prove conclusively that Olga was murdered by you, and no other, I must remind you that you were her lover, whom she had jilted for a man you despised! A husband can kill from jealousy. I presume a lover can do so, too. . . . Now let us advert to Kuz'ma. . . . To judge by his last interrogation, that took place on the eve of his death, he had you in his mind, you had wiped your hands on his poddevka, and you had called him a swine. . . . If it had not been you, why did you interrupt your examination at the most interesting point? Why did you not ask about the colour of the murderer's necktie, when Kuz'ma had informed you he had remem-

bered what the colour of the necktie was? Why did you give Urbenin liberty just when Kuz'ma remembered the name of the murderer? Why not before or after? It was evident you required a man who might walk about the corridors at night . . . And so you killed Kuz'ma, fearing that he would denounce you "

"Well, enough!" Kamyshev said laughing "That will do! You are in such a passion, and have grown so pale that it seems as if at any moment you might faint Do not continue You are right I really did kill them"

This was followed by a silence. I paced the room from corner to corner Kamyshev did the same

"I killed them!" Kamyshev continued "You have caught the secret by the tail,—it's your good luck Not many will have that success Most of your readers will abuse Urbenin, and be amazed at my magisterial cleverness and acumen."

At that moment my assistant came into my office and interrupted our conversation Noticing that I was occupied and excited he hovered for a moment around my writing-table, looked at Kamyshev, and left the room When he had gone Kamyshev went to the window and began to breathe on the glass

"Eight years have passed since then," he began again, after a short silence, "and for eight years I have borne this secret within me. But such a secret and live blood are incompatible in the same organism; it is impossible to know without punishment what the rest of mankind does not know For all these eight years I have felt myself a martyr It was not my conscience that tormented me, no! Conscience is a thing apart . . . and I don't pay much attention to it It can easily be stifled by reasoning about its expansibility. When reason does not work, I smother it with wine and women With women I have my former success,—this I only mention by the way. But I was tormented by something else. The whole time I thought it strange that people should look upon me as an

ordinary man. During all these eight years not a single living soul has looked at me searchingly, it appeared strange to me that I had not to hide. A terrible secret is concealed in me, and still I walk about the streets. I go to dinner-parties. I flirt with women! For a criminal man such a position is unnatural and painful I would not be tormented if I had to hide and dissemble Psychosis, baten'ka! At last I was seized by a kind of passion. . . . I suddenly wanted to pour myself out in some way on everybody, to shout my secret at them all, though nobody is worth a sneeze . . . to do something like that . . . something extraordinary. And so I wrote this novel—indictment, in which only the witless will have any difficulty in recognizing me as a man with a secret . . . There is not a page that does not give the key to the puzzle Is that not true? You doubtless understood it at once. When I wrote it I took into consideration the standard of the average reader. . . ."

We were again disturbed. Andrey entered the room bringing two glasses of tea on a tray. . . . I hastened to send him away

"Now it appears to be easier for me," Kamyshev said smiling, "now you look upon me not as an ordinary man, but as a man with a secret,—and I feel myself in a natural position . . . But . . . However, it is already three o'clock, and somebody is waiting for me in the cab . . .

"Stay, put down your hat. . . . You have told me what made you take up authorship, now tell me how you murdered!"

"Do you want to know that as a supplement of what you have read? Very well. I killed in a state of aberration. Nowadays people even smoke and drink tea under the influence of aberration. In your excitement you have taken up my glass instead of your own, and you smoke more than usual . . . Life is all aberration . . . so it appears to me . . . When I went into the wood my thoughts were far away from murder; I went there with

only one object · to find Olga and to continue to sting her. . . . When I am drunk I always feel the necessity to sting . . . I met her about two hundred paces from the clearing . . . She was standing under a tree and looking pensively at the sky . . . I called to her. . . . When she saw me she smiled and stretched out her arms to me. . . .

"Don't scold me, I'm so unhappy!" she said

That evening she looked so beautiful, that I, drunk as I was, forgot everything in the world and pressed her in my arms . . . She swore to me that she had never loved anybody but me . . . and that was true . . . she really loved me . . . and in the very midst of her assurances she suddenly took it into her head to say a horrible phrase: "How unhappy I am! If I had not got married to Urbenin, I might now have married the Count!" This phrase was like a pail of cold water for me . . . All that was boiling in my breast bubbled over I seized the vile little creature by the shoulder and threw her to the ground as you throw a ball. My rage reached its maximum . . . Well . . . I finished her. . . . I just finished her. . . . Kuz'ma's case, you understand . . . "

I glanced at Kamyshev On his face I could neither read repentance nor regret "I just finished her" was said as easily as "I just had a smoke" In my turn I also experienced a feeling of wrath and loathing. . . . I turned away.

"And Urbenin is in penal servitude?" I asked quietly.

"Yes . . . I heard he had died on the way, but that is not certain. . . . What then?"

"What then? An innocent man is suffering and you ask 'What then?'"

"But what am I to do? To go and confess?"

"I should think so"

"Well, let us suppose it! . . . I have nothing against taking Urbenin's place, but I won't yield without a fight . . . Let them take me if they want, but I won't go to them. Why did they not take me when I was in their

hands? At Olga's funeral I squalled so long, and had such hysterics that even the blind must have seen the truth . . . It's not my fault that they are stupid "

" You are odious to me," I said

" That is natural . . . I am odious to myself . . . "

There was silence again . . . I opened the cash-book and began mechanically to count up the numbers . . . Kamyshev took up his hat

" I see you are stifled while I am here," he said " By-the-by, don't you want to see Count Karnéev There he is sitting in the cab ! "

I went up to the window and glanced at him . . . Sitting in the cab with his back towards us sat a small stooping figure, in a shabby hat and a faded collar It was difficult to recognize in him one of the actors of the drama !

" I heard that Urbenin's son is living here in Moscow in the Andréev Chambers," Kamyshev said " I want to arrange that the Count should receive alms from him . . . Let at least one be punished! However, I must say adieu ! "

Kamyshev nodded and hastened out of the room. I sat down at the table and gave myself up to bitter thoughts I felt stifled.

AN ANONYMOUS STORY

by

ANTON CHEKHOV

written by Gary Graves  
and developed in collaboration with  
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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

VLADIMIR: a revolutionary, ill with Tuberculosis.  
"Stepan" is his assumed name.

ORLOV: A well-to-do government official of no consequence whatsoever. About 35.

ORLOV'S FATHER: the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs.

ZINAIDA: Orlov's lover, married to another man.

POLYA: a maid.

GRUZIN: Orlov's friend.

Note: Orlov and Orlov's Father are played by the same actor.

## SETTING

The action takes place in Orlov's home, various locations around St. Petersburg, and later briefly in Venice, and Nice. The story begins in 1887, not long after the execution of Alexander Ulyanov and several others for their part in an assassination attempt on the life of Czar Alexander III.

## A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

I first encountered the treasure trove of Chekhov's short, and not so short, stories as a graduate student, when a good friend of mine allowed me to direct his adaptation of *Ward Six*. I immediately fell in love with the story, and found in it a whole new dimension in Chekhov's work, apart from the great plays of his so familiar on stage. The stories, in particular the longer ones, or "novellas," often rove across distant, unfamiliar landscapes, the far-flung Russian provinces, the great cities, and even to other parts of Europe. Then in 2004, I returned to the multitudinous short stories—some say there are as many as 300 of them!—when we decided to adapt one for a project at Central Works. But we didn't know which one. Choosing from so many rich options proved a considerable challenge. In the end, we narrowed it down to two, and finally chose

*The Duel*, one of Chekhov's masterpieces. That project was so exciting, and so artistically rewarding, that I've long wanted to return to the same well once again. This year we decided to turn to the other story, the one not chosen in 2004, *An Anonymous Story*. Completed in 1893, this curious tale is a much lesser known work of Chekhov's. Though both stories have many of the same themes in common, *Anonymous* stands out among the rest of Chekhov's work for it's peculiar veneer of political intrigue. The "Anonymous Man" at the heart of this story is a revolutionary of some sort, though Chekhov tells us virtually nothing about the character's actual politics. We have set the play in 1887, the year Chekhov began writing it. That year Alexander Ulyanov and several others were executed for attempting to assassinate Czar Alexander III. Ulyanov's younger brother was Vladimir Lenin. It would be nearly twenty-five years after the publication of *An Anonymous Story* before the Russian Revolution finally erupted in full. Chekhov, however, was no *proto-Bolshevik*. The hero in this story is driven by something other than his political principles, something more familiarly Chekhovian perhaps.

ACT ONE

1 SCENE ONE

1

(Lights up in the drawing room of  
Orlov's flat in St. Petersburg. Eleven  
o'clock in the morning.

VLADIMIR enters dressed as a footman,  
wearing a "swallowtail" servant's coat.

He looks around, listens at a door in  
the room, then turns to Orlov's writing  
desk.

He opens a few drawers, rifling through  
letters and papers, notices one in  
particular, and notes something about  
it on a small pad he keeps in his  
jacket.

Then he turns to the audience.)

VLADIMIR

For reasons I would rather not go into at the moment, I am  
masquerading as a footman in the service of Georgy Ivanitch  
Orlov. I took the assignment because of his father. A  
prominent politician. Marked for execution. By the Faction.  
I am not a footman.

(ORLOV enters. He wears slippers and a  
morning robe or house coat over his  
clothes. He is "exhausted by sleep."  
He sits, groggy and dissatisfied with  
everything.

VLADIMIR waits in attendance, at a  
distance, watching, waiting.

ORLOV lets out a long, sad sigh.

VLADIMIR coughs.

POLYA enters. She brings coffee and  
the morning paper. She pours the  
coffee. VLADIMIR serves it. Orlov  
slurps the coffee, then downs it.

VLADIMIR takes the empty coffee cup,  
and hands Orlov the paper. ORLOV sits  
and reads the morning paper.

VLADIMIR and POLYA wait in attendance.

Again, ORLOV sighs.)

ORLOV

(thinking out loud)

Of what consequence is a man's appearance? Of what consequence...is anything?

(VLADIMIR coughs again.

POLYA winces at the sound of the bad cough.

ORLOV regards the footman.)

ORLOV (cont'd)

I'll need my portfolio. I'm going into the office today.

VLADIMIR

Very well.

POLYA

Will you be dining in tonight, sir?

ORLOV

I don't know.

(beat)

There's a bad smell in here.

(looks at Vladimir)

VLADIMIR

I opened the windows this morning.

ORLOV

Do you smell that?

VLADIMIR

Smell what?

ORLOV

That. You don't smell that?

VLADIMIR

No, I don't smell anything, I open the windows every morning and I--

ORLOV

Don't argue with me, you idiot!

(Beat.

VLADIMIR glares at ORLOV.)

POLYA

Yes, I smell it. I wonder what that is? Stepan, open the windows--again.

(VLADIMIR moves to open the windows.)

ORLOV

Never mind that. Where's the letter?

POLYA

The letter, sir?

ORLOV

The letter!

POLYA

Oh, yes, the letter.

(POLYA retrieves a letter and gives it to Orlov.)

ORLOV

(gives the letter to Vladimir)

Go to Znamensky Street. Deliver this letter to Madam Krasnovsky. In person. But first ask the porter if Mr. Krasnovsky is at home. If he is, don't deliver the letter. Just come back. Is that clear?

(VLADIMIR nods, and starts out.)

ORLOV (cont'd)

Wait.

(beat)

If he's not home, and you give her the letter, she might ask questions. If she asks where I am, tell her I'm visiting with a friend. And we're busy at work.

(ORLOV exits.

VLADIMIR puts on his coat and hat. He coughs.

POLYA

Bad cough.

(POLYA exits.

Lights change to Krasnovsky's House.

VLADIMIR waits to deliver the letter.

ZINAIDA hurries in, dressed in black, a sparkling diamond ring on her wedding finger. She is surprised to discover Vladimir in the room.)

ZINAIDA

Oh.

VLADIMIR

Madam Krasnovsky?

ZINAIDA

Yes.

VLADIMIR

A letter from Mr. Orlov.

(She tears open the letter, and reads it. He watches her as she reads.)

ZINAIDA

(after reading the letter)

Give him my thanks. And my greetings.

VLADIMIR

Yes, Madam.

ZINAIDA

Wait. Where is he?

VLADIMIR

He's visiting with a friend. And they're very busy.

ZINAIDA

Ah. Well, give him my greetings.

(He nods.

She tilts her head, and re-reads the letter as she exits the room.

He watches her go, tilting his head, as well. He smiles. And exits.

Lights change.)

2 SCENE TWO

2

(Back in Orlov's drawing room. Another morning. POLYA enters. She buttons up her blouse. Powders her face, colors her lips and eyebrows, laces herself up, wearing a bustle, and a bangle made of coins.

She steals something.

VLADIMIR enters. They prepare the room for the master in some way. They eye one another. Is there attraction? They move close. Will they kiss?)

VLADIMIR

That scent you're wearing...

POLYA

(seductively)

Yes?

VLADIMIR

Is that the master's?

(She glares at him.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

Did you steal it from him?

POLYA

I hate you. What are you doing here? You've not been properly trained. You don't know what you're doing. You're not right for this job. What are you? Who are your references? You have none. Why not? Look at you. You don't look right.

(He coughs.)

And you're sick. What's wrong with you? That's a bad cough. You keep me awake at night with that cough. Do you know that? I can hear you right through the wall. All night long. You should be in the hospital. Not here.

VLADIMIR

Do you believe in God?

POLYA

What?

VLADIMIR

I said, do you believe in--

POLYA

I heard you. Yes, of course, I believe in God. What--you don't?

(beat)

I see. No God, no laws--what--you want to set fire to the house--is that it? Commit murder? Anarchy? Are you one of them?

VLADIMIR

Do you believe in a final Day of Judgement?

(beat)

I don't like telling lies.

(ORLOV pops in.)

ORLOV

Ah. There you are.

POLYA

Sir?

ORLOV

(extends a letter)

Here.

(POLYA moves to take the letter.)

ORLOV (cont'd)

(withdrawing the letter)

No.

(ORLOV extends the letter to VLADIMIR.)

POLYA exits, angrily.

VLADIMIR takes the letter.)

ORLOV (cont'd)

Tell her I'm sorry. Actually, I completely forgot I told her I would be there. Don't tell her that, of course. Just tell her... Tell her I'm sorry. It's all in the letter. You know what to say.

VLADIMIR

Your father...

ORLOV

Hm?

VLADIMIR

Is he...were you...where is he?

ORLOV

Where is my father? How should I know? I couldn't care less. Why?

(beat)

The letter. Immediately.

(ORLOV exits.)

VLADIMIR

(alone)

Orlov is of no use to us. He has no interest whatsoever in his father's political work. No knowledge of it at all. I am wasting my time here.

(Lights change to Krasnovsky's House again.)

ZINAIDA enters.

VLADIMIR gives her the letter.

They are close.

She exits.)

3 SCENE THREE

3

(Back in Orlov's drawing room. Night.

ORLOV and and his good friend, GRUZIN, enter, with a bottle of vodka, singing the old folk song, "Korobeiniki"-- loudly, badly.)

GRUZIN

"Only the deep night knows, what she agreed to.  
Straighten up now, my tall shaft of rye,  
(ORLOV joins in)  
And keep our secret between us!"

(They laugh, drunkenly. Sit.)

ORLOV

(to Vladimir)

Give us some vodka.

(VLADIMIR serves them tea.)

ORLOV (cont'd)

What do you think, Gruzin--is there a God?

GRUZIN

God? No. Only in fairy tales.

ORLOV

What about the soul? Is there such a thing as a human soul?

GRUZIN

A quaint notion. But if there is such a thing, it ceases to exist at death. Everything ends at death. Unless you're French.

ORLOV

(laughs)

Apres moi, le deluge! [After me, the flood!]

GRUZIN

(laughs)

Are you married, Stepan?

VLADIMIR

No, sir.

GRUZIN

How fortunate for you.

(ORLOV and GRUZIN both laugh.)

ORLOV

You're a good man, Gruzin.

GRUZIN

A good man? Agh. True goodness is predicated upon an ideal of human perfectibility, which is a logical absurdity.

ORLOV

Is it? Not in my case.

(More laughter.)

GRUZIN

Is there anything to eat?

VLADIMIR

Food is on the way.

GRUZIN

Good. I'm starving.

ORLOV

Ah, Russia.

GRUZIN

Russia. Russia is a country as poor and backward as Persia. Our intellectuals are hopeless.

ORLOV

That's you that's hopeless, Gruzin. Don't confuse yourself with an intellectual.

GRUZIN

No chance of that. Intellectuals are idiots. Completely and utterly useless. Every one of them.

ORLOV

Not like you and me, eh?

(Laughter.)

POLYA enters with food.)

GRUZIN

Ah. Splendid. Food.

ORLOV

Yes, let's eat.

(POLYA serves the food.)

GRUZIN

I'll tell you something, Georgy: it's human nature. Human nature's the culprit.

ORLOV

Really--what's the crime?

GRUZIN

By nature, people are drunken, lazy, dishonest, thieves. They're degenerates.

ORLOV

By nature?

GRUZIN

They don't understand anything. Their minds are ruled by superstition, not science.

ORLOV

Well, they don't read.

GRUZIN

Why should they? Russian writers are all idiots. The whole country. Everyone's out for themselves. Nothing else. They're all just trying to sell you something--if its not one thing its another. And while they're at it, they're trying to screw you out of every ruble they can. No, I'll tell you, not until you work for the Government do you ever really know the truth.

ORLOV

Well, there you said a mouthful.

(They eat.)

GRUZIN

Wives. Women.

ORLOV

Trouble at home, Gruzin?

GRUZIN

No, no. Poor thing.

ORLOV

Her or you?

GRUZIN

There's not a wife in the world that's faithful.

ORLOV

Ha!

GRUZIN

It's true. Not a one will hold out in the end--what's more, she'll give in with her husband sitting right there in the next room--not a one!

ORLOV

You dog.

GRUZIN

And girls in their teens these days...

ORLOV

Yes?

GRUZIN

They're perverted. And they know everything.

ORLOV

Not a bad combination, if you ask me.

GRUZIN

Where's the vodka?

(ORLOV snaps his fingers at VLADIMIR.

He pours vodka.)

GRUZIN (cont'd)

How ridiculous it all is. There is no such thing as moral purity. No such thing. There never has been.

ORLOV

Who needs moral purity?

GRUZIN

Well, that's true; mankind has survived without it long enough.

ORLOV

In my opinion, the harm done by the so-called "vices" is vastly overstated. Did the vices prevent Diogenes from becoming a great philosopher?

GRUZIN

Diogenes--which one was he?

ORLOV

He went looking for an honest man.

GRUZIN

Well, he won't find one in Russia.

(They laugh.)

ORLOV

Come on. Eat up.

GRUZIN

What's the rush?

ORLOV

Varvara Ossipovna is expecting us.

GRUZIN

Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho!

ORLOV

Come on. We'll play some cards. Have a few drinks.

GRUZIN

What--you want to lose more money to me?

ORLOV

Tonight I'll have the shirt off your back.

GRUZIN

You have no talent for cards, Georgy.

ORLOV

I don't go to Varvara's for the cards. Now, come on.

(They down shots and head off.)

GRUZIN

(singing as they go)

Varvara, I hear you calling...Varvara, I think I love you...

POLYA

(after they're gone)

Pigs. I'll take care of the study. You clean up in here.

(POLYA exits.

Alone, VLADIMIR coughs. He clears the dishes, etc.)

VLADIMIR

(alone)

There is a certain species of man in Petersburg whose special talent it is to ridicule every aspect of life. He cannot even pass by a starving man or a woman committing suicide without saying something vulgar and cynical. Or else he speaks...ironically. This is Orlov and his friends. Their irony knows no bounds. They spare no one and nothing. If they speak of religion, it is with irony.

(MORE)

VLADIMIR(cont'd)

If they speak of philosophy, about the significance and meaning of life--again, irony. If anyone brings up the poor--more irony. They disgust me.

(He coughs.

Black out.)

4 SCENE FOUR

4

(A bell rings at the front door.  
Lights up in Orlov's drawing room.  
Sunday morning. Just before eleven.  
ZINAIDA enters wearing her coat, etc.  
The wedding ring is gone. VLADIMIR  
follows her in. She stops.)

ZINAIDA

Is he up yet?

(POLYA enters with coffee and the  
newspaper.

Beat.)

ZINAIDA (cont'd)

Well, no matter.

(She exits to Orlov's room.)

POLYA

What's this all about?

VLADIMIR

(shakes his head, no)

There are two trunks, and a dress basket at the door. With a  
porter.

POLYA

Her's?

(beat)

Really.

(ORLOV enters in his robe, followed by  
ZINAIDA.)

ORLOV

Coffee. Quickly.

POLYA

I'll get another coffee.

(VLADIMIR serves coffee. POLYA returns  
with another, for Zinaida. Once the  
coffee is served, they move to their  
familiar waiting positions in the room--  
attending.)

ZINAIDA

(laughs)

I can't believe it.

(MORE)

ZINAIDA(cont'd)

It feels as if I've been traveling for days. Finally, I've arrived, but I can't believe the journey's over, can't believe I'm really here, that I don't have to keep going, on and on. It's so nice just to sit and take a breath.

(she takes a breath, another  
laugh)

ORLOV

Excuse me.

(picks up the paper)

The morning paper with my coffee is a habit I can't break. But don't worry, I can read and listen at the same time.

ZINAIDA

Oh, yes, read away. By all means. You should keep all of your old habits. Please. Go on.

(beat)

What's wrong? Are you always like this in the morning? Or is it me? Aren't you happy to see me?

ORLOV

Yes, of course, I am. Of course, I am. It's just a bit...well...overwhelming. That's all.

ZINAIDA

Overwhelming--why? We've been discussing it for weeks.

ORLOV

Yes, but I didn't expect you to...to...

ZINAIDA

I know. I didn't expect it myself. But all the better, hm? All the better. Best to have the aching tooth out and be done with it.

ORLOV

Yes. Of course.

ZINAIDA

Oh, darling...

(closes her eyes)

All's well that ends well. But how awful it's been. I'm laughing, but I don't know why. I'm happy, but I feel like crying. Yesterday was unbearable. *Seulement Dieu sait je misérable étais.* Only God knows how wretched I was. I'm sitting here, drinking coffee with you, but it isn't real. It's all a dream.

(ORLOV turns the page.)

ZINAIDA (cont'd)

I told him. I just broke it off. He's been suspecting something for a while. But he didn't want to discuss it. We've been fighting constantly.

(MORE)

ZINAIDA(cont'd)

Whenever he gets angry, he goes silent--retreats into his study. He's afraid to discuss anything--won't bring anything out in the open--his suspicions, my feelings. But I felt so guilty, worthless. I was paralysed. And that makes me hate myself. Makes me hate him, more and more and more. *J'ai souffert les supplices de l'enfer.* I have suffered the torments of hell.

(ORLOV turns a page.)

ZINAIDA (cont'd)

But the day before yesterday, when we fought, he cried out, in tears, "My God, my God, when will this end?" And he ran for the study, but I ran ahead of him. I had him, and I wouldn't let him pass. I shouted. "I hate you! I hate you with my entire soul!" That did it. I told him everything. I'm in love with another man. Another man...is my true husband. I have to go to him. Immediately. It's my duty. Whatever happens. Even if you shoot me for it.

ORLOV

Hm.

(ZINAIDA laughs, then looks at Polya--Vladimir.)

ZINAIDA

(back to Orlov)

He threatened me. Said horrible things. Then he cried. Cried as if I were whipping him.

(a little laugh)

You don't believe in God, but I do. A little anyway. I'm afraid. What if He punishes me?

ORLOV

Your husband?

ZINAIDA

No, God. He came to me, at two o'clock in the morning.

ORLOV

God?

ZINAIDA

No, my husband. He burst into my room, and he said, "Don't you dare leave me. I'll send the police after you. I'll tell everyone!" And then later, on his knees, he begged me, "Please, don't do this to me. Think of the scandal. I could lose my position in the service!" His Career. How disgusting. He's punishing me.

(Orlov starts to ask)

God. It begins. The tears. The fear. As though the ceiling will come crashing down upon me. Any minute the police will drag me away. You'll grow cold.

(MORE)

ZINAIDA(cont'd)

Anything can happen. "Get thee to a nunnery." Become a nurse. Abandon all hope of happiness. No. You. Georgy. You love me.

(he smiles)

Yes, you do, I mustn't forget that. I'm so confused. Despair. But look. The sun has come out. I'm happy. I've brought all my things. There, at the door. With the porter. Ah, *ce que j'ai supporté, mon cher.* What I have endured. I haven't slept in days.

(beat)

You have a cosy flat. Might be a bit small for the two of us, though. Which room will be mine? I like the one next to your study.

(she hugs him)

I will love you forever.

(she laughs)

There's no blessing greater than freedom. Isn't it absurd? I was so afraid of what other people would think, but as soon as I made up my mind, and did what I chose to do, my eyes opened up. I overcame my silly fears. And now I'm happy. I wish everyone could be as happy as I am.

ORLOV

(finishing with the paper)

Well. Good.

ZINAIDA

I'd like to change.

ORLOV

Hm?

ZINAIDA

Stepan, move my things into the room next to the study.

(to Orlov)

If that's all right.

ORLOV

Of course.

(nods to Vladimir)

ZINAIDA

Shall we go to lunch? Then some shopping perhaps. Just a few things...for my room.

ORLOV

Yes. Lunch. Let's go out. Why not? I'll dress.

(ORLOV exits, back to his room.)

ZINAIDA regards POLYA and VLADIMIR.

POLYA exits.)

ZINAIDA

(alone with Vladimir)

He'll need to pay the porter.

VLADIMIR

Yes. Madam.

(ZINAIDA exits. VLADIMIR watches her go.)

5 SCENE FIVE

5

(Lights change to night.)

VLADIMIR

(alone)

I don't know what exactly is happening to me. My thinking...  
Something's got hold of me. More and more every day.  
Nagging at me, in the back of my mind. A strange longing  
for...an ordinary everyday life.

(GRUZIN enters, followed by ORLOV.)

GRUZIN

No, no, my dear fellow, I congratulate you. May the two of  
you increase together like the Cedars of Lebanon.

(laughs)

ORLOV

Very amusing.

GRUZIN

I noticed her slippers in the hallway there. Very dainty.  
Very domestic. Where is she, anyway?

ORLOV

She's gone to visit with her old governess for the evening.

GRUZIN

Hm.

ORLOV

Sit.

GRUZIN

I'm hungry.

ORLOV

You're always hungry, Gruzin.

GRUZIN

Isn't there anything to eat?

ORLOV

It's coming, it's coming.

(VLADIMIR pours vodka.)

GRUZIN

You've been snared, Georgy. Plain and simple.

ORLOV

Oh, shut up.

GRUZIN

I don't understand, how could you allow this to happen?

(POLYA enters with food.)

GRUZIN (cont'd)

He who once pointed the finger in scorn, now bows his knee in homage. All you need now is a pipe in your mouth, and the picture of your domestic happiness will be complete.

ORLOV

Eat.

GRUZIN

What about the husband?

ORLOV

What about him?

GRUZIN

I don't understand, it's one thing to fall in love--break the Seventh Commandment to your heart's content, that I understand, that makes perfect sense to me--but why bring the whole thing out into the open? What's the point of that?

(beat)

If ever you take it in to your head to seduce my wife, please, don't tell me about it, don't throw it in my face, all right? It's one thing to deceive a man, it's quite another to make a public spectacle of it. Oh, I see, you think that living together openly makes you somehow "enlightened" in your thinking, is that it?

(beat)

It's not as if you're some student and she's a dressmaker, for God's sake. You both have means. Why don't you get her a flat of her own?

ORLOV

She's been reading Turgenev.

GRUZIN

What?

ORLOV

Turgenev. Be true to your heart. Follow the man you love to ends of the earth.

(smiles)

Unfortunately, the "ends of the earth" are--in this case--my home. Thank you, Turgenev.

GRUZIN

But you invited her to move in here.

ORLOV

I did no such thing.

GRUZIN

That's not what you told me--

ORLOV

Nonsense. I never imagined this. I thought it was all a joke.

GRUZIN

A joke?

ORLOV

A whimsical "what if?" I never imagined she would actually... I'm not some hero out of Turgenev; I don't want to liberate Bulgaria. Love is nothing more than a physical necessity, if you ask me. It's a drain on the spirit. Either you satisfy it with discretion, or else you renounce it altogether. If you want to enjoy love, and not be corrupted by it, you have to cloak it in a fabric of illusions. I want to look my best when I'm with a lover. And I want her to look the same. How else would we ever be in the mood? How else can we deceive ourselves? How else can we ever really believe we're in love--that we're even happy? Do I want to see dirty dishes, soiled laundry, messy hair? Do I want a woman to see me before I've washed in the morning? Or when I'm in a foul mood? Zinaida wants me to fall in love with the very thing I've been resisting all my life. Cooking smells, cleaning fluids. She wants to count the linen, and look after my health. She wants to know about every single aspect of my personal life at every single moment of the day, while at the same time she assures me that she doesn't want to change anything about me. I have habits. I like to come and go as I please. She wants to travel together. She wants a honeymoon. She wants to be with me, constantly, in trains and hotels. I can't stand trains, and I hate hotels.

GRUZIN

Have you told her this?

ORLOV

You're not serious. Do you really think she would understand any of this? We don't think the same way. If I tried to explain all of this to her, she would go to pieces, another breakdown, then the tears, then I've ruined her, she has nothing left to live for, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera--no.

GRUZIN

All right, then don't talk to her. Just get her a flat of her own.

ORLOV

An easy thing for you to say.

(ORLOV gestures for the vodka.  
VLADIMIR replenishes their glasses.)

GRUZIN

She is charming. She's exquisite. Women like her imagine they'll be in love forever. Complete abandon. Tragic devotion, that sort of thing.

ORLOV

Just have to keep a level head on my shoulders. Have to be logical about this. Everybody knows--how many books have been written on the subject?--this sort of thing never lasts. No more than two or three years. No matter how intense the romance is at the beginning. Doesn't she know that? All of this--it's nothing more than a desperate attempt to delude herself--and me. Yes, she's charming and exquisite, I can't deny that. But she's turned my life upside down.

GRUZIN

Like me to take her off your hands for you?

(ORLOV smiles.)

GRUZIN (cont'd)

Careful. I mean it.

(They laugh.)

ORLOV

The devil will roast you in hell, Gruzin.

GRUZIN

(a finger to his lips)

Shhh.

ORLOV

(checks his watch)

Ut-oh.

GRUZIN

Hm?

ORLOV

Uh, the time.

GRUZIN

Oh. I see.

ORLOV

Yes, it's just that--

GRUZIN

You don't have to explain, it's written all over your face.

ORLOV

No, no, it's just that--

GRUZIN

(downing a shot)

Georgy, my friend, let's go out for a drink.

ORLOV

Oh. No. I can't.

GRUZIN

Why not?

ORLOV

(with a smile)

I'm a married man now.

GRUZIN

She won't mind. Come on. It's fantastic out there tonight. The snow, the frost. Believe me, you need it. It would be good for you.

ORLOV

Would it?

GRUZIN

Come on.

ORLOV

You're right. She won't mind.

GRUZIN

That's my Georgy.

ORLOV

Wait.

(checks watch again)

GRUZIN

Hm?

ORLOV

(to Vladimir)

Fetch our coats.

(back to Gruzin)

We'll go out through the garden.

(VLADIMIR gets their coats and hats.)

GRUZIN

The garden--why?

ORLOV

I don't want to run into her at the door.

GRUZIN

Ah. How about one to keep the chill off?  
(pours himself a drink)

ORLOV

You know, Gruzin, if I didn't know any better, I'd think you only come to visit me for the food and drink I provide you with.

GRUZIN

Don't be ridiculous, Georgy, you provide me with so much more than that.

(A door closes off stage.)

ZINAIDA

(off)

Georgy?

ORLOV

That's her. Quickly. Come on.

GRUZIN

I'm coming.

ORLOV

Hurry!

(ORLOV and GRUZIN exit through the garden.)

ZINAIDA enters, opposite.)

POLYA

Good evening, Madam.

ZINAIDA

(to Vladimir)

Where is he?

VLADIMIR

He went out. Madam.

ZINAIDA

Out? Where?

POLYA

They didn't say exactly.

ZINAIDA

They--who?

POLYA

The master and his friend, Mr. Gruzin.

ZINAIDA

Gruzin. Hm.

POLYA

Went out for a drink together, I think they said. Didn't they?

(POLYA exits to the kitchen.)

ZINAIDA

Hm. Well. I suppose he's entitled to that. Once in a while.

VLADIMIR

If I'm not needed...

(starting out)

ZINAIDA

Just a moment, if you please. I have a gold broach. A present from my father.

VLADIMIR

Yes?

ZINAIDA

Have you seen it?

(beat)

VLADIMIR

No, I don't think so.

(POLYA enters, tidies up. ZINAIDA watches her, suspiciously.)

POLYA

Can I get you anything?

ZINAIDA

No, thank you.

(POLYA smiles, and exits.)

ZINAIDA looks VLADIMIR in the eye.

She exits, leaving her purse in the room.

Lights change.)

6 SCENE SIX

6

(The middle of the night. VLADIMIR stands alone, in the shadows.)

VLADIMIR

(looking out the window)

Peace, tranquility, good health, a small piece of land in the country, the breeze blowing through the trees, across the fields. I just want to live an ordinary life.

(POLYA enters. VLADIMIR steps back into the shadows. POLYA doesn't realize he's there. She grabs Zinaida's purse, and exits.

VLADIMIR emerges from the shadows.

Lights change to morning.

ORLOV enters in his robe, ignores Vladimir, looks out the window, and sighs.

POLYA enters with coffee and the paper.

VLADIMIR serves coffee.

ORLOV downs his coffee, reads his paper.

ZINAIDA enters.)

ZINAIDA

Good morning, darling.

ORLOV

Good morning.

ZINAIDA

Stepan.

VLADIMIR

Yes, Madam.

ZINAIDA

Have you seen my purse?

(beat.)

VLADIMIR

No, Madam. I haven't. Polya? Have you seen Madam's purse?

POLYA

The little one?

ZINAIDA

Yes. My purse.

POLYA

Nope. Haven't seen it.

ZINAIDA

Strange. I distinctly remember taking it out of my pocket in here last night. I set it down here. And then I went to bed. Right here. But now I can't find it anywhere.

POLYA

Hm.

(Exits with tray, etc.)

ZINAIDA

(to Orlov)

It seems we have spirits in the flat.

ORLOV

Hm?

ZINAIDA

Someone--or something--has taken my purse.

ORLOV

Are you sure you haven't misplaced it?

ZINAIDA

Yes, I'm certain. I left it right here last night. And this morning it was gone. I've looked everywhere for it.

ORLOV

You do lose things.

ZINAIDA

I didn't lose it. It was taken.

ORLOV

Hm.

ZINAIDA

I've been doing a little thinking about this. It's quite clear to me. She took my broach. That was a gift from my father.

ORLOV

Oh, God.

ZINAIDA

And she took my purse. I'm certain of it. That explains about the handkerchiefs. And the gloves.

ORLOV

Does it.

ZINAIDA

I'm letting her go. Tomorrow. I shall send Stepan for my Sofya. At least she's not a thief.

ORLOV

Look, you can't go dismissing people simply because you suspect them of something.

ZINAIDA

I don't suspect her, I know she's done it.

ORLOV

You're upset.

ZINAIDA

You have to believe me, Georgy.

ORLOV

I don't have to believe anything. Even if you're right, there's no need to get upset about it.

ZINAIDA

Dismiss her.

(beat)

You don't understand...I'm afraid of her.

ORLOV

Afraid? Of her? Don't be absurd. Just ignore her. Pretend she isn't there. It's really quite simple. There's no need to get so upset about it. Nothing is worth the bother of all that. You've got to realize that. Really. You must. I'll buy you a new broach. Whatever was in the purse, I'll give you a hundred times the amount. How much did you lose?

(POLYA enters, walks slowly past ZINAIDA, and exits.)

ORLOV sips coffee, reads his paper.)

ZINAIDA

Are you going out today?

ORLOV

Yes.

ZINAIDA

Good.

ORLOV

No, on second thought, think I'll stay in today.

ZINAIDA

Really?

(beat)

Don't you want to go out?

ORLOV

Do you want me to go out?

ZINAIDA

No. Not unless that's what you want. I think it would be wonderful to stay in together today.

(He groans.)

ZINAIDA (cont'd)

What's the matter?

ORLOV

Nothing. Nothing at all.

(He picks up a book, and starts reading.)

ZINAIDA

What are you reading?

ORLOV

(sighs)

What does it matter?

ZINAIDA

(sits at his feet)

You read so much. You know what the secret of your success is, Georgy? You're smart and you're well-read.

(beat)

There's something I want to ask you.

(she laughs)

Shall I?

(beat)

Are you staying in today because you want to be with me? Or because you're afraid you'll hurt my feelings if you go out?

ORLOV

Truly happy is he who thinks not only of what is, but what is not.

ZINAIDA

I'm not sure what you mean by that.

ORLOV

It means whatever you like.

ZINAIDA

Ah.

(beat)

I love sitting here with you, and letting my thoughts just carry me away. Far, far away. It's pleasant to dream...sometimes. Let's dream together, Georgy.

ORLOV

I'm not a school-girl, Zinya.

ZINAIDA

You're grouchy.

(taking his hand)

Why? When you get like this, it frightens me. Is it me?  
Are you angry with me?

(beat)

Why have you changed? Why aren't you ever tender and sweet, and happy, like you always used to be?

ORLOV

At your husband's house?

ZINAIDA

It's been almost a month, but I don't feel at all comfortable here. We don't ever talk.

ORLOV

What--we don't talk?

ZINAIDA

Not about anything we really need to talk about.

ORLOV

More talk?

ZINAIDA

You answer with jokes, or you lecture me--

ORLOV

I mean what I say--

ZINAIDA

There's something cold in your jokes. Why don't you talk to me?

ORLOV

All right, fine. You want to talk, let's talk. What do you want to talk about?

ZINAIDA

About our life together, our future. I want to make plans. Don't you want to plan for the future?

ORLOV

What sort of plans?

ZINAIDA

Well, to begin with, when are you going to give up your post?

ORLOV

Give up my post? Why on earth would I want to do that?

ZINAIDA

The way you think? You can't stay there. You're out of place there. You shouldn't be working for the government.

ORLOV

No, I fit in perfectly there. What do you mean, the way I think? What are you talking about?

ZINAIDA

Joking again.

ORLOV

I'm not joking. I'm quite serious. You've got the wrong idea about me. It may not be my idea of the best position in the entire world, but it's just fine for me. / I'm quite used to it. I have friends there.

ZINAIDA

You hate the government. You told me it makes you sick.

ORLOV

When did I ever say that?

ZINAIDA

Many times.

ORLOV

Suppose I resigned my position--just quit, just like that--do you really think I'd hate the world one bit less than I do now?

ZINAIDA

Anything I say, you contradict me.

ORLOV

That's not true.

ZINAIDA

Why are you so angry? Is it because you spend your life writing down things you don't believe for the government? Doing as your superiors say? Congratulating them on a job well done, when you know they've failed miserably? You work for a system you detest. Why do you always joke about it? It's awful. You're a brilliant man, you ought to be working at something you believe in--and nothing less!

ORLOV

That's enough, my dear! I have good grounds for living my life as I choose. That's the first thing. The second thing is, you have, as far as I know, never worked for the government. I don't know where you get your ideas about it, but you don't get them from personal experience. So let's agree, once and for all, not to talk about things we don't know anything about!

ZINAIDA

Why do you speak to me like that? Why? For God's sake, think what you're saying!

(she sobs)

Georgy, I'm dying. I'm so miserable. I'm exhausted. *Je ne peux pas le supporter.* I can't bear it. When I was little--my stepmother. Then my husband. Now you. I love you, but you're so cold to me. Nothing but sarcasm and anger.

(referring to Polya)

And that horrible, horrible woman.

(beat)

All right, I see. I'm not your wife. I'm not your friend. I'm just a woman you don't respect. Your mistress. Nothing more. I'll kill myself.

ORLOV

Darling, you don't understand. Forgive me. Please. I was unfair to you. I hate myself.

ZINAIDA

I've said terrible things to you. You're a good man. You're generous. You're true. And I've been so unhappy lately.

(embraces him, kisses him on  
the cheek)

ORLOV

Please. Don't cry.

ZINAIDA

No, no. I'm better now.

ORLOV

I'll dismiss her tomorrow.

ZINAIDA

No, no. Keep her. Please. You're right. I'm fine now.  
I'm not afraid of her anymore. Silly of me, to begin with.  
(beat)

You know, when I was little, I used to walk along the seaside  
with my mother. We would walk and walk.

(she kisses him)

ORLOV

Why don't we have tea together. In the bedroom. Stepan?

ZINAIDA

I got a letter today. May I read it to you?

ORLOV

In the bedroom. With tea.

ZINAIDA

I do love you, Georgy.

ORLOV

Come, my dear.

(ORLOV and ZINAIDA exit.)

VLADIMIR

(alone)

I don't want to appear ridiculously sentimental--my whole life, I've never been--when it comes to intimacy, or tenderness--I'm afraid I'm rather hopeless. It's the fear of...it's something I've no experience with. I'm not able to express myself clearly about these things--about what's happening to me. Am I falling in love with her?

(He coughs.)

Blackout.)

7 SCENE SEVEN

7

(Lights up in the morning. ZINAIDA enters in her coat with a dress box in hand.)

ZINAIDA  
(calling out)

Stepan?

(VLADIMIR enters.)

VLADIMIR

Good morning, Madam.

ZINAIDA

Is he up yet?

VLADIMIR

Not yet.

ZINAIDA

Good. Help me, will you.

(He helps her out of her coat.)

VLADIMIR

Out early today.

ZINAIDA

Yes, I've been shopping. I'm so excited. Wait till he sees this. What a glorious morning it is outside.

(She exits, hurrying off to her room with the box.)

VLADIMIR

(alone)

I want to be in love. I want a wife and a child of my own. And I want my wife to be just like her. The same face. The same voice. I dream of her. At dinner, in the street on errands, as I lie awake at night. He doesn't want any children. He hates the smell of food cooking in the kitchen, all the little knickknacks a woman places about the house. All the things I dream about, tenderly gathering them up in my arms, cherishing them, loving them. Come to me, please. I can see it all now, my wife, a nursery, a little house with a garden path... But she would never love me. I could never dare hope for that. Not unless some miracle... But never mind about that. For a wretch like me, happiness is something only to be dreamt of.

(POLYA enters with coffee and the paper.)

POLYA

He's up.

(ORLOV enters in his robe. Gets his coffee. Gets his paper. Sighs.

ZINAIDA enters, in her new dress.)

ZINAIDA

Good morning, darling.

(ORLOV smiles.)

ZINAIDA (cont'd)

Do you like it?

ORLOV

Hm?

ZINAIDA

My dress. It's new.

ORLOV

Ah. Yes. Lovely.

(returns to his paper and his coffee)

ZINAIDA

You don't like it.

ORLOV

I like it very much.

ZINAIDA

Really?

ORLOV

How much did it cost?

ZINAIDA

Four hundred.

ORLOV

Four hundred?

ZINAIDA

Expensive, I know.

(ORLOV returns to his paper.)

ZINAIDA (cont'd)

You don't like it.

VLADIMIR

Four hundred roubles for a dress, when so many make only twenty kopecks a day. At work in the factories, or the mills, sewing lace till they go blind, or digging coal till they suffocate. Don't you realize that?

(No one seems to hear him.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

Why do I love her? God knows. But I do. I can't help it.

(ZINAIDA looks at VLADIMIR, almost as if she has heard this last remark.)

POLYA

Coffee, Madam?

(ZINAIDA glares at POLYA.)

ORLOV

(still reading the paper)

I'm being sent to assist Senator Niminsky on a revising commission in Rostov. I don't want to go, but I can't get out of it. Have to go. That's all there is to it.

ZINAIDA

For how long?

ORLOV

Five days. Or so.

(beat)

ZINAIDA

Good. I'm happy for you. Really. The change will do you good. You'll fall in love with someone along the way, and tell me all about it when you get back.

(She laughs.)

They all look at her.)

ZINAIDA (cont'd)

When?

ORLOV

I'm leaving tonight.

ZINAIDA

Tonight?

ORLOV

My train's at eight-thirty.

ZINAIDA

I'll see you off at the station.

ORLOV

There's no need for that.

ZINAIDA

But I want to.

ORLOV

I'm not going off to America. It's five days.

(He moves to her, puts his arms around her, kisses her on the lips, and on the forehead.)

ORLOV (cont'd)

Don't let it trouble you. I'll be back before you know it.

ZINAIDA

Forgive me. Lovers quarrel. It can't be helped. *C'est la vie.* Such is life. I love you terribly. You won't forget me, will you?

ORLOV

You're not serious.

ZINAIDA

Wire me often, at luxurious length. Promise me.

(He kisses her again.)

ORLOV

I should pack.

(He heads for the bedroom, but stops and turns back, as if he has something to say.)

ZINAIDA

Yes, darling?

(ORLOV cannot say the words--he exits.

POLYA clears the glasses, etc., and exchanges hateful glances with ZINAIDA.

POLYA exits.

ZINAIDA exits.

Lights change to night.)

VLADIMIR

(alone)

We leave sometime between seven and eight at night. Two sledges wait at the door. Orlov gets into one. I get into the other, with his portmanteau. There's a hard frost. Torches burn at all the crossroads. The cold wind bites at my face--takes my breath away as we drive along. What a splendid woman she is. How she loves him. They collect rubbish these days, and reuse it for all sorts of things. Even old, broken glass bottles have a certain value out there, somewhere. But something so precious, so rare, so unique as the love of a woman--a beautiful, young, intelligent woman--is casually discarded, just thrown away, wasted, utterly.

(beat)

We stop in Sergievsky Street. In front of Gruzin's house. Orlov gets out of the other sledge and goes inside. I wait. I don't know how long. "Are you deaf?" someone shouts. It's Gruzin's footman. "Pay the cabman, and go upstairs," he says, "He's calling for you!" I'm utterly confused. I go in, and climb the stairs, up to the drawing-room.

(Lights change to Gruzin's.)

After the cold, gloomy night outside, I'm struck by all the glitter of the place, its gilt picture frames, bronze statuettes, and finely polished furniture.

(GRUZIN enters, followed by ORLOV, getting ready to go out.)

GRUZIN

Here he is.

ORLOV

Stepan, didn't you hear me?

VLADIMIR

My apologies, sir.

ORLOV

Listen to me, I shall be staying here till Friday or Saturday. If any letters or telegrams arrive, I want you to bring them to me here. Every day, is that clear?

VLADIMIR

Yes, sir, every day.

ORLOV

Back home, of course, you'll say nothing of this. Just say I caught my train, and...send her my love. Is that clear?

(VLADIMIR nods.)

ORLOV (cont'd)

Are you sure?

(VLADIMIR smiles.)

ORLOV smiles.)

ORLOV (cont'd)

Good. Go on then.

(to Gruzin)

Where shall we go tonight?

GRUZIN

Why don't we get something to eat?

ORLOV

Why don't we get something to drink?

GRUZIN

Why not both--are you buying?

ORLOV

Tonight is on me, my friend, lay on!

(GRUZIN and ORLOV exit.)

Lights change back to Orlov's.

ZINAIDA enters and lights a candle in  
the dark flat.)

ZINAIDA

Did Georgy catch his train?

VLADIMIR

Yes, Madam. He sends you his love.

(She sits and thinks, then finds a  
pencil and paper and writes something.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

Why? Why this deception? How could a man of such seeming  
intelligence be so cowardly? What possible rationalization  
could there be for such childish behavior? To deceive your  
own mistress this way. I don't understand it.

(She gives him a note.)

ZINAIDA

Take this to the telegraph office as quick as you can and  
have it sent after him. Go. Now.

(She looks anxiously out the window.)

Lights change.)

VLADIMIR

I walk to the telegraph office. It's snowing heavily.  
Silently.

(he opens the note and reads  
it)

ZINAIDA

May the new day bring you happiness, my love. Hurry and wire  
me. I miss you terribly. It seems an eternity since you  
left. I only wish I could send you a thousand kisses--my  
heart itself. I remain...your Zinya.

VLADIMIR

I sent it and bring her the receipt.

(They look at each other.

Blackout.)

8 SCENE EIGHT

8

(Morning. POLYA enters with a black shawl, a bottle of perfume, a broach, a lace handkerchief, and a pair of gloves. She sets the loot down, and regards each piece with delight.

VLADIMIR enters.

Beat.)

POLYA

What are you looking at?

VLADIMIR

Where did you get those things?

POLYA

That's none of your business. You know where I was this morning? I was over on Sergievsky Street. Mm-hm. The Master wanted me to bring him his shirts. That's right. I know all about what's going on here. All about it. She's overstayed her welcome. Time for her to be on her way. She ought to know that by now. Don't you think?

(POLYA gathers up all the items, and exits.

ZINAIDA enters.)

ZINAIDA

Stepan, I have a shawl, a black shawl. I've looked everywhere for it.

(beat)

This is too much. Too much. The nerve. It's beyond all...

(POLYA enters.)

POLYA

Dinner, Madam. Soup's on the table. Soup and meat pies. The little ones Master likes so much. Everything all right, Madam? You're trembling. Your hands. Your lips there. Not feeling well? Some fresh air perhaps? A walk might do you good. Hm? Or were you already planning to go out? Shall I get your coat? It's not so cold tonight. A light frost. It'll do you good. Go on.

ZINAIDA

You may go. Stepan will do by himself.

POLYA

Are you giving me the night off?

ZINAIDA

I'm dismissing you. Get out. Immediately.

POLYA

You can't dismiss me. Only the Master can do that. He hired me. It's up to him.

ZINAIDA

It's up to me. I am the Mistress here.

POLYA

Indeed you are. But only the Master can dismiss me.

ZINAIDA

Don't you dare stay another minute. You're a thief. You're a thief!

(ZINAIDA exits.)

POLYA

She's a fine one to talk. I could have been a lady like her. A lady. But I have my self-respect.

(POLYA exits.)

VLADIMIR

Meat pies.

(Lights change, three days later, at night. The room is dark.

Off stage, ZINAIDA cries.

VLADIMIR waits in the room, alone, listening to her cry.

ZINAIDA looks in, with a candle in hand.)

ZINAIDA

Stepan?

VLADIMIR

Yes, Madam?

ZINAIDA

Have any telegrams arrived?

VLADIMIR

No, Madam. None.

ZINAIDA

Are you sure?

VLADIMIR

Yes, Madam.

ZINAIDA

How long has he been gone?

VLADIMIR

Three days, Madam.

ZINAIDA

Three days. Go ask the porter. Perhaps something has just come. Some word from him.

VLADIMIR

If you wish.

(he starts out)

ZINAIDA

But don't leave the house. I don't want to be alone with her.

VLADIMIR

Very well.

ZINAIDA

From now on, every day, I want you to check with the porter every hour on the hour. I want to know the minute anything arrives. I'll be in my room. Here.

(she gives him a handful of folded notes)

Send these first thing in the morning. But check with me before you go. There may be others. I don't know if I can write anymore tonight.

VLADIMIR

Madam...

ZINAIDA

Yes? What is it?

VLADIMIR

I'll check with you in the morning.

(ZINIADA exits.)

VLADIMIR looks out the window.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

Why can't I bring myself to tell her?

(Lights change to morning.)

POLYA enters, straightens up the room, humming--loudly. She looks at Vladimir and smiles, triumphantly.

He coughs.)

POLYA

You're getting worse. Any blood coming up?

(Off stage, ZINAIDA rings for Vladimir.)

POLYA (cont'd)

Oh. "Your mistress" is calling.

(he starts out)

I know what you're up to with her.

(he stops)

I know what goes on in her room. The two of you. Like dogs in heat.

(the bell rings again)

Go on. She wants you. What are you waiting for?

(He exits.)

POLYA (cont'd)

(mimiking her)

"Come, Stepan, I need you. Come to me..."

(She puts her ear to the door, and listens.

ORLOV enters.)

POLYA (cont'd)

Oh. Master. You're back.

(She helps him out of his coat, hat, etc.)

ORLOV

I'm exhausted.

POLYA

Are you? Yes, you must be. Let's get you right to bed.

ORLOV

Where is she?

POLYA

The Mistress? Well, I'm not exactly certain. Why don't you give her room a try.

(ZINAIDA looks in.)

ZINAIDA

Georgy!

(She runs in, embraces him, kisses him, whispers something inaudible in his ear.)

POLYA

Well, isn't this a happy occasion.

(VLADIMIR enters from a different door than Zinaida.)

POLYA (cont'd)

Stepan, there you are. Where have you been? The Master's come home.

(VLADIMIR nods. ORLOV hands him his gloves.)

ZINAIDA

Why didn't you wire me?

ORLOV

Hm?

ZINAIDA

Didn't you get my telegrams?

ORLOV

Did you wire me?

ZINAIDA

My God, I sent dozens of them. You mean to say you didn't get any of them?

ORLOV

Oh. No. So sorry about that. There's a simple explanation. Ugh, I'm exhausted.

ZINAIDA

What explanation?

ORLOV

I... we--the Senator and I--went straight on to Moscow.

ZINAIDA

Moscow?

ORLOV

You must have been wiring me in Rostov.

ZINAIDA

You didn't receive a single word?

ORLOV

I'm so sorry about that.

ZINAIDA

Stepan, send for something to eat from the restaurant. I want to hear all about your trip, Georgy. Every detail.

ORLOV

Later, my dear. Later we'll have dinner, and then I'll tell you all about it. Sleep first. I'm exhausted.

ZINAIDA

Of course, of course, my dear. Come along. I'll put you to bed.

(to Polya, before she exits)

Not a sound in here. Do you understand?

(POLYA smiles.

ZINAIDA exits to the bedroom after  
ORLOV.)

POLYA

That was a close one, eh? Almost got caught in the act. You and your mistress in there.

VLADIMIR

Shut up. And get out.

POLYA

Are you threatening me?

(he turns away)

I didn't think so.

(POLYA exits.

Lights change.)

9 SCENE NINE

9

(The following day.)

ORLOV

(off)

Stepan? Stepan!

(VLADIMIR waits.)

ORLOV enters in his black dress coat.  
With a medal in hand. He sees VLADIMIR  
standing there.

Beat.)

VLADIMIR

Sir?

ORLOV

Do you know what time it is?

VLADIMIR

Half past one?

ORLOV

Yes, half past one! And what day is it?

VLADIMIR

The seventh of January, I believe.

ORLOV

Yes, the seventh of January.

(beat)

You really don't know?

VLADIMIR

Know what?

ORLOV

The seventh of January is my father's birthday, you idiot.  
The ceremony is at two o'clock. Everyone In Petersburg knows  
that. Here.

(hands him the medal)

Pin this on me.

(VLADIMIR pins the medal on  
Orlov's breast)

I have to congratulate him. In front of everyone. Every  
year. It's always the same. Congratulations, Father...  
Congratulations, Father... "Great leader with the  
outstretched hand. The one whose will founded the city along  
the Neva..."

VLADIMIR

Pushkin?

ORLOV

That's right. *The Bronze Horseman.* Every year on my father's birthday, I recite it at the ceremony.

VLADIMIR

The entire poem?

ORLOV

The entire poem. The first time I was only seven years old. I was terrified. And now, every year... Congratulations, Father.

(ZINAIDA enters.)

ZINAIDA

Georgy, I have to speak with you?

ORLOV

Hm?

ZINAIDA

(whispering)

She's at it again. That woman is stealing from me. She's taken my black shawl, a bottle of perfume, /she's taken money from my purse--

ORLOV

Oh, no, not this again.

ZINAIDA

She's stealing from me.

ORLOV

I wonder why she doesn't steal from me?

ZINAIDA

She insults me. Openly.

ORLOV

She doesn't insult me. Why is it I never notice all these things you're forever pointing out? I'm beginning to worry about you. There's something wrong with you. You've got some kind of condition. I offered to let her go. You insisted she remain. Now you want me to let her go again. She stays. And that's that. / That's the only way I can cure you of this. It's your nerves.

ZINAIDA

All right, all right, all right! Let's not say anymore about it. Today. We'll discuss it...tomorrow. Tomorrow.

(MORE)

ZINAIDA(cont'd)

(beat)

What kind of world do you think this would be if we were all equals?

ORLOV

What did you say?

ZINAIDA

Just wondering about it.

ORLOV

Oh, for God's sake. Please. Is that what you've been reading lately? How tiresome. I beg you, please, no more "serious questions." Can't you read something just a little more interesting than that?

ZINAIDA

I'm not allowed to have my own thoughts.

ORLOV

You can think whatever you want. Be as radical as you like. But, please, don't tell me about all the problems with our class system, and don't talk about the evils of marriage. Do you have any idea what I'm talking about? It's always the fault of the upper classes. It's the rich who are corrupt, not the tradesmen, not the priests, not the workers, not the peasants. The poor are all as honest as saints. I hate them all. But I'll tell you one thing: if I had to choose between being rich and being poor, I'd choose to be rich. Any day of the week. The world is a trivial, insignificant place. It's an empty place. But at least some of us can speak French to each other. Some of us can read. At least some of us don't strangle each other too often. But the poor, the "good" people, they act like pigs in a pen, and they believe the most ridiculous things. / Ignorant, superstitious brutes.

ZINAIDA

Those people put food on your table.

ORLOV

So what if they do? Is that my fault? Look, I don't blame anybody. I don't favor anybody. The rich are as bad as the poor. I'm against them all!.

(checks his watch)

As for the evils of marriage, it's about time you realized there is nothing inherently evil in the institution of marriage. The problem is you don't know what you really want from it. What do you want? You see, you've been reading. Now you don't know what you want. You're starting to wonder about everything. You run from one man to another, and to make sense of it all, you talk about the evils of marriage.

(MORE)

ORLOV(cont'd)

So long as you refuse to admit what's underneath it all, your darkest enemy, your devil incarnate--so long as you serve him like a slave... Oh, what's the point of talking about it? Seriously. Everything you say to me is false. / It's all just affectation. I don't believe a word you say.

ZINAIDA

You're trying to shock me. Your cynicism revolts me. I am pure before God. And man. I have done nothing wrong. I left my husband and came to you, because I loved you. I'm proud of that. / I swear to you, on my honor, I'm proud of it.

ORLOV

Fine. Fine. All right.

ZINAIDA

If you were a decent, honest man, you'd be proud of it, too. It raises us up above thousands of people who would like to do what we've done, but don't dare, because they're cowards, or hypocrites. They're pathetic. But you're not a decent man. You're afraid of real freedom. You make fun of genuine feelings. Because you're terrified that some idiot will think you have sincere feelings about anything. You're afraid to introduce me to your friends. Nothing embarrasses you more than walking down the street together with me. Admit it. Why haven't you introduced me to your father yet? Why? / No never mind, I'm sick of this.

ORLOV

Go present yourself to him, if you want to meet him so badly. He receives visitors every morning at ten.

ZINAIDA

You're so cruel.

ORLOV

Around and around we go. We never get anywhere. The truth is--this was a mistake. But you won't admit it to yourself. You thought I was some kind of hero. That I stood for something. Some ideal of something. But I'm just an ordinary government official. I play cards. I don't really care about anything. I'm the ideal of a thoroughly rotten world, a world you've run away from, because you despise its meaninglessness. It's emptiness. Admit it. Be honest with yourself. Don't be angry with me, be angry with yourself. This was your mistake. / Not mine.

ZINAIDA

Yes, I admit it. I was mistaken.

ORLOV

Good. That's it then. I can't rise up to your level. And you can't come down to mine. I'm too corrupt. And you're too pure. There's only one thing to do.

ZINAIDA

What?

ORLOV

We have to be logical about this.

ZINAIDA

Why are you torturing me?

(she begins to cry)

Why? I'm so miserable.

(ORLOV starts to go.)

ZINAIDA (cont'd)

I hate you. I despise you. Its over between us. Everything is over.

(He exits.

She cries.

Gently, VLADIMIR approaches Zinaida.)

VLADIMIR

Madam. Should I get a doctor?

ZINAIDA

No. There's no need for that. I'm fine. I have a bit of a headache. That's all. Thank you.

(ZINAIDA exits.

Lights change to night.

ORLOV and GRUZIN enter with vodka.)

ORLOV

My life is hell, Gruzin. It's no life at all. It's the rack. It's tears, and shouting--we fight, we make up, we fight again--it never stops--on and on and on. I have no home anymore. I am a wretched human being. And I make her wretched. It can't go on like this.

GRUZIN

You talk too much. Where's the food?

(POLYA enters with food.)

GRUZIN (cont'd)

Ah. Splendid. Just in the nick of time.

ORLOV

What can I do, Gruzin? There's no reasoning with her. She's completely illogical. I can't stand her crying. It makes me...I don't know. When she cries...I do anything. I give in. We reconcile. It happens every time.

GRUZIN

(eating)

I don't understand. Why don't you get her a flat of her own? It's so simple.

(ORLOV shakes his head, no)

Why not?

ORLOV

I'm not a mushroom...but I'm in the basket. I never wanted to be a hero. I can't stand Turgenev's novels. I'm not a hero. Why won't she believe that? Do I look like a hero?

GRUZIN

Time for another trip to the provinces?

ORLOV

(lifting his glass)

To the provinces.

(They drink shots.

POLYA watches.

VLADIMIR looks out the window.

Blackout.)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

10 SCENE TEN

10

(Lights up in Orlov's flat. Night.)

ORLOV'S FATHER enters. He wears a full-length fur coat and beaver cap. He sits, and sighs.

VLADIMIR enters, and is shocked to discover the old man sitting in the room.)

VLADIMIR

Your Excellency?

FATHER

Where is Georgy?

VLADIMIR

A tour of the provinces, I believe.

FATHER

The provinces? Why? Doesn't make any sense. When did he leave?

VLADIMIR

Just this evening, your Excellency.

FATHER

Oh, for God's sake. Get me a pen and paper. I'll leave a note.

VLADIMIR

Yes, your Excellency.

(VLADIMIR provides the old man with a pen and paper.)

FATHER

(looking at the flat)

Who can live like this?

(FATHER writes a note. VLADIMIR moves around behind him.)

VLADIMIR

It's him. Right there. In front of me. Just an instant from my grasp. I can see him breathing. His skull. Brittle as an eggshell. His throat, no more substantial than a straw. Just...grip it...tighten...and close it off.

(MORE)

VLADIMIR(cont'd)

Over in a minute. And done. Then snatch his watch, and make it look like a robbery. Out the back way. And good bye. Good bye to all of this. Who could dream of such an opportunity? Just me and him. Do it.

FATHER

All right. There we are. Give him this.  
(hands him the letter, gets up  
to go)

VLADIMIR

Your Excellency...

FATHER

(stops, turns back)

Yes?

(beat--a last chance for  
murder)

What is it?

(still nothing)

How long have you been in my son's service?

VLADIMIR

How long? Uh, three months, your Excellency.

FATHER

Hm. Yes, you're new. I thought so.

(FATHER heads for the door.)

VLADIMIR starts after him.

FATHER turns back.

VLADIMIR stops.)

FATHER (cont'd)

Good night, son.

(FATHER exits.)

VLADIMIR

(alone)

I had him in my grasp. But I did nothing. I let him go. Everything's changed. I have to leave this place.

(ZINAIDA enters.)

She crosses to the window, and looks out.)

ZINAIDA

So be it.

(She sees VLADIMIR.

Beat.

GRUZIN peaks his head in.)

GRUZIN

Hello, there.

VLADIMIR

Mr. Gruzin.

GRUZIN

*Bonjour, Madam.*

ZINAIDA

(correcting him)

*Bon soir.*

GRUZIN

Yes, excuse me, *bon soir*. The maid let me in. I'm to get something for Georgy. I mean, something he left for me.

(grabs a book)

Ah, yes, here we are. Well. I'll just be on my...

(starts to go, but stops)

You...is there anything...you want to ask me?

ZINAIDA

No, I don't think so.

GRUZIN

So...Georgy's gone away, hm? He's a rascal, he is.

(He kisses her hand.)

GRUZIN (cont'd)

Can we talk?

ZINAIDA

Talk?

GRUZIN

I can't stand the thought of going home.

(removes his coat)

It's too early to go to the Birshovs. They're having a little party.

(POLYA enters. Sizes up the situation.)

POLYA

Shall I bring tea?

GRUZIN ZINAIDA  
Yes. No.

GRUZIN  
Is there anything to eat?  
(POLYA exits.)

GRUZIN (cont'd)  
Odd woman. (beat) Have you ever been to a party at the Birshoys?

ZINAIDA

GRUZIN

( ZINAIDA sighs . )

(VLADIMIR pours a shot of vodka in a glass, and offers it to Gruzin, who is too distracted to notice. VLADIMIR clears his throat.)

GRUZIN (cont'd)  
(sees the drink)

(POLYA enters with a sandwich.)

GRUZIN (cont'd)

Ah, food.

POLYA

Will this do?

GRUZIN

Fine. Splendid. I'm starving. You know, I have a little girl at home. She's too skinny, but she's a good child.

(he bites into the sandwich)

Mmmm. This is good. Whatever you can say...it's good to have children. Though Georgy wouldn't agree. Would he? No, he wouldn't. He's funny that way. Georgy and his ideas. What a funny fellow. The way his mind works. Don't you agree?

ZINAIDA

Are you the one that plays the piano?

GRUZIN

Hm? Why, yes, I play a bit.

ZINAIDA

Yes, I understand you're quite good.

GRUZIN

Well, I don't know about that. Do you play?

ZINAIDA

Yes, a bit. Now and then. Come. Play something for me, won't you. Then perhaps we can talk a little.

GRUZIN

Talk?

ZINAIDA

Mm-hm. Come.

GRUZIN

If you wish.

ZINAIDA

(as they go)

Tell me, honestly, Mr. Gruzin, what has Georgy told you about me?

GRUZIN

Not nearly enough.

(ZINAIDA and GRUZIN exit.

Piano music plays in the other room-- perhaps Tchaikovsky or Saint-Saens' "Swan Song.")

POLYA

That's a fine thing. What do you suppose they're up to? I know how it goes, all right. First he'll kiss her hands, first one, then the other. All kissy, kissy, kissy.

(MORE)

POLYA(cont'd)

Then what? You know what. I've seen it. I know how she is.  
One, after another, after another--

VLADIMIR

For God's sake, he's only playing the piano.

(The piano stops.)

POLYA

Mm-hm. And now what?

VLADIMIR

It's not what you think.

POLYA

Oh, no? Then why doesn't she turn him out?

(ZINAIDA enters, followed by GRUZIN.  
Have they been kissing?)

GRUZIN

Wait, please.

ZINAIDA

(a bit desperate)

Stepan.

POLYA

(to Zinaida)

Find what you were looking for in there, Madam?

(POLYA exits.

VLADIMIR crosses to GRUZIN, and hands  
him his coat.

GRUZIN takes the coat, and puts it on.)

