

THE BET

AND OTHER STORIES

BY
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TRANSLATORS' NOTE

Stiepanovich and Stepanich are two forms of the same name, meaning "son of Stephen." The abbreviated form is the more intimate and familiar.

The Russian dishes mentioned in "A Tedious Story" have no exact equivalents. *Sossoulki* are a kind of little dumplings eaten in soup; *shi* is a soup made of sour cabbage; and *kasha* is a kind of porridge.

The words of the song which the students sing in "The Fit" come from Poushkin.

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IT was a dark autumn night. The old banker was pacing from corner to corner of his study, recalling to his mind the party he gave in the autumn fifteen years ago. There were many clever people at the party and much interesting conversation. They talked among other things of capital punishment. The guests, among them not a few scholars and journalists, for the most part disapproved of capital punishment. They found it obsolete as a means of punishment, unfitted to a Christian State and immoral. Some of them thought that capital punishment should be replaced universally by life-imprisonment.

“I don’t agree with you,” said the host. “I myself have experienced neither capital punishment nor life-imprisonment, but if one may judge a priori, then in my opinion capital punishment is more moral and more humane than imprisonment. Execution kills instantly, life-imprisonment kills by degrees. Who is the more humane executioner, one who kills you in a few seconds or one who draws the life out of you incessantly, for years?”

“They’re both equally immoral,” remarked one of the guests, “because their purpose is the same, to take away life. The State is not God. It has no right to take away that which it cannot give back, if it should so desire.”

Among the company was a lawyer, a young man of about twenty-five. On being asked his opinion, he said:

“Capital punishment and life-imprisonment are equally immoral; but if I were offered the choice between them, I would certainly choose the second. It’s better to live somehow than not to live at all.”

There ensued a lively discussion. The banker who was then younger and more nervous suddenly lost his temper, banged his fist on the table, and turning to the young lawyer, cried out: “It’s a lie. I bet you two millions you wouldn’t stick in a cell even for five years.”

“If that’s serious,” replied the lawyer, “then I bet I’ll stay not five but fifteen.”

“Fifteen! Done!” cried the banker. “Gentlemen, I stake two millions.”

“Agreed. You stake two millions, I my freedom,” said the lawyer.

So this wild, ridiculous bet came to pass. The banker, who at that time had too many millions to count, spoiled and capricious, was beside himself with rapture. During supper he said to the lawyer jokingly:

“Come to your senses, young man, before it’s too late. Two millions are nothing to me, but you stand to lose three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four, because you’ll never stick it out any longer. Don’t forget either, you unhappy man, that volun-

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what was he doing? What awaits him? Is he married, where's his mother, and does she know he's a lackey here?" Thenceforward in every house Vassiliev involuntarily turned his attention to the lackey first of all.

In one of the houses, it seemed to be the fourth, the lackey was a dry little, puny fellow, with a chain across his waistcoat. He was reading a newspaper and took no notice of the guests at all. Glancing at his face, Vassiliev had the idea that a fellow with a face like that could steal and murder and perjure. And indeed the face was interesting: a big forehead, grey eyes, a flat little nose, small close-set teeth, and the expression on his face dull and impudent at once, like a puppy hard on a hare. Vassiliev had the thought that he would like to touch this lackey's hair: is it rough or soft? It must be rough like a dog's.

III

Because he had had two glasses the painter suddenly got rather drunk, and unnaturally lively.

"Let's go to another place," he added, waving his hands. "I'll introduce you to the best!"

When he had taken his friends into the house which was according to him the best, he proclaimed a persistent desire to dance a quadrille. The medico began to grumble that they would have to pay the musicians a rouble but agreed to be his *vis-à-vis*. The dance began.

It was just as bad in the best house as in the worst. Just the same mirrors and pictures were here, the same coiffures and dresses. Looking round at the furniture and the costumes Vassiliev now understood that it was not lack of taste, but something that might be called the particular taste and style of S—v Street, quite impossible to find anywhere else, something complete, not accidental, evolved in time. After he had been to eight houses he no longer wondered at the colour of the dresses or the long trains, or at the bright bows, or the sailor dresses, or the thick violent painting of the cheeks; he understood that all this was in harmony, that if only one woman dressed herself humanly, or one decent print hung on the wall, then the general tone of the whole street would suffer.

How badly they manage the business? Can't they really understand that vice is only fascinating when it is beautiful and secret, hidden under the cloak of virtue? Modest black dresses, pale faces, sad smiles, and darkness act more strongly than this clumsy tinsel. Idiots! If they don't understand it themselves, their guests ought to teach them. . . .

A girl in a Polish costume trimmed with white fur came up close to him and sat down by his side.

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“Why don’t you dance, my brown-haired darling?” she asked.
“What do you feel so bored about?”

“Because it is boring.”

“Stand me a Château Lafitte, then you won’t be bored.”

Vassiliev made no answer. For a little while he was silent, then he asked:

“What time do you go to bed as a rule?”

“Six.”

“When do you get up?”

“Sometimes two, sometimes three.”

“And after you get up what do you do?”

“We drink coffee. We have dinner at seven.”

“And what do you have for dinner?”

“Soup or *schii* as a rule, beef-steak, dessert. Our madame keeps the girls well. But what are you asking all this for?”

“Just to have a talk. . . .”

Vassiliev wanted to ask about all sorts of things. He had a strong desire to find out where she came from, were her parents alive, and did they know she was here; how she got into the house; was she happy and contented, or gloomy and depressed with dark thoughts. Does she ever hope to escape. . . . But he could not possibly think how to begin, or how to put his questions without seeming indiscreet. He thought for a long while and asked:

“How old are you?”

“Eighty,” joked the girl, looking and laughing at the tricks the painter was doing with his hands and feet.

She suddenly giggled and uttered a long filthy expression aloud so that every one could hear.

Vassiliev, terrified, not knowing how to look, began to laugh uneasily. He alone smiled: all the others, his friends, the musicians and the women—paid no attention to his neighbour. They might never have heard.

“Stand me a Lafitte,” said the girl again.

Vassiliev was suddenly repelled by her white trimming and her voice and left her. It seemed to him close and hot. His heart began to beat slowly and violently, like a hammer, one, two, three.

“Let’s get out of here,” he said, pulling the painter’s sleeve.

“Wait. Let’s finish it.”

While the medico and the painter were finishing their quadrille, Vassiliev, in order to avoid the women, eyed the musicians. The pianist was a nice old man with spectacles, with a face like Marshal Basin; the fiddler a young man with a short, fair beard dressed in the latest fashion. The young man was not stupid or starved, on the contrary he looked clever, young and fresh. He was dressed with a touch of originality, and played with emotion. Problem: how did he and the decent old man get here? Why aren’t they ashamed to sit

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here? What do they think about when they look at the women?

If the piano and the fiddle were played by ragged, hungry, gloomy, drunken creatures, with thin stupid faces, then their presence would perhaps be intelligible. As it was, Vassiliev could understand nothing. Into his memory came the story that he had read about the unfortunate woman, and now he found that the human figure with the guilty smile had nothing to do with this. It seemed to him that they were not unfortunate women that he saw, but they belonged to another, utterly different world, foreign and inconceivable to him; if he had seen this world on the stage or read about it in a book he would never have believed it. . . . The girl with the white trimming giggled again and said something disgusting aloud. He felt sick, blushed, and went out:

“Wait. We’re coming too,” cried the painter.

IV

“I had a talk with my mam’selle while we were dancing,” said the medico when all three came into the street. “The subject was her first love. *He* was a bookkeeper in Smolensk with a wife and five children. She was seventeen and lived with her pa and ma who kept a soap and candle shop.”

“How did he conquer her heart?” asked Vassiliev.

“He bought her fifty roubles’-worth of underclothes—Lord knows what!”

“However could he get her love-story out of his girl?” thought Vassiliev. “I can’t. My dear chaps, I’m off home,” he said.

“Why?”

“Because I don’t know how to get on here. I’m bored and disgusted. What is there amusing about it? If they were only human beings; but they’re savages and beasts. I’m going, please.”

“Grisha darling, please,” the painter said with a sob in his voice, pressing close to Vassiliev, “let’s go to one more—then to Hell with them. Do come, Grigor.”

They prevailed on Vassiliev and led him up a staircase. The carpet and the gilded balustrade, the porter who opened the door, the panels which decorated the hall, were still in the same S—v Street style, but here it was perfected and imposing.

“Really I’m going home,” said Vassiliev, taking off his overcoat.

“Darling, please, please,” said the painter and kissed him on the neck. “Don’t be so faddy, Grigri—be a pal. Together we came, together we go. What a beast you are though!”

“I can wait for you in the street. My God, it’s disgusting here.”

“Please, please . . . You just look on, see, just look on.”

“One should look at things objectively,” said the medico seriously.

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Vassiliev entered the salon and sat down. There were many more guests besides him and his friends: two infantry officers, a grey, bald-headed gentleman with gold spectacles, two young clean-shaven men from the Surveyors' Institute, and a very drunk man with an actor's face. All the girls were looking after these guests and took no notice of Vassiliev. Only one of them dressed like Aida glanced at him sideways, smiled at something and said with a yawn:

"So the dark one's come."

Vassiliev's heart was beating and his face was burning. He felt ashamed for being there, disgusted and tormented. He was tortured by the thought that he, a decent and affectionate man (so he considered himself up till now), despised these women and felt nothing towards them but repulsion. He could not feel pity for them or for the musicians or the lackeys.

"It's because I don't try to understand them," he thought. "They're all more like beasts than human beings; but all the same they are human beings. They've got souls. One should understand them first, then judge them."

"Grisha, don't go away. Wait for us," called the painter; and he disappeared somewhere.

Soon the medico disappeared also.

"Yes, one should try to understand. It's no good, otherwise," thought Vassiliev, and he began to examine intently the face of each girl, looking for the guilty smile. But whether he could not read faces or because none of these women felt guilty he saw in each face only a dull look of common, vulgar boredom and satiety. Stupid eyes, stupid smiles, harsh, stupid voices, impudent gestures—and nothing else. Evidently every woman had in her past a love romance with a bookkeeper and fifty roubles'-worth of underclothes. And in the present the only good things in life were coffee, a three-course dinner, wine, quadrilles, and sleeping till two in the afternoon . . .

Finding not one guilty smile, Vassiliev began to examine them to see if even one looked clever and his attention was arrested by one pale, rather tired face. It was that of a dark woman no longer young, wearing a dress scattered with spangles. She sat in a chair staring at the floor and thinking of something. Vassiliev paced up and down and then sat down beside her as if by accident.

"One must begin with something trivial," he thought, "and gradually pass on to serious conversation . . ."

"What a beautiful little dress you have on," he said, and touched the gold fringe of her scarf with his finger.

"It's all right," said the dark woman.

"Where do you come from?"

"I? A long way. From Tchernigov."

"It's a nice part."

"It always is, where you don't happen to be."

"What a pity I can't describe nature," thought Vassiliev. "I'd

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move her by descriptions of Tchernigov. She must love it if she was born there.”

“Do you feel lonely here?” he asked.

“Of course I’m lonely.”

“Why don’t you go away from here, if you’re lonely?”

“Where shall I go to? Start begging, eh?”

“It’s easier to beg than to live here.”

“Where did you get that idea? Have you been a beggar?”

“I begged, when I hadn’t enough to pay my university fees; and even if I hadn’t begged it’s easy enough to understand. A beggar is a free man, at any rate, and you’re a slave.”

The dark woman stretched herself, and followed with sleepy eyes the lackey who carried a tray of glasses and soda-water.

“Stand us a champagne,” she said, and yawned again.

“Champagne,” said Vassiliev. “What would happen if your mother or your brother suddenly came in? What would you say? And what would they say? You would say ‘champagne’ then.”

Suddenly the noise of crying was heard. From the next room where the lackey had carried the soda-water, a fair man rushed out with a red face and angry eyes. He was followed by the tall, stout madame, who screamed in a squeaky voice:

“No one gave you permission to slap the girls in the face. Better class than you come here, and never slap a girl. You bounder!”

Followed an uproar. Vassiliev was scared and went white. In the next room some one wept, sobbing, sincerely, as only the insulted weep. And he understood that indeed human beings lived here, actually human beings, who get offended, suffer, weep, and ask for help. The smouldering hatred, the feeling of repulsion, gave way to an acute sense of pity and anger against the wrong-doer. He rushed into the room from which the weeping came. Through the rows of bottles which stood on the marble table-top he saw a suffering tear-stained face, stretched out his hands towards this face, stepped to the table and instantly gave a leap back in terror. The sobbing woman was dead-drunk.

As he made his way through the noisy crowd, gathered round the fair man, his heart failed him, he lost his courage like a boy, and it seemed to him that in this foreign, inconceivable world, they wanted to run after him, to beat him, to abuse him with foul words. He tore down his coat from the peg and rushed headlong down the stairs.

V

Pressing close to the fence, he stood near to the house and waited for his friends to come out. The sounds of the pianos and fiddles, gay, bold, impudent and sad, mingled into chaos in the air,

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and this confusion was, as before, as if an unseen orchestra were tuning in the dark over the roof-tops. If he looked up towards the darkness, then all the background was scattered with white, moving points: it was snowing. The flakes, coming into the light, spun lazily in the air like feathers, and still more lazily fell. Flakes of snow crowded whirling about Vassiliev, and hung on his beard, his eyelashes, his eyebrows. The cabmen, the horses, and the passers-by, all were white.

“How dare the snow fall in this street?” thought Vassiliev. A curse on these houses.”

Because of his headlong rush down the staircase his feet failed him from weariness; he was out of breath as if he had climbed a mountain. His heart beat so loud that he could hear it. A longing came over him to get out of this street as soon as possible and go home; but still stronger was his desire to wait for his friends and to vent upon them his feeling of heaviness.

He had not understood many things in the houses. The souls of the perishing women were to him a mystery as before; but it was clear to him that the business was much worse than one would have thought. If the guilty woman who poisoned herself was called a prostitute, then it was hard to find a suitable name for all these creatures, who danced to the muddling music and said long, disgusting phrases. They were not perishing; they were already done for.

“Vice is here,” he thought; “but there is neither confession of sin nor hope of salvation. They are bought and sold, drowned in wine and torpor, and they are dull and indifferent as sheep and do not understand. My God, my God!”

It was so clear to him that all that which is called human dignity, individuality, the image and likeness of God, was here dragged down to the gutter, as they say of drunkards, and that not only the street and the stupid women were to blame for it.

A crowd of students white with snow, talking and laughing gaily, passed by. One of them, a tall, thin man, peered into Vassiliev’s face and said drunkenly, “He’s one of ours. Logged, old man? Aha! my lad. Never mind. Walk up, never say die, uncle.”

He took Vassiliev by the shoulders and pressed his cold wet moustaches to his cheek, then slipped, staggered, brandished his arms, and cried out: “Steady there—don’t fall.”

Laughing, he ran to join his comrades. Through the noise the painter’s voice became audible.

“You dare beat women! I won’t have it. Go to Hell. You’re regular swine.”

The medico appeared at the door of the house. He glanced round and on seeing Vassiliev, said in alarm:

“Is that you? My God, it’s simply impossible to go anywhere with Yegor. I can’t understand a chap like that. He kicked up a row—can’t you hear? Yegor,” he called from the door. “Yegor!”

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“I won’t have you hitting women.” The painter’s shrill voice was audible again from upstairs.

Something heavy and bulky tumbled down the staircase. It was the painter coming head over heels. He had evidently been thrown out.

He lifted himself up from the ground, dusted his hat, and with an angry indignant face, shook his fist at the upstairs.

