

# What Is to Be Done?

Nikolai Chernyshevsky

1863

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# [Front Matter]

Also translated by Michael R. Katz

Alexander Herzen, Who Is to Blame?  
Fyodor Dostoevsky, Notes from Underground

## [Title Page]

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?  
Nikolai Chernyshevsky  
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## [Dedication]

FOR  
REBECCA AND KATY

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M. R. K. and W. G. W.

## Translator's Note

Chernyshevsky's novel was first published in the journal *Sovremennik* [Contemporary] in 1863 (nos. 3–5). This text was reprinted in an authoritative edition by T. I. Ornatskaya and S. A. Reiser in the Literary Monument Series published by Nauka (Leningrad) 1975). The Soviet editors collated the text with Chernyshevsky's manuscripts housed in the Central Government Archive of Literature and Art in Moscow; they corrected all obvious misprints and errors. It is this text we have chosen to translate.

The system of transliteration is that used in the Oxford Slavonic Papers with the following exceptions: hard and soft signs have been omitted and conventional spellings of names have been retained.

M. R. K.



# Introduction

## **Chernyshevsky, *What Is to Be Done?* and the Russian Intelligentsia**

Michael R. Katz and William G. Wagner

If one were to ask for the title of the nineteenth-century Russian novel that has had the greatest influence on Russian society, it is likely that a non-Russian would choose among the books of the mighty triumvirate—Turgenev, Tolstoy, or Dostoyevsky. *Fathers and Sons*? *War and Peace*? *Crime and Punishment*? These would certainly be among the suggested answers; but . . . the novel that can claim this honor with most justice is N. G. Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?*, a book few Western readers have ever heard of and fewer still have read. Yet no work in modern literature, with the possible exception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, can compete with *What Is to Be Done?* in its effect on human lives and its power to make history. For Chernyshevsky's novel, far more than Marx's *Capital*, supplied the emotional dynamic that eventually went to make the Russian Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

From the moment of its first appearance in 1863, *What Is to Be Done?* provoked bitter controversy. Its author, Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky (1828–1889), had already achieved considerable influence and notoriety as one of Russia's earliest advocates of materialist philosophy, socialist political economy, and women's liberation. The novel's extraordinary impact, however, derived chiefly from the solutions it proposed for Russia's social ills and for the problems that agitated the intelligentsia from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Condemning the patriarchal and authoritarian nature of family, social, and political relations as the principal source of Russia's social inequality, oppressiveness, and economic backwardness, Chernyshevsky rejected moderate reform as an ineffectual and morally bankrupt means of overcoming these problems. In the more radical program he offered, intellectuals would play an active role in social development and moral regeneration. Blending traditional Russian values and institutions with ideas derived from Western European social and political critics, he argued forcefully that individual self-realization, sexual liberation, and an economy that combined prosperity with social justice could be achieved only through the reorganization of the family, society, and means of production in accordance with cooperative principles. Armed with scientific education, "new people"—socially aware and morally strong individuals—would lead this process of reorganization, particularly by enlightening others and providing models for emulation.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Frank, "N. G. Chernyshevsky: A Russian Utopia," *Southern Review*, 3 (1967), 68.

## State, Society, and the Intelligentsia

This call to action appealed particularly to the younger generation of the intelligentsia, a small but articulate group of critics of the existing regime who strongly influenced both late imperial Russian and early Soviet history. Attempts to define the intelligentsia have varied widely; some have emphasized the sociological process of education, others the formulation of ideological beliefs antipathetic to autocracy, and still others the psychological experience of alienation as the critical element in the formation of this group.<sup>2</sup> While none of these approaches by itself can explain such a complex phenomenon, each illuminates an important aspect of the intelligentsia. For these educated—often highly educated—individuals who believed in the transformative power of knowledge and ideas saw themselves, and were perceived by their opponents, as a distinct social group dedicated to fundamental changes in both the tsarist political system and the structure of Russian society.

This sense of mission as well as of alienation from the state and the rest of society arose from several important social and cultural changes that occurred in Russia from the early nineteenth century. Chief among them was the growth of an educated elite, which by 1860 still numbered only about 20,000 in a total population of over 60 million.<sup>3</sup> To meet the need for technically more proficient and more effective officials, the state steadily expanded the system of secondary and higher education, drew heavily on Western European specialized literature in revising academic curricula, and gradually increased access to higher education for people outside the nobility. But this educational process produced not only more professional and loyal, albeit often reform-minded, bureaucrats; it also expanded Russia's tiny literary elite and fostered a professional elite whose members frequently sought to work independently of the state toward an avowed goal of social progress. Encouraged by their training as well as by the state to employ their expertise to solve society's problems, members of these elites used their knowledge of Western European institutions, conditions, and ideas to decry both the injustices, oppressiveness, and backwardness of Russian society and the inability or refusal of the tsarist regime to ameliorate this situation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, V. R. Leikina-Svirskaya, *Intelligentsiya v Rossii vo vt or oi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow, 1971), esp. chap. 1; N. Riasanovsky, "Notes on the Emergence and Nature of the Russian Intelligentsia," in *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, ed. T. Stavrou (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 3–25; M. Malia, "What Is the Intelligentsia?" in *The Russian Intelligentsia*, ed. R. Pipes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 1–18; P. Pomper, *The Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: AHM, 1970); and M. Raeff, *The Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966).

<sup>3</sup> Leikina-Svirskaya, *Intelligentsiya*, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> On tsarist educational policies and their impact during this period see P. Alston, *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969); D. Brower, *Training the Nihilists: Education and Radicalism in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); J. McClelland, *Autocrats and Academics: Education, Culture, and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); A. Sinel, *The Classroom and the Chancellery: State Educational Reform under*

Many members of Russia's emerging educated elite thus found themselves alienated from the tsarist state as well as separated from most of Russian society by their education and their disdain for traditional values and relationships. The anomalous social position occupied by the intelligentsia, and indeed by the educated elite in general, intensified this dual alienation. As long as the intellectual and socio-political elites had coincided roughly in the nobility, the problem of defining the status of intellectuals within the traditional social order remained muted. But once educated Russians began to identify themselves more as intellectuals or professionals than as members of a traditional social estate, they needed to redefine their social role and status in different terms. This need grew stronger as the access of nonnobles to higher education increased after the 1850s and as many nobles left their estates for the cities after the emancipation of their serfs in 1861.<sup>5</sup> In an important sense, the various ideologies, programs, utopias, and conspiratorial groups devised by the intelligentsia represented attempts to fulfill this need. By formulating programs for social development which enabled them to play an integral part in overcoming Russia's poverty, oppressiveness, and backwardness, the intelligentsia provided itself with a social role that seemed to reintegrate it into society as spokesman, conscience, or guide. While drawing heavily on Western European social, political-economic, and philosophical ideas in formulating these programs, the intelligentsia assimilated them into a Russian cultural context that emphasized paternalistic control on the one hand and personal fulfillment through service to the community, especially to its weaker members, on the other.<sup>6</sup> Personal interest, social idealism, intellect, and cultural experience thus combined to produce in the intelligentsia a fervid, often self-sacrificing, and potentially authoritarian commitment to social transformation in accordance with an idea frequently carried to its logical extreme.

The sociopolitical order that Chernyshevsky and his fellow intelligentsy hoped to transform consisted in 1860 of an overwhelmingly illiterate and poor peasant agrarian society dominated socially by a thin layer of serf-owning noblemen and ruled politically by a legally unlimited autocrat. Though the nobles provided the majority of state officials, they remained divided socially, ethnically, and regionally and depended on the

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Count Dmitry Tolstoi (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); R. Wortman, *The Development of a Russian Legal Consciousness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

<sup>5</sup> On the problem of defining social identity in late imperial Russia, see G. Freeze, "The Soslovie (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History," *American Historical Review*, 91/1 (1986), 11-36; and D. Brower, *Estate, Class, and Community: Urbanization and Revolution in Late Tsarist Russia* (Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies no. 302 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> On the theme of self-sacrificing service in the ideas and self-perception of the intelligentsia, see N. Rzhevsky, *Russian Literature and Ideology: Herzen, Dostoevsky, Leontiev, Tolsty, Fadeyev* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); B. Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); I. Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). The autobiographies of women revolutionaries in B. Engel, *Five Sisters: Women against the Tsar* (New York: Knopf, 1975), provide excellent examples of this phenomenon.

autocracy for income, status, and the preservation of their principal economic asset, the serfs who worked their lands. The rest of society was divided into a variety of legal estates—merchants, clergy, taxed urban groups, cossacks, foreign settlers, state peasants, and so on—defined by their relative privileges and obligations, either to each other or, primarily, to the state. Reinforcing and reflecting this hierarchical sociolegal order were the unequal relations based on generation and gender which predominated within families, peasant communities, and most other social groups. Women were subordinated legally and usually factually to men at every social level and were excluded from most occupations outside of the home, the family's farm, or certain menial trades. Religious beliefs, strong especially among groups other than the culturally Westernized nobility, reinforced these hierarchical relations and patriarchal values, despite the institutional weakness of the Orthodox church. To people engaged by ideas and committed to an ideal of social progress that often included mobility for themselves, the tsarist order seemed stifling and stagnant.

But despite this perception of stagnation, pressures for change were building throughout the early nineteenth century, not least within the government itself. The educational and ministerial systems created by the sometime avowedly reformist emperor Alexander I (r. 1801–1825) and extended by his successor, the professedly ultraconservative Nicholas I (r. 1825–1855), produced a growing coterie of officials committed to enhancing Russian power and security through measures intended to expand the economy, improve society's welfare, and increase the bureaucracy's effectiveness.<sup>7</sup> With the expansion of education and the development of publishing, some of these measures contributed to the process of professionalization and the growth of a culture of literacy which spawned the intelligentsia. Despite the deadening effects of state censorship and an official ideology that stressed autocratic power, Orthodox religious values, and conservative nationalism, the activities of both statist bureaucrats and critical intellectuals extended and strengthened the belief in human reason that had gnawed steadily at traditional institutions and values since the time of Peter the Great. Other measures helped stimulate a modest yet structurally significant development of industries employing free rather than bound labor and the growth of trade and certain areas of agriculture. As a result of these developments, the populations of several cities expanded dramatically; those of St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Kharkov, Odessa, Saratov, Minsk, and some others more than doubled from the beginning of the century.<sup>8</sup> Yet despite these changes,

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<sup>7</sup> On this process, see W. Lincoln, *In the Vanguard of Reform: Russia's Enlightened Bureaucrats, 1825–1861* (De Kalb, Ill.: University of Northern Illinois Press, 1982); W. Pintner and D. Rowney, eds., *Russian Officialdom: The Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); D. Orlovsky, *The Limits of Reform: The Ministry of Internal Affairs in Imperial Russia, 1802–1881* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> B. Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics, 1750–1970*, abr. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), pp. 12–14.

the overwhelming majority of Russians in 1860 remained illiterate and still lived in impoverished peasant villages, the backwater gentry estates described so gracefully by Turgenev, or the sleepy provincial towns satirized so brilliantly by Gogol. Over a third of the population suffered under the constraints and indignities of serfdom. But where capital resources were scarce, communications poor, regional trade fairs a principal means of distribution, and even such major cities as Kharkov rendered impassable by mud each spring, serfdom represented more a symptom than a cause of social and economic backwardness.

Serfdom nonetheless provided the most visible and vexing symbol of all Russia's ills for state reformers and critical intelligentsia alike. Its elimination, both hoped—too optimistically—would open the way for rapid development while establishing the basis for a more just society, or at least a more tranquil one. Thus when, spurred by Russia's humiliating defeat in the Crimean War, Alexander II (r. 1855–1881) placed emancipation of the serfs at the center of an extensive program of reform that also affected the judicial system, local government, education, state finance, press censorship, and military service, one of the regime's strongest critics, Alexander Herzen, could proclaim approvingly from exile in London, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!"<sup>9</sup> Chernyshevsky himself declared enthusiastically that "in comparison with the Tsar's program . . . all the reforms and improvements carried out since the time of Peter seem of little importance... The new life now beginning for us will be as much more beautiful, harmonious, brilliant, and happy than the former one as the last 150 years have been superior to the seventeenth century in Russia."<sup>10</sup> For a moment it seemed as if the shared goal of emancipation and the process of state reform might reconcile the intelligentsia with the autocracy.

This concord proved short-lived, however, and Alexander's efforts to strengthen his empire through reform paradoxically deepened the intelligentsia's alienation from his regime. To build support for emancipation, Alexander had relaxed the severe censorship controls that had oppressed writers, editors, and intellectuals during his father's reign. A lively public debate ensued in which support for reform predominated. But when this debate seemed to the regime to threaten public order and the radical press began to demand changes that went well beyond Alexander's limited objectives, the government once again tightened censorship restrictions, thereby angering the intelligentsia. Radical intelligentsia denounced the terms of emancipation announced in March 1861 as simply the perpetuation of serfdom in a new guise, and they reacted equally negatively

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<sup>9</sup> M. Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965), p. 414. The illegitimate son of a wealthy nobleman, Alexander Herzen (1812–1870) became a prominent spokesman for liberal and, later, moderate socialist views in mid-nineteenth-century Russia. