

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKI

POOR PEOPLE

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A NOVEL

Ah, these story tellers! If only they would write anything useful, pleasant, soothing, but they will unearth all sorts of hidden things! . . . I would prohibit their writing! Why, it is beyond everything; you read. . .and you can't help thinking—and then all sorts of foolishness comes into your head; I would really prohibit their writing; I would simply prohibit it altogether.

PRINCE V. F. ODOEVSKY

MY PRECIOUS VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

I was happy yesterday, immensely happy, impossibly happy! For once in your life, you obstinate person, you obeyed me. At eight o'clock in the evening I woke up (you know, little mother, that I love a little nap of an hour or two when my work is over). I got out a candle, I got paper ready, was mending a pen when suddenly I chanced to raise my eyes—upon my word it set my heart dancing! So you understood what I wanted, what was my heart's desire! I saw a tiny corner of your window-curtain twitched back and caught against the pot of balsams, just exactly as I hinted that day. Then I fancied I caught a glimpse of your little face at the window, that you were looking at me from your little room, that you were thinking of me. And how vexed I was, my darling, that I could not make out your charming little face distinctly! There was a time when we, too, could see clearly, dearie. It is poor fun being old, my own! Nowadays everything seems sort of spotty before my eyes; if one works a little in the evening, writes something, one's eyes are so red and tearful in the morning that one is really ashamed before strangers. In my imagination, though, your smile was beaming, my little angel, your kind friendly little smile; and I had just the same sensation in my heart as when I kissed you, Varinka, do you remember, little angel? Do you know, my darling, I even fancied that you shook your little finger at me? Did you, you naughty girl? You must be sure to describe all that fully in your letter.

Come, what do you think of our little plan about your curtain, Varinka? It is delightful, isn't it? Whether I am sitting at work, or lying down for a nap, or waking up, I know that you are thinking about me over there, you are remembering me and that you are well and cheerful. You drop the curtain—it means “Good-bye, Makar Alexyevitch, it's bedtime!” You draw it up—“Good morning, Makar Alexyevitch, how have you slept or are you quite well, Makar Alexyevitch? As for me, thank God, I am well and all right!” You see, my darling, what a clever idea; there is no need of letters! It's cunning, isn't it? And you know it was my idea. What do you say to me now, Varvara Alexyevna?

I beg to inform you, Varvara Alexyevna, my dear, that I slept last night excellently, contrary to my expectations, at which I am very

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together. He was frequently delirious and rarely quite himself; he talked of goodness knows what, of his post, of his books, of me, of his father. . .and it was then I heard a great deal about his circumstances of which I had not known or even guessed before. When first he was ill, all of them looked at me somehow strangely; Anna Fyodorovna shook her head. But I looked them all straight in the face and they did not blame me any more for my sympathy for Pokrovsky—at least my mother did not.

Sometimes Pokrovsky knew me, but this was seldom. He was almost all the time unconscious. Sometimes for whole nights together he would carry on long, long conversations with someone in obscure, indistinct words and his hoarse voice resounded with a hollow echo in his narrow room as in a coffin; I used to feel terrified then. Especially on the last night he seemed in a frenzy; he suffered terribly, was in anguish; his moans wrung my heart. Everyone in the house was in alarm. Anna Fyodorovna kept praying that God would take him more quickly. They sent for the doctor. The doctor said that the patient would certainly die by the morning.

Old Pokrovsky spent the whole night in the passage at the door of his son's room; a rug of some sort was put down there for him. He kept coming into the room, it was dreadful to look at him. He was so crushed by sorrow that he seemed utterly senseless and without feeling. His head was shaking with terror. He was trembling all over and kept whispering something, talking about something to himself. It seemed to me he was going out of his mind.

Just before dawn the old man, worn out with mental suffering, fell asleep on his mat and slept like the dead. Between seven and eight his son began to die. I waked the father. Pokrovsky was fully conscious and said good-bye to us all. Strange! I could not cry, but my heart was torn to pieces.

But his last moments distressed and tortured me more than all. He kept asking for something at great length with his halting tongue and I could make out nothing from his words. My heart was lacerated! For a whole hour he was uneasy, kept grieving over something, trying to make some sign with his chill hands and then beginning pitifully to entreat me in his hoarse hollow voice; but his words were disconnected sounds and again I could make nothing of them. I brought everyone of the household to him, I gave him drink, but still he shook his head mournfully. At last I guessed what he wanted. He was begging me to draw up the window curtain and open the shutters. No doubt he wanted to look for the last time at the day, at God's light, at the sunshine. I drew back the curtain, but the dawning day was sad and melancholy as the poor failing life of the dying man. There was no sun. The clouds covered the sky with a shroud of mist; it was rainy, overcast, mournful. A fine rain was pattering on the window-panes and washing them with little rivulets of cold dirty water; it was dark and dingy. The pale daylight scarcely penetrated into the room and

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hardly rivalled the flickering flame of the little lamp lighted before the ikon. The dying man glanced at me mournfully, mournfully and shook his head; a minute later he died.

Anna Fyodorovna herself made the arrangements for the funeral. A coffin of the cheapest kind was bought and a carter was hired. To defray these expenses Anna Fyodorovna seized all Pokrovsky's books and other belongings. The old man argued with her, made a noise, took away all the books he could from her, stuffed his pockets full of them, put them in his hat, wherever he could, went about with them all those three days, and did not part with them even when he had to go to church. During those three days he seemed as it were, stupefied, as though he did not know what he was doing, and he kept fussing about the coffin with a strange solicitude; at one moment he set straight the wreath on his dead son and at the next he lighted and took away candles. It was evident that his thoughts could not rest on anything. Neither mother nor Anna Fyodorovna was at the funeral service at the church. Mother was ill; Anna Fyodorovna had got ready to go, but she quarrelled with old Pokrovsky and stayed behind. I went alone with the old man. During the service a terror came upon me—as though a foreboding of the future. I could scarcely stand up in church.

At last the coffin was closed, nailed up, put in the cart and taken away. I followed it only to the end of the street. The man drove at a trot. The old man ran after him, weeping loudly, his lamentations quivering and broken by his haste. The poor old man lost his hat and did not stop to pick it up. His head was drenched by the rain and the wind was rising; the sleet lashed and stung his face. The old man seemed not to feel the cold and wet and ran wailing from one side of the cart to the other, the skirts of his old coat fluttering in the wind like wings. Books were sticking out from all his pockets; in his hands was a huge volume which he held tightly. The passers-by took off their caps and crossed themselves. Some stopped and stood gazing in wonder at the poor old man. The books kept falling out of his pockets into the mud. People stopped him and pointed to what he had lost, he picked them up and fell to racing after the coffin again. At the corner of the street an old beggar woman joined him to follow the coffin with him. The cart turned the corner at last and disappeared from my sight. I went home. I threw myself on mother's bosom in terrible distress. I pressed her tightly in my arms, I kissed her and burst into floods of tears, huddling up to her fearfully as though trying to keep in my arms my last friend and not to give her up to death. . . but death was already hovering over poor mother. . . .

June 11.

How grateful I am to you for our walk yesterday to the Island, Makar Alexyevitch! How fresh and lovely it is there, how leafy and

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green! It's so long since I saw green leaves—when I was ill I kept fancying that I had to die and that I certainly should die—judge what must have been my sensations yesterday, how I must have felt . . .

You must not be angry with me for having been so sad yesterday; I was very happy, very content, but in my very best moments I am always for some reason sad. As for my crying, that means nothing. I don't know myself why I am always crying. I feel ill and irritable; my sensations are due to illness. The pale cloudless sky, the sunset, the evening stillness—all that—I don't know—but I was somehow in the mood yesterday to take a dreary and miserable view, of everything, so that my heart was too full and needed the relief of tears. But why am I writing all this to you? It is hard to make all that clear to one's own heart and still harder to convey it to another. But you, perhaps, will understand me. Sadness and laughter both at once! How kind you are really, Makar Alexyevitch! You looked into my eyes yesterday as though to read in them what I was feeling and were delighted with my rapture. Whether it was a bush, an avenue, a piece of water—you were there standing before me showing its beauties and peeping into my eyes as though you were displaying your possessions to me. That proves that you have a kind heart, Makar Alexyevitch. It's for that that I love you. Well, goodbye. I'm ill again to-day; I got my feet wet yesterday and have caught cold. Fedora is ailing, too, so now we are both on the sick list. Don't forget me. Come as often as you can.

Your V. D.

June 12.

MY DARLING VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

Well, I had expected, my dear soul, that you would write me a description of our yesterday's expedition in a regular poem, and you have turned out nothing but one simple sheet. I say this because, though you wrote me so little in your sheet, yet you did describe it extraordinarily well and sweetly. The charms of nature, and the various rural scenes and all the rest about your feeling—in short, you described it all very well. Now I have no talent for it. If I smudge a dozen papers there's nothing to show for it; I can't describe anything. I have tried.

You write to me, my own, that I am a kind-hearted, good-natured man, incapable of injuring my neighbour, and able to understand the blessings of the Lord made manifest in nature, and you bestow various praises on me, in fact. All that is true, my darling, all that is perfectly true; I really am all that you say and I know it myself; but when one reads what you write one's heart is touched in spite of oneself and then all sorts of painful reflections come to one. Well, listen to me, Varinka dear, I will tell you something, my own.

I will begin with when I was only seventeen and went into the service, and soon the thirtieth year of my career there will be here. Well, I needn't say I have worn out many a uniform; I grew to manhood

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and to good sense and saw something of the world; I have lived, I may say, I have lived in the world so that on one occasion they even wanted to send up my name to receive a cross. Maybe you will not believe me, but I am really not lying. But there, my darling, in spite of everything, I have been badly treated by malicious people! I tell you, my own, that though I am an obscure person, a stupid person, perhaps, yet I have my feelings like anyone else. Do you know, Varinka, what a spiteful man did to me? I am ashamed to say what he has done to me; you will ask why did he do it? Why, because I am meek, because I am quiet, because I am good-natured! I did not suit their taste, so that's what brought it upon me. At first it began with, "You are this and that, Makar Alexyevitch," and then it came to saying, "It's no good asking Makar Alexyevitch!" And then it ended by, "Of course, that is Makar Alexyevitch!" You see, my precious, what a pass it came to; always Makar Alexyevitch to blame for everything; they managed to make Makar Alexyevitch a by-word all over the department, and it was not enough that they made me a by-word and almost a term of abuse, they attacked my boots, my uniform, my hair, my figure; nothing was to their taste, everything ought to be different! And all this has been repeated every blessed day from time immemorial. I am used to it, for I grow used to anything, because I am a meek man; but what is it all for? What harm do I do to anyone? Have I stolen promotion from anyone, or what? Have I blackened anyone's reputation with his superiors? Have I asked for anything extra out of turn? Have I got up some intrigue? Why, it's a sin for you to imagine such a thing, my dear soul! As though I could do anything of that sort! You've only to look at me, my own. Have I sufficient ability for intrigue and ambition? Then why have such misfortunes come upon me? God forgive me. Here you consider me a decent man, and you are ever so much better than any of them, my darling. Why, what is the greatest virtue in a citizen? A day or two ago, in private conversation, Yevstafy Ivanovitch said that the most important virtue in a citizen was to earn money. He said in jest (I know it was in jest) that morality consists in not being a burden to anyone. Well, I'm not a burden to anyone. My crust of bread is my own; it is true it is a plain crust of bread, at times a dry one; but there it is, earned by my toil and put to lawful and irreproachable use. Why, what can one do? I know very well, of course, that I don't do much by copying; but all the same I am proud of working and earning my bread in the sweat of my brow. Why, what if I am a copying clerk, after all? What harm is there in copying, after all? "He's a copying clerk," they say, but what is there discreditable in that? My handwriting is good, distinct and pleasant to the eye, and his Excellency is satisfied with it. I have no gift of language, of course, I know myself that I haven't the confounded thing; that's why I have not got on in the service, and why even now, my own, I am writing to you simply, artlessly, just as the thought comes into my heart. . . . I know all that; but there, if everyone became an author, who would do

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the copying? I ask you that question and I beg you to answer it, Varinka dear. So I see now that I am necessary, that I am indispensable, and that it's no use to worry a man with nonsense. Well, let me be a rat if you like, since they see a resemblance! But the rat is necessary, but the rat is of service, but the rat is depended upon, but the rat is given a reward, so that's the sort of rat he is!

Enough about that subject though, my own! I did not intend to talk about that at all, but I got a little heated. Besides, it's pleasant from time to time to do oneself justice. Good-bye, my own, my darling, my kind comforter! I will come, I will certainly come to see you, my dearie, and meanwhile, don't be dull, I will bring you a book. Well, good-bye, then, Varinka.

Your devoted well-wisher,
MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

June 20.

DEAR SIR, MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

I write a hurried line, I am in haste, I have to finish my work up to time. You see, this is how it is: you can make a good bargain. Fedora says that a friend of hers has a uniform, quite new, underclothes, a waistcoat and cap, and all very cheap, they say; so you ought to buy them. You see, you are not badly off now, you say you have money; you say so yourself. Give over being so stingy, please. You know all those things are necessary. Just look at yourself, what old clothes you go about in. It's a disgrace! You're all in patches. You have no new clothes; I know that, though you declare that you have. God knows how you have managed to dispose of them. So do as I tell you, please buy these things. Do it for my sake; if you love me, do it.

You sent me some linen as a present; but upon my word, Makar Alexyevitch, you are ruining yourself. It's no joke what you've spent on me, it's awful to think how much money! How fond you are of throwing away your money! I don't want it; it's all absolutely unnecessary. I know—I am convinced—that you love me. It is really unnecessary to remind me of it with presents; and it worries me taking them from you; I know what they cost you. Once for all, leave off, do you hear? I beg you, I beseech you. You ask me, Makar Alexyevitch, to send you the continuation of my diary, you want me to finish it. I don't know how what I have written came to be written! But I haven't the strength now to talk of my past; I don't even want to think of it; I feel frightened of those memories. To talk of my poor mother leaving her poor child to those monsters, too, is more painful than anything. My heart throbs at the very thought of it: it is all still so fresh: I have not had time to think things over, still less to regain my calm, though it is all more than a year ago, now. But you know all that.

I've told you what Anna Fyodorovna thinks now; she blames me for ingratitude and repudiates all blame for her association with Mr. Bykov! She invites me to stay with her; she says that I am living on

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charity, that I am going to the bad. She says that if I go back to her she will undertake to set right everything with Mr. Bykov and compel him to make up for his behaviour to me. She says Mr. Bykov wants to give me a dowry. Bother them! I am happy here with you close by, with my kind Fedora whose devotion reminds me of my old nurse. Though you are only a distant relation you will protect me with your name. I don't know them. I shall forget them if I can. What more do they want of me? Fedora says that it is all talk, that they will leave me alone at last. God grant they may!

V. D.

June 21.

MY DARLING VARINKA,

I want to write, but I don't know how to begin. How strange it is, my precious, how we are living now. I say this because I have never spent my days in such joyfulness. Why, it is as though God had blessed me with a home and family of my own, my child, my pretty! But why are you making such a fuss about the four chemises I sent you? You needed them, you know—I found that out from Fedora. And it's a special happiness for me to satisfy your needs, Varinka, dear; it's my pleasure. You let me alone, my dear soul. Don't interfere with me and don't contradict me. I've never known anything like it, my darling. I've taken to going into society now. In the first place my life is twice as full; because you are living very near me and are a great comfort to me; and secondly, I have been invited to tea to-day by a lodger, a neighbour of mine, that clerk, Ratazyaev, who has the literary evenings. We meet this evening, we are going to read literature. So you see how we are getting on now, Varinka—you see! Well, good-bye. I've written all this for no apparent reason, simply to let you know of the affection I feel for you. You told Teresa to tell me, my love, that you want some silk for coloured embroidery. I will get you it, my darling, I will get the silk, I will get it. To-morrow I shall have the pleasure of satisfying you. I know where to buy it, too. And now I remain,

Your sincere friend,

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

June 22.

DEAR MADAM, VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

I must tell you, my own, that a very pitiful thing has happened in our flat, truly, truly, deserving of pity! Between four and five this morning Gorshkov's little boy died. I don't know what he died of. It seemed to be a sort of scarlatina, God only knows! I went to see these Gorshkovs. Oh, my dear soul, how poor they are! And what disorder! And no wonder; the whole family lives in one room, only divided by a screen for decency. There was a little coffin standing in the room already—a simple little coffin, but rather pretty; they bought it ready-

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made; the boy was nine years old, he was a promising boy, they say. But it was pitiful to look at them, Varinka! The mother did not cry, but she was so sad, so poor. And perhaps it will make it easier for them to have got one off their shoulders; but there are still two left, a baby, and a little girl, not much more than six. There's not much comfort really in seeing a child suffer, especially one's own little child, and having no means of helping him! The father was sitting in a greasy old dress suit on a broken chair. The tears were flowing from his eyes, but perhaps not from grief, but just the usual thing—his eyes are inflamed. He's such a strange fellow! He always turns red when you speak to him, gets confused and does not know what to answer. The little girl, their daughter, stood leaning against the coffin, such a poor little, sad, brooding child! And Varinka, my darling, I don't like it when children brood; it's painful to see! A doll made of rags was lying on the floor beside her; she did not play with it, she held her finger on her lips; she stood, without stirring. The landlady gave her a sweetmeat; she took it but did not eat it.

It was sad, Varinka, wasn't it?

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

June 25.

DEAR MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

I am sending you back your book. A wretched, worthless little book not fit to touch! Where did you ferret out such a treasure? Joking apart, can you really like such a book, Makar Alexyevitch? I was promised the other day something to read. I will share it with you, if you like. And now goodbye. I really have not time to write more.

V. D.

June 26.

DEAR VARINKA,

The fact is that I really had not read that horrid book, my dear girl. It is true, I looked through it and saw it was nonsense, just written to be funny, to make people laugh; well, I thought, it really is amusing; maybe Varinka will like it, so I sent it you.