“Scoundrels! Butchers! Bloodsuckers! I won’t have you hitting a weak, drunken woman. Ah, you. . . .”

“Yegor . . . Yegor!” the medico began to implore, “I give my word I’ll never go out with you again. Upon my honour, I won’t.”

The painter gradually calmed, and the friends went home.

“To these sad shores unknowing”—the medico began—“An unknown power entices. . . .”

“Behold the mill,” the painter sang with him after a pause, “Now fallen into ruin. How the snow is falling, most Holy Mother. Why did you go away, Grisha? You’re a coward; you’re only an old woman.”

Vassiliev was walking behind his friends. He stared at their backs and thought: “One of two things: either prostitution only seems to us an evil and we exaggerate it, or if prostitution is really such an evil as is commonly thought, these charming friends of mine are just as much slavers, violators, and murderers as the inhabitants of Syria and Cairo whose photographs appear in ‘The Field.’ They’re singing, laughing, arguing soundly now, but haven’t they just been exploiting starvation, ignorance, and stupidity? They have, I saw them at it. Where does their humanity, their science, and their painting come in, then? The science, art, and lofty sentiments of these murderers remind me of the lump of fat in the story. Two robbers killed a beggar in a forest; they began to divide his clothes between themselves and found in his bag a lump of pork fat. ‘In the nick of time,’ said one of them. ‘Let’s have a bite!’ ‘How can you?’ the other cried in terror. ‘Have you forgotten to-day’s Friday?’ So they refrained from eating. After having cut the man’s throat they walked out of the forest confident that they were pious fellows. These two are just the same. When they’ve paid for women they go and imagine they’re painters and scholars. . . .”

“Listen, you two,” he said angrily and sharply. “Why do you go to those places? Can’t you understand how horrible they are? Your medicine tells you every one of these women dies prematurely from consumption or something else; your arts tell you that she died morally still earlier. Each of them dies because during her lifetime she accepts on an average, let us say, five hundred men. Each of them is killed by five hundred men, and you’re amongst the five hundred. Now if each of you comes here and to places like this two hundred and fifty times in his lifetime, then it means that between you you have killed one woman. Can’t you understand that? Isn’t it horri-

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ble?"

"Ah, isn't this awful, my God?"

"There, I knew it would end like this," said the painter frowning. "We oughtn't to have had anything to do with this fool of a blockhead. I suppose you think your head's full of great thoughts and great ideas now. Devil knows what they are, but they're not ideas. You're staring at me now with hatred and disgust; but if you want my opinion you'd better build twenty more of the houses than look like that. There's more vice in your look than in the whole street. Let's clear out, Volodya, damn him! He's a fool. He's a blockhead, and that's all he is."

"Human beings are always killing each other," said the medico. "That is immoral, of course. But philosophy won't help you. Good-bye!"

The friends parted at Trubnoi Square and went their way. Left alone, Vassiliev began to stride along the boulevard. He was frightened of the dark, frightened of the snow, which fell to the earth in little flakes, but seemed to long to cover the whole world; he was frightened of the street-lamps, which glimmered faintly through the clouds of snow. An inexplicable faint-hearted fear possessed his soul. Now and then people passed him; but he gave a start and stepped aside. It seemed to him that from everywhere there came and stared at him women, only women. . . .

"It's coming on," he thought, "I'm going to have a fit."

VI

At home he lay on his bed and began to talk, shivering all over his body.

"Live women, live. . . . My God, they're alive."

He sharpened the edge of his imagination in every possible way. Now he was the brother of an unfortunate, now her father. Now he was himself a fallen woman, with painted cheeks; and all this terrified him.

It seemed to him somehow that he must solve this question immediately, at all costs, and that the problem was not strange to him, but was his own. He made a great effort, conquered his despair, and, sitting on the side of the bed, his head clutched in his hands, he began to think:

How could all the women he had seen that night be saved? The process of solving a problem was familiar to him as to a learned person; and notwithstanding all his excitement he kept strictly to this process. He recalled to mind the history of the question, its literature, and just after three o'clock he was pacing up and down, trying to remember all the experiments which are practised nowadays for the salvation of women. He had a great many good friends who

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lived in furnished rooms, Falzfein, Galyashkin, Nechaiev, Yechkin . . . not a few among them were honest and self-sacrificing, and some of them had attempted to save these women. . . .

All these few attempts, thought Vassiliev, rare attempts, may be divided into three groups. Some having rescued a woman from a brothel hired a room for her, bought her a sewing-machine and she became a dressmaker, and the man who saved her kept her for his mistress, openly or otherwise, but later when he had finished his studies and was going away, he would hand her over to another decent fellow. So the fallen woman remained fallen. Others after having bought her out also hired a room for her, bought the inevitable sewing-machine and started her off reading and writing and preached at her. The woman sits and sews as long as it is novel and amusing, but later, when she is bored, she begins to receive men secretly, or runs back to where she can sleep till three in the afternoon, drink coffee, and eat till she is full. Finally, the most ardent and self-sacrificing take a bold, determined step. They marry, and when the impudent, self-indulgent, stupefied creature becomes a wife, a lady of the house, and then a mother, her life and outlook are utterly changed, and in the wife and mother it is hard to recognise the unfortunate woman. Yes, marriage is the best, it may be the only, resource.

“But it’s impossible,” Vassiliev said aloud and threw himself down on his bed. “First of all, I could not marry one. One would have to be a saint to be able to do it, unable to hate, not knowing disgust. But let us suppose that the painter, the medico, and I got the better of our feelings and married, that all these women got married, what is the result? What kind of effect follows? The result is that while the women get married here in Moscow, the Smolensk bookkeeper seduces a fresh lot, and these will pour into the empty places, together with women from Saratov, Nijni-Novgorod, Warsaw. . . . And what happens to the hundred thousand in London? What can be done with those in Hamburg?”

The oil in the lamp was used up and the lamp began to smell. Vassiliev did not notice it. Again he began to pace up and down, thinking. Now he put the question differently. What can be done to remove the demand for fallen women? For this it is necessary that the men who buy and kill them should at once begin to feel all the immorality of their *rôle* of slave-owners, and this should terrify them. It is necessary to save the men.

Science and art apparently won’t do, thought Vassiliev. There is only one way out—to be an apostle.

And he began to dream how he would stand to-morrow evening at the corner of the street and say to each passer-by: “Where are you going and what for? Fear God!”

He would turn to the indifferent cabmen and say to them:

“Why are you standing here? Why don’t you revolt? You do be-

lieve in God, don't you? And you do know that this is a crime, and that people will go to Hell for this? Why do you keep quiet, then? True, the women are strangers to you, but they have fathers and brothers exactly the same as you. . . ."

Some friend of Vassiliev's once said of him that he was a man of talent. There is a talent for writing, for the theatre, for painting; but Vassiliev's was peculiar, a talent for humanity. He had a fine and noble flair for every kind of suffering. As a good actor reflects in himself the movement and voice of another, so Vassiliev could reflect in himself another's pain. Seeing tears, he wept. With a sick person, he himself became sick and moaned. If he saw violence done, it seemed to him that he was the victim. He was frightened like a child, and, frightened, ran for help. Another's pain roused him, excited him, threw him into a state of ecstasy. . . .

Whether the friend was right I do not know, but what happened to Vassiliev when it seemed to him that the question was solved was very much like an ecstasy. He sobbed, laughed, said aloud the things he would say to-morrow, felt a burning love for the men who would listen to him and stand by his side at the corner of the street, preaching. He sat down to write to them; he made vows.

All this was the more like an ecstasy in that it did not last. Vassiliev was soon tired. The London women, the Hamburg women, those from Warsaw, crushed him with their mass, as the mountains crush the earth. He quailed before this mass; he lost himself; he remembered he had no gift for speaking, that he was timid and faint-hearted, that strange people would hardly want to listen to and understand him, a law-student in his third year, a frightened and insignificant figure. The true apostleship consisted, not only in preaching, but also in deeds. . . .

When daylight came and the carts rattled on the streets, Vassiliev lay motionless on the sofa, staring at one point. He did not think any more of women, or men, or apostles. All his attention was fixed on the pain of his soul which tormented him. It was a dull pain, indefinite, vague; it was like anguish and the most acute fear and despair. He could say where the pain was. It was in his breast, under the heart. It could not be compared to anything. Once on a time he used to have violent toothache. Once, he had pleurisy and neuralgia. But all these pains were as nothing beside the pain of his soul. Beneath this pain life seemed repulsive. The thesis, his brilliant work already written, the people he loved, the salvation of fallen women, all that which only yesterday he loved or was indifferent to, remembered now, irritated him in the same way as the noise of the carts, the running about of the porters and the daylight . . . If someone now were to perform before his eyes a deed of mercy or an act of revolting violence, both would produce upon him an equally repulsive impression. Of all the thoughts which roved lazily in his head, two only did not irritate him: one—at any moment he had the power

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to kill himself, the other—that the pain would not last more than three days. The second he knew from experience.

After having lain down for a while he got up and walked wringing his hands, not from corner to corner as usually, but in a square along the walls. He caught a glimpse of himself in the glass. His face was pale and haggard, his temples hollow, his eyes bigger, darker, more immobile, as if they were not his own, and they expressed the intolerable suffering of his soul.

In the afternoon the painter knocked at the door.

“Gregory, are you at home?” he asked.

Receiving no answer, he stood musing for a while, and said to himself good-naturedly:

“Out. He’s gone to the University. Damn him.”

And went away.

Vassiliev lay down on his bed and burying his head in the pillow he began to cry with the pain. But the faster his tears flowed, the more terrible was the pain. When it was dark, he got into his mind the idea of the horrible night which was awaiting him and awful despair seized him. He dressed quickly, ran out of his room, leaving the door wide open, and into the street without reason or purpose. Without asking himself where he was going, he walked quickly to Sadovaia Street.

Snow was falling as yesterday. It was thawing. Putting his hands into his sleeves, shivering, and frightened of the noises and the bells of the trams and of passers-by, Vassiliev walked from Sadovaia to Sukhariev Tower then to the Red Gates, and from here he turned and went to Basmannaia. He went into a public-house and gulped down a big glass of vodka, but felt no better. Arriving at Razgoulyai, he turned to the right and began to stride down streets that he had never in his life been down before. He came to that old bridge under which the river Yaouza roars and from whence long rows of lights are seen in the windows of the Red Barracks. In order to distract the pain of his soul by a new sensation or another pain, not knowing what to do, weeping and trembling, Vassiliev unbuttoned his coat and jacket, baring his naked breast to the damp snow and the wind. Neither lessened the pain. Then he bent over the rail of the bridge and stared down at the black, turbulent Yaouza, and he suddenly wanted to throw himself head-first, not from hatred of life, not for the sake of suicide, but only to hurt himself and so to kill one pain by another. But the black water, the dark, deserted banks covered with snow were frightening. He shuddered and went on. He walked as far as the Red Barracks, then back and into a wood, from the wood to the bridge again.

“No! Home, home,” he thought. “At home I believe it’s easier.”

And he went back. On returning home he tore off his wet clothes and hat, began to pace along the walls, and paced incessantly until the very morning.

VII

The next morning when the painter and the medico came to see him, they found him in a shirt torn to ribbons, his hands bitten all over, tossing about in the room and moaning with pain.

“For God’s sake!” he began to sob, seeing his comrades, “Take me anywhere you like, do what you like, but save me, for God’s sake now, now! I’ll kill myself.”

The painter went pale and was bewildered. The medico, too, nearly began to cry; but, believing that medical men must be cool and serious on every occasion of life, he said coldly:

“It’s a fit you’ve got. But never mind. Come to the doctor, at once.”

“Anywhere you like, but quickly, for God’s sake!”

“Don’t be agitated. You must struggle with yourself.”

The painter and the medico dressed Vassiliev with trembling hands and led him into the street.

“Mikhail Sergueyich has been wanting to make your acquaintance for a long while,” the medico said on the way. “He’s a very nice man, and knows his job splendidly. He took his degree in ’82, and has got a huge practice already. He keeps friends with the students.”

“Quicker, quicker . . .” urged Vassiliev.

Mikhail Sergueyich, a stout doctor with fair hair, received the friends politely, firmly, coldly, and smiled with one cheek only.

“The painter and Mayer have told me of your disease already,” he said. “Very glad to be of service to you. Well? Sit down, please.”

He made Vassiliev sit down in a big chair by the table, and put a box of cigarettes in front of him.

“Well?” he began, stroking his knees. “Let’s make a start. How old are you?”

He put questions and the medico answered. He asked whether Vassiliev’s father suffered from any peculiar diseases, if he had fits of drinking, was he distinguished by his severity or any other eccentricities. He asked the same questions about his grandfather, mother, sisters, and brothers. Having ascertained that his mother had a fine voice and occasionally appeared on the stage, he suddenly brightened up and asked:

“Excuse me, but could you recall whether the theatre was not a passion with your mother?” About twenty minutes passed. Vassiliev was bored by the doctor stroking his knees and talking of the same thing all the while.

“As far as I can understand your questions, Doctor,” he said. “You want to know whether my disease is hereditary or not. It is not hereditary.”

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The doctor went on to ask if Vassiliev had not any secret vices in his early youth, any blows on the head, any love passions, eccentricities, or exceptional infatuations. To half the questions habitually asked by careful doctors you may return no answer without any injury to your health; but Mikhail Sergueyich, the medico and the painter looked as though, if Vassiliev failed to answer even one single question, everything would be ruined. For some reason the doctor wrote down the answers he received on a scrap of paper. Discovering that Vassiliev had already passed through the faculty of natural science and was now in the Law faculty, the doctor began to be pensive. . . .

“He wrote a brilliant thesis last year . . .” said the medico.

“Excuse me. You mustn’t interrupt me; you prevent me from concentrating,” the doctor said, smiling with one cheek. “Yes, certainly that is important for the anamnesis. . . . Yes, yes. . . . And do you drink vodka?” he turned to Vassiliev.

“Very rarely.”

Another twenty minutes passed. The medico began *sotto voce* to give his opinion of the immediate causes of the fit and told how he, the painter and Vassiliev went to S—v Street the day before yesterday.

The indifferent, reserved, cold tone in which his friends and the doctor were speaking of the women and the miserable street seemed to him in the highest degree strange. . . .

“Doctor, tell me this one thing,” he said, restraining himself from being rude. “Is prostitution an evil or not?”

“My dear fellow, who disputes it?” the doctor said with an expression as though he had long ago solved all these questions for himself. “Who disputes it?”

“Are you a psychiatrist?”

“Yes-s, a psychiatrist.”

“Perhaps all of you are right,” said Vassiliev, rising and beginning to walk from corner to corner. “It may be. But to me all this seems amazing. They see a great achievement in my having passed through two faculties at the university; they praise me to the skies because I have written a work that will be thrown away and forgotten in three years’ time, but because I can’t speak of prostitutes as indifferently as I can about these chairs, they send me to doctors, call me a lunatic, and pity me.”

For some reason Vassiliev suddenly began to feel an intolerable pity for himself, his friends, and everybody whom he had seen the day before yesterday, and for the doctor. He began to sob and fell into the chair.

The friends looked interrogatively at the doctor. He, looking as though he magnificently understood the tears and the despair, and knew himself a specialist in this line, approached Vassiliev and gave him some drops to drink, and then when Vassiliev grew calm un-

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dressed him and began to examine the sensitiveness of his skin, of the knee reflexes

And Vassiliev felt better. When he was coming out of the doctor's he was already ashamed; the noise of the traffic did not seem irritating, and the heaviness beneath his heart became easier and easier as though it were thawing. In his hand were two prescriptions. One was for kali-bromatum, the other—morphia. He used to take both before.