GRUZIN

(to Vladimir)

Not married, huh. Lucky for you, all right. I suppose you  
and the maid there are as thick as thieves, eh?

(a laugh)

You rascal, you.

(to Zinaida)

Are you coming, my dear?

(beat)

Get the lady's coat, Stepan.

(beat)

Stepan?

(ZINAIDA exits, back to her room.)

GRUZIN (cont'd)

She'll be back. Watch.

(VLADIMIR crosses to GRUZIN, and grabs him by the lapels, violently.)

VLADIMIR

Get out of here!

(releases him)

GRUZIN

(stunned)

What! Who the hell do you think you are? Your master will hear about this! You can count on that! You...

(GRUZIN exits.)

VLADIMIR

What have I done?

(begins pacing)

I've got to leave.

(removes his "swallowtail" servant's coat)

Leave immediately. Pack my valise, grab the overcoat, and go. But first...

(gets pen and paper, begins writing)

To my former master...

(looks up)

The government official. Ha! You, sir--no, forget the "sir." You...are a fake. No, a phoney. No, an imposter.  
(writes)

You are an imposter.

(looks up)

And what am I? Never mind about that. What does it matter what he thinks of me, what anyone thinks? You lie, you cheat, you defile everything in the world! While I... How many dinners, how many mornings have I endured, listening to you go on and on and on? While I stayed silent, silent as a mute! Silent as a mouse. No more. Not a minute longer. Now it's my turn to speak. Me! My turn! Listen to me, you fat, lazy pig! You cowardly liar. This is what I have to say to you, and all those like you, the whole lousy lot of you.

(looks down at the paper, looks up again)

God, what a gloomy, dismal place this is. Odd how quiet it is, though. Quiet as a tomb.

(coughs, feels his forehead)

Christ. My face is on fire. My legs. I'm fainting.  
(he sits)

Sick. Weak. Alone. Cast out. Damn you. I can't think. Why can't I say what I want to say?

(MORE)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

(imagines Orlov)

You. From the first moment I saw you...I wanted to kill you. But now...I don't know. What right have I got to take your life? We are both fallen men. And neither one of us will ever rise again. No matter what I say, no matter how eloquent, how terrifying, how certain... Nothing I can say will ever warm your blood. All the noise in the world won't awaken the dead. And you know that as well as I do. What am I doing here? What good could this possibly do either one of us? None. There's only one question to be answered, I see it, burning before me, written in fire: why have I failed? Why? I have deceived myself.

(he coughs)

I don't think I have ever known happiness. I have no home. No happy memories. I'm afraid to remember. But you--why have you failed? What kept you from becoming all that you might have been? The unseen hand of God? An evil heart within? Are you kidding me? You're a coward. You don't do anything. You are bored to death! Every day, on and on, nothing matters, nothing but your irony. God, I hate your irony. Though I understand it. It's your protection. It's your armor. You pretend to know everything. And you jeer at it all. To hide your shame, you sneer at the thought of anything noble, anything pure, anything honest, human, passionate--any true feelings. Real life! No wonder you can't stand the sight of tears.

(Someone plays the piano in the other room.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

It's her. Playing the piano. Zinaida. Why is it over? Why do we begin so full of life, and love, so passionate, so full of faith and nobility, only to become total wastrels by the age of thirty-five? One man puts a bullet through his brain, another seeks escape in vodka and cards, another deadens his fear and misery with irony, while I waste away. Why? Why? What if by some miracle all of this turned out to be some sort of dream, a horrible nightmare. What if we woke up from this and started all over again? Young, pure, strong again, confident. I want to live. I want life to be holy as the heavens above. Everyone. Live.

(He sits and writes the letter, as the music plays, swelling as the lights change, and the night passes. The morning sun rises, and the piano music ends.

He rises from the letter, and waits for her to enter. She does not. He goes to the letter, signs it, and leaves it for Orlov.

As he starts out, the door opens, and  
ZINAIDA looks into the dark room.)

ZINAIDA

Who's there?

(sees Vladimir)

Oh.

(ZINAIDA enters the room.)

VLADIMIR

He's not coming back.

(beat)

He's not coming back. Because he hasn't even left  
Petersburg. He's been staying at Gruzin's.

(She looks out the window)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

I'm sorry.

ZINAIDA

I see.

VLADIMIR

Can I get you something?

(beat)

Madam?

ZINAIDA

This is none of your business. Get out.

VLADIMIR

I am not a servant. Not a footman. I'm as free as you are.  
I've been spying on him. For political reasons.

ZINAIDA

Political reasons?

VLADIMIR

My name is not Stepan. It's Vladimir Ivanitch. I'm a member  
of a special faction in the Narodnaya Volya party.

ZINAIDA

The what?

VLADIMIR

The Faction. Have you read the works of Karl Marx?

(beat)

We regard the working class as the heart of a new movement, a  
Socialist movement--

ZINAIDA

Yes--

VLADIMIR

We take our direction from the revolutionary intelligentsia.  
We oppose autocracy, by any means necessary.

ZINAIDA

Like those men they hanged at the fortress last year.

VLADIMIR

I was assigned to spy on Orlov in order to gather information  
about his father.

ZINAIDA

His father--why?

VLADIMIR

The Deputy Minister is a very important man. But...all of  
that...became...irrelevant.

ZINAIDA

What do you mean?

VLADIMIR

The son has no relationship to the father. My efforts here  
were all a waste of time, as far the Faction is concerned. I  
intended to leave Orlov's service some time ago, but...

ZINAIDA

But what?

VLADIMIR

You. I was aware...of what he was doing to you. His  
deception. His cruelty. The senator and the tour of the  
provinces, he invented all of that, in order to deceive you.  
Back in January, as well, he never went away; he just stayed  
at Gruzin's. I saw him every day. I took part in it. He  
said he was tired of you. He hated the sight of you. He  
made fun of you. If you heard what he and Gruzin said about  
you, you wouldn't have stayed here another moment. You  
should leave this place. Immediately. Get away from here.

ZINAIDA

Well, so be it. The Faction, eh? Hm.

(she smiles)

It's all rather comic, isn't it?

VLADIMIR

Comic?

ZINAIDA

No doubt Georgy expects I'll die of humiliation.

VLADIMIR

I don't understand.

ZINAIDA

I think it's funny. Why does he hide from me? There's no need to hide. Why didn't he just tell me? Hiding in other peoples flats. I'm not blind. I saw this coming months ago. I was only waiting for him to...to...I don't know what I was waiting for.

(She sits and cries.)

VLADIMIR

A person can't go on living like this. It's not life.  
It's...

ZINAIDA

It's so humiliating. To live with me, smile at me every morning, and all the while, hate me. Did they laugh at me?

VLADIMIR

(nods, yes)

They don't understand Turgenev. If we both died, here, right now, in the light of the rising sun, they would laugh at that, too. Make a funny story of it, to laugh at, with their friends. To smile at, with that ironic smile of his. We have to leave. I can't stay here a minute longer.

ZINAIDA

I can't think.

VLADIMIR

We should leave together.

ZINAIDA

Will you take me to the Petersburg Side?

(They exit.

Blackout.)

11 SCENE ELEVEN

11

(VLADIMIR and ZINIADA, wearing coats, step into a spotlight--outside Gruzin's house.)

ZINAIDA

(shivering)

Where?

VLADIMIR

(pointing)

Up there. Do you see him? They're having breakfast.

ZINAIDA

(she sees Orlov)

He's been staying here for the last three weeks?

(he nods)

Thank you... Thank you... Thank you...

VLADIMIR

Not at all.

ZINAIDA

I've troubled you enough.

VLADIMIR

It's no trouble.

ZINAIDA

I understand. I understand everything now. When Gruzin was there last night. I could tell. I knew he was hiding something from me. I'm so ashamed. Look at him. Well, so be it.

VLADIMIR

Shall we go?

(He puts his arm around her.

The sound of sleigh bells and horse hooves.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

We drive on. Through the snow. And the wind. Blowing across the Neva, cuts into our faces, into our bones. On and on we go. Ages seem to pass as we glide along. I can feel her breathing, softly. Am I asleep? I look back on my life, my strange, ruinous life, and for some reason, I think of that old melodrama, "The Beggars of Paris." I remember it from when I was a child. I look out at the snow. And I know: everything is over for Zinaida Fyodorovna Krasnovsky. For the both of us. Or so it seems at this moment.

(MORE)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

As if it were written in the sky. As plain as prophecy.  
(a new thought)  
I wonder if Peter the Great ever rode along this road?

ZINAIDA

Where will I go? What will I do? "Get thee to a nunnery."  
If only I could. Change my clothes, change the way I look,  
change my name, erase my thoughts--change everything...  
everything. I want to hide away. Forever. I'm pregnant.

(beat)

VLADIMIR

We'll leave the country. Tomorrow. Together.

ZINAIDA

My husband will never give me a passport.

VLADIMIR

We'll go without one.

(beat)

ZINAIDA

You look different somehow. It's strange. I'm sorry.  
Forgive me, but...you look...how extraordinary. Are you a  
terrorist?

VLADIMIR

We are activists.

ZINAIDA

Those men they hanged at the fortress--they tried to kill the  
Czar.

VLADIMIR

The aim is revolution. The overthrow of...all of this.

ZINAIDA

All of this. Everything is over for me here. Yes, we'll  
leave the country. Together. Yes?

(He smiles.)

ZINAIDA (cont'd)

Have you ever read Balzac's "Father Goriot?" Do you remember  
how it ends? The hero looks out over the rooftops of Paris,  
and he says, "Now"--to the whole city, he says--"now we shall  
settle our account!" And then he begins an entirely new  
life.

VLADIMIR

Yes, I've read it.

ZINAIDA

(looks out)

Now we shall settle our account.

(looks at him)

I'm one of you. Friend.

(They shake hands.)

Lights change.)

12 SCENE TWELVE

12

(VLADIMIR and ZINAIDA step into a spotlight.)

VLADIMIR

We travel by train to Venice. Winter is almost over. But it's still cold. We leave the train station, and row through the canals, to the Hotel Bauer.

(He coughs, severely.)

ZINAIDA

What's wrong?

VLADIMIR

I don't know.

ZINAIDA

I'll find a doctor.

(She hurries off.

A hotel room in Venice.

ZINAIDA reads from a book--the end of Turgenev's "Diary of a Superfluous Man."

VLADIMIR listens, weakly, huddled in a chair, wrapped in a blanket.)

ZINAIDA (cont'd)

"I am dying...Live on, ye living.  
And may the young child play  
By the side of a grave,  
As Nature, the indifferent,  
Beams with beauty forever!"

(closes up the book)

Something else?

VLADIMIR

Whatever you like.

ZINAIDA

Something French or something Russian?

(he shrugs)

You don't care.

VLADIMIR

I enjoy the sound of your voice no matter what the book.

(A cannon booms in the distance.)

ZINAIDA

Noon. Hm.

(goes to the window, looks out)

How beautiful it is today. The sun is warm. Finally, spring is almost here. Think I'll go out for a walk today.

VLADIMIR

When you come back, tell me what you see out there, every detail.

ZINAIDA

I will. Every detail.

VLADIMIR

So we can see Venice together.

ZINAIDA

Every detail.

VLADIMIR

You're crying.

ZINAIDA

No.

VLADIMIR

What's wrong?

ZINAIDA

Nothing.

VLADIMIR

I heard you whispering with the doctor.

ZINAIDA

You'll be fine.

VLADIMIR

You're being kind. It's consumption.

(She kisses him on the forehead, and exits.)

Lights change.

Night.

The sound of rain.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

(alone)

I'm happy. The nights are cold. It rains a lot. Lonely nights.

The rain stops.

The sun shines in.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

But I revel in the days. Our time together.

(stands in the sunlight)

When the sun is out. Warm sunlight. The view from our balcony.

(sounds from the canal outside,  
a bell in the distance)

I feel the breeze from the sea caress my face.

(coughs)

The gondolas. Gliding along with feminine grace, smoothly, majestically, as if they're alive. You can feel the luxury of this unique civilization. This fascinating place. The smell of the sea.

(mandolin music plays)

The sea. The sun glistening on the water. So bright it hurts my eyes. Perfect freedom. Does wonders for the soul.

(opens the blanket, like wings)

Wings. Sprout from my back. And bear me...Gods knows where. To have another human being so close beside me. It's a joy like none other. I just want to live.

(looks out the window again)

There's a house out there. They say it was Desdamona's. A mournful little house, with a sad expression about it. As delicate as lace. I'm a bit better today. Think I'll take a walk on my own.

(lights change)

I stand for an hour gazing up at the Bridge of Sighs. Can't take my eyes off the melancholy lion in St Mark's Square. And in the Palace of the Doges, I can't tear myself away from the portrait of poor Marino Faliero, painted over in black, "Beheaded for his crimes." How fine it is to be an artist, a poet, a dramatist. But that's not my lot. If only I believed...if only there were some small trace of faith in...

(ZINAIDA enters, lights change again,  
and together they ride in a gondola,  
more mandolin music, someone sings.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

We ride together in a gondola one evening, side by side, after a dinner of oysters, and wine. The stars above, the lights of the city.

(notices she is disturbed)

Your hands are tense. Zinaida?

ZINAIDA

Hm? I'm sorry. I was thinking about...

VLADIMIR

What?

ZINAIDA

So many unpleasant memories. The sleigh ride that night we went to Sergievsky Street together. The cold. The ice.

VLADIMIR

Sometimes I think we're like two characters out of one of those old novels--"The Doomed." "The Outcasts." Something like that.

ZINAIDA

Who would I be?

VLADIMIR

The heroine, of course.

ZINAIDA

The doomed? The outcast?

VLADIMIR

No.

ZINAIDA

And who would you be?

VLADIMIR

Me? The faithful, devoted friend, I suppose, hm? The dreamer. A superfluous man, if you like. A failure, capable of nothing...

(coughs)

Nothing but coughing. And dreaming. And perhaps sacrificing myself.

ZINAIDA

To whom? For what?

(Lights change, back in the hotel room, at night now.)

VLADIMIR

Life at Orlov's was torture for me. The masquerade. Serving him, dressing him every morning, while he sipped his coffee, and read his paper. There were moments when I hated you.

ZINAIDA

You hated me?

VLADIMIR

He was so uncaring with you, so condescending. He lied to you. Couldn't you see that? It was all so obvious.

(MORE)

VLADIMIR(cont'd)

But you would kneel at his feet, flatter him, kiss him again and again--

ZINAIDA

When I knelt at his feet, when I kissed him, I loved him.

VLADIMIR

Couldn't you see what he was doing to you? Was he so mysterious to you? Was he the Sphinx of Egypt? Good God. He's a scoundrel. But all that's past now. I don't blame you. What did I do? I went right on serving him. Hating myself. Not knowing what to do. How to speak to you. What to say.

ZINAIDA

No. You despise who I was. And you have every right to do so. You're not an ordinary sort of man. You can't be judged like that. Your moral standards are extraordinary. I understand there are certain things you can't forgive. I understand that about you. Believe me, I see things the same way you do. But all this is new to me. Sometimes I slip back into my old thoughts, like wearing my old clothes, out of habit, nothing more. I hate the things I did back then. I despise who I was. Orlov. My love for him. What was it? It seems completely absurd to me now.

(looks out the window)

Love clouds the mind. Confuses us. The only meaning in life is found in the fight. Getting your heel on the vile serpent's head, and crushing it. That's all that matters. That...or nothing.

VLADIMIR

Shall I light a fire?

ZINAIDA

No. I'm not cold. Do you know, I believe I've grown a bit wiser lately?

VLADIMIR

Wiser?

ZINAIDA

I have all these ideas in my head. When I think of the past, who I was back then--when I think of people in general--it all leads back to my stepmother. She was cruel and harsh, she lied, there was nothing of a soul left in her. She was addicted to morphine. My father was weak, he was feeble. He married my mother for her money. But she contracted consumption.

VLADIMIR

Your mother?

ZINAIDA

Yes. But my stepmother--Father was mad for her. The things I put up with. But what's the use of talking about it? It all leads back to her. Too bad she's dead now. They're all dead. You should rest. Get well. As soon as you're well enough, we'll get to work, hm? It's time.

VLADIMIR

Yes. Good night.

ZINAIDA

Do you think Polya is still back there?

VLADIMIR

I expect so.

ZINAIDA

Hm. Look. The clouds. Coming in from the sea, darkening the canal. Like a muslin veil.

(Lights change.)

13 SCENE THIRTEEN

13

(A hotel room in Nice.)

VLADIMIR

It's autumn. We're in Nice, on the French Riviera.

(looks out the window)

Again, by the sea. The endless, undulating sea.

(ZINAIDA sits, huddled in a chair,  
sobbing.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

What is it? What's wrong?

(she waves him away)

Tell me, please.

(he kisses her hand)

What is it?

ZINAIDA

It's nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Leave me alone,  
Vladimir. I'm not...presentable.

VLADIMIR

Is it...the child? I'll call for a doctor.

(She hurries from the room.)

He knocks at the door.)

Zinaida?

ZINAIDA

(off)

Go away.

VLADIMIR

Please, come out. I can't bear the thought of your crying  
all alone in there. Tell me what's troubling you. Come,  
we'll go for a walk, down by the seaside. We can talk.

ZINAIDA

(off)

Leave me alone.

(Lights change. Sound of the sea.)

VLADIMIR

I take a long walk, down by the seaside. Thoughts of her  
fill my head. Ache in my heart. The sound of the sea, the  
monotonous lap of the waves, seems to foretell something  
unwanted. There will be more tears, more troubles to come,  
more losses ahead. Thoughts of Petersburg return. All my  
dreams, all my hopes dry up like leaves in the heat.

(MORE)

VLADIMIR(cont'd)

The nearness is gone. I am alone again. No more to her than...than a cobweb, blown away on the wind.

(sound of music playing)

I walk about the city square. A band plays. Walk past the Casino, look in at the overdressed, over-perfumed women, who turned and glance at me, as if to say, "You're alone." Out on the terrace, look out at the sea again. Not one sail on the horizon. In the lilac-colored mist, mountains, gardens, towers, houses, all sparkle in the sunset. All alien to me. Indifferent. An incomprehensible tangle. Don't leave me, Zinaida. I'm so afraid to be alone.

(Lights change.)

14 SCENE FOURTEEN

14

(Night, back in the hotel room.  
VLADIMIR knocks lightly at the door to  
the other room.)

VLADIMIR

Darling?

(no answer, he knocks again)  
Zinaida, shall we have some dinner together?

(ZINAIDA enters through the other door.  
She has been out.)

ZINAIDA

Ah, my good sir.

VLADIMIR

Have you been out all this time?

ZINAIDA

Mm-hm.

VLADIMIR

It's nearly eleven. Where have you been?

ZINAIDA

Where? At the casino.

(withdraws a handful of gold  
coins from her pocket)

Look. I won. At the roulette wheel.

VLADIMIR

No.

ZINAIDA

Why not? And I'm going back tomorrow.

VLADIMIR

You're not well.

ZINAIDA

I'm fine.

VLADIMIR

You shouldn't be going there, in your condition, standing  
around the gaming tables, crowded in among the coquettes, and  
the rich old bags who swarm around the place like flies  
circling round--

ZINAIDA

My good sir. Don't upset yourself. Afterall, how much can I  
lose?

VLADIMIR

It's not a question of how much you can lose. You'll faint again. You have to take care of yourself.

ZINAIDA

You're concerned for me.

VLADIMIR

Has it never occurred to you, that gambling for gold, rubbing elbows with all those people, all of it--it's all a vile mockery of real labor, of the workers who labor to actually do something of significance in the world--

ZINAIDA

Oh, don't be ridiculous. If we don't gamble here, what else is there to do? "The workers who labor." Really. Come now. Save that for someone else. Tell me, truthfully, what else can I do here? What?

(beat)

Answer me, honestly, Vladimir. Don't recite me the same old nonsense.

VLADIMIR

It isn't nonsense.

ZINAIDA

Tell me, what should I do? And I don't mean just here in Nice, I mean here in the world, what should I do?

(He has no answer for her. He looks out the window.)

ZINAIDA (cont'd)

Yes, great things were done in the days of old, my good sir. But now things are different. It all seemed so heroic before. But now... If you don't believe in the cause anymore, if you have no intention of returning to the Faction... Then why? Why did you bring me here? Why did you drag me away from Petersburg?

VLADIMIR

I didn't drag you away--

ZINAIDA

Why did you make promises to me? Why did you raise my hopes? What happened to your convictions? You've become a different man. I don't blame you for that--everybody changes--but, Vladimir, for God's sake, why won't you be honest with me? For months now, I've been sharing my dreams with you, I've gone on and on, like a madwoman, a raving madwoman. What about the revolution? What about the plan? Is that all a lie? Have you been lying to me?

VLADIMIR

No.

ZINAIDA

I've given up everything. My whole life, everything I ever believed, everything I've ever done. Turned the whole world upside down. For what? Why did you let me carry on like this? You made me believe. Why did you lie?

VLADIMIR

Yes, I have lost all faith. In the cause. The revolution. All of it. It's difficult to admit that. Very difficult. So I kept it to myself. I couldn't bear to see you...

ZINAIDA

(taking him by the hands)

You've been through so much. Seen so much of life. So much more than me. What should I do? Tell me!

(beat)

I cannot live a lie.

VLADIMIR

There is more light in the world than you see through that little window.

ZINAIDA

What?

VLADIMIR

There are other people in the world.

ZINAIDA

Other people--who?

VLADIMIR

Other ideas. Other possibilities.

ZINAIDA

What are you talking about?

VLADIMIR

You and me. Together.

ZINAIDA

It all comes down to that. Doesn't it? All your fine talk. All your politics. Your momentous ideas. It all comes down to one simple, inevitable conclusion: you want me to be your mistress.

VLADIMIR

No.

ZINAIDA

What else is there?

VLADIMIR

You're angry.

ZINAIDA

I mean what I say.

VLADIMIR

I know you do, but you're wrong. And it hurts me / to hear  
you say such things.

ZINAIDA

I'm wrong?

(she laughs)

No, my good sir.

VLADIMIR

Stop calling me that!

ZINAIDA

You think I'm cruel? I don't care. Do you love me?

(beat)

You do. When you were ill, you said things. I thought you  
were delirious. But since then, I've seen it in your eyes.  
The way you sigh. All this lofty talk about our friendship,  
about our spiritual connection. You haven't been honest with  
me. Why not? Why do you pretend? If you had been honest  
with me from the start; if I had known the real reason why  
you dragged me away from Petersburg--

VLADIMIR

I didn't drag you away Petersburg--

ZINAIDA

I would have poisoned myself.

VLADIMIR

What?

ZINAIDA

Yes. I would have poisoned myself. As I meant to. And this  
entire farce would have been over with.

VLADIMIR

No.

ZINAIDA

What good is there in talking anymore?

VLADIMIR

I love you.

ZINAIDA

You want me to be your mistress.

VLADIMIR

No.

ZINAIDA

You hate Georgy, but at least he was honest.

VLADIMIR

Honest? You're not serious. He's a coward, and a liar!

ZINAIDA

Honest when it came to that.

VLADIMIR

My God, he's vile!

ZINAIDA

All right, so he's a coward, and a liar. So he deceived me. And you? Excuse me for asking, but what are you? He deceived me and left me in Petersburg. You have deceived me and left me here.

VLADIMIR

I haven't left you.

ZINAIDA

He didn't confuse his deceptions with his illusions.

VLADIMIR

Why are you doing this? This is darkness. This is despair. Stop. Listen to me. I've seen too much of this world. It makes my head spin when I think of it.

(a clock chimes quietly)

There's only one thing I've learned that means anything: the only hope for us lies in love, a self-sacrificing love, for our fellows, our neighbors, our brothers and sisters in the world. That's what we must strive for. That's our true destination. The longed-for end of our journey. That's what I believe. I want to live. I want peace, and tranquility. Warmth. I want you near me. Just to hear your voice. To look into your eyes.

ZINAIDA

You love life. I hate it. We can't go on together.

VLADIMIR

No.

ZINAIDA

Enough of this. It's over.

VLADIMIR

No.

ZINAIDA

Everything is over. I don't want anything. What more can I say?

VLADIMIR

It's not over.

ZINAIDA

Enough.

(She sits and cries.)

VLADIMIR

Morning comes. I go out for a long walk. When I return, a waiter in the lobby informs me, with a smile on his face, that the lady in my room--there has been an incident. A disturbance of some sort. I run as fast as I can. There's a doctor. And a midwife. And an old woman from Harkov. The smell of ether is thick in the room.

ZINAIDA

What does it matter? Help me.

(looking up)

What's happening?

(whispers to Vladimir)

It's horrible.

VLADIMIR

Zinaida.

(she rises, looks out the window)

That night, the old woman from Harkov tells me that the child, a girl, is born, but the mother's life is in danger. Then a commotion, the wringing of hands, gasping looks of despair. The doctor suspects she has poisoned herself. At noon, the following day, she dies.

(ZINAIDA exits into the garden.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

As if blown in on the winds from Russia, I think of Orlov. And his irony.

(Lights change.)

15 SCENE FIFTEEN

15

(VLADIMIR, alone, in Orlov's flat.)

VLADIMIR

Two years pass. Circumstances change. I return to Petersburg. With Zinaida's child, Sonya. Whom I adore. Feeding her, bathing her, putting her to bed. Never take my eyes off her for days at a time. Sonya is everything to me. At last, I have found what I need. I love the child with all my heart. In her, my life continues. Not exactly what I expected, but I believe, that when all this is over, I will survive in those dear, little blue eyes. That silky, golden hair. Those little, tender hands that touch my face so lovingly, and grab me round the neck. But I'm dying.

(He coughs.)

POLYA enters.

She serves him a cup of tea.)

VLADIMIR (cont'd)

I see there's a new footman.

POLYA

I don't know you.

(POLYA exits.)

VLADIMIR pours himself a cup of tea.

Sound of a child laughing outside.

VLADIMIR watches Sonya playing in the garden. He smiles, sips his tea, coughs.

ORLOV enters.)

ORLOV

Ah, Monsieur Revolutionary! What fate has brought you back here to me? Come, sit down. Well, you look well.

VLADIMIR

Do I?

(beat)

ORLOV

Nice weather we're having, hm?

VLADIMIR

Yes, very nice. Listen--

ORLOV

I understand Zinaida has died.

VLADIMIR

Yes.

ORLOV

In childbirth, is that correct?

VLADIMIR

Yes. The doctor suspected otherwise, but...let's just say it was complications due to childbirth. That's her daughter. Playing in the garden. Sonya.

ORLOV

Ah. Hm. Lovely. And here, as you can see, nothing has changed. Not a thing. Though my father, perhaps you know, has left the service and retired. Yes. But I'm still in the same department. Do you remember Gruzin? Yes, Gruzin is the same as he always was. He often speaks of you. You made quite an impression on him.

(GRUZIN enters a spot light.)

GRUZIN

He attacked me. Would have murdered me, if he could have. But I gave him what for, I told him who he was dealing with. The socialist thug! Cutthroat. If you want my opinion, he was an assassin, plain and simple! They should have arrested him, and hanged him. Good riddance!

(GRUZIN exits.)

ORLOV

Care for some vodka?

VLADIMIR

No. Thank you. I've come to see you about a very important matter.

ORLOV

I don't care much for important matters. But I shall be glad to be of service to you, if I can.

VLADIMIR

It's...Sonya. I've raised her myself, but, the fact is...  
(he coughs)

I don't expect to be here much longer.

ORLOV

Here, in Petersburg?

VLADIMIR

Here, in this world.

ORLOV

Ah. I see. Hm.

VLADIMIR

I would like to die knowing she'll be provided for.

ORLOV

Ah. Yes. I understand.

(looks out at the girl)

Sonya, did you say?

VLADIMIR

Yes, that's right. A dear child.

ORLOV

Mm-hm. Well, of course, I'm prepared to do my part. But I think we should discuss this with her husband, Krasnovsky. I'm sure he'd be willing to take the child.

VLADIMIR

Krasnovsky? I don't see what he has to do with it.

ORLOV

What is the child's last name?

VLADIMIR

Well, legally, he may be obliged to care for the child--I don't know--but I've come to you because--I'm not talking about the legal implications--

ORLOV

Yes, yes, of course. I don't know what I was thinking. Please, don't get excited.

VLADIMIR

I'm not excited.

ORLOV

I'm sure we can figure this out to everyone's satisfaction, hm? If one thing doesn't work, we'll try something else. If that doesn't work, we'll keep thinking. One way or another, we'll take care of this. I'll speak to Gruzin about it, hm? He'll arrange the whole thing.

VLADIMIR

Gruzin?

ORLOV

Yes, he's a lawyer, you know? Just leave me your address, and I'll let you know when we figure it all out. Where are you living, by the way?

VLADIMIR

I'd rather not say, if you don't mind.

ORLOV

Oh, yes. Of course not.

(looking at Sonya)

My God, what a job it is bringing up a little girl these days, eh? My God.

VLADIMIR

I'd prefer we leave Gruzin out of it.

ORLOV

Leave him out of it. Hm.

(produces a letter)

You've probably forgotten about this letter by now. The one you wrote me the night you left. Yes, I kept it. I understand you were....upset. But I'll admit to you, I admire this letter. Oh, yes....

(reading from the letter)

"You are an imposter." Very amusing. Very direct. Let's see..."imposter...fat, lazy pig...cowardly liar...I want to kill you..." Very nice, all very clever. Ah, and here, your central point, I think, "We have failed. You and I both. Why? Because I have deceived myself, and you"--that's me--"are a coward." Yes, I must admit, that seems very near the truth. Though I suppose we could argue about it all night. But what good would that do? Well, it would pass the time, which is nothing to sneeze at.

(beat)

Yes, I admit my life is perverse. I'm corrupt. I'm of no use to anyone. And the only thing that prevents me from chucking it all in is, yes, cowardice. You're quite right about that. But you take it all so seriously. You're so troubled by all of it. You reduce yourself to despair. That's irrational, my boy. You're all wrong there. A man can't avoid despair when he sees himself going to ruin, while others go to ruin all around him. Who doubts that? I'm not saying we should all be indifferent. I just think we should be objective about it. If we can be objective, we can avoid being deceived. Look at the root causes of things, see the cause of other causes. We have grown weak, feeble, degenerate. People our age are all neurotics, whiners. We do nothing but talk about how tired we are. We're exhausted. But it's not your fault. It's not my fault. We don't matter. Nothing we do will change anything. So why worry, and write long, dreary letters?

VLADIMIR

We only live once. We have to live courageously, aware. We have to appreciate beauty. We have to make a difference. We have to do some good. Lest those future generations say we squandered what opportunities we had. I believe what is happening now is inevitable, and it's happening for a reason. I just don't know how I fit in. Don't know what exactly is the meaning of my life.

ORLOV

Well, there no one can help you. Don't worry about the girl. I'll take care of it.

VLADIMIR

Give me back the letter.

ORLOV

Why should I?

(Beat.

ORLOV hands him the letter.)

ORLOV (cont'd)

I know a woman, who keeps a school, some sort of kindergarten. She takes children at a young age. She can be depended upon, entirely. Of course, we have to talk the whole thing over with Krasnovsky. That's just a matter of form. Get me her birth certificate. Trust me. I respect you, in my own particular way.

(with a smile)

Consider me your humble servant.

(VLADIMIR looks out the window.

We hear the sound of a little girl laughing, at play.

The two men watch the little girl in the garden.

ORLOV puts his hand on Vladimir's shoulder.

Blackout.)

THE END

## **“On Love” (1898) by Anton Chekhov**

At lunch next day there were very nice pies, crayfish, and mutton cutlets; and while we were eating, Nikanor, the cook, came up to ask what the visitors would like for dinner. He was a man of medium height, with a puffy face and little eyes; he was close-shaven, and it looked as though his moustaches had not been shaved, but had been pulled out by the roots. Alehin told us that the beautiful Pelagea was in love with this cook. As he drank and was of a violent character, she did not want to marry him, but was willing to live with him without. He was very devout, and his religious convictions would not allow him to “live in sin”; he insisted on her marrying him, and would consent to nothing else, and when he was drunk he used to abuse her and even beat her. Whenever he got drunk she used to hide upstairs and sob, and on such occasions Alehin and the servants stayed in the house to be ready to defend her in case of necessity.

We began talking about love.

“How love is born,” said Alehin, “why Pelagea does not love somebody more like herself in her spiritual and external qualities, and why she fell in love with Nikanor, that ugly snout—we all call him ‘The Snout’—how far questions of personal happiness are of consequence in love—all that is unknown; one can take what view ones likes of it. So far only one incontestable truth has been uttered about love: ‘This is a great mystery.’ Everything else that has been written or said about love is not a conclusion, but only a statement of questions which have remained unanswered. The explanation which would seem to fit one case does not apply in a dozen others, and the very best thing, to my mind, would be to explain every case individually without attempting to generalize. We ought, as the doctors say, to individualize each case.”

“Perfectly true,” Burkin assented.

“We Russians of the educated class have a partiality for these questions that remain unanswered. Love is usually poeticized, decorated with roses, nightingales; we Russians decorate our loves with these momentous questions, and select the most uninteresting of them, too. In Moscow, when I was a student, I had a friend who shared my life, a charming lady, and every time I took her in my arms she was thinking what I would allow her a month for housekeeping and what was the price of beef a pound. In the same way, when we are in love we are never tired of asking ourselves questions: whether it is honourable or dishonourable, sensible or stupid, what this love is leading up to, and so on. Whether it is a good thing or not I don’t know, but that it is in the way, unsatisfactory, and irritating, I do know.”

It looked as though he wanted to tell some story. People who lead a solitary existence always have something in their hearts which they are eager to talk about. In town bachelors visit the baths and the restaurants on purpose to talk, and sometimes tell the most interesting things to bath attendants and waiters; in the country, as a rule, they unbosom themselves to their guests. Now from the window we could see a grey sky, trees drenched in the rain; in such weather we could go nowhere, and there was nothing for us to do but to tell stories and to listen.

“I have lived at Sofino and been farming for a long time,” Alehin began, “ever since I

left the University. I am an idle gentleman by education, a studious person by disposition; but there was a big debt owing on the estate when I came here, and as my father was in debt partly because he had spent so much on my education, I resolved not to go away, but to work till I paid off the debt. I made up my mind to this and set to work, not, I must confess, without some repugnance. The land here does not yield much, and if one is not to farm at a loss one must employ serf labour or hired labourers, which is almost the same thing, or put it on a peasant footing—that is, work the fields oneself and with one's family. There is no middle path. But in those days I did not go into such subtleties. I did not leave a clod of earth unturned; I gathered together all the peasants, men and women, from the neighbouring villages; the work went on at a tremendous pace. I myself ploughed and sowed and reaped, and was bored doing it, and frowned with disgust, like a village cat driven by hunger to eat cucumbers in the kitchen-garden. My body ached, and I slept as I walked. At first it seemed to me that I could easily reconcile this life of toil with my cultured habits; to do so, I thought, all that is necessary is to maintain a certain external order in life. I established myself upstairs here in the best rooms, and ordered them to bring me there coffee and liquor after lunch and dinner, and when I went to bed I read every night the *Vyestnik Evropi*. But one day our priest, Father Ivan, came and drank up all my liquor at one sitting; and the *Vyestnik Evropi* went to the priest's daughters; as in the summer, especially at the haymaking, I did not succeed in getting to my bed at all, and slept in the sledge in the barn, or somewhere in the forester's lodge, what chance was there of reading? Little by little I moved downstairs, began dining in the servants' kitchen, and of my former luxury nothing is left but the servants who were in my father's service, and whom it would be painful to turn away.

"In the first years I was elected here an honorary justice of the peace. I used to have to go to the town and take part in the sessions of the congress and of the circuit court, and this was a pleasant change for me. When you live here for two or three months without a break, especially in the winter, you begin at last to pine for a black coat. And in the circuit court there were frock-coats, and uniforms, and dress-coats, too, all lawyers, men who have received a general education; I had some one to talk to. After sleeping in the sledge and dining in the kitchen, to sit in an arm-chair in clean linen, in thin boots, with a chain on one's waistcoat, is such luxury!"

"I received a warm welcome in the town. I made friends eagerly. And of all my acquaintanceships the most intimate and, to tell the truth, the most agreeable to me was my acquaintance with Lunganovitch, the vice-president of the circuit court. You both know him: a most charming personality. It all happened just after a celebrated case of incendiarism; the preliminary investigation lasted two days; we were exhausted. Lunganovitch looked at me and said:

"Look here, come round to dinner with me."

"This was unexpected, as I knew Lunganovitch very little, only officially, and I had never been to his house. I only just went to my hotel room to change and went off to dinner. And here it was my lot to meet Anna Alexeyevna, Lunganovitch's wife. At that time she was still very young, not more than twenty-two, and her first baby had been born just six months before. It is all a thing of the past; and now I should find it difficult to define what there was so exceptional in her, what it was in her attracted me so much; at the time, at dinner, it was all perfectly clear to me. I saw a lovely young,

good, intelligent, fascinating woman, such as I had never met before; and I felt her at once some one close and already familiar, as though that face, those cordial, intelligent eyes, I had seen somewhere in my childhood, in the album which lay on my mother's chest of drawers.

"Four Jews were charged with being incendiaries, were regarded as a gang of robbers, and, to my mind, quite groundlessly. At dinner I was very much excited, I was uncomfortable, and I don't know what I said, but Anna Alexyevna kept shaking her head and saying to her husband:

" 'Dmitry, how is this?'

"Luganovitch is a good-natured man, one of those simple-hearted people who firmly maintain the opinion that once a man is charged before a court he is guilty, and to express doubt of the correctness of a sentence cannot be done except in legal form on paper, and not at dinner and in private conversation.

" 'You and I did not set fire to the place,' he said softly, 'and you see we are not condemned, and not in prison.'

"And both husband and wife tried to make me eat and drink as much as possible. From some trifling details, from the way they made the coffee together, for instance, and from the way they understood each other at half a word, I could gather that they lived in harmony and comfort, and that they were glad of a visitor. After dinner they played a duet on the piano; then it got dark, and I went home. That was at the beginning of spring.

"After that I spent the whole summer at Sofino without a break, and I had no time to think of the town, either, but the memory of the graceful fair-haired woman remained in my mind all those days; I did not think of her, but it was as though her light shadow were lying on my heart.

"In the late autumn there was a theatrical performance for some charitable object in the town. I went into the governor's box (I was invited to go there in the interval); I looked, and there was Anna Alexyevna sitting beside the governor's wife; and again the same irresistible, thrilling impression of beauty and sweet, caressing eyes, and again the same feeling of nearness. We sat side by side, then went to the foyer.

"'You've grown thinner,' she said; 'have you been ill?'

"'Yes, I've had rheumatism in my shoulder, and in rainy weather I can't sleep.'

"'You look dispirited. In the spring, when you came to dinner, you were younger, more confident. You were full of eagerness, and talked a great deal then; you were very interesting, and I really must confess I was a little carried away by you. For some reason you often came back to my memory during the summer, and when I was getting ready for the theatre today I thought I should see you.'

"And she laughed.

“But you look dispirited today,’ she repeated; ‘it makes you seem older.’

“The next day I lunched at the Lunganovitchs’. After lunch they drove out to their summer villa, in order to make arrangements there for the winter, and I went with them. I returned with them to the town, and at midnight drank tea with them in quiet domestic surroundings, while the fire glowed, and the young mother kept going to see if her baby girl was asleep. And after that, every time I went to town I never failed to visit the Lunganovitchs. They grew used to me, and I grew used to them. As a rule I went in unannounced, as though I were one of the family.

“Who is there?” I would hear from a faraway room, in the drawling voice that seemed to me so lovely.

“It is Pavel Konstantinovitch,’ answered the maid or the nurse.

“Anna Alexyevna would come out to me with an anxious face, and would ask every time:

“Why is it so long since you have been? Has anything happened?”

“Her eyes, the elegant refined hand she gave me, her indoor dress, the way she did her hair, her voice, her step, always produced the same impression on me something new and extraordinary in my life, and very important. We talked together for hours, were silent, thinking each our own thoughts, or she played for hours to me on the piano. If there were no one at home I stayed and waited, talked to the nurse, played with the child, or lay on the sofa in the study and read; and when Anna Alexyevna came back I met her in the hall, took all her parcels from her, and for some reason I carried those parcels every time with as much love, with as much solemnity, as a boy.

“There is a proverb that if a peasant woman has no troubles she will buy a pig. The Lunganovitchs had no troubles, so they made friends with me. If I did not come to the town I must be ill or something must have happened to me, and both of them were extremely anxious. They were worried that I, an educated man with a knowledge of languages, should, instead of devoting myself to science or literary work, live in the country, rush round like a squirrel in a rage, work hard with never a penny to show for it. They fancied that I was unhappy, and that I only talked, laughed, and ate to conceal my sufferings, and even at cheerful moments when I felt happy I was aware of their searching eyes fixed upon me. They were particularly touching when I really was depressed, when I was being worried by some creditor or had not money enough to pay interest on the proper day. The two of them, husband and wife, would whisper together at the window; then he would come to me and say with a grave face:

“If you really are in need of money at the moment, Pavel Konstantinovitch, my wife and I beg you not to hesitate to borrow from us.’

“And he would blush to his ears with emotion. And it would happen that, after whispering in the same way at the window, he would come up to me, with red ears, and say:

“My wife and I earnestly I beg you to accept this present.’

“And he would give me studs, a cigar-case, or a lamp, and I would send them game, butter, and flowers from the country. They both, by the way, had considerable means of their own. In early days I often borrowed money, and was not very particular about it—borrowed wherever I could—but nothing in the world have induced me to borrow from the Lunganovitchs. But why talk of it?

“I was unhappy. At home, in the fields, in the barn, I thought of her; I tried to understand the mystery of a beautiful, intelligent young woman’s marrying some one so uninteresting, almost an old man (her husband was over forty), and having children by him; to understand the mystery of this uninteresting, good, simple-hearted man, who argued with such wearisome good sense, at balls and evening parties kept near the more solid people, looking listless and superfluous, with a submissive, uninterested expression, as though he had been brought there for sale, who yet believed in his right to be happy, to have children by her; and I kept trying to understand why she had met him first and not me, and why such a terrible mistake in our lives need have happened.

“And when I went to the town I saw every time from her eyes that she was expecting me, and she would confess to me herself that she had had a peculiar feeling all that day guessed that I should come. We talked a long time, and were silent, yet we did not confess our love to each other, but timidly and jealously concealed it. We were afraid of everything that might reveal our secret to ourselves. I loved her tenderly, deeply, but I reflected and kept asking myself what our love could lead to if we had not the strength to fight against it. It seemed to be incredible that my gentle, sad love could all at once coarsely break up the even tenor of the life of her husband, her children, and all the household in which I was so loved and trusted. Would it be honourable? She would go away with me, but where? Where could I take her? It would have been a different matter if I had had a beautiful, interesting life—if, for instance, I had been struggling for the emancipation of my country, or had been a celebrated man of science, an artist or a painter; but as it was it would mean taking her from one everyday humdrum life to another as humdrum or perhaps more so. And how long would our happiness last? What would happen to her in case I was ill, in case I died, or if we simply grew cold to one another?

“And she apparently reasoned in the same way. She thought of her husband, her children, and of her mother, who loved the husband like a son. If she abandoned herself to her feelings she would have to lie, or else to tell the truth, and in her position either would have been equally terrible and inconvenient. And she was tormented by the question whether her love would bring me happiness—would she not complicate my life, which, as it was, was hard enough and full of all sorts of trouble? She fancied she was not young enough for me, that she was not industrious nor energetic enough to begin a new life, and she often talked to her husband of the importance of my marrying a girl of intelligence and merit who would be a capable housewife and a help to me—and she would immediately add that it would be difficult to find such a girl in the whole town.

“Meanwhile the years were passing. Anna Alexyevna already had two children. When I arrived at the Lunganovitchs’ the servants smiled cordially, the children shouted that Uncle Pavel Konstantinovitch had come, and hung on my neck; every one was

overjoyed. They did not understand what was passing in my soul, and thought that I, too, was happy. Every one looked on me as a noble being. And grown-ups and children alike felt that a noble being was walking about their rooms, and that gave a peculiar charm to their manner towards me, as though in my presence their life, too, was purer and more beautiful. Anna Alexyevna and I used to go to the theatre together, always walking there; we used to sit side by side in the stalls, our shoulders touching. I would take the opera-glass from her hands without a word, and feel at that minute that she was near me, that she was mine, that we could not live without each other; but by some strange misunderstanding, when we came out of the theatre we always said good-bye and parted as though we were strangers. Goodness knows what people were saying about us in the town already, but there was not a word of truth in it all!

“In the latter years Anna Alexyevna took to going away for frequent visits to her mother or to her sister; she began to suffer from low spirits, she began to recognize that her life was spoilt and unsatisfied, and at times she did not care to see her husband nor her children. She was already being treated for neurasthenia.

“We were silent and still silent, and in the presence of outsiders she displayed a strange irritation in regard to me; whatever I talked about, she disagreed with me, and if I had an argument she sided with my opponent. If I dropped anything, she would say coldly:

“I congratulate you.’

“If I forgot to take the opera-glass when we were going to the theatre, she would say afterwards:

“I knew you would forget it.’

“Luckily or unluckily, there is nothing in our lives that does not end sooner or later. The time of parting came, as Luganovitch was appointed president in one of the western provinces. They had to sell their furniture, their horses, their summer villa. When they drove out to the villa, and afterwards looked back as they were going away, to look for the last time at the garden, at the green roof, every one was sad, and I realized that I had to say good-bye not only to the villa. It was arranged that at the end of August we should see Anna Alexyevna off to the Crimea, where the doctors were sending her, and that a little later Luganovitch and the children would set off for the western province.

“We were a great crowd to see Anna Alexyevna off. When she had said good-bye to her husband and her children and there was only a minute left before the third bell, I ran into her compartment to put a basket, which she had almost forgotten, on the rack, and I had to say good-bye. When our eyes met in the compartment our spiritual fortitude deserted us both; I took her in my arms, she pressed her face to my breast, and tears flowed from her eyes. Kissing her face, her shoulders, her hands wet with tears—oh, how unhappy were!—I confessed my love for her, and with a burning pain in my heart I realized how unnecessary, how petty, and how deceptive all that had hindered us from loving was. I understood that when you love you must either, in your reasonings about that love, start from what is highest, from what is more

important than happiness or unhappiness, sin or virtue in their accepted meaning, or you must not reason at all.

"I kissed her for the last time, pressed her hand, and parted for ever. The train had already started. I went into the next compartment—it was empty—and until I reached the next station I sat there crying. Then I walked home to Sofino...."

While Alehin was telling his story, the rain left off and the sun came out. Burkin and Ivan Ivanovitch went out on the balcony, from which there was a beautiful view over the garden and the mill-pond, which was shining now in the sunshine like a mirror. They admired it, and at the same time they were sorry that this man with the kind, clever eyes, who had told them this story with such genuine feeling, should be rushing round and round this huge estate like a squirrel on a wheel instead of devoting himself to science or something else which would have made his life more pleasant; and they thought what a sorrowful face Anna Alexyevna must have had when he said good-bye to her in the railway-carriage and kissed her face and shoulders. Both of them had met

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*Kindly contributed by James Rusk <jrusk@airmail.net>*

# Gooseberries

By Anton Chekhov

From early morning the sky had been overcast with clouds; the day was still, cool, and wearisome, as usual on grey, dull days when the clouds hang low over the fields and it looks like rain, which never comes. Ivan Ivanich, the veterinary surgeon, and Bourkin, the schoolmaster, were tired of walking and the fields seemed endless to them. Far ahead they could just see the windmills of the village of Mirousky, to the right stretched away to disappear behind the village a line of hills, and they knew that it was the bank of the river; meadows, green willows, farmhouses; and from one of the hills there could be seen a field as endless, telegraph-posts, and the train, looking from a distance like a crawling caterpillar, and in clear weather even the town. In the calm weather when all Nature seemed gentle and melancholy, Ivan Ivanich and Bourkin were filled with love for the fields and thought how grand and beautiful the country was.

"Last time, when we stopped in Prokofyi's shed," said Bourkin, "you were going to tell me a story."

"Yes. I wanted to tell you about my brother."

Ivan Ivanich took a deep breath and lighted his pipe before beginning his story, but just then the rain began to fall. And in about five minutes it came pelting down and showed no signs of stopping. Ivan Ivanich stopped and hesitated; the dogs, wet through, stood with their tails between their legs and looked at them mournfully.

"We ought to take shelter," said Bourkin. "Let us go to Aliokhin. It is close by."

"Very well."

They took a short cut over a stubble-field and then bore to the right, until they came to the road. Soon there appeared poplars, a garden, the red roofs of

granaries; the river began to glimmer and they came to a wide road with a mill and a white bathing-shed. It was Sophino, where Aliokhin lived.

The mill was working, drowning the sound of the rain, and the dam shook. Round the carts stood wet horses, hanging their heads, and men were walking about with their heads covered with sacks. It was wet, muddy, and unpleasant, and the river looked cold and sullen. Ivan Ivanich and Bourkin felt wet and uncomfortable through and through; their feet were tired with walking in the mud, and they walked past the dam to the barn in silence as though they were angry with each other.

In one of the barns a winnowing-machine was working, sending out clouds of dust. On the threshold stood Aliokhin himself, a man of about forty, tall and stout, with long hair, more like a professor or a painter than a farmer. He was wearing a grimy white shirt and rope belt, and pants instead of trousers; and his boots were covered with mud and straw. His nose and eyes were black with dust. He recognised Ivan Ivanich and was apparently very pleased.

"Please, gentlemen," he said, "go to the house. I'll be with you in a minute."

The house was large and two-storied. Aliokhin lived down-stairs in two vaulted rooms with little windows designed for the farm-hands; the farmhouse was plain, and the place smelled of rye bread and vodka, and leather. He rarely used the reception-rooms, only when guests arrived. Ivan Ivanich and Bourkin were received by a chambermaid; such a pretty young woman that both of them stopped and exchanged glances.

"You cannot imagine how glad I am to see you, gentlemen," said Aliokhin, coming after them into the hall. "I never expected you. Pelagueya," he said to the maid, "give my friends a change of clothes. And I will change, too. But I must have a bath. I haven't had one since the spring. Wouldn't you like to come to the bathing-shed? And meanwhile our things will be got ready."

Pretty Pelagueya, dainty and sweet, brought towels and soap, and Aliokhin led his guests to the bathing-shed.

"Yes," he said, "it is a long time since I had a bath. My bathing-shed is all right, as you see. My father and I put it up, but somehow I have no time to bathe."

He sat down on the step and lathered his long hair and neck, and the water round him became brown.

"Yes. I see," said Ivan Ivanich heavily, looking at his head.

"It is a long time since I bathed," said Aliokhin shyly, as he soaped himself again, and the water round him became dark blue, like ink.

Ivan Ivanich came out of the shed, plunged into the water with a splash, and swam about in the rain, flapping his arms, and sending waves back, and on the waves tossed white lilies; he swam out to the middle of the pool and dived, and in a minute came up again in another place and kept on swimming and diving, trying to reach the bottom. "Ah! how delicious!" he shouted in his glee. "How

delicious!" He swam to the mill, spoke to the peasants, and came back, and in the middle of the pool he lay on his back to let the rain fall on his face. Bourkin and Aliokhin were already dressed and ready to go, but he kept on swimming and diving.

"Delicious," he said. "Too delicious!"

"You've had enough," shouted Bourkin.

They went to the house. And only when the lamp was lit in the large drawing-room up-stairs, and Bourkin and Ivan Ivanich, dressed in silk dressing-gowns and warm slippers, lounged in chairs, and Aliokhin himself, washed and brushed, in a new frock coat, paced up and down evidently delighting in the warmth and cleanliness and dry clothes and slippers, and pretty Pelagueya, noiselessly tripping over the carpet and smiling sweetly, brought in tea and jam on a tray, only then did Ivan Ivanich begin his story, and it was as though he was being listened to not only by Bourkin and Aliokhin, but also by the old and young ladies and the officer who looked down so staidly and tranquilly from the golden frames.

"We are two brothers," he began, "I, Ivan Ivanich, and Nicholai Ivanich, two years younger. I went in for study and became a veterinary surgeon, while Nicholai was at the Exchequer Court when he was nineteen. Our father, Tchimsha-Himalaysky, was a cantonist, but he died with an officer's rank and left us his title of nobility and a small estate. After his death the estate went to pay his debts. However, we spent our childhood there in the country. We were just like peasant's children, spent days and nights in the fields and the woods, minded the horses, barked the lime-trees, fished, and so on. . . And you know once a man has fished, or watched the thrushes hovering in flocks over the village in the bright, cool, autumn days, he can never really be a townsman, and to the day of his death he will be drawn to the country. My brother pined away in the Exchequer. Years passed and he sat in the same place, wrote out the same documents, and thought of one thing, how to get back to the country. And little by little his distress became a definite disorder, a fixed idea -- to buy a small farm somewhere by the bank of a river or a lake.

"He was a good fellow and I loved him, but I never sympathised with the desire to shut oneself up on one's own farm. It is a common saying that a man needs only six feet of land. But surely a corpse wants that, not a man. And I hear that our intellectuals have a longing for the land and want to acquire farms. But it all comes down to the six feet of land. To leave town, and the struggle and the swim of life, and go and hide yourself in a farmhouse is not life -- it is egoism, laziness; it is a kind of monasticism, but monasticism without action. A man needs, not six feet of land, not a farm, but the whole earth, all Nature, where in full liberty he can display all the properties and qualities of the free spirit.

"My brother Nicholai, sitting in his office, would dream of eating his own *schi*, with its savoury smell floating across the farmyard; and of eating out in the open air, and of sleeping in the sun, and of sitting for hours together on a seat by the gate and gazing at the fields and the forest. Books on agriculture and the hints in almanacs were his joy, his favourite spiritual food; and he liked reading

newspapers, but only the advertisements of land to be sold, so many acres of arable and grass land, with a farmhouse, river, garden, mill, and mill-pond. And he would dream of garden-walls, flowers, fruits, nests, carp in the pond, don't you know, and all the rest of it. These fantasies of his used to vary according to the advertisements he found, but somehow there was always a gooseberry-bush in every one. Not a house, not a romantic spot could he imagine without its gooseberry-bush.

"'Country life has its advantages,' he used to say. 'You sit on the veranda drinking tea and your ducklings swim on the pond, and everything smells good. . . and there are gooseberries.'

"He used to draw out a plan of his estate and always the same things were shown on it: (a) Farmhouse, (b) cottage, (c) vegetable garden, (d) gooseberry-bush. He used to live meagrely and never had enough to eat and drink, dressed God knows how, exactly like a beggar, and always saved and put his money into the bank. He was terribly stingy. It used to hurt me to see him, and I used to give him money to go away for a holiday, but he would put that away, too. Once a man gets a fixed idea, there's nothing to be done.

"Years passed; he was transferred to another province. He completed his fortieth year and was still reading advertisements in the papers and saving up his money. Then I heard he was married. Still with the same idea of buying a farmhouse with a gooseberry-bush, he married an elderly, ugly widow, not out of any feeling for her, but because she had money. With her he still lived stingily, kept her half-starved, and put the money into the bank in his own name. She had been the wife of a postmaster and was used to good living, but with her second husband she did not even have enough black bread; she pined away in her new life, and in three years or so gave up her soul to God. And my brother never for a moment thought himself to blame for her death. Money, like vodka, can play queer tricks with a man. Once in our town a merchant lay dying. Before his death he asked for some honey, and he ate all his notes and scrip with the honey so that nobody should get it. Once I was examining a herd of cattle at a station and a horse-jobber fell under the engine, and his foot was cut off. We carried him into the waiting-room, with the blood pouring down -- a terrible business -- and all the while he kept asking anxiously for his foot; he had twenty-five roubles in his boot and did not want to lose them."

"Keep to your story," said Bourkin.

"After the death of his wife," Ivan Ivanich continued, after a long pause, "my brother began to look out for an estate. Of course you may search for five years, and even then buy a pig in a poke. Through an agent my brother Nicholai raised a mortgage and bought three hundred acres with a farmhouse, a cottage, and a park, but there was no orchard, no gooseberry-bush, no duck-pond; there was a river but the water in it was coffee-coloured because the estate lay between a brick-yard and a gelatine factory. But my brother Nicholai was not worried about that; he ordered twenty gooseberry-bushes and settled down to a country life.

"Last year I paid him a visit. I thought I'd go and see how things were with him.

In his letters my brother called his estate Tchimbarshov Corner, or Himalayskoe. I arrived at Himalayskoe in the afternoon. It was hot. There were ditches, fences, hedges, rows of young fir-trees, trees everywhere, and there was no telling how to cross the yard or where to put your horse. I went to the house and was met by a red-haired dog, as fat as a pig. He tried to bark but felt too lazy. Out of the kitchen came the cook, barefooted, and also as fat as a pig, and said that the master was having his afternoon rest. I went in to my brother and found him sitting on his bed with his knees covered with a blanket; he looked old, stout, flabby; his cheeks, nose, and lips were pendulous. I half expected him to grunt like a pig.

"We embraced and shed a tear of joy and also of sadness to think that we had once been young, but were now both going grey and nearing death. He dressed and took me to see his estate.

"Well? How are you getting on?" I asked.

"All right, thank God. I am doing very well.'

"He was no longer the poor, tired official, but a real landowner and a person of consequence. He had got used to the place and liked it, ate a great deal, took Russian baths, was growing fat, had already gone to law with the parish and the two factories, and was much offended if the peasants did not call him 'Your Lordship.' And, like a good landowner, he looked after his soul and did good works pompously, never simply. What good works? He cured the peasants of all kinds of diseases with soda and castor-oil, and on his birthday he would have a thanksgiving service held in the middle of the village, and would treat the peasants to half a bucket of vodka, which he thought the right thing to do. Ah! These horrible buckets of vodka. One day a greasy landowner will drag the peasants before the Zembro Court for trespass, and the next, if it's a holiday, he will give them a bucket of vodka, and they drink and shout Hooray! and lick his boots in their drunkenness. A change to good eating and idleness always fills a Russian with the most preposterous self-conceit. Nicholai Ivanich who, when he was in the Exchequer, was terrified to have an opinion of his own, now imagined that what he said was law. 'Education is necessary for the masses, but they are not fit for it.' 'Corporal punishment is generally harmful, but in certain cases it is useful and indispensable.'

"I know the people and I know how to treat them,' he would say. 'The people love me. I have only to raise my finger and they will do as I wish.'

"And all this, mark you, was said with a kindly smile of wisdom. He was constantly saying: 'We noblemen,' or 'I, as a nobleman.' Apparently he had forgotten that our grandfather was a peasant and our father a common soldier. Even our family name, Tchimacha-Himalaysky, which is really an absurd one, seemed to him full-sounding, distinguished, and very pleasing.

"But my point does not concern him so much as myself. I want to tell you what a change took place in me in those few hours while I was in his house. In the evening, while we were having tea, the cook laid a plateful of gooseberries on the table. They had not been bought, but were his own gooseberries, plucked for

the first time since the bushes were planted. Nicholai Ivanich laughed with joy and for a minute or two he looked in silence at the gooseberries with tears in his eyes. He could not speak for excitement, then put one into his mouth, glanced at me in triumph, like a child at last being given its favourite toy, and said:

"How good they are!"

"He went on eating greedily, and saying all the while:

"How good they are! Do try one!"

"It was hard and sour, but, as Poushkin said, the illusion which exalts us is dearer to us than ten thousand truths. I saw a happy man, one whose dearest dream had come true, who had attained his goal in life, who had got what he wanted, and was pleased with his destiny and with himself. In my idea of human life there is always some alloy of sadness, but now at the sight of a happy man I was filled with something like despair. And at night it grew on me. A bed was made up for me in the room near my brother's and I could hear him, unable to sleep, going again and again to the plate of gooseberries. I thought: 'After all, what a lot of contented, happy people there must be! What an overwhelming power that means! I look at this life and see the arrogance and the idleness of the strong, the ignorance and bestiality of the weak, the horrible poverty everywhere, overcrowding, drunkenness, hypocrisy, falsehood. . . . Meanwhile in all the houses, all the streets, there is peace; out of fifty thousand people who live in our town there is not one to kick against it all. Think of the people who go to the market for food: during the day they eat; at night they sleep, talk nonsense, marry, grow old, piously follow their dead to the cemetery; one never sees or hears those who suffer, and all the horror of life goes on somewhere behind the scenes. Everything is quiet, peaceful, and against it all there is only the silent protest of statistics; so many go mad, so many gallons are drunk, so many children die of starvation. . . . And such a state of things is obviously what we want; apparently a happy man only feels so because the unhappy bear their burden in silence, but for which happiness would be impossible. It is a general hypnosis. Every happy man should have some one with a little hammer at his door to knock and remind him that there are unhappy people, and that, however happy he may be, life will sooner or later show its claws, and some misfortune will befall him -- illness, poverty, loss, and then no one will see or hear him, just as he now neither sees nor hears others. But there is no man with a hammer, and the happy go on living, just a little fluttered with the petty cares of every day, like an aspen-tree in the wind -- and everything is all right.'

"That night I was able to understand how I, too, had been content and happy," Ivan Ivanich went on, getting up. "I, too, at meals or out hunting, used to lay down the law about living, and religion, and governing the masses. I, too, used to say that teaching is light, that education is necessary, but that for simple folk reading and writing is enough for the present. Freedom is a boon, I used to say, as essential as the air we breathe, but we must wait. Yes -- I used to say so, but now I ask: 'Why do we wait?'" Ivan Ivanich glanced angrily at Bourkin. "Why do we wait, I ask you? What considerations keep us fast? I am told that we cannot have everything at once, and that every idea is realised in time. But who says so? Where is the proof that it is so? You refer me to the natural order of

things, to the law of cause and effect, but is there order or natural law in that I, a living, thinking creature, should stand by a ditch until it fills up, or is narrowed, when I could jump it or throw a bridge over it? Tell me, I say, why should we wait? Wait, when we have no strength to live, and yet must live and are full of the desire to live!

"I left my brother early the next morning, and from that time on I found it impossible to live in town. The peace and quiet of it oppress me. I dare not look in at the windows, for nothing is more dreadful to see than the sight of a happy family, sitting round a table, having tea. I am an old man now and am no good for the struggle. I commenced late. I can only grieve within my soul, and fret and sulk. At night my head buzzes with the rush of my thoughts and I cannot sleep. . . . Ah! If I were young!"

Ivan Ivanich walked excitedly up and down the room and repeated:

"If I were young."

He suddenly walked up to Aliokhin and shook him first by one hand and then by the other.

"Pavel Koustantinich," he said in a voice of entreaty, "don't be satisfied, don't let yourself be lulled to sleep! While you are young, strong, wealthy, do not cease to do good! Happiness does not exist, nor should it, and if there is any meaning or purpose in life, they are not in our peddling little happiness, but in something reasonable and grand. Do good!"

Ivan Ivanich said this with a piteous supplicating smile, as though he were asking a personal favour.

Then they all three sat in different corners of the drawing-room and were silent. Ivan Ivanich's story had satisfied neither Bourkin nor Aliokhin. With the generals and ladies looking down from their gilt frames, seeming alive in the firelight, it was tedious to hear the story of a miserable official who ate gooseberries. . . . Somehow they had a longing to hear and to speak of charming people, and of women. And the mere fact of sitting in the drawing-room where everything -- the lamp with its coloured shade, the chairs, and the carpet under their feet -- told how the very people who now looked down at them from their frames once walked, and sat and had tea there, and the fact that pretty Pelagueya was near -- was much better than any story.

Aliokhin wanted very much to go to bed; he had to get up for his work very early, about two in the morning, and now his eyes were closing, but he was afraid of his guests saying something interesting without his hearing it, so he would not go. He did not trouble to think whether what Ivan Ivanich had been saying was clever or right; his guests were talking of neither groats, nor hay, nor tar, but of something which had no bearing on his life, and he liked it and wanted them to go on. . . .

"However, it's time to go to bed," said Bourkin, getting up. "I will wish you good night."

Aliokhin said good night and went down-stairs, and left his guests. Each had a large room with an old wooden bed and carved ornaments; in the corner was an ivory crucifix; and their wide, cool beds, made by pretty Pelagueya, smelled sweetly of clean linen.

Ivan Ivanich undressed in silence and lay down.

"God forgive me, a wicked sinner," he murmured, as he drew the clothes over his head.

A smell of burning tobacco came from his pipe which lay on the table, and Bourkin could not sleep for a long time and was worried because he could not make out where the unpleasant smell came from.

The rain beat against the windows all night long.

-1898-

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# An Enigmatic Nature

Anton Chekhov

ON the red velvet seat of a first-class railway carriage a pretty lady sits half reclining. An expensive fluffy fan trembles in her tightly closed fingers, a pince-nez keeps dropping off her pretty little nose, the brooch heaves and falls on her bosom, like a boat on the ocean. She is greatly agitated.

On the seat opposite sits the Provincial Secretary of Special Commissions, a budding young author, who from time to time publishes long stories of high life, or "Novelli" as he calls them, in the leading paper of the province. He is gazing into her face, gazing intently, with the eyes of a connoisseur. He is watching, studying, catching every shade of this exceptional, enigmatic nature. He understands it, he fathoms it. Her soul, her whole psychology lies open before him.

"Oh, I understand, I understand you to your inmost depths!" says the Secretary of Special Commissions, kissing her hand near the bracelet. "Your sensitive, responsive soul is seeking to escape from the maze of ---- Yes, the struggle is terrific, titanic. But do not lose heart, you will be triumphant! Yes!"

"Write about me, Voldemar!" says the pretty lady, with a mournful smile. "My life has been so full, so varied, so chequered. Above all, I am unhappy. I am a suffering soul in some page of Dostoevsky. Reveal my soul to the world, Voldemar. Reveal that hapless soul. You are a psychologist. We have not been in the train an hour together, and you have already fathomed my heart."

"Tell me! I beseech you, tell me!"

"Listen. My father was a poor clerk in the Service. He had a good heart and was not without intelligence; but the spirit of the age -- of his environment -- vous comprenez? -- I do not blame my poor father. He drank, gambled, took bribes. My mother -- but why say more? Poverty, the struggle for daily bread, the consciousness of insignificance -- ah, do not force me to recall it! I had to make my own way. You know the monstrous education at a boarding-school, foolish novel-reading, the errors of early youth, the first timid flutter of love. It was awful! The vacillation! And the agonies of losing faith in life, in oneself! Ah, you are an author. You know us women. You will understand. Unhappily I have an intense nature. I looked for happiness -- and what happiness! I longed to set my soul free. Yes. In that I saw my happiness!"

"Exquisite creature!" murmured the author, kissing her hand close to the bracelet. "It's not you I am kissing, but the suffering of humanity. Do you remember Raskolnikov and his kiss?"