Now, Ratazyaev has promised to give me some real literature to read, so you will have some books, my darling. Ratazyaev knows, he's a connoisseur; he writes himself, ough, how he writes! His pen is so bold and he has a wonderful style, that is, there is no end to what there is in every word—in the most foolish ordinary vulgar word such as I might say sometimes to Faldoni or Teresa, even in such he has style. I go to his evenings. We smoke and he reads to us, he reads five hours at a stretch and we listen all the time. It's a perfect feast. Such charm, such flowers, simply flowers, you can gather a bouquet from each page! He is so affable, so kindly and friendly. Why, what am I beside him? What am I? Nothing. He is a man with a reputation, and what am I? I simply don't exist, yet he is cordial even to me. I am copying

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something for him. Only don't you imagine, Varinka, that there is something amiss in that, that he is friendly to me just because I am copying for him; don't you believe tittle-tattle, my dear girl, don't you believe worthless tittle-tattle. No, I am doing it of myself, of my own accord for his pleasure. I understand refinement of manners, my love; he is a kind, very kind man, and an incomparable writer.

Literature is a fine thing, Varinka, a very fine thing. I learnt that from them the day before yesterday. A profound thing, strengthening men's hearts, instructing them; there are all sorts of things written about that in their book. Very well written! Literature is a picture, that is, in a certain sense, a picture and a mirror: it's the passions, the expression, the subtlest criticism, edifying instruction and a document. I gathered all that from them. I tell you frankly, my darling, that one sits with them, one listens (one smokes a pipe like them, too, if you please), and when they begin to discuss and dispute about all sorts of matters, then I simply sit dumb; then, my dear soul, you and I can do nothing else but sit dumb. I am simply a blockhead, it seems. I am ashamed of myself, so that I try all the evening how to put in half a word in the general conversation, but there, as ill-luck would have it, I can't find that half word! And one is sorry for oneself, Varinka, that one is not this thing, nor that thing, that, as the saying is, "A man one is grown, but no mind of one's own." Why, what do I do in my free time now? I sleep like a fool! While instead of useless sleep I might have been busy in useful occupation; I might have sat down and written something that would have been of use to oneself and pleasant to others. Why, my dearie, you should only see what they get for it, God forgive them! Take Ratazyaev, for instance, what he gets. What is it for him to write a chapter? Why, sometimes he writes five in a day and he gets three hundred roubles a chapter. Some little anecdote, something curious—five hundred! take it or leave it, give it or be damned! Or another time, we'll put a thousand in our pocket! What do you say to that, Varvara Alexyevna? Why, he's got a little book of poems—such short poems—he's asking seven thousand, my dear girl, he's asking seven thousand; think of it! Why, it's real estate, it's house property! He says that they will give him five thousand, but he won't take it. I reasoned with him. I said, "Take five thousand for them, sir, and don't mind them. Why, five thousand's money!" "No," said he, "they'll give me seven, the swindlers!" He's a cunning fellow, really.

Well, my love, since we are talking of it I will copy a passage from the *Italian Passions* for you. That's the name of his book. Here, read it, Varinka, and judge for yourself. . . .

"Vladimir shuddered and his passion gurgled up furiously within him and his blood boiled. . . .

"'Countess,' he cried. 'Countess! Do you know how awful is this passion, how boundless this madness? No, my dreams did not deceive me! I love, I love ecstatically, furiously, madly! All your husband's blood would not quench the frantic surging ecstasy of my soul!

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A trivial obstacle cannot check the all-destroying, hellish fire that harrows my exhausted breast. Oh, Zinaida, Zinaida! . . .

“Vladimir,’ whispered the countess, beside herself, leaning on his shoulder. . . .

“Zinaida!’ cried the enraptured Smyelsky.

“His bosom exhaled a sigh. The fire flamed brightly on the altar of love and consumed the heart of the unhappy victims.

“Vladimir,’ the countess whispered, intoxicated. Her bosom heaved, her cheeks glowed crimson, her eyes glowed. . . .

“A new, terrible union was accomplished!”

* * *

“Half an hour later the old count went into his wife’s boudoir.

“Well, my love, should we not order the samovar for our welcome guest?’ he said, patting his wife on the cheek.”

Well, I ask you, my dear soul, what do you think of it after that? It’s true, it’s a little free, there’s no disputing that, but still it is fine. What is fine is fine! And now, if you will allow me, I will copy you another little bit from the novel *Yermak and Zuleika*.

You must imagine, my precious, that the Cossack, Yermak, the fierce and savage conqueror of Siberia, is in love with the daughter of Kutchum, the Tsar of Siberia, the Princess Zuleika, who has been taken captive by him. An episode straight from the times of Ivan the Terrible, as you see. Here is the conversation of Yermak and Zuleika.

“You love me, Zuleika! Oh, repeat it, repeat it!’ . . .

“I love you, Yermak,’ whispered Zuleika.

“Heaven and earth, I thank you! I am happy! . . . You have given me everything, everything, for which my turbulent soul has striven from my boyhood’s years. So it was to this thou hast led me, my guiding star, so it was for this thou hast led me here, beyond the Belt of Stone! I will show to all the world my Zuleika, and men, the frantic monsters, will not dare to blame me! Ah, if they could understand the secret sufferings of her tender soul, if they could see a whole poem in a tear of my Zuleika! Oh, let me dry that tear with kisses, let me drink it up, that heavenly tear. . . unearthly one!”

“Yermak,’ said Zuleika, ‘the world is wicked, men are unjust! They will persecute us, they will condemn us, my sweet Yermak! What is the poor maiden, nurtured amid the snows of Siberia in her father’s *yurta* to do in your cold, icy, soulless, selfish world? People will not understand me, my desired one, my beloved one.’

“Then will the Cossack’s sabre rise up hissing about them.”

And now, what do you say to Yermak, Varinka, when he finds out that his Zuleika has been murdered? . . . The blind old man, Kutchum, under cover of night steals into Yermak’s tent in his absence and slays Zuleika, intending to deal a mortal blow at Yermak, who has robbed him of his sceptre and his crown.

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“Sweet is it to me to rasp the iron against the stone,’ shouted Yermak in wild frenzy, whetting his knife of Damascus steel upon the magic stone; I’ll have their blood, their blood! I will hack them! hack them! hack them to pieces!!!”

And, after all that, Yermak, unable to survive his Zuleika, throws himself into the Irtysh, and so it all ends.

And this, for instance, a tiny fragment written in a jocose style, simply to make one laugh.

“Do you know Ivan Prokofyevitch Yellow-paunch? Why, the man who bit Prokofy Ivanovitch’s leg. Ivan Prokofyevitch is a man of hasty temper, but, on the other hand, of rare virtues; Prokofy Ivanovitch, on the other hand, is extremely fond of a rarebit on toast. Why, when Pelagea Antonovna used to know him. . . Do you know Pelagea Antonovna? the woman who always wears her petticoat inside out.”

That’s humour, you know, Varinka, simply humour. He rocked with laughter when he read us that. He is a fellow, God forgive him! But though it’s rather jocose and very playful, Varinka dear, it is quite innocent, without the slightest trace of free-thinking or liberal ideas. I must observe, my love, that Ratazyaev is a very well-behaved man and so an excellent author, not like other authors.

And, after all, an idea sometimes comes into one’s head, you know. . . . What if I were to write something, what would happen then? Suppose that, for instance, apropos of nothing, there came into the world a book with the title—*Poems by Makar Dyevushkin*? What would my little angel say then? How does that strike you? What do you think of it? And I can tell you, my darling, that as soon as my book came out, I certainly should not dare to show myself in the Nevsky Prospect. Why, how should I feel when everyone would be saying, Here comes the author and poet, Dyevushkin? There’s Dyevushkin himself, they would say! What should I do with my boots then? They are, I may mention in passing, my dear girl, almost always covered with patches, and the soles too, to tell the truth, sometimes break away in a very unseemly fashion. What should we do when everyone knew that the author Dyevushkin had patches on his boots! Some countess or duchess would hear of it, and what would she say, the darling? Perhaps she would not notice it; for I imagine countesses don’t trouble themselves about boots, especially clerks’ boots (for you know there are boots and boots), but they would tell her all about it, her friends would give me away. Ratazyaev, for instance, would be the first to give me away; he visits the Countess V.; he says that he goes to all her receptions, and he’s quite at home there. He says she is such a darling, such a literary lady, he says. He’s a rogue, that Ratazyaev!

But enough of that subject; I write all this for fun, my little angel, to amuse you. Good-bye, my darling, I have scribbled you a lot of nonsense, but that is just because I am in a very good humour to-day. We all dined together to-day at Ratazyaev’s (they are rogues, Varinka dear), and brought out such a cordial. . . .

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But there, why write to you about that! Only mind you don't imagine anything about me, Varinka. I don't mean anything by it. I will send you the books, I will certainly send them. . . . One of Paul de Kock's novels is being passed round from one to another, but Paul de Kock will not do for you, my precious. . . . No, no! Paul de Kock won't do for you. They say of him, Varinka dear, that he rouses all the Petersburg critics to righteous indignation. I send you a pound of sweetmeats—I bought them on purpose for you. Do you hear, darling? think of me at every sweetmeat. Only don't nibble up the sugar-candy but only suck it, or you will get toothache. And perhaps you like candied peel? write and tell me. Well, good-bye, good-bye. Christ be with you, my darling!

I remain ever,
Your most faithful friend,
MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

June 27.

DEAR SIR, MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

Fedora tells me that, if I like, certain people will be pleased to interest themselves in my position, and will get me a very good position as a governess in a family. What do you think about it, my friend—shall I go, or shall I not? Of course I should not then be a burden upon you, and the situation seems a good one; but, on the other hand, I feel somehow frightened at going into a strange house. They are people with an estate in the country. When they want to know all about me, when they begin asking questions, making inquiries—why, what should I say then?—besides, I am so shy and unsociable, I like to go on living in the corner I am used to. It's better somehow where one is used to being; even though one spends half one's time grieving, still it is better. Besides, it means leaving Petersburg; and God knows what my duties will be, either; perhaps they will simply make me look after the children, like a nurse. And they are such queer people, too; they've had three governesses already in two years. Do advise me, Makar Alexyevitch, whether to go or not. And why do you never come and see me? You hardly ever show your face, we scarcely ever meet except on Sundays at mass. What an unsociable person you are! You are as bad as I am! And you know I am almost a relation. You don't love me, Makar Alexyevitch, and I am sometimes very sad all alone. Sometimes, especially when it is getting dark, one sits all alone. Fedora goes off somewhere, one sits and sits and thinks—one remembers all the past, joyful and sad alike—it all passes before one's eyes, it all rises up as though out of a mist. Familiar faces appear (I am almost beginning to see them in reality)—I see mother most often of all . . . And what dreams I have! I feel that I am not at all well, I am so weak; to-day, for instance, when I got out of bed this morning, I turned giddy; and I have such a horrid cough, too! I feel, I know, that I shall soon die. Who will bury me? Who will follow my

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coffin! Who will grieve for me! . . . And perhaps I may have to die in a strange place, in a strange house! . . . My goodness! how sad life is, Makar Alexyevitch. Why do you keep feeding me on sweetmeats? I really don't know where you get so much money from? Ah, my friend, take care of your money, for God's sake, take care of it. Fedora is selling the cloth rug I have embroidered; she is getting fifty paper roubles for it. That's very good, I thought it would be less. I shall give Fedora three silver roubles, and shall get a new dress for myself, a plain one but warm. I shall make you a waistcoat, I shall make it myself, and I shall choose a good material.

Fedora got me a book, *Byelkin's Stories*, which I will send you, if you care to read it. Only don't please keep it, or make it dirty, it belongs to someone else—it's one of Pushkin's works. Two years ago I read these stories with my mother. And it was so sad for me now to read them over again. If you have any books send them to me—only not if you get them from Ratazyaev. He will certainly lend you his books if he has ever published anything. How do you like his works, Makar Alexyevitch? Such nonsense. . . . Well, good-bye! How I have been chattering! When I am sad I am glad to chatter about anything. It does-me good; at once one feels better, especially if one expresses all that lies in one's heart. Good-bye. Good-bye, my friend!

Your

V. D.

June 28.

MY PRECIOUS VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

Leave off worrying yourself, I wonder you are not ashamed. Come, give over, my angel! How is it such thoughts come into your mind? You are not ill, my love, you are not ill at all; you are blooming, you are really blooming; a little pale, but still blooming. And what do you mean by these dreams, these visions? For shame, my darling, give over; you must simply laugh at them. Why do I sleep well? Why is nothing wrong with me? You should look at me, my dear soul. I get along all right, I sleep quietly, I am as healthy and hearty as can be, a treat to look at. Give over, give over, darling, for shame. You must reform. I know your little ways, my dearie; as soon as any trouble comes, you begin fancying things and worrying about something. For my sake give over, my darling. Go into a family?—Never! No, no, no, and what notion is this of yours? What is this idea that has come over you? And to leave Petersburg too. No, my darling, I won't allow it. I will use every means in my power to oppose such a plan. I'll sell my old coat and walk about the street in my shirt before you shall want for anything. No, Varinka, no, I know you! It's folly, pure folly. And there is no doubt that it is all Fedora's fault: she's evidently a stupid woman, she puts all these ideas into your head. Don't you trust her, my dear girl. You probably don't know everything yet, my love. . . . She's a silly woman, discontented and nonsensical; she worried her

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husband out of his life. Or perhaps she has vexed you in some way? No, no, my precious, not for anything! And what would become of me then, what would there be left for me to do? No, Varinka darling, you put that out of your little head. What is there wanting in your life with us? We can never rejoice enough over you, you love us, so do go on living here quietly. Sew or read, or don't sew if you like—it does not matter—only go on living with us or, only think yourself, why, what would it be like without you? . . .

Here, I will get you some books and then maybe we'll go for a walk somewhere again. Only you must give over, my dearie, you must give over. Pull yourself together and don't be foolish over trifles! I'll come and see you and very soon too. Only accept what I tell you plainly and candidly about it; you are wrong, my darling, very wrong. Of course, I am an ignorant man and I know myself that I am ignorant, that I have hardly a ha'porth of education. But that's not what I am talking about, and I'm not what matters, but I will stand up for Ratazyaev, say what you like. He writes well, very, very well, and I say it again, he writes very well. I don't agree with you and I never can agree with you. It's written in a flowery abrupt style, with figures of speech. There are ideas of all sorts in it, it is very good! Perhaps you read it without feeling, Varinka; you were out of humour when you read it, vexed with Fedora, or something had gone wrong. No, you read it with feeling; best when you are pleased and happy and in a pleasant humour, when, for instance, you have got a sweetmeat in your mouth, that's when you must read it. I don't dispute (who denies it?) that there are better writers than Ratazyaev, and very much better in fact, but they are good and Ratazyaev is good too. He writes in his own special way, and does very well to write. Well, good-bye, my precious, I can't write more; I must make haste, I have work to do. Mind now, my love, my precious little dearie; calm yourself, and God will be with you, and I remain your faithful friend,

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

P.S.—Thanks for the book, my own; we will read Pushkin too, and this evening I shall be sure to come and see you..

MY DEAR MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

No, my friend, no, I ought not to go on living among you. On second thoughts I consider that I am doing very wrong to refuse such a good situation. I shall have at least my daily bread secure; I will do my best, I will win the affection of the strangers, I will even try to overcome my defects, if necessary. Of course it is painful and irksome to live with strangers, to try and win their good-will, to hide one's feelings, and suppress oneself, but God will help me. I mustn't be a recluse all my life. I have had experiences like it before. I remember when I was a little thing and used to go to school. I used to be frolicking and skipping about all Sundays at home; sometimes mother would

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July 8.

DEAR MADAM, VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

I hasten to return you the book you lent me on the sixth of this month, and therewith I hasten to discuss the matter with you. It's wrong of you, my dear girl, it's wrong of you to put me to the necessity of it. Allow me to tell you, my good friend, every position in the lot of man is ordained by the Almighty. One man is ordained to wear the epaulettes of a general, while it is another's lot to serve as a titular councillor; it is for one to give commands, for another to obey without repining, in fear and humility. It is in accordance with man's capacities; one is fit for one thing and one for another, and their capacities are ordained by God himself. I have been nearly thirty years in the service; my record is irreproachable; I have been sober in my behaviour, and I have never had any irregularity put down to me. As a citizen I look upon myself in my own mind as having my faults, but my virtues, too. I am respected by my superiors, and His Excellency himself is satisfied with me; and though he has not so far shown me any special marks of favour, yet I know that he is satisfied. My handwriting is fairly legible and good, not too big and not too small, rather in the style of italics, but in any case satisfactory; there is no one among us except, perhaps, Ivan Prokofyevitch who writes as well. I am old and my hair is grey; that's the only fault I know of in me. Of course, there is no one without his little failings. We're all sinners, even you are a sinner, my dear! But no serious offence, no impudence has ever been recorded against me, such as anything against the regulations, or any disturbance of public tranquillity; I have never been noticed for anything like that, such a thing has never happened—in fact, I almost got a decoration, but what's the use of talking! You ought to have known all that, my dear, and he ought to have known; if a man undertakes to write he ought to know all about it. No, I did not expect this from you, my dear girl, no, Varinka! You are the last person from whom I should have expected it.