He stood still in the street for a while, pensive, and then, taking leave of his friends, lazily dragged on towards the university.

MISFORTUNE

SOPHIA PIETROVNA, the wife of the solicitor Loubianzev, a handsome young woman of about twenty-five, was walking quickly along a forest path with her bungalow neighbour, the barrister Ilyin. It was just after four. In the distance, above the path, white feathery clouds gathered; from behind them some bright blue pieces of cloud showed through. The clouds were motionless, as if caught on the tops of the tall, aged fir trees. It was calm and warm.

In the distance the path was cut across by a low railway embankment, along which at this hour, for some reason or other, a sentry strode. Just behind the embankment a big, six-towered church with a rusty roof shone white.

"I did not expect to meet you here," Sophia Petrovna was saying, looking down and touching the last year's leaves with the end of her parasol. "But now I am glad to have met you. I want to speak to you seriously and finally. Ivan Mikhailovich, if you really love and respect me I implore you to stop pursuing me! You follow me like a shadow—there's such a wicked look in your eye—you make love to me—write extraordinary letters and . . . I don't know how all this is going to end—Good Heavens! What can all this lead to?"

Ilyin was silent. Sophia Petrovna took a few steps and continued:

"And this sudden complete change has happened in two or three weeks after five years of friendship. I do not know you any more, Ivan Mikhailovich."

Sophia Petrovna glanced sideways at her companion. He was staring intently, screwing up his eyes at the feathery clouds. The expression of his face was angry, capricious and distracted, like that of a man who suffers and at the same time must listen to nonsense.

"It is annoying that you yourself can't realise it!" Madame Loubianzev continued, shrugging her shoulders. "Please understand that you're not playing a very nice game. I am married, I love and respect my husband. I have a daughter. Don't you really care in the slightest for all this? Besides, as an old friend, you know my views

and she began to tell her what a good, dear, splendid father she had.

But when, soon after, Andrey Ilyitch arrived, she barely greeted him. The flow of imaginary feelings had ebbed away without convincing her of anything; she was only exasperated and enraged by the lie. She sat at the window, suffered, and raged. Only in distress can people understand how difficult it is to master their thoughts and feelings. Sophia Petrovna said afterwards a confusion was going on inside her as hard to define as to count a cloud of swiftly flying sparrows. Thus from the fact that she was delighted at her husband's arrival and pleased with the way he behaved at dinner, she suddenly concluded that she had begun to hate him. Andrey Ilyitch, languid with hunger and fatigue, while waiting for the soup, fell upon the sausage and ate it greedily, chewing loudly and moving his temples.

"My God," thought Sophia Petrovna. "I do love and respect him, but . . . why does he chew so disgustingly."

Her thoughts were no less disturbed than her feelings. Madame Loubianzev, like all who have no experience of the struggle with unpleasant thought, did her best not to think of her unhappiness, and the more zealously she tried, the more vivid Ilyin became to her imagination, the sand on his knees, the feathery clouds, the train. . . .

"Why did I—idiot—go to-day?" she teased herself. "And am I really a person who can't answer for herself?"

Fear has big eyes. When Andrey Ilyitch had finished the last course, she had already resolved to tell him everything and so escape from danger.

"Andrey, I want to speak to you seriously," she began after dinner, when her husband was taking off his coat and boots in order to have a lie down.

"Well?"

"Let's go away from here!"

"How—where to? It's still too early to go to town."

"No. Travel or something like that."

"Travel," murmured the solicitor, stretching himself. "I dream of it myself, but where shall I get the money, and who'll look after my business."

After a little reflection he added:

"Yes, really you are bored. Go by yourself if you want to."

Sophia Petrovna agreed; but at the same time she saw that Ilyin would be glad of the opportunity to travel in the same train with her, in the same carriage. . . .

She pondered and looked at her husband, who was full fed but still languid. For some reason her eyes stopped on his feet, tiny, almost womanish, in stupid socks. On the toe of both socks little threads were standing out. Under the drawn blind a bumble bee was knocking against the window pane and buzzing. Sophia Petrovna stared at the threads, listened to the bumble bee and pictured her journey . . . Day and night Ilyin sits opposite, without taking his eyes

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from her, angry with his weakness and pale with the pain of his soul. He brands himself as a libertine, accuses her, tears his hair; but when the dark comes he seizes the chance when the passengers go to sleep or alight at a station and falls on his knees before her and clasps her feet, as he did by the bench. . .

She realised that she was dreaming . . .

"Listen. I am not going by myself," she said. "You must come, too!"

"Sophochka, that's all imagination!" sighed Loubianzev. "You must be serious and only ask for the possible . . ."

"You'll come when you find out!" thought Sophia Petrovna.

Having decided to go away at all costs, she began to feel free from danger; her thoughts fell gradually into order, she became cheerful and even allowed herself to think about everything. Whatever she may think or dream about, she is going all the same. While her husband still slept, little by little, evening came . . .

She sat in the drawing-room playing the piano. Outside the window the evening animation, the sound of music, but chiefly the thought of her own cleverness in mastering her misery gave the final touch to her joy. Other women, her easy conscience told her, in a position like her own would surely not resist, they would spin round like a whirlwind; but she was nearly burnt up with shame, she suffered and now she had escaped from a danger which perhaps was nonexistent! Her virtue and resolution moved her so much that she even glanced at herself in the glass three times.

When it was dark visitors came. The men sat down to cards in the dining-room, the ladies were in the drawing room and on the terrace. Ilyin came last, he was stern and gloomy and looked ill. He sat down on a corner of the sofa and did not get up for the whole evening. Usually cheerful and full of conversation, he was now silent, frowning, and rubbing his eyes. When he had to answer a question he smiled with difficulty and only with his upper lip, answering abruptly and spitefully. He made about five jokes in all, but his jokes seemed crude and insolent. It seemed to Sophia Petrovna that he was on the brink of hysteria. But only now as she sat at the piano did she acknowledge that the unhappy man was not in the mood to joke, that he was sick in his soul, he could find no place for himself. It was for her sake he was ruining the best days of his career and his youth, wasting his last farthing on a bungalow, had left his mother and sisters uncared for, and, above all, was breaking down under the martyrdom of his struggle. From simple, common humanity she ought to take him seriously. . . .

All this was clear to her, even to paining her. If she were to go up to Ilyin now and say to him "No," there would be such strength in her voice that it would be hard to disobey. But she did not go up to him and she did not say it, did not even think it . . . The petty selfishness of a young nature seemed never to have been revealed in

her as strongly as that evening. She admitted that Ilyin was unhappy and that he sat on the sofa as if on hot coals. She was sorry for him, but at the same time the presence of the man who loved her so desperately filled her with a triumphant sense of her own power. She felt her youth, her beauty, her inaccessibility, and—since she had decided to go away—she gave herself full rein this evening. She coquetted, laughed continually, she sang with singular emotion, and as one inspired. Everything made her gay and everything seemed funny. It amused her to recall the incident of the bench, the sentry looking on. The visitors seemed funny to her, Ilyin's insolent jokes, his tie pin which she had never seen before. The pin was a little red snake with tiny diamond eyes; the snake seemed so funny that she was ready to kiss and kiss it.

Sophia Pietrovna, nervously sang romantic songs, with a kind of half-intoxication, and as if jeering at another's sorrow she chose sad, melancholy songs that spoke of lost hopes, of the past, of old age. . . . "And old age is approaching nearer and nearer," she sang. What had she to do with old age?

"There's something wrong going on in me," she thought now and then through laughter and singing.

At twelve o'clock the visitors departed. Ilyin was the last to go. She still felt warm enough about him to go with him to the lower step of the terrace. She had the idea of telling him that she was going away with her husband, just to see what effect this news would have upon him.

The moon was hiding behind the clouds, but it was so bright that Sophia Pietrovna could see the wind playing with the tails of his overcoat and with the creepers on the terrace. It was also plain how pale Ilyin was, and how he twisted his upper-lip, trying to smile.

"Sonia, Sonichka, my dear little woman," he murmured, not letting her speak. "My darling, my pretty one."

In a paroxysm of tenderness with tears in his voice, he showered her with endearing words each tenderer than the other, and was already speaking to her as if she were his wife or his mistress. Suddenly and unexpectedly to her, he put one arm round her and with the other hand he seized her elbow.

"My dear one, my beauty," he began to whisper, kissing the nape of her neck; "be sincere, come to me now."

She slipped out of his embrace and lifted her head to break out in indignation and revolt. But indignation did not come, and of all her praiseworthy virtue and purity, there was left only enough for her to say that which all average women say in similar circumstances:

"You must be mad."

"But really let us go," continued Ilyin. "Just now and over there by the bench I felt convinced that you, Sonia, were as helpless as myself. You too will be all the worse for it. You love me, and you are making a useless bargain with your conscience."

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Seeing that she was leaving him he seized her by her lace sleeve and ended quickly:

“If not to-day, then to-morrow; but you will have to give in. What’s the good of putting it off? My dear, my darling Sonia, the verdict has been pronounced. Why postpone the execution? Why deceive yourself?”

Sophia Pietrovna broke away from him and suddenly disappeared inside the door. She returned to the drawing-room, shut the piano mechanically, stared for a long time at the cover of a music book, and sat down. She could neither stand nor think. . . . From her agitation and passion remained only an awful weakness mingled with laziness and tiredness. Her conscience whispered to her that she had behaved wickedly and foolishly to-night, like a madwoman; that just now she had been kissed on the terrace, and even now she had some strange sensation in her waist and in her elbow. Not a soul was in the drawing-room. Only a single candle was burning. Madame Loubianzev sat on a little round stool before the piano without stirring as if waiting for something, and as if taking advantage of her extreme exhaustion and the dark a heavy unconquerable desire began to possess her. Like a boa-constrictor, it enchained her limbs and soul. It grew every second and was no longer threatening, but stood clear before her in all its nakedness.

She sat thus for half an hour, not moving, and not stopping herself from thinking of Ilyin. Then she got up lazily and went slowly into the bed-room. Andrey Ilyitch was in bed already. She sat by the window and gave herself to her desire. She felt no more “confusion.” All her feelings and thoughts pressed lovingly round some clear purpose. She still had a mind to struggle, but instantly she waved her hand impotently, realising the strength and the determination of the foe. To fight him power and strength were necessary, but her birth, upbringing and life had given her nothing on which to lean.

“You’re immoral, you’re horrible,” she tormented herself for her weakness. “You’re a nice sort, you are!”

So indignant was her insulted modesty at this weakness that she called herself all the bad names that she knew and she related to herself many insulting, degrading truths. Thus she told herself that she never was moral, and she had not fallen before only because there was no pretext, that her day-long struggle had been nothing but a game and a comedy. . . .

“Let us admit that I struggled,” she thought, “but what kind of a fight was it? Even prostitutes struggle before they sell themselves, and still they do sell themselves. It’s a pretty sort of fight. Like milk, turns in a day.” She realised that it was not love that drew her from her home nor Ilyin’s personality, but the sensations which await her. . . . A little week-end *type* like the rest of them.

“When the young bird’s mother was killed,” a hoarse tenor fi-

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nished singing.

If I am going, it's time, thought Sophia Petrovna. Her heart began to beat with a frightful force.

"Andrey," she almost cried. "Listen. Shall we go away? Shall we? Yes?"

"Yes. . . . I've told you already. You go alone."

"But listen," she said, "if you don't come too, you may lose me. I seem to be in love already."

"Who with?" Andrey Ilyitch asked.

"It must be all the same for you, who with," Sophia Petrovna cried out.

Andrey Ilyitch got up, dangled his feet over the side of the bed, with a look of surprise at the dark form of his wife.

"Imagination," he yawned.

He could not believe her, but all the same he was frightened. After having thought for a while, and asked his wife some unimportant questions, he gave his views of the family, of infidelity. . . . He spoke sleepily for about ten minutes and then lay down again. His remarks had no success. There are a great many opinions in this world, and more than half of them belong to people who have never known misery.

In spite of the late hour, the bungalow people were still moving behind their windows. Sophia Petrovna put on a long coat and stood for a while, thinking. She still had force of mind to say to her sleepy husband:

"Are you asleep? I'm going for a little walk. Would you like to come with me?" That was her last hope. Receiving no answer, she walked out. It was breezy and cool. She did not feel the breeze or the darkness but walked on and on. . . . An irresistible power drove her, and it seemed to her that if she stopped that power would push her in the back. "You're an immoral woman," she murmured mechanically. "You're horrible."

She was choking for breath, burning with shame, did not feel her feet under her, for that which drove her along was stronger than her shame, her reason, her fear. . . .

AFTER THE THEATRE

NADYA ZELENINA had just returned with her mother from the theatre, where they had been to see a performance of "Eugene Onegin." Entering her room, she quickly threw off her dress, loosened her hair, and sat down hurriedly in her petticoat and a white blouse to write a letter in the style of Tatiana.

"I love you,"—she wrote—"but you don't love me; no, you don't!"

The moment she had written this, she smiled. She was only six-

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teen years old, and so far she had not been in love. She knew that Gorny, the officer, and Gronsdiiev, the student, loved her; but now, after the theatre, she wanted to doubt their love. To be unloved and unhappy—how interesting. There is something beautiful, affecting, romantic in the fact that one loves deeply while the other is indifferent. Oniegin is interesting because he does not love at all, and Tatiana is delightful because she is very much in love; but if they loved each other equally and were happy, they would seem boring, instead.

“Don’t go on protesting that you love me,” Nadya wrote on, thinking of Gorny, the officer, “I can’t believe you. You’re very clever, educated, serious; you have a great talent, and perhaps, a splendid future waiting, but I am an uninteresting poor-spirited girl, and you yourself know quite well that I shall only be a drag upon your life. It’s true I carried you off your feet, and you thought you had met your ideal in me, but that was a mistake. Already you are asking yourself in despair, ‘Why did I meet this girl?’ Only your kindness prevents you from confessing it.”

Nadya pitied herself. She wept and went on.

“If it were not so difficult for me to leave mother and brother I would put on a nun’s gown and go where my eyes direct me. You would then be free to love another. If I were to die!”

Through her tears she could not make out what she had written. Brief rainbows trembled on the table, on the floor and the ceiling, as though Nadya were looking through a prism. Impossible to write. She sank back in her chair and began to think of Gorny.

Oh, how fascinating, how interesting men are! Nadya remembered the beautiful expression of Gorny’s face, appealing, guilty, and tender, when someone discussed music with him—the efforts he made to prevent the passion from sounding in his voice. Passion must be concealed in a society where cold reserve and indifference are the signs of good breeding. And he does try to conceal it, but he does not succeed, and everybody knows quite well that he has a passion for music. Never-ending discussions about music, blundering pronouncements by men who do not understand—keep him in incessant tension. He is scared, timid, silent. He plays superbly, as an ardent pianist. If he were not an officer, he would be a famous musician.

The tears dried in her eyes. Nadya remembered how Gorny told her of his love at a symphony concert, and again downstairs by the cloak-room.

“I am so glad you have at last made the acquaintance of the student Gronsdiiev,” she continued to write. “He is a very clever man, and you are sure to love him. Yesterday he was sitting with us till two o’clock in the morning. We were all so happy. I was sorry that you hadn’t come to us. He said a lot of remarkable things.”