"Oh, Voldemar, I longed for glory, renown, success, like every -- why affect modesty? -- every nature above the commonplace. I yearned for something extraordinary, above the common lot of woman! And then -- and then -- there crossed my path -- an old general -- very well off. Understand me, Voldemar! It was self-sacrifice, renunciation! You must see

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that! I could do nothing else. I restored the family fortunes, was able to travel, to do good. Yet how I suffered, how revolting, how loathsome to me were his embraces -- though I will be fair to him -- he had fought nobly in his day. There were moments -- terrible moments -- but I was kept up by the thought that from day to day the old man might die, that then I would begin to live as I liked, to give myself to the man I adore -- be happy. There is such a man, Voldemar, indeed there is!"

The pretty lady flutters her fan more violently. Her face takes a lachrymose expression. She goes on:

"But at last the old man died. He left me something. I was free as a bird of the air. Now is the moment for me to be happy, isn't it, Voldemar? Happiness comes tapping at my window, I had only to let it in -- but -- Voldemar, listen, I implore you! Now is the time for me to give myself to the man I love, to become the partner of his life, to help, to uphold his ideals, to be happy -- to find rest -- but -- how ignoble, repulsive, and senseless all our life is! How mean it all is, Voldemar. I am wretched, wretched, wretched! Again there is an obstacle in my path! Again I feel that my happiness is far, far away! Ah, what anguish! -- if only you knew what anguish!"

"But what -- what stands in your way? I implore you tell me! What is it?"

"Another old general, very well off----"

The broken fan conceals the pretty little face. The author props on his fist his thought -- heavy brow and ponders with the air of a master in psychology. The engine is whistling and hissing while the window curtains flush red with the glow of the setting sun.

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# The Death Of A Government Clerk

Anton Chekhov

ONE fine evening, a no less fine government clerk called Ivan Dmitritch Tchervyakov was sitting in the second row of the stalls, gazing through an opera glass at the Cloches de Corneville. He gazed and felt at the acme of bliss. But suddenly. . . . In stories one so often meets with this "But suddenly." The authors are right: life is so full of surprises! But suddenly his face puckered up, his eyes disappeared, his breathing was arrested. . . . he took the opera glass from his eyes, bent over and . . . "Aptchee!!" he sneezed as you perceive. It is not reprehensible for anyone to sneeze anywhere. Peasants sneeze and so do police superintendents, and sometimes even privy councillors. All men sneeze. Tchervyakov was not in the least confused, he wiped his face with his handkerchief, and like a polite man, looked round to see whether he had disturbed any one by his sneezing. But then he was overcome with confusion. He saw that an old gentleman sitting in front of him in the first row of the stalls was carefully wiping his bald head and his neck with his glove and muttering something to himself. In the old gentleman, Tchervyakov recognised Brizzhalov, a civilian general serving in the Department of Transport.

"I have spattered him," thought Tchervyakov, "he is not the head of my department, but still it is awkward. I must apologise."

Tchervyakov gave a cough, bent his whole person forward, and whispered in the general's ear.

"Pardon, your Excellency, I spattered you accidentally. . . ."

"Never mind, never mind."

"For goodness sake excuse me, I. . . . I did not mean to."

"Oh, please, sit down! let me listen!"

Tchervyakov was embarrassed, he smiled stupidly and fell to gazing at the stage. He gazed at it but was no longer feeling bliss. He began to be troubled by uneasiness. In the interval, he went up to Brizzhalov, walked beside him, and overcoming his shyness, muttered:

"I spattered you, your Excellency, forgive me. . . . you see. . . . I didn't do it to. . . ."

"Oh, that's enough. . . . I'd forgotten it, and you keep on about it!" said the general, moving his lower lip impatiently.

"He has forgotten, but there is a fiendish light in his eye," thought Tchervyakov, looking suspiciously at the general. "And he doesn't want to talk. I ought to explain to him. . . . that I really didn't intend. . . . that it is the law of nature or else he will think I meant to spit on him. He doesn't think so now, but he will think so later!"

On getting home, Tchervyakov told his wife of his breach of good manners. It struck him

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that his wife took too frivolous a view of the incident; she was a little frightened, but when she learned that Brizzhalov was in a different department, she was reassured.

"Still, you had better go and apologise," she said, "or he will think you don't know how to behave in public."

"That's just it! I did apologise, but he took it somehow queerly . . . he didn't say a word of sense. There wasn't time to talk properly."

Next day Tchervyakov put on a new uniform, had his hair cut and went to Brizzhalov's to explain; going into the general's reception room he saw there a number of petitioners and among them the general himself, who was beginning to interview them. After questioning several petitioners the general raised his eyes and looked at Tchervyakov.

"Yesterday at the Arcadia, if you recollect, your Excellency," the latter began, "I sneezed and . . . accidentally spattered . . . Exc. . . ."

"What nonsense. . . . It's beyond anything! What can I do for you," said the general addressing the next petitioner.

"He won't speak," thought Tchervyakov, turning pale; "that means that he is angry. . . . No, it can't be left like this. . . . I will explain to him."

When the general had finished his conversation with the last of the petitioners and was turning towards his inner apartments, Tchervyakov took a step towards him and muttered:

"Your Excellency! If I venture to trouble your Excellency, it is simply from a feeling I may say of regret! . . . It was not intentional if you will graciously believe me."

The general made a lachrymose face, and waved his hand.

"Why, you are simply making fun of me, sir," he said as he closed the door behind him.

"Where's the making fun in it?" thought Tchervyakov, "there is nothing of the sort! He is a general, but he can't understand. If that is how it is I am not going to apologise to that fanfaron any more! The devil take him. I'll write a letter to him, but I won't go. By Jove, I won't."

So thought Tchervyakov as he walked home; he did not write a letter to the general, he pondered and pondered and could not make up that letter. He had to go next day to explain in person.

"I ventured to disturb your Excellency yesterday," he muttered, when the general lifted enquiring eyes upon him, "not to make fun as you were pleased to say. I was apologising for having spattered you in sneezing. . . . And I did not dream of making fun of you. Should I dare to make fun of you, if we should take to making fun, then there would be no respect for persons, there would be. . . ."

"Be off!" yelled the general, turning suddenly purple, and shaking all over.

"What?" asked Tchervyakov, in a whisper turning numb with horror.

"Be off!" repeated the general, stamping.

Something seemed to give way in Tchervyakov's stomach. Seeing nothing and hearing nothing he reeled to the door, went out into the street, and went staggering along. . . . Reaching home mechanically, without taking off his uniform, he lay down on the sofa and died.

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# Agafya

## Anton Chekhov

DURING my stay in the district of S. I often used to go to see the watchman Savva Stukatch, or simply Savka, in the kitchen gardens of Dubovo. These kitchen gardens were my favorite resort for so-called "mixed" fishing, when one goes out without knowing what day or hour one may return, taking with one every sort of fishing tackle as well as a store of provisions. To tell the truth, it was not so much the fishing that attracted me as the peaceful stroll, the meals at no set time, the talk with Savka, and being for so long face to face with the calm summer nights. Savka was a young man of five-and-twenty, well grown and handsome, and as strong as a flint. He had the reputation of being a sensible and reasonable fellow. He could read and write, and very rarely drank, but as a workman this strong and healthy young man was not worth a farthing. A sluggish, overpowering sloth was mingled with the strength in his muscles, which were strong as cords. Like everyone else in his village, he lived in his own hut, and had his share of land, but neither tilled it nor sowed it, and did not work at any sort of trade. His old mother begged alms at people's windows and he himself lived like a bird of the air; he did not know in the morning what he would eat at midday. It was not that he was lacking in will, or energy, or feeling for his mother; it was simply that he felt no inclination for work and did not recognize the advantage of it. His whole figure suggested unruffled serenity, an innate, almost artistic passion for living carelessly, never with his sleeves tucked up. When Savka's young, healthy body had a physical craving for muscular work, the young man abandoned himself completely for a brief interval to some free but nonsensical pursuit, such as sharpening skates not wanted for any special purpose, or racing about after the peasant women. His favorite attitude was one of concentrated immobility. He was capable of standing for hours at a stretch in the same place with his eyes fixed on the same spot without stirring. He never moved except on impulse, and then only when an occasion presented itself for some rapid and abrupt action: catching a running dog by the tail, pulling off a woman's kerchief, or jumping over a big hole. It need hardly be said that with such parsimony of movement Savka was as poor as a mouse and lived worse than any homeless outcast. As time went on, I suppose he accumulated arrears of taxes and, young and sturdy as he was, he was sent by the commune to do an old man's job -- to be watchman and scarecrow in the kitchen gardens. However much they laughed at him for his premature senility he did not object to it. This position, quiet and convenient for motionless contemplation, exactly fitted his temperament.

It happened I was with this Savka one fine May evening. I remember I was lying on a torn and dirty sackcloth cover close to the shanty from which came a heavy, fragrant scent of hay. Clasping my hands under my head I looked before me. At my feet was lying a wooden fork. Behind it Savka's dog Kutka stood out like a black patch, and not a dozen feet from Kutka the ground ended abruptly in the steep bank of the little river. Lying down I could not see the river; I could only see the tops of the young willows growing thickly on the nearer bank, and the twisting, as it were gnawed away, edges of the opposite bank. At a distance beyond the bank on the dark hillside the huts of the village in which Savka lived lay huddling together like frightened young partridges. Beyond the hill the afterglow of sunset still lingered in the sky. One pale crimson streak was all that was left, and even that began to be covered by little clouds as a fire with ash.

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A copse with alder-trees, softly whispering, and from time to time shuddering in the fitful breeze, lay, a dark blur, on the right of the kitchen gardens; on the left stretched the immense plain. In the distance, where the eye could not distinguish between the sky and the plain, there was a bright gleam of light. A little way off from me sat Savka. With his legs tucked under him like a Turk and his head hanging, he looked pensively at Kutka. Our hooks with live bait on them had long been in the river, and we had nothing left to do but to abandon ourselves to repose, which Savka, who was never exhausted and always rested, loved so much. The glow had not yet quite died away, but the summer night was already enfolding nature in its caressing, soothing embrace.

Everything was sinking into its first deep sleep except some night bird unfamiliar to me, which indolently uttered a long, protracted cry in several distinct notes like the phrase, "Have you seen Ni-ki-ta?" and immediately answered itself, "Seen him, seen him, seen him!"

"Why is it the nightingales aren't singing tonight?" I asked Savka.

He turned slowly towards me. His features were large, but his face was open, soft, and expressive as a woman's. Then he gazed with his mild, dreamy eyes at the copse, at the willows, slowly pulled a whistle out of his pocket, put it in his mouth and whistled the note of a hen-nightingale. And at once, as though in answer to his call, a landrail called on the opposite bank.

"There's a nightingale for you . . ." laughed Savka. "Drag-drag! drag-drag! just like pulling at a hook, and yet I bet he thinks he is singing, too."

"I like that bird," I said. "Do you know, when the birds are migrating the landrail does not fly, but runs along the ground? It only flies over the rivers and the sea, but all the rest it does on foot."

"Upon my word, the dog . . ." muttered Savka, looking with respect in the direction of the calling landrail.

Knowing how fond Savka was of listening, I told him all I had learned about the landrail from sportsman's books. From the landrail I passed imperceptibly to the migration of the birds. Savka listened attentively, looking at me without blinking, and smiling all the while with pleasure.

"And which country is most the bird's home? Ours or those foreign parts?" he asked.

"Ours, of course. The bird itself is hatched here, and it hatches out its little ones here in its native country, and they only fly off there to escape being frozen."

"It's interesting," said Savka. "Whatever one talks about it is always interesting. Take a bird now, or a man . . . or take this little stone; there's something to learn about all of them. . . . Ah, sir, if I had known you were coming I wouldn't have told a woman to come here this evening. . . . She asked to come to-day."

"Oh, please don't let me be in your way," I said. "I can lie down in the wood. . . ."

"What next! She wouldn't have died if she hadn't come till to-morrow. . . . If only she would sit quiet and listen, but she always wants to be slobbering. . . . You can't have a good talk when she's here."

"Are you expecting Darya?" I asked, after a pause.

"No . . . a new one has asked to come this evening . . . Agafya, the signalman's wife."

Savka said this in his usual passionless, somewhat hollow voice, as though he were talking of tobacco or porridge, while I started with surprise. I knew Agafya. . . . She was quite a young peasant woman of nineteen or twenty, who had been married not more than a year before to a railway signalman, a fine young fellow. She lived in the village, and her husband came home there from the line every night.

"Your goings on with the women will lead to trouble, my boy," said I.

"Well, may be . . . ."

And after a moment's thought Savka added:

"I've said so to the women; they won't heed me. . . . They don't trouble about it, the silly things!"

Silence followed. . . . Meanwhile the darkness was growing thicker and thicker, and objects began to lose their contours. The streak behind the hill had completely died away, and the stars were growing brighter and more luminous. . . . The mournfully monotonous chirping of the grasshoppers, the call of the landrail, and the cry of the quail did not destroy the stillness of the night, but, on the contrary, gave it an added monotony. It seemed as though the soft sounds that enchanted the ear came, not from birds or insects, but from the stars looking down upon us from the sky. . . .

Savka was the first to break the silence. He slowly turned his eyes from black Kutka and said:

"I see you are dull, sir. Let's have supper."

And without waiting for my consent he crept on his stomach into the shanty, rummaged about there, making the whole edifice tremble like a leaf; then he crawled back and set before me my vodka and an earthenware bowl; in the bowl there were baked eggs, lard scones made of rye, pieces of black bread, and something else. . . . We had a drink from a little crooked glass that wouldn't stand, and then we fell upon the food. . . . Coarse grey salt, dirty, greasy cakes, eggs tough as india-rubber, but how nice it all was!

"You live all alone, but what lots of good things you have," I said, pointing to the bowl.  
"Where do you get them from?"

"The women bring them," mumbled Savka.

"What do they bring them to you for?"

"Oh . . . from pity."

Not only Savka's menu, but his clothing, too, bore traces of feminine "pity." Thus I noticed that he had on, that evening, a new woven belt and a crimson ribbon on which a copper cross hung round his dirty neck. I knew of the weakness of the fair sex for Savka, and I knew that he did not like talking about it, and so I did not carry my inquiries any further. Besides there was not time to talk. . . . Kutka, who had been fidgeting about near us and patiently waiting for scraps, suddenly pricked up his ears and growled. We heard in the distance repeated splashing of water.

"Someone is coming by the ford," said Savka.

Three minutes later Kutka growled again and made a sound like a cough.

"Shsh!" his master shouted at him.

In the darkness there was a muffled thud of timid footsteps, and the silhouette of a woman appeared out of the copse. I recognized her, although it was dark -- it was Agafya. She came up to us diffidently and stopped, breathing hard. She was breathless, probably not so much from walking as from fear and the unpleasant sensation everyone experiences in wading across a river at night. Seeing near the shanty not one but two persons, she uttered a faint cry and fell back a step.

"Ah . . . that is you!" said Savka, stuffing a scone into his mouth.

"Ye-es . . . I," she muttered, dropping on the ground a bundle of some sort and looking sideways at me. "Yakov sent his greetings to you and told me to give you . . . something here. . . ."

"Come, why tell stories? Yakov!" laughed Savka. "There is no need for lying; the gentleman knows why you have come! Sit down; you shall have supper with us."

Agafya looked sideways at me and sat down irresolutely.

"I thought you weren't coming this evening," Savka said, after a prolonged silence. "Why sit like that? Eat! Or shall I give you a drop of vodka?"

"What an idea!" laughed Agafya; "do you think you have got hold of a drunkard? . . ."

"Oh, drink it up. . . . Your heart will feel warmer. . . . There!"

Savka gave Agafya the crooked glass. She slowly drank the vodka, ate nothing with it, but drew a deep breath when she had finished.

"You've brought something," said Savka, untying the bundle and throwing a condescending, jesting shade into his voice. "Women can never come without bringing something. Ah, pie and potatoes. . . . They live well," he sighed, turning to me. "They are the only ones in the

whole village who have got potatoes left from the winter!"

In the darkness I did not see Agafya's face, but from the movement of her shoulders and head it seemed to me that she could not take her eyes off Savka's face. To avoid being the third person at this tryst, I decided to go for a walk and got up. But at that moment a nightingale in the wood suddenly uttered two low contralto notes. Half a minute later it gave a tiny high trill and then, having thus tried its voice, began singing. Savka jumped up and listened.

"It's the same one as yesterday," he said. "Wait a minute."

And, getting up, he went noiselessly to the wood.

"Why, what do you want with it?" I shouted out after him, "Stop!"

Savka shook his hand as much as to say, "Don't shout," and vanished into the darkness. Savka was an excellent sportsman and fisherman when he liked, but his talents in this direction were as completely thrown away as his strength. He was too slothful to do things in the routine way, and vented his passion for sport in useless tricks. For instance, he would catch nightingales only with his hands, would shoot pike with a fowling piece, he would spend whole hours by the river trying to catch little fish with a big hook.

Left alone with me, Agafya coughed and passed her hand several times over her forehead. . . . She began to feel a little drunk from the vodka.

"How are you getting on, Agasha?" I asked her, after a long silence, when it began to be awkward to remain mute any longer.

"Very well, thank God. . . . Don't tell anyone, sir, will you?" she added suddenly in a whisper.

"That's all right," I reassured her. "But how reckless you are, Agasha! . . . What if Yakov finds out?"

"He won't find out."

But what if he does?"

"No . . . I shall be at home before he is. He is on the line now, and he will come back when the mail train brings him, and from here I can hear when the train's coming. . . ."

Agafya once more passed her hand over her forehead and looked away in the direction in which Savka had vanished. The nightingale was singing. Some night bird flew low down close to the ground and, noticing us, was startled, fluttered its wings and flew across to the other side of the river.

Soon the nightingale was silent, but Savka did not come back. Agafya got up, took a few steps uneasily, and sat down again.

"What is he doing?" she could not refrain from saying. "The train's not coming in to-morrow! I shall have to go away directly."

"Savka," I shouted. "Savka."

I was not answered even by an echo. Agafya moved uneasily and sat down again.

"It's time I was going," she said in an agitated voice. "The train will be here directly! I know when the trains come in."

The poor woman was not mistaken. Before a quarter of an hour had passed a sound was heard in the distance.

Agafya kept her eyes fixed on the copse for a long time and moved her hands impatiently.

"Why, where can he be?" she said, laughing nervously. "Where has the devil carried him? I am going! I really must be going."

Meanwhile the noise was growing more and more distinct. By now one could distinguish the rumble of the wheels from the heavy gasps of the engine. Then we heard the whistle, the train crossed the bridge with a hollow rumble . . . another minute and all was still.

"I'll wait one minute more," said Agafya, sitting down resolutely. "So be it, I'll wait.

At last Savka appeared in the darkness. He walked noiselessly on the crumbling earth of the kitchen gardens and hummed something softly to himself.

"Here's a bit of luck; what do you say to that now?" he said gaily. "As soon as I got up to the bush and began taking aim with my hand it left off singing! Ah, the bald dog! I waited and waited to see when it would begin again, but I had to give it up."

Savka flopped clumsily down to the ground beside Agafya and, to keep his balance, clutched at her waist with both hands.

"Why do you look cross, as though your aunt were your mother?" he asked.

With all his soft-heartedness and good-nature, Savka despised women. He behaved carelessly, condescendingly with them, and even stooped to scornful laughter of their feelings for himself. God knows, perhaps this careless, contemptuous manner was one of the causes of his irresistible attraction for the village Dulcineas. He was handsome and well-built; in his eyes there was always a soft friendliness, even when he was looking at the women he so despised, but the fascination was not to be explained by merely external qualities. Apart from his happy exterior and original manner, one must suppose that the touching position of Savka as an acknowledged failure and an unhappy exile from his own hut to the kitchen gardens also had an influence upon the women.

"Tell the gentleman what you have come here for!" Savka went on, still holding Agafya by the waist. "Come, tell him, you good married woman! Ho-ho! Shall we have another drop of vodka, friend Agasha?"

I got up and, threading my way between the plots, I walked the length of the kitchen garden. The dark beds looked like flattened-out graves. They smelt of dug earth and the tender dampness of plants beginning to be covered with dew. . . . A red light was still gleaming on the left. It winked genially and seemed to smile.

I heard a happy laugh. It was Agafya laughing.

"And the train?" I thought. "The train has come in long ago."

Waiting a little longer, I went back to the shanty. Savka was sitting motionless, his legs crossed like a Turk, and was softly, scarcely audibly humming a song consisting of words of one syllable something like: "Out on you, fie on you . . . I and you." Agafya, intoxicated by the vodka, by Savka's scornful caresses, and by the stifling warmth of the night, was lying on the earth beside him, pressing her face convulsively to his knees. She was so carried away by her feelings that she did not even notice my arrival.

"Agasha, the train has been in a long time," I said.

"It's time -- it's time you were gone," Savka, tossing his head, took up my thought. "What are you sprawling here for? You shameless hussy!"

Agafya started, took her head from his knees, glanced at me, and sank down beside him again.

"You ought to have gone long ago," I said.

Agafya turned round and got up on one knee. . . . She was unhappy. . . . For half a minute her whole figure, as far as I could distinguish it through the darkness, expressed conflict and hesitation. There was an instant when, seeming to come to herself, she drew herself up to get upon her feet, but then some invincible and implacable force seemed to push her whole body, and she sank down beside Savka again.

"Bother him!" she said, with a wild, guttural laugh, and reckless determination, impotence, and pain could be heard in that laugh.

I strolled quietly away to the copse, and from there down to the river, where our fishing lines were set. The river slept. Some soft, fluffy-petalled flower on a tall stalk touched my cheek tenderly like a child who wants to let one know it's awake. To pass the time I felt for one of the lines and pulled at it. It yielded easily and hung limply -- nothing had been caught. . . . The further bank and the village could not be seen. A light gleamed in one hut, but soon went out. I felt my way along the bank, found a hollow place which I had noticed in the daylight, and sat down in it as in an arm-chair. I sat there a long time. . . . I saw the stars begin to grow misty and lose their brightness; a cool breath passed over the earth like a faint sigh and touched the leaves of the slumbering osiers. . . .

"A-ga-fya!" a hollow voice called from the village. "Agafya!"

It was the husband, who had returned home, and in alarm was looking for his wife in the

village. At that moment there came the sound of unrestrained laughter: the wife, forgetful of everything, sought in her intoxication to make up by a few hours of happiness for the misery awaiting her next day.

I dropped asleep.

When I woke up Savka was sitting beside me and lightly shaking my shoulder. The river, the copse, both banks, green and washed, trees and fields -- all were bathed in bright morning light. Through the slim trunks of the trees the rays of the newly risen sun beat upon my back.

"So that's how you catch fish?" laughed Savka. "Get up!"

I got up, gave a luxurious stretch, and began greedily drinking in the damp and fragrant air.

"Has Agasha gone?" I asked.

"There she is," said Savka, pointing in the direction of the ford.

I glanced and saw Agafya. Dishevelled, with her kerchief dropping off her head, she was crossing the river, holding up her skirt. Her legs were scarcely moving. . . .

"The cat knows whose meat it has eaten," muttered Savka, screwing up his eyes as he looked at her. "She goes with her tail hanging down. . . . They are sly as cats, these women, and timid as hares. . . . She didn't go, silly thing, in the evening when we told her to! Now she will catch it, and they'll flog me again at the peasant court . . . all on account of the women. . . ."

Agafya stepped upon the bank and went across the fields to the village. At first she walked fairly boldly, but soon terror and excitement got the upper hand; she turned round fearfully, stopped and took breath.

"Yes, you are frightened!" Savka laughed mournfully, looking at the bright green streak left by Agafya in the dewy grass. "She doesn't want to go! Her husband's been standing waiting for her for a good hour. . . . Did you see him?"

Savka said the last words with a smile, but they sent a chill to my heart. In the village, near the furthest hut, Yakov was standing in the road, gazing fixedly at his returning wife. He stood without stirring, and was as motionless as a post. What was he thinking as he looked at her? What words was he preparing to greet her with? Agafya stood still a little while, looked round once more as though expecting help from us, and went on. I have never seen anyone, drunk or sober, move as she did. Agafya seemed to be shrivelled up by her husband's eyes. At one time she moved in zigzags, then she moved her feet up and down without going forward, bending her knees and stretching out her hands, then she staggered back. When she had gone another hundred paces she looked round once more and sat down.

"You ought at least to hide behind a bush . . ." I said to Savka. "If the husband sees you . . ."

"He knows, anyway, who it is Agafya has come from. . . . The women don't go to the kitchen garden at night for cabbages -- we all know that."

I glanced at Savka's face. It was pale and puckered up with a look of fastidious pity such as one sees in the faces of people watching tortured animals.

"What's fun for the cat is tears for the mouse. . ." he muttered.

Agafya suddenly jumped up, shook her head, and with a bold step went towards her husband. She had

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# Grisha

Anton Chekhov

GRISHA, a chubby little boy, born two years and eight months ago, is walking on the boulevard with his nurse. He is wearing a long, wadded pelisse, a scarf, a big cap with a fluffy pom-pom, and warm over-boots. He feels hot and stifled, and now, too, the rollicking April sunshine is beating straight in his face, and making his eyelids tingle.

The whole of his clumsy, timidly and uncertainly stepping little figure expresses the utmost bewilderment.

Hitherto Grisha has known only a rectangular world, where in one corner stands his bed, in the other nurse's trunk, in the third a chair, while in the fourth there is a little lamp burning. If one looks under the bed, one sees a doll with a broken arm and a drum; and behind nurse's trunk, there are a great many things of all sorts: cotton reels, boxes without lids, and a broken Jack-a-dandy. In that world, besides nurse and Grisha, there are often mamma and the cat. Mamma is like a doll, and puss is like papa's fur-coat, only the coat hasn't got eyes and a tail. From the world which is called the nursery a door leads to a great expanse where they have dinner and tea. There stands Grisha's chair on high legs, and on the wall hangs a clock which exists to swing its pendulum and chime. From the dining-room, one can go into a room where there are red arm-chairs. Here, there is a dark patch on the carpet, concerning which fingers are still shaken at Grisha. Beyond that room is still another, to which one is not admitted, and where one sees glimpses of papa -- an extremely enigmatical person! Nurse and mamma are comprehensible: they dress Grisha, feed him, and put him to bed, but what papa exists for is unknown. There is another enigmatical person, auntie, who presented Grisha with a drum. She appears and disappears. Where does she disappear to? Grisha has more than once looked under the bed, behind the trunk, and under the sofa, but she was not there.

In this new world, where the sun hurts one's eyes, there are so many papas and mammas and aunties, that there is no knowing to whom to run. But what is stranger and more absurd than anything is the horses. Grisha gazes at their moving legs, and can make nothing of it. He looks at his nurse for her to solve the mystery, but she does not speak.

All at once he hears a fearful tramping. . . . A crowd of soldiers, with red faces and bath brooms under their arms, move in step along the boulevard straight upon him. Grisha turns cold all over with terror, and looks inquiringly at nurse to know whether it is dangerous. But nurse neither weeps nor runs away, so there is no danger. Grisha looks after the soldiers, and begins to move his feet in step with them himself.

Two big cats with long faces run after each other across the boulevard, with their tongues out, and their tails in the air. Grisha thinks that he must run too, and runs after the cats.

"Stop!" cries nurse, seizing him roughly by the shoulder. "Where are you off to? Haven't you been told not to be naughty?"

Here there is a nurse sitting holding a tray of oranges. Grisha passes by her, and, without

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saying anything, takes an orange.

"What are you doing that for?" cries the companion of his travels, slapping his hand and snatching away the orange. "Silly!"

Now Grisha would have liked to pick up a bit of glass that was lying at his feet and gleaming like a lamp, but he is afraid that his hand will be slapped again.

"My respects to you!" Grisha hears suddenly, almost above his ear, a loud thick voice, and he sees a tall man with bright buttons.

To his great delight, this man gives nurse his hand, stops, and begins talking to her. The brightness of the sun, the noise of the carriages, the horses, the bright buttons are all so impressively new and not dreadful, that Grisha's soul is filled with a feeling of enjoyment and he begins to laugh.

"Come along! Come along!" he cries to the man with the bright buttons, tugging at his coattails.

"Come along where?" asks the man.

"Come along!" Grisha insists.

He wants to say that it would be just as well to take with them papa, mamma, and the cat, but his tongue does not say what he wants to.

A little later, nurse turns out of the boulevard, and leads Grisha into a big courtyard where there is still snow; and the man with the bright buttons comes with them too. They carefully avoid the lumps of snow and the puddles, then, by a dark and dirty staircase, they go into a room. Here there is a great deal of smoke, there is a smell of roast meat, and a woman is standing by the stove frying cutlets. The cook and the nurse kiss each other, and sit down on the bench together with the man, and begin talking in a low voice. Grisha, wrapped up as he is, feels insufferably hot and stifled.

"Why is this?" he wonders, looking about him.

He sees the dark ceiling, the oven fork with two horns, the stove which looks like a great black hole.

"Mam-ma," he drawls.

"Come, come, come!" cries the nurse. "Wait a bit!"

The cook puts a bottle on the table, two wine-glasses, and a pie. The two women and the man with the bright buttons clink glasses and empty them several times, and, the man puts his arm round first the cook and then the nurse. And then all three begin singing in an undertone.

Grisha stretches out his hand towards the pie, and they give him a piece of it. He eats it and

watches nurse drinking. . . . He wants to drink too.

"Give me some, nurse!" he begs.

The cook gives him a sip out of her glass. He rolls his eyes, blinks, coughs, and waves his hands for a long time afterwards, while the cook looks at him and laughs.

When he gets home Grisha begins to tell mamma, the walls, and the bed where he has been, and what he has seen. He talks not so much with his tongue, as with his face and his hands. He shows how the sun shines, how the horses run, how the terrible stove looks, and how the cook drinks. . . .

In the evening he cannot get to sleep. The soldiers with the brooms, the big cats, the horses, the bit of glass, the tray of oranges, the bright buttons, all gathered together, weigh on his brain. He tosses from side to side, babbles, and, at last, unable to endure his excitement, begins crying.

"You are feverish," says mamma, putting her open hand on his forehead. "What can have caused it?

"Stove!" wails Grisha. "Go away, stove!"

"He must have eaten too much . . ." mamma decides.

And Grisha, shattered by the impressions of the new life he has just experienced, receives a spoonful of castor-oil from mamma.

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# A Day In The Country

Anton Chekhov

BETWEEN eight and nine o'clock in the morning.

A dark leaden-coloured mass is creeping over the sky towards the sun. Red zigzags of lightning gleam here and there across it. There is a sound of far-away rumbling. A warm wind frolics over the grass, bends the trees, and stirs up the dust. In a minute there will be a spurt of May rain and a real storm will begin.

Fyokla, a little beggar-girl of six, is running through the village, looking for Terenty the cobbler. The white-haired, barefoot child is pale. Her eyes are wide-open, her lips are trembling.

"Uncle, where is Terenty?" she asks every one she meets. No one answers. They are all preoccupied with the approaching storm and take refuge in their huts. At last she meets Silanty Silitch, the sacristan, Terenty's bosom friend. He is coming along, staggering from the wind.

"Uncle, where is Terenty?"

"At the kitchen-gardens," answers Silanty.

The beggar-girl runs behind the huts to the kitchen-gardens and there finds Terenty; the tall old man with a thin, pock-marked face, very long legs, and bare feet, dressed in a woman's tattered jacket, is standing near the vegetable plots, looking with drowsy, drunken eyes at the dark storm-cloud. On his long crane-like legs he sways in the wind like a starling-cote.

"Uncle Terenty!" the white-headed beggar-girl addresses him. "Uncle, darling!"

Terenty bends down to Fyokla, and his grim, drunken face is overspread with a smile, such as come into people's faces when they look at something little, foolish, and absurd, but warmly loved.

"Ah! servant of God, Fyokia," he says, lisping tenderly, "where have you come from?"

"Uncle Terenty," says Fyokia, with a sob, tugging at the lapel of the cobbler's coat. "Brother Danilka has had an accident! Come along!"

"What sort of accident? Ough, what thunder! Holy, holy, holy. . . . What sort of accident?"

"In the count's copse Danilka stuck his hand into a hole in a tree, and he can't get it out. Come along, uncle, do be kind and pull his hand out!"

"How was it he put his hand in? What for?"

"He wanted to get a cuckoo's egg out of the hole for me."

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"The day has hardly begun and already you are in trouble. . . ." Terenty shook his head and spat deliberately. "Well, what am I to do with you now? I must come . . . I must, may the wolf gobble you up, you naughty children! Come, little orphan!"

Terenty comes out of the kitchen-garden and, lifting high his long legs, begins striding down the village street. He walks quickly without stopping or looking from side to side, as though he were shoved from behind or afraid of pursuit. Fyokla can hardly keep up with him.

They come out of the village and turn along the dusty road towards the count's copse that lies dark blue in the distance. It is about a mile and a half away. The clouds have by now covered the sun, and soon afterwards there is not a speck of blue left in the sky. It grows dark.

"Holy, holy, holy . . ." whispers Fyokla, hurrying after Terenty. The first rain-drops, big and heavy, lie, dark dots on the dusty road. A big drop falls on Fyokla's cheek and glides like a tear down her chin.

"The rain has begun," mutters the cobbler, kicking up the dust with his bare, bony feet. "That's fine, Fyokla, old girl. The grass and the trees are fed by the rain, as we are by bread. And as for the thunder, don't you be frightened, little orphan. Why should it kill a little thing like you?"

As soon as the rain begins, the wind drops. The only sound is the patter of rain dropping like fine shot on the young rye and the parched road.

"We shall get soaked, Fyolka," mutters Terenty. "There won't be a dry spot left on us. . . . Ho-ho, my girl! It's run down my neck! But don't be frightened, silly. . . . The grass will be dry again, the earth will be dry again, and we shall be dry again. There is the same sun for us all."

A flash of lightning, some fourteen feet long, gleams above their heads. There is a loud peal of thunder, and it seems to Fyokla that something big, heavy, and round is rolling over the sky and tearing it open, exactly over her head.

"Holy, holy, holy . . ." says Terenty, crossing himself. "Don't be afraid, little orphan! It is not from spite that it thunders."

Terenty's and Fyokla's feet are covered with lumps of heavy, wet clay. It is slippery and difficult to walk, but Terenty strides on more and more rapidly. The weak little beggar-girl is breathless and ready to drop.

But at last they go into the count's copse. The washed trees, stirred by a gust of wind, drop a perfect waterfall upon them. Terenty stumbles over stumps and begins to slacken his pace.

"Whereabouts is Danilka?" he asks. "Lead me to him."

Fyokla leads him into a thicket, and, after going a quarter of a mile, points to Danilka. Her

brother, a little fellow of eight, with hair as red as ochre and a pale sickly face, stands leaning against a tree, and, with his head on one side, looking sideways at the sky. In one hand he holds his shabby old cap, the other is hidden in an old lime tree. The boy is gazing at the stormy sky, and apparently not thinking of his trouble. Hearing footsteps and seeing the cobbler he gives a sickly smile and says:

"A terrible lot of thunder, Terenty. . . . I've never heard so much thunder in all my life."

"And where is your hand?"

"In the hole. . . . Pull it out, please, Terenty!"

The wood had broken at the edge of the hole and jammed Danilka's hand: he could push it farther in, but could not pull it out. Terenty snaps off the broken piece, and the boy's hand, red and crushed, is released.

"It's terrible how it's thundering," the boy says again, rubbing his hand. "What makes it thunder, Terenty?"

"One cloud runs against the other," answers the cobbler. The party come out of the copse, and walk along the edge of it towards the darkened road. The thunder gradually abates, and its rumbling is heard far away beyond the village.

"The ducks flew by here the other day, Terenty," says Danilka, still rubbing his hand. "They must be nesting in the Gniliya Zaimishtcha marshes. . . . Fyolka, would you like me to show you a nightingale's nest?"

"Don't touch it, you might disturb them," says Terenty, wringing the water out of his cap. "The nightingale is a singing-bird, without sin. He has had a voice given him in his throat, to praise God and gladden the heart of man. It's a sin to disturb him."

"What about the sparrow?"

"The sparrow doesn't matter, he's a bad, spiteful bird. He is like a pickpocket in his ways. He doesn't like man to be happy. When Christ was crucified it was the sparrow brought nails to the Jews, and called 'alive! alive!'"

A bright patch of blue appears in the sky.

"Look!" says Terenty. "An ant-heap burst open by the rain! They've been flooded, the rogues!"

They bend over the ant-heap. The downpour has damaged it; the insects are scurrying to and fro in the mud, agitated, and busily trying to carry away their drowned companions.

"You needn't be in such a taking, you won't die of it!" says Terenty, grinning. "As soon as the sun warms you, you'll come to your senses again. . . . It's a lesson to you, you stupid. You won't settle on low ground another time."

They go on.

"And here are some bees," cries Danilka, pointing to the branch of a young oak tree.

The drenched and chilled bees are huddled together on the branch. There are so many of them that neither bark nor leaf can be seen. Many of them are settled on one another.

"That's a swarm of bees," Terenty informs them. "They were flying looking for a home, and when the rain came down upon them they settled. If a swarm is flying, you need only sprinkle water on them to make them settle. Now if, say, you wanted to take the swarm, you would bend the branch with them into a sack and shake it, and they all fall in."

Little Fyokla suddenly frowns and rubs her neck vigorously. Her brother looks at her neck, and sees a big swelling on it.

"Hey-hey!" laughs the cobbler. "Do you know where you got that from, Fyokia, old girl? There are Spanish flies on some tree in the wood. The rain has trickled off them, and a drop has fallen on your neck -- that's what has made the swelling."

The sun appears from behind the clouds and floods the wood, the fields, and the three friends with its warm light. The dark menacing cloud has gone far away and taken the storm with it. The air is warm and fragrant. There is a scent of bird-cherry, meadowsweet, and lilies-of-the-valley.

"That herb is given when your nose bleeds," says Terenty, pointing to a woolly-looking flower. "It does good."

They hear a whistle and a rumble, but not such a rumble as the storm-clouds carried away. A goods train races by before the eyes of Terenty, Danilka, and Fyokla. The engine, panting and puffing out black smoke, drags more than twenty vans after it. Its power is tremendous. The children are interested to know how an engine, not alive and without the help of horses, can move and drag such weights, and Terenty undertakes to explain it to them:

"It's all the steam's doing, children. . . . The steam does the work. . . . You see, it shoves under that thing near the wheels, and it . . . you see . . . it works. . . ."

They cross the railway line, and, going down from the embankment, walk towards the river. They walk not with any object, but just at random, and talk all the way. . . . Danilka asks questions, Terenty answers them. . . .

Terenty answers all his questions, and there is no secret in Nature which baffles him. He knows everything. Thus, for example, he knows the names of all the wild flowers, animals, and stones. He knows what herbs cure diseases, he has no difficulty in telling the age of a horse or a cow. Looking at the sunset, at the moon, or the birds, he can tell what sort of weather it will be next day. And indeed, it is not only Terenty who is so wise. Silanty Silitch, the innkeeper, the market-gardener, the shepherd, and all the villagers, generally speaking, know as much as he does. These people have learned not from books, but in the fields, in the wood, on the river bank. Their teachers have been the birds themselves, when they sang to them, the sun when it left a glow of crimson behind it at setting, the very trees,

and wild herbs.

Danilka looks at Terenty and greedily drinks in every word. In spring, before one is weary of the warmth and the monotonous green of the fields, when everything is fresh and full of fragrance, who would not want to hear about the golden may-beetles, about the cranes, about the gurgling streams, and the corn mounting into ear?

The two of them, the cobbler and the orphan, walk about the fields, talk unceasingly, and are not weary. They could wander about the world endlessly. They walk, and in their talk of the beauty of the earth do not notice the frail little beggar-girl tripping after them. She is breathless and moves with a lagging step. There are tears in her eyes; she would be glad to stop these inexhaustible wanderers, but to whom and where can she go? She has no home or people of her own; whether she likes it or not, she must walk and listen to their talk.

Towards midday, all three sit down on the river bank. Danilka takes out of his bag a piece of bread, soaked and reduced to a mash, and they begin to eat. Terenty says a prayer when he has eaten the bread, then stretches himself on the sandy bank and falls asleep. While he is asleep, the boy gazes at the water, pondering. He has many different things to think of. He has just seen the storm, the bees, the ants, the train. Now, before his eyes, fishes are whisking about. Some are two inches long and more, others are no bigger than one's nail. A viper, with its head held high, is swimming from one bank to the other.

Only towards the evening our wanderers return to the village. The children go for the night to a deserted barn, where the corn of the commune used to be kept, while Terenty, leaving them, goes to the tavern. The children lie huddled together on the straw, dozing.

The boy does not sleep. He gazes into the darkness, and it seems to him that he is seeing all that he has seen in the day: the storm-clouds, the bright sunshine, the birds, the fish, lanky Terenty. The number of his impressions, together with exhaustion and hunger, are too much for him; he is as hot as though he were on fire, and tosses from, side to side. He longs to tell someone all that is haunting him now in the darkness and agitating his soul, but there is no one to tell. Fyokla is too little and could not understand.

"I'll tell Terenty to-morrow," thinks the boy.

The children fall asleep thinking of the homeless cobbler, and, in the night, Terenty comes to them, makes the sign of the cross over them, and puts bread under their heads. And no one sees his love. It is seen only by the moon which floats in the sky and peeps caressingly through the holes in the wall of the deserted barn.

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# Vanka

## Anton Chekhov

VANKA ZHUKOV, a boy of nine, who had been for three months apprenticed to Alyahin the shoemaker, was sitting up on Christmas Eve. Waiting till his master and mistress and their workmen had gone to the midnight service, he took out of his master's cupboard a bottle of ink and a pen with a rusty nib, and, spreading out a crumpled sheet of paper in front of him, began writing. Before forming the first letter he several times looked round fearfully at the door and the windows, stole a glance at the dark ikon, on both sides of which stretched shelves full of lasts, and heaved a broken sigh. The paper lay on the bench while he knelt before it.

"Dear grandfather, Konstantin Makaritch," he wrote, "I am writing you a letter. I wish you a happy Christmas, and all blessings from God Almighty. I have neither father nor mother, you are the only one left me."

Vanka raised his eyes to the dark ikon on which the light of his candle was reflected, and vividly recalled his grandfather, Konstantin Makaritch, who was night watchman to a family called Zhivarev. He was a thin but extraordinarily nimble and lively little old man of sixty-five, with an everlastingly laughing face and drunken eyes. By day he slept in the servants' kitchen, or made jokes with the cooks; at night, wrapped in an ample sheepskin, he walked round the grounds and tapped with his little mallet. Old Kashtanka and Eel, so-called on account of his dark colour and his long body like a weasel's, followed him with hanging heads. This Eel was exceptionally polite and affectionate, and looked with equal kindness on strangers and his own masters, but had not a very good reputation. Under his politeness and meekness was hidden the most Jesuitical cunning. No one knew better how to creep up on occasion and snap at one's legs, to slip into the store-room, or steal a hen from a peasant. His hind legs had been nearly pulled off more than once, twice he had been hanged, every week he was thrashed till he was half dead, but he always revived.

At this moment grandfather was, no doubt, standing at the gate, screwing up his eyes at the red windows of the church, stamping with his high felt boots, and joking with the servants. His little mallet was hanging on his belt. He was clasping his hands, shrugging with the cold, and, with an aged chuckle, pinching first the housemaid, then the cook.

"How about a pinch of snuff?" he was saying, offering the women his snuff-box.

The women would take a sniff and sneeze. Grandfather would be indescribably delighted, go off into a merry chuckle, and cry:

"Tear it off, it has frozen on!"

They give the dogs a sniff of snuff too. Kashtanka sneezes, wriggles her head, and walks away offended. Eel does not sneeze, from politeness, but wags his tail. And the weather is glorious. The air is still, fresh, and transparent. The night is dark, but one can see the whole village with its white roofs and coils of smoke coming from the chimneys, the trees silvered with hoar frost, the snowdrifts. The whole sky spangled with gay twinkling stars, and the

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Milky Way is as distinct as though it had been washed and rubbed with snow for a holiday. . . .

Vanka sighed, dipped his pen, and went on writing:

"And yesterday I had a wiggling. The master pulled me out into the yard by my hair, and whacked me with a boot-stretcher because I accidentally fell asleep while I was rocking their brat in the cradle. And a week ago the mistress told me to clean a herring, and I began from the tail end, and she took the herring and thrust its head in my face. The workmen laugh at me and send me to the tavern for vodka, and tell me to steal the master's cucumbers for them, and the master beats me with anything that comes to hand. And there is nothing to eat. In the morning they give me bread, for dinner, porridge, and in the evening, bread again; but as for tea, or soup, the master and mistress gobble it all up themselves. And I am put to sleep in the passage, and when their wretched brat cries I get no sleep at all, but have to rock the cradle. Dear grandfather, show the divine mercy, take me away from here, home to the village. It's more than I can bear. I bow down to your feet, and will pray to God for you for ever, take me away from here or I shall die."

Vanka's mouth worked, he rubbed his eyes with his black fist, and gave a sob.

"I will powder your snuff for you," he went on. "I will pray for you, and if I do anything you can thrash me like Sidor's goat. And if you think I've no job, then I will beg the steward for Christ's sake to let me clean his boots, or I'll go for a shepherd-boy instead of Fedka. Dear grandfather, it is more than I can bear, it's simply no life at all. I wanted to run away to the village, but I have no boots, and I am afraid of the frost. When I grow up big I will take care of you for this, and not let anyone annoy you, and when you die I will pray for the rest of your soul, just as for my mammy's.

Moscow is a big town. It's all gentlemen's houses, and there are lots of horses, but there are no sheep, and the dogs are not spiteful. The lads here don't go out with the star, and they don't let anyone go into the choir, and once I saw in a shop window fishing-hooks for sale, fitted ready with the line and for all sorts of fish, awfully good ones, there was even one hook that would hold a forty-pound sheat-fish. And I have seen shops where there are guns of all sorts, after the pattern of the master's guns at home, so that I shouldn't wonder if they are a hundred roubles each. . . . And in the butchers' shops there are grouse and woodcocks and fish and hares, but the shopmen don't say where they shoot them.

"Dear grandfather, when they have the Christmas tree at the big house, get me a gilt walnut, and put it away in the green trunk. Ask the young lady Olga Ignatyevna, say it's for Vanka."

Vanka gave a tremulous sigh, and again stared at the window. He remembered how his grandfather always went into the forest to get the Christmas tree for his master's family, and took his grandson with him. It was a merry time! Grandfather made a noise in his throat, the forest crackled with the frost, and looking at them Vanka chortled too. Before chopping down the Christmas tree, grandfather would smoke a pipe, slowly take a pinch of snuff, and laugh at frozen Vanka. . . . The young fir trees, covered with hoar frost, stood motionless, waiting to see which of them was to die. Wherever one looked, a hare flew like an arrow over the snowdrifts. . . . Grandfather could not refrain from shouting: "Hold him, hold him . . . hold him! Ah, the bob-tailed devil!"

When he had cut down the Christmas tree, grandfather used to drag it to the big house, and there set to work to decorate it. . . . The young lady, who was Vanka's favourite, Olga Ignatyevna, was the busiest of all. When Vanka's mother Pelageya was alive, and a servant in the big house, Olga Ignatyevna used to give him goodies, and having nothing better to do, taught him to read and write, to count up to a hundred, and even to dance a quadrille. When Pelageya died, Vanka had been transferred to the servants' kitchen to be with his grandfather, and from the kitchen to the shoemaker's in Moscow.

"Do come, dear grandfather," Vanka went on with his letter. "For Christ's sake, I beg you, take me away. Have pity on an unhappy orphan like me; here everyone knocks me about, and I am fearfully hungry; I can't tell you what misery it is, I am always crying. And the other day the master hit me on the head with a last, so that I fell down. My life is wretched, worse than any dog's. . . . I send greetings to Alyona, one-eyed Yegorka, and the coachman, and don't give my concertina to anyone. I remain, your grandson, Ivan Zhukov. Dear grandfather, do come."

Vanka folded the sheet of writing-paper twice, and put it into an envelope he had bought the day before for a kopeck. . . . After thinking a little, he dipped the pen and wrote the address:

To grandfather in the village.

Then he scratched his head, thought a little, and added: Konstantin Makaritch. Glad that he had not been prevented from writing, he put on his cap and, without putting on his little greatcoat, ran out into the street as he was in his shirt. . . .

The shopmen at the butcher's, whom he had questioned the day before, told him that letters were put in post-boxes, and from the boxes were carried about all over the earth in mailcarts with drunken drivers and ringing bells. Vanka ran to the nearest post-box, and thrust the precious letter in the slit. . . .

An hour later, lulled by sweet hopes, he was sound asleep. . . . He dreamed of the stove. On the stove was sitting his grandfather, swinging his bare legs, and reading the letter to the cooks. . . .

By the stove was Eel, wagging his tail.

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# The Lottery Ticket

Anton Chekhov

IVAN DMITRITCH, a middle-class man who lived with his family on an income of twelve hundred a year and was very well satisfied with his lot, sat down on the sofa after supper and began reading the newspaper.

"I forgot to look at the newspaper today," his wife said to him as she cleared the table.  
"Look and see whether the list of drawings is there."

"Yes, it is," said Ivan Dmitritch; "but hasn't your ticket lapsed?"

"No; I took the interest on Tuesday."

"What is the number?"

"Series 9,499, number 26."

"All right . . . we will look . . . 9,499 and 26."

Ivan Dmitritch had no faith in lottery luck, and would not, as a rule, have consented to look at the lists of winning numbers, but now, as he had nothing else to do and as the newspaper was before his eyes, he passed his finger downwards along the column of numbers. And immediately, as though in mockery of his scepticism, no further than the second line from the top, his eye was caught by the figure 9,499! Unable to believe his eyes, he hurriedly dropped the paper on his knees without looking to see the number of the ticket, and, just as though some one had given him a douche of cold water, he felt an agreeable chill in the pit of the stomach; tingling and terrible and sweet!

"Masha, 9,499 is there!" he said in a hollow voice.

His wife looked at his astonished and panic-stricken face, and realized that he was not joking.

"9,499?" she asked, turning pale and dropping the folded tablecloth on the table.

"Yes, yes . . . it really is there!"

"And the number of the ticket?"

"Oh, yes! There's the number of the ticket too. But stay . . . wait! No, I say! Anyway, the number of our series is there! Anyway, you understand. . . ."

Looking at his wife, Ivan Dmitritch gave a broad, senseless smile, like a baby when a bright object is shown it. His wife smiled too; it was as pleasant to her as to him that he only mentioned the series, and did not try to find out the number of the winning ticket. To torment and tantalize oneself with hopes of possible fortune is so sweet, so thrilling!

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"It is our series," said Ivan Dmitritch, after a long silence. "So there is a probability that we have won. It's only a probability, but there it is!"

"Well, now look!"

"Wait a little. We have plenty of time to be disappointed. It's on the second line from the top, so the prize is seventy-five thousand. That's not money, but power, capital! And in a minute I shall look at the list, and there -- 26! Eh? I say, what if we really have won?"

The husband and wife began laughing and staring at one another in silence. The possibility of winning bewildered them; they could not have said, could not have dreamed, what they both needed that seventy-five thousand for, what they would buy, where they would go. They thought only of the figures 9,499 and 75,000 and pictured them in their imagination, while somehow they could not think of the happiness itself which was so possible.

Ivan Dmitritch, holding the paper in his hand, walked several times from corner to corner, and only when he had recovered from the first impression began dreaming a little.

"And if we have won," he said -- "why, it will be a new life, it will be a transformation! The ticket is yours, but if it were mine I should, first of all, of course, spend twenty-five thousand on real property in the shape of an estate; ten thousand on immediate expenses, new furnishing . . . travelling . . . paying debts, and so on. . . . The other forty thousand I would put in the bank and get interest on it."

"Yes, an estate, that would be nice," said his wife, sitting down and dropping her hands in her lap.

"Somewhere in the Tula or Oryol provinces. . . . In the first place we shouldn't need a summer villa, and besides, it would always bring in an income."

And pictures came crowding on his imagination, each more gracious and poetical than the last. And in all these pictures he saw himself well-fed, serene, healthy, felt warm, even hot! Here, after eating a summer soup, cold as ice, he lay on his back on the burning sand close to a stream or in the garden under a lime-tree. . . . It is hot. . . . His little boy and girl are crawling about near him, digging in the sand or catching ladybirds in the grass. He dozes sweetly, thinking of nothing, and feeling all over that he need not go to the office today, tomorrow, or the day after. Or, tired of lying still, he goes to the hayfield, or to the forest for mushrooms, or watches the peasants catching fish with a net. When the sun sets he takes a towel and soap and saunters to the bathing-shed, where he undresses at his leisure, slowly rubs his bare chest with his hands, and goes into the water. And in the water, near the opaque soapy circles, little fish flit to and fro and green water-weeds nod their heads. After bathing there is tea with cream and milk rolls. . . . In the evening a walk or vint with the neighbours.

"Yes, it would be nice to buy an estate," said his wife, also dreaming, and from her face it was evident that she was enchanted by her thoughts.

Ivan Dmitritch pictured to himself autumn with its rains, its cold evenings, and its St.

Martin's summer. At that season he would have to take longer walks about the garden and beside the river, so as to get thoroughly chilled, and then drink a big glass of vodka and eat a salted mushroom or a soused cucumber, and then -- drink another. . . . The children would come running from the kitchen-garden, bringing a carrot and a radish smelling of fresh earth. . . . And then, he would lie stretched full length on the sofa, and in leisurely fashion turn over the pages of some illustrated magazine, or, covering his face with it and unbuttoning his waistcoat, give himself up to slumber.

The St. Martin's summer is followed by cloudy, gloomy weather. It rains day and night, the bare trees weep, the wind is damp and cold. The dogs, the horses, the fowls -- all are wet, depressed, downcast. There is nowhere to walk; one can't go out for days together; one has to pace up and down the room, looking despondently at the grey window. It is dreary!

Ivan Dmitritch stopped and looked at his wife.

"I should go abroad, you know, Masha," he said.

And he began thinking how nice it would be in late autumn to go abroad somewhere to the South of France . . . to Italy . . . to India!

"I should certainly go abroad too," his wife said. "But look at the number of the ticket!"

"Wait, wait! . . ."

He walked about the room and went on thinking. It occurred to him: what if his wife really did go abroad? It is pleasant to travel alone, or in the society of light, careless women who live in the present, and not such as think and talk all the journey about nothing but their children, sigh, and tremble with dismay over every farthing. Ivan Dmitritch imagined his wife in the train with a multitude of parcels, baskets, and bags; she would be sighing over something, complaining that the train made her head ache, that she had spent so much money. . . . At the stations he would continually be having to run for boiling water, bread and butter. . . . She wouldn't have dinner because of its being too dear. . . .

"She would begrudge me every farthing," he thought, with a glance at his wife. "The lottery ticket is hers, not mine! Besides, what is the use of her going abroad? What does she want there? She would shut herself up in the hotel, and not let me out of her sight. . . . I know!"

And for the first time in his life his mind dwelt on the fact that his wife had grown elderly and plain, and that she was saturated through and through with the smell of cooking, while he was still young, fresh, and healthy, and might well have got married again.

"Of course, all that is silly nonsense," he thought; "but . . . why should she go abroad? What would she make of it? And yet she would go, of course. . . . I can fancy . . . In reality it is all one to her, whether it is Naples or Klin. She would only be in my way. I should be dependent upon her. I can fancy how, like a regular woman, she will lock the money up as soon as she gets it. . . . She will hide it from me. . . . She will look after her relations and grudge me every farthing."

Ivan Dmitritch thought of her relations. All those wretched brothers and sisters and aunts

and uncles would come crawling about as soon as they heard of the winning ticket, would begin whining like beggars, and fawning upon them with oily, hypocritical smiles. Wretched, detestable people! If they were given anything, they would ask for more; while if they were refused, they would swear at them, slander them, and wish them every kind of misfortune.

Ivan Dmitritch remembered his own relations, and their faces, at which he had looked impartially in the past, struck him now as repulsive and hateful.

"They are such reptiles!" he thought.

And his wife's face, too, struck him as repulsive and hateful. Anger surged up in his heart against her, and he thought malignantly:

"She knows nothing about money, and so she is stingy. If she won it she would give me a hundred roubles, and put the rest away under lock and key."

And he looked at his wife, not with a smile now, but with hatred. She glanced at him too, and also with hatred and anger. She had her own daydreams, her own plans, her own reflections; she understood perfectly well what her husband's dreams were. She knew who would be the first to try and grab her winnings.

"It's very nice making daydreams at other people's expense!" is what her eyes expressed.  
"No, don't you dare!"

Her husband understood her look; hatred began stirring again in his breast, and in order to annoy his wife he glanced quickly, to spite her at the fourth page on the newspaper and read out triumphantly:

"Series 9,499, number 46! Not 26!"

Hatred and hope both disappeared at once, and it began immediately to seem to Ivan Dmitritch and his wife that their rooms were dark and small and low-pitched, that the supper they had been eating was not doing them good, but lying heavy on their stomachs, that the evenings were long and wearisome. . . .

"What the devil's the meaning of it?" said Ivan Dmitritch, beginning to be ill-humoured. "Wherever one steps there are bits of paper under one's feet, crumbs, husks. The rooms are never swept! One is simply forced to go out. Damnation take my soul entirely! I shall go and hang myself on the first aspen-tree!"

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# Kashtanka

Anton Chekhov

I

## Misbehaviour

A YOUNG dog, a reddish mongrel, between a dachshund and a "yard-dog," very like a fox in face, was running up and down the pavement looking uneasily from side to side. From time to time she stopped and, whining and lifting first one chilled paw and then another, tried to make up her mind how it could have happened that she was lost.

She remembered very well how she had passed the day, and how, in the end, she had found herself on this unfamiliar pavement.

The day had begun by her master Luka Alexandritch's putting on his hat, taking something wooden under his arm wrapped up in a red handkerchief, and calling: "Kashtanka, come along!"

Hearing her name the mongrel had come out from under the work-table, where she slept on the shavings, stretched herself voluptuously and run after her master. The people Luka Alexandritch worked for lived a very long way off, so that, before he could get to any one of them, the carpenter had several times to step into a tavern to fortify himself. Kashtanka remembered that on the way she had behaved extremely improperly. In her delight that she was being taken for a walk she jumped about, dashed barking after the trains, ran into yards, and chased other dogs. The carpenter was continually losing sight of her, stopping, and angrily shouting at her. Once he had even, with an expression of fury in his face, taken her fox-like ear in his fist, smacked her, and said emphatically: "Pla-a-ague take you, you pest!"

After having left the work where it had been bespoken, Luka Alexandritch went into his sister's and there had something to eat and drink; from his sister's he had gone to see a bookbinder he knew; from the bookbinder's to a tavern, from the tavern to another crony's, and so on. In short, by the time Kashtanka found herself on the unfamiliar pavement, it was getting dusk, and the carpenter was as drunk as a cobbler. He was waving his arms and, breathing heavily, muttered:

"In sin my mother bore me! Ah, sins, sins! Here now we are walking along the street and looking at the street lamps, but when we die, we shall burn in a fiery Gehenna. . . ."

Or he fell into a good-natured tone, called Kashtanka to him, and said to her: "You, Kashtanka, are an insect of a creature, and nothing else. Beside a man, you are much the same as a joiner beside a cabinet-maker. . . ."

While he talked to her in that way, there was suddenly a burst of music. Kashtanka looked round and saw that a regiment of soldiers was coming straight towards her. Unable to endure the music, which unhinged her nerves, she turned round and round and wailed. To

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her great surprise, the carpenter, instead of being frightened, whining and barking, gave a broad grin, drew himself up to attention, and saluted with all his five fingers. Seeing that her master did not protest, Kashtanka whined louder than ever, and dashed across the road to the opposite pavement.

When she recovered herself, the band was not playing and the regiment was no longer there. She ran across the road to the spot where she had left her master, but alas, the carpenter was no longer there. She dashed forward, then back again and ran across the road once more, but the carpenter seemed to have vanished into the earth. Kashtanka began sniffing the pavement, hoping to find her master by the scent of his tracks, but some wretch had been that way just before in new rubber goloshes, and now all delicate scents were mixed with an acute stench of india-rubber, so that it was impossible to make out anything.

Kashtanka ran up and down and did not find her master, and meanwhile it had got dark. The street lamps were lighted on both sides of the road, and lights appeared in the windows. Big, fluffy snowflakes were falling and painting white the pavement, the horses' backs and the cabmen's caps, and the darker the evening grew the whiter were all these objects. Unknown customers kept walking incessantly to and fro, obstructing her field of vision and shoving against her with their feet. (All mankind Kashtanka divided into two uneven parts: masters and customers; between them there was an essential difference: the first had the right to beat her, and the second she had the right to nip by the calves of their legs.) These customers were hurrying off somewhere and paid no attention to her.

When it got quite dark, Kashtanka was overcome by despair and horror. She huddled up in an entrance and began whining piteously. The long day's journeying with Luka Alexandritch had exhausted her, her ears and her paws were freezing, and, what was more, she was terribly hungry. Only twice in the whole day had she tasted a morsel: she had eaten a little paste at the bookbinder's, and in one of the taverns she had found a sausage skin on the floor, near the counter -- that was all. If she had been a human being she would have certainly thought: "No, it is impossible to live like this! I must shoot myself!"

## II A Mysterious Stranger

But she thought of nothing, she simply whined. When her head and back were entirely plastered over with the soft feathery snow, and she had sunk into a painful doze of exhaustion, all at once the door of the entrance clicked, creaked, and struck her on the side. She jumped up. A man belonging to the class of customers came out. As Kashtanka whined and got under his feet, he could not help noticing her. He bent down to her and asked:

"Doggy, where do you come from? Have I hurt you? O, poor thing, poor thing. . . . Come, don't be cross, don't be cross. . . . I am sorry."

Kashtanka looked at the stranger through the snow-flakes that hung on her eyelashes, and saw before her a short, fat little man, with a plump, shaven face wearing a top hat and a fur coat that swung open.

"What are you whining for?" he went on, knocking the snow off her back with his fingers.

"Where is your master? I suppose you are lost? Ah, poor doggy! What are we going to do now?"

Catching in the stranger's voice a warm, cordial note, Kashtanka licked his hand, and whined still more pitifully.

"Oh, you nice funny thing!" said the stranger. "A regular fox! Well, there's nothing for it, you must come along with me! Perhaps you will be of use for something. . . . Well!"

He clicked with his lips, and made a sign to Kashtanka with his hand, which could only mean one thing: "Come along!" Kashtanka went.

Not more than half an hour later she was sitting on the floor in a big, light room, and, leaning her head against her side, was looking with tenderness and curiosity at the stranger who was sitting at the table, dining. He ate and threw pieces to her. . . . At first he gave her bread and the green rind of cheese, then a piece of meat, half a pie and chicken bones, while through hunger she ate so quickly that she had not time to distinguish the taste, and the more she ate the more acute was the feeling of hunger.

"Your masters don't feed you properly," said the stranger, seeing with what ferocious greediness she swallowed the morsels without munching them. "And how thin you are! Nothing but skin and bones. . . ."

Kashtanka ate a great deal and yet did not satisfy her hunger, but was simply stupefied with eating. After dinner she lay down in the middle of the room, stretched her legs and, conscious of an agreeable weariness all over her body, wagged her tail. While her new master, lounging in an easy-chair, smoked a cigar, she wagged her tail and considered the question, whether it was better at the stranger's or at the carpenter's. The stranger's surroundings were poor and ugly; besides the easy-chairs, the sofa, the lamps and the rugs, there was nothing, and the room seemed empty. At the carpenter's the whole place was stuffed full of things: he had a table, a bench, a heap of shavings, planes, chisels, saws, a cage with a goldfinch, a basin. . . . The stranger's room smelt of nothing, while there was always a thick fog in the carpenter's room, and a glorious smell of glue, varnish, and shavings. On the other hand, the stranger had one great superiority -- he gave her a great deal to eat and, to do him full justice, when Kashtanka sat facing the table and looking wistfully at him, he did not once hit or kick her, and did not once shout: "Go away, damned brute!"

When he had finished his cigar her new master went out, and a minute later came back holding a little mattress in his hands.

"Hey, you dog, come here!" he said, laying the mattress in the corner near the dog. "Lie down here, go to sleep!"

Then he put out the lamp and went away. Kashtanka lay down on the mattress and shut her eyes; the sound of a bark rose from the street, and she would have liked to answer it, but all at once she was overcome with unexpected melancholy. She thought of Luka Alexandritch, of his son Fedyushka, and her snug little place under the bench. . . . She remembered on the long winter evenings, when the carpenter was planing or reading the paper aloud,

Fedyushka usually played with her. . . . He used to pull her from under the bench by her hind legs, and play such tricks with her, that she saw green before her eyes, and ached in every joint. He would make her walk on her hind legs, use her as a bell, that is, shake her violently by the tail so that she squealed and barked, and give her tobacco to sniff. . . . The following trick was particularly agonising: Fedyushka would tie a piece of meat to a thread and give it to Kashtanka, and then, when she had swallowed it he would, with a loud laugh, pull it back again from her stomach, and the more lurid were her memories the more loudly and miserably Kashtanka whined.

But soon exhaustion and warmth prevailed over melancholy. She began to fall asleep. Dogs ran by in her imagination: among them a shaggy old poodle, whom she had seen that day in the street with a white patch on his eye and tufts of wool by his nose. Fedyushka ran after the poodle with a chisel in his hand, then all at once he too was covered with shaggy wool, and began merrily barking beside Kashtanka. Kashtanka and he goodnaturedly sniffed each other's noses and merrily ran down the street. . . .

### III

#### New and Very Agreeable Acquaintances

When Kashtanka woke up it was already light, and a sound rose from the street, such as only comes in the day-time. There was not a soul in the room. Kashtanka stretched, yawned and, cross and ill-humoured, walked about the room. She sniffed the corners and the furniture, looked into the passage and found nothing of interest there. Besides the door that led into the passage there was another door. After thinking a little Kashtanka scratched on it with both paws, opened it, and went into the adjoining room. Here on the bed, covered with a rug, a customer, in whom she recognised the stranger of yesterday, lay asleep.

"Rrrrr . . ." she growled, but recollecting yesterday's dinner, wagged her tail, and began sniffing.

She sniffed the stranger's clothes and boots and thought they smelt of horses. In the bedroom was another door, also closed. Kashtanka scratched at the door, leaned her chest against it, opened it, and was instantly aware of a strange and very suspicious smell. Foreseeing an unpleasant encounter, growling and looking about her, Kashtanka walked into a little room with a dirty wall-paper and drew back in alarm. She saw something surprising and terrible. A grey gander came straight towards her, hissing, with its neck bowed down to the floor and its wings outspread. Not far from him, on a little mattress, lay a white tom-cat; seeing Kashtanka, he jumped up, arched his back, wagged his tail with his hair standing on end and he, too, hissed at her. The dog was frightened in earnest, but not caring to betray her alarm, began barking loudly and dashed at the cat. . . . The cat arched his back more than ever, mewed and gave Kashtanka a smack on the head with his paw. Kashtanka jumped back, squatted on all four paws, and craning her nose towards the cat, went off into loud, shrill barks; meanwhile the gander came up behind and gave her a painful peck in the back. Kashtanka leapt up and dashed at the gander.