What! So now you can't live quietly in your own little corner—whatever it may be like—not stirring up any mud, as the saying is, interfering with no one, knowing yourself, and fearing God, without people's interfering with you, without their prying into your little den and trying to see what sort of life you lead at home, whether for instance you have a good waistcoat, whether you have all you ought to have in the way of underclothes, whether you have boots and what they are lined with; what you eat, what you drink, what you write? And what even if I do sometimes walk on tiptoe to save my boots where the pavement's bad? Why write of another man that he sometimes goes short, that he has no tea to drink, as though everyone is always bound to drink tea—do I look into another man's mouth to see how he chews his crust, have I ever insulted anyone in that way? No, my dear, why insult people, when they are not interfering with you! Look

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here, Varvara Alexyevna, this is what it comes to: you work, and work regularly and devotedly; and your superiors respect you (however things may be, they do respect you), and here under your very nose, for no apparent reason, neither with your leave nor by your leave, somebody makes a caricature of you. Of course one does sometimes get something new—and is so pleased that one lies awake thinking about it, one is so pleased, one puts on new boots for instance, with such enjoyment; that is true: I have felt it because it is pleasant to see one's foot in a fine smart boot—that's truly described! But I am really surprised that Fyodor Fyodorovitch should have let such a book pass without notice and without defending himself. It is true that, though he is a high official, he is young and likes at times to make his voice heard. Why shouldn't he make his voice heard, why not give us a scolding if we need it? Scold to keep up the tone of the office, for instance—well, he must, to keep up the tone; you must teach men, you must give them a good talking to; for, between ourselves, Varinka, we clerks do nothing without a good talking to. Everyone is only on the look-out to get off somewhere, so as to say, I was sent here or there, and to avoid work and edge out of it. And as there are various grades in the service and as each grade requires a special sort of reprimand corresponding to the grade, it's natural that the tone of the reprimand should differ in the various grades—that's in the order of things—why, the whole world rests on that, my dear soul, on our all keeping up our authority with one another, on each one of us scolding the other. Without that precaution, the world could not go on and there would be no sort of order. I am really surprised that Fyodor Fyodorovitch let such an insult pass without attention. And why write such things? And what's the use of it? Why, will someone who reads it order me a cloak because of it; will he buy me new boots? No, Varinka, he will read it and ask for a contribution. One hides oneself sometimes, one hides oneself, one tries to conceal one's weak points, one's afraid to show one's nose at times anywhere because one is afraid of tittle-tattle, because they can work up a tale against you about anything in the world—anything. And here now all one's private and public life is being dragged into literature, it is all printed, read, laughed and gossiped about! Why, it will be impossible to show oneself in the street. It's all so plainly told, you know, that one might be recognised in one's walk. To be sure, it's as well that he does make up for it a little at the end, that he does soften it a bit, that after that passage when they throw the papers at his head, it does put in, for instance, that for all that he was a conscientious man, a good citizen, that he did not deserve such treatment from his fellow-clerks, that he respected his elders (his example might be followed, perhaps, in that), had no ill-will against anyone, believed in God and died (if he will have it that he died) regretted. But it would have been better not to let him die, poor fellow, but to make the coat be found, to make Fyodor Fyodorovitch—what am I saying? I mean, make that general,

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finding out his good qualities, question him in his office, promote him in his office, and give him a good increase in his salary, for then, you see, wickedness would have been punished, and virtue would have been triumphant, and his fellow-clerks would have got nothing by it. I should have done that, for instance, but as it is, what is there special about it, what is there good in it? It's just an insignificant example from vulgar, everyday life. And what induced you to send me such a book, my own? Why, it's a book of an evil tendency, Varinka, it's untrue to life, for there cannot have been such a clerk. No, I must make a complaint, Varinka. I must make a formal complaint.

Your very humble servant,

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

July 27.

DEAR SIR, MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

Your latest doings and letters have frightened, shocked, and amazed me, and what Fedora tells me has explained it all. But what reason had you to be so desperate and to sink to such a depth as you have sunk to, Makar Alexyevitch? Your explanation has not satisfied me at all. Isn't it clear that I was right in trying to insist on taking the situation that was offered me? Besides, my last adventure has thoroughly frightened me. You say that it's your love for me that makes you keep in hiding from me. I saw that I was deeply indebted to you while you persuaded me that you were only spending your savings on me, which you said you had lying by in the bank in case of need. Now, when I learn that you had no such money at all, but, hearing by chance of my straitened position, and touched by it, you actually spent your salary, getting it in advance, and even sold your clothes when I was ill—now that I have discovered all this I am put in such an agonising position that I still don't know how to take it, and what to think about it. Oh, Makar Alexyevitch! You ought to have confined yourself to that first kind help inspired by sympathy and the feeling of kinship and not have wasted money afterwards on luxuries. You have been false to our friendship, Makar Alexyevitch, for you weren't open with me. And now, when I see that you were spending your last penny on finery, on sweetmeats, on excursions, on the theatre and on books—now I am paying dearly for all that in regret for my frivolity (for I took it all from you without troubling myself about you); and everything with which you tried to give me pleasure is now turned to grief for me, and has left nothing but useless regret. I have noticed your depression of late, and, although I was nervously apprehensive of some trouble, what has happened never entered my head. What! Could you lose heart so completely, Makar Alexyevitch! Why, what am I to think of you now, what will everyone who knows you say of you now? You, whom I always respected for your good heart, your discretion, and your good sense. You have suddenly given way to such a revolting vice, of which one saw no sign in you before. What were my feelings

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when Fedora told me you were found in the street in a state of inebriety, and were brought home to your lodgings by the police! I was petrified with amazement, though I did expect something extraordinary, as there had been no sign of you for four days. Have you thought, Makar Alexyevitch, what your chiefs at the office will say when they learn the true cause of your absence? You say that everyone laughs at you, that they all know of our friendship, and that your neighbours speak of me in their jokes, too. Don't pay any attention to that, Makar Alexyevitch, and for goodness' sake, calm yourself. I am alarmed about your affair with those officers, too; I have heard a vague account of it. Do explain what it all means. You write that you were afraid to tell me, that you were afraid to lose my affection by your confession, that you were in despair, not knowing how to help me in my illness, that you sold everything to keep me and prevent my going to hospital, that you got into debt as far as you possibly could, and have unpleasant scenes every day with your landlady—but you made a mistake in concealing all this from me. Now I know it all, however. You were reluctant to make me realise that I was the cause of your unhappy position, and now you have caused me twice as much grief by your behaviour. All this has shocked me, Makar Alexyevitch. Oh, my dear friend! misfortune is an infectious disease, the poor and unfortunate ought to avoid one another, for fear of making each other worse. I have brought you trouble such as you knew nothing of in your old humble and solitary existence. All this is distressing and killing me.

Write me now openly all that happened to you and how you came to behave like that. Set my mind at rest if possible. It isn't selfishness makes me write to you about my peace of mind, but my affection and love for you, which nothing will ever efface from my heart. Good-bye. I await your answer with impatience. You had a very poor idea of me, Makar Alexyevitch.

Your loving
VARVARA DOBROSELOV.

July 28.

MY PRECIOUS VARVARA ALEXYEVNA—

Well, as now everything is over and, little by little, things are beginning to be as they used to be, again let me tell you one thing, my good friend: you are worried by what people will think about me, to which I hasten to assure you, Varvara Alexyevna, that my reputation is dearer to me than anything. For which reason and with reference to my misfortunes and all those disorderly proceedings I beg to inform you that no one of the authorities at the office know anything about it or will know anything about it. So that they will all feel the same respect for me as before. The one thing I'm afraid of is gossip. At home our landlady did nothing but shout, and now that with the help of your ten roubles I have paid part of what I owe her she does nothing more than grumble; as for other people, they don't matter,

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one mustn't borrow money of them, that's all, and to conclude my explanations I tell you, Varvara Alexyevna, that your respect for me I esteem more highly than anything on earth, and I am comforted by it now in my temporary troubles. Thank God that the first blow and the first shock are over and that you have taken it as you have, and don't look on me as a false friend, or an egoist for keeping you here and deceiving you because I love you as my angel and could not bring myself to part from you. I've set to work again assiduously and have begun performing my duties well. Yevstafy Ivanovitch did just say a word when I passed him by yesterday. I will not conceal from you, Varinka, that I am overwhelmed by my debts and the awful condition of my wardrobe, but that again does not matter, and about that too, I entreat you, do not despair, my dear. Send me another half rouble. Varinka, that half rouble rends my heart too. So that's what it has come to now, that is how it is, old fool that I am; it's not I helping you, my angel, but you, my poor little orphan, helping me. Fedora did well to get the money. For the time I have no hopes of getting any, but if there should be any prospects I will write to you fully about it all. But gossip, gossip is what I am most uneasy about. I kiss your little hand and implore you to get well. I don't write more fully because I am in haste to get to the office. For I want by industry and assiduity to atone for all my shortcomings in the way of negligence in the office; a further account of all that happened and my adventures with the officers I put off till this evening.

Your respectful and loving

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

July 28.

MY PRECIOUS VARINKA—

Ach, Varinka, Varinka! This time the sin is on your side and your conscience. You completely upset and perplexed me by your letter, and only now, when at my leisure I looked into the inmost recesses of my heart, I saw that I was right, perfectly right. I am not talking of my drinking (that's enough of it, my dear soul, that's enough) but about my loving you and that I was not at all unreasonable in loving you, not at all unreasonable. You know nothing about it, my darling; why, if only you knew why it all was, why I was bound to love you, you wouldn't talk like that. All your reasoning about it is only talk, and I am sure that in your heart you feel quite differently.

My precious, I don't even know myself and don't remember what happened between me and the officers. I must tell you, my angel, that up to that time I was in the most terrible perturbation. Only imagine! for a whole month I had been clinging to one thread, so to say. My position was most awful. I was concealing it from you, and concealing it at home too. But my landlady made a fuss and a clamour. I should not have minded that. The wretched woman might have clamoured but, for one thing, it was the disgrace and, for another, she had found

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out about our friendship—God knows how—and was making such talk about it all over the house that I was numb with horror and put wool in my ears, but the worst of it is that other people did not put wool in theirs, but pricked them up, on the contrary. Even now I don't know where to hide myself. . . .

Well, my angel, all this accumulation of misfortunes of all sorts overwhelmed me utterly. Suddenly I heard a strange thing from Fedora: that a worthless profligate had called upon you and had insulted you by dishonourable proposals; that he did insult you, insult you deeply, I can judge from myself, my darling, for I was deeply insulted myself. That crushed me, my angel, that overwhelmed me and made me lose my head completely. I ran out, Varinka dear, in unutterable fury. I wanted to go straight to him, the reprobate. I did not know what I meant to do. I won't have you insulted, my angel! Well, I was sad! And at that time it was raining, sleet was falling, it was horribly wretched! . . . I meant to turn back. . . . Then came my downfall. I met Emelyan Ilyitch—he is a clerk, that is, was a clerk, but he is not a clerk now because he was turned out of our office. I don't know what he does now, he just hangs about there. Well, I went with him. Then—but there, Varinka, will it amuse you to read about your friend's misfortunes, his troubles, and the story of the trials he has endured? Three days later that Emelyan egged me on and I went to see him, that officer. I got his address from our porter. Since we are talking about it, my dear, I noticed that young gallant long ago: I kept an eye upon him when he lodged in our buildings. I see now that what I did was unseemly, because I was not myself when I was shown up to him. Truly, Varinka, I don't remember anything about it, all I remember is that there were a great many officers with him, else I was seeing double—goodness knows. I don't remember what I said either, I only know that I said a great deal in my honest indignation. But then they turned me out, then they threw me downstairs—that is, not really threw me downstairs, but turned me out. You know already, Varinka, how I returned: that's the whole story. Of course I lowered myself and my reputation has suffered, but, after all, no one knows of it but you, no outsider knows of it, and so it is all as though it had never happened. Perhaps that is so, Varinka, what do you think? The only thing is, I know for a fact that last year Aksenty Osipovitch in the same way assaulted Pyotr Petrovitch but in secret, he did it in secret. He called him into the porter's room—I saw it all through the crack in the door—and there he settled the matter, as was fitting, but in a gentlemanly way, for no one saw it except me, and I did not matter—that is, I did not tell anyone. Well, after that Pyotr Petrovitch and Aksenty Osipovitch were all right together. Pyotr Petrovitch, you know, is a man with self-respect, so he told no one, so that now they even bow and shake hands. I don't dispute, Varinka, I don't venture to dispute with you that I have degraded myself terribly, and, what is worst of all,

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I have lowered myself in my own opinion, but no doubt it was destined from my birth, no doubt it was my fate, and there's no escaping one's fate, you know.

Well, that is an exact account of my troubles and misfortunes, Varinka, all of them, things such that reading of them is unprofitable. I am very far from well, Varinka, and have lost all the playfulness of my feelings. Herewith I beg to testify to my devotion, love and respect. I remain, dear madam Varvara Alexyevna,

Your humble servant,

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

July 29.

MY DEAR MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH!

I have read your two letters, and positively groaned! Listen, my dear; you are either concealing something from me and have written to me only part of all your troubles, or. . .really, Makar Alexyevitch, there is a touch of incoherency about your letters still. . . . Come and see me, for goodness' sake, come to-day; and listen, come straight to dinner, you know I don't know how you are living, or how you have managed about your landlady. You write nothing about all that, and your silence seems intentional. So, good-bye, my friend; be sure and come to us to-day; and you would do better to come to us for dinner every day. Fedora cooks very nicely. Good-bye.

Your

VARVARA DOBROSELOV.

August 1.

MY DEAR VARVARA ALEXYEVNA—

You are glad, my dear girl, that God has sent you a chance to do one good turn for another and show your gratitude to me. I believe that, Varinka, and I believe in the goodness of your angelic heart, and I am not saying it to reproach you—only do not upbraid me for being a spendthrift in my old age. Well, if I have done wrong, there's no help for it; only to hear it from you, my dearie, is very bitter! Don't be angry with me for saying so, my heart's all one ache. Poor people are touchy—that's in the nature of things. I felt that even in the past. The poor man is exacting; he takes a different view of God's world, and looks askance at every passer-by and turns a troubled gaze about him and looks to every word, wondering whether people are not talking about him, whether they are saying that he is so ugly, speculating about what he would feel exactly, what he would be on this side and what he would be on that side, and everyone knows, Varinka, that a poor man is worse than a rag and can get no respect from anyone; whatever they may write, those scribblers, it will always be the same with the poor man as it has been. And why will it always be as it has been? Because to their thinking the poor man must be turned inside out, he must have no privacy, no pride whatever! Emelyan told me

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the other day that they got up a subscription for him and made a sort of official inspection over every sixpence; they thought that they were giving him his sixpences for nothing, but they were not; they were paid for them by showing him he was a poor man. Nowadays, my dear soul, benevolence is practised in a very queer way. . .and perhaps it always has been so, who knows! Either people don't know how to do it or they are first-rate hands at it—one of the two. Perhaps you did not know it, so there it is for you. On anything else we can say nothing, but on this subject we are authorities! And how is it a poor man knows all this and thinks of it all like this? Why?—from experience! Because he knows for instance, that there is a gentleman at his side, who is going somewhere to a restaurant and saying to himself, “What's this beggarly clerk going to eat to-day? I'm going to eat *sauté papillotte* while he is going to eat porridge without butter, maybe.” And what business is it to him that I am going to eat porridge without butter? There are men, Varinka, there are men who think of nothing else. And they go about, the indecent caricaturists, and look whether one puts one's whole foot down on the pavement or walks on tiptoe; they notice that such a clerk, of such a department, a titular councillor, has his bare toes sticking out of his boot, that he has holes in his elbow—and then they sit down at home and describe it all and publish such rubbish. . .and what business is it of yours, sir, if my elbows are in holes? Yes, if you will excuse me the coarse expression, Varinka, I will tell you that the poor man has the same sort of modesty on that score as you, for instance, have maidenly modesty. Why, you wouldn't divest yourself of your clothing before everyone—forgive my coarse comparison. So, in the same way, the poor man does not like people to peep into his poor hole and wonder about his domestic arrangements. So what need was there to join in insulting me, Varinka, with the enemies who are attacking an honest man's honour and reputation?

And in the office to-day I sat like a hen, like a plucked sparrow, so that I almost turned with shame at myself. I was ashamed, Varinka! And one is naturally timid, when one's elbows are seeing daylight through one's sleeves, and one's buttons are hanging on threads. And, as ill-luck would have it, all my things were in such disorder! You can't help losing heart. Why! . . . Stepan Karlovitch himself began speaking to me about my work to-day, he talked and talked away and added, as though unawares, “Well, really, Makar Alexyevitch!” and did not say what was in his mind, only I understood what it was for myself, and blushed so that even the bald patch on my head was crimson. It was really only a trifle, but still it made me uneasy, and aroused bitter reflections. If only they have heard nothing! Ah, God forbid that they should hear about anything! I confess I do suspect one man. I suspect him very much. Why, these villains stick at nothing, they will betray me, they will give away one's whole private life for a halfpenny—nothing is sacred to them.

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I know now whose doing it is; it is Ratazyaev's doing. He knows someone in our office, and most likely in the course of conversation has told them the whole story with additions; or maybe he has told the story in his own office, and it has crept out and crept into our office. In our lodging, they all know it down to the lowest, and point at your window; I know that they do point. And when I went to dinner with you yesterday, they all poked their heads out of window and the landlady said: "Look," said she, "the devil has made friends with the baby." And then she called you an unseemly name. But all that's nothing beside Ratazyaev's disgusting design to put you and me into his writing and to describe us in a cunning satire; he spoke of this himself, and friendly fellow-lodgers have repeated it to me. I can think of nothing else, my darling, and don't know what to decide to do. There is no concealing the fact, we have provoked the wrath of God, little angel. You meant to send me a book, my good friend, to relieve my dullness; what is the use of a book, my love, what's the good of it? It's arrant nonsense! The story is nonsense and it is written as nonsense, just for idle people to read; trust me, my dear soul, trust the experience of my age. And what if they talk to you of some Shakespeare, saying, "You see that Shakespeare wrote literature," well, then, Shakespeare is nonsense; it's all arrant nonsense and only written to jeer at folk!

Yours,

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

August 2.

DEAR MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH!

Don't worry about anything; please God it will all be set right. Fedora has got a lot of work both for herself and for me, and we have set to work very happily; perhaps we shall save the situation. She suspects that Anna Fyodorovna had some hand in this last unpleasant business; but now I don't care. I feel somehow particularly cheerful to-day. You want to borrow money—God forbid! You'll get into trouble afterwards when you need to pay it back. We had much better live more frugally; come to us more often, and don't take any notice of your landlady. As for your other enemies and ill-wishers, I am sure you are worrying yourself with needless suspicions, Makar Alexyevitch! Mind, I told you last time that your language was very exaggerated. Well, good-bye till we meet. I expect you without fail.

Your

V. D.

August 3.

MY ANGEL, VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

I hasten to tell you, my little life, I have fresh hopes of something. But excuse me, my little daughter, you write, my angel, that I am not to borrow money. My darling, it is impossible to avoid it; here I am

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in a bad way, and what if anything were suddenly amiss with you! You are frail, you know; so that's why I say we must borrow. Well, so I will continue.