Nadya laid her hands on the table and lowered her head. Her

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hair covered the letter. She remembered that Gronsdiiev also loved her, and that he had the same right to her letter as Gorny. Perhaps she had better write to Gronsdiiev? For no cause, a happiness began to quicken in her breast. At first it was a little one, rolling about in her breast like a rubber ball. Then it grew broader and bigger, and broke forth like a wave. Nadya had already forgotten about Gorny and Gronsdiiev. Her thoughts became confused. The happiness grew more and more. From her breast it ran into her arms and legs, and it seemed that a light fresh breeze blew over her head, stirring her hair. Her shoulders trembled with quiet laughter. The table and the lampglass trembled. Tears from her eyes splashed the letter. She was powerless to stop her laughter; and to convince herself that she had a reason for it, she hastened to remember something funny.

“What a funny poodle!” she cried, feeling that she was choking with laughter. “What a funny poodle!”

She remembered how Gronsdiiev was playing with Maxim the poodle after tea yesterday; how he told a story afterwards of a very clever poodle who was chasing a crow in the yard. The crow gave him a look and said:

“Oh, you swindler!”

The poodle did not know he had to do with a learned crow. He was terribly confused, and ran away dumfounded. Afterwards he began to bark.

“No, I’d better love Gronsdiiev,” Nadya decided and tore up the letter.

She began to think of the student, of his love, of her own love, with the result that the thoughts in her head swam apart and she thought about everything, about her mother, the street, the pencil, the piano. She was happy thinking, and found that everything was good, magnificent. Her happiness told her that this was not all, that a little later it would be still better. Soon it will be spring, summer. They will go with mother to Gorbiki in the country. Gorny will come for his holidays. He will walk in the orchard with her, and make love to her. Gronsdiiev will come too. He will play croquet with her and bowls. He will tell funny, wonderful stories. She passionately longed for the orchard, the darkness, the pure sky, the stars. Again her shoulders trembled with laughter and she seemed to awake to a smell of wormwood in the room; and a branch was tapping at the window.

She went to her bed and sat down. She did not know what to do with her great happiness. It overwhelmed her. She stared at the crucifix which hung at the head of her bed and saying:

“Dear God, dear God, dear God.”

THAT WRETCHED BOY

IVAN IVANICH LAPKIN, a pleasant looking young man, and Anna Zamblizky, a young girl with a little snub nose, walked down the sloping bank and sat down on the bench. The bench was close to the water's edge, among thick bushes of young willow. A heavenly spot! You sat down, and you were hidden from the world. Only the fish could see you and the catspaws which flashed over the water like lightning. The two young persons were equipped with rods, fish hooks, bags, tins of worms and everything else necessary. Once seated, they immediately began to fish.

"I am glad that we're left alone at last," said Lapkin, looking round. I've got a lot to tell you, Anna—tremendous . . . when I saw you for the first time . . . you've got a nibble . . . I understood then—why I am alive, I knew where my idol was, to whom I can devote my honest, hardworking life. . . It must be a big one . . . it is biting . . . When I saw you—for the first time in my life I fell in love—fell in love passionately! Don't pull. Let it go on biting . . . Tell me, darling, tell me—will you let me hope? No! I'm not worth it. I dare not even think of it—may I hope for . . . Pull!

Anna lifted her hand that held the rod—pulled, cried out. A silvery green fish shone in the air.

"Goodness! it's a perch! Help—quick! It's slipping off." The perch tore itself from the hook—danced in the grass towards its native element and . . . leaped into the water.

But instead of the little fish that he was chasing, Lapkin quite by accident caught hold of Anna's hand—quite by accident pressed it to his lips. She drew back, but it was too late; quite by accident their lips met and kissed; yes, it was an absolute accident! They kissed and kissed. Then came vows and assurances. . . . Blissful moments! But there is no such thing as absolute happiness in this life. If happiness itself does not contain a poison, poison will enter in from without. Which happened this time. Suddenly, while the two were kissing, a laugh was heard. They looked at the river and were paralysed. The schoolboy Kolia, Anna's brother, was standing in the water, watching the young people and maliciously laughing.

"Ah—ha! Kissing!" said he. "Right O, I'll tell Mother."

"I hope that you—as a man of honour," Lapkin muttered, blushing. "It's disgusting to spy on us, it's loathsome to tell tales, it's rotten. As a man of honour . . ."

"Give me a shilling, then I'll shut up!" the man of honour retorted. "If you don't, I'll tell."

Lapkin took a shilling out of his pocket and gave it to Kolia, who squeezed it in his wet fist, whistled, and swam away. And the young people did not kiss any more just then.

Next day Lapkin brought Kolia some paints and a ball from town, and his sister gave him all her empty pill boxes. Then they

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had to present him with a set of studs like dogs' heads. The wretched boy enjoyed this game immensely, and to keep it going he began to spy on them. Wherever Lapkin and Anna went, he was there too. He did not leave them alone for a single moment.

"Beast!" Lapkin gnashed his teeth. "So young and yet such a full fledged scoundrel. What on earth will become of him later!"

During the whole of July the poor lovers had no life apart from him. He threatened to tell on them; he dogged them and demanded more presents. Nothing satisfied him—finally he hinted at a gold watch. All right, they had to promise the watch.

Once, at table, when biscuits were being handed round, he burst out laughing and said to Lapkin: "Shall I let on? Ah—ha!"

Lapkin blushed fearfully and instead of a biscuit he began to chew his table napkin. Anna jumped up from the table and rushed out of the room.

And this state of things went on until the end of August, up to the day when Lapkin at last proposed to Anna. Ah! What a happy day that was! When he had spoken to her parents and obtained their consent Lapkin rushed into the garden after Kolia. When he found him he nearly cried for joy and caught hold of the wretched boy by the ear. Anna, who was also looking for Kolia came running up and grabbed him by the other ear. You should have seen the happiness depicted on their faces while Kolia roared and begged them:

"Darling, precious pets, I won't do it again. O-oh—O-oh! Forgive me!" And both of them confessed afterwards that during all the time they were in love with each other they never experienced such happiness, such overwhelming joy as during those moments when they pulled the wretched boy's ears.

ENEMIES

ABOUT ten o'clock of a dark September evening the Zemstvo doctor Kirilov's only son, six-year-old Andrey, died of diphtheria. As the doctor's wife dropped on to her knees before the dead child's cot and the first paroxysm of despair took hold of her, the bell rang sharply in the hall.

When the diphtheria came all the servants were sent away from the house, that very morning. Kirilov himself went to the door, just as he was, in his shirt-sleeves with his waistcoat unbuttoned, without wiping his wet face or hands, which had been burnt with carbolic acid. It was dark in the hall, and of the person who entered could be distinguished only his middle height, a white scarf and a big, extraordinarily pale face, so pale that it seemed as though its appearance made the hall brighter. . . .

"Is the doctor in?" the visitor asked abruptly.

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"I'm at home," answered Kirilov. "What do you want?"

"Oh, you're the doctor? I'm so glad!" The visitor was overjoyed and began to seek for the doctor's hand in the darkness. He found it and squeezed it hard in his own. "I'm very . . . very glad! We were introduced . . . I am Aboguïn . . . had the pleasure of meeting you this summer at Mr. Gnouchev's. I am very glad to have found you at home. . . . For God's sake, don't say you won't come with me immediately. . . . My wife has been taken dangerously ill . . . I have the carriage with me. . . ."

From the visitor's voice and movements it was evident that he had been in a state of violent agitation. Exactly as though he had been frightened by a fire or a mad dog, he could hardly restrain his hurried breathing, and he spoke quickly in a trembling voice. In his speech there sounded a note of real sincerity, of childish fright. Like all men who are frightened and dazed, he spoke in short, abrupt phrases and uttered many superfluous, quite unnecessary, words.

"I was afraid I shouldn't find you at home," he continued. "While I was coming to you I suffered terribly. . . . Dress yourself and let us go, for God's sake. . . . It happened like this. Papchinsky came to me—Alexander Siemionovich, you know him. . . . We were chatting. . . . Then we sat down to tea. Suddenly my wife cries out, presses her hands to her heart, and falls back in her chair. We carried her off to her bed and . . . and I rubbed her forehead with sal volatile, and splashed her with water. . . . She lies like a corpse. . . . I'm afraid that her heart's failed. . . . Let us go . . . Her father too died of heart-failure."

Kirilov listened in silence as though he did not understand the Russian language.

When Aboguïn once more mentioned Papchinsky and his wife's father, and once more began to seek for the doctor's hand in the darkness, the doctor shook his head and said, drawling each word listlessly:

"Excuse me, but I can't go. . . . Five minutes ago my . . . my son died."

"Is that true?" Aboguïn whispered, stepping back. "My God, what an awful moment to come! It's a terribly fated day . . . terribly! What a coincidence . . . and it might have been on purpose!"

Aboguïn took hold of the door handle and drooped his head in meditation. Evidently he was hesitating, not knowing whether to go away, or to ask the doctor once more.

"Listen," he said eagerly, seizing Kirilov by the sleeve. "I fully understand your state! God knows I'm ashamed to try to hold your attention at such a moment, but what can I do? Think yourself—who can I go to? There isn't another doctor here besides you. For heaven's sake come. I'm not asking for myself. It's not I that's ill!"

Silence began. Kirilov turned his back to Aboguïn, stood still for a while and slowly went out of the hall into the drawing-room. To

judge by his uncertain, machine-like movement, and by the attentiveness with which he arranged the hanging shade on the unlighted lamp in the drawing-room and consulted a thick book which lay on the table—at such a moment he had neither purpose nor desire, nor did he think of anything, and probably had already forgotten that there was a stranger standing in his hall. The gloom and the quiet of the drawing-room apparently increased his insanity. As he went from the drawing-room to his study he raised his right foot higher than he need, felt with his hands for the door-posts, and then one felt a certain perplexity in his whole figure, as though he had entered a strange house by chance, or for the first time in his life had got drunk, and now was giving himself up in bewilderment to the new sensation. A wide line of light stretched across the bookshelves on one wall of the study; this light, together with the heavy stifling smell of carbolic acid and ether came from the door ajar that led from the study into the bedroom. . . The doctor sank into a chair before the table; for a while he looked drowsily at the shining books, then rose and went into the bedroom.

Here, in the bedroom, dead quiet reigned. Everything, down to the last trifle, spoke eloquently of the tempest undergone, of weariness, and everything rested. The candle which stood among a close crowd of phials, boxes and jars on the stool and the big lamp on the chest of drawers brightly lit the room. On the bed, by the window, the boy lay open-eyed, with a look of wonder on his face. He did not move, but it seemed that his open eyes became darker and darker every second and sank into his skull. Having laid her hands on his body and hid her face in the folds of the bed-clothes, the mother now was on her knees before the bed. Like the boy she did not move, but how much living movement was felt in the coil of her body and in her hands! She was pressing close to the bed with her whole being, with eager vehemence, as though she were afraid to violate the quiet and comfortable pose which she had found at last for her weary body. Blankets, cloths, basins, splashes on the floor, brushes and spoons scattered everywhere, a white bottle of lime-water, the stifling heavy air itself—everything died away, and as it were plunged into quietude.

The doctor stopped by his wife, thrust his hands into his trouser pockets and bending his head on one side looked fixedly at his son. His face showed indifference; only the drops which glistened on his beard revealed that he had been lately weeping.

The repulsive terror of which we think when we speak of death was absent from the bed-room. In the pervading dumbness, in the mother's pose, in the indifference of the doctor's face was something attractive that touched the heart, the subtle and elusive beauty of human grief, which it will take men long to understand and describe, and only music, it seems, is able to express. Beauty too was felt in the stern stillness. Kirilov and his wife were silent and did not

weep, as though they confessed all the poetry of their condition. As once the season of their youth passed away, so now in this boy their right to bear children had passed away, alas! for ever to eternity. The doctor is forty-four years old, already grey and looks like an old man; his faded sick wife is thirty-five. Andrey was not merely the only son but the last.

In contrast to his wife the doctor's nature belonged to those which feel the necessity of movement when their soul is in pain. After standing by his wife for about five minutes, he passed from the bed-room, lifting his right foot too high, into a little room half filled with a big broad divan. From there he went to the kitchen. After wandering about the fireplace and the cook's bed, he stooped through a little door and came into the hall.

Here he saw the white scarf and the pale face again.

"At last," sighed Aboguin, seizing the door handle. "Let us go, please."

The doctor shuddered, glanced at him and remembered.

"Listen. I've told you already that I can't go," he said, livening. "What a strange idea!"

"Doctor, I'm made of flesh and blood, too. I fully understand your condition. I sympathise with you," Aboguin said in an imploring voice, putting his hand to his scarf. "But I am not asking for myself. My wife is dying. If you had heard her cry, if you'd seen her face, you would understand my insistence! My God—and I thought that you'd gone to dress yourself. The time is precious, Doctor! Let us go, I beg of you."

"I can't come," Kirilov said after a pause, and stepped into his drawing-room.

Aboguin followed him and seized him by the sleeve.

"You're in sorrow. I understand. But I'm not asking you to cure a toothache, or to give expert evidence—but to save a human life." He went on imploring like a beggar. "This life is more than any personal grief. I ask you for courage, for a brave deed—in the name of humanity."

"Humanity cuts both ways," Kirilov said irritably. "In the name of the same humanity I ask you not to take me away. My God, what a strange idea! I can hardly stand on my feet and you frighten me with humanity. I'm not fit for anything now. I won't go for anything. With whom shall I leave my wife? No, no. . . ."

Kirilov flung out his open hands and drew back. "And . . . and don't ask me," he continued, disturbed. "I'm sorry. . . . Under the Laws, Volume XIII., I'm obliged to go and you have the right to drag me by the neck. . . . Well, drag me, but . . . I'm not fit. . . . I'm not even able to speak. Excuse me."

"It's quite unfair to speak to me in that tone, Doctor," said Aboguin, again taking the doctor by the sleeve. "The thirteenth volume be damned! I have no right to do violence to your will. If you want

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to, come; if you don't, then God be with you; but it's not to your will that I apply, but to your feelings. A young woman is dying! You say your son died just now. Who could understand my terror better than you?"

Aboguin's voice trembled with agitation. His tremor and his tone were much more convincing than his words. Aboguin was sincere, but it is remarkable that every phrase he used came out stilted, soulless, inopportunistly florid, and as it were insulted the atmosphere of the doctor's house and the woman who was dying. He felt it himself, and in his fear of being misunderstood he exerted himself to the utmost to make his voice soft and tender so as to convince by the sincerity of his tone at least, if not by his words. As a rule, however deep and beautiful the words they affect only the unconcerned. They cannot always satisfy those who are happy or distressed because the highest expression of happiness or distress is most often silence. Lovers understand each other best when they are silent, and a fervent passionate speech at the graveside affects only outsiders. To the widow and children it seems cold and trivial.

Kirilov stood still and was silent. When Aboguin uttered some more words on the higher vocation of a doctor, and self-sacrifice, the doctor sternly asked:

"Is it far?"

"Thirteen or fourteen versts. I've got good horses, doctor. I give you my word of honour that I'll take you there and back in an hour. Only an hour."

The last words impressed the doctor more strongly than the references to humanity or the doctor's vocation. He thought for a while and said with a sigh,

"Well, let us go!"

He went off quickly, with a step that was now sure, to his study and soon after returned in a long coat. Aboguin, delighted, danced impatiently round him, helped him on with his overcoat, and accompanied him out of the house.

Outside it was dark, but brighter than in the hall. Now in the darkness the tall stooping figure of the doctor was clearly visible with the long, narrow beard and the aquiline nose. Besides his pale face Aboguin's big face could now be seen and a little student's cap which hardly covered the crown of his head. The scarf showed white only in front, but behind it was hid under his long hair.

"Believe me, I'm able to appreciate your magnanimity," murmured Aboguin, as he helped the doctor to a seat in the carriage. "We'll whirl away. Luke, dear man, drive as fast as you can, do!"

The coachman drove quickly. First appeared a row of bare buildings, which stood along the hospital yard. It was dark everywhere, save that at the end of the yard a bright light from someone's window broke through the garden fence, and three windows in the upper story of the separate house seemed to be paler than the air.

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Then the carriage drove into dense obscurity where you could smell mushroom damp, and hear the whisper of the trees. The noise of the wheels awoke the rooks who began to stir in the leaves and raised a doleful, bewildered cry as if they knew that the doctor's son was dead and Aboguín's wife ill. Then began to appear separate trees, a shrub. Sternly gleamed the pond, where big black shadows slept. The carriage rolled along over an even plain. Now the cry of the rooks was but faintly heard far away behind. Soon it became completely still.

Almost all the way Kirilov and Aboguín were silent; save that once Aboguín sighed profoundly and murmured,

"It's terrible pain. One never loves his nearest so much as when there is the risk of losing them."

And when the carriage was quietly passing through the river, Kirilov gave a sudden start, as though the dashing of the water frightened him, and he began to move impatiently.

"Let me go," he said in anguish. "I'll come to you later. I only want to send the attendant to my wife. She is all alone." Aboguín was silent. The carriage, swaying and rattling against the stones, drove over the sandy bank and went on. Kirilov began to toss about in anguish, and glanced around. Behind the road was visible in the scant light of the stars and the willows that fringed the bank disappearing into the darkness. To the right the plain stretched smooth and boundless as heaven. On it in the distance here and there dim lights were burning, probably on the turf-pits. To the left, parallel with the road stretched a little hill, tufted with tiny shrubs, and on the hill a big half-moon stood motionless, red, slightly veiled with a mist, and surrounded with fine clouds which seemed to be gazing upon it from every side, and guarding it, lest it should disappear.

In all nature one felt something hopeless and sick. Like a fallen woman who sits alone in a dark room trying not to think of her past, the earth languished with reminiscence of spring and summer and waited in apathy for ineluctable winter. Wherever one's glance turned nature showed everywhere like a dark, cold, bottomless pit, whence neither Kirilov nor Aboguín nor the red half-moon could escape. . . .

The nearer the carriage approached the destination the more impatient did Aboguín become. He moved about, jumped up and stared over the driver's shoulder in front of him. And when at last the carriage drew up at the foot of the grand staircase, nicely covered with a striped linen awning and he looked up at the lighted windows of the first floor one could hear his breath trembling.

"If anything happens . . . I shan't survive it," he said entering the hall with the doctor and slowly rubbing his hands in his agitation. "But I can't hear any noise. That means it's all right so far," he added, listening to the stillness.

No voices or steps were heard in the hall. For all the bright illu-

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mination the whole house seemed asleep. Now the doctor and Aboguin who had been in darkness up till now could examine each other. The doctor was tall, with a stoop, slovenly dressed, and his face was plain. There was something unpleasantly sharp, ungracious, and severe in his thick negro lips, his aquiline nose and his faded, indifferent look. His tangled hair, his sunken temples, the early grey in his long thin beard, that showed his shining chin, his pale grey complexion and the slipshod awkwardness of his manners—the hardness of it all suggested to the mind bad times undergone, an unjust lot and weariness of life and men. To look at the hard figure of the man, you could not believe that he had a wife and could weep over his child. Aboguin revealed something different. He was robust, solid and fair-haired, with a big head and large, yet soft, features, exquisitely dressed in the latest fashion. In his carriage, his tight-buttoned coat and his mane of hair you felt something noble and leonine. He walked with his head straight and his chest prominent, he spoke in a pleasant baritone, and in his manner of removing his scarf or arranging his hair there appeared a subtle, almost feminine, elegance. Even his pallor and childish fear as he glanced upwards to the staircase while taking off his coat, did not disturb his carriage or take from the satisfaction, the health and aplomb which his figure breathed.

“There’s no one about, nothing I can hear,” he said walking upstairs. “No commotion. May God be good!”

He accompanied the doctor through the hall to a large salon, where a big piano showed dark and a lustre hung in a white cover. Thence they both passed into a small and beautiful drawing-room, very cosy, filled with a pleasant, rosy half-darkness.

“Please sit here a moment, Doctor,” said Aboguin, “I . . . I won’t be a second. I’ll just have a look and tell them.”

Kirilov was left alone. The luxury of the drawing-room, the pleasant half-darkness, even his presence in a stranger’s unfamiliar house evidently did not move him. He sat in a chair looking at his hands burnt with carbolic acid. He had no more than a glimpse of the bright red lampshade, the ’cello case, and when he looked sideways across the room to where the clock was ticking, he noticed a stuffed wolf, as solid and satisfied as Aboguin himself.

It was still. . . . Somewhere far away in the other rooms someone uttered a loud “Ah!” A glass door, probably a cupboard door, rang, and again everything was still. After five minutes had passed, Kirilov did not look at his hands any more. He raised his eyes to the door through which Aboguin had disappeared.

Aboguin was standing on the threshold, but not the same man as went out. The expression of satisfaction and subtle elegance had disappeared from him. His face and hands, the attitude of his body were distorted with a disgusting expression either of horror or of tormenting physical pain. His nose, lips, moustache, all his features

were moving and as it were trying to tear themselves away from his face, but the eyes were as though laughing from pain.

Aboguin took a long heavy step into the middle of the room, stooped, moaned, and shook his fists.

“Deceived!” he cried, emphasising the syllable *cei*. “She deceived me! She’s gone! She fell ill and sent me for the doctor only to run away with this fool Papchinsky. My God!”

Aboguin stepped heavily towards the doctor, thrust his white soft fists before his face, and went on wailing, shaking his fists the while.

“She’s gone off! She’s deceived me! But why this lie? My God, my God! Why this dirty, foul trick, this devilish, serpent’s game? What have I done to her? She’s gone off.”

Tears gushed from his eyes. He turned on his heel and began to pace the drawing-room. Now in his short jacket and his fashionable narrow trousers in which his legs seemed too thin for his body, he was extraordinarily like a lion. Curiosity kindled in the doctor’s impassive face. He rose and eyed Aboguin.

“Well, where’s the patient?”

“The patient, the patient,” cried Aboguin, laughing, weeping, and still shaking his fists. “She’s not ill, but accursed. Vile—dastardly. The Devil himself couldn’t have planned a fouler trick. She sent me so that she could run away with a fool, an utter clown, an Alphonse! My God, far better she should have died. I’ll not bear it. I shall not bear it.”

The doctor stood up straight. His eyes began to blink, filled with tears; his thin beard began to move with his jaw right and left.

“What’s this?” he asked, looking curiously about. “My child’s dead. My wife in anguish, alone in all the house . . . I can hardly stand on my feet, I haven’t slept for three nights . . . and I’m made to play in a vulgar comedy, to play the part of a stage property! I don’t . . . I don’t understand it!”

Aboguin opened one fist, flung a crumpled note on the floor and trod on it, as upon an insect he wished to crush.

“And I didn’t see . . . didn’t understand,” he said through his set teeth, brandishing one fist round his head, with an expression as though someone had trod on a corn. “I didn’t notice how he came to see us every day. I didn’t notice that he came in a carriage to-day! What was the carriage for? And I didn’t see! Innocent!”

“I don’t . . . I don’t understand,” the doctor murmured. “What’s it all mean? It’s jeering at a man, laughing at a man’s suffering! That’s impossible . . . I’ve never seen it in my life before!”

With the dull bewilderment of a man who has just begun to understand that someone has bitterly offended him, the doctor shrugged his shoulders, waved his hands and not knowing what to say or do, dropped exhausted into a chair.

“Well, she didn’t love me any more. She loved another man. Very well. But why the deceit, why this foul treachery?” Aboguin

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spoke with tears in his voice. "Why, why? What have I done to you? Listen, doctor," he said passionately approaching Kirilov. "You were the unwilling witness of my misfortune, and I am not going to hide the truth from you. I swear I loved this woman. I loved her with devotion, like a slave. I sacrificed everything for her. I broke with my family, I gave up the service and my music. I forgave her things I could not have forgiven my mother and sister . . . I never once gave her an angry look . . . I never gave her any cause. Why this lie then? I do not demand love, but why this abominable deceit? If you don't love any more then speak out honestly, above all when you know what I feel about this matter. . ."

With tears in his eyes and trembling in all his bones, Aboguin was pouring out his soul to the doctor. He spoke passionately, pressing both hands to his heart. He revealed all the family secrets without hesitation, as though he were glad that these secrets were being torn from his heart. Had he spoken thus for an hour or two and poured out all his soul, he would surely have been easier.

Who can say whether, had the doctor listened and given him friendly sympathy, he would not, as so often happens, have been reconciled to his grief unprotesting, without turning to unprofitable follies? But it happened otherwise. While Aboguin was speaking the offended doctor changed countenance visibly. The indifference and amazement in his face gradually gave way to an expression of bitter outrage, indignation, and anger. His features became still sharper, harder, and more forbidding. When Aboguin put before his eyes the photograph of his young wife, with a pretty, but dry, inexpressive face like a nun's, and asked if it were possible to look at that face and grant that it could express a lie, the doctor suddenly started away, with flashing eyes, and said, coarsely forging out each several word:

"Why do you tell me all this? I do not want to hear! I don't want to," he cried and banged his fist upon the table. "I don't want your trivial vulgar secrets—to Hell with them. You dare not tell me such trivialities. Or do you think I have not yet been insulted enough! That I'm a lackey to whom you can give the last insult? Yes?"

Aboguin drew back from Kirilov and stared at him in surprise.

"Why did you bring me here?" the doctor went on, shaking his beard. "You marry out of high spirits, get angry out of high spirits, and make a melodrama—but where do I come in? What have I got to do with your romances? Leave me alone! Get on with your noble grabbing, parade your humane ideas, play—" the doctor gave a side-glance at the 'cello-case—"the double-bass and the trombone, stuff yourselves like capons, but don't dare to jeer at a real man! If you can't respect him, then you can at least spare him your attentions."

"What does all this mean?" Aboguin asked, blushing.

"It means that it's vile and foul to play with a man! I'm a doctor. You consider doctors and all men who work and don't reek of scent

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and harlotry, your footmen, your *mauvais tons*. Very well, but no one gave you the right to turn a man who suffers into a property."

"How dare you say that?" Aboguin asked quietly. Again his face began to twist about, this time in visible anger.

"How dare you bring me here to listen to trivial rubbish, when you know that I'm in sorrow?" the doctor cried and banged his fists on the table once more. "Who gave you the right to jeer at another's grief?"

"You're mad," cried Aboguin. "You're ungenerous. I too am deeply unhappy and . . . and . . ."

"Unhappy"—the doctor gave a sneering laugh—"Don't touch the word, it's got nothing to do with you. Wasters who can't get money on a bill call themselves unhappy too. A capon's unhappy, oppressed with all its superfluous fat. You worthless lot!"

"Sir, you're forgetting yourself," Aboguin gave a piercing scream. "For words like those, people are beaten. Do you understand?"

Aboguin thrust his hand into his side pocket, took out a pocket-book, found two notes and flung them on the table.

"There's your fee," he said, and his nostrils trembled. "You're paid."

"You dare not offer me money," said the doctor, and brushed the notes from the table to the floor. "You don't settle an insult with money."

Aboguin and the doctor stood face to face, heaping each other with undeserved insults. Never in their lives, even in a frenzy, had they said so much that was unjust and cruel and absurd. In both the selfishness of the unhappy is violently manifest. Unhappy men are selfish, wicked, unjust, and less able to understand each other than fools. Unhappiness does not unite people, but separates them; and just where one would imagine that people should be united by the community of grief, there is more injustice and cruelty done than among the comparatively contented.

"Send me home, please," the doctor cried, out of breath.

Aboguin rang the bell violently. Nobody came. He rang once more; then flung the bell angrily to the floor. It struck dully on the carpet and gave out a mournful sound like a death-moan. The footman appeared.

"Where have you been hiding, damn you?" The master sprang upon him with clenched fists. "Where have you been just now? Go away and tell them to send the carriage round for this gentleman, and get the brougham ready for me. Wait," he called out as the footman turned to go. "Not a single traitor remains to-morrow. Pack off all of you! I will engage new ones . . . Rabble!"

While they waited Aboguin and the doctor were silent. Already the expression of satisfaction and the subtle elegance had returned to the former. He paced the drawing-room, shook his head elegantly and evidently was planning something. His anger was not yet cool,

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but he tried to make as if he did not notice his enemy. . . . The doctor stood with one hand on the edge of the table, looking at Aboguin with that deep, rather cynical, ugly contempt with which only grief and an unjust lot can look, when they see satiety and elegance before them.

A little later, when the doctor took his seat in the carriage and drove away, his eyes still glanced contemptuously. It was dark, much darker than an hour ago. The red half-moon had now disappeared behind the little hill, and the clouds which watched it lay in dark spots round the stars. The brougham with the red lamps began to rattle on the road and passed the doctor. It was Aboguin on his way to protest, to commit all manner of folly.

All the way the doctor thought not of his wife or Andrey, but only of Aboguin and those who lived in the house he just left. His thoughts were unjust, inhuman, and cruel. He passed sentence on Aboguin, his wife, Papchinsky, and all those who live in rosy semi-darkness and smell of scent. All the way he hated them, and his heart ached with his contempt for them. The conviction he formed about them would last his life long.

Time will pass and Kirilov's sorrow, but this conviction, unjust and unworthy of the human heart, will not pass, but will remain in the doctor's mind until the grave.

A TRIFLING OCCURRENCE

NICOLAI ILYICH BYELYAEV, a Petersburg landlord, very fond of the racecourse, a well fed, pink young man of about thirty-two, once called towards evening on Madame Irnin—Olga Ivanovna—with whom he had a liaison, or, to use his own phrase, spun out a long and tedious romance. And indeed the first pages of this romance, pages of interest and inspiration, had been read long ago; now they dragged on and on, and presented neither novelty nor interest.

Finding that Olga Ivanovna was not at home, my hero lay down a moment on the drawingroom sofa and began to wait.

“Good evening, Nicolai Ilyich,” he suddenly heard a child's voice say. “Mother will be in in a moment. She's gone to the dress-maker's with Sonya.”

In the same drawing-room on the sofa lay Olga Vassilievna's son, Alyosha, a boy about eight years old, well built, well looked after, dressed up like a picture in a velvet jacket and long black stockings. He lay on a satin pillow, and apparently imitating an acrobat whom he had lately seen in the circus, lifted up first one leg then the other. When his elegant legs began to be tired, he moved his hands, or he jumped up impetuously and then went on all fours, trying to stand with his legs in the air. All this he did with a most serious face,

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breathing heavily, as if he himself found no happiness in God's gift of such a restless body.

"Ah, how do you do, my friend?" said Byelyaev. "Is it you? I didn't notice you. Is your mother well?"

At the moment Alyosha had just taken hold of the toe of his left foot in his right hand and got into a most awkward pose. He turned head over heels, jumped up, and glanced from under the big, fluffy lampshade at Byelyaev.

"How can I put it?" he said, shrugging his shoulders. "As a matter of plain fact mother is never well. You see she's a woman, and women, Nicolai Ilyich, have always some pain or another."

For something to do, Byelyaev began to examine Alyosha's face. All the time he had been acquainted with Olga Ivanovna he had never once turned his attention to the boy and had completely ignored his existence. A boy is stuck in front of your eyes, but what is he doing here, what is his *rôle*?—you don't want to give a single thought to the question.

In the evening dusk Alyosha's face with a pale forehead and steady black eyes unexpectedly reminded Byelyaev of Olga Vassilievna as she was in the first pages of the romance. He had the desire to be affectionate to the boy.

"Come here, whipper-snapper," he said. "Come and let me have a good look at you, quite close."

The boy jumped off the sofa and ran to Byelyaev.

"Well?" Nicolai Ilyich began, putting his hand on the thin shoulders. "And how are things with you?"

"How shall I put it? . . . They used to be much better before."

"How?"

"Quite simple. Before, Sonya and I only had to do music and reading, and now we're given French verses to learn. You've had your hair cut lately?"

"Yes, just lately."

"That's why I noticed it. Your beard's shorter. May I touch it . . . doesn't it hurt?"

"No, not a bit."

"Why is it that it hurts if you pull one hair, and when you pull a whole lot, it doesn't hurt a bit? Ah, ah! You know it's a pity you don't have side-whiskers. You should shave here, and at the sides . . . and leave the hair just here."

The boy pressed close to Byelyaev and began to play with his watch-chain.

"When I go to the gymnasium," he said, "Mother is going to buy me a watch. I'll ask her to buy me a chain just like this. What a fine locket! Father has one just the same, but yours has stripes, here, and his has got letters . . . Inside it's mother's picture. Father has another chain now, not in links, but like a ribbon . . ."

"How do you know? Do you see your father?"

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"I? Mm . . . no . . . I . . ."

Alyosha blushed and in the violent confusion of being detected in a lie began to scratch the locket busily with his finger-nail. Byelyaev looked steadily at his face and asked:

"Do you see your father?"

"No . . . no!"

"But, be honest—on your honour. By your face I can see you're not telling me the truth. If you made a slip of the tongue by mistake, what's the use of shuffling. Tell me, do you see him? As one friend to another."

Alyosha mused.

"And you won't tell Mother?" he asked.

"What next?"

"On your word of honour."

"My word of honour."

"Swear an oath."

"What a nuisance you are! What do you take me for?"

Alyosha looked round, made big eyes and began to whisper.

"Only for God's sake don't tell Mother! Never tell it to anyone at all, because it's a secret. God forbid that Mother should ever get to know; then I and Sonya and Pelagueia will pay for it. . . Listen. Sonya and I meet Father every Tuesday and Friday. When Pelagueia takes us for a walk before dinner, we go into Apfel's sweet-shop and Father's waiting for us. He always sits in a separate room, you know, where there's a splendid marble table and an ash-tray shaped like a goose without a back . . ."

"And what do you do there?"

"Nothing!—First, we welcome one another, then we sit down at a little table and Father begins to treat us to coffee and cakes. You know, Sonya eats meat-pies, and I can't bear pies with meat in them! I like them made of cabbage and eggs. We eat so much that afterwards at dinner we try to eat as much as we possibly can so that Mother shan't notice."

"What do you talk about there?"

"To Father? About anything. He kisses us and cuddles us, tells us all kinds of funny stories. You know, he says that he will take us to live with him when we are grown up. Sonya doesn't want to go, but I say 'Yes.' Of course, it'll be lonely without Mother; but I'll write letters to her. How funny: we could go to her for our holidays then—couldn't we? Besides, Father says that he'll buy me a horse. He's a splendid man. I can't understand why Mother doesn't invite him to live with her or why she says we mustn't meet him. He loves Mother very much indeed. He's always asking us how she is and what she's doing. When she was ill, he took hold of his head like this . . . and ran, ran, all the time. He is always telling us to obey and respect her. Tell me, is it true that we're unlucky?"

"H'm . . . how?"

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“Father says so. He says: ‘You are unlucky children.’ It’s quite strange to listen to him. He says: ‘You are unhappy, I’m unhappy, and Mother’s unhappy.’ He says: ‘Pray to God for yourselves and for her.’”

Alyosha’s eyes rested upon the stuffed bird and he mused.

“Exactly . . . snorted Byelyaev. “This is what you do. You arrange conferences in sweet-shops. And your mother doesn’t know?” “No . . . How could she know? Pelagueia won’t tell for anything. The day before yesterday Father stood us pears. Sweet, like jam. I had two.”

“H’m . . . well, now . . . tell me, doesn’t your father speak about me?”

“About you? How shall I put it?” Alyosha gave a searching glance to Byelyaev’s face and shrugged his shoulders.

“He doesn’t say anything in particular.”

“What does he say, for instance?”

“You won’t be offended?”

“What next? Why, does he abuse me?”

“He doesn’t abuse you, but you know . . . he is cross with you. He says that it’s through you that Mother’s unhappy and that you . . . ruined Mother. But he is so queer! I explain to him that you are good and never shout at Mother, but he only shakes his head.”

“Does he say those very words: that I ruined her?”

“Yes. Don’t be offended, Nicolai Ilyich!” Byelyaev got up, stood still a moment, and then began to walk about the drawingroom.

“This is strange, and . . . funny,” he murmured, shrugging his shoulders and smiling ironically. “He is to blame all round, and now *I’ve* ruined her, eh? What an innocent lamb! Did he say those very words to you: that I ruined your mother?”

“Yes, but . . . you said that you wouldn’t get offended.”

“I’m not offended, and . . . and it’s none of your business! No, it . . . it’s quite funny though. I fell into the trap, yet I’m to be blamed as well.”

The bell rang. The boy dashed from his place and ran out. In a minute a lady entered the room with a little girl. It was Olga Ivanovna, Alyosha’s mother. After her, hopping, humming noisily, and waving his hands, followed Alyosha.

“Of course, who is there to accuse except me?” he murmured, sniffing. “He’s right, he’s the injured husband.”

“What’s the matter?” asked Olga Ivanovna.

“What’s the matter! Listen to the kind of sermon your dear husband preaches. It appears I’m a scoundrel and a murderer, I’ve ruined you and the children. All of you are unhappy, and only I am awfully happy! Awfully, awfully happy!”

“I don’t understand, Nicolai! What is it?”

“Just listen to this young gentleman,” Byelyaev said, pointing to Alyosha.

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Alyosha blushed, then became pale suddenly and his whole face was twisted in fright.

“Nicolai Ilyich,” he whispered loudly. “Shh!”

Olga Ivanovna glanced in surprise at Alyosha, at Byelyaev, and then again at Alyosha.

“Ask him, if you please,” went on Byelyaev. “That stupid fool Pelagueia of yours, takes them to sweet-shops and arranges meetings with their dear father there. But that’s not the point. The point is that the dear father is a martyr, and I’m a murderer, I’m a scoundrel, who broke the lives of both of you. . . .”

“Nicolai Ilyich!” moaned Alyosha. “You gave your word of honour!”

“Ah, let me alone!” Byelyaev waved his hand. “This is something more important than any words of honour. The hypocrisy revolts me, the lie!”

“I don’t understand,” muttered Olga Ivanovna, and tears began to glimmer in her eyes. “Tell me, Lyolka,”—she turned to her son, “Do you see your father?”

Alyosha did not hear and looked with horror at Byelyaev.

“It’s impossible,” said the mother. “I’ll go and ask Pelagueia.”

Olga Ivanovna went out.

“But, but you gave me your word of honour,” Alyosha said trembling all over.

Byelyaev waved his hand at him and went on walking up and down. He was absorbed in his insult, and now, as before, he did not notice the presence of the boy. He, a big serious man, had nothing to do with boys. And Alyosha sat down in a corner and in terror told Sonya how he had been deceived. He trembled, stammered, wept. This was the first time in his life that he had been set, roughly, face to face with a lie. He had never known before that in this world besides sweet pears and cakes and expensive watches, there exist many other things which have no name in children’s language.

A GENTLEMAN FRIEND

WHEN she came out of the hospital the charming Vanda, or, according to her passport, “the honourable lady-citizen Nastasya Kanavkina,” found herself in a position in which she had never been before: without a roof and without a sou. What was to be done?

First of all, she went to a pawnshop to pledge her turquoise ring, her only jewellery. They gave her a rouble for the ring . . . but what can you buy for a rouble? For that you can’t get a short jacket *à la mode*, or an elaborate hat, or a pair of brown shoes; yet without these things she felt naked. She felt as though, not only the people, but even the horses and dogs were staring at her and laughing at the plainness of her clothes. And her only thought was for her clothes;

she did not care at all what she ate or where she slept.

"If only I were to meet a gentleman friend. . ." she thought. "I could get some money . . . Nobody would say 'No,' because . . ."

But she came across no gentleman friends. It's easy to find them of nights in the *Renaissance*, but they wouldn't let her go into the *Renaissance* in that plain dress and without a hat. What's to be done? After a long time of anguish, vexed and weary with walking, sitting, and thinking, Vanda made up her mind to play her last card: to go straight to the rooms of some gentleman friend and ask him for money.

"But who shall I go to?" she pondered. "I can't possibly go to Misha . . . he's got a family . . . The ginger-headed old man is at his office . . ."

Vanda recollected Finkel, the dentist, the converted Jew, who gave her a bracelet three months ago. Once she poured a glass of beer on his head at the German club. She was awfully glad that she had thought of Finkel.

"He'll be certain to give me some, if only I find him in . . ." she thought, on her way to him. "And if he won't, then I'll break every single thing there."

She had her plan already prepared. She approached the dentist's door. She would run up the stairs, with a laugh, fly into his private room and ask for twenty-five roubles . . . But when she took hold of the bell-pull, the plan went clean out of her head. Vanda suddenly began to be afraid and agitated, a thing which had never happened to her before. She was never anything but bold and independent in drunken company; but now, dressed in common clothes, and just like any ordinary person begging a favour, she felt timid and humble.

"Perhaps he has forgotten me . . ." she thought, not daring to pull the bell. "And how can I go up to him in a dress like this? As if I were a pauper, or a dowdy respectable. . ."

She rang the bell irresolutely.

There were steps behind the door. It was the porter.

"Is the doctor at home?" she asked.

She would have been very pleased now if the porter had said "No," but instead of answering he showed her into the hall, and took her jacket. The stairs seemed to her luxurious and magnificent, but what she noticed first of all in all the luxury was a large mirror in which she saw a ragged creature without an elaborate hat, without a modish jacket, and without a pair of brown shoes. And Vanda found it strange that, now that she was poorly dressed and looking more like a seamstress or a washerwoman, for the first time she felt ashamed, and had no more assurance or boldness left. In her thoughts she began to call herself Nastya Kanavkina, instead of Vanda as she used.

"This way, please!" said the maid-servant, leading her to the pri-

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vate room. "The doctor will be here immediately . . . Please, take a seat."

Vanda dropped into an easy chair.

"I'll say: 'Lend me . . .'" she thought. "That's the right thing, because we are acquainted. But the maid must go out of the room . . . It's awkward in front of the maid . . . What is she standing there for?"

In five minutes the door opened and Finkel entered—a tall, swarthy, convert Jew, with fat cheeks and goggle-eyes. His cheeks, eyes, belly, fleshy hips—were all so full, repulsive, and coarse! At the *Renaissance* and the German club he used always to be a little drunk, to spend a lot of money on women, patiently put up with all their tricks—for instance, when Vanda poured the beer on his head, he only smiled and shook his finger at her—but now he looked dull and sleepy; he had the pompous, chilly expression of a superior, and he was chewing something.

"What is the matter?" he asked, without looking at Vanda. Vanda glanced at the maid's serious face, at the blown-out figure of Finkel, who obviously did not recognise her, and she blushed.

"What's the matter?" the dentist repeated, irritated.

"To . . . oth ache . . ." whispered Vanda.

"Ah . . . which tooth . . . where?"

Vanda remembered she had a tooth with a hole.

"At the bottom . . . to the right," she said.

"H'm . . . open your mouth."

Finkel frowned, held his breath, and began to work the aching tooth loose.

"Do you feel any pain?" he asked, picking at her tooth with some instrument.

"Yes, I do . . ." Vanda lied. "Shall I remind him?" she thought, "he'll be sure to remember . . . But . . . the maid . . . what is she standing there for?"

Finkel suddenly snorted like a steam-engine, straight into her mouth, and said:

"I don't advise you to have a stopping . . . Anyhow the tooth is quite useless."

Again he picked at the tooth for a little, and soiled Vanda's lips and gums with his tobacco-stained fingers. Again he held his breath and dived into her mouth with something cold . . .

Vanda suddenly felt a terrible pain, shrieked and seized Finkel's hand . . .

"Never mind . . ." he murmured. "Don't be frightened . . . This tooth isn't any use."

And his tobacco-stained fingers, covered with blood, held up the extracted tooth before her eyes. The maid came forward and put a bowl to her lips.

"Rinse your mouth with cold water at home," said Finkel. "That

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will make the blood stop.” He stood before her in the attitude of a man impatient to be left alone at last.

“Good-bye . . .” she said, turning to the door.

“H’m! And who’s to pay me for the work?” Finkel asked laughingly.

“Ah . . . yes!” Vanda recollected, blushed and gave the dentist the rouble she had got for the turquoise ring.

When she came into the street she felt still more ashamed than before, but she was not ashamed of her poverty any more. Nor did she notice any more that she hadn’t an elaborate hat or a modish jacket. She walked along the street spitting blood and each red spittle told her about her life, a bad, hard life; about the insults she had suffered and had still to suffer—to-morrow, a week, a year hence—her whole life, till death . . .

“Oh, how terrible it is!” she whispered. “My God, how terrible!”

But the next day she was at the *Renaissance* and she danced there. She wore a new, immense red hat, a new jacket *à la mode* and a pair of brown shoes. She was treated to supper by a young merchant from Kazan.

OVERWHELMING SENSATIONS

THIS happened not so very long ago in the Moscow Circuit Court. The jurymen, left in court for the night, before going to bed, began a conversation about overwhelming sensations. It was occasioned by someone’s recollection of a witness who became a stammerer and turned grey, owing, as he said, to one dreadful moment. The jurymen decided before going to bed that each one of them should dig into his memories and tell a story. Life is short; but still there is not a single man who can boast that he had not had some dreadful moments in his past.

One jurymen related how he was nearly drowned. A second told how one night he poisoned his own child, in a place where there was neither doctor nor chemist, by giving the child white copperas in mistake for soda. The child did not die, but the father nearly went mad. A third, not an old man, but sickly, described his two attempts to commit suicide. Once he shot himself; the second time he threw himself in front of a train.

The fourth, a short, stout man, smartly dressed, told the following story:

“I was no more than twenty-two or twenty-three years old, when I fell head over heels in love with my present wife and proposed to her. Now, I would gladly give myself a thrashing for that early marriage; but then—well, I don’t know what would have happened to me if Natasha had refused. My love was most ardent, the kind described in novels as mad, passionate, and so on. My happiness choked me,

and I did not know how to escape from it. I bored my father, my friends, the servants by continually telling them how desperately I was in love. Happy people are quite the most tiresome and boring. I used to be awfully exasperating. Even now I'm ashamed.

"At the time I had a newly-called barrister among my friends. The barrister is now known all over Russia, but then he was only at the beginning of his popularity, and he was not rich or famous enough to have the right not to recognise a friend when he met him or not to raise his hat. I used to go and see him once or twice a week.

"When I came, we used both to stretch ourselves upon the sofas and begin to philosophise.