"What's this?" They heard a loud angry voice, and the stranger came into the room in his dressing-gown, with a cigar between his teeth. "What's the meaning of this? To your places!"

He went up to the cat, flicked him on his arched back, and said:

"Fyodor Timofeyitch, what's the meaning of this? Have you got up a fight? Ah, you old rascal! Lie down!"

And turning to the gander he shouted: "Ivan Ivanitch, go home!"

The cat obediently lay down on his mattress and closed his eyes. Judging from the expression of his face and whiskers, he was displeased with himself for having lost his temper and got into a fight.

Kashtanka began whining resentfully, while the gander craned his neck and began saying something rapidly, excitedly, distinctly, but quite unintelligibly.

"All right, all right," said his master, yawning. "You must live in peace and friendship." He stroked Kashtanka and went on: "And you, redhair, don't be frightened. . . . They are capital company, they won't annoy you. Stay, what are we to call you? You can't go on without a name, my dear."

The stranger thought a moment and said: "I tell you what . . . you shall be Auntie. . . . Do you understand? Auntie!"

And repeating the word "Auntie" several times he went out. Kashtanka sat down and began watching. The cat sat motionless on his little mattress, and pretended to be asleep. The gander, craning his neck and stamping, went on talking rapidly and excitedly about something. Apparently it was a very clever gander; after every long tirade, he always stepped back with an air of wonder and made a show of being highly delighted with his own speech. . . . Listening to him and answering "R-r-r-r," Kashtanka fell to sniffing the corners. In one of the corners she found a little trough in which she saw some soaked peas and a sop of rye crusts. She tried the peas; they were not nice; she tried the sopped bread and began eating it. The gander was not at all offended that the strange dog was eating his food, but, on the contrary, talked even more excitedly, and to show his confidence went to the trough and ate a few peas himself.

#### IV

#### Marvels on a Hurdle

A little while afterwards the stranger came in again, and brought a strange thing with him like a hurdle, or like the figure II. On the crosspiece on the top of this roughly made wooden frame hung a bell, and a pistol was also tied to it; there were strings from the tongue of the bell, and the trigger of the pistol. The stranger put the frame in the middle of the room, spent a long time tying and untying something, then looked at the gander and said: "Ivan Ivanitch, if you please!"

The gander went up to him and stood in an expectant attitude.

"Now then," said the stranger, "let us begin at the very beginning. First of all, bow and

make a curtsey! Look sharp!"

Ivan Ivanitch craned his neck, nodded in all directions, and scraped with his foot.

"Right. Bravo. . . . Now die!"

The gander lay on his back and stuck his legs in the air. After performing a few more similar, unimportant tricks, the stranger suddenly clutched at his head, and assuming an expression of horror, shouted: "Help! Fire! We are burning!"

Ivan Ivanitch ran to the frame, took the string in his beak, and set the bell ringing.

The stranger was very much pleased. He stroked the gander's neck and said:

"Bravo, Ivan Ivanitch! Now pretend that you are a jeweller selling gold and diamonds. Imagine now that you go to your shop and find thieves there. What would you do in that case?"

The gander took the other string in his beak and pulled it, and at once a deafening report was heard. Kashtanka was highly delighted with the bell ringing, and the shot threw her into so much ecstasy that she ran round the frame barking.

"Auntie, lie down!" cried the stranger; "be quiet!"

Ivan Ivanitch's task was not ended with the shooting. For a whole hour afterwards the stranger drove the gander round him on a cord, cracking a whip, and the gander had to jump over barriers and through hoops; he had to rear, that is, sit on his tail and wave his legs in the air. Kashtanka could not take her eyes off Ivan Ivanitch, wriggled with delight, and several times fell to running after him with shrill barks. After exhausting the gander and himself, the stranger wiped the sweat from his brow and cried:

"Marya, fetch Havronya Ivanovna here!"

A minute later there was the sound of grunting. Kashtanka growled, assumed a very valiant air, and to be on the safe side, went nearer to the stranger. The door opened, an old woman looked in, and, saying something, led in a black and very ugly sow. Paying no attention to Kashtanka's growls, the sow lifted up her little hoof and grunted good-humouredly.

Apparently it was very agreeable to her to see her master, the cat, and Ivan Ivanitch. When she went up to the cat and gave him a light tap on the stomach with her hoof, and then made some remark to the gander, a great deal of good-nature was expressed in her movements, and the quivering of her tail. Kashtanka realised at once that to growl and bark at such a character was useless.

The master took away the frame and cried. "Fyodor Timofeyitch, if you please!"

The cat stretched lazily, and reluctantly, as though performing a duty, went up to the sow.

"Come, let us begin with the Egyptian pyramid," began the master.

He spent a long time explaining something, then gave the word of command, "One . . . two . . . three!" At the word "three" Ivan Ivanitch flapped his wings and jumped on to the sow's back. . . . When, balancing himself with his wings and his neck, he got a firm foothold on the bristly back, Fyodor Timofeyitch listlessly and lazily, with manifest disdain, and with an air of scorning his art and not caring a pin for it, climbed on to the sow's back, then reluctantly mounted on to the gander, and stood on his hind legs. The result was what the stranger called the Egyptian pyramid. Kashtanka yapped with delight, but at that moment the old cat yawned and, losing his balance, rolled off the gander. Ivan Ivanitch lurched and fell off too. The stranger shouted, waved his hands, and began explaining something again. After spending an hour over the pyramid their indefatigable master proceeded to teach Ivan Ivanitch to ride on the cat, then began to teach the cat to smoke, and so on.

The lesson ended in the stranger's wiping the sweat off his brow and going away. Fyodor Timofeyitch gave a disdainful sniff, lay down on his mattress, and closed his eyes; Ivan Ivanitch went to the trough, and the pig was taken away by the old woman. Thanks to the number of her new impressions, Kashranka hardly noticed how the day passed, and in the evening she was installed with her mattress in the room with the dirty wall-paper, and spent the night in the society of Fyodor Timofeyitch and the gander.

V  
Talent! Talent!

A month passed.

Kashtanka had grown used to having a nice dinner every evening, and being called Auntie. She had grown used to the stranger too, and to her new companions. Life was comfortable and easy.

Every day began in the same way. As a rule, Ivan Ivanitch was the first to wake up, and at once went up to Auntie or to the cat, twisting his neck, and beginning to talk excitedly and persuasively, but, as before, unintelligibly. Sometimes he would crane up his head in the air and utter a long monologue. At first Kashtanka thought he talked so much because he was very clever, but after a little time had passed, she lost all her respect for him; when he went up to her with his long speeches she no longer wagged her tail, but treated him as a tiresome chatterbox, who would not let anyone sleep and, without the slightest ceremony, answered him with "R-r-r-r!"

Fyodor Timofeyitch was a gentleman of a very different sort. When he woke he did not utter a sound, did not stir, and did not even open his eyes. He would have been glad not to wake, for, as was evident, he was not greatly in love with life. Nothing interested him, he showed an apathetic and nonchalant attitude to everything, he despised everything and, even while eating his delicious dinner, sniffed contemptuously.

When she woke Kashtanka began walking about the room and sniffing the corners. She and the cat were the only ones allowed to go all over the flat; the gander had not the right to cross the threshold of the room with the dirty wall-paper, and Hayronya Ivanovna lived somewhere in a little outhouse in the yard and made her appearance only during the lessons.

Their master got up late, and immediately after drinking his tea began teaching them their tricks. Every day the frame, the whip, and the hoop were brought in, and every day almost the same performance took place. The lesson lasted three or four hours, so that sometimes Fyodor Timofeyitch was so tired that he staggered about like a drunken man, and Ivan Ivanitch opened his beak and breathed heavily, while their master became red in the face and could not mop the sweat from his brow fast enough.

The lesson and the dinner made the day very interesting, but the evenings were tedious. As a rule, their master went off somewhere in the evening and took the cat and the gander with him. Left alone, Auntie lay down on her little mattress and began to feel sad.

Melancholy crept on her imperceptibly and took possession of her by degrees, as darkness does of a room. It began with the dog's losing every inclination to bark, to eat, to run about the rooms, and even to look at things; then vague figures, half dogs, half human beings, with countenances attractive, pleasant, but incomprehensible, would appear in her imagination; when they came Auntie wagged her tail, and it seemed to her that she had somewhere, at some time, seen them and loved them. And as she dropped asleep, she always felt that those figures smelt of glue, shavings, and varnish.

When she had grown quite used to her new life, and from a thin, long mongrel, had changed into a sleek, well-groomed dog, her master looked at her one day before the lesson and said:

"It's high time, Auntie, to get to business. You have kicked up your heels in idleness long enough. I want to make an artiste of you. . . . Do you want to be an artiste?"

And he began teaching her various accomplishments. At the first lesson he taught her to stand and walk on her hind legs, which she liked extremely. At the second lesson she had to jump on her hind legs and catch some sugar, which her teacher held high above her head. After that, in the following lessons she danced, ran tied to a cord, howled to music, rang the bell, and fired the pistol, and in a month could successfully replace Fyodor Timofeyitch in the "Egyptian Pyramid." She learned very eagerly and was pleased with her own success; running with her tongue out on the cord, leaping through the hoop, and riding on old Fyodor Timofeyitch, gave her the greatest enjoyment. She accompanied every successful trick with a shrill, delighted bark, while her teacher wondered, was also delighted, and rubbed his hands.

"It's talent! It's talent!" he said. "Unquestionable talent! You will certainly be successful!"

And Auntie grew so used to the word talent, that every time her master pronounced it, she jumped up as if it had been her name.

## VI An Uneasy Night

Auntie had a doggy dream that a porter ran after her with a broom, and she woke up in a fright.

It was quite dark and very stuffy in the room. The fleas were biting. Auntie had never been afraid of darkness before, but now, for some reason, she felt frightened and inclined to bark.

Her master heaved a loud sigh in the next room, then soon afterwards the sow grunted in her sty, and then all was still again. When one thinks about eating one's heart grows lighter, and Auntie began thinking how that day she had stolen the leg of a chicken from Fyodor Timofeyitch, and had hidden it in the drawing-room, between the cupboard and the wall, where there were a great many spiders' webs and a great deal of dust. Would it not be as well to go now and look whether the chicken leg were still there or not? It was very possible that her master had found it and eaten it. But she must not go out of the room before morning, that was the rule. Auntie shut her eyes to go to sleep as quickly as possible, for she knew by experience that the sooner you go to sleep the sooner the morning comes. But all at once there was a strange scream not far from her which made her start and jump up on all four legs. It was Ivan Ivanitch, and his cry was not babbling and persuasive as usual, but a wild, shrill, unnatural scream like the squeak of a door opening. Unable to distinguish anything in the darkness, and not understanding what was wrong, Auntie felt still more frightened and growled: "R-r-r-r. . . ."

Some time passed, as long as it takes to eat a good bone; the scream was not repeated. Little by little Auntie's uneasiness passed off and she began to doze. She dreamed of two big black dogs with tufts of last year's coat left on their haunches and sides; they were eating out of a big basin some swill, from which there came a white steam and a most appetising smell; from time to time they looked round at Auntie, showed their teeth and growled: "We are not going to give you any!" But a peasant in a fur-coat ran out of the house and drove them away with a whip; then Auntie went up to the basin and began eating, but as soon as the peasant went out of the gate, the two black dogs rushed at her growling, and all at once there was again a shrill scream.

"K-gee! K-gee-gee!" cried Ivan Ivanitch.

Auntie woke, jumped up and, without leaving her mattress, went off into a yelping bark. It seemed to her that it was not Ivan Ivanitch that was screaming but someone else, and for some reason the sow again grunted in her sty.

Then there was the sound of shuffling slippers, and the master came into the room in his dressing-gown with a candle in his hand. The flickering light danced over the dirty wall-paper and the ceiling, and chased away the darkness. Auntie saw that there was no stranger in the room. Ivan Ivanitch was sitting on the floor and was not asleep. His wings were spread out and his beak was open, and altogether he looked as though he were very tired and thirsty. Old Fyodor Timofeyitch was not asleep either. He, too, must have been awakened by the scream.

"Ivan Ivanitch, what's the matter with you?" the master asked the gander. "Why are you screaming? Are you ill?"

The gander did not answer. The master touched him on the neck, stroked his back, and said: "You are a queer chap. You don't sleep yourself, and you don't let other people. . . ."

When the master went out, carrying the candle with him, there was darkness again. Auntie felt frightened. The gander did not scream, but again she fancied that there was some stranger in the room. What was most dreadful was that this stranger could not be bitten, as he was unseen and had no shape. And for some reason she thought that something very bad would certainly happen that night. Fyodor Timofeyitch was uneasy too.

Auntie could hear him shifting on his mattress, yawning and shaking his head.

Somewhere in the street there was a knocking at a gate and the sow grunted in her sty. Auntie began to whine, stretched out her front-paws and laid her head down upon them. She fancied that in the knocking at the gate, in the grunting of the sow, who was for some reason awake, in the darkness and the stillness, there was something as miserable and dreadful as in Ivan Ivanitch's scream. Everything was in agitation and anxiety, but why? Who was the stranger who could not be seen? Then two dim flashes of green gleamed for a minute near Auntie. It was Fyodor Timofeyitch, for the first time of their whole acquaintance coming up to her. What did he want? Auntie licked his paw, and not asking why he had come, howled softly and on various notes.

"K-gee!" cried Ivan Ivanitch, "K-g-ee!"

The door opened again and the master came in with a candle.

The gander was sitting in the same attitude as before, with his beak open, and his wings spread out, his eyes were closed.

"Ivan Ivanitch!" his master called him.

The gander did not stir. His master sat down before him on the floor, looked at him in silence for a minute, and said:

"Ivan Ivanitch, what is it? Are you dying? Oh, I remember now, I remember!" he cried out, and clutched at his head. "I know why it is! It's because the horse stepped on you to-day! My God! My God!"

Auntie did not understand what her master was saying, but she saw from his face that he, too, was expecting something dreadful. She stretched out her head towards the dark window, where it seemed to her some stranger was looking in, and howled.

"He is dying, Auntie!" said her master, and wrung his hands. "Yes, yes, he is dying! Death has come into your room. What are we to do?"

Pale and agitated, the master went back into his room, sighing and shaking his head. Auntie was afraid to remain in the darkness, and followed her master into his bedroom. He sat down on the bed and repeated several times: "My God, what's to be done?"

Auntie walked about round his feet, and not understanding why she was wretched and why they were all so uneasy, and trying to understand, watched every movement he made. Fyodor Timofeyitch, who rarely left his little mattress, came into the master's bedroom too, and began rubbing himself against his feet. He shook his head as though he wanted to shake

painful thoughts out of it, and kept peeping suspiciously under the bed.

The master took a saucer, poured some water from his wash-stand into it, and went to the gander again.

"Drink, Ivan Ivanitch!" he said tenderly, setting the saucer before him; "drink, darling."

But Ivan Ivanitch did not stir and did not open his eyes. His master bent his head down to the saucer and dipped his beak into the water, but the gander did not drink, he spread his wings wider than ever, and his head remained lying in the saucer.

"No, there's nothing to be done now," sighed his master. "It's all over. Ivan Ivanitch is gone!"

And shining drops, such as one sees on the window-pane when it rains, trickled down his cheeks. Not understanding what was the matter, Auntie and Fyodor Timofeyitch snuggled up to him and looked with horror at the gander.

"Poor Ivan Ivanitch!" said the master, sighing mournfully. "And I was dreaming I would take you in the spring into the country, and would walk with you on the green grass. Dear creature, my good comrade, you are no more! How shall I do without you now?"

It seemed to Auntie that the same thing would happen to her, that is, that she too, there was no knowing why, would close her eyes, stretch out her paws, open her mouth, and everyone would look at her with horror. Apparently the same reflections were passing through the brain of Fyodor Timofeyitch. Never before had the old cat been so morose and gloomy.

It began to get light, and the unseen stranger who had so frightened Auntie was no longer in the room. When it was quite daylight, the porter came in, took the gander, and carried him away. And soon afterwards the old woman came in and took away the trough.

Auntie went into the drawing-room and looked behind the cupboard: her master had not eaten the chicken bone, it was lying in its place among the dust and spiders' webs. But Auntie felt sad and dreary and wanted to cry. She did not even sniff at the bone, but went under the sofa, sat down there, and began softly whining in a thin voice.

## VII An Unsuccessful Début

One fine evening the master came into the room with the dirty wall-paper, and, rubbing his hands, said:

"Well. . . ."

He meant to say something more, but went away without saying it. Auntie, who during her lessons had thoroughly studied his face and intonations, divined that he was agitated, anxious and, she fancied, angry. Soon afterwards he came back and said:

"To-day I shall take with me Auntie and F'yodor Timofeyitch. To-day, Auntie, you will take the place of poor Ivan Ivanitch in the 'Egyptian Pyramid.' Goodness knows how it will be! Nothing is ready, nothing has been thoroughly studied, there have been few rehearsals! We shall be disgraced, we shall come to grief!"

Then he went out again, and a minute later, came back in his fur-coat and top hat. Going up to the cat he took him by the fore-paws and put him inside the front of his coat, while Fyodor Timofeyitch appeared completely unconcerned, and did not even trouble to open his eyes. To him it was apparently a matter of absolute indifference whether he remained lying down, or were lifted up by his paws, whether he rested on his mattress or under his master's fur-coat.

"Come along, Auntie," said her master.

Wagging her tail, and understanding nothing, Auntie followed him. A minute later she was sitting in a sledge by her master's feet and heard him, shrinking with cold and anxiety, mutter to himself:

"We shall be disgraced! We shall come to grief!"

The sledge stopped at a big strange-looking house, like a soup-ladle turned upside down. The long entrance to this house, with its three glass doors, was lighted up with a dozen brilliant lamps. The doors opened with a resounding noise and, like jaws, swallowed up the people who were moving to and fro at the entrance. There were a great many people, horses, too, often ran up to the entrance, but no dogs were to be seen.

The master took Auntie in his arms and thrust her in his coat, where Fyodor Timofeyirch already was. It was dark and stuffy there, but warm. For an instant two green sparks flashed at her; it was the cat, who opened his eyes on being disturbed by his neighbour's cold rough paws. Auntie licked his ear, and, trying to settle herself as comfortably as possible, moved uneasily, crushed him under her cold paws, and casually poked her head out from under the coat, but at once growled angrily, and tucked it in again. It seemed to her that she had seen a huge, badly lighted room, full of monsters; from behind screens and gratings, which stretched on both sides of the room, horrible faces looked out: faces of horses with horns, with long ears, and one fat, huge countenance with a tail instead of a nose, and two long gnawed bones sticking out of his mouth.

The cat mewed huskily under Auntie's paws, but at that moment the coat was flung open, the master said, "Hop!" and Fyodor Timofeyitch and Auntie jumped to the floor. They were now in a little room with grey plank walls; there was no other furniture in it but a little table with a looking-glass on it, a stool, and some rags hung about the corners, and instead of a lamp or candles, there was a bright fan-shaped light attached to a little pipe fixed in the wall. Fyodor Timofeyitch licked his coat which had been ruffled by Auntie, went under the stool, and lay down. Their master, still agitated and rubbing his hands, began undressing. . . . He undressed as he usually did at home when he was preparing to get under the rug, that is, took off everything but his underlinen, then he sat down on the stool, and, looking in the looking-glass, began playing the most surprising tricks with himself. . . . First of all he put on his head a wig, with a parting and with two tufts of hair standing up like horns, then he smeared his face thickly with something white, and over the white colour

painted his eyebrows, his moustaches, and red on his cheeks. His antics did not end with that. After smearing his face and neck, he began putting himself into an extraordinary and incongruous costume, such as Auntie had never seen before, either in houses or in the street. Imagine very full trousers, made of chintz covered with big flowers, such as is used in working-class houses for curtains and covering furniture, trousers which buttoned up just under his armpits. One trouser leg was made of brown chintz, the other of bright yellow. Almost lost in these, he then put on a short chintz jacket, with a big scalloped collar, and a gold star on the back, stockings of different colours, and green slippers.

Everything seemed going round before Auntie's eyes and in her soul. The white-faced, sack-like figure smelt like her master, its voice, too, was the familiar master's voice, but there were moments when Auntie was tortured by doubts, and then she was ready to run away from the parti-coloured figure and to bark. The new place, the fan-shaped light, the smell, the transformation that had taken place in her master -- all this aroused in her a vague dread and a foreboding that she would certainly meet with some horror such as the big face with the tail instead of a nose. And then, somewhere through the wall, some hateful band was playing, and from time to time she heard an incomprehensible roar. Only one thing reassured her -- that was the imperturbability of Fyodor Timofeyitch. He dozed with the utmost tranquillity under the stool, and did not open his eyes even when it was moved.

A man in a dress coat and a white waistcoat peeped into the little room and said:

"Miss Arabella has just gone on. After her -- you."

Their master made no answer. He drew a small box from under the table, sat down, and waited. From his lips and his hands it could be seen that he was agitated, and Auntie could hear how his breathing came in gasps.

"Monsieur George, come on!" someone shouted behind the door. Their master got up and crossed himself three times, then took the cat from under the stool and put him in the box.

"Come, Auntie," he said softly.

Auntie, who could make nothing out of it, went up to his hands, he kissed her on the head, and put her beside Fyodor Timofeyitch. Then followed darkness. . . . Auntie trampled on the cat, scratched at the walls of the box, and was so frightened that she could not utter a sound, while the box swayed and quivered, as though it were on the waves. . . .

"Here we are again!" her master shouted aloud: "here we are again!"

Auntie felt that after that shout the box struck against something hard and left off swaying. There was a loud deep roar, someone was being slapped, and that someone, probably the monster with the tail instead of a nose, roared and laughed so loud that the locks of the box trembled. In response to the roar, there came a shrill, squeaky laugh from her master, such as he never laughed at home.

"Ha!" he shouted, trying to shout above the roar. "Honoured friends! I have only just come from the station! My granny's kicked the bucket and left me a fortune! There is something very heavy in the box, it must be gold, ha! ha! I bet there's a million here! We'll open it and

look. . . ."

The lock of the box clicked. The bright light dazzled Auntie's eyes, she jumped out of the box, and, deafened by the roar, ran quickly round her master, and broke into a shrill bark.

"Ha!" exclaimed her master. "Uncle Fyodor Timofeyitch! Beloved Aunt, dear relations! The devil take you!"

He fell on his stomach on the sand, seized the cat and Auntie, and fell to embracing them. While he held Auntie tight in his arms, she glanced round into the world into which fate had brought her and, impressed by its immensity, was for a minute dumbfounded with amazement and delight, then jumped out of her master's arms, and to express the intensity of her emotions, whirled round and round on one spot like a top. This new world was big and full of bright light; wherever she looked, on all sides, from floor to ceiling there were faces, faces, faces, and nothing else.

"Auntie, I beg you to sit down!" shouted her master. Remembering what that meant, Auntie jumped on to a chair, and sat down. She looked at her master. His eyes looked at her gravely and kindly as always, but his face, especially his mouth and teeth, were made grotesque by a broad immovable grin. He laughed, skipped about, twitched his shoulders, and made a show of being very merry in the presence of the thousands of faces. Auntie believed in his merriment, all at once felt all over her that those thousands of faces were looking at her, lifted up her fox-like head, and howled joyously.

"You sit there, Auntie," her master said to her., "while Uncle and I will dance the Kamarinsky."

Fyodor Timofeyitch stood looking about him indifferently, waiting to be made to do something silly. He danced listlessly, carelessly, sullenly, and one could see from his movements, his tail and his ears, that he had a profound contempt for the crowd, the bright light, his master and himself. When he had performed his allotted task, he gave a yawn and sat down.

"Now, Auntie!" said her master, "we'll have first a song, and then a dance, shall we?"

He took a pipe out of his pocket, and began playing. Auntie, who could not endure music, began moving uneasily in her chair and howled. A roar of applause rose from all sides. Her master bowed, and when all was still again, went on playing. . . . Just as he took one very high note, someone high up among the audience uttered a loud exclamation:

"Auntie!" cried a child's voice, "why it's Kashtanka!"

"Kashtanka it is!" declared a cracked drunken tenor. "Kashtanka! Strike me dead, Fedyushka, it is Kashtanka. Kashtanka! here!"

Someone in the gallery gave a whistle, and two voices, one a boy's and one a man's, called loudly: "Kashtanka! Kashtanka!"

Auntie started, and looked where the shouting came from. Two faces, one hairy, drunken

and grinning, the other chubby, rosy-cheeked and frightened-looking, dazed her eyes as the bright light had dazed them before. . . . She remembered, fell off the chair, struggled on the sand, then jumped up, and with a delighted yap dashed towards those faces. There was a deafening roar, interspersed with whistles and a shrill childish shout: "Kashtanka! Kashtanka!"

Auntie leaped over the barrier, then across someone's shoulders. She found herself in a box: to get into the next tier she had to leap over a high wall. Auntie jumped, but did not jump high enough, and slipped back down the wall. Then she was passed from hand to hand, licked hands and faces, kept mounting higher and higher, and at last got into the gallery. . . .

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Half an hour afterwards, Kashtanka was in the street, following the people who smelt of glue and varnish. Luka Alexandritch staggered and instinctively, taught by experience, tried to keep as far from the gutter as possible.

"In sin my mother bore me," he muttered. "And you, Kashtanka, are a thing of little understanding. Beside a man, you are like a joiner beside a cabinetmaker."

Fedyushka walked beside him, wearing his father's cap. Kashtanka looked at their backs, and it seemed to her that she had been following them for ages, and was glad that there had not been a break for a minute in her life.

She remembered the little room with dirty wall-paper, the gander, Fyodor Timofeyitch, the delicious dinners, the lessons, the circus, but all that seemed to her now like a long, tangled, oppressive dream.

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# Peasant Wives

Anton Chekhov

IN the village of Reybuzh, just facing the church, stands a two-storeyed house with a stone foundation and an iron roof. In the lower storey the owner himself, Filip Ivanov Kashin, nicknamed Dyudya, lives with his family, and on the upper floor, where it is apt to be very hot in summer and very cold in winter, they put up government officials, merchants, or landowners, who chance to be travelling that way. Dyudya rents some bits of land, keeps a tavern on the highroad, does a trade in tar, honey, cattle, and jackdaws, and has already something like eight thousand roubles put by in the bank in the town.

His elder son, Fyodor, is head engineer in the factory, and, as the peasants say of him, he has risen so high in the world that he is quite out of reach now. Fyodor's wife, Sofya, a plain, ailing woman, lives at home at her father-in-law's. She is for ever crying, and every Sunday she goes over to the hospital for medicine. Dyudya's second son, the hunchback Alyoshka, is living at home at his father's. He has only lately been married to Varvara, whom they singled out for him from a poor family. She is a handsome young woman, smart and buxom. When officials or merchants put up at the house, they always insist on having Varvara to bring in the samovar and make their beds.

One June evening when the sun was setting and the air was full of the smell of hay, of steaming dung-heaps and new milk, a plain-looking cart drove into Dyudya's yard with three people in it: a man of about thirty in a canvas suit, beside him a little boy of seven or eight in a long black coat with big bone buttons, and on the driver's seat a young fellow in a red shirt.

The young fellow took out the horses and led them out into the street to walk them up and down a bit, while the traveller washed, said a prayer, turning towards the church, then spread a rug near the cart and sat down with the boy to supper. He ate without haste, sedately, and Dyudya, who had seen a good many travellers in his time, knew him from his manners for a businesslike man, serious and aware of his own value.

Dyudya was sitting on the step in his waistcoat without a cap on, waiting for the visitor to speak first. He was used to hearing all kinds of stories from the travellers in the evening, and he liked listening to them before going to bed. His old wife, Afanasyevna, and his daughter-in-law Sofya, were milking in the cowshed. The other daughter-in-law, Varvara, was sitting at the open window of the upper storey, eating sunflower seeds.

"The little chap will be your son, I'm thinking?" Dyudya asked the traveller.

"No; adopted. An orphan. I took him for my soul's salvation."

They got into conversation. The stranger seemed to be a man fond of talking and ready of speech, and Dyudya learned from him that he was from the town, was of the tradesman class, and had a house of his own, that his name was Matvey Savitch, that he was on his way now to look at some gardens that he was renting from some German colonists, and that the boy's name was Kuzka. The evening was hot and close, no one felt inclined for sleep.

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When it was getting dark and pale stars began to twinkle here and there in the sky, Matvey Savitch began to tell how he had come by Kuzka. Afanasyevna and Sofya stood a little way off, listening. Kuzka had gone to the gate.

"It's a complicated story, old man," began Matvey Savitch, "and if I were to tell you all just as it happened, it would take all night and more. Ten years ago in a little house in our street, next door to me, where now there's a tallow and oil factory, there was living an old widow, Marfa Semyonovna Kapluntsev, and she had two sons: one was a guard on the railway, but the other, Vasya, who was just my own age, lived at home with his mother. Old Kapluntsev had kept five pair of horses and sent carriers all over the town; his widow had not given up the business, but managed the carriers as well as her husband had done, so that some days they would bring in as much as five roubles from their rounds.

"The young fellow, too, made a trifle on his own account. He used to breed fancy pigeons and sell them to fanciers; at times he would stand for hours on the roof, waving a broom in the air and whistling; his pigeons were right up in the clouds, but it wasn't enough for him, and he'd want them to go higher yet. Siskins and starlings, too, he used to catch, and he made cages for sale. All trifles, but, mind you, he'd pick up some ten roubles a month over such trifles. Well, as time went on, the old lady lost the use of her legs and took to her bed. In consequence of which event the house was left without a woman to look after it, and that's for all the world like a man without an eye. The old lady bestirred herself and made up her mind to marry Vasya. They called in a matchmaker at once, the women got to talking of one thing and another, and Vasya went off to have a look at the girls. He picked out Mashenka, a widow's daughter. They made up their minds without loss of time and in a week it was all settled. The girl was a little slip of a thing, seventeen, but fair-skinned and pretty-looking, and like a lady in all her ways; and a decent dowry with her, five hundred roubles, a cow, a bed. . . . Well, the old lady -- it seemed as though she had known it was coming -- three days after the wedding, departed to the Heavenly Jerusalem where is neither sickness nor sighing. The young people gave her a good funeral and began their life together. For just six months they got on splendidly, and then all of a sudden another misfortune. It never rains but it pours: Vasya was summoned to the recruiting office to draw lots for the service. He was taken, poor chap, for a soldier, and not even granted exemption. They shaved his head and packed him off to Poland. It was God's will; there was nothing to be done. When he said good-bye to his wife in the yard, he bore it all right; but as he glanced up at the hay-loft and his pigeons for the last time, he burst out crying. It was pitiful to see him.

"At first Mashenka got her mother to stay with her, that she mightn't be dull all alone; she stayed till the baby -- this very Kuzka here -- was born, and then she went off to Oboyan to another married daughter's and left Mashenka alone with the baby. There were five peasants -- the carriers -- a drunken saucy lot; horses, too, and dray-carts to see to, and then the fence would be broken or the soot afire in the chimney -- jobs beyond a woman, and through our being neighbours, she got into the way of turning to me for every little thing. . . . Well, I'd go over, set things to rights, and give advice. . . . Naturally, not without going indoors, drinking a cup of tea and having a little chat with her. I was a young fellow, intellectual, and fond of talking on all sorts of subjects; she, too, was well-bred and educated. She was always neatly dressed, and in summer she walked out with a sunshade. Sometimes I would begin upon religion or politics with her, and she was flattered and would entertain me with tea and jam. . . . In a word, not to make a long story of it, I must tell you, old man, a year

had not passed before the Evil One, the enemy of all mankind, confounded me. I began to notice that any day I didn't go to see her, I seemed out of sorts and dull. And I'd be continually making up something that I must see her about: 'It's high time,' I'd say to myself, 'to put the double windows in for the winter,' and the whole day I'd idle away over at her place putting in the windows and take good care to leave a couple of them over for the next day too.

"I ought to count over Vasya's pigeons, to see none of them have strayed," and so on. I used always to be talking to her across the fence, and in the end I made a little gate in the fence so as not to have to go so far round. From womankind comes much evil into the world and every kind of abomination. Not we sinners only; even the saints themselves have been led astray by them. Mashenka did not try to keep me at a distance. Instead of thinking of her husband and being on her guard, she fell in love with me. I began to notice that she was dull without me, and was always walking to and fro by the fence looking into my yard through the cracks.

"My brains were going round in my head in a sort of frenzy. On Thursday in Holy Week I was going early in the morning -- it was scarcely light -- to market. I passed close by her gate, and the Evil One was by me -- at my elbow. I looked -- she had a gate with open trellis work at the top -- and there she was, up already, standing in the middle of the yard, feeding the ducks. I could not restrain myself, and I called her name. She came up and looked at me through the trellis. . . . Her little face was white, her eyes soft and sleepy-looking. . . . I liked her looks immensely, and I began paying her compliments, as though we were not at the gate, but just as one does on namedays, while she blushed, and laughed, and kept looking straight into my eyes without winking. . . . I lost all sense and began to declare my love to her. . . . She opened the gate, and from that morning we began to live as man and wife. . . ."

The hunchback Alyoshka came into the yard from the street and ran out of breath into the house, not looking at any one. A minute later he ran out of the house with a concertina. Jingling some coppers in his pocket, and cracking sunflower seeds as he ran, he went out at the gate.

"And who's that, pray?" asked Matvey Savitch.

"My son Alexey," answered Dyudya. "He's off on a spree, the rascal. God has afflicted him with a hump, so we are not very hard on him."

"And he's always drinking with the other fellows, always drinking," sighed Afanasyevna. "Before Carnival we married him, thinking he'd be steadier, but there! he's worse than ever."

"It's been no use. Simply keeping another man's daughter for nothing," said Dyudya.

Somewhere behind the church they began to sing a glorious, mournful song. The words they could not catch and only the voices could be heard -- two tenors and a bass. All were listening; there was complete stillness in the yard. . . . Two voices suddenly broke off with a loud roar of laughter, but the third, a tenor, still sang on, and took so high a note that every one instinctively looked upwards, as though the voice had soared to heaven itself.

Varvara came out of the house, and screening her eyes with her hand, as though from the sun, she looked towards the church.

"It's the priest's sons with the schoolmaster," she said.

Again all the three voices began to sing together. Matvey Savitch sighed and went on:

"Well, that's how it was, old man. Two years later we got a letter from Vasya from Warsaw. He wrote that he was being sent home sick. He was ill. By that time I had put all that foolishness out of my head, and I had a fine match picked out all ready for me, only I didn't know how to break it off with my sweetheart. Every day I'd make up my mind to have it out with Mashenka, but I didn't know how to approach her so as not to have a woman's screeching about my ears. The letter freed my hands. I read it through with Mashenka; she turned white as a sheet, while I said to her: 'Thank God; now,' says I, 'you'll be a married woman again.' But says she: 'I'm not going to live with him.' 'Why, isn't he your husband?' said I. 'Is it an easy thing? . . . I never loved him and I married him not of my own free will. My mother made me.' 'Don't try to get out of it, silly,' said I, 'but tell me this: were you married to him in church or not?' 'I was married,' she said, 'but it's you that I love, and I will stay with you to the day of my death. Folks may jeer. I don't care. . . .' 'You're a Christian woman,' said I, 'and have read the Scriptures; what is written there?'

"Once married, with her husband she must live," said Dyudya.

" 'Man and wife are one flesh. We have sinned,' I said, 'you and I, and it is enough; we must repent and fear God. We must confess it all to Vasya,' said I; 'he's a quiet fellow and soft -- he won't kill you. And indeed,' said I, 'better to suffer torments in this world at the hands of your lawful master than to gnash your teeth at the dread Seat of Judgment.' The wench wouldn't listen; she stuck to her silly, 'It's you I love!' and nothing more could I get out of her.

"Vasya came back on the Saturday before Trinity, early in the morning. From my fence I could see everything; he ran into the house, and came back a minute later with Kuzka in his arms, and he was laughing and crying all at once; he was kissing Kuzka and looking up at the hay-loft, and hadn't the heart to put the child down, and yet he was longing to go to his pigeons. He was always a soft sort of chap -- sentimental. That day passed off very well, all quiet and proper. They had begun ringing the church bells for the evening service, when the thought struck me: 'To-morrow's Trinity Sunday; how is it they are not decking the gates and the fence with green? Something's wrong,' I thought. I went over to them. I peeped in, and there he was, sitting on the floor in the middle of the room, his eyes staring like a drunken man's, the tears streaming down his cheeks and his hands shaking; he was pulling cracknels, necklaces, gingerbread nuts, and all sorts of little presents out of his bundle and flinging them on the floor. Kuzka -- he was three years old -- was crawling on the floor, munching the gingerbreads, while Mashenka stood by the stove, white and shivering all over, muttering: 'I'm not your wife; I can't live with you,' and all sorts of foolishness. I bowed down at Vasya's feet, and said: 'We have sinned against you, Vassily Maximitch; forgive us, for Christ's sake!' Then I got up and spoke to Mashenka: 'You, Marya Semyonovna, ought now to wash Vassily Maximitch's feet and drink the water. Do you be an obedient wife to him, and pray to God for me, that He in His mercy may forgive my transgression.' It came to me like an inspiration from an angel of Heaven; I gave her solemn

counsel and spoke with such feeling that my own tears flowed too. And so two days later Vasya comes to me: 'Matyusha,' says he, 'I forgive you and my wife; God have mercy on you! She was a soldier's wife, a young thing all alone; it was hard for her to be on her guard. She's not the first, nor will she be the last. Only,' he says, 'I beg you to behave as though there had never been anything between you, and to make no sign, while I,' says he, 'will do my best to please her in every way, so that she may come to love me again.' He gave me his hand on it, drank a cup of tea, and went away more cheerful.

"'Well,' thought I, 'thank God!' and I did feel glad that everything had gone off so well. But no sooner had Vasya gone out of the yard, when in came Mashenka. Ah! What I had to suffer! She hung on my neck, weeping and praying: 'For God's sake, don't cast me off; I can't live without you!' "

"The vile hussy!" sighed Dyudya.

"I swore at her, stamped my foot, and dragging her into the passage, I fastened the door with the hook. 'Go to your husband,' I cried. 'Don't shame me before folks. Fear God!' And every day there was a scene of that sort.

"One morning I was standing in my yard near the stable cleaning a bridle. All at once I saw her running through the little gate into my yard, with bare feet, in her petticoat, and straight towards me; she clutched at the bridle, getting all smeared with the pitch, and shaking and weeping, she cried: 'I can't stand him; I loathe him; I can't bear it! If you don't love me, better kill me!' I was angry, and I struck her twice with the bridle, but at that instant Vasya ran in at the gate, and in a despairing voice he shouted: 'Don't beat her! Don't beat her!' But he ran up himself, and waving his arms, as though he were mad, he let fly with his fists at her with all his might, then flung her on the ground and kicked her. I tried to defend her, but he snatched up the reins and thrashed her with them, and all the while, like a colt's whinny, he went: 'He -- he-- he!' "

"I'd take the reins and let you feel them," muttered Varvara, moving away; "murdering our sister, the damned brutes! . . ."

"Hold your tongue, you jade!" Dyudya shouted at her.

"'He -- he -- he!' " Matvey Savitch went on. "A carrier ran out of his yard; I called to my workman, and the three of us got Mashenka away from him and carried her home in our arms. The disgrace of it! The same day I went over in the evening to see how things were. She was lying in bed, all wrapped up in bandages, nothing but her eyes and nose to be seen; she was looking at the ceiling. I said: 'Good-evening, Marya Semyonovna!' She did not speak. And Vasya was sitting in the next room, his head in his hands, crying and saying: 'Brute that I am! I've ruined my life! O God, let me die!' I sat for half an hour by Mashenka and gave her a good talking-to. I tried to frighten her a bit. 'The righteous,' said I, 'after this life go to Paradise, but you will go to a Gehenna of fire, like all adulteresses. Don't strive against your husband, go and lay yourself at his feet.' But never a word from her; she didn't so much as blink an eyelid, for all the world as though I were talking to a post. The next day Vasya fell ill with something like cholera, and in the evening I heard that he was dead. Well, so they buried him, and Mashenka did not go to the funeral; she didn't care to show her shameless face and her bruises. And soon there began to be talk all over the district that

Vasya had not died a natural death, that Mashenka had made away with him. It got to the ears of the police; they had Vasya dug up and cut open, and in his stomach they found arsenic. It was clear he had been poisoned; the police came and took Mashenka away, and with her the innocent Kuzka. They were put in prison. . . . The woman had gone too far -- God punished her. . . . Eight months later they tried her. She sat, I remember, on a low stool, with a little white kerchief on her head, wearing a grey gown, and she was so thin, so pale, so sharp-eyed it made one sad to look at her. Behind her stood a soldier with a gun. She would not confess her guilt. Some in the court said she had poisoned her husband and others declared he had poisoned himself for grief. I was one of the witnesses. When they questioned me, I told the whole truth according to my oath. 'Hers,' said I, 'is the guilt. It's no good to conceal it; she did not love her husband, and she had a will of her own. . . .' The trial began in the morning and towards night they passed this sentence: to send her to hard labour in Siberia for thirteen years. After that sentence Mashenka remained three months longer in prison. I went to see her, and from Christian charity I took her a little tea and sugar. But as soon as she set eyes on me she began to shake all over, wringing her hands and muttering: 'Go away! go away!' And Kuzka she clasped to her as though she were afraid I would take him away. 'See,' said I, 'what you have come to! Ah, Masha, Masha! you would not listen to me when I gave you good advice, and now you must repent it. You are yourself to blame,' said I; 'blame yourself!' I was giving her good counsel, but she: 'Go away, go away!' huddling herself and Kuzka against the wall, and trembling all over.

"When they were taking her away to the chief town of our province, I walked by the escort as far as the station and slipped a rouble into her bundle for my soul's salvation. But she did not get as far as Siberia. . . . She fell sick of fever and died in prison."

"Live like a dog and you must die a dog's death," said Dyudya.

"Kuzka was sent back home. . . . I thought it over and took him to bring up. After all -- though a convict's child -- still he was a living soul, a Christian. . . . I was sorry for him. I shall make him my clerk, and if I have no children of my own, I'll make a merchant of him. Wherever I go now, I take him with me; let him learn his work."

All the while Matvey Savitch had been telling his story, Kuzka had sat on a little stone near the gate. His head propped in both hands, he gazed at the sky, and in the distance he looked in the dark like a stump of wood.

"Kuzka, come to bed," Matvey Savitch bawled to him.

"Yes, it's time," said Dyudya, getting up; he yawned loudly and added:

"Folks will go their own way, and that's what comes of it."

Over the yard the moon was floating now in the heavens; she was moving one way, while the clouds beneath moved the other way; the clouds were disappearing into the darkness, but still the moon could be seen high above the yard.

Matvey Savitch said a prayer, facing the church, and saying good-night, he lay down on the ground near his cart. Kuzka, too, said a prayer, lay down in the cart, and covered himself with his little overcoat; he made himself a little hole in the hay so as to be more

comfortable, and curled up so that his elbows looked like knees. From the yard Dyudya could be seen lighting a candle in his room below, putting on his spectacles and standing in the corner with a book. He was a long while reading and crossing himself.

The travellers fell asleep. Afanasyevna and Sofya came up to the cart and began looking at Kuzka.

"The little orphan's asleep," said the old woman. "He's thin and frail, nothing but bones. No mother and no one to care for him properly."

"My Grishutka must be two years older," said Sofya. "Up at the factory he lives like a slave without his mother. The foreman beats him, I dare say. When I looked at this poor mite just now, I thought of my own Grishutka, and my heart went cold within me."

A minute passed in silence.

"Doesn't remember his mother, I suppose," said the old woman.

"How could he remember?"

And big tears began dropping from Sofya's eyes.

"He's curled himself up like a cat," she said, sobbing and laughing with tenderness and sorrow. . . . "Poor motherless mite!"

Kuzka started and opened his eyes. He saw before him an ugly, wrinkled, tear-stained face, and beside it another, aged and toothless, with a sharp chin and hooked nose, and high above them the infinite sky with the flying clouds and the moon. He cried out in fright, and Sofya, too, uttered a cry; both were answered by the echo, and a faint stir passed over the stifling air; a watchman tapped somewhere near, a dog barked. Matvey Savitch muttered something in his sleep and turned over on the other side.

Late at night when Dyudya and the old woman and the neighbouring watchman were all asleep, Sofya went out to the gate and sat down on the bench. She felt stifled and her head ached from weeping. The street was a wide and long one; it stretched for nearly two miles to the right and as far to the left, and the end of it was out of sight. The moon was now not over the yard, but behind the church. One side of the street was flooded with moonlight, while the other side lay in black shadow. The long shadows of the poplars and the starlings cotes stretched right across the street, while the church cast a broad shadow, black and terrible that enfolded Dyudya's gates and half his house. The street was still and deserted. From time to time the strains of music floated faintly from the end of the street -- Alyoshka, most likely, playing his concertina.

Someone moved in the shadow near the church enclosure, and Sofya could not make out whether it were a man or a cow, or perhaps merely a big bird rustling in the trees. But then a figure stepped out of the shadow, halted, and said something in a man's voice, then vanished down the turning by the church. A little later, not three yards from the gate, another figure came into sight; it walked straight from the church to the gate and stopped short, seeing Sofya on the bench.

"Varvara, is that you?" said Sofya.

"And if it were?"

It was Varvara. She stood still a minute, then came up to the bench and sat down.

"Where have you been?" asked Sofya.

Varvara made no answer.

"You'd better mind you don't get into trouble with such goings-on, my girl," said Sofya.  
"Did you hear how Mashenka was kicked and lashed with the reins? You'd better look out, or they'll treat you the same."

"Well, let them!"

Varvara laughed into her kerchief and whispered:

"I have just been with the priest's son."

"Nonsense!"

"I have!"

"It's a sin!" whispered Sofya.

"Well, let it be. . . . What do I care? If it's a sin, then it is a sin, but better be struck dead by thunder than live like this. I'm young and strong, and I've a filthy crooked hunchback for a husband, worse than Dyudya himself, curse him! When I was a girl, I hadn't bread to eat, or a shoe to my foot, and to get away from that wretchedness I was tempted by Alyoshka's money, and got caught like a fish in a net, and I'd rather have a viper for my bedfellow than that scurvy Alyoshka. And what's your life? It makes me sick to look at it. Your Fyodor sent you packing from the factory and he's taken up with another woman. They have robbed you of your boy and made a slave of him. You work like a horse, and never hear a kind word. I'd rather pine all my days an old maid, I'd rather get half a rouble from the priest's son, I'd rather beg my bread, or throw myself into the well. . . .

"It's a sin!" whispered Sofya again.

"Well, let it be."

Somewhere behind the church the same three voices, two tenors and a bass, began singing again a mournful song. And again the words could not be distinguished.

"They are not early to bed," Varvara said, laughing.

And she began telling in a whisper of her midnight walks with the priest's son, and of the stories he had told her, and of his comrades, and of the fun she had with the travellers who

stayed in the house. The mournful song stirred a longing for life and freedom. Sofya began to laugh; she thought it sinful and terrible and sweet to hear about, and she felt envious and sorry that she, too, had not been a sinner when she was young and pretty.

In the churchyard they heard twelve strokes beaten on the watchman's board.

"It's time we were asleep," said Sofya, getting up, "or, maybe, we shall catch it from Dyudya."

They both went softly into the yard.

"I went away without hearing what he was telling about Mashenka," said Varvara, making herself a bed under the window.

"She died in prison, he said. She poisoned her husband."

Varvara lay down beside Sofya a while, and said softly:

"I'd make away with my Alyoshka and never regret it."

"You talk nonsense; God forgive you."

When Sofya was just dropping asleep, Varvara, coming close, whispered in her ear:

"Let us get rid of Dyudya and Alyoshka!"

Sofya started and said nothing. Then she opened her eyes and gazed a long while steadily at the sky.

"People would find out," she said.

"No, they wouldn't. Dyudya's an old man, it's time he did die; and they'd say Alyoshka died of drink."

"I'm afraid . . . God would chastise us."

"Well, let Him. . . ."

Both lay awake thinking in silence.

"It's cold," said Sofya, beginning to shiver all over. "It will soon be morning. . . . Are you asleep?"

"No. . . . Don't you mind what I say, dear," whispered Varvara; "I get so mad with the damned brutes, I don't know what I do say. Go to sleep, or it will be daylight directly. . . . Go to sleep."

Both were quiet and soon they fell asleep.

Earlier than all woke the old woman. She waked up Sofya and they went together into the cowshed to milk the cows. The hunchback Alyoshka came in hopelessly drunk without his concertina; his breast and knees had been in the dust and straw -- he must have fallen down in the road. Staggering, he went into the cowshed, and without undressing he rolled into a sledge and began to snore at once. When first the crosses on the church and then the windows were flashing in the light of the rising sun, and shadows stretched across the yard over the dewy grass from the trees and the top of the well, Matvey Savitch jumped up and began hurrying about:

"Kuzka! get up!" he shouted. "It's time to put in the horses! Look sharp!"

The bustle of morning was beginning. A young Jewess in a brown gown with flounces led a horse into the yard to drink. The pulley of the well creaked plaintively, the bucket knocked as it went down. . . .

Kuzka, sleepy, tired, covered with dew, sat up in the cart, lazily putting on his little overcoat, and listening to the drip of the water from the bucket into the well as he shivered with the cold.

"Auntie!" shouted Matvey Savitch to Sofya, "tell my lad to hurry up and to harness the horses!"

And Dyudya at the same instant shouted from the window:

"Sofya, take a farthing from the Jewess for the horse's drink! They're always in here, the mangy creatures!"

In the street sheep were running up and down, baaing; the peasant women were shouting at the shepherd, while he played his pipes, cracked his whip, or answered them in a thick sleepy bass. Three sheep strayed into the yard, and not finding the gate again, pushed at the fence.

Varvara was waked by the noise, and bundling her bedding up in her arms, she went into the house.

"You might at least drive the sheep out!" the old woman bawled after her, "my lady!"

"I dare say! As if I were going to slave for you Herods!" muttered Varvara, going into the house.

Dyudya came out of the house with his accounts in his hands, sat down on the step, and began reckoning how much the traveller owed him for the night's lodging, oats, and watering his horses.

"You charge pretty heavily for the oats, my good man," said Matvey Savitch.

"If it's too much, don't take them. There's no compulsion, merchant."

When the travellers were ready to start, they were detained for a minute. Kuzka had lost his

cap.

"Little swine, where did you put it?" Matvey Savitch roared angrily. "Where is it?"

Kuzka's face was working with terror; he ran up and down near the cart, and not finding it there, ran to the gate and then to the shed. The old woman and Sofya helped him look.

"I'll pull your ears off!" yelled Matvey Savitch. "Dirty brat!"

The cap was found at the bottom of the cart.

Kuzka brushed the hay off it with his sleeve, put it on, and timidly he crawled into the cart, still with an expression of terror on his face as though he were afraid of a blow from behind.

Matvey Savitch crossed himself. The driver gave a tug at the reins and the cart rolled out of the yard.

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# The Duel

Anton Chekhov

## I

It was eight o'clock in the morning -- the time when the officers, the local officials, and the visitors usually took their morning dip in the sea after the hot, stifling night, and then went into the pavilion to drink tea or coffee. Ivan Andreitch Laevsky, a thin, fair young man of twenty-eight, wearing the cap of a clerk in the Ministry of Finance and with slippers on his feet, coming down to bathe, found a number of acquaintances on the beach, and among them his friend Samoylenko, the army doctor.

With his big cropped head, short neck, his red face, his big nose, his shaggy black eyebrows and grey whiskers, his stout puffy figure and his hoarse military bass, this Samoylenko made on every newcomer the unpleasant impression of a gruff bully; but two or three days after making his acquaintance, one began to think his face extraordinarily good-natured, kind, and even handsome. In spite of his clumsiness and rough manner, he was a peaceable man, of infinite kindness and goodness of heart, always ready to be of use. He was on familiar terms with every one in the town, lent every one money, doctored every one, made matches, patched up quarrels, arranged picnics at which he cooked shashlik and an awfully good soup of grey mullets. He was always looking after other people's affairs and trying to interest some one on their behalf, and was always delighted about something. The general opinion about him was that he was without faults of character. He had only two weaknesses: he was ashamed of his own good nature, and tried to disguise it by a surly expression and an assumed gruffness; and he liked his assistants and his soldiers to call him "Your Excellency," although he was only a civil councillor.

"Answer one question for me, Alexandre Daviditch," Laevsky began, when both he and Samoylenko were in the water up to their shoulders. "Suppose you had loved a woman and had been living with her for two or three years, and then left off caring for her, as one does, and began to feel that you had nothing in common with her. How would you behave in that case?"

"It's very simple. 'You go where you please, madam' -- and that would be the end of it."

"It's easy to say that! But if she has nowhere to go? A woman with no friends or relations, without a farthing, who can't work . . ."

"Well? Five hundred roubles down or an allowance of twenty-five roubles a month -- and nothing more. It's very simple."

"Even supposing you have five hundred roubles and can pay twenty-five roubles a month, the woman I am speaking of is an educated woman and proud. Could you really bring yourself to offer her money? And how would you do it?"

Samoylenko was going to answer, but at that moment a big wave covered them both, then broke on the beach and rolled back noisily over the shingle. The friends got out and began

dressing.

"Of course, it is difficult to live with a woman if you don't love her," said Samoylenko, shaking the sand out of his boots. "But one must look at the thing humanely, Vanya. If it were my case, I should never show a sign that I did not love her, and I should go on living with her till I died."

He was at once ashamed of his own words; he pulled himself up and said:

"But for aught I care, there might be no females at all. Let them all go to the devil!"

The friends dressed and went into the pavilion. There Samoylenko was quite at home, and even had a special cup and saucer. Every morning they brought him on a tray a cup of coffee, a tall cut glass of iced water, and a tiny glass of brandy. He would first drink the brandy, then the hot coffee, then the iced water, and this must have been very nice, for after drinking it his eyes looked moist with pleasure, he would stroke his whiskers with both hands, and say, looking at the sea:

"A wonderfully magnificent view!"

After a long night spent in cheerless, unprofitable thoughts which prevented him from sleeping, and seemed to intensify the darkness and sultriness of the night, Laevsky felt listless and shattered. He felt no better for the bathe and the coffee.

"Let us go on with our talk, Alexandre Daviditch," he said. "I won't make a secret of it; I'll speak to you openly as to a friend. Things are in a bad way with Nadyezhda Fyodorovna and me . . . a very bad way! Forgive me for forcing my private affairs upon you, but I must speak out."

Samoylenko, who had a misgiving of what he was going to speak about, dropped his eyes and drummed with his fingers on the table.

"I've lived with her for two years and have ceased to love her," Laevsky went on; "or, rather, I realised that I never had felt any love for her. . . . These two years have been a mistake."

It was Laevsky's habit as he talked to gaze attentively at the pink palms of his hands, to bite his nails, or to pinch his cuffs. And he did so now.

"I know very well you can't help me," he said. "But I tell you, because unsuccessful and superfluous people like me find their salvation in talking. I have to generalise about everything I do. I'm bound to look for an explanation and justification of my absurd existence in somebody else's theories, in literary types -- in the idea that we, upper-class Russians, are degenerating, for instance, and so on. Last night, for example, I comforted myself by thinking all the time: 'Ah, how true Tolstoy is, how mercilessly true!' And that did me good. Yes, really, brother, he is a great writer, say what you like!"

Samoylenko, who had never read Tolstoy and was intending to do so every day of his life, was a little embarrassed, and said:

"Yes, all other authors write from imagination, but he writes straight from nature."

"My God!" sighed Laevsky; "how distorted we all are by civilisation! I fell in love with a married woman and she with me. . . . To begin with, we had kisses, and calm evenings, and vows, and Spencer, and ideals, and interests in common. . . . What a deception! We really ran away from her husband, but we lied to ourselves and made out that we ran away from the emptiness of the life of the educated class. We pictured our future like this: to begin with, in the Caucasus, while we were getting to know the people and the place, I would put on the Government uniform and enter the service; then at our leisure we would pick out a plot of ground, would toil in the sweat of our brow, would have a vineyard and a field, and so on. If you were in my place, or that zoologist of yours, Von Koren, you might live with Nadyezhda Fyodorovna for thirty years, perhaps, and might leave your heirs a rich vineyard and three thousand acres of maize; but I felt like a bankrupt from the first day. In the town you have insufferable heat, boredom, and no society; if you go out into the country, you fancy poisonous spiders, scorpions, or snakes lurking under every stone and behind every bush, and beyond the fields -- mountains and the desert. Alien people, an alien country, a wretched form of civilisation -- all that is not so easy, brother, as walking on the Nevsky Prospect in one's fur coat, arm-in-arm with Nadyezhda Fyodorovna, dreaming of the sunny South. What is needed here is a life and death struggle, and I'm not a fighting man. A wretched neurasthenic, an idle gentleman. . . . From the first day I knew that my dreams of a life of labour and of a vineyard were worthless. As for love, I ought to tell you that living with a woman who has read Spencer and has followed you to the ends of the earth is no more interesting than living with any Anfissa or Akulina. There's the same smell of ironing, of powder, and of medicines, the same curl-papers every morning, the same self-deception."

"You can't get on in the house without an iron," said Samoylenko, blushing at Laevsky's speaking to him so openly of a lady he knew. "You are out of humour to-day, Vanya, I notice. Nadyezhda Fyodorovna is a splendid woman, highly educated, and you are a man of the highest intellect. Of course, you are not married," Samoylenko went on, glancing round at the adjacent tables, "but that's not your fault; and besides . . . one ought to be above conventional prejudices and rise to the level of modern ideas. I believe in free love myself, yes. . . . But to my thinking, once you have settled together, you ought to go on living together all your life."

"Without love?"

"I will tell you directly," said Samoylenko. "Eight years ago there was an old fellow, an agent, here -- a man of very great intelligence. Well, he used to say that the great thing in married life was patience. Do you hear, Vanya? Not love, but patience. Love cannot last long. You have lived two years in love, and now evidently your married life has reached the period when, in order to preserve equilibrium, so to speak, you ought to exercise all your patience. . . ."

"You believe in your old agent; to me his words are meaningless. Your old man could be a hypocrite; he could exercise himself in the virtue of patience, and, as he did so, look upon a person he did not love as an object indispensable for his moral exercises; but I have not yet fallen so low. If I want to exercise myself in patience, I will buy dumb-bells or a frisky

horse, but I'll leave human beings alone."

Samoylenko asked for some white wine with ice. When they had drunk a glass each, Laevsky suddenly asked:

"Tell me, please, what is the meaning of softening of the brain?"

"How can I explain it to you? . . . It's a disease in which the brain becomes softer . . . as it were, dissolves."

"Is it curable?"

"Yes, if the disease is not neglected. Cold douches, blisters. . . . Something internal, too."

"Oh! . . . Well, you see my position; I can't live with her: it is more than I can do. While I'm with you I can be philosophical about it and smile, but at home I lose heart completely; I am so utterly miserable, that if I were told, for instance, that I should have to live another month with her, I should blow out my brains. At the same time, parting with her is out of the question. She has no friends or relations; she cannot work, and neither she nor I have any money. . . . What could become of her? To whom could she go? There is nothing one can think of. . . . Come, tell me, what am I to do?"

"H'm! . . ." growled Samoylenko, not knowing what to answer. "Does she love you?"

"Yes, she loves me in so far as at her age and with her temperament she wants a man. It would be as difficult for her to do without me as to do without her powder or her curl-papers. I am for her an indispensable, integral part of her boudoir."

Samoylenko was embarrassed.

"You are out of humour to-day, Vanya," he said. "You must have had a bad night."

"Yes, I slept badly. . . . Altogether, I feel horribly out of sorts, brother. My head feels empty; there's a sinking at my heart, a weakness. . . . I must run away."

"Run where?"

"There, to the North. To the pines and the mushrooms, to people and ideas. . . . I'd give half my life to bathe now in some little stream in the province of Moscow or Tula; to feel chilly, you know, and then to stroll for three hours even with the feeblest student, and to talk and talk endlessly. . . . And the scent of the hay! Do you remember it? And in the evening, when one walks in the garden, sounds of the piano float from the house; one hears the train passing. . . ."

Laevsky laughed with pleasure; tears came into his eyes, and to cover them, without getting up, he stretched across the next table for the matches.

"I have not been in Russia for eighteen years," said Samoylenko. "I've forgotten what it is like. To my mind, there is not a country more splendid than the Caucasus."

"Vereshtchagin has a picture in which some men condemned to death are languishing at the bottom of a very deep well. Your magnificent Caucasus strikes me as just like that well. If I were offered the choice of a chimney-sweep in Petersburg or a prince in the Caucasus, I should choose the job of chimney-sweep."

Laevsky grew pensive. Looking at his stooping figure, at his eyes fixed dreamily at one spot, at his pale, perspiring face and sunken temples, at his bitten nails, at the slipper which had dropped off his heel, displaying a badly darned sock, Samoylenko was moved to pity, and probably because Laevsky reminded him of a helpless child, he asked:

"Is your mother living?"

"Yes, but we are on bad terms. She could not forgive me for this affair."

Samoylenko was fond of his friend. He looked upon Laevsky as a good-natured fellow, a student, a man with no nonsense about him, with whom one could drink, and laugh, and talk without reserve. What he understood in him he disliked extremely. Laevsky drank a great deal and at unsuitable times; he played cards, despised his work, lived beyond his means, frequently made use of unseemly expressions in conversation, walked about the streets in his slippers, and quarrelled with Nadyezhda Fyodorovna before other people -- and Samoylenko did not like this. But the fact that Laevsky had once been a student in the Faculty of Arts, subscribed to two fat reviews, often talked so cleverly that only a few people understood him, was living with a well-educated woman -- all this Samoylenko did not understand, and he liked this and respected Laevsky, thinking him superior to himself.

"There is another point," said Laevsky, shaking his head. "Only it is between ourselves. I'm concealing it from Nadyezhda Fyodorovna for the time. . . . Don't let it out before her. . . . I got a letter the day before yesterday, telling me that her husband has died from softening of the brain."

"The Kingdom of Heaven be his!" sighed Samoylenko. "Why are you concealing it from her?"

"To show her that letter would be equivalent to 'Come to church to be married.' And we should first have to make our relations clear. When she understands that we can't go on living together, I will show her the letter. Then there will be no danger in it."

"Do you know what, Vanya," said Samoylenko, and a sad and imploring expression came into his face, as though he were going to ask him about something very touching and were afraid of being refused. "Marry her, my dear boy!"

"Why?"

"Do your duty to that splendid woman! Her husband is dead, and so Providence itself shows you what to do!"

"But do understand, you queer fellow, that it is impossible. To marry without love is as base and unworthy of a man as to perform mass without believing in it."

"But it's your duty to."

"Why is it my duty?" Laevsky asked irritably.

"Because you took her away from her husband and made yourself responsible for her."

"But now I tell you in plain Russian, I don't love her!"

"Well, if you've no love, show her proper respect, consider her wishes. . . ."

"'Show her respect, consider her wishes,'" Laevsky mimicked him. "As though she were some Mother Superior! . . . You are a poor psychologist and physiologist if you think that living with a woman one can get off with nothing but respect and consideration. What a woman thinks most of is her bedroom."

"Vanya, Vanya!" said Samoylenko, overcome with confusion.

"You are an elderly child, a theorist, while I am an old man in spite of my years, and practical, and we shall never understand one another. We had better drop this conversation. Mustapha!" Laevsky shouted to the waiter. "What's our bill?"

"No, no . . ." the doctor cried in dismay, clutching Laevsky's arm. "It is for me to pay. I ordered it. Make it out to me," he cried to Mustapha.

The friends got up and walked in silence along the sea-front. When they reached the boulevard, they stopped and shook hands at parting.

"You are awfully spoilt, my friend!" Samoylenko sighed. "Fate has sent you a young, beautiful, cultured woman, and you refuse the gift, while if God were to give me a crooked old woman, how pleased I should be if only she were kind and affectionate! I would live with her in my vineyard and . . ."

Samoylenko caught himself up and said:

"And she might get the samovar ready for me there, the old hag."

After parting with Laevsky he walked along the boulevard. When, bulky and majestic, with a stern expression on his face, he walked along the boulevard in his snow-white tunic and superbly polished boots, squaring his chest, decorated with the Vladimir cross on a ribbon, he was very much pleased with himself, and it seemed as though the whole world were looking at him with pleasure. Without turning his head, he looked to each side and thought that the boulevard was extremely well laid out; that the young cypress-trees, the eucalyptuses, and the ugly, anemic palm-trees were very handsome and would in time give abundant shade; that the Circassians were an honest and hospitable people.

"It's strange that Laevsky does not like the Caucasus," he thought, "very strange."

Five soldiers, carrying rifles, met him and saluted him. On the right side of the boulevard

the wife of a local official was walking along the pavement with her son, a schoolboy.

"Good-morning, Marya Konstantinovna," Samoylenko shouted to her with a pleasant smile.  
"Have you been to bathe? Ha, ha, ha! . . . My respects to Nikodim Alexandritch!"

And he went on, still smiling pleasantly, but seeing an assistant of the military hospital coming towards him, he suddenly frowned, stopped him, and asked:

"Is there any one in the hospital?"

"No one, Your Excellency."

"Eh?"

"No one, Your Excellency."

"Very well, run along. . . ."

Swaying majestically, he made for the lemonade stall, where sat a full-bosomed old Jewess, who gave herself out to be a Georgian, and said to her as loudly as though he were giving the word of command to a regiment:

"Be so good as to give me some soda-water!"

## II

Laevsky's not loving Nadyezhda Fyodorovna showed itself chiefly in the fact that everything she said or did seemed to him a lie, or equivalent to a lie, and everything he read against women and love seemed to him to apply perfectly to himself, to Nadyezhda Fyodorovna and her husband. When he returned home, she was sitting at the window, dressed and with her hair done, and with a preoccupied face was drinking coffee and turning over the leaves of a fat magazine; and he thought the drinking of coffee was not such a remarkable event that she need put on a preoccupied expression over it, and that she had been wasting her time doing her hair in a fashionable style, as there was no one here to attract and no need to be attractive. And in the magazine he saw nothing but falsity. He thought she had dressed and done her hair so as to look handsomer, and was reading in order to seem clever.

"Will it be all right for me to go to bathe to-day?" she said.

"Why? There won't be an earthquake whether you go or not, I suppose. . . ."

"No, I only ask in case the doctor should be vexed."

"Well, ask the doctor, then; I'm not a doctor."

On this occasion what displeased Laevsky most in Nadyezhda Fyodorovna was her white open neck and the little curls at the back of her head. And he remembered that when Anna Karenin got tired of her husband, what she disliked most of all was his ears, and thought:

"How true it is, how true!"