I beg to inform you, Varvara Alexyevna, that in the office I am sitting next to Emelyan Ivanovitch. That's not the Emelyan Ilyitch whom you know. He is, like me, a titular councillor, and he and I are almost the oldest veterans in the office. He is a good-natured soul, an unworldly soul; he's not given to talking and always sits like a regular bear. But he is a good clerk and has a good English handwriting and, to tell the whole truth, he writes as well as I do—he's a worthy man! I never was very intimate with him, but only just say good-morning and good-evening; or if I wanted the pen-knife, I would say, "Give me the pen-knife, Emelyan Ivanovitch"; in short, our intercourse was confined to our common necessities. Well so, he says to me to-day, "Makar Alexyevitch, why are you so thoughtful?" I see the man wishes me kindly, so I told him—I said, "This is how it is, Emelyan Ivanovitch"—that is, I did not tell him everything, and indeed, God forbid! I never will tell the story because I haven't the heart to, but just told him something, that I was in straits for money, and so on. "You should borrow, my good soul," said Emelyan Ivanovitch: "you should borrow; from Pyotr Petrovitch you might borrow, he lends money at interest; I have borrowed and he asks a decent rate of interest, not exorbitant." Well, Varinka, my heart gave a leap. I thought and thought maybe the Lord will put it into the heart of Pyotr Petrovitch and in his benevolence he will lend me the money. Already I was reckoning to myself that I could pay the landlady and help you, and clear myself all round. Whereas now it is such a disgrace, one is afraid to be in one's own place, let alone the jeers of our grinning jackanapes. Bother them! And besides, his Excellency sometimes passes by our table: why, God forbid! he may cast a glance in my direction and notice I'm not decently dressed! And he makes a great point of neatness and tidiness. Maybe he would say nothing, but I should die of shame—that's how it would be. In consequence I screwed myself up and, putting my pride in my ragged pocket, I went up to Pyotr Petrovitch full of hope and at the same time more dead than alive with suspense. But, after all, Varinka, it all ended in foolishness! He was busy with something, talking with Fedosey Ivanovitch. I went up to him sideways and pulled him by the sleeve, saying, "Pyotr Petrovitch, I say, Pyotr Petrovitch!" He looked round, and I went on: saying, "this is how it is, thirty roubles," and so on. At first he did not understand me, and when I explained it all to him, he laughed, and said nothing. I said the same thing again. And he said to me, "Have you got a pledge?" And he buried himself in his writing and did not even glance at me. I was a little flustered. "No," I said, "Pyotr Petrovitch, I've no pledge," and I explained to him that when I got my salary I would pay him, would be sure to pay him, I should consider it my first duty. Then somebody called him. I waited for him, he came

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back and began mending a pen and did not seem to notice me, and I kept on with "Pyotr Petrovitch, can't you manage it somehow?" He said nothing and seemed not to hear me. I kept on standing there. Well, I thought I would try for the last time, and pulled him by the sleeve. He just muttered something, cleaned his pen, and began writing. I walked away. You see, my dear girl, they may be excellent people, but proud, very proud—but I don't mind! We are not fit company for them, Varinka! That is why I have written all this to you. Emelyan Ivanovitch laughed, too, and shook his head, but he cheered me up, the dear fellow—Emelyan Ivanovitch is a worthy man. He promised to introduce me to a man who lives in the Vybord Side, Varinka, and lends money at interest too; he is some sort of clerk of the fourteenth class. Emelyan Ivanovitch says he will be sure to lend it. Shall I go to him to-morrow, my angel, eh? What do you think? It is awful if I don't. My landlady is almost turning me out and won't consent to give me my dinner; besides, my boots are in a dreadful state, my dear; I've no buttons either and nothing else besides. And what if anyone in authority at the office notices such unseemliness; it will be awful, Varinka, simply awful!

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

August 4.

DEAR MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

For God's sake, Makar Alexyevitch, borrow some money as soon as possible! I would not for anything have asked you for help as things are at present, but if you only knew what a position I am in. It's utterly impossible for us to remain in this lodging. A horribly unpleasant thing has happened here, and if only you knew how upset and agitated I am! Only imagine, my friend; this morning a stranger came into our lodging, an elderly, almost old man, wearing orders. I was amazed, not knowing what he wanted with us. Fedora had gone out to a shop at the time. He began asking me how I lived and what I did, and without waiting for an answer, told me that he was the uncle of that officer; that he was very angry with his nephew for his disgraceful behaviour, and for having given us a bad name all over the buildings; said that his nephew was a featherheaded scamp, and that he was ready to take me under his protection; advised me not to listen to young men, added that he sympathised with me like a father, that he felt a father's feeling for me and was ready to help me in any way. I blushed all over, not knowing what to think, but was in no haste to thank him. He took my hand by force, patted me on the cheek, told me I was very pretty and that he was delighted to find I had dimples in my cheeks (goodness knows what he said!) and at last tried to kiss me, saying that he was an old man (he was so loathsome). At that point Fedora came in. He was a little disconcerted and began saying again that he felt respect for me, for my discretion and good principles, and that he was very anxious that I should not treat him as a stranger. Then he drew Fedora aside

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and on some strange pretext wanted to give her a lot of money. Fedora, of course, would not take it. At last he got up to go, he repeated once more all his assurances, said that he would come and see me again and bring me some ear-rings (I believe he, too, was very much embarrassed); he advised me to change my lodgings and recommended me a very nice lodging which he had his eye on, and which would cost me nothing; he said that he liked me very much for being an honest and sensible girl, advised me to beware of profligate men, and finally told us that he knew Anna Fyodorovna and that Anna Fyodorovna had commissioned him to tell me that she would come and see me herself. Then I understood it all. I don't know what came over me; it was the first time in my life I had had such an experience; I flew into a fury, I put him to shame completely. Fedora helped me, and we almost turned him out of the flat. We've come to the conclusion that it is all Anna Fyodorovna's doing; how else could he have heard of us?

Now I appeal to you, Makar Alexyevitch, and entreat you to help us. For God's sake, don't desert me in this awful position. Please borrow, get hold of some money anyway; we've no money to move with and we mustn't stay here any longer; that's Fedora's advice. We need at least thirty-five roubles; I'll pay you back the money; I'll earn it. Fedora will get me some more work in a day or two, so that if they ask a high interest, never mind it, but agree to anything. I'll pay it all back, only for God's sake, don't abandon me. I can't bear worrying you now when you are in such circumstances. . . . Good-bye, Makar Alexyevitch; think of me, and God grant you are successful.

Yours,

V. D.

August 4.

MY DARLING VARVARA ALEXYEVNA!

All these unexpected blows positively shatter me! Such terrible calamities destroy my spirit! These scoundrelly libertines and rascally old men will not only bring you, my angel, to a bed of sickness, they mean to be the death of me, too. And they will be, too, I swear they will. You know I am ready to die sooner than not help you! If I don't help you it will be the death of me, Varinka, the actual literal death of me, and if I do help you, you'll fly away from me like a bird out of its nest, to escape these owls, these birds of prey that were trying to peck her. That's what tortures me, my precious. And you too, Varinka, you are so cruel! How can you do it? You are tormented, you are insulted, you, my little bird, are in distress, and then you regret that you must worry me and promise to repay the debt, which means, to tell the truth, that with your delicate health you will kill yourself, in order to get the money for me in time. Why, only think, Varinka, what you are talking about. Why should you sew? Why should you work, worry your poor little head with anxiety, spoil your pretty eyes and destroy

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your health? Ah, Varinka, Varinka! You see, my darling, I am good for nothing, I know myself that I am good for nothing, but I'll manage to be good for something! I will overcome all obstacles. I will get outside work, I will copy all sorts of manuscripts for all sorts of literary men. I will go to them, I won't wait to be asked, I'll force them to give me work, for you know, my darling, they are on the look-out for good copyists, I know they look out for them, but I won't let you wear yourself out; I won't let you carry out such a disastrous intention. I will certainly borrow it, my angel, I'd sooner die than not borrow it. You write, my darling, that I am not to be afraid of a high rate of interest—and I won't be afraid of it, my dear soul, I won't be frightened. I won't be frightened of anything now. I will ask for forty roubles in paper, my dear; that's not much, you know, Varinka, what do you think? Will they trust me with forty roubles at the first word? That is, I mean to say, do you consider me capable of inspiring trust and confidence at first sight. Can they form a favourable impression of me from my physiognomy at first sight? Recall my appearance, my angel; am I capable of inspiring confidence? What do you think yourself? You know I feel such terror; it makes me quite ill, to tell the truth, quite ill. Of the forty roubles I set aside twenty-five for you, Varinka, two silver roubles will be for the landlady, and the rest I design for my own expenses. You see I ought to give the landlady more, I must, in fact; but if you think it all over, my dear girl, and reckon out all I need, then you'll see that it is impossible to give her more, consequently there's no use talking about it and no need to refer to it. For a silver rouble I shall buy a pair of boots—I really don't know whether I shall be able to appear at the office in the old ones; a new necktie would have been necessary, too, for I have had the old one a year, but since you've promised to make me, not only a tie, but a shirtfront cut out of your old apron, I shall think no more of a tie. So there we have boots and a tie. Now for buttons, my dear. You will agree, my darling, that I can't go on without buttons and almost half have dropped off. I tremble when I think that his Excellency may notice such untidiness and say something, and what he would say! I shouldn't hear what he would say, my darling, for I should die, die, die on the spot, simply go and die of shame at the very thought!—Ah, Varinka!—Well, after all these necessities, there will be three roubles left, so that would do to live on and get half a pound of tobacco, for I can't live without tobacco, my little angel, and this is the ninth day since I had my pipe in my mouth. To tell the truth, I should have bought it and said nothing to you, but I was ashamed. You are there in trouble depriving yourself of everything, and here am I enjoying luxuries of all sorts; so that's why I tell you about it to escape the stings of conscience. I frankly confess, Varinka, I am now in an extremely straitened position, that is, nothing like it has ever happened before. My landlady despises me, I get no sort of respect from anyone; my terrible lapses, my debts; and at the office, where I had anything but a good time, in

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the old days, at the hands of my fellow clerks—now, Varinka, it is beyond words. I hide everything, I carefully hide everything from everyone, and I edge into the office sideways, I hold aloof from all. It's only to you that I have the heart to confess it. . . . And what if they won't give me the money! No, we had better not think about that, Varinka, not depress our spirits beforehand with such thoughts. That's why I am writing this, to warn you not to think about it, and not to worry yourself with evil imaginations. Ah! my God! what will happen to you then! It's true that then you will not move from that lodging and I shall be with you then. But, no, I should not come back then, I should simply perish somewhere and be lost. Here I have been writing away to you and I ought to have been shaving; it makes one more presentable, and to be presentable always counts for something. Well, God help us, I will say my prayers, and then set off.

M. DYEYUSHKIN.

August 5.

MY DEAR MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

You really mustn't give way to despair. There's trouble enough without that.

I send you thirty kopecks in silver, I cannot manage more. Buy yourself what you need most, so as to get along somehow, until to-morrow. We have scarcely anything left ourselves, and I don't know what will happen to-morrow. It's sad, Makar Alexyevitch! Don't be sad, though, if you've not succeeded, there's no help for it. Fedora says that there is no harm done so far, that we can stay for the time in this lodging, that if we did move we shouldn't gain much by it, and that they can find us anywhere if they want to. Though I don't feel comfortable at staying here now. If it were not so sad I would have written you an account of something.

What a strange character you have, Makar Alexyevitch; you take everything too much to heart and so you will be always a very unhappy man. I read all your letters attentively and I see in every letter you are anxious and worried about me as you never are about yourself. Everyone says, of course, that you have a good heart, but I say that it is too good. I will give you some friendly advice, Makar Alexyevitch. I am grateful to you, very grateful for all that you have done for me, I feel it very much; so judge what it must be for me to see that even now, after all your misfortunes of which I have been the unconscious cause—that even now you are only living in my life, my joys, my sorrows, my feelings! If one takes all another person's troubles so to heart and sympathises so intensely with everything it is bound to make one very unhappy. To-day, when you came in to see me from the office I was frightened at the sight of you. You were so pale, so despairing, so frightened-looking; you did not look like yourself—and all because you were afraid to tell me of your failure, afraid of disappointing me, of frightening me, and when you saw I nearly laughed your heart was

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almost at ease. Makar Alexyevitch, don't grieve, don't despair, be more sensible, I beg you, I implore you. Come, you will see that everything will be all right. Everything will take a better turn: why, life will be a misery to you, forever grieving and being miserable over other people's troubles. Good-bye, my dear friend. I beseech you not to think too much about it.

V. D.

August 5.

MY DARLING VARINKA,

Very well, my angel, very well! You have made up your mind that it is no harm so far that I have not got the money. Well, very good, I feel reassured, I am happy as regards you. I am delighted, in fact, that you are not going to leave me in my old age but are going to stay in your lodging. In fact, to tell you everything, my heart was brimming over with joy when I saw that you wrote so nicely about me in your letter and gave due credit to my feelings. I don't say this from pride, but because I see how you love me when you are so anxious about my heart. Well, what's the use of talking about my heart! The heart goes its own way, but you hint, my precious, that I mustn't be downhearted. Yes, my angel, maybe, and I say myself it is of no use being downhearted! but for all that, you tell me, my dear girl, what boots I am to go to the office in to-morrow! That's the trouble, Varinka; and you know such a thought destroys a man, destroys him utterly. And the worst of it is, my own, that it is not for myself I am troubled, it is not for myself I am distressed; as far as I am concerned I don't mind going about without an overcoat and without boots in the hardest frost; I don't care: I can stand anything, and put up with anything. I am a humble man of no importance,—but what will people say? My enemies with their spiteful tongues, what will they say, when one goes about without an overcoat? You know it is for the sake of other people one wears an overcoat, yes, and boots, too, you put on, perhaps, on their account. Boots, in such cases, Varinka darling, are necessary to keep up one's dignity and good name: in boots with holes in them, both dignity and good name are lost; trust the experience of my years, my dear child, listen to an old man like me who knows the world and what people are, and not to any scurrilous scribblers and satirists.

I have not yet told you in detail, my darling, how it all happened to-day. I suffered so much, I endured in one morning more mental anguish than many a man endures in a year. This is how it was: first, I set off very early in the morning, so as to find him and be in time for the office afterwards. There was such a rain, such a sleet falling this morning! I wrapped myself up in my overcoat, my little dearie. I walked on and on and I kept thinking: "Oh, Lord, forgive my transgressions and grant the fulfilment of my desires!" Passing St. X's Church, I crossed myself, repented of all my sins, and thought that it was wrong of me to bargain with the Almighty. I was lost in my

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thoughts and did not feel like looking at anything; so I walked without picking my way. The streets were empty, and the few I met all seemed anxious and preoccupied, and no wonder: who would go out at such an early hour and in such weather! A gang of workmen, grinning all over, met me, the rough fellows shoved against me! A feeling of dread came over me, I felt panic-stricken, to tell the truth I didn't like even to think about the money—I felt I must just take my chance! Just at Voskressensky Bridge the sole came off my boot, so I really don't know what I walked upon. And then I met our office attendant, Yermolaev. He drew himself up at attention and stood looking after me as though he would ask for a drink. "Ech, a drink, brother," I thought; "not much chance of a drink!" I was awfully tired. I stood still, rested a bit and pushed on farther; I looked about on purpose for something to fasten my attention on, to distract my mind, to cheer me up, but no, I couldn't fix one thought on anything and, besides, I was so muddy that I felt ashamed of myself. At last I saw in the distance a yellow wooden house with an upper storey in the style of a belvedere. "Well," thought I, "so that's it, that's how Emelyan Ivanovitch described it—Markov's house." (It is this Markov himself, Varinka, who lends money.) I scarcely knew what I was doing, and I knew, of course, that it was Markov's house, but I asked a policeman. "Whose house is that, brother?" said I. The policeman was a surly fellow, seemed loth to speak and cross with someone; he filtered his words through his teeth, but he did say it was Markov's house. These policemen are always so unfeeling, but what did the policeman matter?—well, it all made a bad and unpleasant impression, in short, there was one thing on the top of another; one finds in everything something akin to one's own position, and it is always so. I took three turns past the house, along the street, and the further I went, the worse I felt. "No," I thought, "he won't give it me, nothing will induce him to give it me. I am a stranger and it's a ticklish business, and I am not an attractive figure. Well," I thought, "leave it to Fate, if only I do not regret it afterwards; they won't devour me for making the attempt," and I softly opened the gate, and then another misfortune happened. A wretched, stupid yard dog fastened upon me. It was beside itself and barked its loudest!—and it's just such wretched, trivial incidents that always madden a man, Varinka, and make him nervous and destroy all the determination he has been fortifying himself with beforehand; so that I went into the house more dead than alive and walked straight into trouble again. Without seeing what was below me straight in the doorway, I went in, stumbled over a woman who was busy straining some milk from a pail into a jug, and spilt all the milk. The silly woman shrieked and made an outcry, saying, "Where are you shoving to, my man?" and made a deuce of a row. I may say, Varinka, it is always like this with me in such cases; it seems it is my fate, I always get mixed up in something. An old hag, the Finnish landlady, poked her head out at the noise. I went straight up to her. "Does

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Markov live here?" said I. "No," said she. She stood still and took a good look at me. "And what do you want with him?" I explained to her that Emelyan had told me this and that, and all the rest of it—said it was a matter of business. The old woman called her daughter, a barelegged girl in her teens. "Call your father; he's upstairs at the lodger's, most likely."

I went in. The room was all right, there were pictures on the wall—all portraits of generals, a sofa, round table, mignonette, and balsam—I wondered whether I had not better clear out and take myself off for good and all. And, oh dear, I did want to run away, Varinka. "I had better come to-morrow," I thought, "and the weather will be better and I will wait a little—to-day the milk's been spilt and the generals look so cross. . . ." "I was already at the door—but he came in—a grey-headed man with thievish eyes, in a greasy dressing-gown with a cord round his waist. He enquired how and why, and I told him that Emelyan Ivanovitch had told me this and that—"Forty roubles," I said, "is what I've come about"—and I couldn't finish. I saw from his eyes that the game was lost. "No," says he; "the fact is, I've no money; and have you brought anything to pledge as security?"

I began explaining that I had brought nothing to pledge, but that Emelyan Ivanovitch—I explained in fact, what was wanted. He heard it all. "No," said he; "what is Emelyan Ivanovitch! I've no money."

Well, I thought, "There it is, I knew—I had a foreboding of it." Well, Varinka, it would have been better really if the earth had opened under me. I felt chill all over, my feet went numb and a shiver ran down my back. I looked at him and he looked at me and almost said, Come, run along, brother, it is no use your staying here—so that if such a thing had happened in other circumstances, I should have been quite ashamed. "And what do you want money for?"—(do you know, he asked that, Varinka). I opened my mouth, if only not to stand there doing nothing, but he wouldn't listen. "No," he said, "I have no money, I would have lent it with pleasure," said he. Then I pressed him, telling him I only wanted a little, saying I would pay him back on the day fixed, that I would pay him back before the day fixed, that he could ask any interest he liked and that, by God! I would pay him back. At that instant, my darling, I thought of you, I thought of all your troubles and privations, I thought of your poor little half-rouble. "But no," says he, "the interest is no matter; if there had been a pledge now! Besides, I have no money. I have none, by God! or I'd oblige you with pleasure,"—he took God's name, too, the villain!

Well, I don't remember, my own, how I went out, how I walked along Vyborgsky Street; how I got to Voskressensky Bridge. I was fearfully tired, shivering, wet through, and only succeeded in reaching the office at ten o'clock. I wanted to brush the mud off, but Snyegirev, the porter, said I mustn't, I should spoil the brush, and "the brush is government property," said he. That's how they all go on now, my dear, these gentry treat me no better than a rag to wipe their boots on.

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Do you know what is killing me, Varinka? it's not the money that's killing me, but all these little daily cares, these whispers, smiles and jokes. His Excellency may by chance have to refer to me. Oh, my darling, my golden days are over. I read over all your letters to-day; it's sad, Varinka! Goodbye, my own! The Lord keep you.

M. DYEYUSHKIN.

P.S.—I meant to describe my troubles half in joke, Varinka, only it seems that it does not come off with me, joking. I wanted to satisfy you. I am coming to see you, my dear girl, I will be sure to come.

August 11.

VARVARA ALEXYEVNA, MY DARLING,

I am lost, we are both lost, both together irretrievably lost. My reputation, my dignity—all is destroyed! I am ruined and you are ruined, my darling. You are hopelessly ruined with me! It's my doing, I have brought you to ruin! I am persecuted, Varinka, I am despised, turned into a laughing-stock, and the landlady has simply begun to abuse me; she shouted and shouted at me, to-day; she rated and rated at me and treated me as though I were dirt. And in the evening, at Ratazyaev's, one of them began reading aloud the rough copy of a letter to you which I had accidentally dropped out of my pocket. My precious, what a joke they made of it! They called us all sorts of flattering names and roared with laughter, the traitors! I went to them and taxed Ratazyaev with his perfidy, told him he was a traitor! And Ratazyaev answered that I was a traitor myself, that I amused myself with making conquests among the fair sex. He said, "You take good care to keep it from us; you're a Lovelace," he said; and now they all call me Lovelace and I have no other name! Do you hear, my little angel, do you hear?—they know it all now, they know all about it, and they know about you, my own, and whatever you have, they know about it all! And that's not all. Even Faldoni is in it, he's following their lead; I sent him to-day to the sausage-shop to get me something; he wouldn't go. "I am busy," that was all he said! "But you know it's your duty," I said. "No, indeed," he said, "it's not my duty. Here, you don't pay my mistress her money, so I have no duty to you." I could not stand this insult from him, an illiterate peasant, and I said, "You fool," and he answered back, "Fool yourself." I thought he must have had a drop too much to be so rude, and I said: "You are drunk, you peasant!" and he answered: "Well, not at your expense, anyway, you've nothing to get drunk on yourself; you are begging for twenty kopecks from somebody yourself," and he even added: "Ugh! and a gentleman too!" There, my dear girl, that's what it has come to! One's ashamed to be alive, Varinka! As though one were some sort of out-cast, worse than a tramp without a passport. An awful calamity! I am ruined, simply ruined! I am irretrievably ruined!

M.D.

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August 13.

MY DEAR MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

It's nothing but one trouble after another upon us. I don't know myself what to do! What will happen to you now?—and I have very little to hope for either; I burnt my left hand this morning with an iron; I dropped it accidentally and bruised myself and burnt my hand at the same time. I can't work at all, and Fedora has been poorly for the last three days. I am in painful anxiety. I send you thirty kopecks in silver; it is almost all we have left, and God knows how I should have liked to help you in your need. I am so vexed I could cry. Good-bye, my friend! You would comfort me very much if you would come and see us to-day.

V.D.

August 14.

MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH

What is the matter with you? It seems you have no fear of God! You are simply driving me out of my mind. Aren't you ashamed? You will be your own ruin; you should at least think of your good name! You're a man of honour, of gentlemanly feelings, of self-respect; well, when everyone finds out about you! Why, you will simply die of shame! Have you no pity for your grey hairs? Have you no fear of God? Fedora says she won't help you again, and I won't give you money either. What have you brought me to, Makar Alexyevitch? I suppose you think that it is nothing to me, your behaving so badly? You don't know what I have to put up with on your account! I can't even go down our staircase; everyone looks at me and points at me, and says such awful things; they say plainly that I have taken up with a drunkard. Think what it is to hear that! When you are brought in all the lodgers point at you with contempt: "Look," they say, "they've brought that clerk in." And I'm ready to faint with shame over you. I swear I shall move from here. I shall go somewhere as a housemaid or a laundrymaid, I shan't stay here. I wrote to you to come and see me here but you did not come. So are my tears and entreaties nothing to you, Makar Alexyevitch? And where do you get the money? For God's sake, do be careful. Why, you are ruining yourself, ruining yourself for nothing! And it's a shame and a disgrace! The landlady would not let you in last night, you spent the night in the porch. I know all about it. If only you knew how miserable I was when I knew all about it. Come to see me; you will be happy with us; we will read together, we will recall the past. Fedora will tell us about her wanderings as a pilgrim. For my sake, don't destroy yourself and me. Why, I only live for you, for your sake I am staying with you. And this is how you are behaving now! Be a fine man, steadfast in misfortune,

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remember that poverty is not a vice. And why despair? It is all temporary! Please God, it will all be set right, only you must restrain yourself now. I send you twenty kopecks. Buy yourself tobacco or anything you want, only for God's sake don't spend it on what's harmful. Come and see us, be sure to come. Perhaps you will be ashamed as you were before, but don't be ashamed; it's false shame. If only you would show genuine penitence. Trust in God. He will do all things for the best.

V. D.

August 19.

VARVARA ALEXYEVNA, DARLING,

I am ashamed, little dearie, Varvara Alexyevna; I am quite ashamed. But, after all, what is there so particular about it, my dear? Why not rejoice the heart a little? Then I don't think about my sole, for one's sole is nonsense, and will always remain a simple, nasty, muddy sole. Yes, and boots are nonsense, too! The Greek sages used to go about without boots, so why should people like us pamper ourselves with such unworthy objects? Oh! my dearie, my dearie, you have found something to write about! You tell Fedora that she is a nonsensical, fidgety, fussy woman, and, what's more, she's a silly one, too, unutterably silly! As for my grey hairs, you are quite mistaken about that, my own, for I am by no means so old as you think. Emelian sends you his regards. You write that you have been breaking your heart and crying; and I write to you that I am breaking my heart, too, and crying. In conclusion I wish you the best of health and prosperity, and as for me I am in the best of health and prosperity, too, and I remain, my angel, your friend,

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

August 21.

HONOURED MADAM AND DEAR FRIEND, VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

I feel that I am to blame, I feel that I have wronged you, and to my mind there's no benefit at all, dear friend, in my feeling it, whatever you may say. I felt all that even before my misconduct, but I lost heart and fell, knowing I was doing wrong. My dear, I am not a bad man and not cruel-hearted, and to torture your little heart, my little darling, one must be, more or less, like a bloodthirsty tiger. Well, I have the heart of a lamb and, as you know, have no inclination towards bloodthirstiness; consequently, my angel, I am not altogether to blame in my misconduct, since neither my feelings nor my thoughts were to blame; and in fact, I don't know what was to blame; it's all so incomprehensible, my darling! you sent me thirty kopecks in silver, and then you sent me twenty kopecks. My heart ached looking at your poor little coins. You had burnt your hand, you would soon be going hungry yourself, and you write that I am to buy tobacco. Well, how could I behave in such a position? Was I without a pang of conscience

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to begin plundering you, poor little orphan, like a robber! Then I lost heart altogether, my darling—that is, at first I could not help feeling that I was good for nothing and that I was hardly better than the sole of my boot. And so I felt it was unseemly to consider myself of any consequence, and began to look upon myself as something unseemly and somewhat indecent. Well, and when I lost my self-respect and denied my good qualities and my dignity, then it was all up with me, it meant degradation, inevitable degradation! That is ordained by destiny and I'm not to blame for it.

I went out at first to get a little air, then it was one thing after another; nature was so tearful, the weather was cold and it was raining. Well, Emelyan turned up. He had pawned everything he had, Varinka, everything he had is gone: and when I met him he had not put a drop of the rosy to his lips for two whole days and nights, so that he was ready to pawn what you can't pawn, because such things are never taken in pawn. Well, Varinka, I gave way more from a feeling of humanity than my own inclination, that's how the sin came to pass, my dear! How we wept together! We spoke of you. He's very good-natured, he's a very good-natured fellow and a very feeling man. I feel all that myself, my dear girl, that is just why it all happens to me, that I feel it all very much. I know how much I owe to you, my darling. Getting to know you, I came first to know myself better and to love you; and before I knew you, my angel, I was solitary and as it were asleep, and scarcely alive. They said, the spiteful creatures, that even my appearance was unseemly and they were disgusted with me, and so I began to be disgusted with myself; they said I was stupid and I really thought that I was stupid. When you came to me, you lighted up my dark life, so that my heart and my soul were filled with light and I gained peace at heart, and knew that I was no worse than others; that the only thing is that I am not brilliant in any way, that I have no polish or style about me, but I am still a man, in heart and mind a man. Well now, feeling that I was persecuted and humiliated by destiny, I lost all faith in my own good qualities, and, shattered by calamities, I lost all heart. And now since you know all about it, my dear, I beg you with tears not to question me further about that matter, for my heart is breaking and it is very bitter for me and hard to bear.

Assuring you of my respect, I remain, your faithful

MAKAR DYEVUSHKIN.

September 3.

I did not finish my last letter, Makar Alexyevitch, because it was difficult for me to write. Sometimes I have moments when I am glad to be alone, to mourn, with none to share my grief, and such moments are becoming more and more frequent with me. In my recollections there is something inexplicable to me, which attacks me unaccountably and so intensely that for hours at a stretch I am insensible to all surrounding me and I forget everything—all the present. And there is

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no impression of my present life, whether pleasant or painful and sad, which would not remind me of something similar in my past, and most often in my childhood, my golden childhood! But I always feel oppressed after such moments. I am somehow weakened by them; my dreaminess exhausts me, and apart from that my health grows worse and worse. But to-day the fresh bright sunny morning, such as are rare in autumn here, revived me and I welcomed it joyfully. And so autumn is with us already! How I used to love the autumn in the country! I was a child then, but I had already felt a great deal. I loved the autumn evening better than the morning. I remember that there was a lake at the bottom of the hill a few yards from our house. That lake—I feel as though I could see it now—that lake was so broad, so smooth, as bright and clear as crystal! At times, if it were a still evening, the lake was calm; not a leaf would stir on the trees that grew on the bank, and the water would be as motionless as a mirror. It was so fresh, so cool! The dew would be falling on the grass, the lights begin twinkling in the cottages on the bank, and they would be driving the cattle home. Then I could creep out to look at my lake, and I would forget everything, looking at it. At the water's edge, the fishermen would have a faggot burning and the light would be reflected far, far, over the water. The sky was so cold and blue, with streaks of fiery red along the horizon, and the streaks kept growing paler and paler; the moon would rise; the air so resonant that if a frightened bird fluttered, or a reed stirred in the faint breeze, or a fish splashed in the water, everything could be heard. A white steam, thin and transparent, rises up over the blue water: the distance darkens; everything seems drowned in the mist, while close by it all stands out so sharply, as though cut by a chisel, the boat, the banks, the islands; the tub thrown away and forgotten floats in the water close to the bank, the willow branch hangs with its yellow leaves tangled in the reeds, a belated gull flies up, then dives into the cold water, flies up again and is lost in the mist—while I gaze and listen. How lovely, how marvellous it was to me I and I was a child, almost a baby. . . .

I was so fond of the autumn, the late autumn when they were carrying the harvest, finishing all the labours of the year, when the peasants began gathering together in their cottages in the evening, when they were all expecting winter. Then it kept growing darker. The yellow leaves strewed the paths at the edges of the bare forest while the forest grew bluer and darker—especially at evening when a damp mist fell and the trees glimmered in the mist like giants, like terrible misshapen phantoms. If one were late out for a walk, dropped behind the others, how one hurried on alone—it was dreadful! One trembled like a leaf and kept thinking that in another minute someone terrible would peep out from behind that hollow tree; meanwhile the wind would rush through the woods, roaring and whistling, howling so plaintively, tearing a crowd of leaves from a withered twig, whirling them in the air, and with wild, shrill cries the birds would fly after

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them in a great, noisy flock, so that the sky would be all covered and darkened with them. One feels frightened, and then, just as though one heard someone speaking—some voice—as though someone whispered: “Run, run, child, don’t be late; it will be dreadful here soon; run, child!”—with a thrill of horror at one’s heart one would run till one was out of breath. One would reach home, breathless; there it was all noise and gaiety; all of us children had some work given to us to do, shelling peas or shaking out poppy seeds. The damp wood crackles in the stove. Cheerfully mother looks after our cheerful work; our old nurse, Ulyana, tells us stories about old times or terrible tales of wizards and dead bodies. We children squeeze up to one another with smiles on our lips. Then suddenly we are all silent, . . . Oh! a noise as though someone were knocking—it was nothing; it was old Frolovna’s spindle; how we laughed! Then at night we would lie awake for hours, we had such fearful dreams. One would wake and not dare to stir, and lie shivering under the quilt till daybreak. In the morning one would get up, fresh as a flower. One would look out of the window; all the country would be covered with frost, the thin hoarfrost of autumn would be hanging on the bare boughs, the lake would be covered with ice, thin as a leaf, a white mist would be rising over it, the birds would be calling merrily, the sun would light up everything with its brilliant rays and break the thin ice like glass. It was so bright, so shining, so gay, the fire would be crackling in the stove again, we would sit down round the samovar while our black dog, Polkan, numb with cold from the night, would peep in at the window with a friendly wag of his tail. A peasant would ride by the window on his good horse to fetch wood from the forest. Everyone was so gay, so happy! . . . There were masses and masses of com stored up in the threshing-barns; the huge, huge stacks covered with straw shone golden in the sun, a comforting sight! And all are calm and joyful. God has blessed us all with the harvest; they all know they will have bread for the winter; the peasant knows that his wife and children will have food to eat; and so there is no end to the singing of the girls and their dances and games in the evening, and on the Saints’ days! All pray in the house of God with grateful tears! Oh! what a golden, golden age was my childhood! . . .

Here I am crying like a child, carried away by my reminiscences. I remembered it all so vividly, so vividly, all the past stood out so brightly before me, and the present is so dim, so dark! . . . How will it end, how will it all end? Do you know I have a sort of conviction, a feeling of certainty, that I shall die this autumn. I am very, very ill. I often think about dying, but still I don’t want to die like this, to lie in the earth here. Perhaps I shall be laid up as I was in the spring; I’ve not fully recovered from that illness yet. I am feeling very dreary just now. Fedora has gone off somewhere for the whole day and I am sitting alone. And for some time now I’ve been afraid of being left alone; I always feel as though there were someone else in the room,

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that someone is talking to me; especially when I begin dreaming about something and suddenly wake up from my brooding, then I feel frightened. That is why I've written you such a long letter; it goes off when I write. Good-bye; I finish my letter because I have neither time nor paper for more. Of the money from pawning my dress and my hat I have only one rouble in silver left. You have given the landlady two roubles in silver; that's very good. She will keep quiet now for a time.

You must improve your clothes somehow. Good-bye, I'm so tired; I don't know why I am growing so feeble. The least work exhausts me. If I do get work, how am I to work? It is that thought that's killing me.

V.D.

September 5.

MY DARLING VARINKA,

I have received a great number of impressions this morning, my angel. To begin with I had a headache all day. To freshen myself up a bit I went for a walk along Fontanka. It was such a damp, dark evening. By six o'clock it was getting dusk—that is what we are coming to now. It was not raining but there was mist equal to a good rain. There were broad, long stretches of storm-cloud across the sky. There were masses of people walking along the canal bank, and, as ill-luck would have it, the people had such horrible depressing faces, drunken peasants, snub-nosed Finnish women, in high boots with nothing on their heads, workmen, cab-drivers, people like me out on some errand, boys, a carpenter's apprentice in a striped dressing-gown, thin and wasted-looking, with his face bathed in smutty oil, and a lock in his hand; a discharged soldier seven feet high waiting for somebody to buy a pen-knife or a bronze ring from him. That was the sort of crowd. It seems it was an hour when no other sort of people could be about. Fontanka is a canal for traffic! Such a mass of barges that one wonders how there can be room for them all! On the bridges there are women sitting with wet gingerbread and rotten apples, and they all of them looked so muddy, so drenched. It's dreary walking along Fontanka! The wet granite under one's feet, with tall, black, sooty houses on both sides. Fog underfoot and fog overhead. How dark and melancholy it was this evening!

When I went back to Gorohovoy Street it was already getting dark and they had begun lighting the gas. I have not been in Gorohovoy Street for quite a long while, I haven't happened to go there. It's a noisy street! What shops, what magnificent establishments; everything is simply shining and resplendent; materials, flowers under glass, hats of all sorts with ribbons. One would fancy they were all displayed as a show—but no: you know there are people who buy all those things and present them to their wives. It's a wealthy street! There are a great many German bakers in Gorohovoy Street, so they must be a very

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prosperous set of people, too. What numbers of carriages roll by every minute; I wonder the paving is not worn out! Such gorgeous equipages, windows shining like mirrors, silk and velvet inside, and aristocratic footmen wearing epaulettes and carrying a sword; I glanced into all the carriages, there were always ladies in them dressed up to the nines, perhaps countesses and princesses. No doubt it was the hour when they were all hastening to balls and assemblies. It would be interesting to get a closer view of princesses and ladies of rank in general; it must be very nice; I have never seen them; except just as to-day, a passing glance at their carriages. I thought of you then. Ah, my darling, my own! When I think of you my heart begins aching! Why are you so unlucky, my Varinka? You are every bit as good as any of them. You are good, lovely, well-educated—why has such a cruel fortune fallen to your lot? Why does it happen that a good man is left forlorn and forsaken, while happiness seems thrust upon another? I know, I know, my dear, that it's wrong to flunk that, that it is free-thinking; but to speak honestly, to speak the whole truth, why is it fate, like a raven, croaks good fortune for one still unborn, while another begins life in the orphan asylum? And you know it often happens that Ivan the fool is favoured by fortune. "You, Ivan the fool, rummage in the family money bags, eat, drink and be merry, while you, So-and-so, can lick your lips. That's all you are fit for, you, brother So-and-so!" It's a sin, my darling, it's a sin to think like that, but sometimes one cannot help sin creeping into one's heart. You ought to be driving in such a carriage, my own little dearie. Generals should be craving the favour of a glance from you—not the likes of us; you ought to be dressed in silk and gold, instead of a little old linen gown. You would not be a thin, delicate little thing, as you are now, but like a little sugar figure, fresh, plump and rosy. And then, I should be happy simply to look in at you from the street through the brightly lighted windows; simply to see your shadow. The thought that you were happy and gay, my pretty little bird, would be enough to make me gay, too. But as it is, it is not enough that spiteful people have ruined you, a worthless profligate wretch goes and insults you. Because his coat hangs smartly on him, because he stares at you from a golden eyeglass, the shameless fellow, he can do what he likes, and one must listen to what he says indulgently, however unseemly it is! Wait a bit—is it really so, my pretty gentlemen? And why is all this? Because you are an orphan, because you are defenceless, because you have no powerful friend to help and protect you. And what can one call people who are ready to insult an orphan? They are worthless beasts, not men; simply trash. They are mere ciphers and have no real existence, of that I am convinced. That's what they are like, these people! And to my thinking, my own, the hurdy-gurdy man I met to-day in Gorohovoy Street is more worthy of respect than they are. He goes about the whole day long, hoping to get some wretched spare

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farthing for food, but he is his own master, he does earn his own living. He won't ask for charity; but he works like a machine wound up to give pleasure. "Here," he says, "I do what I can to give pleasure." He's a beggar, he's a beggar, it is true, he's a beggar all the same, but he's an honourable beggar; he is cold and weary, but still he works; though it's in his own way, still he works. And there are many honest men, my darling, who, though they earn very little in proportion to the amount and usefulness of their work, yet they bow down to no one and buy their bread of no one. Here I am just like that hurdy-gurdy man—that is, not at all like him. But in my own sense, in an honourable and aristocratic sense, just as he does, to the best of my abilities, I work as I can. That's enough about me, it's neither here nor there.

I speak of that hurdy-gurdy, my darling, because it has happened that I have felt my poverty twice as much to-day. I stopped to look at the hurdy-gurdy man. I was in such a mood that I stopped to distract my thoughts. I was standing there, and also two cab-drivers, a woman of some sort, and a little girl, such a grubby little thing. The hurdy-gurdy man stopped before the windows of a house. I noticed a little boy about ten years old; he would have been pretty, but he looked so ill, so frail, with hardly anything but his shirt on and almost barefoot, with his mouth open; he was listening to the music like a child! He watched the German's dolls dancing, while his own hands and feet were numb with cold; he shivered and nibbled the edge of his sleeve. I noticed that he had a bit of paper of some sort in his hands. A gentleman passed and flung the hurdy-gurdy man some small coin, which fell straight into the box in a little garden in which the toy Frenchman was dancing with the ladies. At the clink of the coin the boy started, looked round and evidently thought that I had given the money. He ran up to me, his little hands trembling, his little voice trembling, he held the paper out to me and said, "A letter." I opened the letter; well, it was the usual thing, saying: "Kind gentleman, a mother's dying with three children hungry, so help us now, and as I am dying I will pray for you, my benefactor, in the next world for not forgetting my babes now." Well, what of it?—one could see what it meant, an everyday matter, but what could I give him? Well, I gave him nothing, and how sorry I was! The boy was poor, blue with cold, perhaps hungry, too, and not lying, surely he was not lying, I know that for certain. But what is wrong is that these horrid mothers don't take care of their children and send them out half naked in the cold to beg. Maybe she's a weak-willed, silly woman; and there's no one, maybe, to do anything for her, so she simply sits with her legs tucked under her, maybe she's really ill. Well, anyway, she should apply in the proper quarter. Though, maybe, she's a cheat and sends a hungry, delicate child out on purpose to deceive people, and makes him ill. And what sort of training is it for a poor boy? It simply hardens his heart, he runs about begging, people pass and have no time for him. Their hearts are stony,

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their words are cruel. "Get away, go along, you are naughty!" that is what he hears from everyone, and the child's heart grows hard, and in vain the poor little frightened boy shivers with cold like a fledgling fallen out of a broken nest. His hands and feet are frozen, he gasps for breath. The next thing he is coughing, before long disease, like an unclean reptile, creeps into his bosom and death is standing over him in some dark corner, no help, no escape, and that's his life! That is what life is like sometimes! Oh, Varinka, it's wretched to hear "for Christ's sake," and to pass by and give nothing, telling him "God will provide." Sometimes "for Christ's sake" is all right (it's not always the same, you know, Varinka), sometimes it's a long, drawling, habitual, practised, regular beggar's whine; it's not so painful to refuse one like that; he's an old hand, a beggar by profession. He's accustomed to it, one thinks; he can cope with it and knows how to cope with it. Sometimes "for Christ's sake" sounds unaccustomed, rude, terrible—as today, when I was taking the letter from the boy, a man standing close to the fence, not begging from everyone, said to me: "Give us a halfpenny, sir, for Christ's sake," and in such a harsh, jerky voice that I started with a horrible feeling and did not give him a halfpenny, I hadn't one. Rich people don't like the poor to complain aloud of their harsh lot, they say they disturb them, they are troublesome! Yes, indeed, poverty is always troublesome; maybe their hungry groans hinder the rich from sleeping!

To make a confession, my own, I began to describe all this to you partly to relieve my heart but chiefly to give you an example of the fine style of my composition, for you have no doubt noticed yourself, my dear girl, that of late my style has been forming, but such a depression came over me that I began to pity my feelings to the depth of my soul, and though I know, my dear, that one gets no good by self-pity, yet one must do oneself justice in some way, and often, my own, for no reason whatever, one literally annihilates oneself, makes oneself of no account, and not worth a straw. And perhaps that is why it happens that I am panic-stricken and persecuted like that poor boy who asked me for alms. Now I will tell you, by way of instance and illustration, Varinka; listen: hurrying to the office early in the morning, my own, I sometimes look at the town, how it wakes, gets up, begins smoking, hurrying with life, resounding—sometimes you feel so small before such a sight that it is as though someone had given you a flip on your intrusive nose and you creep along your way noiseless as water, and humble as grass, and hold your peace! Now just look into it and see what is going on in those great, black, smutty buildings. Get to the bottom of that and then judge whether one was right to abuse oneself for no reason and to be reduced to undignified mortification. Note, Varinka, that I am speaking figuratively, not in a literal sense. But let us look what is going on in those houses. There, in some smoky corner, in some damp hole, which, through poverty, passes as a lodging, some workman wakes up from his sleep; and all night he

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has been dreaming of boots, for instance, which he had accidentally slit the day before, as though a man ought to dream of such nonsense! But he's an artisan, he's a shoemaker; it's excusable for him to think of nothing but his own subject. His children are crying and his wife is hungry; and it's not only shoemakers who get up in the morning like that, my own—that would not matter, and would not be worth writing about, but this is the point, Varinka: close by in the same house, in a storey higher or lower, a wealthy man in his gilded apartments dreams at night, it may be, of those same boots, that is, boots in a different manner, in a different sense, but still boots, for in the sense I am using the word, Varinka, everyone of us is a bit of a shoemaker, my darling; and that would not matter, only it's a pity there is no one at that wealthy person's side, no man who could whisper in his ear: "Come, give over thinking of such things, thinking of nothing but yourself, living for nothing but yourself; your children are healthy, your wife is not begging for food. Look about you, can't you see some object more noble to worry about than your boots?" That's what I wanted to say to you in a figurative way, Varinka. Perhaps it's too free a thought, my own, but sometimes one has that thought, sometimes it comes to one and one cannot help its bursting out from one's heart in warm language. And so it seems there was no reason to make oneself so cheap, and to be scared by mere noise and uproar. I will conclude by saying, Varinka, that perhaps you think what I am saying is unjust, or that I'm suffering from a fit of the spleen, or that I have copied this out of some book. No, my dear girl, you must dismiss that idea, it is not that; I abominate injustice, I am not suffering from spleen, and I've not copied anything out of a book—so there.

I went home in a melancholy frame of mind; I sat down to the table and heated my teapot to have a glass of two of tea. Suddenly I saw coming towards me Gorshkov, our poor lodger. I had noticed in the morning that he kept hanging about round the other lodgers, and trying to approach me. And I may say, in passing, Varinka, that they live ever so much worse than I do. Yes, indeed, he has a wife and children! So that if I were in his place I don't know what I should do. Well, my Gorshkov comes up to me, bows to me, a running tear as always on his eyelashes, he scrapes with his foot and can't utter a word. I made him sit down on a chair—it was a broken one, it is true, but there was no other. I offered him some tea. He refused from politeness, refused for a long time, but at last he took a glass. He would have drunk it without sugar, began apologising again, when I tried to persuade him that he must have sugar; he argued for a long time, kept refusing, but at last put the very smallest lump of sugar in his glass, and began declaring that his tea was extremely sweet. Oh, to what degradation poverty does reduce people! "Well, my good friend, what is it?" I said. "Well, it is like this, Makar Alexyevitch, my benefactor," he said, "show the mercy of the Lord, come to the help of my unhappy family; my wife and children have nothing to eat; think what

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it is for me, their father," said he. I tried to speak, but he interrupted me. "I am afraid of everyone here, Makar Alexyevitch—that is, not exactly afraid but as it were ashamed with them; they are all proud and haughty people. I would not have troubled you, my benefactor, I know that you have been in difficulties yourself, I know you can't give me much, but do lend me a trifle, and I make bold to ask you," said he, "because I know your kind heart. I know that you are in need yourself, that you know what trouble is now, and so your heart feels compassion." He ended by saying, "Forgive my boldness and unmannerliness, Makar Alexyevitch." I answered him that I should be heartily glad, but that I had nothing, absolutely nothing. "Makar Alexyevitch, sir," said he, "I am not asking for much, but you see it is like this—(then he flushed crimson)—my wife, my children, hungry—if only a ten-kopeck piece." Well, it sent a twinge to my heart. Why, I thought, they are worse off than I, even. Twenty kopecks was all I had left, and I was reckoning on it. I meant to spend it next day on my most pressing needs.

"No, my dear fellow, I can't, it is like this," I said.

"Makar Alexyevitch, my dear soul, what you like," he said, "if it is only ten kopecks."

Well, I took my twenty kopecks out of my box, Varinka, and gave it him; it's a good deed anyway! Ah! poverty! I had a good talk with him: "Why, how is it, my good soul," I said, "that you are in such want and yet you rent a room for five silver roubles?" He explained to me that he had taken it six months before and paid for it six months in advance; and since then circumstances had been such that the poor fellow does not know which way to turn. He expected his case would be over by this time. It's an unpleasant business. You see, Varinka, he has to answer for something before the court, he is mixed up in a case with a merchant who swindled the government over a contract; the cheat was discovered and the merchant was arrested and he's managed to implicate Gorshkov, who had something to do with it, too. But in reality Gorshkov was only guilty of negligence, of injudiciousness and unpardonable disregard of the interests of government. The case has been going on for some years. Gorshkov has had to face all sorts of difficulties.

"I'm not guilty, not in the least guilty of the dishonesty attributed to me," said Gorshkov; "I am not guilty of swindling and robbery."

This case has thrown a slur on his character; he has been turned out of the service, and though he has not been found guilty of any legal crime, yet, till he has completely cleared himself he cannot recover from the merchant a considerable sum of money due to him which is now the subject of dispute before the courts. I believe him, but the court won't take his word for it; the case is all in such a coil and a tangle that it would take a hundred years to unravel it. As soon as they untie one knot the merchant brings forward another and then another. I feel the deepest sympathy for Gorshkov, my own, I am

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very sorry for him. The man's out of work, he won't be taken anywhere without a character; all they had saved has been spent on food, the case is complicated and, meanwhile, they have had to live, and meanwhile, apropos of nothing and most inappropriately, a baby has been born, and that is an expense; his son fell ill—expense; died—expense; his wife is ill; he's afflicted with some disease of long standing—in fact, he has suffered, he has suffered to the utmost; he says, however, that he is expecting a favourable conclusion to his business in a day or two and that there is no doubt of it now. I am sorry for him, I am sorry for him; I am very sorry for him, Varinka. I was kind to him, he's a poor lost, scared creature; he needs a friend so I was kind to him. Well, goodbye, my dear one, Christ be with you, keep well. My darling! when I think of you it's like laying a salve on my sore heart. And though I suffer for you, yet it eases my heart to suffer for you.

Your true friend,

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

September 9.

MY DARLING, VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

I am writing to you almost beside myself. I have been thoroughly upset by a terrible incident. My head is going round. Ah, my own, what a thing I have to tell you now! This we did not foresee. No, I don't believe that I did not foresee it; I did foresee it all. I had a presentiment of it in my heart. I even dreamed of something of the kind a day or two ago.

This is what happened! I will write to you regardless of style, just as God puts it into my heart. I went to the office to-day. I went in, I sat down, I began writing. And you must know, Varinka, that I was writing yesterday too. Well, this is how it was: Timofey Ivanovitch came up to me and was pleased to explain to me in person, "The document is wanted in a hurry," said he. "Copy it very clearly as quickly as possible and carefully, Makar Alexyevitch," he said; "it goes to be signed to-day." I must observe, my angel, that I was not myself yesterday, I could not bear the sight of anything; such a mood of sadness and depression had come over me! It was cold in my heart and dark in my soul, you were in my mind all the while, my little dearie. But I set to work to copy it; I copied it clearly, legibly, only—I really don't know how to explain it—whether the devil himself muddled me, or whether it was ordained by some secret decree of destiny, or simply it had to be—but I left out a whole line, goodness knows what sense it made, it simply made none at all. They were late with the document yesterday and only took it to his Excellency to be signed to-day. I turned up this morning at the usual hour as though nothing had happened and settled myself beside Emelyan Ivanovitch. I must observe, my own, that of late I have been more abashed and ill at ease than ever. Of late I have given up looking at anyone. If I hear so much as a chair creak I feel more dead than alive. That is just how it was to-

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day, I sat down like a hedgehog crouched up and shrinking into myself, so that Efim Akimovitch (there never was such a fellow for teasing) said in the hearing of all: "Why are you sitting like a picture of misery, Makar Alexyevitch?" And he made such a grimace that everyone sitting near him and me went off into roars of laughter, and at my expense of course. And they went on and on. I put my hands over my ears, and screwed up my eyes, I sat without stirring. That's what I always do; they leave off the sooner. Suddenly I heard a noise, a fuss and a bustle; I heard—did not my ears deceive me?—they were mentioning me, asking for me, calling Dyevushkin. My heart began shuddering within me, and I don't know myself why I was so frightened; I only know I was panic-stricken as I had never been before in my life. I sat rooted to my chair—as though there were nothing the matter, as though it were not I. But they began getting nearer and nearer. And at last, close to my ear, they were calling, "Dyevushkin, Dyevushkin! Where is Dyevushkin?" I raised my eyes: Yevstafy Ivanovitch stood before me; he said: "Makar Alexyevitch, make haste to his Excellency! You've made a mistake in that document!" That was all he said, but it was enough; enough had been said, hadn't it, Varinka? Half dead, frozen with terror, not knowing what I was doing, I went—why, I was more dead than alive. I was led through one room, through a second, through a third, to his Excellency's study. I was in his presence! I can give you no exact account of what my thoughts were then. I saw his Excellency standing up, they were all standing round him. I believe I did not bow, I forgot. I was so flustered that my lips were trembling, my legs were trembling. And I had reason to be, my dear girl! To begin with, I was ashamed; I glanced into the looking-glass on the right hand and what I saw there was enough to send one out of one's mind. And in the second place, I had always tried to behave as if there were no such person in the world. So that his Excellency could hardly have been aware of my existence. Perhaps he may have heard casually that there was a clerk called Dyevushkin in the office, but he had never gone into the matter more closely.

He began, angrily: "What were you about, sir? Where were your eyes? The copy was wanted; it was wanted in a hurry, and you spoil it."

At this point, his Excellency turned to Yevstafy Ivanovitch. I could only catch a word here and there: "Negligence! Carelessness! You will get us into difficulties!" I would have opened my mouth to say something. I wanted to beg for forgiveness, but I could not; I wanted to run away, but dared not attempt it, and then. . . then, Varinka, something happened so awful that I can hardly hold my pen, for shame, even now. A button—the devil take the button—which was hanging by a thread on my uniform—suddenly flew off, bounced on the floor (I must have caught hold of it accidentally) with a jingle, the damned thing, and rolled straight to his Excellency's feet, and that in the midst of a profound silence! And that was my only justification, my sole

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apology, my only answer, all that I had to say to his Excellency! What followed was awful. His Excellency's attention was at once turned to my appearance and my attire. I remembered what I had seen in the looking-glass; I flew to catch the button! Some idiocy possessed me! I bent down, I tried to pick up the button—it twirled and rolled, I couldn't pick it up—in fact, I distinguished myself by my agility. Then I felt that my last faculties were deserting me, that everything, everything was lost, my whole reputation was lost, my dignity as a man was lost, and then, apropos of nothing, I had the voices of Teresa and Faldoni ringing in my ears. At last I picked up the button, stood up and drew myself erect, and if I were a fool I might at least have stood quietly with my hands at my sides! But not a bit of it. I began fitting the button to the torn threads as though it might hang on, and I actually smiled, actually smiled. His Excellency turned away at first, then he glanced at me again—I heard him say to Yevstafy Ivanovitch: “How is this? . . . Look at him! . . . What is he? . . . What sort of man? . . .” Ah, my own, think of that! “What is he?” and, “what sort of man?” I had distinguished myself! I heard Yevstafy Ivanovitch say: “No note against him, no note against him for anything, behaviour excellent, salary in accordance with his grade. . . .” “Well, assist him in some way, let him have something in advance,” says his Excellency. . . . “But he has had an advance,” he said; “he has had his salary in advance for such and such a time. He is apparently in difficulties, but his conduct is good, and there is no note, there never has been a note against him.”

My angel, I was burning, burning in the fires of hell! I was dying. . . .

“Well,” said his Excellency, “make haste and copy it again; Dye-vushkin, come here, copy it over again without a mistake; and listen . . .” Here his Excellency turned to the others, gave them various instructions and they all went away. As soon as they had gone, his Excellency hurriedly took out his notebook and from it took a hundred-rouble note. “Here,” said he, “take it as you like, so far as I can help you, take it. . . and he thrust it into my hand. I trembled, my angel, my whole soul was quivering; I don't know what happened to me, I tried to seize his hand to kiss it, but he flushed crimson, my darling, and—here I am not departing one hair's breadth from the truth, my own—he took my unworthy hand and shook it, just took it and shook it, as though I had been his equal, as though I had been just such a General as himself. “You can go,” he said; “whatever I can do for you. . . don't make mistakes, but there, no great harm done this time.”

Now Varinka, this is what I have decided. I beg you and Fedora, and if I had any children I should bid them, to pray every day and all our lives for his Excellency as they would not pray for their own father! I will say more, my dear, and I say it solemnly—pay attention, Varinka—I swear that however cast down I was and afflicted in the bitterest days of our misfortunes, looking at you, at your poverty, and at myself, my degradation and my uselessness, in spite of all that, I

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swear that the hundred roubles is not as much to me as that his Excellency deigned to shake hands with me, a straw, a worthless drunkard! By that he has restored me to myself, by that action he has lifted up my spirit, has made my life sweeter for ever, and I am firmly persuaded that, however sinful I may be before the Almighty, yet my prayers for the happiness and prosperity of his Excellency will reach His Throne! . . .

My darling! I am dreadfully upset, dreadfully excited now, my heart is beating as though it would burst out of my breast, and I feel, as it were, weak all over.

I am sending you forty-five roubles; I am giving the landlady twenty and leaving thirty-five for myself. For twenty I can put my wardrobe in order, and I shall have fifteen left to go on with. But just now all the impressions of the morning have shaken my whole being, I am going to lie down. I am at peace, quite at peace, though; only there is an ache in my heart and deep down within me I feel my soul quivering, trembling, stirring.

I am coming to see you: but now I am simply drunk with all these sensations God sees all, my Varinka, my priceless darling!

Your worthy friend,

MAKAR DYEVUSHKIN.

September 10.

MY DEAR MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

I am unutterably delighted at your happiness and fully appreciate the goodness of your chief, my friend. So now you will have a little respite from trouble! But, for God's sake, don't waste your money again. Live quietly and as frugally as possible, and from to-day begin to put by a little that misfortune may not find you unprepared again. For goodness' sake don't worry about us. Fedora and I will get along somehow. Why have you sent us so much money, Makar Alexyevitch? We don't need it at all. We are satisfied with what we have. It is true we shall soon want money for moving from this lodging, but Fedora is hoping to be repaid an old debt that has been owing for years. I will keep twenty roubles, however, in case of extreme necessity. The rest I send you back. Please take care of your money, Makar Alexyevitch. Good-bye. Be at peace now, keep well and happy. I would write more to you, but I feel dreadfully tired; yesterday I did not get up all day. You do well to promise to come. Do come and see me, please, Makar Alexyevitch.

V. D.

September 11.

MY DEAR VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

I beseech you, my own, not to part from me now, now when I am quite happy and contented with everything. My darling! Don't listen

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to Fedora and I will do anything you like; I shall behave well if only from respect to his Excellency. I will behave well and carefully; we will write to each other happy letters again, we will confide in each other our thoughts, our joys, our cares, if we have any cares; we will live together in happiness and concord. We'll study literature. . . . My angel! My whole fate has changed and everything has changed for the better. The landlady has become more amenable. Teresa is more sensible, even Faldoni has become prompter. I have made it up with Ratazyaev. In my joy I went to him of myself. He's really a good fellow, Varinka, and all the harm that was said of him was nonsense. I have discovered that it was all an abominable slander. He had no idea whatever of describing us. He read me a new work of his. And as for his calling me a Lovelace, that was not an insulting or abusive name; he explained it to me. The word is taken straight from a foreign source and means a clever fellow, and to express it more elegantly, in a literary fashion, it means a young man you must be on the lookout with, you see, and nothing of that sort. It was an innocent jest, my angel! I'm an ignoramus and in my foolishness I was offended. In fact, it is I who apologised to him now. . . . And the weather is so wonderful to-day, Varinka, so fine. It is true there was a slight frost this morning, as though it had been sifted through a sieve. It was nothing. It only made the air a little fresher. I went to buy some boots, and I bought some wonderful boots. I walked along the Nevsky. I read the *Bee*. Why! I am forgetting to tell you the principal thing.

It was this, do you see.

This morning I talked to Emelyan Ivanovitch and to Axentey Mihalovitch about his Excellency. Yes, Varinka, I'm not the only one he has treated so graciously. I am not the only one he has befriended, and he is known to all the world for the goodness of his heart. His praises are sung in very many quarters, and tears of gratitude are shed. An orphan girl was brought up in his house. He gave her a dowry and married her to a man in a good position, to a clerk on special commissions, who was in attendance on his Excellency. He installed a son of a widow in some office, and has done a great many other acts of kindness. I thought it my duty at that point to add my mite and described his Excellency's action in the hearing of all; I told them all and concealed nothing. I put my pride in my pocket, as though pride or dignity mattered in a case like that. So I told it aloud—to do glory to the good deeds of his Excellency! I spoke enthusiastically, I spoke with warmth, I did not blush, on the contrary, I was proud that I had such a story to tell. I told them about everything (only I was judiciously silent about you, Varinka), about my landlady, about Faldoni, about Ratazyaev, about my boots and about Markov—I told them everything. Some of them laughed a little, in fact, they all laughed a little. Probably they found something funny in my appearance, or it may have been about my boots—yes, it must have been about my boots. They could not have done it with any bad intention. It was nothing,

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just youthfulness, or perhaps because they are well-to-do people, but they could not jeer at what I said with any bad, evil intention. That is, what I said about his Excellency—that they could not do. Could they, Varinka?

I still can't get over it, my darling. The whole incident has so overwhelmed me! Have you got any firewood? Don't catch cold, Varinka; you can so easily catch cold. Ah, my own precious, you crush me with your sad thoughts. I pray to God, how I pray to Him for you, my dearie! For instance, have you got woollen stockings, and other warm underclothing? Mind, my darling, if you need anything, for God's sake don't wound your old friend, come straight to me. Now our bad times are over. Don't be anxious about me. Everything is so bright, so happy in the future!

It was a sad time, Varinka! But there, no matter, it's past! Years will pass and we shall sigh for that time. I remember my young days. Why, I often hadn't a farthing! I was cold and hungry, but light-hearted, that was all. In the morning I would walk along the Nevsky, see a pretty little face and be happy all day. It was a splendid, splendid time, my darling! It is nice to be alive, Varinka! Especially in Petersburg. I repented with tears in my eyes yesterday, and prayed to the Lord God to forgive me all my sins in that sad time: my repining, my liberal ideas, my drinking and despair. I remembered you with emotion in my prayers. You were my only support, Varinka, you were my only comfort, you cheered me on my way with counsel and good advice. I can never forget that, dear one. I have kissed all your letters today, my darling! Well, good-bye, my precious. They say that somewhere near here there is a sale of clothing. So I will make inquiries a little. Good-bye, my angel. Good-bye!

Your deeply devoted,

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

September 15.

DEAR MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

I feel dreadfully upset. Listen what has happened here. I foresee something momentous. Judge yourself, my precious friend; Mr. Bykov is in Petersburg, Fedora met him. He was driving, he ordered the cab to stop, went up to Fedora himself and began asking where she was living. At first she would not tell him. Then he said, laughing, that he knew who was living with her. (Evidently Anna Fyodorovna had told him all about it.) Then Fedora could not contain herself and upbraiding him on the spot, in the street, reproaching him, telling him he was an immoral man and the cause of all my troubles. He answered, that one who has not a halfpenny is bound to have misfortunes. Fedora answered that I might have been able to earn my own living, that I might have been married or else have had some situation, but that now my happiness was wrecked for ever and that I was ill besides, and would not live long. To this he answered that I was still

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young, that I had still a lot of nonsense in my head and that my virtues were getting a little tarnished (his words). Fedora and I thought he did not know our lodging when suddenly, yesterday, just after I had gone out to buy some things in the Gostiny Dvor he walked into our room. I believe he did not want to find me at home. He questioned Fedora length concerning our manner of life, examined everything we had; he looked at my work; at last asked, "Who is this clerk you have made friends with?" At that moment you walked across the yard; Fedora pointed to you; he glanced and laughed; Fedora begged him to go away, told him that I was unwell, as it was, from grieving, and that to see him in our room would be very distasteful to me. He was silent for a while; said that he had just looked in with no object and tried to give Fedora twenty-five roubles; she, of course, did not take it.

What can it mean? What has he come to see us for? I cannot understand where he has found out all about us! I am lost in conjecture. Fedora says that Axinya, her sister-in-law, who comes to see us, is friendly with Nastasya the laundress, and Nastasya's cousin is a porter in the office in which a friend of Anna Fyodorovna's nephew is serving. So has not, perhaps, some ill-natured gossip crept round? But it is very possible that Fedora is mistaken; we don't know what to think. Is it possible he will come to us again! The mere thought of it terrifies me! When Fedora told me all about it yesterday, I was so frightened that I almost fainted with terror! What more does he want? I don't want to know him now! What does he want with me, poor me? Oh! I am in such terror now, I keep expecting Bykov to walk in every minute. What will happen to me, what more has fate in store for me? For Christ's sake, come and see me now, Makar Alexyevitch. Do come, for God's sake, come.

September 18.

MY DARLING VARVARA ALEXYEVNA!

To-day an unutterably sad, quite unaccountable and unexpected event has occurred here. Our poor Gorshkov (I must tell you, Varinka) has had his character completely cleared. The case was concluded some time ago and to-day he went to hear the final judgment. The case ended very happily for him. He was fully exonerated of any blame for negligence and carelessness. The merchant was condemned to pay him a considerable sum of money, so that his financial position was vastly improved and no stain left on his honour and things were better all round—in fact, he won everything he could have desired.

He came home at three o'clock this afternoon. He did not look like himself, his face was white as a sheet, his lips quivered and he kept smiling—he embraced his wife and children. We all flocked to congratulate him. He was greatly touched by our action, he bowed in all directions, shook hands with all of us several times. It even seemed to me as though he were taller and more erect, and no longer had that

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running tear in his eye. He was in such excitement, poor fellow. He could not stand still for two minutes: he picked up anything he came across, then dropped it again; and kept continually smiling and bowing, sitting down, getting up and sitting down again. Goodness knows what he said: "My honour, my honour, my good name, my children," and that was how he kept talking! He even shed tears. Most of us were moved to tears, too; Ratazyaev clearly wanted to cheer him up, and said, "What is honour, old man, when one has nothing to eat? The money, the money's the thing, old man, thank God for that!" and thereupon he slapped him on the shoulder. It seemed to me that Gorshkov was offended—not that he openly showed dissatisfaction, but he looked rather strangely at Ratazyaev and took his hand off his shoulder. And that had never happened before, Varinka! But characters differ. Now I, for instance, should not have stood on my dignity, at a time of such joy; why, my own, sometimes one is too liberal with one's bows and almost cringing from nothing but excess of good-nature and soft-heartedness. . . . However, no matter about me!

"Yes," he said, "the money is a good thing too, thank God, thank God!" And then all the time we were with him he kept repeating, "Thank God, thank God."

His wife ordered a rather nicer and more ample dinner. Our landlady cooked for them herself. Our landlady is a good-natured woman in a way. And until dinner-time Gorshkov could not sit still in his seat. He went into the lodgers' rooms, without waiting to be invited. He just went in, smiled, sat down on the edge of a chair, said a word or two, or even said nothing, and went away again. At the naval man's he even took a hand at cards; they made up a game with him as fourth. He played a little, made a muddle of it, played three or four rounds and threw down the cards. "No," he said, "you see, I just looked in, I just looked in," and he went away from them. He met me in the passage, took both my hands, looked me straight in the face, but so strangely; then shook hands with me and walked away, and kept smiling, but with a strange, painful smile like a dead man. His wife was crying with joy; everything was cheerful as though it were a holiday. They soon had dinner. After dinner he said to his wife: "I tell you what, my love, I'll lie down a little," and he went to his bed. He called his little girl, put his hand on her head, and for a long time he was stroking the child's head. Then he turned to his wife again, "And what of Petinka? our Petya!" he said. "Petinka?" . . . His wife crossed herself and answered that he was dead. "Yes, yes, I know all about it. Petinka is now in the Kingdom of Heaven." His wife saw that he was not himself, that what had happened had completely upset him, and she said to him, "You ought to have a nap, my love." "Yes, very well, I will directly . . . just a little," then he turned away, lay still for a bit, then turned round, tried to say something. His wife could not make out what he said, and asked him, "What it is, my dear?" and he did not answer. She waited a little, "Well, he's asleep," she thought, and

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went into the landlady's for an hour. An hour later she came back, she saw her husband had not woken up and was not stirring. She thought he was asleep, and she sat down and began working at something. She said that for half an hour she was so lost in musing that she did not know what she was thinking about, all she can say is that she did not think of her husband. But suddenly she was roused by the feeling of uneasiness, and what struck her first of all was the death-like silence in the room. . . . She looked at the bed and saw that her husband was lying in the same position. She went up to him, pulled down the quilt and looked at him—and he was already cold—he was dead, my darling. Gorshkov was dead, he had died suddenly, as though he had been killed by a thunder-bolt. And why he died, God only knows. It was such a shock to me, Varinka, that I can't get over it now. One can't believe that a man could die so easily. He was such a poor, unlucky fellow, that Gorshkov! And what a fate, what a fate! His wife was in tears and panic-stricken. The little girl crept away into a corner. There is such a hubbub going on, they will hold a post-mortem and inquest. . . I can't tell you just what. But the pity of it, oh, the pity of it! It's sad to think that in reality one does not know the day or the hour. . . . One dies so easily for no reason. . . .

Your

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

September 19.

DEAR VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

I hasten to inform you, my dear, that Ratazyaev has found me work with a writer. Someone came to him, and brought him such a fat manuscript—thank God, a lot of work. But it's so illegibly written that I don't know how to set to work on it: they want it in a hurry. It's all written in such a way that one does not understand it. . . . They have agreed to pay forty kopecks the sixteen pages. I write you all this, my own, because now I shall have extra money. And now, goodbye, my darling, I have come straight from work.

Your faithful friend,

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

September 23.

MY DEAR FRIEND, MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

For three days I have not written you a word, and I have had a great many anxieties and worries.

The day before yesterday Bykov was here. I was alone, Fedora had gone off somewhere. I opened the door to him, and was so frightened when I saw him that I could not move. I felt that I turned pale. He walked in as he always does, with a loud laugh, took a chair and sat down. For a long while I could not recover myself. At last I sat down in the corner to my work. He even left off laughing. I believe my appearance impressed him. I have grown so thin of late, my eyes

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and my cheeks are hollow, I was as white as a sheet. . . it would really be hard for anyone to recognise me who had known me a year ago. He looked long and intently at me; then at last he began to be lively again, said something or other; I don't know what I answered, and he laughed again. He stayed a whole hour with me; talked to me a long time; asked me some questions. At last just before leaving, he took me by the hand and said (I write you it word for word): "Varvara Alexyevitch, between ourselves, be it said, your relation and my intimate friend, Anna Fyodorovna, is a very nasty woman" (then he used an unseemly word about her). "She led your cousin astray, and ruined you. I behaved like a rascal in that case, too; but after all, it's a thing that happens every day." Then he laughed heartily. Then he observed that he was not great at fine speeches, and that most of what he had to explain, about which the obligations of gentlemanly feeling forbade him to be silent, he had told me already, and that in brief words he would come to the rest. Then he told me he was asking my hand in marriage, that he thought it his duty to restore my good name, that he was rich, that after the wedding he would take me away to his estates in the steppes, that he wanted to go coursing hares there; that he would never come back to Petersburg again, because it was horrid in Petersburg; that he had here in Petersburg—as he expressed it—a good-for-nothing nephew whom he had sworn to deprive of the estate, and it was just for that reason in the hope of having legitimate heirs that he sought my hand, that it was the chief cause of his courtship. Then he observed that I was living in a very poor way: and it was no wonder I was ill living in such a slum; predicted that I should certainly die if I stayed there another month; said that lodgings in Petersburg were horrid, and finally asked me if I wanted anything.

I was so overcome at his offer that, I don't know why, I began crying. He took my tears for gratitude and told me he had always been sure I was a good, feeling, and educated girl, but that he had not been able to make up his mind to take this step till he had found out about my present behaviour in full detail. Then he asked me about you, said that he had heard all about it, that you were a man of good principles, that he did not want to be indebted to you and asked whether five hundred roubles would be enough for all that you had done for me. When I explained to him that what you had done for me no money could repay, he said that it was all nonsense, that that was all romantic stuff out of novels, that I was young and read poetry, that novels were the ruin of young girls, that books were destructive of morality and that he could not bear books of any sort, he advised me to wait till I was his age and then talk about people. "Then," he added, "you will know what men are like." Then he said I was to think over his offer thoroughly, that he would very much dislike it if I were to take such an important step thoughtlessly; he added that thoughtlessness and impulsiveness were the ruin of inexperienced youth, but that he quite hoped for a favourable answer from me, but that in the opposite

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event, he should be forced to marry some Moscow shopkeeper's daughter, "because," he said, "I have sworn that good-for-nothing nephew shall not have the estate."

He forced five hundred roubles into my hands, as he said, "to buy sweetmeats". He said that in the country I should grow as round as a bun, that with him I should be living on the fat of the land, that he had a terrible number of things to see to now, that he was dragging about all day on business, and that he had just slipped in to see me between his engagements. Then he went away.

I thought for a long time, I pondered many things, I wore myself out thinking, my friend; at last I made up my mind. My friend, I shall marry him. I ought to accept his offer. If anyone can rescue me from my shame, restore my good name, and ward off poverty, privation and misfortune from me in the future, it is he and no one else. What more can one expect from the future, what more can one expect from fate? Fedora says I must not throw away my good fortune; she says, if this isn't good fortune, what is? Anyway, I can find no other course for me, my precious friend. What am I to do? I have ruined my health with work as it is; I can't go on working continually. Go into a family? I should pine away with depression, besides I should be of no use to anyone. I am of a sickly constitution, and so I shall always be a burden on other people. Of course I am not going into a paradise, but what am I to do, my friend, what am I to do? What choice have I?

I have not asked your advice. I wanted to think it over alone. The decision you have just read is unalterable, and I shall immediately inform Bykov of it, he is pressing me to answer quickly. He said that his business would not wait, that he must be off, and that he couldn't put it off for nonsense. God knows whether I shall be happy, my fate is in His holy, inscrutable power, but I have made up my mind. They say Bykov is a kind-hearted man: he will respect me; perhaps I, too, shall respect him. What more can one expect from such a marriage?

I will let you know about everything, Makar Alexyevitch. I am sure you will understand all my wretchedness. Do not try to dissuade me from my intention. Your efforts will be in vain. Weigh in your own mind all that has forced me to this step. I was very much distressed at first, but now I am calmer. What is before me, I don't know. What will be, will be; as God wills! . . .

Bykov has come, I leave this letter unfinished. I wanted to tell you a great deal more. Bykov is here already!

September 23.

MY DARLING VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

I hasten to answer you, my dear; I hasten to tell you, my precious, that I am dumbfounded. It all seems so. . . . Yesterday we buried Gorshkov. Yes, that is so, Varinka, that is so; Bykov has behaved honourably; only, you see, my own. . . so you have consented. Of course, everything is according to God's will; that is so, that certainly must be

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so—that is, it certainly must be God’s will in this; and the providence of the Heavenly Creator is blessed, of course, and inscrutable, and it is fate too, and they are the same. Fedora sympathises with you too. Of course you will be happy now, my precious, you will live in comfort, my darling, my little dearie, little angel and light of my eyes—only Varinka, how can it be so soon? . . . Yes, business. . . . Mr. Bykov has business—of course, everyone has business, and he may have it too. . . . I saw him as he came out from you. He’s a good-looking man, good-looking; a very good-looking man, in fact. Only there is something queer about it, the point is not whether he is a good-looking man. Indeed, I am not myself at all. Why, how are we to go on writing to one another? I . . . I shall be left alone. I am weighing everything, my angel, I am weighing everything as you write to me, I am weighing it all in my heart, the reasons. I had just finished copying the twentieth quire, and meanwhile these events have come upon us! Here you are going a journey, my darling, you will have to buy all sorts of things, shoes of all kinds, a dress, and I know just the shop in Gorohovoy Street; do you remember how I described it to you? But no! How can you, Varinka? what are you about? You can’t go away now, it’s quite impossible, utterly impossible. Why, you will have to buy a great many things and get a carriage. Besides, the weather is so awful now; look, the rain is coming down in bucketfuls, and such soaking rain, too, and what’s more. . . what’s more, you will be cold, my angel; your little heart will be cold! Why, you are afraid of anyone strange, and yet you go. And to whom am I left, all alone here? Yes! Here, Fedora says that there is great happiness in store for you. . . but you know she’s a headstrong woman, she wants to be the death of me. Are you going to the evening service to-night, Varinka? I would go to have a look at you. It’s true, perfectly true, my darling, that you are a well-educated, virtuous and feeling girl, only he had much better marry the shopkeeper’s daughter! Don’t you think so, my precious? He had better marry the shopkeeper’s daughter! I will come to see you, Varinka, as soon as it gets dark, I shall just run in for an hour. It will get dark early to-day, then I shall run in. I shall certainly come to you for an hour this evening, my darling. Now you are expecting Bykov, but when he goes, then. . . . Wait a bit, Varinka, I shall run across. . . .

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

September 27

MY DEAR FRIEND, MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

Mr. Bykov says I must have three dozen linen chemises. So I must make haste and find seamstresses to make two dozen, and we have very little time. Mr. Bykov is angry and says there is a great deal of bother over these rags. Our wedding is to be in five days, and we are to set off the day after the wedding. Mr. Bykov is in a hurry, he says we must not waste much time over nonsense. I am worn out with all this fuss and can hardly stand on my feet. There is a terrible lot to do,

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and perhaps it would have been better if all this had not happened. Another thing: we have not enough net or lace, so we ought to buy some more, for Mr. Bykov says he does not want his wife to go about like a cook, and that I simply must “wipe all the country ladies’ noses for them”. That was his own expression. So, Makar Alexyevitch, please apply to Madame Chiffon in Gorohovoy Street, and ask her first to send us some seamstresses, and secondly, to be so good as to come herself. I am ill to-day. It’s so cold in our new lodging and the disorder is terrible. Mr. Bykov’s aunt can scarcely breathe, she is so old. I am afraid she may die before we set off, but Mr. Bykov says that it is nothing, she’ll wake up. Everything in the house is in the most awful confusion. Mr. Bykov is not living with us, so the servants are racing about in all directions, goodness knows where. Sometimes Fedora is the only one to wait on us, and Mr. Bykov’s valet, who looks after everything, has disappeared no one knows where for the last three days. Mr. Bykov comes to see us every morning, and yesterday he beat the superintendent of the house, for which he got into trouble with the police. I have not even had anyone to take my letters to you. I am writing by post. Yes! I had almost forgotten the most important point. Tell Madame Chiffon to be sure and change the net, matching it with the pattern she had yesterday, and to come to me herself to show the new, and tell her, too, that I have changed my mind about the embroidery, that it must be done in crochet; and another thing, that the letters for the monogram on the handkerchiefs must be done in tambour stitch, do you hear? Tambour stitch and not satin stitch. Mind you don’t forget that it is to be tambour stitch! Something else I had almost forgotten! For God’s sake tell her also that the leaves on the pelerine are to be raised and that the tendrils and thorns are to be in appliqué; and, then, the collar is to be edged with lace, or a deep frill. Please tell her, Makar Alexyevitch.

Your

V. D.

P.S.—I am so ashamed of worrying you with all my errands. The day before yesterday you were running about all the morning. But what can I do! There’s no sort of order in the house here, and I am not well. So don’t be vexed with me, Makar Alexyevitch. I’m so miserable. Oh, how will it end, my friend, my dear, my kind Makar Alexyevitch? I’m afraid to look into my future. I have a presentiment of something and am living in a sort of delirium.

P.P.S.—For God’s sake, my friend, don’t forget anything of what I have told you. I am so afraid you will make a mistake. Remember tambour, not satin stitch.

V. D.

September 27.

DEAR VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

POOR PEOPLE

I have carried out all your commissions carefully. Madame Chiffon says that she had thought herself of doing them in tambour stitch; that it is more correct, or something, I don't know, I didn't take it in properly. And you wrote about a frill, too, and she talked about the frill. Only I have forgotten, my darling, what she told me about the frill. All I remember is, that she said a great deal; such a horrid woman! What on earth was it? But she will tell you about it herself. I have become quite dissipated, Varinka, I have not even been to the office to-day. But there's no need for you to be in despair about that, my own. I am ready to go the round of all the shops for your peace of mind. You say you are afraid to look into the future. But at seven o'clock this evening you will know all about it. Madame Chiffon is coming to see you herself. So don't be in despair; you must hope for the best, everything will turn out for the best—so there. Well, now, I keep thinking about that cursed frill—ugh! bother that frill! I should have run round to you, my angel, I should have looked in, I should certainly have looked in; I have been to the gates of your house, once or twice. But Bykov—that is, I mean, Mr. Bykov—is always so cross, you see it doesn't. . . . Well, what of it!

MAKAR DYEYUSHKIN.

September 28.

MY DEAR MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

For God's sake, run at once to the jeweller's: tell him that he must not make the pearl and emerald ear-rings. Mr. Bykov says that it is too gorgeous, that it's too expensive. He is angry; he says, that as it is, it is costing him a pretty penny, and we are robbing him, and yesterday he said that if he had known beforehand and had any notion of the expense he would not have bound himself. He says that as soon as we are married we will set off at once, that we shall have no visitors and that I needn't hope for dancing and flirtation, and that the holidays are a long way off. That's how he talks. And, God knows, I don't want anything of that sort! Mr. Bykov ordered everything himself. I don't dare to answer him: he is so hasty. What will become of me?

V. D.

September 28.

MY DARLING VARVARA ALEXYEVNA,

I—that is, the jeweller said—very good; and I meant to say at first that I have been taken ill and cannot get up. Here now, at such an urgent, busy time I have caught a cold, the devil take it! I must tell you, to complete my misfortunes, his Excellency was pleased to be stern and was very angry with Emelyan Ivanovitch and scolded him, and he was quite worn out at last, poor man. You see, I tell you about everything. I wanted to write to you about something else, but I am afraid to trouble you. You see, I am a foolish, simple man, Varinka, I just write what comes, so that, maybe, you may—But there, never

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mind!

Your

MAKAR DYEVUSHKIN.

September 29.

VARVARA ALEXYEVITCH, MY OWN,

I saw Fedora to-day, my darling, she says that you are to be married to-morrow, and that the day after you are setting off, and that Mr. Bykov is engaging horses already. I have told you about his Excellency already, my darling. Another thing—I have checked the bills from the shop in Gorohovoy; it is all correct, only the things are very dear. But why is Mr. Bykov angry with you? Well, may you be happy, Varinka! I am glad, yes, I shall be glad if you are happy. I should come to the church, my dear, but I've got lumbago. So I keep on about our letters; who will carry them for us, my precious? Yes! You have been a good friend to Fedora, my own! You have done a good deed, my dear, you have done quite right. It's a good deed! And God will bless you for every good deed. Good deeds never go unrewarded, and virtue will sooner or later be rewarded by the eternal justice of God. Varinka! I wanted to write to you a great deal; I could go on writing and writing every minute, every hour! I have one of your books still, *Byelkin's Stories*. I tell you what, Varinka, don't take it away, make me a present of it, my darling. It is not so much that I want to read it. But you know yourself, my darling, winter is coming on: the evenings will be long; it will be sad; and then I could read. I shall move from my lodgings, Varinka, into your old room and lodge with Fedora. I would not part from that honest woman for anything now; besides, she is such a hard-working woman. I looked at your empty room carefully yesterday. Your embroidery frame has remained untouched, just as it was with embroidery on it. I examined your needlework; there were all sorts of little scraps left there, you had begun winding thread on one of my letters. On the little table I found a piece of paper with the words "Dear Makar Alexyevitch, I hasten—" and that was all. Someone must have interrupted you at the most interesting place. In the corner behind the screen stands your little bed. . . . Oh, my darling!!! Well, good-bye, good-bye, send me some answer to this letter quickly.

MAKAR DYEVUSHKIN.

September 30.

MY PRECIOUS FRIEND, MAKAR ALEXYEVITCH,

Everything is over! My lot is cast; I don't know what it will be, but I am resigned to God's will. To-morrow we set off. I say good-bye to you for the last time, my precious one, my friend, my benefactor, my own! Don't grieve for me, live happily, think of me, and may God's blessing descend on us! I shall often remember you in my thoughts,

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in my prayers. So this time is over! I bring to my new life little consolation from the memories of the past; the more precious will be my memory of you, the more precious will your memory be to my heart. You are my one friend; you are the only one there who loved me. You know I have seen it all, I know how you love me! You were happy in a smile from me and a few words from my pen. Now you will have to get used to being without me. How will you do, left alone here? To whom am I leaving you my kind, precious, only friend! I leave you the book, the embroidery frame, the unfinished letter; when you look at those first words, you must read in your thoughts all that you would like to hear or read from me, all that I should have written to you; and what I could not write now! Think of your poor Varinka who loves you so truly. All your letters are at Fedora's in the top drawer of a chest. You write that you are ill and Mr. Bykov will not let me go out anywhere to-day. I will write to you, my friend, I promise; but, God alone knows what may happen. And so we are saying good-bye now for ever, my friend, my darling, my own, for ever. . . . Oh, if only I could embrace you now! Good-bye, my dear; good-bye, good-bye. Live happily, keep well. My prayers will be always for you. Oh! how sad I am, how weighed down in my heart. Mr. Bykov is calling me.

Your ever loving

V.

P.S.—My soul is so full, so full of tears now . . . tears are choking me, rending my heart. Good-bye. Oh, God, how sad I am!

Remember me, remember your poor Varinka.

VARINKA, MY DARLING, MY PRECIOUS,

You are being carried off, you are going. They had better have torn the heart out of my breast than take you from me! How could you do it? Here you are weeping and going away! Here I have just had a letter from you, all smudged with tears. So you don't want to go; so you are being taken away by force; so you are sorry for me; so you love me! And with whom will you be now? Your little heart will be sad, sick and cold out there. It will be sapped by misery, torn by grief. You will die out there, they will put you in the damp earth; there will be no one to weep for you there! Mr. Bykov will be always courting hares. Oh, my darling, my darling! What have you brought yourself to? How could you make up your mind to such a step? What have you done, what have you done, what have you done to yourself? They'll drive you to your grave out there; they will be the death of you, my angel. You know you are as weak as a little feather, my own! And where was I, old fool, where were my eyes! I saw the child did not know what she was doing, the child was simply in a fever! I ought simply—But no, fool, fool, I thought nothing and saw nothing, as though that were the right thing, as though it had nothing to do with me; and went running after frills and flounces too. . . . No, Varinka, I

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shall get up; tomorrow, maybe, I shall be better and then I shall get up! . . . I'll throw myself under the wheels, my precious, I won't let you go away! Oh, no, how can it be? By what right is all this done? I will go with you; I will run after your carriage if you won't take me, and will run my hardest as long as there is a breath left in my body. And do you know what it is like where you are going, my darling? Maybe you don't know—if so, ask me! There it is, the steppe, my own, the steppe, the bare steppe; why, it is as bare as my hand; there, there are hard-hearted peasant women and uneducated drunken peasants. There the leaves are falling off the trees now, there it is cold and rainy—and you are going there! Well, Mr. Bykov has something to do there: he will be with his hares; but what about you? Do you want to be a grand country lady, Varinka? But, my little cherub! you should just look at yourself. Do you look like a grand country lady? . . . Why, how can such a thing be, Varinka? To whom am I going to write letters, my darling? Yes! You must take that into consideration, my darling—you must ask yourself, to whom is he going to write letters? Whom am I to call my darling; whom am I to call by that loving name, where am I to find you afterwards, my angel? I shall die, Varinka, I shall certainly die; my heart will never survive such a calamity! I loved you like God's sunshine, I loved you like my own daughter, I loved everything in you, my darling, my own! And I lived only for you! I worked and copied papers, and walked and went about and put my thoughts down on paper, in friendly letters, all because you, my precious, were living here opposite, close by; perhaps you did not know it, but that was how it was. Yes, listen, Varinka; you only think, my sweet darling, how is it possible that you should go away from us? You can't go away, my own, it is impossible; it's simply utterly impossible! Why, it's raining, you are delicate, you will catch cold. Your carriage will be wet through; it will certainly get wet through. It won't get beyond the city gates before it will break down; it will break down on purpose. They make these carriages in Petersburg so badly: I know all those carriage makers; they are only fit to turn out a little model, a plaything, not anything solid. I'll take my oath they won't build it solid. I'll throw myself on my knees before Mr. Bykov: I will explain to him, I will explain everything, and you, my precious, explain to him, make him see reason! Tell him that you will stay and that you cannot go away! . . . Ah, why didn't he marry a shopkeeper's daughter in Moscow? He might just as well have married her! The shopkeeper's daughter would have suited him much better, she would have suited him much better. I know why! And I should have kept you here. What is he to you, my darling, what is Bykov? How has he suddenly become so dear to you? Perhaps it's because he is always buying you frills and flounces. But what are frills and flounces? What good are frills and flounces? Why, it is nonsense, Varinka! Here it is a question of a man's life: and you know a frill's a rag; it's a rag, Varinka, a frill is; why, I shall buy you frills myself, that's all the reward I get; I shall

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buy them for you, my darling, I know a shop, that's all the reward you let me hope for, my cherub, Varinka. Oh Lord! Lord! So, you are really going to the steppes with Mr. Bykov, going away never to return! Ah, my darling! . . . No, you must write to me again, you must write another letter about everything, and when you go away you must write to me from there, or else, my heavenly angel, this will be the last letter and you know that this cannot be, this cannot be the last letter! Why, how can it be, so suddenly, actually the last? Oh no, I shall write and you will write. . . . Besides, I am acquiring a literary style. . . . Oh, my own, what does style matter, now? I don't know, now, what I am writing, I don't know at all, I don't know and I don't read it over and I don't improve the style. I write only to write, only to go on writing to you. . . my darling, my own, my Varinka. . . .