"Once I lay on the sofa, harping on the theme that there is no more ungrateful profession than a barrister's. I tried to show that after the witnesses have been heard the Court can easily dispense with the Crown Prosecutor and the barrister, because they are equally unnecessary and only hindrances. If an adult juryman, sound in spirit and mind, is convinced that this ceiling is white, or that Ivanov is guilty, no Demosthenes has the power to fight and overcome his conviction. Who can convince me that my moustache is carrotty when I know it is black? When I listen to an orator I may perhaps get sentimental and even shed a tear, but my rooted convictions, for the most part based on the obvious and on facts, will not be changed an atom. My friend the barrister contended that I was still young and silly and was talking childish nonsense. In his opinion an obvious fact when illumined by conscientious experts became still more obvious. That was his first point. His second was that a talent is a force, an elemental power, a hurricane, that is able to turn even stones to dust, not to speak of such trifles as the convictions of householders and small shopkeepers. It is as hard for human frailty to struggle against a talent as it is to look at the sun without being blinded or to stop the wind. By the power of the word one single mortal converts thousands of convinced savages to Christianity. Ulysses was the most convinced person in the world, but he was all submission before the Syrens, and so on. All history is made up of such instances. In life we meet them at every turn. And so it ought to be; otherwise a clever person of talent would not be preferred before the stupid and untalented.

"I persisted and continued to argue that a conviction is stronger than any talent, though, speaking frankly, I myself could not define what exactly is a conviction and what is a talent. Probably I talked only for the sake of talking.

"Take even your own case' . . . said the barrister. 'You are convinced that your *fiancée* is an angel and that there's not a man in all the town happier than you. I tell you, ten or twenty minutes would be quite enough for me to make you sit down at this very table and write to break off the engagement.'

"I began to laugh.

"Don't laugh. I'm talking seriously,' said my friend. 'If I only had the desire, in twenty minutes you would be happy in the thought that you have been saved from marriage. My talent is not great, but neither are you strong?'

"Well, try, please,' I said.

"No, why should I? I only said it in passing. You're a good boy. It would be a pity to expose you to such an experiment. Besides, I'm not in the mood, to-day.'

"We sat down to supper. The wine and thoughts of Natasha and my love utterly filled me with a sense of youth and happiness. My happiness was so infinitely great that the green-eyed barrister opposite me seemed so unhappy, so little, so grey!

"But do try,' I pressed him. "I beg you.'

"The barrister shook his head and knit his brows. Evidently I had begun to bore him.

"I know,' he said, 'that when the experiment is over you will thank me and call me saviour, but one must think of your sweetheart too. She loves you, and your refusal would make her suffer. But what a beauty she is! I envy you.'

"The barrister sighed, swallowed some wine, and began to speak of what a wonderful creature my Natasha was. He had an uncommon gift for description. He could pour out a whole heap of words about a woman's eyelashes or her little finger. I listened to him with delight.

"I've seen many women in my life-time,' he said, 'but I give you my word of honour, I tell you as a friend, your Natasha Andreevna is a gem, a rare girl! Of course, there are defects, even a good many, I grant you, but still she is charming.'

"And the barrister began to speak of the defects of my sweetheart. Now I quite understand it was a general conversation about women, one about their weak points in general; but it appeared to me then as though he was speaking only of Natasha. He went into raptures about her snub-nose, her excited voice, her shrill laugh, her affectation—indeed, about everything I particularly disliked in her. All this was in his opinion infinitely amiable, gracious and feminine. Imperceptibly he changed from enthusiasm first to paternal edification, then to a light, sneering tone. . . . There was no Chairman of the Bench with us to stop the barrister riding the high horse. I hadn't a chance of opening my mouth—and what could I have said? My friend said nothing new, his truths were long familiar. The poison was not at all in what he said, but altogether in the devilish form in which he said it. A form of Satan's own invention! As I listened to him I was convinced that one and the same word had a thousand meanings and nuances according to the way it is pronounced and the turn given to the sentence. I certainly cannot reproduce the tone or the form. I can only say that as I listened to my friend and paced

from corner to corner of my room, I was revolted, exasperated, contemptuous according as he felt. I even believed him when, with tears in his eyes, he declared to me that I was a great man, deserving a better fate, and destined in the future to accomplish some remarkable exploit, from which I might be prevented by my marriage.

“My dear friend,’ he exclaimed, firmly grasping my hand, ‘I implore you, I command you: stop before it is too late. Stop! God save you from this strange and terrible mistake! My friend, don’t ruin your youth.’

“Believe me or not as you will, but finally I sat down at the table and wrote to my sweetheart breaking off the engagement. I wrote and rejoiced that there was still time to repair my mistake. When the envelope was sealed I hurried into the street to put it in a pillar box. The barrister came with me.

“Splendid! Superb!’ he praised me when my letter to Natasha disappeared into the darkness of the pillar-box. ‘I congratulate you with all my heart. I’m delighted for your sake.’

“After we had gone about ten steps together, the barrister continued:

“Of course, marriage has its bright side too. I, for instance, belong to the kind of men for whom marriage and family life are everything.’

“He was already describing his life: all the ugliness of a lonely bachelor existence appeared before me.

“He spoke with enthusiasm of his future wife, of the pleasures of an ordinary family life, and his transports were so beautiful and sincere that I was in absolute despair by the time we reached his door.

“What are you doing with me, you damnable man?’ I said panting. ‘You’ve ruined me! Why did you make me write that cursed letter? I love her! I love her!’

“And I swore that I was in love. I was terrified of my action. It already seemed wild and absurd to me. Gentlemen, it is quite impossible to imagine a more overwhelming sensation than mine at that moment! If a kind man had happened to slip a revolver into my hand I would have put a bullet through my head gladly.

“Well, that’s enough, enough!’ the advocate said, patting my shoulder and beginning to laugh. ‘Stop crying! The letter won’t reach your sweetheart. It was I, not you, wrote the address on the envelope, and I muddled it up so that they won’t be able to make anything of it at the post-office. But let this be a lesson to you. Don’t discuss things you don’t understand.’”

“Now, gentlemen, next, please.”

The fifth jurymen had settled himself comfortably and already opened his mouth to begin his story, when we heard the clock striking from Spaisky Church-tower.

“Twelve . . .” one of the jurymen counted. “To which class, gentlemen, would you assign the sensations which our prisoner at the

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bar is now feeling? The murderer passes the night here in a prisoner's cell, either lying or sitting, certainly without sleeping and all through the sleepless night listens to the striking of the hours. What does he think of? What dreams visit him?"

And all the jurymen suddenly forgot about overwhelming sensations. The experience of their friend, who once wrote the letter to his Natasha, seemed unimportant, and not even amusing. Nobody told any more stories; but they began to go to bed quietly, in silence.

EXPENSIVE LESSONS

IT is a great bore for an educated person not to know foreign languages. Vorotov felt it strongly, when on leaving the university after he had got his degree he occupied himself with a little scientific research.

"It's awful!" he used to say, losing his breath (for although only twenty-six he was stout, heavy, and short of breath). "It's awful. Without knowing languages I'm like a bird without wings. I'll simply have to chuck the work."

So he decided, come what might, to conquer his natural laziness and to study French and German, and he began to look out for a teacher.

One winter afternoon, as Vorotov sat working in his study, the servant announced a lady to see him.

"Show her in," said Vorotov.

And a young lady, exquisitely dressed in the latest fashion, entered the study. She introduced herself as Alice Ossipovna Enquette, a teacher of French, and said that a friend of Vorotov's had sent her to him.

"Very glad! Sit down!" said Vorotov, losing his breath, and clutching at the collar of his night shirt. (He always worked in a night shirt in order to breathe more easily.) "You were sent to me by Peter Sergueyevich? Yes . . . Yes . . . I asked him . . . Very glad!"

While he discussed the matter with Mademoiselle Enquette he glanced at her shyly, with curiosity. She was a genuine Frenchwoman, very elegant, and still quite young. From her pale and languid face, from her short, curly hair and unnaturally small waist, you would not think her more than eighteen, but looking at her broad, well-developed shoulders, her charming back and severe eyes, Vorotov decided that she was certainly not less than twenty-three, perhaps even twenty-five; but then again it seemed to him that she was only eighteen. Her face had the cold, business-like expression of one who had come to discuss a business matter. Never once did she smile or frown, and only once a look of perplexity flashed into her eyes, when she discovered that she was not asked to teach children but a grown up, stout young man.

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“So, Alice Ossipovna,” Vorotov said to her, “you will give me a lesson daily from seven to eight o’clock in the evening. With regard to your wish to receive a rouble a lesson, I have no objection at all. A rouble—well, let it be a rouble. . . .”

And he went on asking her if she wanted tea or coffee, if the weather was fine, and, smiling good naturedly, stroking the tablecloth with the palm of his hand, he asked her kindly who she was, where she had completed her education, and how she earned her living.

In a cold, business-like tone Alice Ossipovna answered that she had completed her education at a private school, and had then qualified as a domestic teacher, that her father had died recently of scarlet fever, her mother was alive and made artificial flowers, that she, Mademoiselle Enquette, gave private lessons at a pension in the morning, and from one o’clock right until the evening she taught in respectable private houses.

She went, leaving a slight and almost imperceptible perfume of a woman’s dress behind her. Vorotov did not work for a long time afterwards but sat at the table stroking the green cloth and thinking.

“It’s very pleasant to see girls earning their own living,” he thought. “On the other hand it is very unpleasant to realise that poverty does not spare even such elegant and pretty girls as Alice Ossipovna; she, too, must struggle for her existence. Rotten luck! . . .”

Having never seen virtuous Frenchwomen he also thought that this exquisitely dressed Alice Ossipovna, with her well-developed shoulders and unnaturally small waist was in all probability, engaged in something else besides teaching.

Next evening when the clock pointed to five minutes to seven, Alice Ossipovna arrived, rosy from the cold; she opened Margot (an elementary text-book) and began without any preamble:

“The French grammar has twenty-six letters. The first is called A, the second B . . .”

“Pardon,” interrupted Vorotov, smiling, “I must warn you, Mademoiselle, that you will have to change your methods somewhat in my case. The fact is that I know Russian, Latin and Greek very well. I have studied comparative philology, and it seems to me that we may leave out Margot and begin straight off to read some author.” And he explained to the Frenchwoman how grown-up people study languages.

“A friend of mine,” said he, “who wished to know modern languages put a French, German and Latin gospel in front of him and then minutely analysed one word after another. The result—he achieved his purpose in less than a year. Let us take some author and start reading.”

The Frenchwoman gave him a puzzled look. It was evident that Vorotov’s proposal appeared to her naïve and absurd. If he had not been grown up she would certainly have got angry and stormed at

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him, but as he was a very stout, adult man at whom she could not storm, she only shrugged her shoulders half-perceptibly and said:

“Just as you please.”

Vorotov ransacked his bookshelves and produced a ragged French book.

“Will this do?” he asked.

“It’s all the same.”

“In that case let us begin. Let us start from the title, *Mémoires*”

“Reminiscences . . .” translated Mademoiselle Enquette.

“Reminiscences . . .” repeated Vorotov. Smiling good naturedly and breathing heavily, he passed a quarter of an hour over the word *mémoires* and the same with the word *de*. This tired Alice Ossipovna out. She answered his questions carelessly, got confused and evidently neither understood her pupil nor tried to. Vorotov asked her questions, and at the same time glanced furtively at her fair hair, thinking: “The hair is not naturally curly. She waves it. Marvellous! She works from morning till night and yet she finds time to wave her hair.” At eight o’clock sharp she got up, gave him a dry, cold “Au revoir, Monsieur,” and left the study. After her lingered the same sweet, subtle, agitating perfume. The pupil again did nothing for a long time, but sat by the table and thought.

During the following days he became convinced that his teacher was a charming girl serious and punctual, but very uneducated and incapable of teaching grown up people; so he decided he would not waste his time, but part with her and engage someone else. When she came for the seventh lesson he took an envelope containing seven roubles out of his pocket. Holding it in his hands and blushing furiously, he began:

“I am sorry, Alice Ossipovna, but I must tell you. . . . I am placed in an awkward position. . . .”

The Frenchwoman glanced at the envelope and guessed what was the matter. For the first time during the lessons a shiver passed over her face and the cold, business-like expression disappeared. She reddened faintly, and casting her eyes down, began to play absently with her thin gold chain. And Vorotov, noticing her confusion, understood how precious this rouble was to her, how hard it would be for her to lose this money.

“I must tell you,” he murmured, getting still more confused. His heart gave a thump. Quickly he put the envelope back into his pocket and continued:

“Excuse me. I . . . I will leave you for ten minutes. . . .”

And as though he did not want to dismiss her at all, but had only asked permission to retire for a moment he went into another room and sat there for ten minutes. Then he returned, more confused than ever; he thought that his leaving her like that would be explained by her in a certain way and this made him awkward. The lessons began again.

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Vorotov wanted them no more. Knowing that they would lead to nothing he gave the Frenchwoman a free hand; he did not question or interrupt her any more. She translated at her own sweet will, ten pages a lesson, but he did not listen. He breathed heavily and for want of occupation gazed now and then at her curly little head, her neck, her soft white hands, and inhaled the perfume of her dress.

He caught himself thinking about her as he ought not and it shamed him, or admiring her, and then he felt aggrieved and angry because she behaved so coldly towards him, in such a businesslike way, never smiling and as if afraid that he might suddenly touch her. All the while he thought: How could he inspire her with confidence in him, how could he get to know her better, to help her, to make her realise how badly she taught, poor little soul?

Once Alice Ossipovna came to the lesson in a dainty pink dress, a little *décolleté*, and such a sweet scent came from her that you might have thought she was wrapped in a cloud, that you had only to blow on her for her to fly away or dissolve like smoke. She apologised, saying she could only stay for half an hour, because she had to go straight from the lesson to a ball.

He gazed at her neck, at her bare shoulders and he thought he understood why Frenchwomen were known to be light-minded and easily won; he was drowned in this cloud of scent, beauty, and nudity, and she, quite unaware of his thoughts and probably not in the least interested in them, read over the pages quickly and translated full steam ahead:

“He walked over the street and met the gentleman of his friend and said: where do you rush? seeing your face so pale it makes me pain.”

The *Mémoires* had been finished long ago; Alice was now translating another book. Once she came to the lesson an hour earlier, apologising because she had to go to the Little Theatre at seven o'clock. When the lesson was over Vorotov dressed and he too went to the theatre. It seemed to him only for the sake of rest and distraction, and he did not even think of Alice. He would not admit that a serious man, preparing for a scientific career, a stay-at-home, should brush aside his book and rush to the theatre for the sake of meeting an unintellectual, stupid girl whom he hardly knew.

But somehow, during the intervals his heart beat, and, without noticing it, he ran about the foyer and the corridors like a boy, looking impatiently for someone. Every time the interval was over he was tired, but when he discovered the familiar pink dress and the lovely shoulders veiled with tulle his heart jumped as if from a presentiment of happiness, he smiled joyfully, and for the first time in his life he felt jealous.

Alice was with two ugly students and an officer. She was laughing, talking loudly and evidently flirting. Vorotov had never seen her like that. Apparently she was happy, contented, natural, warm.

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Why? What was the reason? Perhaps because these people were dear to her and belonged to the same class as she. Vorotov felt the huge abyss between him and that class. He bowed to his teacher, but she nodded coldly and quietly passed by. It was plain she did not want her cavaliers to know that she had pupils and gave lessons because she was poor.

After the meeting at the theatre Vorotov knew that he was in love. During lessons that followed he devoured his elegant teacher with his eyes, and no longer struggling, he gave full rein to his pure and impure thoughts. Alice's face was always cold. Exactly at eight o'clock every evening she said calmly, "Au revoir, Monsieur," and he felt that she was indifferent to him and would remain indifferent, that—his position was hopeless.