Feeling weak and as though his head were perfectly empty, he went into his study, lay down on his sofa, and covered his face with a handkerchief that he might not be bothered by the flies. Despondent and oppressive thoughts always about the same thing trailed slowly across his brain like a long string of waggons on a gloomy autumn evening, and he sank into a state of drowsy oppression. It seemed to him that he had wronged Nadyezhda Fyodorovna and her husband, and that it was through his fault that her husband had died. It seemed to him that he had sinned against his own life, which he had ruined, against the world of lofty ideas, of learning, and of work, and he conceived that wonderful world as real and possible, not on this sea-front with hungry Turks and lazy mountaineers sauntering upon it, but there in the North, where there were operas, theatres, newspapers, and all kinds of intellectual activity. One could only there -- not here -- be honest, intelligent, lofty, and pure. He accused himself of having no ideal, no guiding principle in life, though he had a dim understanding now what it meant. Two years before, when he fell in love with Nadyezhda Fyodorovna, it seemed to him that he had only to go with her as his wife to the Caucasus, and he would be saved from vulgarity and emptiness; in the same way now, he was convinced that he had only to part from Nadyezhda Fyodorovna and to go to Petersburg, and he would get everything he wanted.

"Run away," he muttered to himself, sitting up and biting his nails. "Run away!"

He pictured in his imagination how he would go aboard the steamer and then would have some lunch, would drink some cold beer, would talk on deck with ladies, then would get into the train at Sevastopol and set off. Hurrah for freedom! One station after another would flash by, the air would keep growing colder and keener, then the birches and the fir-trees, then Kursk, Moscow. . . . In the restaurants cabbage soup, mutton with kasha, sturgeon, beer, no more Asiaticism, but Russia, real Russia. The passengers in the train would talk about trade, new singers, the Franco-Russian entente; on all sides there would be the feeling of keen, cultured, intellectual, eager life. . . . Hasten on, on! At last Nevsky Prospect, and Great Morskaya Street, and then Kovensky Place, where he used to live at one time when he was a student, the dear grey sky, the drizzling rain, the drenched cabmen. . . .

"Ivan Andreitch!" some one called from the next room. "Are you at home?"

"I'm here," Laevsky responded. "What do you want?"

"Papers."

Laevsky got up languidly, feeling giddy, walked into the other room, yawning and shuffling with his slippers. There, at the open window that looked into the street, stood one of his young fellow-clerks, laying out some government documents on the window-sill.

"One minute, my dear fellow," Laevsky said softly, and he went to look for the ink; returning to the window, he signed the papers without looking at them, and said: "It's hot!"

"Yes. Are you coming to-day?"

"I don't think so. . . . I'm not quite well. Tell Sheshkovsky that I will come and see him after

dinner."

The clerk went away. Laevsky lay down on his sofa again and began thinking:

"And so I must weigh all the circumstances and reflect on them. Before I go away from here I ought to pay up my debts. I owe about two thousand roubles. I have no money. . . . Of course, that's not important; I shall pay part now, somehow, and I shall send the rest, later, from Petersburg. The chief point is Nadyezhda Fyodorovna. . . . First of all we must define our relations. . . . Yes."

A little later he was considering whether it would not be better to go to Samoylenko for advice.

"I might go," he thought, "but what use would there be in it? I shall only say something inappropriate about boudoirs, about women, about what is honest or dishonest. What's the use of talking about what is honest or dishonest, if I must make haste to save my life, if I am suffocating in this cursed slavery and am killing myself? . . . One must realise at last that to go on leading the life I do is something so base and so cruel that everything else seems petty and trivial beside it. To run away," he muttered, sitting down, "to run away."

The deserted seashore, the insatiable heat, and the monotony of the smoky lilac mountains, ever the same and silent, everlastinglly solitary, overwhelmed him with depression, and, as it were, made him drowsy and sapped his energy. He was perhaps very clever, talented, remarkably honest; perhaps if the sea and the mountains had not closed him in on all sides, he might have become an excellent Zemstvo leader, a statesman, an orator, a political writer, a saint. Who knows? If so, was it not stupid to argue whether it were honest or dishonest when a gifted and useful man -- an artist or musician, for instance -- to escape from prison, breaks a wall and deceives his jailers? Anything is honest when a man is in such a position.

At two o'clock Laevsky and Nadyezhda Fyodorovna sat down to dinner. When the cook gave them rice and tomato soup, Laevsky said:

"The same thing every day. Why not have cabbage soup?"

"There are no cabbages."

"It's strange. Samoylenko has cabbage soup and Marya Konstantinovna has cabbage soup, and only I am obliged to eat this mawkish mess. We can't go on like this, darling."

As is common with the vast majority of husbands and wives, not a single dinner had in earlier days passed without scenes and fault-finding between Nadyezhda Fyodorovna and Laevsky; but ever since Laevsky had made up his mind that he did not love her, he had tried to give way to Nadyezhda Fyodorovna in everything, spoke to her gently and politely, smiled, and called her " darling."

"This soup tastes like liquorice," he said, smiling; he made an effort to control himself and seem amiable, but could not refrain from saying: "Nobody looks after the housekeeping. . . . If you are too ill or busy with reading, let me look after the cooking."

In earlier days she would have said to him, "Do by all means," or, "I see you want to turn me into a cook"; but now she only looked at him timidly and flushed crimson.

"Well, how do you feel to-day?" he asked kindly.

"I am all right to-day. There is nothing but a little weakness."

"You must take care of yourself, darling. I am awfully anxious about you."

Nadyezhda Fyodorovna was ill in some way. Samoylenko said she had intermittent fever, and gave her quinine; the other doctor, Ustimovitch, a tall, lean, unsociable man, who used to sit at home in the daytime, and in the evenings walk slowly up and down on the sea-front coughing, with his hands folded behind him and a cane stretched along his back, was of opinion that she had a female complaint, and prescribed warm compresses. In old days, when Laevsky loved her, Nadyezhda Fyodorovna's illness had excited his pity and terror; now he saw falsity even in her illness. Her yellow, sleepy face, her lustreless eyes, her apathetic expression, and the yawning that always followed her attacks of fever, and the fact that during them she lay under a shawl and looked more like a boy than a woman, and that it was close and stuffy in her room -- all this, in his opinion, destroyed the illusion and was an argument against love and marriage.

The next dish given him was spinach with hard-boiled eggs, while Nadyezhda Fyodorovna, as an invalid, had jelly and milk. When with a preoccupied face she touched the jelly with a spoon and then began languidly eating it, sipping milk, and he heard her swallowing, he was possessed by such an overwhelming aversion that it made his head tingle. He recognised that such a feeling would be an insult even to a dog, but he was angry, not with himself but with Nadyezhda Fyodorovna, for arousing such a feeling, and he understood why lovers sometimes murder their mistresses. He would not murder her, of course, but if he had been on a jury now, he would have acquitted the murderer.

"Merci, darling," he said after dinner, and kissed Nadyezhda Fyodorovna on the forehead.

Going back into his study, he spent five minutes in walking to and fro, looking at his boots; then he sat down on his sofa and muttered:

"Run away, run away! We must define the position and run away!"

He lay down on the sofa and recalled again that Nadyezhda Fyodorovna's husband had died, perhaps, by his fault.

"To blame a man for loving a woman, or ceasing to love a woman, is stupid," he persuaded himself, lying down and raising his legs in order to put on his high boots. "Love and hatred are not under our control. As for her husband, maybe I was in an indirect way one of the causes of his death; but again, is it my fault that I fell in love with his wife and she with me?"

Then he got up, and finding his cap, set off to the lodgings of his colleague, Sheshkovsky, where the Government clerks met every day to play vint and drink beer.

"My indecision reminds me of Hamlet," thought Laevsky on the way. "How truly Shakespeare describes it! Ah, how truly!"

### III

For the sake of sociability and from sympathy for the hard plight of newcomers without families, who, as there was not an hotel in the town, had nowhere to dine, Dr. Samoylenko kept a sort of table d'Ôhôte. At this time there were only two men who habitually dined with him: a young zoologist called Von Koren, who had come for the summer to the Black Sea to study the embryology of the medusa, and a deacon called Pobyedov, who had only just left the seminary and been sent to the town to take the duty of the old deacon who had gone away for a cure. Each of them paid twelve roubles a month for their dinner and supper, and Samoylenko made them promise to turn up at two o'clock punctually.

Von Koren was usually the first to appear. He sat down in the drawing-room in silence, and taking an album from the table, began attentively scrutinising the faded photographs of unknown men in full trousers and top-hats, and ladies in crinolines and caps. Samoylenko only remembered a few of them by name, and of those whom he had forgotten he said with a sigh: "A very fine fellow, remarkably intelligent!" When he had finished with the album, Von Koren took a pistol from the whatnot, and screwing up his left eye, took deliberate aim at the portrait of Prince Vorontsov, or stood still at the looking-glass and gazed a long time at his swarthy face, his big forehead, and his black hair, which curled like a negro's, and his shirt of dull-coloured cotton with big flowers on it like a Persian rug, and the broad leather belt he wore instead of a waistcoat. The contemplation of his own image seemed to afford him almost more satisfaction than looking at photographs or playing with the pistols. He was very well satisfied with his face, and his becomingly clipped beard, and the broad shoulders, which were unmistakable evidence of his excellent health and physical strength. He was satisfied, too, with his stylish get-up, from the cravat, which matched the colour of his shirt, down to his brown boots.

While he was looking at the album and standing before the glass, at that moment, in the kitchen and in the passage near, Samoylenko, without his coat and waistcoat, with his neck bare, excited and bathed in perspiration, was bustling about the tables, mixing the salad, or making some sauce, or preparing meat, cucumbers, and onion for the cold soup, while he glared fiercely at the orderly who was helping him, and brandished first a knife and then a spoon at him.

"Give me the vinegar!" he said. "That's not the vinegar -- it's the salad oil!" he shouted, stamping. "Where are you off to, you brute?"

"To get the butter, Your Excellency," answered the flustered orderly in a cracked voice.

"Make haste; it's in the cupboard! And tell Daria to put some fennel in the jar with the cucumbers! Fennel! Cover the cream up, gaping laggard, or the flies will get into it!"

And the whole house seemed resounding with his shouts. When it was ten or fifteen minutes to two the deacon would come in; he was a lanky young man of twenty-two, with long hair, with no beard and a hardly perceptible moustache. Going into the drawing-room,

he crossed himself before the ikon, smiled, and held out his hand to Von Koren.

"Good-morning," the zoologist said coldly. "Where have you been?"

"I've been catching sea-gudgeon in the harbour."

"Oh, of course. . . . Evidently, deacon, you will never be busy with work."

"Why not? Work is not like a bear; it doesn't run off into the woods," said the deacon, smiling and thrusting his hands into the very deep pockets of his white cassock.

"There's no one to whip you!" sighed the zoologist.

Another fifteen or twenty minutes passed and they were not called to dinner, and they could still hear the orderly running into the kitchen and back again, noisily treading with his boots, and Samoylenko shouting:

"Put it on the table! Where are your wits? Wash it first."

The famished deacon and Von Koren began tapping on the floor with their heels, expressing in this way their impatience like the audience at a theatre. At last the door opened and the harassed orderly announced that dinner was ready! In the dining-room they were met by Samoylenko, crimson in the face, wrathful, perspiring from the heat of the kitchen; he looked at them furiously, and with an expression of horror, took the lid off the soup tureen and helped each of them to a plateful; and only when he was convinced that they were eating it with relish and liked it, he gave a sigh of relief and settled himself in his deep arm-chair. His face looked blissful and his eyes grew moist. . . . He deliberately poured himself out a glass of vodka and said:

"To the health of the younger generation."

After his conversation with Laevsky, from early morning till dinner Samoylenko had been conscious of a load at his heart, although he was in the best of humours; he felt sorry for Laevsky and wanted to help him. After drinking a glass of vodka before the soup, he heaved a sigh and said:

"I saw Vanya Laevsky to-day. He is having a hard time of it, poor fellow! The material side of life is not encouraging for him, and the worst of it is all this psychology is too much for him. I'm sorry for the lad."

"Well, that is a person I am not sorry for," said Von Koren. "If that charming individual were drowning, I would push him under with a stick and say, 'Drown, brother, drown away.' . . ."

"That's untrue. You wouldn't do it."

"Why do you think that?" The zoologist shrugged his shoulders. "I'm just as capable of a good action as you are."

"Is drowning a man a good action?" asked the deacon, and he laughed.

"Laevsky? Yes."

I think there is something amiss with the soup . . ." said Samoylenko, anxious to change the conversation.

"Laevsky is absolutely pernicious and is as dangerous to society as the cholera microbe," Von Koren went on. "To drown him would be a service."

"It does not do you credit to talk like that about your neighbour. Tell us: what do you hate him for?"

"Don't talk nonsense, doctor. To hate and despise a microbe is stupid, but to look upon everybody one meets without distinction as one's neighbour, whatever happens -- thanks very much, that is equivalent to giving up criticism, renouncing a straightforward attitude to people, washing one's hands of responsibility, in fact! I consider your Laevsky a blackguard; I do not conceal it, and I am perfectly conscientious in treating him as such. Well, you look upon him as your neighbour -- and you may kiss him if you like: you look upon him as your neighbour, and that means that your attitude to him is the same as to me and to the deacon; that is no attitude at all. You are equally indifferent to all."

"To call a man a blackguard!" muttered Samoylenko, frowning with distaste -- "that is so wrong that I can't find words for it!"

"People are judged by their actions," Von Koren continued. "Now you decide, deacon. . . . I am going to talk to you, deacon. Mr. Laevsky's career lies open before you, like a long Chinese puzzle, and you can read it from beginning to end. What has he been doing these two years that he has been living here? We will reckon his doings on our fingers. First, he has taught the inhabitants of the town to play vint: two years ago that game was unknown here; now they all play it from morning till late at night, even the women and the boys. Secondly, he has taught the residents to drink beer, which was not known here either; the inhabitants are indebted to him for the knowledge of various sorts of spirits, so that now they can distinguish Kospelov's vodka from Smirnov's No. 21, blindfold. Thirdly, in former days, people here made love to other men's wives in secret, from the same motives as thieves steal in secret and not openly; adultery was considered something they were ashamed to make a public display of. Laevsky has come as a pioneer in that line; he lives with another man's wife openly. . . . Fourthly . . ."

Von Koren hurriedly ate up his soup and gave his plate to the orderly.

"I understood Laevsky from the first month of our acquaintance," he went on, addressing the deacon. "We arrived here at the same time. Men like him are very fond of friendship, intimacy, solidarity, and all the rest of it, because they always want company for vint, drinking, and eating; besides, they are talkative and must have listeners. We made friends -- that is, he turned up every day, hindered me working, and indulged in confidences in regard to his mistress. From the first he struck me by his exceptional falsity, which simply made me sick. As a friend I pitched into him, asking him why he drank too much, why he lived beyond his means and got into debt, why he did nothing and read nothing, why he had so

little culture and so little knowledge; and in answer to all my questions he used to smile bitterly, sigh, and say: 'I am a failure, a superfluous man'; or: 'What do you expect, my dear fellow, from us, the debris of the serf-owning class?' or: 'We are degenerate. . . .' Or he would begin a long rigmarole about Onyegin, Petchorin, Byron's Cain, and Bazarov, of whom he would say: 'They are our fathers in flesh and in spirit.' So we are to understand that it was not his fault that Government envelopes lay unopened in his office for weeks together, and that he drank and taught others to drink, but Onyegin, Petchorin, and Turgenev, who had invented the failure and the superfluous man, were responsible for it. The cause of his extreme dissoluteness and unseemliness lies, do you see, not in himself, but somewhere outside in space. And so -- an ingenious idea! -- it is not only he who is dissolute, false, and disgusting, but we . . . 'we men of the eighties,' 'we the spiritless, nervous offspring of the serf-owning class'; 'civilisation has crippled us' . . . in fact, we are to understand that such a great man as Laevsky is great even in his fall: that his dissoluteness, his lack of culture and of moral purity, is a phenomenon of natural history, sanctified by inevitability; that the causes of it are world-wide, elemental; and that we ought to hang up a lamp before Laevsky, since he is the fated victim of the age, of influences, of heredity, and so on. All the officials and their ladies were in ecstasies when they listened to him, and I could not make out for a long time what sort of man I had to deal with, a cynic or a clever rogue. Such types as he, on the surface intellectual with a smattering of education and a great deal of talk about their own nobility, are very clever in posing as exceptionally complex natures."

"Hold your tongue!" Samoylenko flared up. "I will not allow a splendid fellow to be spoken ill of in my presence!"

"Don't interrupt, Alexandre Daviditch," said Von Koren coldly; "I am just finishing. Laevsky is by no means a complex organism. Here is his moral skeleton: in the morning, slippers, a bathe, and coffee; then till dinner-time, slippers, a constitutional, and conversation; at two o'clock slippers, dinner, and wine; at five o'clock a bathe, tea and wine, then vint and lying; at ten o'clock supper and wine; and after midnight sleep and la femme. His existence is confined within this narrow programme like an egg within its shell. Whether he walks or sits, is angry, writes, rejoices, it may all be reduced to wine, cards, slippers, and women. Woman plays a fatal, overwhelming part in his life. He tells us himself that at thirteen he was in love; that when he was a student in his first year he was living with a lady who had a good influence over him, and to whom he was indebted for his musical education. In his second year he bought a prostitute from a brothel and raised her to his level -- that is, took her as his kept mistress, and she lived with him for six months and then ran away back to the brothel-keeper, and her flight caused him much spiritual suffering. Alas! his sufferings were so great that he had to leave the university and spend two years at home doing nothing. But this was all for the best. At home he made friends with a widow who advised him to leave the Faculty of Jurisprudence and go into the Faculty of Arts. And so he did. When he had taken his degree, he fell passionately in love with his present . . . what's her name? . . . married lady, and was obliged to flee with her here to the Caucasus for the sake of his ideals, he would have us believe, seeing that . . . to-morrow, if not to-day, he will be tired of her and flee back again to Petersburg, and that, too, will be for the sake of his ideals."

"How do you know?" growled Samoylenko, looking angrily at the zoologist. "You had better eat your dinner."

The next course consisted of boiled mullet with Polish sauce. Samoylenko helped each of his companions to a whole mullet and poured out the sauce with his own hand. Two minutes passed in silence.

"Woman plays an essential part in the life of every man," said the deacon. "You can't help that."

"Yes, but to what degree? For each of us woman means mother, sister, wife, friend. To Laevsky she is everything, and at the same time nothing but a mistress. She -- that is, cohabitation with her -- is the happiness and object of his life; he is gay, sad, bored, disenchanted -- on account of woman; his life grows disagreeable -- woman is to blame; the dawn of a new life begins to glow, ideals turn up -- and again look for the woman. . . . He only derives enjoyment from books and pictures in which there is woman. Our age is, to his thinking, poor and inferior to the forties and the sixties only because we do not know how to abandon ourselves obviously to the passion and ecstasy of love. These voluptuaries must have in their brains a special growth of the nature of sarcoma, which stifles the brain and directs their whole psychology. Watch Laevsky when he is sitting anywhere in company. You notice: when one raises any general question in his presence, for instance, about the cell or instinct, he sits apart, and neither speaks nor listens; he looks languid and disillusioned; nothing has any interest for him, everything is vulgar and trivial. But as soon as you speak of male and female -- for instance, of the fact that the female spider, after fertilisation, devours the male -- his eyes glow with curiosity, his face brightens, and the man revives, in fact. All his thoughts, however noble, lofty, or neutral they may be, they all have one point of resemblance. You walk along the street with him and meet a donkey, for instance. . . . 'Tell me, please,' he asks, 'what would happen if you mated a donkey with a camel?' And his dreams! Has he told you of his dreams? It is magnificent! First, he dreams that he is married to the moon, then that he is summoned before the police and ordered to live with a guitar . . ."

The deacon burst into resounding laughter; Samoylenko frowned and wrinkled up his face angrily so as not to laugh, but could not restrain himself, and laughed.

"And it's all nonsense!" he said, wiping his tears. "Yes, by Jove, it's nonsense!"

#### IV

The deacon was very easily amused, and laughed at every trifle till he got a stitch in his side, till he was helpless. It seemed as though he only liked to be in people's company because there was a ridiculous side to them, and because they might be given ridiculous nicknames. He had nicknamed Samoylenko "the tarantula," his orderly "the drake," and was in ecstasies when on one occasion Von Koren spoke of Laevsky and Nadyezhda Fyodorovna as "Japanese monkeys." He watched people's faces greedily, listened without blinking, and it could be seen that his eyes filled with laughter and his face was tense with expectation of the moment when he could let himself go and burst into laughter.

"He is a corrupt and depraved type," the zoologist continued, while the deacon kept his eyes riveted on his face, expecting he would say something funny. "It is not often one can meet with such a nonentity. In body he is inert, feeble, prematurely old, while in intellect he

differs in no respect from a fat shopkeeper's wife who does nothing but eat, drink, and sleep on a feather-bed, and who keeps her coachman as a lover."

The deacon began guffawing again.

"Don't laugh, deacon," said Von Koren. "It grows stupid, at last. I should not have paid attention to his insignificance," he went on, after waiting till the deacon had left off laughing; "I should have passed him by if he were not so noxious and dangerous. His noxiousness lies first of all in the fact that he has great success with women, and so threatens to leave descendants -- that is, to present the world with a dozen Laevskys as feeble and as depraved as himself. Secondly, he is in the highest degree contaminating. I have spoken to you already of vint and beer. In another year or two he will dominate the whole Caucasian coast. You know how the mass, especially its middle stratum, believe in intellectuality, in a university education, in gentlemanly manners, and in literary language. Whatever filthy thing he did, they would all believe that it was as it should be, since he is an intellectual man, of liberal ideas and university education. What is more, he is a failure, a superfluous man, a neurasthenic, a victim of the age, and that means he can do anything. He is a charming fellow, a regular good sort, he is so genuinely indulgent to human weaknesses; he is compliant, accommodating, easy and not proud; one can drink with him and gossip and talk evil of people. . . . The masses, always inclined to anthropomorphism in religion and morals, like best of all the little gods who have the same weaknesses as themselves. Only think what a wide field he has for contamination! Besides, he is not a bad actor and is a clever hypocrite, and knows very well how to twist things round. Only take his little shifts and dodges, his attitude to civilisation, for instance. He has scarcely sniffed at civilisation, yet: 'Ah, how we have been crippled by civilisation! Ah, how I envy those savages, those children of nature, who know nothing of civilisation!' We are to understand, you see, that at one time, in ancient days, he has been devoted to civilisation with his whole soul, has served it, has sounded it to its depths, but it has exhausted him, disillusioned him, deceived him; he is a Faust, do you see? -- a second Tolstoy. . . . As for Schopenhauer and Spencer, he treats them like small boys and slaps them on the shoulder in a fatherly way: 'Well, what do you say, old Spencer?' He has not read Spencer, of course, but how charming he is when with light, careless irony he says of his lady friend: 'She has read Spencer!' And they all listen to him, and no one cares to understand that this charlatan has not the right to kiss the sole of Spencer's foot, let alone speaking about him in that tone! Sapping the foundations of civilisation, of authority, of other people's altars, spattering them with filth, winking jocosely at them only to justify and conceal one's own rottenness and moral poverty is only possible for a very vain, base, and nasty creature."

"I don't know what it is you expect of him, Kolya," said Samoylenko, looking at the zoologist, not with anger now, but with a guilty air. "He is a man the same as every one else. Of course, he has his weaknesses, but he is abreast of modern ideas, is in the service, is of use to his country. Ten years ago there was an old fellow serving as agent here, a man of the greatest intelligence . . . and he used to say . . ."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" the zoologist interrupted. "You say he is in the service; but how does he serve? Do you mean to tell me that things have been done better because he is here, and the officials are more punctual, honest, and civil? On the contrary, he has only sanctioned their slackness by his prestige as an intellectual university man. He is only punctual on the 20th of the month, when he gets his salary; on the other days he lounges

about at home in slippers and tries to look as if he were doing the Government a great service by living in the Caucasus. No, Alexandr Daviditch, don't stick up for him. You are insincere from beginning to end. If you really loved him and considered him your neighbour, you would above all not be indifferent to his weaknesses, you would not be indulgent to them, but for his own sake would try to make him innocuous."

"That is?"

"Innocuous. Since he is incorrigible, he can only be made innocuous in one way. . . ." Von Koren passed his finger round his throat. "Or he might be drowned . . .," he added. "In the interests of humanity and in their own interests, such people ought to be destroyed. They certainly ought."

"What are you saying?" muttered Samoylenko, getting up and looking with amazement at the zoologist's calm, cold face. "Deacon, what is he saying? Why -- are you in your senses?"

"I don't insist on the death penalty," said Von Koren. "If it is proved that it is pernicious, devise something else. If we can't destroy Laevsky, why then, isolate him, make him harmless, send him to hard labour."

"What are you saying!" said Samoylenko in horror. "With pepper, with pepper," he cried in a voice of despair, seeing that the deacon was eating stuffed aubergines without pepper. "You with your great intellect, what are you saying! Send our friend, a proud intellectual man, to penal servitude!"

"Well, if he is proud and tries to resist, put him in fetters!"

Samoylenko could not utter a word, and only twiddled his fingers; the deacon looked at his flabbergasted and really absurd face, and laughed.

"Let us leave off talking of that," said the zoologist. "Only remember one thing, Alexandr Daviditch: primitive man was preserved from such as Laevsky by the struggle for existence and by natural selection; now our civilisation has considerably weakened the struggle and the selection, and we ought to look after the destruction of the rotten and worthless for ourselves; otherwise, when the Laevskys multiply, civilisation will perish and mankind will degenerate utterly. It will be our fault."

"If it depends on drowning and hanging," said Samoylenko, "damnation take your civilisation, damnation take your humanity! Damnation take it! I tell you what: you are a very learned and intelligent man and the pride of your country, but the Germans have ruined you. Yes, the Germans! The Germans!"

Since Samoylenko had left Dorpat, where he had studied medicine, he had rarely seen a German and had not read a single German book, but, in his opinion, every harmful idea in politics or science was due to the Germans. Where he had got this notion he could not have said himself, but he held it firmly.

"Yes, the Germans!" he repeated once more. "Come and have some tea."

All three stood up, and putting on their hats, went out into the little garden, and sat there under the shade of the light green maples, the pear-trees, and a chestnut-tree. The zoologist and the deacon sat on a bench by the table, while Samoylenko sank into a deep wicker chair with a sloping back. The orderly handed them tea, jam, and a bottle of syrup.

It was very hot, thirty degrees Réaumur in the shade. The sultry air was stagnant and motionless, and a long spider-web, stretching from the chestnut-tree to the ground, hung limply and did not stir.

The deacon took up the guitar, which was constantly lying on the ground near the table, tuned it, and began singing softly in a thin voice:

"'Gathered round the tavern were the seminary lads,'"  
but instantly subsided, overcome by the heat, mopped his brow and glanced upwards at the blazing blue sky. Samoylenko grew drowsy; the sultry heat, the stillness and the delicious after-dinner languor, which quickly pervaded all his limbs, made him feel heavy and sleepy; his arms dropped at his sides, his eyes grew small, his head sank on his breast. He looked with almost tearful tenderness at Von Koren and the deacon, and muttered:

"The younger generation. . . A scientific star and a luminary of the Church. . . I shouldn't wonder if the long-skirted alleluia will be shooting up into a bishop; I dare say I may come to kissing his hand. . . Well . . . please God. . . ."

Soon a snore was heard. Von Koren and the deacon finished their tea and went out into the street.

"Are you going to the harbour again to catch sea-gudgeon?" asked the zoologist.

"No, it's too hot."

"Come and see me. You can pack up a parcel and copy something for me. By the way, we must have a talk about what you are to do. You must work, deacon. You can't go on like this."

"Your words are just and logical," said the deacon. "But my laziness finds an excuse in the circumstances of my present life. You know yourself that an uncertain position has a great tendency to make people apathetic. God only knows whether I have been sent here for a time or permanently. I am living here in uncertainty, while my wife is vegetating at her father's and is missing me. And I must confess my brain is melting with the heat."

"That's all nonsense," said the zoologist. "You can get used to the heat, and you can get used to being without the deaconess. You mustn't be slack; you must pull yourself together."

with a jug, a copper basin, towels, and a sponge. In the bay stood two unknown steamers with dirty white funnels, obviously foreign cargo vessels. Some men dressed in white and wearing white shoes were walking along the harbour, shouting loudly in French, and were answered from the steamers. The bells were ringing briskly in the little church of the town.

"To-day is Sunday!" Nadyezhda Fyodorovna remembered with pleasure.

She felt perfectly well, and was in a gay holiday humour. In a new loose-fitting dress of coarse thick tussore silk, and a big wide-brimmed straw hat which was bent down over her ears, so that her face looked out as though from a basket, she fancied she looked very charming. She thought that in the whole town there was only one young, pretty, intellectual woman, and that was herself, and that she was the only one who knew how to dress herself cheaply, elegantly, and with taste. That dress, for example, cost only twenty-two roubles, and yet how charming it was! In the whole town she was the only one who could be attractive, while there were numbers of men, so they must all, whether they would or not, be envious of Laevsky.

She was glad that of late Laevsky had been cold to her, reserved and polite, and at times even harsh and rude; in the past she had met all his outbursts, all his contemptuous, cold or strange incomprehensible glances, with tears, reproaches, and threats to leave him or to starve herself to death; now she only blushed, looked guiltily at him, and was glad he was not affectionate to her. If he had abused her, threatened her, it would have been better and pleasanter, since she felt hopelessly guilty towards him. She felt she was to blame, in the first place, for not sympathising with the dreams of a life of hard work, for the sake of which he had given up Petersburg and had come here to the Caucasus, and she was convinced that he had been angry with her of late for precisely that. When she was travelling to the Caucasus, it seemed that she would find here on the first day a cosy nook by the sea, a snug little garden with shade, with birds, with little brooks, where she could grow flowers and vegetables, rear ducks and hens, entertain her neighbours, doctor poor peasants and distribute little books amongst them. It had turned out that the Caucasus was nothing but bare mountains, forests, and huge valleys, where it took a long time and a great deal of effort to find anything and settle down; that there were no neighbours of any sort; that it was very hot and one might be robbed. Laevsky had been in no hurry to obtain a piece of land; she was glad of it, and they seemed to be in a tacit compact never to allude to a life of hard work. He was silent about it, she thought, because he was angry with her for being silent about it.

In the second place, she had without his knowledge during those two years bought various trifles to the value of three hundred roubles at Atchmianov's shop. She had bought the things by degrees, at one time materials, at another time silk or a parasol, and the debt had grown imperceptibly.

"I will tell him about it to-day . . .," she used to decide, but at once reflected that in Laevsky's present mood it would hardly be convenient to talk to him of debts.

Thirdly, she had on two occasions in Laevsky's absence received a visit from Kirilin, the police captain: once in the morning when Laevsky had gone to bathe, and another time at midnight when he was playing cards. Remembering this, Nadyezhda Fyodorovna flushed crimson, and looked round at the cook as though she might overhear her thoughts. The

long, insufferably hot, wearisome days, beautiful languorous evenings and stifling nights, and the whole manner of living, when from morning to night one is at a loss to fill up the useless hours, and the persistent thought that she was the prettiest young woman in the town, and that her youth was passing and being wasted, and Laevsky himself, though honest and idealistic, always the same, always lounging about in his slippers, biting his nails, and wearying her with his caprices, led by degrees to her becoming possessed by desire, and as though she were mad, she thought of nothing else day and night. Breathing, looking, walking, she felt nothing but desire. The sound of the sea told her she must love; the darkness of evening -- the same; the mountains -- the same. . . . And when Kirilin began paying her attentions, she had neither the power nor the wish to resist, and surrendered to him. . . .

Now the foreign steamers and the men in white reminded her for some reason of a huge hall; together with the shouts of French she heard the strains of a waltz, and her bosom heaved with unaccountable delight. She longed to dance and talk French.

She reflected joyfully that there was nothing terrible about her infidelity. Her soul had no part in her infidelity; she still loved Laevsky, and that was proved by the fact that she was jealous of him, was sorry for him, and missed him when he was away. Kirilin had turned out to be very mediocre, rather coarse though handsome; everything was broken off with him already and there would never be anything more. What had happened was over; it had nothing to do with any one, and if Laevsky found it out he would not believe in it.

There was only one bathing-house for ladies on the sea-front; men bathed under the open sky. Going into the bathing-house, Nadyezhda Fyodorovna found there an elderly lady, Marya Konstantinovna Bityugov, and her daughter Katya, a schoolgirl of fifteen; both of them were sitting on a bench undressing. Marya Konstantinovna was a good-natured, enthusiastic, and genteel person, who talked in a drawling and pathetic voice. She had been a governess until she was thirty-two, and then had married Bityugov, a Government official -- a bald little man with his hair combed on to his temples and with a very meek disposition. She was still in love with him, was jealous, blushed at the word "love," and told every one she was very happy.

"My dear," she cried enthusiastically, on seeing Nadyezhda Fyodorovna, assuming an expression which all her acquaintances called "almond-oily." "My dear, how delightful that you have come! We'll bathe together -- that's enchanting!"

Olga quickly flung off her dress and chemise, and began undressing her mistress.

"It's not quite so hot to-day as yesterday?" said Nadyezhda Fyodorovna, shrinking at the coarse touch of the naked cook. "Yesterday I almost died of the heat."

"Oh, yes, my dear; I could hardly breathe myself. Would you believe it? I bathed yesterday three times! Just imagine, my dear, three times! Nikodim Alexandritch was quite uneasy."

"Is it possible to be so ugly?" thought Nadyezhda Fyodorovna, looking at Olga and the official's wife; she glanced at Katya and thought: "The little girl's not badly made."

"Your Nikodim Alexandritch is very charming!" she said. "I'm simply in love with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried Marya Konstantinovna, with a forced laugh; "that's quite enchanting."

Free from her clothes, Nadyezhda Fyodorovna felt a desire to fly. And it seemed to her that if she were to wave her hands she would fly upwards. When she was undressed, she noticed that Olga looked scornfully at her white body. Olga, a young soldier's wife, was living with her lawful husband, and so considered herself superior to her mistress. Marya Konstantinovna and Katya were afraid of her, and did not respect her. This was disagreeable, and to raise herself in their opinion, Nadyezhda Fyodorovna said:

"At home, in Petersburg, summer villa life is at its height now. My husband and I have so many friends! We ought to go and see them."

"I believe your husband is an engineer?" said Marya Konstantinovna timidly.

"I am speaking of Laevsky. He has a great many acquaintances. But unfortunately his mother is a proud aristocrat, not very intelligent. . . ."

Nadyezhda Fyodorovna threw herself into the water without finishing; Marya Konstantinovna and Katya made their way in after her.

"There are so many conventional ideas in the world," Nadyezhda Fyodorovna went on, "and life is not so easy as it seems."

Marya Konstantinovna, who had been a governess in aristocratic families and who was an authority on social matters, said:

"Oh yes! Would you believe me, my dear, at the Garatynskys' I was expected to dress for lunch as well as for dinner, so that, like an actress, I received a special allowance for my wardrobe in addition to my salary."

She stood between Nadyezhda Fyodorovna and Katya as though to screen her daughter from the water that washed the former.

Through the open doors looking out to the sea they could see some one swimming a hundred paces from their bathing-place.

"Mother, it's our Kostya," said Katya.

"Ach, ach!" Marya Konstantinovna cackled in her dismay. "Ach, Kostya!" she shouted, "Come back! Kostya, come back!"

Kostya, a boy of fourteen, to show off his prowess before his mother and sister, dived and swam farther, but began to be exhausted and hurried back, and from his strained and serious face it could be seen that he could not trust his own strength.

"The trouble one has with these boys, my dear!" said Marya Konstantinovna, growing calmer. "Before you can turn round, he will break his neck. Ah, my dear, how sweet it is, and yet at the same time how difficult, to be a mother! One's afraid of everything."

Nadyezhda Fyodorovna put on her straw hat and dashed out into the open sea. She swam some thirty feet and then turned on her back. She could see the sea to the horizon, the steamers, the people on the sea-front, the town; and all this, together with the sultry heat and the soft, transparent waves, excited her and whispered that she must live, live. . . . A sailing-boat darted by her rapidly and vigorously, cleaving the waves and the air; the man sitting at the helm looked at her, and she liked being looked at. . . .

After bathing, the ladies dressed and went away together.

"I have fever every alternate day, and yet I don't get thin," said Nadyezhda Fyodorovna, licking her lips, which were salt from the bathe, and responding with a smile to the bows of her acquaintances. "I've always been plump, and now I believe I'm plumper than ever."

"That, my dear, is constitutional. If, like me, one has no constitutional tendency to stoutness, no diet is of any use. . . . But you've wetted your hat, my dear."

"It doesn't matter; it will dry."

Nadyezhda Fyodorovna saw again the men in white who were walking on the sea-front and talking French; and again she felt a sudden thrill of joy, and had a vague memory of some big hall in which she had once danced, or of which, perhaps, she had once dreamed. And something at the bottom of her soul dimly and obscurely whispered to her that she was a pretty, common, miserable, worthless woman. . . .

Marya Konstantinovna stopped at her gate and asked her to come in and sit down for a little while.

"Come in, my dear," she said in an imploring voice, and at the same time she looked at Nadyezhda Fyodorovna with anxiety and hope; perhaps she would refuse and not come in!

"With pleasure," said Nadyezhda Fyodorovna, accepting. "You know how I love being with you!"

And she went into the house. Marya Konstantinovna sat her down and gave her coffee, regaled her with milk rolls, then showed her photographs of her former pupils, the Garatynskys, who were by now married. She showed her, too, the examination reports of Kostya and Katya. The reports were very good, but to make them seem even better, she complained, with a sigh, how difficult the lessons at school were now. . . . She made much of her visitor, and was sorry for her, though at the same time she was harassed by the thought that Nadyezhda Fyodorovna might have a corrupting influence on the mora

# The Grasshopper

Anton Chekhov

I

ALL Olga Ivanovna's friends and acquaintances were at her wedding.

"Look at him; isn't it true that there is something in him?" she said to her friends, with a nod towards her husband, as though she wanted to explain why she was marrying a simple, very ordinary, and in no way remarkable man.

Her husband, Osip Stepanitch Dymov, was a doctor, and only of the rank of a titular councillor. He was on the staff of two hospitals: in one a ward-surgeon and in the other a dissecting demonstrator. Every day from nine to twelve he saw patients and was busy in his ward, and after twelve o'clock he went by tram to the other hospital, where he dissected. His private practice was a small one, not worth more than five hundred roubles a year. That was all. What more could one say about him? Meanwhile, Olga Ivanovna and her friends and acquaintances were not quite ordinary people. Every one of them was remarkable in some way, and more or less famous; already had made a reputation and was looked upon as a celebrity; or if not yet a celebrity, gave brilliant promise of becoming one. There was an actor from the Dramatic Theatre, who was a great talent of established reputation, as well as an elegant, intelligent, and modest man, and a capital elocutionist, and who taught Olga Ivanovna to recite; there was a singer from the opera, a good-natured, fat man who assured Olga Ivanovna, with a sigh, that she was ruining herself, that if she would take herself in hand and not be lazy she might make a remarkable singer; then there were several artists, and chief among them Ryabovsky, a very handsome, fair young man of five-and-twenty who painted genre pieces, animal studies, and landscapes, was successful at exhibitions, and had sold his last picture for five hundred roubles. He touched up Olga Ivanovna's sketches, and used to say she might do something. Then a violoncellist, whose instrument used to sob, and who openly declared that of all the ladies of his acquaintance the only one who could accompany him was Olga Ivanovna; then there was a literary man, young but already well known, who had written stories, novels, and plays. Who else? Why, Vassily Vassilyitch, a landowner and amateur illustrator and vignettist, with a great feeling for the old Russian style, the old ballad and epic. On paper, on china, and on smoked plates, he produced literally marvels. In the midst of this free artistic company, spoiled by fortune, though refined and modest, who recalled the existence of doctors only in times of illness, and to whom the name of Dymov sounded in no way different from Sidorov or Tarasov -- in the midst of this company Dymov seemed strange, not wanted, and small, though he was tall and broad-shouldered. He looked as though he had on somebody else's coat, and his beard was like a shopman's. Though if he had been a writer or an artist, they would have said that his beard reminded them of Zola.

An artist said to Olga Ivanovna that with her flaxen hair and in her wedding-dress she was very much like a graceful cherry-tree when it is covered all over with delicate white blossoms in spring.

"Oh, let me tell you," said Olga Ivanovna, taking his arm, "how it was it all came to pass so

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suddenly. Listen, listen! . . . I must tell you that my father was on the same staff at the hospital as Dymov. When my poor father was taken ill, Dymov watched for days and nights together at his bedside. Such self-sacrifice! Listen, Ryabovsky! You, my writer, listen; it is very interesting! Come nearer. Such self-sacrifice, such genuine sympathy! I sat up with my father, and did not sleep for nights, either. And all at once -- the princess had won the hero's heart -- my Dymov fell head over ears in love. Really, fate is so strange at times! Well, after my father's death he came to see me sometimes, met me in the street, and one fine evening, all at once he made me an offer . . . like snow upon my head. . . . I lay awake all night, crying, and fell hellishly in love myself. And here, as you see, I am his wife. There really is something strong, powerful, bearlike about him, isn't there? Now his face is turned three-quarters towards us in a bad light, but when he turns round look at his forehead. Ryabovsky, what do you say to that forehead? Dymov, we are talking about you!" she called to her husband. "Come here; hold out your honest hand to Ryabovsky. . . . That's right, be friends."

Dymov, with a naïve and good-natured smile, held out his hand to Ryabovsky, and said:

"Very glad to meet you. There was a Ryabovsky in my year at the medical school. Was he a relation of yours?"

## II

Olga Ivanovna was twenty-two, Dymov was thirty-one. They got on splendidly together when they were married. Olga Ivanovna hung all her drawing-room walls with her own and other people's sketches, in frames and without frames, and near the piano and furniture arranged picturesque corners with Japanese parasols, easels, daggers, busts, photographs, and rags of many colours. . . . In the dining-room she papered the walls with peasant woodcuts, hung up bark shoes and sickles, stood in a corner a scythe and a rake, and so achieved a dining-room in the Russian style. In her bedroom she draped the ceiling and the walls with dark cloths to make it like a cavern, hung a Venetian lantern over the beds, and at the door set a figure with a halberd. And every one thought that the young people had a very charming little home.

When she got up at eleven o'clock every morning, Olga Ivanovna played the piano or, if it were sunny, painted something in oils. Then between twelve and one she drove to her dressmaker's. As Dymov and she had very little money, only just enough, she and her dressmaker were often put to clever shifts to enable her to appear constantly in new dresses and make a sensation with them. Very often out of an old dyed dress, out of bits of tulle, lace, plush, and silk, costing nothing, perfect marvels were created, something bewitching -- not a dress, but a dream. From the dressmaker's Olga Ivanovna usually drove to some actress of her acquaintance to hear the latest theatrical gossip, and incidentally to try and get hold of tickets for the first night of some new play or for a benefit performance. From the actress's she had to go to some artist's studio or to some exhibition or to see some celebrity -- either to pay a visit or to give an invitation or simply to have a chat. And everywhere she met with a gay and friendly welcome, and was assured that she was good, that she was sweet, that she was rare. . . . Those whom she called great and famous received her as one of themselves, as an equal, and predicted with one voice that, with her talents, her taste, and her intelligence, she would do great things if she concentrated herself. She sang, she played the piano, she painted in oils, she carved, she took part in amateur performances; and all

this not just anyhow, but all with talent, whether she made lanterns for an illumination or dressed up or tied somebody's cravat -- everything she did was exceptionally graceful, artistic, and charming. But her talents showed themselves in nothing so clearly as in her faculty for quickly becoming acquainted and on intimate terms with celebrated people. No sooner did any one become ever so little celebrated, and set people talking about him, than she made his acquaintance, got on friendly terms the same day, and invited him to her house. Every new acquaintance she made was a veritable fête for her. She adored celebrated people, was proud of them, dreamed of them every night. She craved for them, and never could satisfy her craving. The old ones departed and were forgotten, new ones came to replace them, but to these, too, she soon grew accustomed or was disappointed in them, and began eagerly seeking for fresh great men, finding them and seeking for them again. What for?

Between four and five she dined at home with her husband. His simplicity, good sense, and kind-heartedness touched her and moved her up to enthusiasm. She was constantly jumping up, impulsively hugging his head and showering kisses on it.

"You are a clever, generous man, Dymov," she used to say, "but you have one very serious defect. You take absolutely no interest in art. You don't believe in music or painting."

"I don't understand them," he would say mildly. "I have spent all my life in working at natural science and medicine, and I have never had time to take an interest in the arts."

"But, you know, that's awful, Dymov!"

"Why so? Your friends don't know anything of science or medicine, but you don't reproach them with it. Every one has his own line. I don't understand landscapes and operas, but the way I look at it is that if one set of sensible people devote their whole lives to them, and other sensible people pay immense sums for them, they must be of use. I don't understand them, but not understanding does not imply disbelieving in them."

"Let me shake your honest hand!"

After dinner Olga Ivanovna would drive off to see her friends, then to a theatre or to a concert, and she returned home after midnight. So it was every day.

On Wednesdays she had "At Homes." At these "At Homes" the hostess and her guests did not play cards and did not dance, but entertained themselves with various arts. An actor from the Dramatic Theatre recited, a singer sang, artists sketched in the albums of which Olga Ivanovna had a great number, the violoncellist played, and the hostess herself sketched, carved, sang, and played accompaniments. In the intervals between the recitations, music, and singing, they talked and argued about literature, the theatre, and painting. There were no ladies, for Olga Ivanovna considered all ladies wearisome and vulgar except actresses and her dressmaker. Not one of these entertainments passed without the hostess starting at every ring at the bell, and saying, with a triumphant expression, "It is he," meaning by "he," of course, some new celebrity. Dymov was not in the drawing-room, and no one remembered his existence. But exactly at half-past eleven the door leading into the dining-room opened, and Dymov would appear with his good-natured, gentle smile and say, rubbing his hands:

"Come to supper, gentlemen."

They all went into the dining-room, and every time found on the table exactly the same things: a dish of oysters, a piece of ham or veal, sardines, cheese, caviare, mushrooms, vodka, and two decanters of wine.

"My dear maître d'hôtel!" Olga Ivanovna would say, clasping her hands with enthusiasm, "you are simply fascinating! My friends, look at his forehead! Dymov, turn your profile. Look! he has the face of a Bengal tiger and an expression as kind and sweet as a gazelle. Ah, the darling!"

The visitors ate, and, looking at Dymov, thought, "He really is a nice fellow"; but they soon forgot about him, and went on talking about the theatre, music, and painting.

The young people were happy, and their life flowed on without a hitch.

The third week of their honeymoon was spent, however, not quite happily -- sadly, indeed. Dymov caught erysipelas in the hospital, was in bed for six days, and had to have his beautiful black hair cropped. Olga Ivanovna sat beside him and wept bitterly, but when he was better she put a white handkerchief on his shaven head and began to paint him as a Bedouin. And they were both in good spirits. Three days after he had begun to go back to the hospital he had another mischance.

"I have no luck, little mother," he said one day at dinner. "I had four dissections to do today, and I cut two of my fingers at one. And I did not notice it till I got home."

Olga Ivanovna was alarmed. He smiled, and told her that it did not matter, and that he often cut his hands when he was dissecting.

"I get absorbed, little mother, and grow careless."

Olga Ivanovna dreaded symptoms of blood-poisoning, and prayed about it every night, but all went well. And again life flowed on peaceful and happy, free from grief and anxiety. The present was happy, and to follow it spring was at hand, already smiling in the distance, and promising a thousand delights. There would be no end to their happiness. In April, May and June a summer villa a good distance out of town; walks, sketching, fishing, nightingales; and then from July right on to autumn an artist's tour on the Volga, and in this tour Olga Ivanovna would take part as an indispensable member of the society. She had already had made for her two travelling dresses of linen, had bought paints, brushes, canvases, and a new palette for the journey. Almost every day Ryabovsky visited her to see what progress she was making in her painting; when she showed him her painting, he used to thrust his hands deep into his pockets, compress his lips, sniff, and say:

"Ye -- es . . . ! That cloud of yours is screaming: it's not in the evening light. The foreground is somehow chewed up, and there is something, you know, not the thing. . . . And your cottage is weighed down and whines pitifully. That corner ought to have been taken more in shadow, but on the whole it is not bad; I like it."

And the more incomprehensible he talked, the more readily Olga Ivanovna understood him.

### III

After dinner on the second day of Trinity week, Dymov bought some sweets and some savouries and went down to the villa to see his wife. He had not seen her for a fortnight, and missed her terribly. As he sat in the train and afterwards as he looked for his villa in a big wood, he felt all the while hungry and weary, and dreamed of how he would have supper in freedom with his wife, then tumble into bed and to sleep. And he was delighted as he looked at his parcel, in which there was caviare, cheese, and white salmon.

The sun was setting by the time he found his villa and recognized it. The old servant told him that her mistress was not at home, but that most likely she would soon be in. The villa, very uninviting in appearance, with low ceilings papered with writing-paper and with uneven floors full of crevices, consisted only of three rooms. In one there was a bed, in the second there were canvases, brushes, greasy papers, and men's overcoats and hats lying about on the chairs and in the windows, while in the third Dymov found three unknown men; two were dark-haired and had beards, the other was clean-shaven and fat, apparently an actor. There was a samovar boiling on the table.

"What do you want?" asked the actor in a bass voice, looking at Dymov ungraciously. "Do you want Olga Ivanovna? Wait a minute; she will be here directly."

Dymov sat down and waited. One of the dark-haired men, looking sleepily and listlessly at him, poured himself out a glass of tea, and asked:

"Perhaps you would like some tea?"

Dymov was both hungry and thirsty, but he refused tea for fear of spoiling his supper. Soon he heard footsteps and a familiar laugh; a door slammed, and Olga Ivanovna ran into the room, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and carrying a box in her hand; she was followed by Ryabovsky, rosy and good-humoured, carrying a big umbrella and a camp-stool.

"Dymov!" cried Olga Ivanovna, and she flushed crimson with pleasure. "Dymov!" she repeated, laying her head and both arms on his bosom. "Is that you? Why haven't you come for so long? Why? Why?"

"When could I, little mother? I am always busy, and whenever I am free it always happens somehow that the train does not fit."

"But how glad I am to see you! I have been dreaming about you the whole night, the whole night, and I was afraid you must be ill. Ah! if you only knew how sweet you are! You have come in the nick of time! You will be my salvation! You are the only person who can save me! There is to be a most original wedding here tomorrow," she went on, laughing, and tying her husband's cravat. "A young telegraph clerk at the station, called Tchikeldyev, is going to be married. He is a handsome young man and -- well, not stupid, and you know there is something strong, bearlike in his face . . . you might paint him as a young Norman. We summer visitors take a great interest in him, and have promised to be at his

wedding. . . . He is a lonely, timid man, not well off, and of course it would be a shame not to be sympathetic to him. Fancy! the wedding will be after the service; then we shall all walk from the church to the bride's lodgings . . . you see the wood, the birds singing, patches of sunlight on the grass, and all of us spots of different colours against the bright green background -- very original, in the style of the French impressionists. But, Dymov, what am I to go to the church in?" said Olga Ivanovna, and she looked as though she were going to cry. "I have nothing here, literally nothing! no dress, no flowers, no gloves . . . you must save me. Since you have come, fate itself bids you save me. Take the keys, my precious, go home and get my pink dress from the wardrobe. You remember it; it hangs in front. . . . Then, in the storeroom, on the floor, on the right side, you will see two cardboard boxes. When you open the top one you will see tulle, heaps of tulle and rags of all sorts, and under them flowers. Take out all the flowers carefully, try not to crush them, darling; I will choose among them later. . . . And buy me some gloves."

"Very well!" said Dymov; "I will go tomorrow and send them to you."

"Tomorrow?" asked Olga Ivanovna, and she looked at him surprised. "You won't have time tomorrow. The first train goes tomorrow at nine, and the wedding's at eleven. No, darling, it must be today; it absolutely must be today. If you won't be able to come tomorrow, send them by a messenger. Come, you must run along. . . . The passenger train will be in directly; don't miss it, darling."

"Very well."

"Oh, how sorry I am to let you go!" said Olga Ivanovna, and tears came into her eyes. "And why did I promise that telegraph clerk, like a silly?"

Dymov hurriedly drank a glass of tea, took a cracknel, and, smiling gently, went to the station. And the caviare, the cheese, and the white salmon were eaten by the two dark gentlemen and the fat actor.

#### IV

On a still moonlight night in July Olga Ivanovna was standing on the deck of a Volga steamer and looking alternately at the water and at the picturesque banks. Beside her was standing Ryabovsky, telling her the black shadows on the water were not shadows, but a dream, that it would be sweet to sink into forgetfulness, to die, to become a memory in the sight of that enchanted water with the fantastic glimmer, in sight of the fathomless sky and the mournful, dreamy shores that told of the vanity of our life and of the existence of something higher, blessed, and eternal. The past was vulgar and uninteresting, the future was trivial, and that marvellous night, unique in a lifetime, would soon be over, would blend with eternity; then, why live?

And Olga Ivanovna listened alternately to Ryabovsky's voice and the silence of the night, and thought of her being immortal and never dying. The turquoise colour of the water, such as she had never seen before, the sky, the river-banks, the black shadows, and the unaccountable joy that flooded her soul, all told her that she would make a great artist, and that somewhere in the distance, in the infinite space beyond the moonlight, success, glory, the love of the people, lay awaiting her. . . . When she gazed steadily without blinking into

the distance, she seemed to see crowds of people, lights, triumphant strains of music, cries of enthusiasm, she herself in a white dress, and flowers showered upon her from all sides. She thought, too, that beside her, leaning with his elbows on the rail of the steamer, there was standing a real great man, a genius, one of God's elect. . . . All that he had created up to the present was fine, new, and extraordinary, but what he would create in time, when with maturity his rare talent reached its full development, would be astounding, immeasurably sublime; and that could be seen by his face, by his manner of expressing himself and his attitude to nature. He talked of shadows, of the tones of evening, of the moonlight, in a special way, in a language of his own, so that one could not help feeling the fascination of his power over nature. He was very handsome, original, and his life, free, independent, aloof from all common cares, was like the life of a bird.

"It's growing cooler," said Olga Ivanovna, and she gave a shudder.

Ryabovsky wrapped her in his cloak, and said mournfully:

"I feel that I am in your power; I am a slave. Why are you so enchanting today?"

He kept staring intently at her, and his eyes were terrible. And she was afraid to look at him.

"I love you madly," he whispered, breathing on her cheek. "Say one word to me and I will not go on living; I will give up art . . ." he muttered in violent emotion. "Love me, love . . ."

"Don't talk like that," said Olga Ivanovna, covering her eyes. "It's dreadful! How about Dymov?"

"What of Dymov? Why Dymov? What have I to do with Dymov? The Volga, the moon, beauty, my love, ecstasy, and there is no such thing as Dymov. . . . Ah! I don't know . . . I don't care about the past; give me one moment, one instant!"

Olga Ivanovna's heart began to throb. She tried to think about her husband, but all her past, with her wedding, with Dymov, and with her "At Homes," seemed to her petty, trivial, dingy, unnecessary, and far, far away. . . . Yes, really, what of Dymov? Why Dymov? What had she to do with Dymov? Had he any existence in nature, or was he only a dream?

"For him, a simple and ordinary man the happiness he has had already is enough," she thought, covering her face with her hands. "Let them condemn me, let them curse me, but in spite of them all I will go to my ruin; I will go to my ruin! . . . One must experience everything in life. My God! how terrible and how glorious!"

"Well? Well?" muttered the artist, embracing her, and greedily kissing the hands with which she feebly tried to thrust him from her. "You love me? Yes? Yes? Oh, what a night! marvellous night!"

"Yes, what a night!" she whispered, looking into his eyes, which were bright with tears.

Then she looked round quickly, put her arms round him, and kissed him on the lips.

"We are nearing Kineshma!" said some one on the other side of the deck.

They heard heavy footsteps; it was a waiter from the refreshment-bar.

"Waiter," said Olga Ivanovna, laughing and crying with happiness, "bring us some wine."

The artist, pale with emotion, sat on the seat, looking at Olga Ivanovna with adoring, grateful eyes; then he closed his eyes, and said, smiling languidly:

"I am tired."

And he leaned his head against the rail.

## V

On the second of September the day was warm and still, but overcast. In the early morning a light mist had hung over the Volga, and after nine o'clock it had begun to spout with rain. And there seemed no hope of the sky clearing. Over their morning tea Ryabovsky told Olga Ivanovna that painting was the most ungrateful and boring art, that he was not an artist, that none but fools thought that he had any talent, and all at once, for no rhyme or reason, he snatched up a knife and with it scraped over his very best sketch. After his tea he sat plunged in gloom at the window and gazed at the Volga. And now the Volga was dingy, all of one even colour without a gleam of light, cold-looking. Everything, everything recalled the approach of dreary, gloomy autumn. And it seemed as though nature had removed now from the Volga the sumptuous green covers from the banks, the brilliant reflections of the sunbeams, the transparent blue distance, and all its smart gala array, and had packed it away in boxes till the coming spring, and the crows were flying above the Volga and crying tauntingly, "Bare, bare!"

Ryabovsky heard their cawing, and thought he had already gone off and lost his talent, that everything in this world was relative, conditional, and stupid, and that he ought not to have taken up with this woman. . . . In short, he was out of humour and depressed.

Olga Ivanovna sat behind the screen on the bed, and, passing her fingers through her lovely flaxen hair, pictured herself first in the drawing-room, then in the bedroom, then in her husband's study; her imagination carried her to the theatre, to the dress-maker, to her distinguished friends. Were they getting something up now? Did they think of her? The season had begun by now, and it would be time to think about her "At Homes." And Dymov? Dear Dymov! with what gentleness and childlike pathos he kept begging her in his letters to make haste and come home! Every month he sent her seventy-five roubles, and when she wrote him that she had lent the artists a hundred roubles, he sent that hundred too. What a kind, generous-hearted man! The travelling wearied Olga Ivanovna; she was bored; and she longed to get away from the peasants, from the damp smell of the river, and to cast off the feeling of physical uncleanliness of which she was conscious all the time, living in the peasants' huts and wandering from village to village. If Ryabovsky had not given his word to the artists that he would stay with them till the twentieth of September, they might have gone away that very day. And how nice that would have been!

"My God!" moaned Ryabovsky. "Will the sun ever come out? I can't go on with a sunny

landscape without the sun. . . ."

"But you have a sketch with a cloudy sky," said Olga Ivanovna, coming from behind the screen. "Do you remember, in the right foreground forest trees, on the left a herd of cows and geese? You might finish it now."

"Aie!" the artist scowled. "Finish it! Can you imagine I am such a fool that I don't know what I want to do?"

"How you have changed to me!" sighed Olga Ivanovna.

"Well, a good thing too!"

Olga Ivanovna's face quivered; she moved away to the stove and began to cry.

"Well, that's the last straw -- crying! Give over! I have a thousand reasons for tears, but I am not crying."

"A thousand reasons!" cried Olga Ivanovna. "The chief one is that you are weary of me. Yes!" she said, and broke into sobs. "If one is to tell the truth, you are ashamed of our love. You keep trying to prevent the artists from noticing it, though it is impossible to conceal it, and they have known all about it for ever so long."

"Olga, one thing I beg you," said the artist in an imploring voice, laying his hand on his heart -- "one thing, don't worry me! I want nothing else from you!"

"But swear that you love me still!"

"This is agony!" the artist hissed through his teeth, and he jumped up. "It will end by my throwing myself in the Volga or going out of my mind! Let me alone!"

"Come, kill me, kill me!" cried Olga Ivanovna. "Kill me!"

She sobbed again, and went behind the screen. There was a swish of rain on the straw thatch of the hut. Ryabovsky clutched his head and strode up and down the hut; then with a resolute face, as though bent on proving something to somebody, put on his cap, slung his gun over his shoulder, and went out of the hut.

After he had gone, Olga Ivanovna lay a long time on the bed, crying. At first she thought it would be a good thing to poison herself, so that when Ryabovsky came back he would find her dead; then her imagination carried her to her drawing-room, to her husband's study, and she imagined herself sitting motionless beside Dymov and enjoying the physical peace and cleanliness, and in the evening sitting in the theatre, listening to Mazini. And a yearning for civilization, for the noise and bustle of the town, for celebrated people sent a pang to her heart. A peasant woman came into the hut and began in a leisurely way lighting the stove to get the dinner. There was a smell of charcoal fumes, and the air was filled with bluish smoke. The artists came in, in muddy high boots and with faces wet with rain, examined their sketches, and comforted themselves by saying that the Volga had its charms even in bad weather. On the wall the cheap clock went "tic-tic-tic." . . . The flies, feeling chilled,

crowded round the ikon in the corner, buzzing, and one could hear the cockroaches scurrying about among the thick portfolios under the seats. . . .

Ryabovsky came home as the sun was setting. He flung his cap on the table, and, without removing his muddy boots, sank pale and exhausted on the bench and closed his eyes.

"I am tired . . ." he said, and twitched his eyebrows, trying to raise his eyelids.

To be nice to him and to show she was not cross, Olga Ivanovna went up to him, gave him a silent kiss, and passed the comb through his fair hair. She meant to comb it for him.

"What's that?" he said, starting as though something cold had touched him, and he opened his eyes. "What is it? Please let me alone."

He thrust her off, and moved away. And it seemed to her that there was a look of aversion and annoyance on his face.

At that time the peasant woman cautiously carried him, in both hands, a plate of cabbage-soup. And Olga Ivanovna saw how she wetted her fat fingers in it. And the dirty peasant woman, standing with her body thrust forward, and the cabbage-soup which Ryabovsky began eating greedily, and the hut, and their whole way of life, which she at first had so loved for its simplicity and artistic disorder, seemed horrible to her now. She suddenly felt insulted, and said coldly:

"We must part for a time, or else from boredom we shall quarrel in earnest. I am sick of this; I am going today."

"Going how? Astride on a broomstick?"

"Today is Thursday, so the steamer will be here at half-past nine."

"Eh? Yes, yes. . . . Well, go, then . . ." Ryabovsky said softly, wiping his mouth with a towel instead of a dinner napkin. "You are dull and have nothing to do here, and one would have to be a great egoist to try and keep you. Go home, and we shall meet again after the twentieth."

Olga Ivanovna packed in good spirits. Her cheeks positively glowed with pleasure. Could it really be true, she asked herself, that she would soon be writing in her drawing-room and sleeping in her bedroom, and dining with a cloth on the table? A weight was lifted from her heart, and she no longer felt angry with the artist.

"My paints and brushes I will leave with you, Ryabovsky," she said. "You can bring what's left. . . . Mind, now, don't be lazy here when I am gone; don't mope, but work. You are such a splendid fellow, Ryabovsky!"

At ten o'clock Ryabovsky gave her a farewell kiss, in order, as she thought, to avoid kissing her on the steamer before the artists, and went with her to the landing-stage. The steamer soon came up and carried her away.

She arrived home two and a half days later. Breathless with excitement, she went, without taking off her hat or waterproof, into the drawing-room and thence into the dining-room. Dymov, with his waistcoat unbuttoned and no coat, was sitting at the table sharpening a knife on a fork; before him lay a grouse on a plate. As Olga Ivanovna went into the flat she was convinced that it was essential to hide everything from her husband, and that she would have the strength and skill to do so; but now, when she saw his broad, mild, happy smile, and shining, joyful eyes, she felt that to deceive this man was as vile, as revolting, and as impossible and out of her power as to bear false witness, to steal, or to kill, and in a flash she resolved to tell him all that had happened. Letting him kiss and embrace her, she sank down on her knees before him and hid her face.

"What is it, what is it, little mother?" he asked tenderly. "Were you homesick?"

She raised her face, red with shame, and gazed at him with a guilty and imploring look, but fear and shame prevented her from telling him the truth.

"Nothing," she said; "it's just nothing. . . ."

"Let us sit down," he said, raising her and seating her at the table. "That's right, eat the grouse. You are starving, poor darling."

She eagerly breathed in the atmosphere of home and ate the grouse, while he watched her with tenderness and laughed with delight.

## VI

Apparently, by the middle of the winter Dymov began to suspect that he was being deceived. As though his conscience was not clear, he could not look his wife straight in the face, did not smile with delight when he met her, and to avoid being left alone with her, he often brought in to dinner his colleague, Korostelev, a little close-cropped man with a wrinkled face, who kept buttoning and unbuttoning his reefer jacket with embarrassment when he talked with Olga Ivanovna, and then with his right hand nipped his left moustache. At dinner the two doctors talked about the fact that a displacement of the diaphragm was sometimes accompanied by irregularities of the heart, or that a great number of neurotic complaints were met with of late, or that Dymov had the day before found a cancer of the lower abdomen while dissecting a corpse with the diagnosis of pernicious anaemia. And it seemed as though they were talking of medicine to give Olga Ivanovna a chance of being silent -- that is, of not lying. After dinner Korostelev sat down to the piano, while Dymov sighed and said to him:

"Ech, brother -- well, well! Play something melancholy."

Hunching up his shoulders and stretching his fingers wide apart, Korostelev played some chords and began singing in a tenor voice, "Show me the abode where the Russian peasant would not groan," while Dymov sighed once more, propped his head on his fist, and sank into thought.

Olga Ivanovna had been extremely imprudent in her conduct of late. Every morning she woke up in a very bad humour and with the thought that she no longer cared for Ryabovsky,

and that, thank God, it was all over now. But as she drank her coffee she reflected that Ryabovsky had robbed her of her husband, and that now she was left with neither her husband nor Ryabovsky; then she remembered talks she had heard among her acquaintances of a picture Ryabovsky was preparing for the exhibition, something striking, a mixture of genre and landscape, in the style of Polyenov, about which every one who had been into his studio went into raptures; and this, of course, she mused, he had created under her influence, and altogether, thanks to her influence, he had greatly changed for the better. Her influence was so beneficent and essential that if she were to leave him he might perhaps go to ruin. And she remembered, too, that the last time he had come to see her in a great-coat with flecks on it and a new tie, he had asked her languidly:

"Am I beautiful?"

And with his elegance, his long curls, and his blue eyes, he really was very beautiful (or perhaps it only seemed so), and he had been affectionate to her.

Considering and remembering many things Olga Ivanovna dressed and in great agitation drove to Ryabovsky's studio. She found him in high spirits, and enchanted with his really magnificent picture. He was dancing about and playing the fool and answering serious questions with jokes. Olga Ivanovna was jealous of the picture and hated it, but from politeness she stood before the picture for five minutes in silence, and, heaving a sigh, as though before a holy shrine, said softly:

"Yes, you have never painted anything like it before. Do you know, it is positively awe-inspiring?"

And then she began beseeching him to love her and not to cast her off, to have pity on her in her misery and her wretchedness. She shed tears, kissed his hands, insisted on his swearing that he loved her, told him that without her good influence he would go astray and be ruined. And, when she had spoilt his good-humour, feeling herself humiliated, she would drive off to her dressmaker or to an actress of her acquaintance to try and get theatre tickets.

If she did not find him at his studio she left a letter in which she swore that if he did not come to see her that day she would poison herself. He was scared, came to see her, and stayed to dinner. Regardless of her husband's presence, he would say rude things to her, and she would answer him in the same way. Both felt they were a burden to each other, that they were tyrants and enemies, and were wrathful, and in their wrath did not notice that their behaviour was unseemly, and that even Korostelev, with his close-cropped head, saw it all. After dinner Ryabovsky made haste to say good-bye and get away.

"Where are you off to?" Olga Ivanovna would ask him in the hall, looking at him with hatred.

Scowling and screwing up his eyes, he mentioned some lady of their acquaintance, and it was evident that he was laughing at her jealousy and wanted to annoy her. She went to her bedroom and lay down on her bed; from jealousy, anger, a sense of humiliation and shame, she bit the pillow and began sobbing aloud. Dymov left Korostelev in the drawing-room, went into the bedroom, and with a desperate and embarrassed face said softly:

"Don't cry so loud, little mother; there's no need. You must be quiet about it. You must not let people see. . . . You know what is done is done, and can't be mended."

Not knowing how to ease the burden of her jealousy, which actually set her temples throbbing with pain, and thinking still that things might be set right, she would wash, powder her tear-stained face, and fly off to the lady mentioned.

Not finding Ryabovsky with her, she would drive off to a second, then to a third. At first she was ashamed to go about like this, but afterwards she got used to it, and it would happen that in one evening she would make the round of all her female acquaintances in search of Ryabovsky, and they all understood it.

One day she said to Ryabovsky of her husband:

"That man crushes me with his magnanimity."

This phrase pleased her so much that when she met the artists who knew of her affair with Ryabovsky she said every time of her husband, with a vigorous movement of her arm:

"That man crushes me with his magnanimity."

Their manner of life was the same as it had been the year before. On Wednesdays they were "At Home", an actor recited, the artists sketched. The violoncellist played, a singer sang, and invariably at half-past eleven the door leading to the dining-room opened and Dymov, smiling, said:

"Come to supper, gentlemen."

As before, Olga Ivanovna hunted celebrities, found them, was not satisfied, and went in pursuit of fresh ones. As before, she came back late every night; but now Dymov was not, as last year, asleep, but sitting in his study at work of some sort. He went to bed at three o'clock and got up at eight.

One evening when she was getting ready to go to the theatre and standing before the pier glass, Dymov came into her bedroom, wearing his dress-coat and a white tie. He was smiling gently and looked into his wife's face joyfully, as in old days; his face was radiant.

"I have just been defending my thesis," he said, sitting down and smoothing his knees.

"Defending?" asked Olga Ivanovna.

"Oh, oh!" he laughed, and he craned his neck to see his wife's face in the mirror, for she was still standing with her back to him, doing up her hair. "Oh, oh," he repeated, "do you know it's very possible they may offer me the Readership in General Pathology? It seems like it."

It was evident from his beaming, blissful face that if Olga Ivanovna had shared with him his joy and triumph he would have forgiven her everything, both the present and the future, and would have forgotten everything, but she did not understand what was meant by a

"readership" or by "general pathology"; besides, she was afraid of being late for the theatre, and she said nothing.

He sat there another two minutes, and with a guilty smile went away.

## VII

It had been a very troubled day.

Dymov had a very bad headache; he had no breakfast, and did not go to the hospital, but spent the whole time lying on his sofa in the study. Olga Ivanovna went as usual at midday to see Ryabovsky, to show him her still-life sketch, and to ask him why he had not been to see her the evening before. The sketch seemed to her worthless, and she had painted it only in order to have an additional reason for going to the artist.

She went in to him without ringing, and as she was taking off her goloshes in the entry she heard a sound as of something running softly in the studio, with a feminine rustle of skirts; and as she hastened to peep in she caught a momentary glimpse of a bit of brown petticoat, which vanished behind a big picture draped, together with the easel, with black calico, to the floor. There could be no doubt that a woman was hiding there. How often Olga Ivanovna herself had taken refuge behind that picture!

Ryabovsky, evidently much embarrassed, held out both hands to her, as though surprised at her arrival, and said with a forced smile:

"Aha! Very glad to see you! Anything nice to tell me?"

Olga Ivanovna's eyes filled with tears. She felt ashamed and bitter, and would not for a million roubles have consented to speak in the presence of the outsider, the rival, the deceitful woman who was standing now behind the picture, and probably giggling malignantly.

"I have brought you a sketch," she said timidly in a thin voice, and her lips quivered.  
"Nature morte."

"Ah -- ah! . . . A sketch?"

The artist took the sketch in his hands, and as he examined it walked, as it were mechanically, into the other room.

Olga Ivanovna followed him humbly.

"Nature morte . . . first-rate sort," he muttered, falling into rhyme. "Kurort . . . sport . . . port . . ."

From the studio came the sound of hurried footsteps and the rustle of a skirt.

So she had gone. Olga Ivanovna wanted to scream aloud, to hit the artist on the head with something heavy, but she could see nothing through her tears, was crushed by her shame,

and felt herself, not Olga Ivanovna, not an artist, but a little insect.

"I am tired . . ." said the artist languidly, looking at the sketch and tossing his head as though struggling with drowsiness. "It's very nice, of course, but here a sketch today, a sketch last year, another sketch in a month . . . I wonder you are not bored with them. If I were you I should give up painting and work seriously at music or something. You're not an artist, you know, but a musician. But you can't think how tired I am! I'll tell them to bring us some tea, shall I?"

He went out of the room, and Olga Ivanovna heard him give some order to his footman. To avoid farewells and explanations, and above all to avoid bursting into sobs, she ran as fast as she could, before Ryabovsky came back, to the entry, put on her goloshes, and went out into the street; then she breathed easily, and felt she was free for ever from Ryabovsky and from painting and from the burden of shame which had so crushed her in the studio. It was all over!

She drove to her dressmaker's; then to see Barnay, who had only arrived the day before; from Barnay to a music-shop, and all the time she was thinking how she would write Ryabovsky a cold, cruel letter full of personal dignity, and how in the spring or the summer she would go with Dymov to the Crimea, free herself finally from the past there, and begin a new life.

On getting home late in the evening she sat down in the drawing-room, without taking off her things, to begin the letter. Ryabovsky had told her she was not an artist, and to pay him out she wrote to him now that he painted the same thing every year, and said exactly the same thing every day; that he was at a standstill, and that nothing more would come of him than had come already. She wanted to write, too, that he owed a great deal to her good influence, and that if he was going wrong it was only because her influence was paralysed by various dubious persons like the one who had been hiding behind the picture that day.

"Little mother!" Dymov called from the study, without opening the door.

"What is it?"

"Don't come in to me, but only come to the door -- that's right. . . . The day before yesterday I must have caught diphtheria at the hospital, and now . . . I am ill. Make haste and send for Korostelev."

Olga Ivanovna always called her husband by his surname, as she did all the men of her acquaintance; she disliked his Christian name, Osip, because it reminded her of the Osip in Gogol and the silly pun on his name. But now she cried:

"Osip, it cannot be!"

"Send for him; I feel ill," Dymov said behind the door, and she could hear him go back to the sofa and lie down. "Send!" she heard his voice faintly.

"Good Heavens!" thought Olga Ivanovna, turning chill with horror. "Why, it's dangerous!"

For no reason she took the candle and went into the bedroom, and there, reflecting what she must do, glanced casually at herself in the pier glass. With her pale, frightened face, in a jacket with sleeves high on the shoulders, with yellow ruches on her bosom, and with stripes running in unusual directions on her skirt, she seemed to herself horrible and disgusting. She suddenly felt poignantly sorry for Dymov, for his boundless love for her, for his young life, and even for the desolate little bed in which he had not slept for so long; and she remembered his habitual, gentle, submissive smile. She wept bitterly, and wrote an imploring letter to Korostelev. It was two o'clock in the night.

## VIII

When towards eight o'clock in the morning Olga Ivanovna, her head heavy from want of sleep and her hair unbrushed, came out of her bedroom, looking unattractive and with a guilty expression on her face, a gentleman with a black beard, apparently the doctor, passed by her into the entry. There was a smell of drugs. Korostelev was standing near the study door, twisting his left moustache with his right hand.

"Excuse me, I can't let you go in," he said surlily to Olga Ivanovna; "it's catching. Besides, it's no use, really; he is delirious, anyway."

"Has he really got diphtheria?" Olga Ivanovna asked in a whisper.

"People who wantonly risk infection ought to be hauled up and punished for it," muttered Korostelev, not answering Olga Ivanovna's question. "Do you know why he caught it? On Tuesday he was sucking up the mucus through a pipette from a boy with diphtheria. And what for? It was stupid. . . . Just from folly. . . ."

"Is it dangerous, very?" asked Olga Ivanovna.

"Yes; they say it is the malignant form. We ought to send for Shrek really."

A little red-haired man with a long nose and a Jewish accent arrived; then a tall, stooping, shaggy individual, who looked like a head deacon; then a stout young man with a red face and spectacles. These were doctors who came to watch by turns beside their colleague. Korostelev did not go home when his turn was over, but remained and wandered about the rooms like an uneasy spirit. The maid kept getting tea for the various doctors, and was constantly running to the chemist, and there was no one to do the rooms. There was a dismal stillness in the flat.

Olga Ivanovna sat in her bedroom and thought that God was punishing her for having deceived her husband. That silent, unrepining, uncomprehended creature, robbed by his mildness of all personality and will, weak from excessive kindness, had been suffering in obscurity somewhere on his sofa, and had not complained. And if he were to complain even in delirium, the doctors watching by his bedside would learn that diphtheria was not the only cause of his sufferings. They would ask Korostelev. He knew all about it, and it was not for nothing that he looked at his friend's wife with eyes that seemed to say that she was the real chief criminal and diphtheria was only her accomplice. She did not think now of the moonlight evening on the Volga, nor the words of love, nor their poetical life in the peasant's hut. She thought only that from an idle whim, from self-indulgence, she had

sullied herself all over from head to foot in something filthy, sticky, which one could never wash off. . . .

"Oh, how fearfully false I've been!" she thought, recalling the troubled passion she had known with Ryabovsky. "Curse it all! . . ."

At four o'clock she dined with Korostelev. He did nothing but scowl and drink red wine, and did not eat a morsel. She ate nothing, either. At one minute she was praying inwardly and vowing to God that if Dymov recovered she would love him again and be a faithful wife to him. Then, forgetting herself for a minute, she would look at Korostelev, and think: "Surely it must be dull to be a humble, obscure person, not remarkable in any way, especially with such a wrinkled face and bad manners!" Then it seemed to her that God would strike her dead that minute for not having once been in her husband's study, for fear of infection. And altogether she had a dull, despondent feeling and a conviction that her life was spoilt, and that there was no setting it right anyhow. . . .

After dinner darkness came on. When Olga Ivanovna went into the drawing-room Korostelev was asleep on the sofa, with a gold-embroidered silk cushion under his head.

"Khee-poo-ah," he snored -- "khee-poo-ah."

And the doctors as they came to sit up and went away again did not notice this disorder. The fact that a strange man was asleep and snoring in the drawing-room, and the sketches on the walls and the exquisite decoration of the room, and the fact that the lady of the house was dishevelled and untidy -- all that aroused not the slightest interest now. One of the doctors chanced to laugh at something, and the laugh had a strange and timid sound that made one's heart ache.

When Olga Ivanovna went into the drawing-room next time, Korostelev was not asleep, but sitting up and smoking.

"He has diphtheria of the nasal cavity," he said in a low voice, "and the heart is not working properly now. Things are in a bad way, really."

"But you will send for Shrek?" said Olga Ivanovna.

"He has been already. It was he noticed that the diphtheria had passed into the nose. What's the use of Shrek! Shrek's no use at all, really. He is Shrek, I am Korostelev, and nothing more."

The time dragged on fearfully slowly. Olga Ivanovna lay down in her clothes on her bed, that had not been made all day, and sank into a doze. She dreamed that the whole flat was filled up from floor to ceiling with a huge piece of iron, and that if they could only get the iron out they would all be light-hearted and happy. Waking, she realized that it was not the iron but Dymov's illness that was weighing on her.

"Nature morte, port . . ." she thought, sinking into forgetfulness again. "Sport . . . Kurort . . . and what of Shrek? Shrek . . . trek . . . wreck. . . . And where are my friends now? Do they know that we are in trouble? Lord, save . . . spare! Shrek . . . trek . . ."

And again the iron was there. . . . The time dragged on slowly, though the clock on the lower storey struck frequently. And bells were continually ringing as the doctors arrived. . . . The house-maid came in with an empty glass on a tray, and asked, "Shall I make the bed, madam?" and getting no answer, went away.

The clock below struck the hour. She dreamed of the rain on the Volga; and again some one came into her bedroom, she thought a stranger. Olga Ivanovna jumped up, and recognized Korostelev.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"About three."

"Well, what is it?"

"What, indeed! . . . I've come to tell you he is passing. . . ."

He gave a sob, sat down on the bed beside her, and wiped away the tears with his sleeve. She could not grasp it at once, but turned cold all over and began slowly crossing herself.

"He is passing," he repeated in a shrill voice, and again he gave a sob. "He is dying because he sacrificed himself. What a loss for science!" he said bitterly." Compare him with all of us. He was a great man, an extraordinary man! What gifts! What hopes we all had of him!" Korostelev went on, wringing his hands: "Merciful God, he was a man of science; we shall never look on his like again. Osip Dymov, what have you done -- aie, aie, my God!"

Korostelev covered his face with both hands in despair, and shook his head.

"And his moral force," he went on, seeming to grow more and more exasperated against some one. "Not a man, but a pure, good, loving soul, and clean as crystal. He served science and died for science. And he worked like an ox night and day -- no one spared him -- and with his youth and his learning he had to take a private practice and work at translations at night to pay for these . . . vile rags!"

Korostelev looked with hatred at Olga Ivanovna, snatched at the sheet with both hands and angrily tore it, as though it were to blame.

"He did not spare himself, and others did not spare him. Oh, what's the use of talking!"

"Yes, he was a rare man," said a bass voice in the drawing-room.

Olga Ivanovna remembered her whole life with him from the beginning to the end, with all its details, and suddenly she understood that he really was an extraordinary, rare, and, compared with every one else she knew, a great man. And remembering how her father, now dead, and all the other doctors had behaved to him, she realized that they really had seen in him a future celebrity. The walls, the ceiling, the lamp, and the carpet on the floor, seemed to be winking at her sarcastically, as though they would say, "You were blind! you were blind!" With a wail she flung herself out of the bedroom, dashed by some unknown

man in the drawing-room, and ran into her husband's study. He was lying motionless on the sofa, covered to the waist with a quilt. His face was fearfully thin and sunken, and was of a grayish-yellow colour such as is never seen in the living; only from the forehead, from the black eyebrows and from the familiar smile, could he be recognized as Dymov. Olga Ivanovna hurriedly felt his chest, his forehead, and his hands. The chest was still warm, but the forehead and hands were unpleasantly cold, and the half-open eyes looked, not at Olga Ivanovna, but at the quilt.

"Dymov!" she called aloud, "Dymov!" She wanted to explain to him that it had been a mistake, that all was not lost, that life might still be beautiful and happy, that he was an extraordinary, rare, great man, and that she would all her life worship him and bow down in homage and holy awe before him. . . .

"Dymov!" she called him, patting him on the shoulder, unable to believe that he would never wake again. "Dymov! Dymov!"

In the drawing-room Korostelev was saying to the housemaid:

"Why keep asking? Go to the church beadle and enquire where they live. They'll wash the body and lay it out, and do everything that is necessary."

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# The Black Monk

Anton Chekhov

## I

ANDREY VASSILITCH KOVRIN, who held a master's degree at the University, had exhausted himself, and had upset his nerves. He did not send for a doctor, but casually, over a bottle of wine, he spoke to a friend who was a doctor, and the latter advised him to spend the spring and summer in the country. Very opportunely a long letter came from Tanya Pesotsky, who asked him to come and stay with them at Borissovka. And he made up his mind that he really must go.

To begin with -- that was in April -- he went to his own home, Kovrinka, and there spent three weeks in solitude; then, as soon as the roads were in good condition, he set off, driving in a carriage, to visit Pesotsky, his former guardian, who had brought him up, and was a horticulturist well known all over Russia. The distance from Kovrinka to Borissovka was reckoned only a little over fifty miles. To drive along a soft road in May in a comfortable carriage with springs was a real pleasure.

Pesotsky had an immense house with columns and lions, off which the stucco was peeling, and with a footman in swallow-tails at the entrance. The old park, laid out in the English style, gloomy and severe, stretched for almost three-quarters of a mile to the river, and there ended in a steep, precipitous clay bank, where pines grew with bare roots that looked like shaggy paws; the water shone below with an unfriendly gleam, and the peewits flew up with a plaintive cry, and there one always felt that one must sit down and write a ballad. But near the house itself, in the courtyard and orchard, which together with the nurseries covered ninety acres, it was all life and gaiety even in bad weather. Such marvellous roses, lilies, camellias; such tulips of all possible shades, from glistening white to sooty black -- such a wealth of flowers, in fact, Kovrin had never seen anywhere as at Pesotsky's. It was only the beginning of spring, and the real glory of the flower-beds was still hidden away in the hot-houses. But even the flowers along the avenues, and here and there in the flower-beds, were enough to make one feel, as one walked about the garden, as though one were in a realm of tender colours, especially in the early morning when the dew was glistening on every petal.

What was the decorative part of the garden, and what Pesotsky contemptuously spoke of as rubbish, had at one time in his childhood given Kovrin an impression of fairyland.

Every sort of caprice, of elaborate monstrosity and mockery at Nature was here. There were espaliers of fruit-trees, a pear-tree in the shape of a pyramidal poplar, spherical oaks and lime-trees, an apple-tree in the shape of an umbrella, plum-trees trained into arches, crests, candelabra, and even into the number 1862 -- the year when Pesotsky first took up horticulture. One came across, too, lovely, graceful trees with strong, straight stems like palms, and it was only by looking intently that one could recognise these trees as

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gooseberries or currants. But what made the garden most cheerful and gave it a lively air, was the continual coming and going in it, from early morning till evening; people with wheelbarrows, shovels, and watering-cans swarmed round the trees and bushes, in the avenues and the flower-beds, like ants. . . .

Kovrin arrived at Pesotsky's at ten o'clock in the evening. He found Tanya and her father, Yegor Semyonitch, in great anxiety. The clear starlight sky and the thermometer foretold a frost towards morning, and meanwhile Ivan Karlovitch, the gardener, had gone to the town, and they had no one to rely upon. At supper they talked of nothing but the morning frost, and it was settled that Tanya should not go to bed, and between twelve and one should walk through the garden, and see that everything was done properly, and Yegor Semyonitch should get up at three o'clock or even earlier.

Kovrin sat with Tanya all the evening, and after midnight went out with her into the garden. It was cold. There was a strong smell of burning already in the garden. In the big orchard, which was called the commercial garden, and which brought Yegor Semyonitch several thousand clear profit, a thick, black, acrid smoke was creeping over the ground and, curling around the trees, was saving those thousands from the frost. Here the trees were arranged as on a chessboard, in straight and regular rows like ranks of soldiers, and this severe pedantic regularity, and the fact that all the trees were of the same size, and had tops and trunks all exactly alike, made them look monotonous and even dreary. Kovrin and Tanya walked along the rows where fires of dung, straw, and all sorts of refuse were smouldering, and from time to time they were met by labourers who wandered in the smoke like shadows. The only trees in flower were the cherries, plums, and certain sorts of apples, but the whole garden was plunged in smoke, and it was only near the nurseries that Kovrin could breathe freely.

"Even as a child I used to sneeze from the smoke here," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "but to this day I don't understand how smoke can keep off frost."

"Smoke takes the place of clouds when there are none . . ." answered Tanya.

"And what do you want clouds for?"

"In overcast and cloudy weather there is no frost."

"You don't say so."

He laughed and took her arm. Her broad, very earnest face, chilled with the frost, with her delicate black eyebrows, the turned-up collar of her coat, which prevented her moving her head freely, and the whole of her thin, graceful figure, with her skirts tucked up on account of the dew, touched him.

"Good heavens! she is grown up," he said. "When I went away from here last, five years ago, you were still a child. You were such a thin, longlegged creature, with your hair hanging on your shoulders; you used to wear short frocks, and I used to tease you, calling you a heron. . . . What time does!"

"Yes, five years!" sighed Tanya. "Much water has flowed since then. Tell me, Andryusha,

"honestly," she began eagerly, looking him in the face: "do you feel strange with us now? But why do I ask you? You are a man, you live your own interesting life, you are somebody. . . . To grow apart is so natural! But however that may be, Andryusha, I want you to think of us as your people. We have a right to that."

"I do, Tanya."

"On your word of honour?"

"Yes, on my word of honour."

"You were surprised this evening that we have so many of your photographs. You know my father adores you. Sometimes it seems to me that he loves you more than he does me. He is proud of you. You are a clever, extraordinary man, you have made a brilliant career for yourself, and he is persuaded that you have turned out like this because he brought you up. I don't try to prevent him from thinking so. Let him."

Dawn was already beginning, and that was especially perceptible from the distinctness with which the coils of smoke and the tops of the trees began to stand out in the air.

"It's time we were asleep, though," said Tanya, "and it's cold, too." She took his arm. "Thank you for coming, Andryusha. We have only uninteresting acquaintances, and not many of them. We have only the garden, the garden, the garden, and nothing else. Standards, half-standards," she laughed. "Aports, Reinettes, Borovinkas, budded stocks, grafted stocks. . . . All, all our life has gone into the garden. I never even dream of anything but apples and pears. Of course, it is very nice and useful, but sometimes one longs for something else for variety. I remember that when you used to come to us for the summer holidays, or simply a visit, it always seemed to be fresher and brighter in the house, as though the covers had been taken off the lustres and the furniture. I was only a little girl then, but yet I understood it."

She talked a long while and with great feeling. For some reason the idea came into his head that in the course of the summer he might grow fond of this little, weak, talkative creature, might be carried away and fall in love; in their position it was so possible and natural! This thought touched and amused him; he bent down to her sweet, preoccupied face and hummed softly:

"'Onegin, I won't conceal it;  
I madly love Tatiana. . . .'"

By the time they reached the house, Yegor Semyonitch had got up. Kovrin did not feel sleepy; he talked to the old man and went to the garden with him. Yegor Semyonitch was a tall, broad-shouldered, corpulent man, and he suffered from asthma, yet he walked so fast that it was hard work to hurry after him. He had an extremely preoccupied air; he was always hurrying somewhere, with an expression that suggested that if he were one minute late all would be ruined!

"Here is a business, brother . . ." he began, standing still to take breath. "On the surface of the ground, as you see, is frost; but if you raise the thermometer on a stick fourteen feet

above the ground, there it is warm. . . . Why is that?"

"I really don't know," said Kovrin, and he laughed.

"H'm! . . . One can't know everything, of course. . . . However large the intellect may be, you can't find room for everything in it. I suppose you still go in chiefly for philosophy?"

"Yes, I lecture in psychology; I am working at philosophy in general."

"And it does not bore you?"

"On the contrary, it's all I live for."

"Well, God bless you! . . ." said Yegor Semyonitch, meditatively stroking his grey whiskers. "God bless you! . . . I am delighted about you . . . delighted, my boy. . . ."

But suddenly he listened, and, with a terrible face, ran off and quickly disappeared behind the trees in a cloud of smoke.

"Who tied this horse to an apple-tree?" Kovrin heard his despairing, heart-rending cry. "Who is the low scoundrel who has dared to tie this horse to an apple-tree? My God, my God! They have ruined everything; they have spoilt everything; they have done everything filthy, horrible, and abominable. The orchard's done for, the orchard's ruined. My God!"

When he came back to Kovrin, his face looked exhausted and mortified.

"What is one to do with these accursed people?" he said in a tearful voice, flinging up his hands. "Styopka was carting dung at night, and tied the horse to an apple-tree! He twisted the reins round it, the rascal, as tightly as he could, so that the bark is rubbed off in three places. What do you think of that! I spoke to him and he stands like a post and only blinks his eyes. Hanging is too good for him."

Growing calmer, he embraced Kovrin and kissed him on the cheek.

"Well, God bless you! . . . God bless you! . . ." he muttered. "I am very glad you have come. Utterably glad. . . . Thank you."

Then, with the same rapid step and preoccupied face, he made the round of the whole garden, and showed his former ward all his greenhouses and hot-houses, his covered-in garden, and two apiaries which he called the marvel of our century.

While they were walking the sun rose, flooding the garden with brilliant light. It grew warm. Foreseeing a long, bright, cheerful day, Kovrin recollected that it was only the beginning of May, and that he had before him a whole summer as bright, cheerful, and long; and suddenly there stirred in his bosom a joyous, youthful feeling, such as he used to experience in his childhood, running about in that garden. And he hugged the old man and kissed him affectionately. Both of them, feeling touched, went indoors and drank tea out of old-fashioned china cups, with cream and satisfying krendels made with milk and eggs; and these trifles reminded Kovrin again of his childhood and boyhood. The delightful present

was blended with the impressions of the past that stirred within him; there was a tightness at his heart; yet he was happy.

He waited till Tanya was awake and had coffee with her, went for a walk, then went to his room and sat down to work. He read attentively, making notes, and from time to time raised his eyes to look out at the open windows or at the fresh, still dewy flowers in the vases on the table; and again he dropped his eyes to his book, and it seemed to him as though every vein in his body was quivering and fluttering with pleasure.

## II

In the country he led just as nervous and restless a life as in town. He read and wrote a great deal, he studied Italian, and when he was out for a walk, thought with pleasure that he would soon sit down to work again. He slept so little that every one wondered at him; if he accidentally dozed for half an hour in the daytime, he would lie awake all night, and, after a sleepless night, would feel cheerful and vigorous as though nothing had happened.

He talked a great deal, drank wine, and smoked expensive cigars. Very often, almost every day, young ladies of neighbouring families would come to the Pesotskys', and would sing and play the piano with Tanya; sometimes a young neighbour who was a good violinist would come, too. Kovrin listened with eagerness to the music and singing, and was exhausted by it, and this showed itself by his eyes closing and his head falling to one side.

One day he was sitting on the balcony after evening tea, reading. At the same time, in the drawing-room, Tanya taking soprano, one of the young ladies a contralto, and the young man with his violin, were practising a well-known serenade of Braga's. Kovrin listened to the words -- they were Russian -- and could not understand their meaning. At last, leaving his book and listening attentively, he understood: a maiden, full of sick fancies, heard one night in her garden mysterious sounds, so strange and lovely that she was obliged to recognise them as a holy harmony which is unintelligible to us mortals, and so flies back to heaven. Kovrin's eyes began to close. He got up, and in exhaustion walked up and down the drawing-room, and then the dining-room. When the singing was over he took Tanya's arm, and with her went out on the balcony.

"I have been all day thinking of a legend," he said. "I don't remember whether I have read it somewhere or heard it, but it is a strange and almost grotesque legend. To begin with, it is somewhat obscure. A thousand years ago a monk, dressed in black, wandered about the desert, somewhere in Syria or Arabia. . . . Some miles from where he was, some fisherman saw another black monk, who was moving slowly over the surface of a lake. This second monk was a mirage. Now forget all the laws of optics, which the legend does not recognise, and listen to the rest. From that mirage there was cast another mirage, then from that other a third, so that the image of the black monk began to be repeated endlessly from one layer of the atmosphere to another. So that he was seen at one time in Africa, at another in Spain, then in Italy, then in the Far North. . . . Then he passed out of the atmosphere of the earth, and now he is wandering all over the universe, still never coming into conditions in which he might disappear. Possibly he may be seen now in Mars or in some star of the Southern Cross. But, my dear, the real point on which the whole legend hangs lies in the fact that, exactly a thousand years from the day when the monk walked in the desert, the mirage will return to the atmosphere of the earth again and will appear to men. And it seems that the

thousand years is almost up. . . . According to the legend, we may look out for the black monk to-day or to-morrow."

"A queer mirage," said Tanya, who did not like the legend.

"But the most wonderful part of it all," laughed Kovrin, "is that I simply cannot recall where I got this legend from. Have I read it somewhere? Have I heard it? Or perhaps I dreamed of the black monk. I swear I don't remember. But the legend interests me. I have been thinking about it all day."

Letting Tanya go back to her visitors, he went out of the house, and, lost in meditation, walked by the flower-beds. The sun was already setting. The flowers, having just been watered, gave forth a damp, irritating fragrance. Indoors they began singing again, and in the distance the violin had the effect of a human voice. Kovrin, racking his brains to remember where he had read or heard the legend, turned slowly towards the park, and unconsciously went as far as the river. By a little path that ran along the steep bank, between the bare roots, he went down to the water, disturbed the peewits there and frightened two ducks. The last rays of the setting sun still threw light here and there on the gloomy pines, but it was quite dark on the surface of the river. Kovrin crossed to the other side by the narrow bridge. Before him lay a wide field covered with young rye not yet in blossom. There was no living habitation, no living soul in the distance, and it seemed as though the little path, if one went along it, would take one to the unknown, mysterious place where the sun had just gone down, and where the evening glow was flaming in immensity and splendour.

"How open, how free, how still it is here!" thought Kovrin, walking along the path. "And it feels as though all the world were watching me, hiding and waiting for me to understand it. . . ."

But then waves began running across the rye, and a light evening breeze softly touched his uncovered head. A minute later there was another gust of wind, but stronger -- the rye began rustling, and he heard behind him the hollow murmur of the pines. Kovrin stood still in amazement. From the horizon there rose up to the sky, like a whirlwind or a waterspout, a tall black column. Its outline was indistinct, but from the first instant it could be seen that it was not standing still, but moving with fearful rapidity, moving straight towards Kovrin, and the nearer it came the smaller and the more distinct it was. Kovrin moved aside into the rye to make way for it, and only just had time to do so.

A monk, dressed in black, with a grey head and black eyebrows, his arms crossed over his breast, floated by him. . . . His bare feet did not touch the earth. After he had floated twenty feet beyond him, he looked round at Kovrin, and nodded to him with a friendly but sly smile. But what a pale, fearfully pale, thin face! Beginning to grow larger again, he flew across the river, collided noiselessly with the clay bank and pines, and passing through them, vanished like smoke.

"Why, you see," muttered Kovrin, "there must be truth in the legend."

Without trying to explain to himself the strange apparition, glad that he had succeeded in seeing so near and so distinctly, not only the monk's black garments, but even his face and

eyes, agreeably excited, he went back to the house.

In the park and in the garden people were moving about quietly, in the house they were playing -- so he alone had seen the monk. He had an intense desire to tell Tanya and Yegor Semyonitch, but he reflected that they would certainly think his words the ravings of delirium, and that would frighten them; he had better say nothing.

He laughed aloud, sang, and danced the mazurka; he was in high spirits, and all of them, the visitors and Tanya, thought he had a peculiar look, radiant and inspired, and that he was very interesting.

### III

After supper, when the visitors had gone, he went to his room and lay down on the sofa: he wanted to think about the monk. But a minute later Tanya came in.

"Here, Andryusha; read father's articles," she said, giving him a bundle of pamphlets and proofs. "They are splendid articles. He writes capitally."

"Capitally, indeed!" said Yegor Semyonitch, following her and smiling constrainedly; he was ashamed. "Don't listen to her, please; don't read them! Though, if you want to go to sleep, read them by all means; they are a fine soporific."

"I think they are splendid articles," said Tanya, with deep conviction. "You read them, Andryusha, and persuade father to write oftener. He could write a complete manual of horticulture."

Yegor Semyonitch gave a forced laugh, blushed, and began uttering the phrases usually made us of by an embarrassed author. At last he began to give way.

"In that case, begin with Gaucher's article and these Russian articles," he muttered, turning over the pamphlets with a trembling hand, "or else you won't understand. Before you read my objections, you must know what I am objecting to. But it's all nonsense . . . tiresome stuff. Besides, I believe it's bedtime."

Tanya went away. Yegor Semyonitch sat down on the sofa by Kovrin and heaved a deep sigh.

"Yes, my boy . . ." he began after a pause. "That's how it is, my dear lecturer. Here I write articles, and take part in exhibitions, and receive medals. . . . Pesotsky, they say, has apples the size of a head, and Pesotsky, they say, has made his fortune with his garden. In short, 'Kotcheby is rich and glorious.' But one asks oneself: what is it all for? The garden is certainly fine, a model. It's not really a garden, but a regular institution, which is of the greatest public importance because it marks, so to say, a new era in Russian agriculture and Russian industry. But, what's it for? What's the object of it?"

"The fact speaks for itself."

"I do not mean in that sense. I meant to ask: what will happen to the garden when I die? In

the condition in which you see it now, it would not be maintained for one month without me. The whole secret of success lies not in its being a big garden or a great number of labourers being employed in it, but in the fact that I love the work. Do you understand? I love it perhaps more than myself. Look at me; I do everything myself. I work from morning to night: I do all the grafting myself, the pruning myself, the planting myself. I do it all myself: when any one helps me I am jealous and irritable till I am rude. The whole secret lies in loving it -- that is, in the sharp eye of the master; yes, and in the master's hands, and in the feeling that makes one, when one goes anywhere for an hour's visit, sit, ill at ease, with one's heart far away, afraid that something may have happened in the garden. But when I die, who will look after it? Who will work? The gardener? The labourers? Yes? But I will tell you, my dear fellow, the worst enemy in the garden is not a hare, not a cockchafer, and not the frost, but any outside person."

"And Tanya?" asked Kovrin, laughing. "She can't be more harmful than a hare? She loves the work and understands it."

"Yes, she loves it and understands it. If after my death the garden goes to her and she is the mistress, of course nothing better could be wished. But if, which God forbid, she should marry," Yegor Semyonitch whispered, and looked with a frightened look at Kovrin, "that's just it. If she marries and children come, she will have no time to think about the garden. What I fear most is: she will marry some fine gentleman, and he will be greedy, and he will let the garden to people who will run it for profit, and everything will go to the devil the very first year! In our work females are the scourge of God!"

Yegor Semyonitch sighed and paused for a while.

"Perhaps it is egoism, but I tell you frankly: I don't want Tanya to get married. I am afraid of it! There is one young dandy comes to see us, bringing his violin and scraping on it; I know Tanya will not marry him, I know it quite well; but I can't bear to see him! Altogether, my boy, I am very queer. I know that."

Yegor Semyonitch got up and walked about the room in excitement, and it was evident that he wanted to say something very important, but could not bring himself to it.

"I am very fond of you, and so I am going to speak to you openly," he decided at last, thrusting his hands into his pockets. "I deal plainly with certain delicate questions, and say exactly what I think, and I cannot endure so-called hidden thoughts. I will speak plainly: you are the only man to whom I should not be afraid to marry my daughter. You are a clever man with a good heart, and would not let my beloved work go to ruin; and the chief reason is that I love you as a son, and I am proud of you. If Tanya and you could get up a romance somehow, then -- well! I should be very glad and even happy. I tell you this plainly, without mincing matters, like an honest man."

Kovrin laughed. Yegor Semyonitch opened the door to go out, and stood in the doorway.

"If Tanya and you had a son, I would make a horticulturist of him," he said, after a moment's thought. "However, this is idle dreaming. Goodnight."

Left alone, Kovrin settled himself more comfortably on the sofa and took up the articles.

The title of one was "On Intercropping"; of another, "A few Words on the Remarks of Monsieur Z. concerning the Trenching of the Soil for a New Garden"; a third, "Additional Matter concerning Grafting with a Dormant Bud"; and they were all of the same sort. But what a restless, jerky tone! What nervous, almost hysterical passion! Here was an article, one would have thought, with most peaceable and impersonal contents: the subject of it was the Russian Antonovsky Apple. But Yegor Semyonitch began it with "Audiatu altera pars," and finished it with "Sapienti sat"; and between these two quotations a perfect torrent of venomous phrases directed "at the learned ignorance of our recognised horticultural authorities, who observe Nature from the height of their university chairs," or at Monsieur Gaucher, "whose success has been the work of the vulgar and the dilettanti." "And then followed an inappropriate, affected, and insincere regret that peasants who stole fruit and broke the branches could not nowadays be flogged.

"It is beautiful, charming, healthy work, but even in this there is strife and passion," thought Kovrin, "I suppose that everywhere and in all careers men of ideas are nervous, and marked by exaggerated sensitiveness. Most likely it must be so."

He thought of Tanya, who was so pleased with Yegor Semyonitch's articles. Small, pale, and so thin that her shoulder-blades stuck out, her eyes, wide and open, dark and intelligent, had an intent gaze, as though looking for something. She walked like her father with a little hurried step. She talked a great deal and was fond of arguing, accompanying every phrase, however insignificant, with expressive mimicry and gesticulation. No doubt she was nervous in the extreme.

Kovrin went on reading the articles, but he understood nothing of them, and flung them aside. The same pleasant excitement with which he had earlier in the evening danced the mazurka and listened to the music was now mastering him again and rousing a multitude of thoughts. He got up and began walking about the room, thinking about the black monk. It occurred to him that if this strange, supernatural monk had appeared to him only, that meant that he was ill and had reached the point of having hallucinations. This reflection frightened him, but not for long.

"But I am all right, and I am doing no harm to any one; so there is no harm in my hallucinations," he thought; and he felt happy again.

He sat down on the sofa and clasped his hands round his head. Restraining the unaccountable joy which filled his whole being, he then paced up and down again, and sat down to his work. But the thought that he read in the book did not satisfy him. He wanted something gigantic, unfathomable, stupendous. Towards morning he undressed and reluctantly went to bed: he ought to sleep.

When he heard the footsteps of Yegor Semyonitch going out into the garden, Kovrin rang the bell and asked the footman to bring him some wine. He drank several glasses of Lafitte, then wrapped himself up, head and all; his consciousness grew clouded and he fell asleep.

#### IV

Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya often quarrelled and said nasty things to each other.

They quarrelled about something that morning. Tanya burst out crying and went to her room. She would not come down to dinner nor to tea. At first Yegor Semyonitch went about looking sulky and dignified, as though to give every one to understand that for him the claims of justice and good order were more important than anything else in the world; but he could not keep it up for long, and soon sank into depression. He walked about the park dejectedly, continually sighing: "Oh, my God! My God!" and at dinner did not eat a morsel. At last, guilty and conscience-stricken, he knocked at the locked door and called timidly:

"Tanya! Tanya!"

And from behind the door came a faint voice, weak with crying but still determined:

"Leave me alone, if you please."

The depression of the master and mistress was reflected in the whole household, even in the labourers working in the garden. Kovrin was absorbed in his interesting work, but at last he, too, felt dreary and uncomfortable. To dissipate the general ill-humour in some way, he made up his mind to intervene, and towards evening he knocked at Tanya's door. He was admitted.

"Fie, fie, for shame!" he began playfully, looking with surprise at Tanya's tear-stained, woebegone face, flushed in patches with crying. "Is it really so serious? Fie, fie!"

"But if you knew how he tortures me!" she said, and floods of scalding tears streamed from her big eyes. "He torments me to death," she went on, wringing her hands. "I said nothing to him . . . nothing . . . I only said that there was no need to keep . . . too many labourers . . . if we could hire them by the day when we wanted them. You know . . . you know the labourers have been doing nothing for a whole week. . . . I . . . I . . . only said that, and he shouted and . . . said . . . a lot of horrible insulting things to me. What for?"

"There, there," said Kovrin, smoothing her hair. "You've quarrelled with each other, you've cried, and that's enough. You must not be angry for long -- that's wrong . . . all the more as he loves you beyond everything."

"He has . . . has spoiled my whole life," Tanya went on, sobbing. "I hear nothing but abuse and . . . insults. He thinks I am of no use in the house. Well! He is right. I shall go away tomorrow; I shall become a telegraph clerk. . . . I don't care. . . ."

"Come, come, come. . . . You mustn't cry, Tanya. You mustn't, dear. . . . You are both hot-tempered and irritable, and you are both to blame. Come along; I will reconcile you."

Kovrin talked affectionately and persuasively, while she went on crying, twitching her shoulders and wringing her hands, as though some terrible misfortune had really befallen her. He felt all the sorrier for her because her grief was not a serious one, yet she suffered extremely. What trivialities were enough to make this little creature miserable for a whole day, perhaps for her whole life! Comforting Tanya, Kovrin thought that, apart from this girl and her father, he might hunt the world over and would not find people who would love him as one of themselves, as one of their kindred. If it had not been for those two he might

very likely, having lost his father and mother in early childhood, never to the day of his death have known what was meant by genuine affection and that naïve, uncritical love which is only lavished on very close blood relations; and he felt that the nerves of this weeping, shaking girl responded to his half-sick, overstrained nerves like iron to a magnet. He never could have loved a healthy, strong, rosy-cheeked woman, but pale, weak, unhappy Tanya attracted him.

And he liked stroking her hair and her shoulders, pressing her hand and wiping away her tears. . . . At last she left off crying. She went on for a long time complaining of her father and her hard, insufferable life in that house, entreating Kovrin to put himself in her place; then she began, little by little, smiling, and sighing that God had given her such a bad temper. At last, laughing aloud, she called herself a fool, and ran out of the room.

When a little later Kovrin went into the garden, Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya were walking side by side along an avenue as though nothing had happened, and both were eating rye bread with salt on it, as both were hungry.

## V

Glad that he had been so successful in the part of peacemaker, Kovrin went into the park. Sitting on a garden seat, thinking, he heard the rattle of a carriage and a feminine laugh -- visitors were arriving. When the shades of evening began falling on the garden, the sounds of the violin and singing voices reached him indistinctly, and that reminded him of the black monk. Where, in what land or in what planet, was that optical absurdity moving now?

Hardly had he recalled the legend and pictured in his imagination the dark apparition he had seen in the rye-field, when, from behind a pine-tree exactly opposite, there came out noiselessly, without the slightest rustle, a man of medium height with uncovered grey head, all in black, and barefooted like a beggar, and his black eyebrows stood out conspicuously on his pale, death-like face. Nodding his head graciously, this beggar or pilgrim came noiselessly to the seat and sat down, and Kovrin recognised him as the black monk.

For a minute they looked at one another, Kovrin with amazement, and the monk with friendliness, and, just as before, a little slyness, as though he were thinking something to himself.

"But you are a mirage," said Kovrin. "Why are you here and sitting still? That does not fit in with the legend."

"That does not matter," the monk answered in a low voice, not immediately turning his face towards him. "The legend, the mirage, and I are all the products of your excited imagination. I am a phantom."

"Then you don't exist?" said Kovrin.

"You can think as you like," said the monk, with a faint smile. "I exist in your imagination, and your imagination is part of nature, so I exist in nature."

"You have a very old, wise, and extremely expressive face, as though you really had lived more than a thousand years," said Kovrin. "I did not know that my imagination was capable of creating such phenomena. But why do you look at me with such enthusiasm? Do you like me?"

"Yes, you are one of those few who are justly called the chosen of God. You do the service of eternal truth. Your thoughts, your designs, the marvellous studies you are engaged in, and all your life, bear the Divine, the heavenly stamp, seeing that they are consecrated to the rational and the beautiful -- that is, to what is eternal."

"You said 'eternal truth.' . . . But is eternal truth of use to man and within his reach, if there is no eternal life?"

"There is eternal life," said the monk.

"Do you believe in the immortality of man?"

"Yes, of course. A grand, brilliant future is in store for you men. And the more there are like you on earth, the sooner will this future be realised. Without you who serve the higher principle and live in full understanding and freedom, mankind would be of little account; developing in a natural way, it would have to wait a long time for the end of its earthly history. You will lead it some thousands of years earlier into the kingdom of eternal truth -- and therein lies your supreme service. You are the incarnation of the blessing of God, which rests upon men."

"And what is the object of eternal life?" asked Kovrin.

"As of all life -- enjoyment. True enjoyment lies in knowledge, and eternal life provides innumerable and inexhaustible sources of knowledge, and in that sense it has been said: 'In My Father's house there are many mansions!'"

"If only you knew how pleasant it is to hear you!" said Kovrin, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

"I am very glad."

"But I know that when you go away I shall be worried by the question of your reality. You are a phantom, an hallucination. So I am mentally deranged, not normal?"

"What if you are? Why trouble yourself? You are ill because you have overworked and exhausted yourself, and that means that you have sacrificed your health to the idea, and the time is near at hand when you will give up life itself to it. What could be better? That is the goal towards which all divinely endowed, noble natures strive."

"If I know I am mentally affected, can I trust myself?"

"And are you sure that the men of genius, whom all men trust, did not see phantoms, too? The learned say now that genius is allied to madness. My friend, healthy and normal people are only the common herd. Reflections upon the neurasthenia of the age, nervous

exhaustion and degeneracy, et cetera, can only seriously agitate those who place the object of life in the present -- that is, the common herd."

"The Romans used to say: Mens sana in corpore sano."

"Not everything the Greeks and the Romans said is true. Exaltation, enthusiasm, ecstasy -- all that distinguishes prophets, poets, martyrs for the idea, from the common folk -- is repellent to the animal side of man -- that is, his physical health. I repeat, if you want to be healthy and normal, go to the common herd."

"Strange that you repeat what often comes into my mind," said Kovrin. "It is as though you had seen and overheard my secret thoughts. But don't let us talk about me. What do you mean by 'eternal truth'?"

The monk did not answer. Kovrin looked at him and could not distinguish his face. His features grew blurred and misty. Then the monk's head and arms disappeared; his body seemed merged into the seat and the evening twilight, and he vanished altogether.

"The hallucination is over," said Kovrin; and he laughed. "It's a pity."

He went back to the house, light-hearted and happy. The little the monk had said to him had flattered, not his vanity, but his whole soul, his whole being. To be one of the chosen, to serve eternal truth, to stand in the ranks of those who could make mankind worthy of the kingdom of God some thousands of years sooner -- that is, to free men from some thousands of years of unnecessary struggle, sin, and suffering; to sacrifice to the idea everything -- youth, strength, health; to be ready to die for the common weal -- what an exalted, what a happy lot! He recalled his past -- pure, chaste, laborious; he remembered what he had learned himself and what he had taught to others, and decided that there was no exaggeration in the monk's words.

Tanya came to meet him in the park: she was by now wearing a different dress.

"Are you here?" she said. "And we have been looking and looking for you. . . . But what is the matter with you?" she asked in wonder, glancing at his radiant, ecstatic face and eyes full of tears. "How strange you are, Andryusha!"

"I am pleased, Tanya," said Kovrin, laying his hand on her shoulders. "I am more than pleased: I am happy. Tanya, darling Tanya, you are an extraordinary, nice creature. Dear Tanya, I am so glad, I am so glad!"

He kissed both her hands ardently, and went on:

"I have just passed through an exalted, wonderful, unearthly moment. But I can't tell you all about it or you would call me mad and not believe me. Let us talk of you. Dear, delightful Tanya! I love you, and am used to loving you. To have you near me, to meet you a dozen times a day, has become a necessity of my existence; I don't know how I shall get on without you when I go back home."

"Oh," laughed Tanya, "you will forget about us in two days. We are humble people and you

are a great man."

"No; let us talk in earnest!" he said. "I shall take you with me, Tanya. Yes? Will you come with me? Will you be mine?"

"Come," said Tanya, and tried to laugh again, but the laugh would not come, and patches of colour came into her face.

She began breathing quickly and walked very quickly, but not to the house, but further into the park.

"I was not thinking of it . . . I was not thinking of it," she said, wringing her hands in despair.

And Kovrin followed her and went on talking, with the same radiant, enthusiastic face:

"I want a love that will dominate me altogether; and that love only you, Tanya, can give me. I am happy! I am happy!"

She was overwhelmed, and huddling and shrinking together, seemed ten years older all at once, while he thought her beautiful and expressed his rapture aloud:

"How lovely she is!"

## VI

Learning from Kovrin that not only a romance had been got up, but that there would even be a wedding, Yegor Semyonitch spent a long time in pacing from one corner of the room to the other, trying to conceal his agitation. His hands began trembling, his neck swelled and turned purple, he ordered his racing droshky and drove off somewhere. Tanya, seeing how he lashed the horse, and seeing how he pulled his cap over his ears, understood what he was feeling, shut herself up in her room, and cried the whole day.

In the hot-houses the peaches and plums were already ripe; the packing and sending off of these tender and fragile goods to Moscow took a great deal of care, work, and trouble. Owing to the fact that the summer was very hot and dry, it was necessary to water every tree, and a great deal of time and labour was spent on doing it. Numbers of caterpillars made their appearance, which, to Kovrin's disgust, the labourers and even Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya squashed with their fingers. In spite of all that, they had already to book autumn orders for fruit and trees, and to carry on a great deal of correspondence. And at the very busiest time, when no one seemed to have a free moment, the work of the fields carried off more than half their labourers from the garden. Yegor Semyonitch, sunburnt, exhausted, ill-humoured, galloped from the fields to the garden and back again; cried that he was being torn to pieces, and that he should put a bullet through his brains.

Then came the fuss and worry of the trousseau, to which the Pesotskys attached a good deal of importance. Every one's head was in a whirl from the snipping of the scissors, the rattle of the sewing-machine, the smell of hot irons, and the caprices of the dressmaker, a huffy and nervous lady. And, as ill-luck would have it, visitors came every day, who had to be

entertained, fed, and even put up for the night. But all this hard labour passed unnoticed as though in a fog. Tanya felt that love and happiness had taken her unawares, though she had, since she was fourteen, for some reason been convinced that Kovrin would marry her and no one else. She was bewildered, could not grasp it, could not believe herself. . . . At one minute such joy would swoop down upon her that she longed to fly away to the clouds and there pray to God, at another moment she would remember that in August she would have to part from her home and leave her father; or, goodness knows why, the idea would occur to her that she was worthless -- insignificant and unworthy of a great man like Kovrin -- and she would go to her room, lock herself in, and cry bitterly for several hours. When there were visitors, she would suddenly fancy that Kovrin looked extraordinarily handsome, and that all the women were in love with him and envying her, and her soul was filled with pride and rapture, as though she had vanquished the whole world; but he had only to smile politely at any young lady for her to be trembling with jealousy, to retreat to her room -- and tears again. These new sensations mastered her completely; she helped her father mechanically, without noticing peaches, caterpillars or labourers, or how rapidly the time was passing.

It was almost the same with Yegor Semyonitch. He worked from morning till night, was always in a hurry, was irritable, and flew into rages, but all of this was in a sort of spellbound dream. It seemed as though there were two men in him: one was the real Yegor Semyonitch, who was moved to indignation, and clutched his head in despair when he heard of some irregularity from Ivan Karlovitch the gardener; and another -- not the real one -- who seemed as though he were half drunk, would interrupt a business conversation at half a word, touch the gardener on the shoulder, and begin muttering:

"Say what you like, there is a great deal in blood. His mother was a wonderful woman, most high-minded and intelligent. It was a pleasure to look at her good, candid, pure face; it was like the face of an angel. She drew splendidly, wrote verses, spoke five foreign languages, sang. . . . Poor thing! she died of consumption. The Kingdom of Heaven be hers."

The unreal Yegor Semyonitch sighed, and after a pause went on:

"When he was a boy and growing up in my house, he had the same angelic face, good and candid. The way he looks and talks and moves is as soft and elegant as his mother's. And his intellect! We were always struck with his intelligence. To be sure, it's not for nothing he's a Master of Arts! It's not for nothing! And wait a bit, Ivan Karlovitch, what will he be in ten years' time? He will be far above us!"

But at this point the real Yegor Semyonitch, suddenly coming to himself, would make a terrible face, would clutch his head and cry:

"The devils! They have spoilt everything! They have ruined everything! They have spoilt everything! The garden's done for, the garden's ruined!"

Kovrin, meanwhile, worked with the same ardour as before, and did not notice the general commotion. Love only added fuel to the flames. After every talk with Tanya he went to his room, happy and triumphant, took up his book or his manuscript with the same passion with which he had just kissed Tanya and told her of his love. What the black monk had told him of the chosen of God, of eternal truth, of the brilliant future of mankind and so on, gave

peculiar and extraordinary significance to his work, and filled his soul with pride and the consciousness of his own exalted consequence. Once or twice a week, in the park or in the house, he met the black monk and had long conversations with him, but this did not alarm him, but, on the contrary, delighted him, as he was now firmly persuaded that such apparitions only visited the elect few who rise up above their fellows and devote themselves to the service of the idea.

One day the monk appeared at dinner-time and sat in the dining-room window. Kovrin was delighted, and very adroitly began a conversation with Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya of what might be of interest to the monk; the black-robed visitor listened and nodded his head graciously, and Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya listened, too, and smiled gaily without suspecting that Kovrin was not talking to them but to his hallucination.

Imperceptibly the fast of the Assumption was approaching, and soon after came the wedding, which, at Yegor Semyonitch's urgent desire, was celebrated with "a flourish" -- that is, with senseless festivities that lasted for two whole days and nights. Three thousand roubles' worth of food and drink was consumed, but the music of the wretched hired band, the noisy toasts, the scurrying to and fro of the footmen, the uproar and crowding, prevented them from appreciating the taste of the expensive wines and wonderful delicacies ordered from Moscow.

## VII

One long winter night Kovrin was lying in bed, reading a French novel. Poor Tanya, who had headaches in the evenings from living in town, to which she was not accustomed, had been asleep a long while, and, from time to time, articulated some incoherent phrase in her restless dreams.

It struck three o'clock. Kovrin put out the light and lay down to sleep, lay for a long time with his eyes closed, but could not get to sleep because, as he fancied, the room was very hot and Tanya talked in her sleep. At half-past four he lighted the candle again, and this time he saw the black monk sitting in an arm-chair near the bed.

"Good-morning," said the monk, and after a brief pause he asked: "What are you thinking of now?"

"Of fame," answered Kovrin. "In the French novel I have just been reading, there is a description of a young savant, who does silly things and pines away through worrying about fame. I can't understand such anxiety."

"Because you are wise. Your attitude towards fame is one of indifference, as towards a toy which no longer interests you."

"Yes, that is true."

"Renown does not allure you now. What is there flattering, amusing, or edifying in their carving your name on a tombstone, then time rubbing off the inscription together with the gilding? Moreover, happily there are too many of you for the weak memory of mankind to be able to retain your names."

"Of course," assented Kovrin. "Besides, why should they be remembered? But let us talk of something else. Of happiness, for instance. What is happiness?"

When the clock struck five, he was sitting on the bed, dangling his feet to the carpet, talking to the monk:

"In ancient times a happy man grew at last frightened of his happiness -- it was so great! -- and to propitiate the gods he brought as a sacrifice his favourite ring. Do you know, I, too, like Polykrates, begin to be uneasy of my happiness. It seems strange to me that from morning to night I feel nothing but joy; it fills my whole being and smothers all other feelings. I don't know what sadness, grief, or boredom is. Here I am not asleep; I suffer from sleeplessness, but I am not dull. I say it in earnest; I begin to feel perplexed."

"But why?" the monk asked in wonder. "Is joy a supernatural feeling? Ought it not to be the normal state of man? The more highly a man is developed on the intellectual and moral side, the more independent he is, the more pleasure life gives him. Socrates, Diogenes, and Marcus Aurelius, were joyful, not sorrowful. And the Apostle tells us: 'Rejoice continually'; 'Rejoice and be glad.' "

"But will the gods be suddenly wrathful?" Kovrin jested; and he laughed. "If they take from me comfort and make me go cold and hungry, it won't be very much to my taste."

Meanwhile Tanya woke up and looked with amazement and horror at her husband. He was talking, addressing the arm-chair, laughing and gesticulating; his eyes were gleaming, and there was something strange in his laugh.

"Andryusha, whom are you talking to?" she asked, clutching the hand he stretched out to the monk. "Andryusha! Whom?"

"Oh! Whom?" said Kovrin in confusion. "Why, to him. . . . He is sitting here," he said, pointing to the black monk.

"There is no one here . . . no one! Andryusha, you are ill!"

Tanya put her arm round her husband and held him tight, as though protecting him from the apparition, and put her hand over his eyes.

"You are ill!" she sobbed, trembling all over. "Forgive me, my precious, my dear one, but I have noticed for a long time that your mind is clouded in some way. . . . You are mentally ill, Andryusha. . . ."

Her trembling infected him, too. He glanced once more at the arm-chair, which was now empty, felt a sudden weakness in his arms and legs, was frightened, and began dressing.

"It's nothing, Tanya; it's nothing," he muttered, shivering. "I really am not quite well . . . it's time to admit that."

"I have noticed it for a long time . . . and father has noticed it," she said, trying to suppress

her sobs. "You talk to yourself, smile somehow strangely . . . and can't sleep. Oh, my God, my God, save us!" she said in terror. "But don't be frightened, Andryusha; for God's sake don't be frightened. . . ."

She began dressing, too. Only now, looking at her, Kovrin realised the danger of his position -- realised the meaning of the black monk and his conversations with him. It was clear to him now that he was mad.

Neither of them knew why they dressed and went into the dining-room: she in front and he following her. There they found Yegor Semyonitch standing in his dressing-gown and with a candle in his hand. He was staying with them, and had been awakened by Tanya's sobs.

"Don't be frightened, Andryusha," Tanya was saying, shivering as though in a fever; "don't be frightened. . . . Father, it will all pass over . . . it will all pass over. . . ."

Kovrin was too much agitated to speak. He wanted to say to his father-in-law in a playful tone: "Congratulate me; it appears I have gone out of my mind"; but he could only move his lips and smile bitterly.

At nine o'clock in the morning they put on his jacket and fur coat, wrapped him up in a shawl, and took him in a carriage to a doctor.

## VIII

Summer had come again, and the doctor advised their going into the country. Kovrin had recovered; he had left off seeing the black monk, and he had only to get up his strength. Staying at his father-in-law's, he drank a great deal of milk, worked for only two hours out of the twenty-four, and neither smoked nor drank wine.

On the evening before Elijah's Day they had an evening service in the house. When the deacon was handing the priest the censer the immense old room smelt like a graveyard, and Kovrin felt bored. He went out into the garden. Without noticing the gorgeous flowers, he walked about the garden, sat down on a seat, then strolled about the park; reaching the river, he went down and then stood lost in thought, looking at the water. The sullen pines with their shaggy roots, which had seen him a year before so young, so joyful and confident, were not whispering now, but standing mute and motionless, as though they did not recognise him. And, indeed, his head was closely cropped, his beautiful long hair was gone, his step was lagging, his face was fuller and paler than last summer.

He crossed by the footbridge to the other side. Where the year before there had been rye the oats stood, reaped, and lay in rows. The sun had set and there was a broad stretch of glowing red on the horizon, a sign of windy weather next day. It was still. Looking in the direction from which the year before the black monk had first appeared, Kovrin stood for twenty minutes, till the evening glow had begun to fade. . . .

When, listless and dissatisfied, he returned home the service was over. Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya were sitting on the steps of the verandah, drinking tea. They were talking of something, but, seeing Kovrin, ceased at once, and he concluded from their faces that their talk had been about him.

"I believe it is time for you to have your milk," Tanya said to her husband.

"No, it is not time yet . . ." he said, sitting down on the bottom step. "Drink it yourself; I don't want it."

Tanya exchanged a troubled glance with her father, and said in a guilty voice:

"You notice yourself that milk does you good."

"Yes, a great deal of good!" Kovrin laughed. "I congratulate you: I have gained a pound in weight since Friday." He pressed his head tightly in his hands and said miserably: "Why, why have you cured me? Preparations of bromide, idleness, hot baths, supervision, cowardly consternation at every mouthful, at every step -- all this will reduce me at last to idiocy. I went out of my mind, I had megalomania; but then I was cheerful, confident, and even happy; I was interesting and original. Now I have become more sensible and stolid, but I am just like every one else: I am -- mediocrity; I am weary of life. . . . Oh, how cruelly you have treated me! . . . I saw hallucinations, but what harm did that do to any one? I ask, what harm did that do any one?"

"Goodness knows what you are saying!" sighed Yegor Semyonitch. "It's positively wearisome to listen to it."

"Then don't listen."

The presence of other people, especially Yegor Semyonitch, irritated Kovrin now; he answered him drily, coldly, and even rudely, never looked at him but with irony and hatred, while Yegor Semyonitch was overcome with confusion and cleared his throat guiltily, though he was not conscious of any fault in himself. At a loss to understand why their charming and affectionate relations had changed so abruptly, Tanya huddled up to her father and looked anxiously in his face; she wanted to understand and could not understand, and all that was clear to her was that their relations were growing worse and worse every day, that of late her father had begun to look much older, and her husband had grown irritable, capricious, quarrelsome and uninteresting. She could not laugh or sing; at dinner she ate nothing; did not sleep for nights together, expecting something awful, and was so worn out that on one occasion she lay in a dead faint from dinner-time till evening. During the service she thought her father was crying, and now while the three of them were sitting together on the terrace she made an effort not to think of it.

"How fortunate Buddha, Mahomed, and Shakespeare were that their kind relations and doctors did not cure them of their ecstasy and their inspiration," said Kovrin. "If Mahomed had taken bromide for his nerves, had worked only two hours out of the twenty-four, and had drunk milk, that remarkable man would have left no more trace after him than his dog. Doctors and kind relations will succeed in stupefying mankind, in making mediocrity pass for genius and in bringing civilisation to ruin. If only you knew," Kovrin said with annoyance, "how grateful I am to you."

He felt intense irritation, and to avoid saying too much, he got up quickly and went into the house. It was still, and the fragrance of the tobacco plant and the marvel of Peru floated in

at the open window. The moonlight lay in green patches on the floor and on the piano in the big dark dining-room. Kovrin remembered the raptures of the previous summer when there had been the same scent of the marvel of Peru and the moon had shone in at the window. To bring back the mood of last year he went quickly to his study, lighted a strong cigar, and told the footman to bring him some wine. But the cigar left a bitter and disgusting taste in his mouth, and the wine had not the same flavour as it had the year before. And so great is the effect of giving up a habit, the cigar and the two gulps of wine made him giddy, and brought on palpitations of the heart, so that he was obliged to take bromide.

Before going to bed, Tanya said to him:

"Father adores you. You are cross with him about something, and it is killing him. Look at him; he is ageing, not from day to day, but from hour to hour. I entreat you, Andryusha, for God's sake, for the sake of your dead father, for the sake of my peace of mind, be affectionate to him."

"I can't, I don't want to."

"But why?" asked Tanya, beginning to tremble all over. "Explain why."

"Because he is antipathetic to me, that's all," said Kovrin carelessly; and he shrugged his shoulders. "But we won't talk about him: he is your father."

"I can't understand, I can't," said Tanya, pressing her hands to her temples and staring at a fixed point. "Something incomprehensible, awful, is going on in the house. You have changed, grown unlike yourself. . . . You, clever, extraordinary man as you are, are irritated over trifles, meddle in paltry nonsense. . . . Such trivial things excite you, that sometimes one is simply amazed and can't believe that it is you. Come, come, don't be angry, don't be angry," she went on, kissing his hands, frightened of her own words. "You are clever, kind, noble. You will be just to father. He is so good."

"He is not good; he is just good-natured. Burlesque old uncles like your father, with well-fed, good-natured faces, extraordinarily hospitable and queer, at one time used to touch me and amuse me in novels and in farces and in life; now I dislike them. They are egoists to the marrow of their bones. What disgusts me most of all is their being so well-fed, and that purely bovine, purely hogfish optimism of a full stomach."

Tanya sat down on the bed and laid her head on the pillow.

"This is torture," she said, and from her voice it was evident that she was utterly exhausted, and that it was hard for her to speak. "Not one moment of peace since the winter. . . . Why, it's awful! My God! I am wretched."

"Oh, of course, I am Herod, and you and your father are the innocents. Of course."

His face seemed to Tanya ugly and unpleasant. Hatred and an ironical expression did not suit him. And, indeed, she had noticed before that there was something lacking in his face, as though ever since his hair had been cut his face had changed, too. She wanted to say something wounding to him, but immediately she caught herself in this antagonistic feeling,

she was frightened and went out of the bedroom.

## IX

Kovrin received a professorship at the University. The inaugural address was fixed for the second of December, and a notice to that effect was hung up in the corridor at the University. But on the day appointed he informed the students' inspector, by telegram, that he was prevented by illness from giving the lecture.

He had haemorrhage from the throat. He was often spitting blood, but it happened two or three times a month that there was a considerable loss of blood, and then he grew extremely weak and sank into a drowsy condition. This illness did not particularly frighten him, as he knew that his mother had lived for ten years or longer suffering from the same disease, and the doctors assured him that there was no danger, and had only advised him to avoid excitement, to lead a regular life, and to speak as little as possible.

In January again his lecture did not take place owing to the same reason, and in February it was too late to begin the course. It had to be postponed to the following year.

By now he was living not with Tanya, but with another woman, who was two years older than he was, and who looked after him as though he were a baby. He was in a calm and tranquil state of mind; he readily gave in to her, and when Varvara Nikolaevna -- that was the name of his friend -- decided to take him to the Crimea, he agreed, though he had a presentiment that no good would come of the trip.

They reached Sevastopol in the evening and stopped at an hotel to rest and go on the next day to Yalta. They were both exhausted by the journey. Varvara Nikolaevna had some tea, went to bed and was soon asleep. But Kovrin did not go to bed. An hour before starting for the station, he had received a letter from Tanya, and had not brought himself to open it, and now it was lying in his coat pocket, and the thought of it excited him disagreeably. At the bottom of his heart he genuinely considered now that his marriage to Tanya had been a mistake. He was glad that their separation was final, and the thought of that woman who in the end had turned into a living relic, still walking about though everything seemed dead in her except her big, staring, intelligent eyes -- the thought of her roused in him nothing but pity and disgust with himself. The handwriting on the envelope reminded him how cruel and unjust he had been two years before, how he had worked off his anger at his spiritual emptiness, his boredom, his loneliness, and his dissatisfaction with life by revenging himself on people in no way to blame. He remembered, also, how he had torn up his dissertation and all the articles he had written during his illness, and how he had thrown them out of window, and the bits of paper had fluttered in the wind and caught on the trees and flowers. In every line of them he saw strange, utterly groundless pretension, shallow defiance, arrogance, megalomania; and they made him feel as though he were reading a description of his vices. But when the last manuscript had been torn up and sent flying out of window, he felt, for some reason, suddenly bitter and angry; he went to his wife and said a great many unpleasant things to her. My God, how he had tormented her! One day, wanting to cause her pain, he told her that her father had played a very unattractive part in their romance, that he had asked him to marry her. Yegor Semyonitch accidentally overheard this, ran into the room, and, in his despair, could not utter a word, could only stamp and make a strange, bellowing sound as though he had lost the power of speech, and

Tanya, looking at her father, had uttered a heart-rending shriek and had fallen into a swoon. It was hideous.

All this came back into his memory as he looked at the familiar writing. Kovrin went out on to the balcony; it was still warm weather and there was a smell of the sea. The wonderful bay reflected the moonshine and the lights, and was of a colour for which it was difficult to find a name. It was a soft and tender blending of dark blue and green; in places the water was like blue vitriol, and in places it seemed as though the moonlight were liquefied and filling the bay instead of water. And what harmony of colours, what an atmosphere of peace, calm, and sublimity!

In the lower storey under the balcony the windows were probably open, for women's voices and laughter could be heard distinctly. Apparently there was an evening party.

Kovrin made an effort, tore open the envelope, and, going back into his room, read:

"My father is just dead. I owe that to you, for you have killed him. Our garden is being ruined; strangers are managing it already -- that is, the very thing is happening that poor father dreaded. That, too, I owe to you. I hate you with my whole soul, and I hope you may soon perish. Oh, how wretched I am! Insufferable anguish is burning my soul. . . . My curses on you. I took you for an extraordinary man, a genius; I loved you, and you have turned out a madman. . . ."

Kovrin could read no more, he tore up the letter and threw it away. He was overcome by an uneasiness that was akin to terror. Varvara Nikolaevna was asleep behind the screen, and he could hear her breathing. From the lower storey came the sounds of laughter and women's voices, but he felt as though in the whole

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# Whitebrow

## Anton Chekhov

A HUNGRY she-wolf got up to go hunting. Her cubs, all three of them, were sound asleep, huddled in a heap and keeping each other warm. She licked them and went off.

It was already March, a month of spring, but at night the trees snapped with the cold, as they do in December, and one could hardly put one's tongue out without its being nipped. The wolf-mother was in delicate health and nervous; she started at the slightest sound, and kept hoping that no one would hurt the little ones at home while she was away. The smell of the tracks of men and horses, logs, piles of faggots, and the dark road with horse-dung on it frightened her; it seemed to her that men were standing behind the trees in the darkness, and that dogs were howling somewhere beyond the forest.

She was no longer young and her scent had grown feebler, so that it sometimes happened that she took the track of a fox for that of a dog, and even at times lost her way, a thing that had never been in her youth. Owing to the weakness of her health she no longer hunted calves and big sheep as she had in old days, and kept her distance now from mares with colts; she fed on nothing but carrion; fresh meat she tasted very rarely, only in the spring when she would come upon a hare and take away her young, or make her way into a peasant's stall where there were lambs.

Some three miles from her lair there stood a winter hut on the posting road. There lived the keeper Ignat, an old man of seventy, who was always coughing and talking to himself; at night he was usually asleep, and by day he wandered about the forest with a single-barrelled gun, whistling to the hares. He must have worked among machinery in early days, for before he stood still he always shouted to himself: "Stop the machine!" and before going on: "Full speed!" He had a huge black dog of indeterminate breed, called Arapka. When it ran too far ahead he used to shout to it: "Reverse action!" Sometimes he used to sing, and as he did so staggered violently, and often fell down (the wolf thought the wind blew him over), and shouted: "Run off the rails!"

The wolf remembered that, in the summer and autumn, a ram and two ewes were pasturing near the winter hut, and when she had run by not so long ago she fancied that she had heard bleating in the stall. And now, as she got near the place, she reflected that it was already March, and, by that time, there would certainly be lambs in the stall. She was tormented by hunger, she thought with what greediness she would eat a lamb, and these thoughts made her teeth snap, and her eyes glitter in the darkness like two sparks of light.

Ignat's hut, his barn, cattle-stall, and well were surrounded by high snowdrifts. All was still. Arapka was, most likely, asleep in the barn.

The wolf clambered over a snowdrift on to the stall, and began scratching away the thatched roof with her paws and her nose. The straw was rotten and decaying, so that the wolf almost fell through; all at once a smell of warm steam, of manure, and of sheep's milk floated straight to her nostrils. Down below, a lamb, feeling the cold, bleated softly. Leaping through the hole, the wolf fell with her four paws and chest on something soft and warm,

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probably a sheep, and at the same moment, something in the stall suddenly began whining, barking, and going off into a shrill little yap; the sheep huddled against the wall, and the wolf, frightened, snatched the first thing her teeth fastened on, and dashed away. . . .

She ran at her utmost speed, while Arapka, who by now had scented the wolf, howled furiously, the frightened hens cackled, and Ignat, coming out into the porch, shouted: "Full speed! Blow the whistle!"

And he whistled like a steam-engine, and then shouted: "Ho-ho-ho-ho!" and all this noise was repeated by the forest echo. When, little by little, it all died away, the wolf somewhat recovered herself, and began to notice that the prey she held in her teeth and dragged along the snow was heavier and, as it were, harder than lambs usually were at that season; and it smelt somehow different, and uttered strange sounds. . . . The wolf stopped and laid her burden on the snow, to rest and begin eating it, then all at once she leapt back in disgust. It was not a lamb, but a black puppy, with a big head and long legs, of a large breed, with a white patch on his brow, like Arapka's. Judging from his manners he was a simple, ignorant, yard-dog. He licked his crushed and wounded back, and, as though nothing was the matter, wagged his tail and barked at the wolf. She growled like a dog, and ran away from him. He ran after her. She looked round and snapped her teeth. He stopped in perplexity, and, probably deciding that she was playing with him, craned his head in the direction he had come from, and went off into a shrill, gleeful bark, as though inviting his mother Arapka to play with him and the wolf.

It was already getting light, and when the wolf reached her home in the thick aspen wood, each aspen tree could be seen distinctly, and the woodcocks were already awake, and the beautiful male birds often flew up, disturbed by the incautious gambols and barking of the puppy.

"Why does he run after me?" thought the wolf with annoyance. "I suppose he wants me to eat him."

She lived with her cubs in a shallow hole; three years before, a tall old pine tree had been torn up by the roots in a violent storm, and the hole had been formed by it. Now there were dead leaves and moss at the bottom, and around it lay bones and bullocks' horns, with which the little ones played. They were by now awake, and all three of them, very much alike, were standing in a row at the edge of their hole, looking at their returning mother, and wagging their tails. Seeing them, the puppy stopped a little way off, and stared at them for a very long time; seeing that they, too, were looking very attentively at him, he began barking angrily, as at strangers.

By now it was daylight and the sun had risen, the snow sparkled all around, but still the puppy stood a little way off and barked. The cubs sucked their mother, pressing her thin belly with their paws, while she gnawed a horse's bone, dry and white; she was tormented by hunger, her head ached from the dog's barking, and she felt inclined to fall on the uninvited guest and tear him to pieces.

At last the puppy was hoarse and exhausted; seeing they were not afraid of him, and not even attending to him, he began somewhat timidly approaching the cubs, alternately squatting down and bounding a few steps forward. Now, by daylight, it was easy to have a

good look at him. . . . His white forehead was big, and on it was a hump such as is only seen on very stupid dogs; he had little, blue, dingy-looking eyes, and the expression of his whole face was extremely stupid. When he reached the cubs he stretched out his broad paws, laid his head upon them, and began:

"Mnya, myna . . . nga--nga--nga . . . !"

The cubs did not understand what he meant, but they wagged their tails. Then the puppy gave one of the cubs a smack on its big head with his paw. The cub, too, gave him a smack on the head. The puppy stood sideways to him, and looked at him askance, wagging his tail, then dashed off, and ran round several times on the frozen snow. The cubs ran after him, he fell on his back and kicked up his legs, and all three of them fell upon him, squealing with delight, and began biting him, not to hurt but in play. The crows sat on the high pine tree, and looked down on their struggle, and were much troubled by it. They grew noisy and merry. The sun was hot, as though it were spring; and the woodcocks, continually flitting through the pine tree that had been blown down by the storm, looked as though made of emerald in the brilliant sunshine.

As a rule, wolf-mothers train their children to hunt by giving them prey to play with; and now watching the cubs chasing the puppy over the frozen snow and struggling with him, the mother thought:

"Let them learn."

When they had played long enough, the cubs went into the hole and lay down to sleep. The puppy howled a little from hunger, then he, too, stretched out in the sunshine. And when they woke up they began playing again.

All day long, and in the evening, the wolf-mother was thinking how the lamb had bleated in the cattle-shed the night before, and how it had smelt of sheep's milk, and she kept snapping her teeth from hunger, and never left off greedily gnawing the old bone, pretending to herself that it was the lamb. The cubs sucked their mother, and the puppy, who was hungry, ran round them and sniffed at the snow.

"I'll eat him . . ." the mother-wolf decided.

She went up to him, and he licked her nose and yapped at her, thinking that she wanted to play with him. In the past she had eaten dogs, but the dog smelt very doggy, and in the delicate state of her health she could not endure the smell; she felt disgusted and walked away. . . .

Towards night it grew cold. The puppy felt depressed and went home.

When the wolf-cubs were fast asleep, their mother went out hunting again. As on the previous night she was alarmed at every sound, and she was frightened by the stumps, the logs, the dark juniper bushes, which stood out singly, and in the distance were like human beings. She ran on the ice-covered snow, keeping away from the road. . . . All at once she caught a glimpse of something dark, far away on the road. She strained her eyes and ears: yes, something really was walking on in front, she could even hear the regular thud of

footsteps. Surely not a badger? Cautiously holding her breath, and keeping always to one side, she overtook the dark patch, looked round, and recognised it. It was the puppy with the white brow, going with a slow, lingering step homewards.

"If only he doesn't hinder me again," thought the wolf, and ran quickly on ahead.

But the homestead was by now near. Again she clambered on to the cattle-shed by the snowdrift. The gap she had made yesterday had been already mended with straw, and two new rafters stretched across the roof. The wolf began rapidly working with her legs and nose, looking round to see whether the puppy were coming, but the smell of the warm steam and manure had hardly reached her nose before she heard a gleeful burst of barking behind her. It was the puppy. He leapt up to the wolf on the roof, then into the hole, and, feeling himself at home in the warmth, recognising his sheep, he barked louder than ever. . . . Arapka woke up in the barn, and, scenting a wolf, howled, the hens began cackling, and by the time Ignat appeared in the porch with his single-barrelled gun the frightened wolf was already far away.

"Fuite!" whistled Ignat. "Fuite! Full steam ahead!"

He pulled the trigger -- the gun missed fire; he pulled the trigger again -- again it missed fire; he tried a third time -- and a great blaze of flame flew out of the barrel and there was a deafening boom, boom. It kicked him violently on the shoulder, and, taking his gun in one hand and his axe in the other, he went to see what the noise was about.

A little later he went back to the hut.

"What was it?" a pilgrim, who was staying the night at the hut and had been awakened by the noise, asked in a husky voice.

"It's all right," answered Ignat. "Nothing of consequence. Our Whitebrow has taken to sleeping with the sheep in the warm. Only he hasn't the sense to go in at the door, but always tries to wriggle in by the roof. The other night he tore a hole in the roof and went off on the spree, the rascal, and now he has come back and scratched away the roof again."

"Stupid dog."

"Yes, there is a spring snapped in his brain. I do detest fools," sighed Ignat, clambering on to the stove. "Come, man of God, it's early yet to get up. Let us sleep full steam! . . ."

In the morning he called Whitebrow, smacked him hard about the ears, and then showing him a stick, kept repeating to him:

"Go in at the door! Go in at the door! Go in at the door!"

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# "anna On The Neck"

Anton Chekhov

I

AFTER the wedding they had not even light refreshments; the happy pair simply drank a glass of champagne, changed into their travelling things, and drove to the station. Instead of a gay wedding ball and supper, instead of music and dancing, they went on a journey to pray at a shrine a hundred and fifty miles away. Many people commended this, saying that Modest Alexeitch was a man high up in the service and no longer young, and that a noisy wedding might not have seemed quite suitable; and music is apt to sound dreary when a government official of fifty-two marries a girl who is only just eighteen. People said, too, that Modest Alexeitch, being a man of principle, had arranged this visit to the monastery expressly in order to make his young bride realize that even in marriage he put religion and morality above everything.

The happy pair were seen off at the station. The crowd of relations and colleagues in the service stood, with glasses in their hands, waiting for the train to start to shout "Hurrah!" and the bride's father, Pyotr Leontyitch, wearing a top-hat and the uniform of a teacher, already drunk and very pale, kept craning towards the window, glass in hand and saying in an imploring voice:

"Anyuta! Anya, Anya! one word!"

Anna bent out of the window to him, and he whispered something to her, enveloping her in a stale smell of alcohol, blew into her ear -- she could make out nothing -- and made the sign of the cross over her face, her bosom, and her hands; meanwhile he was breathing in gasps and tears were shining in his eyes. And the schoolboys, Anna's brothers, Petya and Andrusha, pulled at his coat from behind, whispering in confusion:

"Father, hush! . . . Father, that's enough. . . ."

When the train started, Anna saw her father run a little way after the train, staggering and spilling his wine, and what a kind, guilty, pitiful face he had:

"Hurra--ah!" he shouted.

The happy pair were left alone. Modest Alexeitch looked about the compartment, arranged their things on the shelves, and sat down, smiling, opposite his young wife. He was an official of medium height, rather stout and puffy, who looked exceedingly well nourished, with long whiskers and no moustache. His clean-shaven, round, sharply defined chin looked like the heel of a foot. The most characteristic point in his face was the absence of moustache, the bare, freshly shaven place, which gradually passed into the fat cheeks, quivering like jelly. His deportment was dignified, his movements were deliberate, his manner was soft.

"I cannot help remembering now one circumstance," he said, smiling. "When, five years

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ago, Kosorotov received the order of St. Anna of the second grade, and went to thank His Excellency, His Excellency expressed himself as follows: 'So now you have three Annas: one in your buttonhole and two on your neck.' And it must be explained that at that time Kosorotov's wife, a quarrelsome and frivolous person, had just returned to him, and that her name was Anna. I trust that when I receive the Anna of the second grade His Excellency will not have occasion to say the same thing to me."

He smiled with his little eyes. And she, too, smiled, troubled at the thought that at any moment this man might kiss her with his thick damp lips, and that she had no right to prevent his doing so. The soft movements of his fat person frightened her; she felt both fear and disgust. He got up, without haste took off the order from his neck, took off his coat and waistcoat, and put on his dressing-gown.

"That's better," he said, sitting down beside Anna.

Anna remembered what agony the wedding had been, when it had seemed to her that the priest, and the guests, and every one in church had been looking at her sorrowfully and asking why, why was she, such a sweet, nice girl, marrying such an elderly, uninteresting gentleman. Only that morning she was delighted that everything had been satisfactorily arranged, but at the time of the wedding, and now in the railway carriage, she felt cheated, guilty, and ridiculous. Here she had married a rich man and yet she had no money, her wedding-dress had been bought on credit, and when her father and brothers had been saying good-bye, she could see from their faces that they had not a farthing. Would they have any supper that day? And tomorrow? And for some reason it seemed to her that her father and the boys were sitting tonight hungry without her, and feeling the same misery as they had the day after their mother's funeral.

"Oh, how unhappy I am!" she thought. "Why am I so unhappy?"

With the awkwardness of a man with settled habits, unaccustomed to deal with women, Modest Alexeitch touched her on the waist and patted her on the shoulder, while she went on thinking about money, about her mother and her mother's death. When her mother died, her father, Pyotr Leontyitch, a teacher of drawing and writing in the high school, had taken to drink, impoverishment had followed, the boys had not had boots or goloshes, their father had been hauled up before the magistrate, the warrant officer had come and made an inventory of the furniture. . . . What a disgrace! Anna had had to look after her drunken father, darn her brothers' stockings, go to market, and when she was complimented on her youth, her beauty, and her elegant manners, it seemed to her that every one was looking at her cheap hat and the holes in her boots that were inked over. And at night there had been tears and a haunting dread that her father would soon, very soon, be dismissed from the school for his weakness, and that he would not survive it, but would die, too, like their mother. But ladies of their acquaintance had taken the matter in hand and looked about for a good match for Anna. This Modest Alexevitch, who was neither young nor good-looking but had money, was soon found. He had a hundred thousand in the bank and the family estate, which he had let on lease. He was a man of principle and stood well with His Excellency; it would be nothing to him, so they told Anna, to get a note from His Excellency to the directors of the high school, or even to the Education Commissioner, to prevent Pyotr Leontyitch from being dismissed.

While she was recalling these details, she suddenly heard strains of music which floated in at the window, together with the sound of voices. The train was stopping at a station. In the crowd beyond the platform an accordion and a cheap squeaky fiddle were being briskly played, and the sound of a military band came from beyond the villas and the tall birches and poplars that lay bathed in the moonlight; there must have been a dance in the place. Summer visitors and townspeople, who used to come out here by train in fine weather for a breath of fresh air, were parading up and down on the platform. Among them was the wealthy owner of all the summer villas -- a tall, stout, dark man called Artynov. He had prominent eyes and looked like an Armenian. He wore a strange costume; his shirt was unbuttoned, showing his chest; he wore high boots with spurs, and a black cloak hung from his shoulders and dragged on the ground like a train. Two boar-hounds followed him with their sharp noses to the ground.

Tears were still shining in Anna's eyes, but she was not thinking now of her mother, nor of money, nor of her marriage; but shaking hands with schoolboys and officers she knew, she laughed gaily and said quickly:

"How do you do? How are you?"

She went out on to the platform between the carriages into the moonlight, and stood so that they could all see her in her new splendid dress and hat.

"Why are we stopping here?" she asked.

"This is a junction. They are waiting for the mail train to pass."

Seeing that Artynov was looking at her, she screwed up her eyes coquettishly and began talking aloud in French; and because her voice sounded so pleasant, and because she heard music and the moon was reflected in the pond, and because Artynov, the notorious Don Juan and spoiled child of fortune, was looking at her eagerly and with curiosity, and because every one was in good spirits -- she suddenly felt joyful, and when the train started and the officers of her acquaintance saluted her, she was humming the polka the strains of which reached her from the military band playing beyond the trees; and she returned to her compartment feeling as though it had been proved to her at the station that she would certainly be happy in spite of everything.

The happy pair spent two days at the monastery, then went back to town. They lived in a rent-free flat. When Modest Alexevitch had gone to the office, Anna played the piano, or shed tears of depression, or lay down on a couch and read novels or looked through fashion papers. At dinner Modest Alexevitch ate a great deal and talked about politics, about appointments, transfers, and promotions in the service, about the necessity of hard work, and said that, family life not being a pleasure but a duty, if you took care of the kopecks the roubles would take care of themselves, and that he put religion and morality before everything else in the world. And holding his knife in his fist as though it were a sword, he would say:

"Every one ought to have his duties!"

And Anna listened to him, was frightened, and could not eat, and she usually got up from

the table hungry. After dinner her husband lay down for a nap and snored loudly, while Anna went to see her own people. Her father and the boys looked at her in a peculiar way, as though just before she came in they had been blaming her for having married for money a tedious, wearisome man she did not love; her rustling skirts, her bracelets, and her general air of a married lady, offended them and made them uncomfortable. In her presence they felt a little embarrassed and did not know what to talk to her about; but yet they still loved her as before, and were not used to having dinner without her. She sat down with them to cabbage soup, porridge, and fried potatoes, smelling of mutton dripping. Pyotr Leontyitch filled his glass from the decanter with a trembling hand and drank it off hurriedly, greedily, with repulsion, then poured out a second glass and then a third. Petya and Andrusha, thin, pale boys with big eyes, would take the decanter and say desperately:

"You mustn't, father. . . . Enough, father. . . ."

And Anna, too, was troubled and entreated him to drink no more; and he would suddenly fly into a rage and beat the table with his fists:

"I won't allow any one to dictate to me!" he would shout. "Wretched boys! wretched girl! I'll turn you all out!"

But there was a note of weakness, of good-nature in his voice, and no one was afraid of him. After dinner he usually dressed in his best. Pale, with a cut on his chin from shaving, craning his thin neck, he would stand for half an hour before the glass, prinking, combing his hair, twisting his black moustache, sprinkling himself with scent, tying his cravat in a bow; then he would put on his gloves and his top-hat, and go off to give his private lessons. Or if it was a holiday he would stay at home and paint, or play the harmonium, which wheezed and growled; he would try to wrest from it pure harmonious sounds and would sing to it; or would storm at the boys:

"Wretches! Good-for-nothing boys! You have spoiled the instrument!"

In the evening Anna's husband played cards with his colleagues, who lived under the same roof in the government quarters. The wives of these gentlemen would come in -- ugly, tastelessly dressed women, as coarse as cooks -- and gossip would begin in the flat as tasteless and unattractive as the ladies themselves. Sometimes Modest Alexevitch would take Anna to the theatre. In the intervals he would never let her stir a step from his side, but walked about arm in arm with her through the corridors and the foyer. When he bowed to some one, he immediately whispered to Anna: "A civil councillor . . . visits at His Excellency's"; or, "A man of means . . . has a house of his own." When they passed the buffet Anna had a great longing for something sweet; she was fond of chocolate and apple cakes, but she had no money, and she did not like to ask her husband. He would take a pear, pinch it with his fingers, and ask uncertainly:

"How much?"

"Twenty-five kopecks!"

"I say!" he would reply, and put it down; but as it was awkward to leave the buffet without buying anything, he would order some seltzer-water and drink the whole bottle himself, and

tears would come into his eyes. And Anna hated him at such times.

And suddenly flushing crimson, he would say to her rapidly:

"Bow to that old lady!"

"But I don't know her."

"No matter. That's the wife of the director of the local treasury! Bow, I tell you," he would grumble insistently. "Your head won't drop off."

Anna bowed and her head certainly did not drop off, but it was agonizing. She did everything her husband wanted her to, and was furious with herself for having let him deceive her like the veriest idiot. She had only married him for his money, and yet she had less money now than before her marriage. In old days her father would sometimes give her twenty kopecks, but now she had not a farthing.

To take money by stealth or ask for it, she could not; she was afraid of her husband, she trembled before him. She felt as though she had been afraid of him for years. In her childhood the director of the high school had always seemed the most impressive and terrifying force in the world, sweeping down like a thunderstorm or a steam-engine ready to crush her; another similar force of which the whole family talked, and of which they were for some reason afraid, was His Excellency; then there were a dozen others, less formidable, and among them the teachers at the high school, with shaven upper lips, stern, implacable; and now finally, there was Modest Alexeitch, a man of principle, who even resembled the director in the face. And in Anna's imagination all these forces blended together into one, and, in the form of a terrible, huge white bear, menaced the weak and erring such as her father. And she was afraid to say anything in opposition to her husband, and gave a forced smile, and tried to make a show of pleasure when she was coarsely caressed and defiled by embraces that excited her terror. Only once Pyotr Leontyitch had the temerity to ask for a loan of fifty roubles in order to pay some very irksome debt, but what an agony it had been!

"Very good; I'll give it to you," said Modest Alexeitch after a moment's thought; "but I warn you I won't help you again till you give up drinking. Such a failing is disgraceful in a man in the government service! I must remind you of the well-known fact that many capable people have been ruined by that passion, though they might possibly, with temperance, have risen in time to a very high

And long-winded phrases followed: "inasmuch as . . .," "following upon which proposition . . .," in view of the aforesaid contention . . ."; and Pyotr Leontyitch was in agonies of humiliation and felt an intense craving for alcohol.

And when the boys came to visit Anna, generally in broken boots and threadbare trousers, they, too, had to listen to sermons.

"Every man ought to have his duties!" Modest Alexeitch would say to them.

And he did not give them money. But he did give Anna bracelets, rings, and brooches,

saying that these things would come in useful for a rainy day. And he often unlocked her drawer and made an inspection to see whether they were all safe.

## II

Meanwhile winter came on. Long before Christmas there was an announcement in the local papers that the usual winter ball would take place on the twenty-ninth of December in the Hall of Nobility. Every evening after cards Modest Alexeitch was excitedly whispering with his colleagues' wives and glancing at Anna, and then paced up and down the room for a long while, thinking. At last, late one evening, he stood still, facing Anna, and said:

"You ought to get yourself a ball dress. Do you understand? Only please consult Marya Grigoryevna and Natalya Kuzminishna."

And he gave her a hundred roubles. She took the money, but she did not consult any one when she ordered the ball dress; she spoke to no one but her father, and tried to imagine how her mother would have dressed for a ball. Her mother had always dressed in the latest fashion and had always taken trouble over Anna, dressing her elegantly like a doll, and had taught her to speak French and dance the mazurka superbly (she had been a governess for five years before her marriage). Like her mother, Anna could make a new dress out of an old one, clean gloves with benzine, hire jewels; and, like her mother, she knew how to screw up her eyes, lisp, assume graceful attitudes, fly into raptures when necessary, and throw a mournful and enigmatic look into her eyes. And from her father she had inherited the dark colour of her hair and eyes, her highly-strung nerves, and the habit of always making herself look her best.

When, half an hour before setting off for the ball, Modest Alexeitch went into her room without his coat on, to put his order round his neck before her pier-glass, dazzled by her beauty and the splendour of her fresh, ethereal dress, he combed his whiskers complacently and said:

"So that's what my wife can look like . . . so that's what you can look like! Anyuta!" he went on, dropping into a tone of solemnity, "I have made your fortune, and now I beg you to do something for mine. I beg you to get introduced to the wife of His Excellency! For God's sake, do! Through her I may get the post of senior reporting clerk!"

They went to the ball. They reached the Hall of Nobility, the entrance with the hall porter. They came to the vestibule with the hat-stands, the fur coats; footmen scurrying about, and ladies with low necks putting up their fans to screen themselves from the draughts. There was a smell of gas and of soldiers. When Anna, walking upstairs on her husband's arm, heard the music and saw herself full length in the looking-glass in the full glow of the lights, there was a rush of joy in her heart, and she felt the same presentiment of happiness as in the moonlight at the station. She walked in proudly, confidently, for the first time feeling herself not a girl but a lady, and unconsciously imitating her mother in her walk and in her manner. And for the first time in her life she felt rich and free. Even her husband's presence did not oppress her, for as she crossed the threshold of the hall she had guessed instinctively that the proximity of an old husband did not detract from her in the least, but, on the contrary, gave her that shade of piquant mystery that is so attractive to men. The orchestra was already playing and the dances had begun. After their flat Anna was

overwhelmed by the lights, the bright colours, the music, the noise, and looking round the room, thought, "Oh, how lovely!" She at once distinguished in the crowd all her acquaintances, every one she had met before at parties or on picnics -- all the officers, the teachers, the lawyers, the officials, the landowners, His Excellency, Artynov, and the ladies of the highest standing, dressed up and very décollettées, handsome and ugly, who had already taken up their positions in the stalls and pavilions of the charity bazaar, to begin selling things for the benefit of the poor. A huge officer in epaulettes -- she had been introduced to him in Staro-Kievsky Street when she was a schoolgirl, but now she could not remember his name -- seemed to spring from out of the ground, begging her for a waltz, and she flew away from her husband, feeling as though she were floating away in a sailing-boat in a violent storm, while her husband was left far away on the shore. She danced passionately, with fervour, a waltz, then a polka and a quadrille, being snatched by one partner as soon as she was left by another, dizzy with music and the noise, mixing Russian with French, lisping, laughing, and with no thought of her husband or anything else. She excited great admiration among the men -- that was evident, and indeed it could not have been otherwise; she was breathless with excitement, felt thirsty, and convulsively clutched her fan. Pyotr Leontyitch, her father, in a crumpled dress-coat that smelt of benzine, came up to her, offering her a plate of pink ice.

"You are enchanting this evening," he said, looking at her rapturously, "and I have never so much regretted that you were in such a hurry to get married. . . . What was it for? I know you did it for our sake, but . . ." With a shaking hand he drew out a roll of notes and said: "I got the money for my lessons today, and can pay your husband what I owe him."

She put the plate back into his hand, and was pounced upon by some one and borne off to a distance. She caught a glimpse over her partner's shoulder of her father gliding over the floor, putting his arm round a lady and whirling down the ball-room with her.

"How sweet he is when he is sober!" she thought.

She danced the mazurka with the same huge officer; he moved gravely, as heavily as a dead carcase in a uniform, twitched his shoulders and his chest, stamped his feet very languidly -- he felt fearfully disinclined to dance. She fluttered round him, provoking him by her beauty, her bare neck; her eyes glowed defiantly, her movements were passionate, while he became more and more indifferent, and held out his hands to her as graciously as a king.

"Bravo, bravo!" said people watching them.

But little by little the huge officer, too, broke out; he grew lively, excited, and, overcome by her fascination, was carried away and danced lightly, youthfully, while she merely moved her shoulders and looked slyly at him as though she were now the queen and he were her slave; and at that moment it seemed to her that the whole room was looking at them, and that everybody was thrilled and envied them. The huge officer had hardly had time to thank her for the dance, when the crowd suddenly parted and the men drew themselves up in a strange way, with their hands at their sides.

His Excellency, with two stars on his dress-coat, was walking up to her. Yes, His Excellency was walking straight towards her, for he was staring directly at her with a sugary smile, while he licked his lips as he always did when he saw a pretty woman.

"Delighted, delighted . . ." he began. "I shall order your husband to be clapped in a lock-up for keeping such a treasure hidden from us till now. I've come to you with a message from my wife," he went on, offering her his arm. "You must help us. . . . M-m-yes. . . . We ought to give you the prize for beauty as they do in America. . . . M-m-yes. . . . The Americans. . . . My wife is expecting you impatiently."

He led her to a stall and presented her to a middle-aged lady, the lower part of whose face was disproportionately large, so that she looked as though she were holding a big stone in her mouth.

"You must help us," she said through her nose in a sing-song voice. "All the pretty women are working for our charity bazaar, and you are the only one enjoying yourself. Why won't you help us?"

She went away, and Anna took her place by the cups and the silver samovar. She was soon doing a lively trade. Anna asked no less than a rouble for a cup of tea, and made the huge officer drink three cups. Artynov, the rich man with prominent eyes, who suffered from asthma, came up, too; he was not dressed in the strange costume in which Anna had seen him in the summer at the station, but wore a dress-coat like every one else. Keeping his eyes fixed on Anna, he drank a glass of champagne and paid a hundred roubles for it, then drank some tea and gave another hundred -- all this without saying a word, as he was short of breath through asthma. . . . Anna invited purchasers and got money out of them, firmly convinced by now that her smiles and glances could not fail to afford these people great pleasure. She realized now that she was created exclusively for this noisy, brilliant, laughing life, with its music, its dancers, its adorers, and her old terror of a force that was sweeping down upon her and menacing to crush her seemed to her ridiculous: she was afraid of no one now, and only regretted that her mother could not be there to rejoice at her success.

Pyotr Leontyitch, pale by now but still steady on his legs, came up to the stall and asked for a glass of brandy. Anna turned crimson, expecting him to say something inappropriate (she was already ashamed of having such a poor and ordinary father); but he emptied his glass, took ten roubles out of his roll of notes, flung it down, and walked away with dignity without uttering a word. A little later she saw him dancing in the grand chain, and by now he was staggering and kept shouting something, to the great confusion of his partner; and Anna remembered how at the ball three years before he had staggered and shouted in the same way, and it had ended in the police-sergeant's taking him home to bed, and next day the director had threatened to dismiss him from his post. How inappropriate that memory was!

When the samovars were put out in the stalls and the exhausted ladies handed over their takings to the middle-aged lady with the stone in her mouth, Artynov took Anna on his arm to the hall where supper was served to all who had assisted at the bazaar. There were some twenty people at supper, not more, but it was very noisy. His Excellency proposed a toast:

"In this magnificent dining-room it will be appropriate to drink to the success of the cheap dining-rooms, which are the object of today's bazaar."

The brigadier-general proposed the toast: "To the power by which even the artillery is vanquished," and all the company clinked glasses with the ladies. It was very, very gay.

When Anna was escorted home it was daylight and the cooks were going to market. Joyful, intoxicated, full of new sensations, exhausted, she undressed, dropped into bed, and at once fell asleep. . . .

It was past one in the afternoon when the servant waked her and announced that M. Artynov had called. She dressed quickly and went down into the drawing-room. Soon after Artynov, His Excellency called to thank her for her assistance in the bazaar. With a sugary smile, chewing his lips, he kissed her hand, and asking her permission to come again, took his leave, while she remained standing in the middle of the drawing-room, amazed, enchanted, unable to believe that this change in her life, this marvellous change, had taken place so quickly; and at that moment Modest Alexeitch walked in . . . and he, too, stood before her now with the same ingratiating, sugary, cringingly respectful expression which she was accustomed to see on his face in the presence of the great and powerful; and with rapture, with indignation, with contempt, convinced that no harm would come to her from it, she said, articulating distinctly each word:

"Be off, you blockhead!"

From this time forward Anna never had one day free, as she was always taking part in picnics, expeditions, performances. She returned home every day after midnight, and went to bed on the floor in the drawing-room, and afterwards used to tell every one, touchingly, how she slept under flowers. She needed a very great deal of money, but she was no longer afraid of Modest Alexeitch, and spent his money as though it were her own; and she did not ask, did not demand it, simply sent him in the bills. "Give bearer two hundred roubles," or "Pay one hundred roubles at once."

At Easter Modest Alexeitch received the Anna of the second grade. When he went to offer his thanks, His Excellency put aside the paper he was reading and settled himself more comfortably in his chair.

"So now you have three Annas," he said, scrutinizing his white hands and pink nails -- "one on your buttonhole and two on your neck."

Modest Alexeitch put two fingers to his lips as a precaution against laughing too loud and said:

"Now I have only to look forward to the arrival of a little Vladimir. I make bold to beg your Excellency to stand godfather."

He was alluding to Vladimir of the fourth grade, and was already imagining how he would tell everywhere the story of this pun, so happy in its readiness and audacity, and he wanted to say something equally happy, but His Excellency was buried again in his newspaper, and merely gave him a nod.

And Anna went on driving about with three horses, going out hunting with Artynov, playing in one-act dramas, going out to supper, and was more and more rarely with her own

family; they dined now alone. Pyotr Leontyitch was drinking more heavily than ever; there was no money, and the harmonium had been sold long ago for debt. The boys did not let him go out alone in the street now, but looked after him for fear he might fall down; and whenever they met Anna driving in Staro-Kievsy Street with a pair of horses and Artynov on the box instead of a coachman, Pyotr Leontyitch took off his top-hat, and was about to shout to her, but Petya and Andrusha took him by the arm, and said imploringly:

"You mustn't, father. Hush, father!"

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# The Man In A Case

Anton Chekhov

AT the furthest end of the village of Mironositskoe some belated sportsmen lodged for the night in the elder Prokofy's barn. There were two of them, the veterinary surgeon Ivan Ivanovitch and the schoolmaster Burkin. Ivan Ivanovitch had a rather strange double-barrelled surname -- Tchimsha-Himalaisky -- which did not suit him at all, and he was called simply Ivan Ivanovitch all over the province. He lived at a stud-farm near the town, and had come out shooting now to get a breath of fresh air. Burkin, the high-school teacher, stayed every summer at Count P----'s, and had been thoroughly at home in this district for years.

They did not sleep. Ivan Ivanovitch, a tall, lean old fellow with long moustaches, was sitting outside the door, smoking a pipe in the moonlight. Burkin was lying within on the hay, and could not be seen in the darkness.

They were telling each other all sorts of stories. Among other things, they spoke of the fact that the elder's wife, Mavra, a healthy and by no means stupid woman, had never been beyond her native village, had never seen a town nor a railway in her life, and had spent the last ten years sitting behind the stove, and only at night going out into the street.

"What is there wonderful in that!" said Burkin. "There are plenty of people in the world, solitary by temperament, who try to retreat into their shell like a hermit crab or a snail. Perhaps it is an instance of atavism, a return to the period when the ancestor of man was not yet a social animal and lived alone in his den, or perhaps it is only one of the diversities of human character -- who knows? I am not a natural science man, and it is not my business to settle such questions; I only mean to say that people like Mavra are not uncommon. There is no need to look far; two months ago a man called Byelikov, a colleague of mine, the Greek master, died in our town. You have heard of him, no doubt. He was remarkable for always wearing goloshes and a warm wadded coat, and carrying an umbrella even in the very finest weather. And his umbrella was in a case, and his watch was in a case made of grey chamois leather, and when he took out his penknife to sharpen his pencil, his penknife, too, was in a little case; and his face seemed to be in a case too, because he always hid it in his turned-up collar. He wore dark spectacles and flannel vests, stuffed up his ears with cotton-wool, and when he got into a cab always told the driver to put up the hood. In short, the man displayed a constant and insurmountable impulse to wrap himself in a covering, to make himself, so to speak, a case which would isolate him and protect him from external influences. Reality irritated him, frightened him, kept him in continual agitation, and, perhaps to justify his timidity, his aversion for the actual, he always praised the past and what had never existed; and even the classical languages which he taught were in reality for him goloshes and umbrellas in which he sheltered himself from real life.

" 'Oh, how sonorous, how beautiful is the Greek language!' he would say, with a sugary expression; and as though to prove his words he would screw up his eyes and, raising his finger, would pronounce 'Anthropos'!"

"And Byelikov tried to hide his thoughts also in a case. The only things that were clear to his mind were government circulars and newspaper articles in which something was forbidden. When some proclamation prohibited the boys from going out in the streets after nine o'clock in the evening, or some article declared carnal love unlawful, it was to his mind clear and definite; it was forbidden, and that

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was enough. For him there was always a doubtful element, something vague and not fully expressed, in any sanction or permission. When a dramatic club or a reading-room or a tea-shop was licensed in the town, he would shake his head and say softly:

"It is all right, of course; it is all very nice, but I hope it won't lead to anything!"

"Every sort of breach of order, deviation or departure from rule, depressed him, though one would have thought it was no business of his. If one of his colleagues was late for church or if rumours reached him of some prank of the high-school boys, or one of the mistresses was seen late in the evening in the company of an officer, he was much disturbed, and said he hoped that nothing would come of it. At the teachers' meetings he simply oppressed us with his caution, his circumspection, and his characteristic reflection on the ill-behaviour of the young people in both male and female high-schools, the uproar in the classes.

"Oh, he hoped it would not reach the ears of the authorities; oh, he hoped nothing would come of it; and he thought it would be a very good thing if Petrov were expelled from the second class and Yegorov from the fourth. And, do you know, by his sighs, his despondency, his black spectacles on his pale little face, a little face like a pole-cat's, you know, he crushed us all, and we gave way, reduced Petrov's and Yegorov's marks for conduct, kept them in, and in the end expelled them both. He had a strange habit of visiting our lodgings. He would come to a teacher's, would sit down, and remain silent, as though he were carefully inspecting something. He would sit like this in silence for an hour or two and then go away. This he called 'maintaining good relations with his colleagues'; and it was obvious that coming to see us and sitting there was tiresome to him, and that he came to see us simply because he considered it his duty as our colleague. We teachers were afraid of him. And even the headmaster was afraid of him. Would you believe it, our teachers were all intellectual, right-minded people, brought up on Turgenev and Shtchedrin, yet this little chap, who always went about with goloshes and an umbrella, had the whole high-school under his thumb for fifteen long years! High-school, indeed -- he had the whole town under his thumb! Our ladies did not get up private theatricals on Saturdays for fear he should hear of it, and the clergy dared not eat meat or play cards in his presence. Under the influence of people like Byelikov we have got into the way of being afraid of everything in our town for the last ten or fifteen years. They are afraid to speak aloud, afraid to send letters, afraid to make acquaintances, afraid to read books, afraid to help the poor, to teach people to read and write. . . ."

Ivan Ivanovitch cleared his throat, meaning to say something, but first lighted his pipe, gazed at the moon, and then said, with pauses:

"Yes, intellectual, right minded people read Shtchedrin and Turgenev, Buckle, and all the rest of them, yet they knocked under and put up with it. . . that's just how it is."

"Byelikov lived in the same house as I did," Burkin went on, "on the same storey, his door facing mine; we often saw each other, and I knew how he lived when he was at home. And at home it was the same story: dressing-gown, nightcap, blinds, bolts, a perfect succession of prohibitions and restrictions of all sorts, and --'Oh, I hope nothing will come of it!' Lenten fare was bad for him, yet he could not eat meat, as people might perhaps say Byelikov did not keep the fasts, and he ate freshwater fish with butter -- not a Lenten dish, yet one could not say that it was meat. He did not keep a female servant for fear people might think evil of him, but had as cook an old man of sixty, called Afanasy, half-witted and given to tippling, who had once been an officer's servant and could cook after a fashion. This Afanasy was usually standing at the door with his arms folded; with a deep sigh, he would mutter always the same thing:

" 'There are plenty of them about nowadays!'

"Byelikov had a little bedroom like a box; his bed had curtains. When he went to bed he covered his head over; it was hot and stuffy; the wind battered on the closed doors; there was a droning noise in the stove and a sound of sighs from the kitchen -- ominous sighs. . . . And he felt frightened under the bed-clothes. He was afraid that something might happen, that Afanasy might murder him, that thieves might break in, and so he had troubled dreams all night, and in the morning, when we went together to the high-school, he was depressed and pale, and it was evident that the high-school full of people excited dread and aversion in his whole being, and that to walk beside me was irksome to a man of his solitary temperament.

" 'They make a great noise in our classes,' he used to say, as though trying to find an explanation for his depression. 'It's beyond anything.'

"And the Greek master, this man in a case -- would you believe it? -- almost got married."

Ivan Ivanovitch glanced quickly into the barn, and said:

"You are joking!"

"Yes, strange as it seems, he almost got married. A new teacher of history and geography, Milhail Savvitch Kovalenko, a Little Russian, was appointed. He came, not alone, but with his sister Varinka. He was a tall, dark young man with huge hands, and one could see from his face that he had a bass voice, and, in fact, he had a voice that seemed to come out of a barrel -- 'boom, boom, boom!' And she was not so young, about thirty, but she, too, was tall, well-made, with black eyebrows and red cheeks -- in fact, she was a regular sugar-plum, and so sprightly, so noisy; she was always singing Little Russian songs and laughing. For the least thing she would go off into a ringing laugh -- 'Ha-ha-ha!' We made our first thorough acquaintance with the Kovalenkos at the headmaster's name-day party. Among the glum and intensely bored teachers who came even to the name-day party as a duty we suddenly saw a new Aphrodite risen from the waves; she walked with her arms akimbo, laughed, sang, danced. . . . She sang with feeling 'The Winds do Blow,' then another song, and another, and she fascinated us all -- all, even Byelikov. He sat down by her and said with a honeyed smile:

" 'The Little Russian reminds one of the ancient Greek in its softness and agreeable resonance.'

"That flattered her, and she began telling him with feeling and earnestness that they had a farm in the Gadyatchsky district, and that her mamma lived at the farm, and that they had such pears, such melons, such kabaks! The Little Russians call pumpkins kabaks (i.e., pothouses), while their pothouses they call shinki, and they make a beetroot soup with tomatoes and aubergines in it, 'which was so nice -- awfully nice!'

"We listened and listened, and suddenly the same idea dawned upon us all:

" 'It would be a good thing to make a match of it,' the headmaster's wife said to me softly.

"We all for some reason recalled the fact that our friend Byelikov was not married, and it now seemed to us strange that we had hitherto failed to observe, and had in fact completely lost sight of, a detail so important in his life. What was his attitude to woman? How had he settled this vital question for

himself? This had not interested us in the least till then; perhaps we had not even admitted the idea that a man who went out in all weathers in goloshes and slept under curtains could be in love.

"'He is a good deal over forty and she is thirty,' the headmaster's wife went on, developing her idea. 'I believe she would marry him.'

"All sorts of things are done in the provinces through boredom, all sorts of unnecessary and nonsensical things! And that is because what is necessary is not done at all. What need was there for instance, for us to make a match for this Byelikov, whom one could not even imagine married? The headmaster's wife, the inspector's wife, and all our high-school ladies, grew livelier and even better-looking, as though they had suddenly found a new object in life. The headmaster's wife would take a box at the theatre, and we beheld sitting in her box Varinka, with such a fan, beaming and happy, and beside her Byelikov, a little bent figure, looking as though he had been extracted from his house by pincers. I would give an evening party, and the ladies would insist on my inviting Byelikov and Varinka. In short, the machine was set in motion. It appeared that Varinka was not averse to matrimony. She had not a very cheerful life with her brother; they could do nothing but quarrel and scold one another from morning till night. Here is a scene, for instance. Kovalenko would be coming along the street, a tall, sturdy young ruffian, in an embroidered shirt, his love-locks falling on his forehead under his cap, in one hand a bundle of books, in the other a thick knotted stick, followed by his sister, also with books in her hand.

"'But you haven't read it, Mihalik!' she would be arguing loudly. 'I tell you, I swear you have not read it at all!'

"'And I tell you I have read it,' cries Kovalenko, thumping his stick on the pavement.

"'Oh, my goodness, Mihalik! why are you so cross? We are arguing about principles.'

"'I tell you that I have read it!' Kovalenko would shout, more loudly than ever.

"And at home, if there was an outsider present, there was sure to be a skirmish. Such a life must have been wearisome, and of course she must have longed for a home of her own. Besides, there was her age to be considered; there was no time left to pick and choose; it was a case of marrying anybody, even a Greek master. And, indeed, most of our young ladies don't mind whom they marry so long as they do get married. However that may be, Varinka began to show an unmistakable partiality for Byelikov.

"And Byelikov? He used to visit Kovalenko just as he did us. He would arrive, sit down, and remain silent. He would sit quiet, and Varinka would sing to him 'The Winds do Blow,' or would look pensively at him with her dark eyes, or would suddenly go off into a peal -- 'Ha-ha-ha!'

"Suggestion plays a great part in love affairs, and still more in getting married. Everybody -- both his colleagues and the ladies -- began assuring Byelikov that he ought to get married, that there was nothing left for him in life but to get married; we all congratulated him, with solemn countenances delivered ourselves of various platitudes, such as 'Marriage is a serious step.' Besides, Varinka was good-looking and interesting; she was the daughter of a civil councillor, and had a farm; and what was more, she was the first woman who had been warm and friendly in her manner to him. His head was turned, and he decided that he really ought to get married."

"Well, at that point you ought to have taken away his goloshes and umbrella," said Ivan Ivanovitch.

"Only fancy! that turned out to be impossible. He put Varinka's portrait on his table, kept coming to see me and talking about Varinka, and home life, saying marriage was a serious step. He was frequently at Kovalenko's, but he did not alter his manner of life in the least; on the contrary, indeed, his determination to get married seemed to have a depressing effect on him. He grew thinner and paler, and seemed to retreat further and further into his case.

"'I like Varvara Savvishna,' he used to say to me, with a faint and wry smile, 'and I know that every one ought to get married, but . . . you know all this has happened so suddenly. . . . One must think a little.'

"'What is there to think over?' I used to say to him. 'Get married -- that is all.'

"'No; marriage is a serious step. One must first weigh the duties before one, the responsibilities . . . that nothing may go wrong afterwards. It worries me so much that I don't sleep at night. And I must confess I am afraid: her brother and she have a strange way of thinking; they look at things strangely, you know, and her disposition is very impetuous. One may get married, and then, there is no knowing, one may find oneself in an unpleasant position.'

"And he did not make an offer; he kept putting it off, to the great vexation of the headmaster's wife and all our ladies; he went on weighing his future duties and responsibilities, and meanwhile he went for a walk with Varinka almost every day -- possibly he thought that this was necessary in his position -- and came to see me to talk about family life. And in all probability in the end he would have proposed to her, and would have made one of those unnecessary, stupid marriages such as are made by thousands among us from being bored and having nothing to do, if it had not been for a kolossalische scandal. I must mention that Varinka's brother, Kovalenko, detested Byelikov from the first day of their acquaintance, and could not endure him.

"'I don't understand,' he used to say to us, shrugging his shoulders --'I don't understand how you can put up with that sneak, that nasty phiz. Ugh! how can you live here! The atmosphere is stifling and unclean! Do you call yourselves schoolmasters, teachers? You are paltry government clerks. You keep, not a temple of science, but a department for red tape and loyal behaviour, and it smells as sour as a police-station. No, my friends; I will stay with you for a while, and then I will go to my farm and there catch crabs and teach the Little Russians. I shall go, and you can stay here with your Judas -- damn his soul!'

"Or he would laugh till he cried, first in a loud bass, then in a shrill, thin laugh, and ask me, waving his hands:

"'What does he sit here for? What does he want? He sits and stares.'

"He even gave Byelikov a nickname, 'The Spider.' And it will readily be understood that we avoided talking to him of his sister's being about to marry 'The Spider.'

"And on one occasion, when the headmaster's wife hinted to him what a good thing it would be to secure his sister's future with such a reliable, universally respected man as Byelikov, he frowned and muttered:

"'It's not my business; let her marry a reptile if she likes. I don't like meddling in other people's affairs.'

"Now hear what happened next. Some mischievous person drew a caricature of Byelikov walking along in his goloshes with his trousers tucked up, under his umbrella, with Varinka on his arm; below, the

inscription 'Anthropos in love.' The expression was caught to a marvel, you know. The artist must have worked for more than one night, for the teachers of both the boys' and girls' high-schools, the teachers of the seminary, the government officials, all received a copy. Byelikov received one, too. The caricature made a very painful impression on him.

"We went out together; it was the first of May, a Sunday, and all of us, the boys and the teachers, had agreed to meet at the high-school and then to go for a walk together to a wood beyond the town. We set off, and he was green in the face and gloomier than a storm-cloud.

'What wicked, ill-natured people there are!' he said, and his lips quivered.

"I felt really sorry for him. We were walking along, and all of a sudden -- would you believe it? -- Kovalenko came bowling along on a bicycle, and after him, also on a bicycle, Varinka, flushed and exhausted, but good-humoured and gay.

" 'We are going on ahead,' she called. 'What lovely weather! Awfully lovely!'

"And they both disappeared from our sight. Byelikov turned white instead of green, and seemed petrified. He stopped short and stared at me. . . .

" 'What is the meaning of it? Tell me, please!' he asked. 'Can my eyes have deceived me? Is it the proper thing for high-school masters and ladies to ride bicycles?'

" 'What is there improper about it?' I said. 'Let them ride and enjoy themselves.'

" 'But how can that be?' he cried, amazed at my calm. 'What are you saying?'

"And he was so shocked that he was unwilling to go on, and returned home.

"Next day he was continually twitching and nervously rubbing his hands, and it was evident from his face that he was unwell. And he left before his work was over, for the first time in his life. And he ate no dinner. Towards evening he wrapped himself up warmly, though it was quite warm weather, and sallied out to the Kovalenkos'. Varinka was out; he found her brother, however.

" 'Pray sit down,' Kovalenko said coldly, with a frown. His face looked sleepy; he had just had a nap after dinner, and was in a very bad humour.

"Byelikov sat in silence for ten minutes, and then began:

" 'I have come to see you to relieve my mind. I am very, very much troubled. Some scurrilous fellow has drawn an absurd caricature of me and another person, in whom we are both deeply interested. I regard it as a duty to assure you that I have had no hand in it. . . . I have given no sort of ground for such ridicule -- on the contrary, I have always behaved in every way like a gentleman.'

"Kovalenko sat sulky and silent. Byelikov waited a little, and went on slowly in a mournful voice:

" 'And I have something else to say to you. I have been in the service for years, while you have only lately entered it, and I consider it my duty as an older colleague to give you a warning. You ride on a bicycle, and that pastime is utterly unsuitable for an educator of youth.'

" 'Why so?' asked Kovalenko in his bass.

" 'Surely that needs no explanation, Mihail Savvitch -- surely you can understand that? If the teacher rides a bicycle, what can you expect the pupils to do? You will have them walking on their heads next! And so long as there is no formal permission to do so, it is out of the question. I was horrified yesterday! When I saw your sister everything seemed dancing before my eyes. A lady or a young girl on a bicycle -- it's awful!'

" 'What is it you want exactly?'

" 'All I want is to warn you, Mihail Savvitch. You are a young man, you have a future before you, you must be very, very careful in your behaviour, and you are so careless -- oh, so careless! You go about in an embroidered shirt, are constantly seen in the street carrying books, and now the bicycle, too. The headmaster will learn that you and your sister ride the bicycle, and then it will reach the higher authorities. . . . Will that be a good thing?'

" 'It's no business of anybody else if my sister and I do bicycle!' said Kovalenko, and he turned crimson. 'And damnation take any one who meddles in my private affairs!'

"Byelikov turned pale and got up.

" 'If you speak to me in that tone I cannot continue,' he said. 'And I beg you never to express yourself like that about our superiors in my presence; you ought to be respectful to the authorities.'

" 'Why, have I said any harm of the authorities?' asked Kovalenko, looking at him wrathfully. 'Please leave me alone. I am an honest man, and do not care to talk to a gentleman like you. I don't like sneaks!'

"Byelikov flew into a nervous flutter, and began hurriedly putting on his coat, with an expression of horror on his face. It was the first time in his life he had been spoken to so rudely.

" 'You can say what you please,' he said, as he went out from the entry to the landing on the staircase. 'I ought only to warn you: possibly some one may have overheard us, and that our conversation may not be misunderstood and harm come of it, I shall be compelled to inform our headmaster of our conversation . . . in its main features. I am bound to do so.'

" 'Inform him? You can go and make your report!'

"Kovalenko seized him from behind by the collar and gave him a push, and Byelikov rolled downstairs, thudding with his goloshes. The staircase was high and steep, but he rolled to the bottom unhurt, got up, and touched his nose to see whether his spectacles were all right. But just as he was falling down the stairs Varinka came in, and with her two ladies; they stood below staring, and to Byelikov this was more terrible than anything. I believe he would rather have broken his neck or both legs than have been an object of ridicule. 'Why, now the whole town would hear of it; it would come to the headmaster's ears, would reach the higher authorities -- oh, it might lead to something! There would be another caricature, and it would all end in his being asked to resign his post. . . .

"When he got up, Varinka recognized him, and, looking at his ridiculous face, his crumpled overcoat,

and his goloshes, not understanding what had happened and supposing that he had slipped down by accident, could not restrain herself, and laughed loud enough to be heard by all the flats:

"'Ha-ha-ha'!"

"And this pealing, ringing 'Ha-ha-ha!' was the last straw that put an end to everything: to the proposed match and to Byelikov's earthly existence. He did not hear what Varinka said to him; he saw nothing. On reaching home, the first thing he did was to remove her portrait from the table; then he went to bed, and he never got up again.

"Three days later Afanasy came to me and asked whether we should not send for the doctor, as there was something wrong with his master. I went in to Byelikov. He lay silent behind the curtain, covered with a quilt; if one asked him a question, he said 'Yes' or 'No' and not another sound. He lay there while Afanasy, gloomy and scowling, hovered about him, sighing heavily, and smelling like a pothouse.

"A month later Byelikov died. We all went to his funeral -- that is, both the high-schools and the seminary. Now when he was lying in his coffin his expression was mild, agreeable, even cheerful, as though he were glad that he had at last been put into a case which he would never leave again. Yes, he had attained his ideal! And, as though in his honour, it was dull, rainy weather on the day of his funeral, and we all wore goloshes and took our umbrellas. Varinka, too, was at the funeral, and when the coffin was lowered into the grave she burst into tears. I have noticed that Little Russian women are always laughing or crying -- no intermediate mood.

"One must confess that to bury people like Byelikov is a great pleasure. As we were returning from the cemetery we wore discreet Lenten faces; no one wanted to display this feeling of pleasure -- a feeling like that we had experienced long, long ago as children when our elders had gone out and we ran about the garden for an hour or two, enjoying complete freedom. Ah, freedom, freedom! The merest hint, the faintest hope of its possibility gives wings to the soul, does it not?"

"We returned from the cemetery in a good humour. But not more than a week had passed before life went on as in the past, as gloomy, oppressive, and senseless -- a life not forbidden by government prohibition, but not fully permitted, either: it was no better. And, indeed, though we had buried Byelikov, how many such men in cases were left, how many more of them there will be!"

"That's just how it is," said Ivan Ivanovitch and he lighted his pipe.

"How many more of them there will be!" repeated Burkin.

The schoolmaster came out of the barn. He was a short, stout man, completely bald, with a black beard down to his waist. The two dogs came out with him.

"What a moon!" he said, looking upwards.

It was midnight. On the right could be seen the whole village, a long street stretching far away for four miles. All was buried in deep silent slumber; not a movement, not a sound; one could hardly believe that nature could be so still. When on a moonlight night you see a broad village street, with its cottages, haystacks, and slumbering willows, a feeling of calm comes over the soul; in this peace, wrapped away from care, toil, and sorrow in the darkness of night, it is mild, melancholy, beautiful, and it seems as though the stars look down upon it kindly and with tenderness, and as though there were no evil on

earth and all were well. On the left the open country began from the end of the village; it could be seen stretching far away to the horizon, and there was no movement, no sound in that whole expanse bathed in moonlight.

"Yes, that is just how it is," repeated Ivan Ivanovitch; "and isn't our living in town, airless and crowded, our writing useless papers, our playing vint -- isn't that all a sort of case for us? And our spending our whole lives among trivial, fussy men and silly, idle women, our talking and our listening to all sorts of nonsense -- isn't that a case for us, too? If you like, I will tell you a very edifying story."

"No; it's time we were asleep," said Burkin. "Tell it tomorrow."

They went into the barn and lay down on the hay. And they were both covered up and beginning to doze when they suddenly heard light footsteps -- patter, patter. . . . Some one was walking not far from the barn, walking a little and stopping, and a minute later, patter, patter again. . . . The dogs began growling.

"That's Mavra," said Burkin.

The footsteps died away.

"You see and hear that they lie," said Ivan Ivanovitch, turning over on the other side, "and they call you a fool for putting up with their lying. You endure insult and humiliation, and dare not openly say that you are on the side of the honest and the free, and you lie and smile yourself; and all that for the sake of a crust of bread, for the sake of a warm corner, for the sake of a wretched little worthless rank in the service. No, one can't go on living like this."

"Well, you are off on another tack now, Ivan Ivanovitch," said the schoolmaster. "Let us go to sleep!"

And ten minutes later Burkin was asleep. But Ivan Ivanovitch kept sighing and turning over from side to side; then he got up, went outside again, and, sitting in the doorway, lighted his pipe.

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## "Overdoing It," by Anton Chekhov

GLYEB GAVRILOVITCH SMIRNOV, a land surveyor, arrived at the station of Gnilushki. He had another twenty or thirty miles to drive before he would reach the estate which he had been summoned to survey. (If the driver were not drunk and the horses were not bad, it would hardly be twenty miles, but if the driver had had a drop and his steeds were worn out it would mount up to a good forty.)

"Tell me, please, where can I get post-horses here?" the surveyor asked of the station gendarme.

"What? Post-horses? There's no finding a decent dog for seventy miles round, let alone post-horses. . . . But where do you want to go?"

"To Dyevkino, General Hohotov's estate."

"Well," yawned the gendarme, "go outside the station, there are sometimes peasants in the yard there, they will take passengers."

The surveyor heaved a sigh and made his way out of the station.

There, after prolonged enquiries, conversations, and hesitations, he found a very sturdy, sullen-looking pock-marked peasant, wearing a tattered grey smock and bark-shoes.

"You have got a queer sort of cart!" said the surveyor, frowning as he clambered into the cart. "There is no making out which is the back and which is the front."

"What is there to make out? Where the horse's tail is, there's the front, and where your honour's sitting, there's the back."

The little mare was young, but thin, with legs planted wide apart and frayed ears. When the driver stood up and lashed her with a whip made of cord, she merely shook her head; when he swore at her and lashed her once more, the cart squeaked and shivered as though in a fever. After the third lash the cart gave a lurch, after the fourth, it moved forward.

"Are we going to drive like this all the way?" asked the surveyor, violently jolted and marvelling at the capacity of Russian drivers for combining a slow tortoise-like pace with a jolting that turns the soul inside out.

"We shall ge-et there!" the peasant reassured him. "The mare is young and frisky. . . . Only let her get running and then there is no stopping her. . . . No-ow, cur-sed brute!"

It was dusk by the time the cart drove out of the station. On the surveyor's right hand stretched a dark frozen plain, endless and boundless. If you drove over it you

would certainly get to the other side of beyond. On the horizon, where it vanished and melted into the sky, there was the languid glow of a cold autumn sunset. . . . On the left of the road, mounds of some sort, that might be last year's stacks or might be a village, rose up in the gathering darkness. The surveyor could not see what was in front as his whole field of vision on that side was covered by the broad clumsy back of the driver. The air was still, but it was cold and frosty.

"What a wilderness it is here," thought the surveyor, trying to cover his ears with the collar of his overcoat. "Neither post nor paddock. If, by ill-luck, one were attacked and robbed no one would hear you, whatever uproar you made. . . . And the driver is not one you could depend on. . . . Ugh, what a huge back! A child of nature like that has only to move a finger and it would be all up with one! And his ugly face is suspicious and brutal-looking."

"Hey, my good man!" said the surveyor, "What is your name?"

"Mine? Klim."

"Well, Klim, what is it like in your parts here? Not dangerous? Any robbers on the road?"

"It is all right, the Lord has spared us. . . . Who should go robbing on the road?"

"It's a good thing there are no robbers. But to be ready for anything I have got three revolvers with me," said the surveyor untruthfully. "And it doesn't do to trifle with a revolver, you know. One can manage a dozen robbers. . . ."

It had become quite dark. The cart suddenly began creaking, squeaking, shaking, and, as though unwillingly, turned sharply to the left.

"Where is he taking me to?" the surveyor wondered. "He has been driving straight and now all at once to the left. I shouldn't wonder if he'll take me, the rascal, to some den of thieves . . . and. . . . Things like that do happen."

"I say," he said, addressing the driver, "so you tell me it's not dangerous here? That's a pity. . . . I like a fight with robbers. . . . I am thin and sickly-looking, but I have the strength of a bull. . . . Once three robbers attacked me and what do you think? I gave one such a dressing that. . . . that he gave up his soul to God, you understand, and the other two were sent to penal servitude in Siberia. And where I got the strength I can't say. . . . One grips a strapping fellow of your sort with one hand and. . . . wipes him out."

Klim looked round at the surveyor, wrinkled up his whole face, and lashed his horse.

"Yes. . . ." the surveyor went on. "God forbid anyone should tackle me. The robber would have his bones broken, and, what's more, he would have to answer for it in

the police court too.... I know all the judges and the police captains, I am a man in the Government, a man of importance. Here I am travelling and the authorities know ... they keep a regular watch over me to see no one does me a mischief. There are policemen and village constables stuck behind bushes all along the road. .... Sto .... sto .... stop!" the surveyor bawled suddenly. "Where have you got to? Where are you taking me to?"

"Why, don't you see? It's a forest!"

"It certainly is a forest," thought the surveyor. "I was frightened! But it won't do to betray my feelings.... He has noticed already that I am in a funk. Why is it he has taken to looking round at me so often? He is plotting something for certain.... At first he drove like a snail and now how he is dashing along!"

"I say, Klim, why are you making the horse go like that?"

"I am not making her go. She is racing along of herself.... Once she gets into a run there is no means of stopping her. It's no pleasure to her that her legs are like that."

"You are lying, my man, I see that you are lying. Only I advise you not to drive so fast. Hold your horse in a bit.... Do you hear? Hold her in!"

"What for?"

"Why ... why, because four comrades were to drive after me from the station. We must let them catch us up.... They promised to overtake us in this forest. It will be more cheerful in their company.... They are a strong, sturdy set of fellows.... And each of them has got a pistol. Why do you keep looking round and fidgeting as though you were sitting on thorns? eh? I, my good fellow, er ... my good fellow ... there is no need to look around at me ... there is nothing interesting about me.... Except perhaps the revolvers. Well, if you like I will take them out and show you...."

The surveyor made a pretence of feeling in his pockets and at that moment something happened which he could not have expected with all his cowardice. Klim suddenly rolled off the cart and ran as fast as he could go into the forest.

"Help!" he roared. "Help! Take the horse and the cart, you devil, only don't take my life. Help!"

There was the sound of footsteps hurriedly retreating, of twigs snapping -- and all was still.... The surveyor had not expected such a dénouement. He first stopped the horse and then settled himself more comfortably in the cart and fell to thinking.

"He has run off ... he was scared, the fool. Well, what's to be done now? I can't go on alone because I don't know the way; besides they may think I have stolen his horse. . . What's to be done?"

"Klim! Klim," he cried.

"Klim," answered the echo.

At the thought that he would have to sit through the whole night in the cold and dark forest and hear nothing but the wolves, the echo, and the snorting of the scraggy mare, the surveyor began to have twinges down his spine as though it were being rasped with a cold file.

"Klimushka," he shouted. "Dear fellow! Where are you, Klimushka?"

For two hours the surveyor shouted, and it was only after he was quite husky and had resigned himself to spending the night in the forest that a faint breeze wafted the sound of a moan to him.

"Klim, is it you, dear fellow? Let us go on."

"You'll mu-ur-der me!"

"But I was joking, my dear man! I swear to God I was joking! As though I had revolvers! I told a lie because I was frightened. For goodness sake let us go on, I am freezing!"

Klim, probably reflecting that a real robber would have vanished long ago with the horse and cart, came out of the forest and went hesitatingly up to his passenger.

"Well, what were you frightened of, stupid? I . . . I was joking and you were frightened. Get in!"

"God be with you, sir," Klim muttered as he clambered into the cart, "if I had known I wouldn't have taken you for a hundred roubles. I almost died of fright. . . ."

Klim lashed at the little mare. The cart swayed. Klim lashed once more and the cart gave a lurch. After the fourth stroke of the whip when the cart moved forward, the surveyor hid his ears in his collar and sank into thought.

The road and Klim no longer seemed dangerous to him.

# Rothschild's Fiddle

Anton Chekhov

THE town was a little one, worse than a village, and it was inhabited by scarcely any but old people who died with an infrequency that was really annoying. In the hospital and in the prison fortress very few coffins were needed. In fact business was bad. If Yakov Ivanov had been an undertaker in the chief town of the province he would certainly have had a house of his own, and people would have addressed him as Yakov Matveyitch; here in this wretched little town people called him simply Yakov; his nickname in the street was for some reason Bronze, and he lived in a poor way like a humble peasant, in a little old hut in which there was only one room, and in this room he and Marfa, the stove, a double bed, the coffins, his bench, and all their belongings were crowded together.

Yakov made good, solid coffins. For peasants and working people he made them to fit himself, and this was never unsuccessful, for there were none taller and stronger than he, even in the prison, though he was seventy. For gentry and for women he made them to measure, and used an iron foot-rule for the purpose. He was very unwilling to take orders for children's coffins, and made them straight off without measurements, contemptuously, and when he was paid for the work he always said:

"I must confess I don't like trumpery jobs."

Apart from his trade, playing the fiddle brought him in a small income.

The Jews' orchestra conducted by Moisey Ilyitch Shahkes, the tinsmith, who took more than half their receipts for himself, played as a rule at weddings in the town. As Yakov played very well on the fiddle, especially Russian songs, Shahkes sometimes invited him to join the orchestra at a fee of half a rouble a day, in addition to tips from the visitors. When Bronze sat in the orchestra first of all his face became crimson and perspiring; it was hot, there was a suffocating smell of garlic, the fiddle squeaked, the double bass wheezed close to his right ear, while the flute wailed at his left, played by a gaunt, red-haired Jew who had a perfect network of red and blue veins all over his face, and who bore the name of the famous millionaire Rothschild. And this accursed Jew contrived to play even the liveliest things plaintively. For no apparent reason Yakov little by little became possessed by hatred and contempt for the Jews, and especially for Rothschild; he began to pick quarrels with him, rail at him in unseemly language and once even tried to strike him, and Rothschild was offended and said, looking at him ferociously:

"If it were not that I respect you for your talent, I would have sent you flying out of the window."

Then he began to weep. And because of this Yakov was not often asked to play in the orchestra; he was only sent for in case of extreme necessity in the absence of one of the Jews.

Yakov was never in a good temper, as he was continually having to put up with terrible losses. For instance, it was a sin to work on Sundays or Saints' days, and Monday was an

unlucky day, so that in the course of the year there were some two hundred days on which, whether he liked it or not, he had to sit with his hands folded. And only think, what a loss that meant. If anyone in the town had a wedding without music, or if Shahkes did not send for Yakov, that was a loss, too. The superintendent of the prison was ill for two years and was wasting away, and Yakov was impatiently waiting for him to die, but the superintendent went away to the chief town of the province to be doctored, and there took and died. There's a loss for you, ten roubles at least, as there would have been an expensive coffin to make, lined with brocade. The thought of his losses haunted Yakov, especially at night; he laid his fiddle on the bed beside him, and when all sorts of nonsensical ideas came into his mind he touched a string; the fiddle gave out a sound in the darkness, and he felt better.

On the sixth of May of the previous year Marfa had suddenly been taken ill. The old woman's breathing was laboured, she drank a great deal of water, and she staggered as she walked, yet she lighted the stove in the morning and even went herself to get water. Towards evening she lay down. Yakov played his fiddle all day; when it was quite dark he took the book in which he used every day to put down his losses, and, feeling dull, he began adding up the total for the year. It came to more than a thousand roubles. This so agitated him that he flung the reckoning beads down, and trampled them under his feet. Then he picked up the reckoning beads, and again spent a long time clicking with them and heaving deep, strained sighs. His face was crimson and wet with perspiration. He thought that if he had put that lost thousand roubles in the bank, the interest for a year would have been at least forty roubles, so that forty roubles was a loss too. In fact, wherever one turned there were losses and nothing else.

"Yakov!" Marfa called unexpectedly. "I am dying."

He looked round at his wife. Her face was rosy with fever, unusually bright and joyful-looking. Bronze, accustomed to seeing her face always pale, timid, and unhappy-looking, was bewildered. It looked as if she really were dying and were glad that she was going away for ever from that hut, from the coffins, and from Yakov. . . . And she gazed at the ceiling and moved her lips, and her expression was one of happiness, as though she saw death as her deliverer and were whispering with him.

It was daybreak; from the windows one could see the flush of dawn. Looking at the old woman, Yakov for some reason reflected that he had not once in his life been affectionate to her, had had no feeling for her, had never once thought to buy her a kerchief, or to bring her home some dainty from a wedding, but had done nothing but shout at her, scold her for his losses, shake his fists at her; it is true he had never actually beaten her, but he had frightened her, and at such times she had always been numb with terror. Why, he had forbidden her to drink tea because they spent too much without that, and she drank only hot water. And he understood why she had such a strange, joyful face now, and he was overcome with dread.

As soon as it was morning he borrowed a horse from a neighbour and took Marfa to the hospital. There were not many patients there, and so he had not long to wait, only three hours. To his great satisfaction the patients were not being received by the doctor, who was himself ill, but by the assistant, Maxim Nikolaitch, an old man of whom everyone in the town used to say that, though he drank and was quarrelsome, he knew more than the doctor.

"I wish you good-day," said Yakov, leading his old woman into the consulting room. "You must excuse us, Maxim Nikolaitch, we are always troubling you with our trumpery affairs. Here you see my better half is ailing, the partner of my life, as they say, excuse the expression. . . ."

Knitting his grizzled brows and stroking his whiskers the assistant began to examine the old woman, and she sat on a stool, a wasted, bent figure with a sharp nose and open mouth, looking like a bird that wants to drink.

"H-----m . . . Ah! . . ." the assistant said slowly, and he heaved a sigh. "Influenza and possibly fever. There's typhus in the town now. Well, the old woman has lived her life, thank God. . . . How old is she?"

"She'll be seventy in another year, Maxim Nikolaitch."

"Well, the old woman has lived her life, it's time to say good-bye."

"You are quite right in what you say, of course, Maxim Nikolaitch," said Yakov, smiling from politeness, "and we thank you feelingly for your kindness, but allow me to say every insect wants to live."

"To be sure," said the assistant, in a tone which suggested that it depended upon him whether the woman lived or died. "Well, then, my good fellow, put a cold compress on her head, and give her these powders twice a day, and so good-bye. Bonjour."

From the expression of his face Yakov saw that it was a bad case, and that no sort of powders would be any help; it was clear to him that Marfa would die very soon, if not today, to-morrow. He nudged the assistant's elbow, winked at him, and said in a low voice:

"If you would just cup her, Maxim Nikolaitch."

"I have no time, I have no time, my good fellow. Take your old woman and go in God's name. Goodbye."

"Be so gracious," Yakov besought him. "You know yourself that if, let us say, it were her stomach or her inside that were bad, then powders or drops, but you see she had got a chill! In a chill the first thing is to let blood, Maxim Nikolaitch."

But the assistant had already sent for the next patient, and a peasant woman came into the consulting room with a boy.

"Go along! go along," he said to Yakov, frowning. "It's no use to --"

"In that case put on leeches, anyway! Make us pray for you for ever."

The assistant flew into a rage and shouted:

"You speak to me again! You blockhead. . . ."

Yakov flew into a rage too, and he turned crimson all over, but he did not utter a word. He took Marfa on his arm and led her out of the room. Only when they were sitting in the cart he looked morosely and ironically at the hospital, and said:

"A nice set of artists they have settled here! No fear, but he would have cupped a rich man, but even a leech he grudges to the poor. The Herods!"

When they got home and went into the hut, Marfa stood for ten minutes holding on to the stove. It seemed to her that if she were to lie down Yakov would talk to her about his losses, and scold her for lying down and not wanting to work. Yakov looked at her drearily and thought that to-morrow was St. John the Divine's, and next day St. Nikolay the Wonder-worker's, and the day after that was Sunday, and then Monday, an unlucky day. For four days he would not be able to work, and most likely Marfa would die on one of those days; so he would have to make the coffin to-day. He picked up his iron rule, went up to the old woman and took her measure. Then she lay down, and he crossed himself and began making the coffin.

When the coffin was finished Bronze put on his spectacles and wrote in his book: "Marfa Ivanov's coffin, two roubles, forty kopecks."

And he heaved a sigh. The old woman lay all the time silent with her eyes closed. But in the evening, when it got dark, she suddenly called the old man.

"Do you remember, Yakov," she asked, looking at him joyfully. "Do you remember fifty years ago God gave us a little baby with flaxen hair? We used always to be sitting by the river then, singing songs . . . under the willows," and laughing bitterly, she added: "The baby girl died."

Yakov racked his memory, but could not remember the baby or the willows.

"It's your fancy," he said.

The priest arrived; he administered the sacrament and extreme unction. Then Marfa began muttering something unintelligible, and towards morning she died. Old women, neighbours, washed her, dressed her, and laid her in the coffin. To avoid paying the sacristan, Yakov read the psalms over the body himself, and they got nothing out of him for the grave, as the grave-digger was a crony of his. Four peasants carried the coffin to the graveyard, not for money, but from respect. The coffin was followed by old women, beggars, and a couple of crazy saints, and the people who met it crossed themselves piously. . . . And Yakov was very much pleased that it was so creditable, so decorous, and so cheap, and no offence to anyone. As he took his last leave of Marfa he touched the coffin and thought: "A good piece of work!"

But as he was going back from the cemetery he was overcome by acute depression. He didn't feel quite well: his breathing was laboured and feverish, his legs felt weak, and he had a craving for drink. And thoughts of all sorts forced themselves on his mind. He remembered again that all his life he had never felt for Marfa, had never been affectionate

to her. The fifty-two years they had lived in the same hut had dragged on a long, long time, but it had somehow happened that in all that time he had never once thought of her, had paid no attention to her, as though she had been a cat or a dog. And yet, every day, she had lighted the stove had cooked and baked, had gone for the water, had chopped the wood, had slept with him in the same bed, and when he came home drunk from the weddings always reverently hung his fiddle on the wall and put him to bed, and all this in silence, with a timid, anxious expression.

Rothschild, smiling and bowing, came to meet Yakov.

"I was looking for you, uncle," he said. "Moisey Ilyitch sends you his greetings and bids you come to him at once."

Yakov felt in no mood for this. He wanted to cry.

"Leave me alone," he said, and walked on.

"How can you," Rothschild said, fluttered, running on in front. "Moisey Ilyitch will be offended! He bade you come at once!"

Yakov was revolted at the Jew's gasping for breath and blinking, and having so many red freckles on his face. And it was disgusting to look at his green coat with black patches on it, and all his fragile, refined figure.

"Why are you pestering me, garlic?" shouted Yakov. "Don't persist!"

The Jew got angry and shouted too:

"Not so noisy, please, or I'll send you flying over the fence!"

"Get out of my sight!" roared Yakov, and rushed at him with his fists. "One can't live for you scabby Jews!"

Rothschild, half dead with terror, crouched down and waved his hands over his head, as though to ward off a blow; then he leapt up and ran away as fast as his legs could carry him: as he ran he gave little skips and kept clasping his hands, and Yakov could see how his long thin spine wriggled. Some boys, delighted at the incident, ran after him shouting "Jew! Jew!" Some dogs joined in the chase barking. Someone burst into a roar of laughter, then gave a whistle; the dogs barked with even more noise and unanimity. Then a dog must have bitten Rothschild, as a desperate, sickly scream was heard.

Yakov went for a walk on the grazing ground, then wandered on at random in the outskirts of the town, while the street boys shouted:

"Here's Bronze! Here's Bronze!"

He came to the river, where the curlews floated in the air uttering shrill cries and the ducks quacked. The sun was blazing hot, and there was a glitter from the water, so that it hurt the eyes to look at it. Yakov walked by a path along the bank and saw a plump, rosy-cheeked

lady come out of the bathing-shed, and thought about her: "Ugh! you otter!"

Not far from the bathing-shed boys were catching crayfish with bits of meat; seeing him, they began shouting spitefully, "Bronze! Bronze!" And then he saw an old spreading willow-tree with a big hollow in it, and a crow's nest on it. . . . And suddenly there rose up vividly in Yakov's memory a baby with flaxen hair, and the willow-tree Marfa had spoken of. Why, that is it, the same willow-tree -- green, still, and sorrowful. . . . How old it has grown, poor thing!

He sat down under it and began to recall the past. On the other bank, where now there was the water meadow, in those days there stood a big birchwood, and yonder on the bare hillside that could be seen on the horizon an old, old pine forest used to be a bluish patch in the distance. Big boats used to sail on the river. But now it was all smooth and unruffled, and on the other bank there stood now only one birch-tree, youthful and slender like a young lady, and there was nothing on the river but ducks and geese, and it didn't look as though there had ever been boats on it. It seemed as though even the geese were fewer than of old. Yakov shut his eyes, and in his imagination huge flocks of white geese soared, meeting one another.

He wondered how it had happened that for the last forty or fifty years of his life he had never once been to the river, or if he had been by it he had not paid attention to it. Why, it was a decent sized river, not a trumpery one; he might have gone in for fishing and sold the fish to merchants, officials, and the bar-keeper at the station, and then have put money in the bank; he might have sailed in a boat from one house to another, playing the fiddle, and people of all classes would have paid to hear him; he might have tried getting big boats afloat again -- that would be better than making coffins; he might have bred geese, killed them and sent them in the winter to Moscow. Why, the feathers alone would very likely mount up to ten roubles in the year. But he had wasted his time, he had done nothing of this. What losses! Ah! What losses! And if he had gone in for all those things at once -- catching fish and playing the fiddle, and running boats and killing geese -- what a fortune he would have made! But nothing of this had happened, even in his dreams; life had passed uselessly without any pleasure, had been wasted for nothing, not even a pinch of snuff; there was nothing left in front, and if one looked back -- there was nothing there but losses, and such terrible ones, it made one cold all over. And why was it a man could not live so as to avoid these losses and misfortunes? One wondered why they had cut down the birch copse and the pine forest. Why was he walking with no reason on the grazing ground? Why do people always do what isn't needful? Why had Yakov all his life scolded, bellowed, shaken his fists, ill-treated his wife, and, one might ask, what necessity was there for him to frighten and insult the Jew that day? Why did people in general hinder each other from living? What losses were due to it! what terrible losses! If it were not for hatred and malice people would get immense benefit from one another.

In the evening and the night he had visions of the baby, of the willow, of fish, of slaughtered geese, and Marfa looking in profile like a bird that wants to drink, and the pale, pitiful face of Rothschild, and faces moved down from all sides and muttered of losses. He tossed from side to side, and got out of bed five times to play the fiddle.

In the morning he got up with an effort and went to the hospital. The same Maxim Nikolaitch told him to put a cold compress on his head, and gave him some powders, and

from his tone and expression of face Yakov realized that it was a bad case and that no powders would be any use. As he went home afterwards, he reflected that death would be nothing but a benefit; he would not have to eat or drink, or pay taxes or offend people, and, as a man lies in his grave not for one year but for hundreds and thousands, if one reckoned it up the gain would be enormous. A man's life meant loss: death meant gain. This reflection was, of course, a just one, but yet it was bitter and mortifying; why was the order of the world so strange, that life, which is given to man only once, passes away without benefit?

He was not sorry to die, but at home, as soon as he saw his fiddle, it sent a pang to his heart and he felt sorry. He could not take the fiddle with him to the grave, and now it would be left forlorn, and the same thing would happen to it as to the birch copse and the pine forest. Everything in this world was wasted and would be wasted! Yakov went out of the hut and sat in the doorway, pressing the fiddle to his bosom. Thinking of his wasted, profitless life, he began to play, he did not know what, but it was plaintive and touching, and tears trickled down his cheeks. And the harder he thought, the more mournfully the fiddle wailed.

The latch clicked once and again, and Rothschild appeared at the gate. He walked across half the yard boldly, but seeing Yakov he stopped short, and seemed to shrink together, and probably from terror, began making signs with his hands as though he wanted to show on his fingers what o'clock it was.

"Come along, it's all right," said Yakov in a friendly tone, and he beckoned him to come up.  
"Come along!"

Looking at him mistrustfully and apprehensively, Rothschild began to advance, and stopped seven feet off.

"Be so good as not to beat me," he said, ducking. "Moisey Ilyitch has sent me again. 'Don't be afraid,' he said; 'go to Yakov again and tell him,' he said, 'we can't get on without him.' There is a wedding on Wednesday. . . . Ye---es! Mr. Shapovalov is marrying his daughter to a good man. . . . And it will be a grand wedding, oo-oo!" added the Jew, screwing up one eye.

"I can't come," said Yakov, breathing hard. "I'm ill, brother."

And he began playing again, and the tears gushed from his eyes on to the fiddle. Rothschild listened attentively, standing sideways to him and folding his arms on his chest. The scared and perplexed expression on his face, little by little, changed to a look of woe and suffering; he rolled his eyes as though he were experiencing an agonizing ecstasy, and articulated, "Vachhh!" and tears slowly ran down his cheeks and trickled on his greenish coat.

And Yakov lay in bed all the rest of the day grieving. In the evening, when the priest confessing him asked, Did he remember any special sin he had committed? straining his failing memory he thought again of Marfa's unhappy face, and the despairing shriek of the Jew when the dog bit him, and said, hardly audibly, "Give the fiddle to Rothschild."

"Very well," answered the priest.

And now everyone in the town asks where Rothschild got such a fine fiddle. Did he buy it or steal it? Or perhaps it had come to him as a pledge. He gave up the flute long ago, and now plays nothing but the fiddle. As plaintive sounds flow now from his bow, as came once from his flute, but when he tries to repeat what Yakov played, sitting in the doorway, the effect is something so sad and sorrowful that his audience weep, and he himself rolls his eyes and articulates "Vachhh! . . ." And this new air was so much liked in the town that the merchants and officials used to be continually sending for Rothschild and making him play it over and over again a dozen times.

### Interpretive Questions for Rothschild's Fiddle

1. Why does Jacob think of life as a debit and death as a credit?
2. Why doesn't Jacob remember his daughter?
3. Why does Jacob think of his fiddle as an orphan?
4. Why does Jacob leave his fiddle to Rothschild?
5. Why is it made a mystery to the townspeople how Rothschild got his fiddle?

# The bishop

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Anton Chekhov



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THE evening service was being celebrated on the eve of Palm Sunday in the Old Petrovsky Convent. When they began distributing the palm it was close upon ten o'clock, the candles were burning dimly, the wicks wanted snuffing; it was all in a sort of mist. In the twilight of the church the crowd seemed heaving like the sea, and to Bishop Pyotr, who had been unwell for the last three days, it seemed that all the faces—old and young, men's and women's—were alike, that everyone who came up for the palm had the same expression in his eyes. In the mist he could not see the doors; the crowd kept moving and looked as though there were no end to it. The female choir was singing, a nun was reading the prayers for the day.

How stifling, how hot it was! How long the service went on! Bishop Pyotr was tired. His breathing was laboured and rapid, his throat was parched, his shoulders ached with weariness.

ness, his legs were trembling. And it disturbed him unpleasantly when a religious maniac uttered occasional shrieks in the gallery. And then all of a sudden, as though in a dream or delirium, it seemed to the bishop as though his own mother Marya Timofyevna, whom he had not seen for nine years, or some old woman just like his mother, came up to him out of the crowd, and, after taking a palm branch from him, walked away looking at him all the while good-humouredly with a kind, joyful smile until she was lost in the crowd. And for some reason tears flowed down his face. There was peace in his heart, everything was well, yet he kept gazing fixedly towards the left choir, where the prayers were being read, where in the dusk of evening you could not recognize anyone, and—wept. Tears glistened on his face and on his beard. Here someone close at hand was weeping, then someone else farther away, then others and still others, and little by little the church was filled with soft weeping. And a

little later, within five minutes, the nuns' choir was singing; no one was weeping and everything was as before.

Soon the service was over. When the bishop got into his carriage to drive home, the gay, melodious chime of the heavy, costly bells was filling the whole garden in the moonlight. The white walls, the white crosses on the tombs, the white birch-trees and black shadows, and the far-away moon in the sky exactly over the convent, seemed now living their own life, apart and incomprehensible, yet very near to man. It was the beginning of April, and after the warm spring day it turned cool; there was a faint touch of frost, and the breath of spring could be felt in the soft, chilly air. The road from the convent to the town was sandy, the horses had to go at a walking pace, and on both sides of the carriage in the brilliant, peaceful moonlight there were people trudging along home from church through the sand. And all was silent,

sunk in thought; everything around seemed kindly, youthful, akin, everything—trees and sky and even the moon, and one longed to think that so it would be always.

At last the carriage drove into the town and rumbled along the principal street. The shops were already shut, but at Erakin's, the millionaire shopkeeper's, they were trying the new electric lights, which flickered brightly, and a crowd of people were gathered round. Then came wide, dark, deserted streets, one after another; then the highroad, the open country, the fragrance of pines. And suddenly there rose up before the bishop's eyes a white turreted wall, and behind it a tall belfry in the full moonlight, and beside it five shining, golden cupolas: this was the Pankratievsky Monastery, in which Bishop Pyotr lived. And here, too, high above the monastery, was the silent, dreamy moon. The carriage drove in at the gate, crunching over the sand; here and there in

the moonlight there were glimpses of dark monastic figures, and there was the sound of footsteps on the flag-stones. . . .

"You know, your holiness, your mamma arrived while you were away," the lay brother informed the bishop as he went into his cell.

"My mother? When did she come?"

"Before the evening service. She asked first where you were and then she went to the convent."

"Then it was her I saw in the church, just now! Oh, Lord!"

And the bishop laughed with joy.

"She bade me tell your holiness," the lay brother went on, "that she would come tomorrow. She had a little girl with her—her grandchild, I suppose. They are staying at Ovsyannikov's inn."

"What time is it now?"

"A little after eleven."

"Oh, how vexing!"

The bishop sat for a little while in the parlour, hesitating, and as it were refusing to believe it was so late. His arms and legs were stiff, his head ached. He was hot and uncomfortable. After resting a little he went into his bedroom, and there, too, he sat a little, still thinking of his mother; he could hear the lay brother going away, and Father Sisoy coughing the other side of the wall. The monastery clock struck a quarter.

The bishop changed his clothes and began reading the prayers before sleep. He read attentively those old, long familiar prayers, and at the same time thought about his mother. She had nine children and about forty grandchildren. At one time, she had lived with her hus-

band, the deacon, in a poor village; she had lived there a very long time from the age of seventeen to sixty. The bishop remembered her from early childhood, almost from the age of three, and—how he had loved her! Sweet, precious childhood, always fondly remembered! Why did it, that long-past time that could never return, why did it seem brighter, fuller, and more festive than it had really been? When in his childhood or youth he had been ill, how tender and sympathetic his mother had been! And now his prayers mingled with the memories, which gleamed more and more brightly like a flame, and the prayers did not hinder his thinking of his mother.

When he had finished his prayers he undressed and lay down, and at once, as soon as it was dark, there rose before his mind his dead father, his mother, his native village Lesopolye . . . the creak of wheels, the bleat of sheep, the church bells on bright summer mornings, the

gypsies under the window—oh, how sweet to think of it! He remembered the priest of Lesopolye, Father Simeon—mild, gentle, kindly; he was a lean little man, while his son, a divinity student, was a huge fellow and talked in a roaring bass voice. The priest's son had flown into a rage with the cook and abused her: "Ah, you Jehud's ass!" and Father Simeon overhearing it, said not a word, and was only ashamed because he could not remember where such an ass was mentioned in the Bible. After him the priest at Lesopolye had been Father Demyan, who used to drink heavily, and at times drank till he saw green snakes, and was even nicknamed Demyan Snakeseer. The schoolmaster at Lesopolye was Matvey Nikolaitch, who had been a divinity student, a kind and intelligent man, but he, too, was a drunkard; he never beat the schoolchildren, but for some reason he always had hanging on his wall a bunch of birch-twigs, and below it an utterly meaningless inscription in Latin: "Betula kinderbalsamica se-

cuta." He had a shaggy black dog whom he called Syntax.

And his holiness laughed. Six miles from Lesopolye was the village Obnino with a wonder-working ikon. In the summer they used to carry the ikon in procession about the neighbouring villages and ring the bells the whole day long; first in one village and then in another, and it used to seem to the bishop then that joy was quivering in the air, and he (in those days his name was Pavlusha) used to follow the ikon, bareheaded and barefoot, with naïve faith, with a naïve smile, infinitely happy. In Obnino, he remembered now, there were always a lot of people, and the priest there, Father Alexey, to save time during mass, used to make his deaf nephew Ilarion read the names of those for whose health or whose souls' peace prayers were asked. Ilarion used to read them, now and then getting a five or ten kopeck piece for the service, and only when he was grey and bald,

when life was nearly over, he suddenly saw written on one of the pieces of paper: "What a fool you are, Ilarion." Up to fifteen at least Pavlusha was undeveloped and idle at his lessons, so much so that they thought of taking him away from the clerical school and putting him into a shop; one day, going to the post at Obnino for letters, he had stared a long time at the post-office clerks and asked: "Allow me to ask, how do you get your salary, every month or every day?"

His holiness crossed himself and turned over on the other side, trying to stop thinking and go to sleep.

"My mother has come," he remembered and laughed.

The moon peeped in at the window, the floor was lighted up, and there were shadows on it. A cricket was chirping. Through the wall Father Sisoy was snoring in the next room, and

his aged snore had a sound that suggested loneliness, forlornness, even vagrancy. Sisoy had once been housekeeper to the bishop of the diocese, and was called now "the former Father Housekeeper"; he was seventy years old, he lived in a monastery twelve miles from the town and stayed sometimes in the town, too. He had come to the Pankratievsky Monastery three days before, and the bishop had kept him that he might talk to him at his leisure about matters of business, about the arrangements here. . . .

At half-past one they began ringing for matins. Father Sisoy could be heard coughing, muttering something in a discontented voice, then he got up and walked barefoot about the rooms.

"Father Sisoy," the bishop called.

Sisoy went back to his room and a little later made his appearance in his boots, with a candle; he had on his cassock over his under-

clothes and on his head was an old faded skull-cap.

"I can't sleep," said the bishop, sitting up. "I must be unwell. And what it is I don't know. Fever!"

"You must have caught cold, your holiness. You must be rubbed with tallow." Sisoy stood a little and yawned. "O Lord, forgive me, a sinner."

"They had the electric lights on at Erakin's to-day," he said; "I don't like it!"

Father Sisoy was old, lean, bent, always dissatisfied with something, and his eyes were angry-looking and prominent as a crab's.

"I don't like it," he said, going away. "I don't like it. Bother it!"

Next day, Palm Sunday, the bishop took the service in the cathedral in the town, then he visited the bishop of the diocese, then visited a very sick old lady, the widow of a general, and at last drove home. Between one and two o'clock he had welcome visitors dining with him—his mother and his niece Katya, a child of eight years old. All dinner-time the spring sunshine was streaming in at the windows, throwing bright light on the white tablecloth and on Katya's red hair. Through the double windows they could hear the noise of the rooks and the notes of the starlings in the garden.

"It is nine years since we have met," said the old lady. "And when I looked at you in the monastery yesterday, good Lord! you've not changed a bit, except maybe you are thinner and your beard is a little longer. Holy Mother, Queen of Heaven! Yesterday at the evening service no one could help crying. I, too, as I looked at you,

suddenly began crying, though I couldn't say why. His Holy Will!"

And in spite of the affectionate tone in which she said this, he could see she was constrained as though she were uncertain whether to address him formally or familiarly, to laugh or not, and that she felt herself more a deacon's widow than his mother. And Katya gazed without blinking at her uncle, his holiness, as though trying to discover what sort of a person he was. Her hair sprang up from under the comb and the velvet ribbon and stood out like a halo; she had a turned-up nose and sly eyes. The child had broken a glass before sitting down to dinner, and now her grandmother, as she talked, moved away from Katya first a wineglass and then a tumbler. The bishop listened to his mother and remembered how many, many years ago she used to take him and his brothers and sisters to relations whom she considered rich; in those days she was

taken up with the care of her children, now with her grandchildren, and she had brought Katya. . . .

"Your sister, Varenka, has four children," she told him; "Katya, here, is the eldest. And your brother-in-law Father Ivan fell sick, God knows of what, and died three days before the Assumption; and my poor Varenka is left a beggar."

"And how is Nikanor getting on?" the bishop asked about his eldest brother.

"He is all right, thank God. Though he has nothing much, yet he can live. Only there is one thing: his son, my grandson Nikolasha, did not want to go into the Church; he has gone to the university to be a doctor. He thinks it is better; but who knows! His Holy Will!"

"Nikolasha cuts up dead people," said Katya, spilling water over her knees.

"Sit still, child," her grandmother observed calmly, and took the glass out of her hand. "Say a prayer, and go on eating."

"How long it is since we have seen each other!" said the bishop, and he tenderly stroked his mother's hand and shoulder; "and I missed you abroad, mother, I missed you dreadfully."

"Thank you."

"I used to sit in the evenings at the open window, lonely and alone; often there was music playing, and all at once I used to be overcome with homesickness and felt as though I would give everything only to be at home and see you."

His mother smiled, beamed, but at once she made a grave face and said:

"Thank you."

His mood suddenly changed. He looked at his mother and could not understand how she had come by that respectfulness, that timid expression of face: what was it for? And he did not recognize her. He felt sad and vexed. And then his head ached just as it had the day before; his legs felt fearfully tired, and the fish seemed to him stale and tasteless; he felt thirsty all the time. . . .

After dinner two rich ladies, landowners, arrived and sat for an hour and a half in silence with rigid countenances; the archimandrite, a silent, rather deaf man, came to see him about business. Then they began ringing for vespers; the sun was setting behind the wood and the day was over. When he returned from church, he hurriedly said his prayers, got into bed, and wrapped himself up as warm as possible.

It was disagreeable to remember the fish he had eaten at dinner. The moonlight worried him, and then he heard talking. In an adjoining

room, probably in the parlour, Father Sisoy was talking politics:

"There's war among the Japanese now. They are fighting. The Japanese, my good soul, are the same as the Montenegrins; they are the same race. They were under the Turkish yoke together."

And then he heard the voice of Marya Timofyevna:

"So, having said our prayers and drunk tea, we went, you know, to Father Yegor at Novokatnoye, so . . ."

And she kept on saying, "having had tea" or "having drunk tea," and it seemed as though the only thing she had done in her life was to drink tea.

The bishop slowly, languidly, recalled the seminary, the academy. For three years he had

been Greek teacher in the seminary: by that time he could not read without spectacles. Then he had become a monk; he had been made a school inspector. Then he had defended his thesis for his degree. When he was thirty-two he had been made rector of the seminary, and consecrated archimandrite: and then his life had been so easy, so pleasant; it seemed so long, so long, no end was in sight. Then he had begun to be ill, had grown very thin and almost blind, and by the advice of the doctors had to give up everything and go abroad.

"And what then?" asked Sisoy in the next room.

"Then we drank tea . . ." answered Marya Timofyevna.

"Good gracious, you've got a green beard," said Katya suddenly in surprise, and she laughed.

The bishop remembered that the grey-headed Father Sisoy's beard really had a shade of green in it, and he laughed.

"God have mercy upon us, what we have to put up with with this girl!" said Sisoy, aloud, getting angry. "Spoilt child! Sit quiet!"

The bishop remembered the perfectly new white church in which he had conducted the services while living abroad, he remembered the sound of the warm sea. In his flat he had five lofty light rooms; in his study he had a new writing-table, lots of books. He had read a great deal and often written. And he remembered how he had pined for his native land, how a blind beggar woman had played the guitar under his window every day and sung of love, and how, as he listened, he had always for some reason thought of the past. But eight years had passed and he had been called back to Russia, and now he was a suffragan bishop,

and all the past had retreated far away into the mist as though it were a dream. . . .

Father Sisoy came into the bedroom with a candle.

"I say!" he said, wondering, "are you asleep already, your holiness?"

"What is it?"

"Why, it's still early, ten o'clock or less. I bought a candle to-day; I wanted to rub you with tallow."

"I am in a fever . . ." said the bishop, and he sat up. "I really ought to have something. My head is bad. . . ."

Sisoy took off the bishop's shirt and began rubbing his chest and back with tallow.

"That's the way . . . that's the way . . ." he said.  
"Lord Jesus Christ . . . that's the way. I walked

to the town to-day; I was at what's-his-name's—the chief priest Sidonsky's. . . . I had tea with him. I don't like him. Lord Jesus Christ. . . . That's the way. I don't like him."

### III

The bishop of the diocese, a very fat old man, was ill with rheumatism or gout, and had been in bed for over a month. Bishop Pyotr went to see him almost every day, and saw all who came to ask his help. And now that he was unwell he was struck by the emptiness, the triviality of everything which they asked and for which they wept; he was vexed at their ignorance, their timidity; and all this useless, petty business oppressed him by the mass of it, and it seemed to him that now he understood the diocesan bishop, who had once in his young days written on "The Doctrines of the Freedom of the Will," and now seemed to be all lost in trivialities, to have forgotten everything, and to have

no thoughts of religion. The bishop must have lost touch with Russian life while he was abroad; he did not find it easy; the peasants seemed to him coarse, the women who sought his help dull and stupid, the seminarists and their teachers uncultivated and at times savage. And the documents coming in and going out were reckoned by tens of thousands; and what documents they were! The higher clergy in the whole diocese gave the priests, young and old, and even their wives and children, marks for their behaviour—a five, a four, and sometimes even a three; and about this he had to talk and to read and write serious reports. And there was positively not one minute to spare; his soul was troubled all day long, and the bishop was only at peace when he was in church.

He could not get used, either, to the awe which, through no wish of his own, he inspired in people in spite of his quiet, modest disposition. All the people in the province seemed to him

little, scared, and guilty when he looked at them. Everyone was timid in his presence, even the old chief priests; everyone "flopped" at his feet, and not long previously an old lady, a village priest's wife who had come to consult him, was so overcome by awe that she could not utter a single word, and went empty away. And he, who could never in his sermons bring himself to speak ill of people, never reproached anyone because he was so sorry for them, was moved to fury with the people who came to consult him, lost his temper and flung their petitions on the floor. The whole time he had been here, not one person had spoken to him genuinely, simply, as to a human being; even his old mother seemed now not the same! And why, he wondered, did she chatter away to Sisoy and laugh so much; while with him, her son, she was grave and usually silent and constrained, which did not suit her at all. The only person who behaved freely with him and said what he meant was old Sisoy, who had spent

his whole life in the presence of bishops and had outlived eleven of them. And so the bishop was at ease with him, although, of course, he was a tedious and nonsensical man.

After the service on Tuesday, his holiness Pyotr was in the diocesan bishop's house receiving petitions there; he got excited and angry, and then drove home. He was as unwell as before; he longed to be in bed, but he had hardly reached home when he was informed that a young merchant called Erakin, who subscribed liberally to charities, had come to see him about a very important matter. The bishop had to see him. Erakin stayed about an hour, talked very loud, almost shouted, and it was difficult to understand what he said.

"God grant it may," he said as he went away.  
"Most essential!  
According to circumstances, your holiness! I trust it may!"

After him came the Mother Superior from a distant convent. And when she had gone they began ringing for vespers. He had to go to church.

In the evening the monks sang harmoniously, with inspiration. A young priest with a black beard conducted the service; and the bishop, hearing of the Bridegroom who comes at midnight and of the Heavenly Mansion adorned for the festival, felt no repentance for his sins, no tribulation, but peace at heart and tranquillity. And he was carried back in thought to the distant past, to his childhood and youth, when, too, they used to sing of the Bridegroom and of the Heavenly Mansion; and now that past rose up before him—living, fair, and joyful as in all likelihood it never had been. And perhaps in the other world, in the life to come, we shall think of the distant past, of our life here, with the same feeling. Who knows? The bishop was sitting near the altar. It was dark; tears flowed

down his face. He thought that here he had attained everything a man in his position could attain; he had faith and yet everything was not clear, something was lacking still. He did not want to die; and he still felt that he had missed what was most important, something of which he had dimly dreamed in the past; and he was troubled by the same hopes for the future as he had felt in childhood, at the academy and abroad.

"How well they sing to-day!" he thought, listening to the singing.  
"How nice it is!"

## IV

On Thursday he celebrated mass in the cathedral; it was the Washing of Feet. When the service was over and the people were going home, it was sunny, warm; the water gurgled in the gutters, and the unceasing trilling of the larks, tender, telling of peace, rose from the fields

outside the town. The trees were already awakening and smiling a welcome, while above them the infinite, fathomless blue sky stretched into the distance, God knows whither.

On reaching home his holiness drank some tea, then changed his clothes, lay down on his bed, and told the lay brother to close the shutters on the windows. The bedroom was darkened. But what weariness, what pain in his legs and his back, a chill heavy pain, what a noise in his ears! He had not slept for a long time—for a very long time, as it seemed to him now, and some trifling detail which haunted his brain as soon as his eyes were closed prevented him from sleeping. As on the day before, sounds reached him from the adjoining rooms through the walls, voices, the jingle of glasses and teaspoons. . . . Marya Timofyevna was gaily telling Father Sisoy some story with quaint turns of speech, while the latter answered in a grumpy, ill-humoured voice: "Bother them! Not likely!"

What next!" And the bishop again felt vexed and then hurt that with other people his old mother behaved in a simple, ordinary way, while with him, her son, she was shy, spoke little, and did not say what she meant, and even, as he fancied, had during all those three days kept trying in his presence to find an excuse for standing up, because she was embarrassed at sitting before him. And his father? He, too, probably, if he had been living, would not have been able to utter a word in the bishop's presence. . . .

Something fell down on the floor in the adjoining room and was broken; Katya must have dropped a cup or a saucer, for Father Sisoy suddenly spat and said angrily:

"What a regular nuisance the child is! Lord forgive my transgressions! One can't provide enough for her."

Then all was quiet, the only sounds came from outside. And when the bishop opened his eyes he saw Katya in his room, standing motionless, staring at him. Her red hair, as usual, stood up from under the comb like a halo.

"Is that you, Katya?" he asked. "Who is it downstairs who keeps opening and shutting a door?"

"I don't hear it," answered Katya; and she listened.

"There, someone has just passed by."

"But that was a noise in your stomach, uncle."

He laughed and stroked her on the head.

"So you say Cousin Nikolasha cuts up dead people?" he asked after a pause.

"Yes, he is studying."

"And is he kind?"

"Oh, yes, he's kind. But he drinks vodka awfully."

"And what was it your father died of?"

"Papa was weak and very, very thin, and all at once his throat was bad. I was ill then, too, and brother Fedya; we all had bad throats. Papa died, uncle, and we got well."

Her chin began quivering, and tears gleamed in her eyes and trickled down her cheeks.

"Your holiness," she said in a shrill voice, by now weeping bitterly, "uncle, mother and all of us are left very wretched. . . . Give us a little money . . . do be kind . . . uncle darling. . . ."

He, too, was moved to tears, and for a long time was too much touched to speak. Then he stroked her on the head, patted her on the shoulder and said:

"Very good, very good, my child. When the holy Easter comes, we will talk it over. . . . I will help you. . . . I will help you. . . ."

His mother came in quietly, timidly, and prayed before the ikon. Noticing that he was not sleeping, she said:

"Won't you have a drop of soup?"

"No, thank you," he answered, "I am not hungry."

"You seem to be unwell, now I look at you. I should think so; you may well be ill! The whole day on your legs, the whole day. . . . And, my goodness, it makes one's heart ache even to look at you! Well, Easter is not far off; you will rest then, please God. Then we will have a talk, too, but now I'm not going to disturb you with my chatter. Come along, Katya; let his holiness sleep a little."

And he remembered how once very long ago, when he was a boy, she had spoken exactly like that, in the same jestingly respectful tone, with a Church dignitary. . . . Only from her extraordinarily kind eyes and the timid, anxious glance she stole at him as she went out of the room could one have guessed that this was his mother. He shut his eyes and seemed to sleep, but twice heard the clock strike and Father Sisoy coughing the other side of the wall. And once more his mother came in and looked timidly at him for a minute. Someone drove up to the steps, as he could hear, in a coach or in a chaise. Suddenly a knock, the door slammed, the lay brother came into the bedroom.

"Your holiness," he called.

"Well?"

"The horses are here; it's time for the evening service."

"What o'clock is it?"

"A quarter past seven."

He dressed and drove to the cathedral. During all the "Twelve Gospels" he had to stand in the middle of the church without moving, and the first gospel, the longest and the most beautiful, he read himself. A mood of confidence and courage came over him. That first gospel, "Now is the Son of Man glorified," he knew by heart; and as he read he raised his eyes from time to time, and saw on both sides a perfect sea of lights and heard the splutter of candles, but, as in past years, he could not see the people, and it seemed as though these were all the same people as had been round him in those days, in his childhood and his youth; that they would always be the same every year and till such time as God only knew.

His father had been a deacon, his grandfather a priest, his great-grandfather a deacon, and his

whole family, perhaps from the days when Christianity had been accepted in Russia, had belonged to the priesthood; and his love for the Church services, for the priesthood, for the peal of the bells, was deep in him, ineradicable, innate. In church, particularly when he took part in the service, he felt vigorous, of good cheer, happy. So it was now. Only when the eighth gospel had been read, he felt that his voice had grown weak, even his cough was inaudible. His head had begun to ache intensely, and he was troubled by a fear that he might fall down. And his legs were indeed quite numb, so that by degrees he ceased to feel them and could not understand how or on what he was standing, and why he did not fall. . . .

It was a quarter to twelve when the service was over. When he reached home, the bishop undressed and went to bed at once without even saying his prayers. He could not speak and felt that he could not have stood up. When he had

covered his head with the quilt he felt a sudden longing to be abroad, an insufferable longing! He felt that he would give his life not to see those pitiful cheap shutters, those low ceilings, not to smell that heavy monastery smell. If only there were one person to whom he could have talked, have opened his heart!

For a long while he heard footsteps in the next room and could not tell whose they were. At last the door opened, and Sisoy came in with a candle and a tea-cup in his hand.

"You are in bed already, your holiness?" he asked. "Here I have come to rub you with spirit and vinegar. A thorough rubbing does a great deal of good. Lord Jesus Christ! . . . That's the way . . . that's the way. . . . I've just been in our monastery. . . . I don't like it. I'm going away from here to-morrow, your holiness; I don't want to stay longer. Lord Jesus Christ. . . . That's the way. . . ."

Sisoy could never stay long in the same place, and he felt as though he had been a whole year in the Pankratievsky Monastery. Above all, listening to him it was difficult to understand where his home was, whether he cared for anyone or anything, whether he believed in God. . . . He did not know himself why he was a monk, and, indeed, he did not think about it, and the time when he had become a monk had long passed out of his memory; it seemed as though he had been born a monk.

"I'm going away to-morrow; God be with them all."

"I should like to talk to you. . . . I can't find the time," said the bishop softly with an effort. "I don't know anything or anybody here. . . ."

"I'll stay till Sunday if you like; so be it, but I don't want to stay longer. I am sick of them!"

"I ought not to be a bishop," said the bishop softly. "I ought to have been a village priest, a deacon . . . or simply a monk. . . . All this oppresses me . . . oppresses me."

"What? Lord Jesus Christ. . . . That's the way. Come, sleep well, your holiness! . . . What's the good of talking? It's no use. Good-night!"

The bishop did not sleep all night. And at eight o'clock in the morning he began to have hemorrhage from the bowels. The lay brother was alarmed, and ran first to the archimandrite, then for the monastery doctor, Ivan Andreyitch, who lived in the town. The doctor, a stout old man with a long grey beard, made a prolonged examination of the bishop, and kept shaking his head and frowning, then said:

"Do you know, your holiness, you have got typhoid?"

After an hour or so of hemorrhage the bishop looked much thinner, paler, and wasted; his face looked wrinkled, his eyes looked bigger, and he seemed older, shorter, and it seemed to him that he was thinner, weaker, more insignificant than any one, that everything that had been had retreated far, far away and would never go on again or be repeated.

"How good," he thought, "how good!"

His old mother came. Seeing his wrinkled face and his big eyes, she was frightened, she fell on her knees by the bed and began kissing his face, his shoulders, his hands. And to her, too, it seemed that he was thinner, weaker, and more insignificant than anyone, and now she forgot that he was a bishop, and kissed him as though he were a child very near and very dear to her.

"Pavlusha, darling," she said; "my own, my darling son! . . . Why are you like this? Pavlusha, answer me!"

Katya, pale and severe, stood beside her, unable to understand what was the matter with her uncle, why there was such a look of suffering on her grandmother's face, why she was saying such sad and touching things. By now he could not utter a word, he could understand nothing, and he imagined he was a simple ordinary man, that he was walking quickly, cheerfully through the fields, tapping with his stick, while above him was the open sky bathed in sunshine, and that he was free now as a bird and could go where he liked!

"Pavlusha, my darling son, answer me," the old woman was saying.  
"What is it? My own!"

"Don't disturb his holiness," Sisoy said angrily, walking about the room. "Let him sleep . . . what's the use . . . it's no good. . . ."

Three doctors arrived, consulted together, and went away again. The day was long, incredibly

long, then the night came on and passed slowly, slowly, and towards morning on Saturday the lay brother went in to the old mother who was lying on the sofa in the parlour, and asked her to go into the bedroom: the bishop had just breathed his last.

Next day was Easter Sunday. There were forty-two churches and six monasteries in the town; the sonorous, joyful clang of the bells hung over the town from morning till night unceasingly, setting the spring air aquiver; the birds were singing, the sun was shining brightly. The big market square was noisy, swings were going, barrel organs were playing, accordions were squeaking, drunken voices were shouting. After midday people began driving up and down the principal street.

In short, all was merriment, everything was satisfactory, just as it had been the year before, and as it will be in all likelihood next year.

A month later a new suffragan bishop was appointed, and no one thought anything more of Bishop Pyotr, and afterwards he was completely forgotten. And only the dead man's old mother, who is living to-day with her son-in-law the deacon in a remote little district town, when she goes out at night to bring her cow in and meets other women at the pasture, begins talking of her children and her grandchildren, and says that she had a son a bishop, and this she says timidly, afraid that she may not be believed. . . .

And, indeed, there are some who do not believe her.

**THE PROPOSAL** by Anton Chekov

Adaptation by Brian Molloy based on the translation by Julius West (circa 1889)

**STEPAN STEPANOVITCH CHUBUKOV**, a landowner  
**NATALYA STEPANOVNA**, his daughter, twenty-five years old  
**IVAN VASSILEVITCH LOMOV**, a neighbour of **Chubukov**.

Setting: A drawing-room in **CHUBUKOV'S** house.

(**LOMOV** enters, wearing a dress-jacket and white gloves.)

**CHUBUKOV**. My dear Ivan Vassilevitch! I am extremely glad to see you here!  
(**Squeezes his hand**) Now this is a surprise, dear boy... How are you and so on and all that?

**LOMOV**. I'm well thank you. (**Pause**) And how are you getting on?

**CHUBUKOV**. We're just getting by somehow, thanks to your prayers, and so on. Sit down, please do.... Now, you know, you shouldn't forget all about your dear neighbours. But why are you so formal? What's the occasion? Why the evening dress, gloves, and so on and all that. Are you going somewhere?

**LOMOV**. No, I've come only to see you, honoured Stepan Stepanovitch.

**CHUBUKOV**. Then why are you in evening dress, my boy? It's as if you're celebrating New Year's Eve !

**LOMOV**. Well, you see, it's like this. I'm sorry to trouble you .... I've come to you, honoured Stepan Stepanovitch...with a request. It's not the first time I have had the privilege of coming to you for help, and you have always...., so to speak... I beg your pardon, I am *very* nervous. If you don't mind I'll drink some water, honoured Stepan Stepanovitch. (**Drinks**.)

**CHUBUKOV**. (**Aside**) If he's come to borrow money, he'll be sorely disappointed!  
(**Aloud**) What is it, my dear friend?

**LOMOV**. You see, Honour Stepanitch... I mean, Stepan Honouritch...pardon me, I'm shaking with nerves, as you can see.... In short, you alone can help me, though I don't deserve it, of course... and I haven't any right to expect your assistance....

**CHUBUKOV**. Oh, don't beat around the bush boy! Spit it out and so on! Well?

**LOMOV**. One minute! (**Inhales deeply**) The fact is.... I've come to ask for the hand of your daughter, Natalya Stepanovna, in marriage.

**CHUBUKOV.** Oh dear God in heaven! Ivan Vassilevitch! Such joy! ... Can you say that again I'm not sure I heard all that and so on?

**LOMOV.** I have the honour to ask...

**CHUBUKOV.** Oh my dear boy... I'm so glad, and so on.... Yes, indeed, and all that sort of thing. (**Embraces and kisses LOMOV**) I've been hoping for this for a long time. You have always been like a son to me. God bless you both and so on and all that. Look at me, I'm babbling like an idiot! Such happiness! (**Squeezes Lomov's cheeks**)! Oh, you rascal! ... I'll go and call Natasha, and all that.

**LOMOV.** (**Greatly moved**) Honoured Stepan Stepanovitch, do you think I may count on her consent?

**CHUBUKOV.** Why, of course she'll consent! She's in love... she's like a cat in heat.. ..and so on.... I won't be long! (**Exits.**)

**LOMOV.** It's cold... I'm trembling all over.... I must resolve myself. I need steely determination. If I hesitate, I'm finished. If I take time to look for an ideal wife, or for real love, then I'll never get married.... (**Shivers**)... It's so cold! Natalya Stepanovna is an excellent housekeeper. She's not bad-looking... and she went to school! .... What more do I want? Oh I'm getting that ringing in my ears again!. (**Drinks**) In any event, I need to marry. It's a simple as that. I'm already 35— I ought to lead a quiet and regular life with no upsets. I'm suffering from palpitations, I'm far too excitable. At this very moment my lips are trembling, and I'm getting that twitch in my right eyebrow....again! But the worst thing of all is... sleep... or the lack of it! As soon as my head hits the pillow, something in my left side—gives a pull, (**makes a stretching sound**) and I can feel it in my shoulder and head.... I jump up like a lunatic, walk about a bit, and lie down again, but as soon as I begin to get off to sleep, it happens again(**stretching sound**) there's another pull! And this may happen twenty times....

[**NATALYA STEPANOVNA** comes in.]

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Well, hello there! It's only you! Papa said, "Go inside there's a merchant come by to collect his goods." How have you been, Ivan Vassilevitch?

**LOMOV.** I've been well, honoured Natalya Stepanovna. (**He stands and bows**)

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** You must excuse my apron ... we're shelling peas for drying. Why haven't you been here for such a long time? Please sit down. (**They sit**) Won't you have some lunch?

**LOMOV.** No, thank you, I've had some already.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Please smoke if you like. The weather is glorious now, but yesterday it was so wet that the field hands couldn't do anything all day. How much

hay have you stacked? Actually, I got a bit enthusiastic today and had a whole field cut, and now I'm regretting it because I'm afraid the hay may rot. Should I have waited a bit? Yes, I ought to have waited a bit. But look at you! Why, you're in evening dress! Well you do look nice! Are you going to a party or something? Tell me!

**LOMOV.** (**Excited**) You see, honoured Natalya Stepanovna... the fact is, I've come here to see if you would....to ask you to .... hear me out.... Of course you'll be surprised and perhaps even a bit angry, but I... (**Aside**) It's really cold!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** What's the matter? (**Pause**) Well?

**LOMOV.** I shall try to be brief. You must know, honoured Natalya Stepanovna, that I have long, since my childhood, in fact, had the privilege of knowing your family. My late aunt and her husband, from whom, as you know, I inherited my land, always had the greatest respect for your father and your late mother. The Lomovs and the Chubukovs have always had the friendliest, and I might almost say the most affectionate, regard for each other. We are close neighbours. Of course you already know this! My land boarders yours! My Oxen Meadows touch your birchwoods and....

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** One moment, please forgive the interruption, but you said, "My Oxen Meadows...." But are they yours?

**LOMOV.** Yes, they are mine.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** (**Laughing**) What are you talking about? Oxen Meadows are ours, not yours!

**LOMOV.** No mine, honoured Natalya Stepanovna.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Well, I never knew that before. How do you make that out?

**LOMOV.** How? I'm taking about the Oxen Meadows, on that tiny patch of land wedged in between your birchwoods and the Burnt Marsh....

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA**.....and the Burnt Marsh.... ah yes, yes.... No they're ours.

**LOMOV.** No, you're mistaken, honoured Natalya Stepanovna, they're mine.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Now think very carefully, Ivan Vassilevitch! How long have they been yours?

**LOMOV.** How long? As long as I can remember.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Now really wait just a minute!

**LOMOV.** I can show you the documents, honoured Natalya Stepanovna. It's true Oxen Meadows, were once the subject of some dispute, but now everybody knows that they are mine. There's nothing to argue about. You see, my aunt's grandmother gave the free use of these Meadows in perpetuity to the peasants of your father's grandfather, in return for which they were to make bricks for her. The peasants belonging to your father's grandfather had the free use of the Meadows for forty years, and had got into the habit of regarding them as their own, when in fact they actually belonged to...

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** You are wrong! Both my grandfather and great-grandfather reckoned that their land extended to Burnt Marsh—which means that Oxen Meadows were ours. There is no point in arguing. It's simply ridiculous!

**LOMOV.** I have the papers, Natalya Stepanovna!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Oh I see.... You're just making fun of me.... This is a big joke! We've had the land for nearly three hundred years, and then we're suddenly told that it isn't ours! Ivan Vassilevitch, I can hardly believe what you are saying. These Meadows aren't valuable. They only come to about 12 acres, but that's not the point. It's the unfairness! I can't stand unfairness.

**LOMOV.** Didn't you hear what I said! Your great grandfather's peasants, as I have already had the honour of explaining to you, used to bake bricks for my aunt's grandmother. Now my aunt's grandmother, being a decent woman...

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Who cares about all this grandfathers and grandmothers business! The Meadows are ours, and that's all there is to it.

**LOMOV.** They're Mine.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Ours! You can go on about it until you are blue in the face and you can wear fifteen dress-jackets, but I tell you they're ours, ours, ours! I don't want anything that belongs to you and I won't give up anything of mine thank you very much!

**LOMOV.** Natalya Stepanovna, I don't care about the Meadows, but I am acting on principle. If you like, I'll give them to you as a gift!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** If there is any giving to do - I'll do it, because they're mine! I cannot believe your behaviour! Up to this we have always thought of you as a good neighbour and friend. Last year we lent you our threshing-machine, which meant us putting off our own threshing till November. Now you treat us as if we were gypsies. Giving me my own land, indeed! In my opinion that's not at all neighbourly! In fact, I think it's downright insulting!

**LOMOV.** Then you think I'm some sort of land grabber? Never in my life have I grabbed anybody else's land, and I won't allow anybody to accuse me of having done so.... (**drinks more water**) ...Oxen Meadows are mine!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** It's not true, they're ours!

**LOMOV.** Mine!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** It's a lie! I'll prove it! I'll send my mowers out to the Meadows this very day!

**LOMOV.** What?

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** My mowers will be there this very day!

**LOMOV.** I'll break their necks if they set foot on my land!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** You dare!

**LOMOV.** (*Clutches at his heart*) Oxen Meadows are mine! You understand? Mine!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Please don't shout! You can carry on as you please in your own house, but here I expect you to behave as a gentleman!

**LOMOV.** If it wasn't for the excruciating palpitations and these throbbing murmurs ripping through me and my temples near bursting point, I'd talk to you in a different way! (**Yells**) Oxen Meadows are mine!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Ours!

**LOMOV.** Mine!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Ours!

**LOMOV.** Mine!

(Enter **CHUBUKOV**.)

**CHUBUKOV.** What's going on? What's all the shouting for?

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Papa, please tell to this *gentleman* who owns Oxen Meadows, him or us?

**CHUBUKOV.** (To **LOMOV**) The Meadows are ours!

**LOMOV.** But, Stepan Stepanitch, how can they be yours? Please be reasonable man! My aunt's grandmother gave the Meadows for the temporary and free use of your grandfather's peasants. The peasants used the land for forty years and got as accustomed to it as if it was their own, but what happened was.....

**CHUBUKOV.** Excuse me.... You have forgotten that the peasants didn't pay your grandmother and all that, because the Meadows were in dispute, and so on. And now every dog in the village knows that they're ours. It means that you haven't seen the survey plans.

**LOMOV.** I'll prove to you that they're mine!

**CHUBUKOV.** You won't prove it.

**LOMOV.** I shall!

**CHUBUKOV.** Why yell like that? You won't prove anything by yelling. I don't want anything of yours, and don't intend to give up anything of mine. Why should I? And furthermore if you intend to go on arguing about it, I'd just as soon give the meadows over to the peasants than let you have them. So there!

**LOMOV.** I don't understand! How have you the right to give away somebody else's land?

**CHUBUKOV.** I'll decide whether I have the right or not. Because, young man, I'm not used to being spoken to in that tone of voice, and so on and all that. I, young man, am many years your senior, so I ask you to speak to me without getting yourself into a state, and so on.

**LOMOV.** No, you think I'm a fool and you want to take advantage! You call my land yours, and then you want me to talk to you calmly and politely! Good neighbours don't behave like that, Stepan Stepanitch! You're not a neighbour, you're a land grabber!

**CHUBUKOV.** What's that? What did you say?

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Papa, send the mowers out to the Meadows at once!

**CHUBUKOV.** What did you say, sir?

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Oxen Meadows are ours, and I will never give them up, never, never, never!

**LOMOV.** We'll see! I'll have the matter taken to court, and then we'll see who it belongs to!

**CHUBUKOV.** To court? You go ahead can take it to court, and all that! By all means do! I know you; you're just looking for a chance to go to court, and so on.... All your people were like that! Your family is famous for suing anybody and everybody!

**LOMOV.** Keep my family out of this! The **Lomovs** have always been honourable, law abiding people, not like some I won't mention...like your grandfather who was arrested for embezzlement for instance!

**CHUBUKOV.** You Lomovs are crazy, all of you!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** All, all, all!

**CHUBUKOV.** Your grandfather was nothing more than a drunk, and your younger aunt, Nastasya Mihailovna, ran away with an architect....That's right, an architect and so on.

**LOMOV.** And your mother was a hunchback! (**Clutches at his heart**) Oh my God Something's pulling in my side.... my head is pounding..... I need water!

**CHUBUKOV.** Your father was a gambler and a cheat!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** And your aunt was a gossip and a backbiter!

**LOMOV.** My left foot is paralyzed! You're a snake and a.... Oh, my heart... And it's an open secret that before the last elections you bribed... my eyes are gone blurry.... Where's my hat?

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** It's low! It's dishonest! It's mean!

**CHUBUKOV.** And you're just a malicious, two faced liar! Yes!

**LOMOV.** Here's my hat.... My heart! Which way? Where's the door? Oh... I think I'm dying.... My foot's quite numb.... (**He goes to the door.**)

**CHUBUKOV.** (**Following him**) And don't set foot in my house again!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Take it to court! We'll see!

(**LOMOV staggers out.**)

**CHUBUKOV.** He can go to hell! (**He walks about excitedly.**)

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Creep!

**CHUBUKOV.** Crook!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** The monster! First he takes our land and then he has the cheek to abuse us.

**CHUBUKOV.** And to think that that upstart, that monkey brain has the confounded nerve to make a proposal, and so on and all that! A proposal!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** What proposal?

**CHUBUKOV.** Why, he came here to propose to you.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Propose to me? Why didn't you tell me that before?

**CHUBUKOV.** That's why he was dressed up in that silly suit and all that. The stuffed sausage!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** He came to propose to me? Oh my God! (**Falls into a chair and wails**) Bring him back! Oh my God! Get him back. Oh my God! Please make him come back!!

**CHUBUKOV.** Make who come back?

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Quick, quick! Go... Go get him! (**Hysterics.**)

**CHUBUKOV.** What's that? What's the matter with you? (**realizes**) Oh, what have I done! Fool! I'll hang myself!... I'll shoot myself! ...I'll hang myself then I'll shoot myself!!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** I'm going to die! Get him!

**CHUBUKOV.** Don't yell! I'm going.

(**Runs out. A pause.**) (**NATALYA STEPANOVNA** wails.)

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** What have they done to me! Oh make him come back! (**Wailing**) ....Please!

(**A pause.**)

(**CHUBUKOV** enters Breathless)

**CHUBUKOV.** (**Panting**) He's coming ...he's coming back and all that and so on! Talk to him yourself this time. I leave it to you and all that and so on.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** (**Wails**) Get him!

**CHUBUKOV.** (Yells) He's coming, I told you! Oh, what a burden, Lord, to be the father of a grown-up daughter! I'll cut my throat! I will, indeed! We cursed him, we abused him and drove him out, and it's all your doing... yours!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** No, it was you!

**CHUBUKOV.** I tell you it's not my fault. (**LOMOV appears**) Now you talk to him yourself (**Exits**.)

(**LOMOV enters, exhausted.**)

**LOMOV.** My heart's beating wildly.... My foot's gone to sleep.... There's something keeps pulling in my side.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Forgive us, Ivan Vassilevitch, we were all a little heated.... I remember now: Oxen Meadows really are yours.

**LOMOV.** My heart's almost bursting ...My Meadows... *Both* my eyebrows are twitching now!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** The Meadows are yours, yes, yours.... Do sit down.... (**They sit**) We were wrong....

**LOMOV.** I did it on principle.... the land is worth little to me, but the principle...

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Yes, the principle. Now please let's talk about something... else.

**LOMOV.** I have the evidence you see. My aunt's grandmother gave the land to your father's grandfather's peasants...

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Yes, yes, (**raises her voice**)....That's enough! (**Aside**) I wish I knew how to start.... (**Aloud**) Will you be going hunting this season?

**LOMOV.** I'm thinking of having a go at the geese and grouse, after the harvest. Oh, have you heard? My best dog Guesser has gone lame.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** What a pity! How did it happen?

**LOMOV.** I don't know.... he must of twisted it, or got bitten by some other dog. He's my very best dog, to say nothing of how much he cost me. I gave Mironov 125 for him.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** You were robbed, Ivan Vassilevitch.

**LOMOV.** I think it was a bargain. He's a first-rate dog.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Papa only paid 85 for his hound Messer, and Messer is much better than Guesser!

**LOMOV.** Messer is better than Guesser? How do you mean! (**Laughs**) Messer better than Guesser!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Of course he's better! Messer is still young, but on points and pedigree there is no comparison.

**LOMOV.** But Natalya Stepanovna, you forget that Messer has an overshot jaw, and an overshot jaw always means the dog is a bad hunter!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Overshot, is he? That's news to me!

**LOMOV.** I assure you that his lower jaw is shorter than the upper.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** You've measured it have you?

**LOMOV.** Yes. He's all right at chasing the pack, of course, but if you want him to get hold of anything...

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** In the first place, our Messer is a thoroughbred animal, the son of Lesser and Stresser, whereas your Guesser is the son of Slusher and Pusher and has no pedigree whatsoever. He's just a flea bitten old wreck.

**LOMOV.** He is old, but I wouldn't take five Messers for him.... Why, how can you even...? Guesser is a proper dog; as for Messer, well he's just a joke of a hound. If you had paid 25 for him it would have been 20 too much!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Ivan Vassilevitch. Are you being obnoxious on purpose today? First you pretend that the Meadows are yours; now you are saying that Guesser is better than Messer. I don't like people who refuse to face facts. You know perfectly well that Messer is a hundred times better than your ridiculous Guesser.

**LOMOV.** I see. Natalya Stepanovna, that you consider me either blind or stupid. You must realize that Messer is overshot!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** It's not true.

**LOMOV.** It is!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** It's not true!

**LOMOV.** What are you shouting for?

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** What are you lying for? Guesser is only fit to be shot, and you dare to compare him with Messer!

**LOMOV.** Excuse me; I cannot continue this discussion: my heart is palpitating again.

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** You are typical of those hunters who are all full of talk but useless when it actually comes to hunting!

**LOMOV.** Please be quiet. (**moaning**) Shut up! My heart's bursting!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** I won't shut up.

(Enter **CHUBUKOV.**)

**CHUBUKOV.** What's the matter now?

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Papa, tell us truly, which is the better dog, our Messer or his Guesser.

**LOMOV.** Stepan Stepanovitch, please tell me just one thing: is your Messer overshot or not? Yes or no?

**CHUBUKOV.** And suppose he is? What does it matter? He's the best dog in the district for all that, and so on.

**LOMOV.** But isn't my Guesser better? Tell me honestly!

**CHUBUKOV.** Don't excite yourself, dear boy.... Allow me.... Your Guesser certainly has his good points.... He's pure-bred, firm on his feet, has well-sprung ribs, and all that and so on. But, if you want to know the truth, that dog has two defects: he's old and he's short in the muzzle.

**LOMOV.** You'll have to excuse me but I'm having severe heart murmurs.... Let's face the facts....shall we? You will remember that on the Marusinsky hunt my Guesser ran neck-and-neck with the Count's dog, Fresher while your Messer was chasing up the rear.

**CHUBUKOV.** He got left behind because the Count hit him with his whip.

**LOMOV.** He had good reason. The dogs are supposed to run after a fox, but Messer went and started chasing a sheep!

**CHUBUKOV.** It's not true!... Now, I'm very liable to lose my temper, and so, let's stop arguing. You started because everybody is always jealous of everybody else's dogs. Yes, we're all like that! You no sooner notice that some dog is better than your Guesser than you begin with this, that... and so on... and all that.... I remember everything!

**LOMOV.** I remember too!

**CHUBUKOV.** (Teasing him) I remember, too.... What do you remember?

**LOMOV.** My heart... my foot's gone to sleep.... I can't...

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** (Teasing) My heart.... What sort of a hunter are you? You'd be better off lying down in a darkened room than chasing after foxes! (Mocking him) Oh My heart!

**CHUBUKOV.** Yes really, what sort of a hunter are you, anyway? Let's change the subject in case I lose my temper. You're not a real hunter and let's leave it at that!

**LOMOV.** And are you a hunter? You only go hunting to get in with the Count and all his wealthy friends. Oh, my heart... You're a sneaky, Social climber!

**CHUBUKOV.** What? I'm a social....? (Shouts) Shut up!

**LOMOV.** Snake!

**CHUBUKOV.** Young brat!

**LOMOV.** Old rat!

**CHUBUKOV.** Shut up or I'll shoot you like a partridge! You fool!

**LOMOV.** There, there, there it is... my heart's burst! My shoulder's come off.... Where's my shoulder? I'm dying. (Falls into an armchair) Call a doctor! (Faints.)

**CHUBUKOV.** Fool! (Imitating him) I'm sick! My Heart is pounding!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** You can't even ride a horse properly! (Looks at LOMOV) Papa, what's the matter with him? Papa! Look, papa! (Screams) Ivan Vassilevitch!..... He's dead!

**CHUBUKOV.** Oh... What is it? What's the matter?

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** (Wails) He's dead... dead!

**CHUBUKOV.** He's dead? (Looks at LOMOV) My God! Water! A doctor! (Lifts a glass to LOMOV'S mouth) Drink this! ....No, he's not drinking, He *is* dead and all that. Why don't I put a bullet into my brain? I deserve to die! Give me a knife! Get me a pistol! [LOMOV moves] Oh ..... He seems to be coming round....I think he'll live. Here drink some water! That's right....

**LOMOV.** I see stars...it's very blurry.... Where am I?

**CHUBUKOV.** Now listen, just hurry up and get married  
(He puts LOMOV'S hand into his daughter's) She's willing and all that and so on. I give you my blessing but please just leave me in peace!

**LOMOV.** Eh? What? Who?

**CHUBUKOV.** She says yes! Well? Go on. Kiss her!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Oh you're alive... Yes, yes, I'm willing....

**CHUBUKOV.** Kiss each other!

**LOMOV.** Eh? Kiss who? (**She Kisses him**) ... Well...Yes that's very nice! Excuse me, what's going on? Oh, now I remember... my heart... stars... I'm happy. Natalya Stepanovna.... (**Kisses her**) My leg is still paralyzed....

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** I... I'm happy too....

**CHUBUKOV.** (**Aside**)What a weight off my shoulders!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** (**In his arms**) So... now you can admit that Messer is better than Messer.

**LOMOV.** He's worse!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Better!

(They continue to argue)

**LOMOV.** He's better!

**NATALYA STEPANOVNA.** Worse! worse! worse!

**CHUBUKOV.** (**Aside**) And they lived happily ever after!

(Calls for Champagne ! Champagne! As the lights go down.)

**END OF PLAY**