Sometimes in the middle of a lesson he would begin dreaming, hoping, building plans; he composed an amorous declaration, remembering that Frenchwomen were frivolous and complaisant, but he had only to give his teacher one glance for his thoughts to be blown out like a candle, when you carry it on to the verandah of a bungalow and the wind is blowing. Once, overcome, forgetting everything, in a frenzy, he could stand it no longer. He barred her way when she came from the study into the hall after the lesson and, losing his breath and stammering, began to declare his love:

"You are dear to me! . . . I love you. Please let me speak!"

Alice grew pale: probably she was afraid that after this declaration she would not be able to come to him any more and receive a rouble a lesson. She looked at him with terrified eyes and began in a loud whisper:

"Ah, it's impossible! Do not speak, I beg you! Impossible!"

Afterwards Vorotov did not sleep all night; he tortured himself with shame, abused himself, thinking feverishly. He thought that his declaration had offended the girl and that she would not come any more. He made up his mind to find out where she lived from the Address Bureau and to write her an apology. But Alice came without the letter. For a moment she felt awkward, and then opened the book and began to translate quickly, in an animated voice, as always:

"Oh, young gentleman, do not rend these flowers in my garden which I want to give to my sick daughter."

She still goes. Four books have been translated by now but Vorotov knows nothing beyond the word *mémoires*, and when he is asked about his scientific research work he waves his hand, leaves the question unanswered, and begins to talk about the weather.

A LIVING CALENDAR

STATE-COUNCILLOR SHARAMYKIN'S drawingroom is wrapped in a pleasant half-darkness. The big bronze lamp with the

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green shade, makes the walls, the furniture, the faces, all green, *couleur "Nuit d'Ukraine."* Occasionally a smouldering log flares up in the dying fire and for a moment casts a red glow over the faces; but this does not spoil the general harmony of light. The general tone, as the painters say, is well sustained.

Sharamykin sits in a chair in front of the fireplace, in the attitude of a man who has just dined. He is an elderly man with a high official's grey side whiskers and meek blue eyes. Tenderness is shed over his face, and his lips are set in a melancholy smile. At his feet, stretched out lazily, with his legs towards the fire-place, Vice-Governor Lopniev sits on a little stool. He is a brave-looking man of about forty. Sharamykin's children are moving about round the piano; Nina, Kolya, Nadya, and Vanya. The door leading to Madame Sharamykin's room is slightly open and the light breaks through timidly. There behind the door sits Sharamykin's wife, Anna Pavlovna, in front of her writing-table. She is president of the local ladies' committee, a lively, piquant lady of thirty years and a little bit over. Through her pince-nez her vivacious black eyes are running over the pages of a French novel. Beneath the novel lies a tattered copy of the report of the committee for last year.

"Formerly our town was much better off in these things," says Sharamykin, screwing up his meek eyes at the glowing coals. "Never a winter passed but some star would pay us a visit. Famous actors and singers used to come . . . but now, besides acrobats and organ-grinders, the devil only knows what comes. There's no aesthetic pleasure at all. . . . We might be living in a forest. Yes. . . . And does your Excellency remember that Italian tragedian? . . . What's his name? . . . He was so dark, and tall. . . . Let me think. . . . Oh, yes! Luigi Ernesto di Ruggiero. . . . Remarkable talent. . . . And strength. He had only to say one word and the whole theatre was on the *qui vive*. My darling Anna used to take a great interest in his talent. She hired the theatre for him and sold tickets for the performances in advance. . . . In return he taught her elocution and gesture. A first-rate fellow! He came here . . . to be quite exact . . . twelve years ago. . . . No, that's not true. . . . Less, ten years. . . . Anna dear, how old is our Nina?"

"She'll be ten next birthday," calls Anna Pavlovna from her room. "Why?"

"Nothing in particular, my dear. I was just curious. . . . And good singers used to come. Do you remember Prilipchin, the *tenore di grazia*? What a charming fellow he was! How good looking! Fair . . . a very expressive face, Parisian manners. . . . And what a voice, your Excellency! Only one weakness: he would sing some notes with his stomach and would take *re falsetto*—otherwise everything was good. Tamberlik, he said, had taught him. . . . My dear Anna and I hired a hall for him at the Social Club, and in gratitude for that he used to sing to us for whole days and nights. . . . He taught dear

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Anna to sing. He came—I remember it as though it were last night—in Lent, some twelve years ago. No, it's more. . . . How bad my memory is getting, Heaven help me! Anna dear, how old is our darling Nadya?

"Twelve."

"Twelve . . . then we've got to add ten months. . . . That makes it exact . . . thirteen. Somehow there used to be more life in our town then. . . . Take, for instance, the charity *soirées*. What enjoyable *soirées* we used to have before! How elegant! There were singing, playing, and recitation. . . . After the war, I remember, when the Turkish prisoners were here, dear Anna arranged a *soirée* on behalf of the wounded. We collected eleven hundred roubles. I remember the Turkish officers were passionately fond of dear Anna's voice, and kissed her hand incessantly. He-he! Asiatics, but a grateful nation. Would you believe me, the *soirée* was such a success that I wrote an account of it in my diary? It was—I remember it as though it had only just happened—in '76 . . . no, in '77. . . . No! Pray, when were the Turks here? Anna dear, how old is our little Kolya?" "I'm seven, Papa!" says Kolya, a brat with a swarthy face and coal black hair.

"Yes, we're old, and we've lost the energy we used to have," Lopniev agreed with a sigh. "That's the real cause. Old age, my friend. No new moving spirits arrive, and the old ones grow old. . . . The old fire is dull now. When I was younger I did not like company to be bored. . . . I was your Anna Pavlovna's first assistant. Whether it was a charity *soirée* or a tombola to support a star who was going to arrive, whatever Anna Pavlovna was arranging, I used to throw over everything and begin to bustle about. One winter, I remember, I bustled and ran so much that I even got ill. . . . I shan't forget that winter. . . . Do you remember what a performance we arranged with Anna Pavlovna in aid of the victims of the fire?"

"What year was it?"

"Not so very long ago. . . . In '79. No, in '80, I believe! Tell me how old is your Vanya?"

"Five," Anna Pavlovna calls from the study.

"Well, that means it was six years ago. Yes, my dear friend, that was a time. It's all over now. The old fire's quite gone."

Lopniev and Sharamykin grew thoughtful. The smouldering log flares up for the last time, and then is covered in ash.

OLD AGE

STATE-COUNCILLOR USIELKOV, architect, arrived in his native town, where he had been summoned to restore the cemetery church. He was born in the town, he had grown up and been married there, and yet when he got out of the train he hardly recognised

it. Everything was changed. For instance, eighteen years ago, when he left the town to settle in Petersburg, where the railway station is now boys used to hunt for marmots: now as you come into the High Street there is a four storied "Hotel Vienna," with apartments, where there was of old an ugly grey fence. But not the fence or the houses, or anything had changed so much as the people. Questioning the hall-porter, Usielkov discovered that more than half of the people he remembered were dead or paupers or forgotten.

"Do you remember Usielkov?" he asked the porter. "Usielkov, the architect, who divorced his wife. . . . He had a house in Sviribev Street. . . . Surely you remember."

"No, I don't remember anyone of the name."

"Why, it's impossible not to remember. It was an exciting case. All the cabmen knew, even. Try to remember. His divorce was managed by the attorney, Shapkin, the swindler . . . the notorious sharper, the man who was thrashed at the club. . . ."

"You mean Ivan Nicolaich?"

"Yes. . . . Is he alive? Dead?"

"Thank heaven, his honour's alive. His honour's a notary now, with an office. Well-to-do. Two houses in Kirpichny Street. Just lately married his daughter off."

Usielkov strode from one corner of the room to another. An idea flashed into his mind. From boredom, he decided to see Shapkin. It was afternoon when he left the hotel and quietly walked to Kirpichny Street. He found Shapkin in his office and hardly recognised him. From the well-built, alert attorney with a quick, impudent, perpetually tipsy expression, Shapkin had become a modest, grey-haired, shrunken old man.

"You don't recognise me . . . You have forgotten . . ." Usielkov began. "I'm your old client, Usielkov."

"Usielkov? Which Usielkov? Ah!" Remembrance came to Shapkin: he recognised him and was confused. Began exclamations, questions, recollections.

"Never expected . . . never thought . . ." chuckled Shapkin. "What will you have? Would you like champagne? Perhaps you'd like oysters. My dear man, what a lot of money I got out of you in the old days—so much that I can't think what I ought to stand you."

"Please don't trouble," said Usielkov. "I haven't time. I must go to the cemetery and examine the church. I have a commission."

"Splendid. We'll have something to eat and a drink and go together. I've got some splendid horses! I'll take you there and introduce you to the churchwarden. . . . I'll fix up everything. . . . But what's the matter, my dearest man? You're not avoiding me, not afraid? Please sit nearer. There's nothing to be afraid of now. . . . Long ago, I really was pretty sharp, a bit of a rogue . . . but now I'm quieter than water, humbler than grass. I've grown old; got a family. There are children. . . . Time to die!"

The friends had something to eat and drink, and went in a coach and pair to the cemetery.

“Yes, it was a good time,” Shapkin was reminiscent, sitting in the sledge. “I remember, but I simply can’t believe it. Do you remember how you divorced your wife? It’s almost twenty years ago, and you’ve probably forgotten everything, but I remember it as though I conducted the petition yesterday. My God, how rotten I was! Then I was a smart, casuistical devil, full of sharp practice and devilry. . . and I used to run into some shady affairs, particularly when there was a good fee, as in your case, for instance. What was it you paid me then? Five—six hundred. Enough to upset anybody! By the time you left for Petersburg you’d left the whole affair completely in my hands. ‘Do what you like!’ And your former wife, Sophia Mikhailovna, though she did come from a merchant family, was proud and selfish. To bribe her to take the guilt on herself was difficult—extremely difficult. I used to come to her for a business talk, and when she saw me, she would say to her maid: ‘Masha, surely I told you I wasn’t at home to scoundrels.’ I tried one way, then another . . . wrote letters to her, tried to meet her accidentally—no good. I had to work through a third person. For a long time I had trouble with her, and she only yielded when you agreed to give her ten thousand. She could not stand out against ten thousand. She succumbed. . . . She began to weep, spat in my face, but she yielded and took the guilt on herself.”

“If I remember it was fifteen, not ten thousand she took from me,” said Usielkov.

“Yes, of course . . . fifteen, my mistake.” Shapkin was disconcerted. “Anyway it’s all past and done with now. Why shouldn’t I confess, frankly? Ten I gave to her, and the remaining five I bargained out of you for my own share. I deceived both of you. . . . It’s all past, why be ashamed of it? And who else was there to take from, Boris Pietrovich, if not from you? I ask you . . . You were rich and well-to-do. You married in caprice: you were divorced in caprice. You were making a fortune. I remember you got twenty thousand out of a single contract. Whom was I to tap, if not you? And I must confess, I was tortured by envy. If you got hold of a nice lot of money, people would take off their hats to you: but the same people would beat me for shillings and smack my face in the club. But why recall it? It’s time to forget.”

“Tell me, please, how did Sophia Mikhailovna live afterwards?”

“With her ten thousand? *On ne peut plus* badly. . . . God knows whether it was frenzy or pride and conscience that tortured her, because she had sold herself for money—or perhaps she loved you; but, she took to drink, you know. She received the money and began to gad about with officers in troikas. . . . Drunkenness, philandering, debauchery. . . . She would come into a tavern with an officer, and instead of port or a light wine, she would drink the strongest

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cognac to drive her into a frenzy.”

“Yes, she was eccentric. I suffered enough with her. She would take offence at some trifle and then get nervous. . . . And what happened afterwards?”

“A week passed, a fortnight. . . . I was sitting at home writing. Suddenly, the door opened and she comes in. ‘Take your cursed money,’ she said, and threw the parcel in my face. . . . She could not resist it. . . . Five hundred were missing. She had only got rid of five hundred.”

“And what did you do with the money?”

“It’s all past and done with. What’s the good of concealing it? . . . I certainly took it. What are you staring at me like that for? Wait for the sequel. It’s a complete novel, the sickness of a soul! Two months passed by. One night I came home drunk, in a wicked mood. . . . I turned on the light and saw Sophia Mikhailovna sitting on my sofa, drunk too, wandering a bit, with something savage in her face as if she had just escaped from the mad-house. ‘Give me my money back,’ she said. ‘I’ve changed my mind. If I’m going to the dogs, I want to go madly, passionately. Make haste, you scoundrel, give me the money.’ How indecent it was!”

“And you . . . did you give it her?”

“I remember I gave her ten roubles.”

“Oh . . . is it possible?” Usielkov frowned. “If you couldn’t do it yourself, or you didn’t want to, you could have written to me. . . . And I didn’t know . . . I didn’t know.”

“My dear man, why should I write, when she wrote herself afterwards when she was in hospital?”

“I was so taken up with the new marriage that I paid no attention to letters. . . . But you were an outsider; you had no antagonism to Sophia Mikhailovna. . . . Why didn’t you help her?”

“We can’t judge by our present standards, Boris Pietrovich. Now we think in this way; but then we thought quite differently. . . . Now I might perhaps give her a thousand roubles; but then even ten roubles . . . she didn’t get them for nothing. It’s a terrible story. It’s time to forget. . . . But here you are!”

The sledge stopped at the churchyard gate. Usielkov and Shapkin got out of the sledge, went through the gate and walked along a long, broad avenue. The bare cherry trees, the acacias, the grey crosses and monuments sparkled with hoar-frost. In each flake of snow the bright sunny day was reflected. There was the smell you find in all cemeteries of incense and fresh-dug earth.

“You have a beautiful cemetery,” said Usielkov. “It’s almost an orchard.”

“Yes, but it’s a pity the thieves steal the monuments. Look, there, behind that cast-iron memorial, on the right, Sophia Mikhailovna is buried. Would you like to see?”

The friends turned to the right, stepping in deep snow towards

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the cast-iron memorial.

“Down here,” said Shapkin, pointing to a little stone of white marble. “Some subaltern or other put up the monument on her grave.” Usielkov slowly took off his hat and showed his bald pate to the snow. Eying him, Shapkin also took off his hat, and another baldness shone beneath the sun. The silence round about was like the tomb, as though the air were dead, too. The friends looked at the stone, silent, thinking.

“She is asleep!” Shapkin broke the silence. “And she cares very little that she took the guilt upon herself and drank cognac. Confess, Boris Pietrovich!”

“What?” asked Usielkov, sternly.

“That, however loathsome the past may be, it’s better than this.” And Shapkin pointed to his grey hairs.

“In the old days I did not even think of death. . . . If I’d met her, I would have circumvented her, but now . . . well, now!”

Sadness took hold of Usielkov. Suddenly he wanted to cry, passionately, as he once desired to love. . . . And he felt that these tears would be exquisite, refreshing. Moisture came out of his eyes and a lump rose in his throat, but . . . Shapkin was standing by his side, and Usielkov felt ashamed of his weakness before a witness. He turned back quickly and walked towards the church.

Two hours later, having arranged with the churchwarden and examined the church, he seized the opportunity while Shapkin was talking away to the priest, and ran to shed a tear. He walked to the stone surreptitiously, with stealthy steps, looking round all the time. The little white monument stared at him absently, so sadly and innocently, as though a girl and not a wanton *divorcée* were beneath.

“If I could weep, could weep!” thought Usielkov.

But the moment for weeping had been lost. Though the old man managed to make his eyes shine, and tried to bring himself to the right pitch, the tears did not flow and the lump did not rise in his throat. . . . After waiting for about ten minutes, Usielkov waved his arm and went to look for Shapkin.

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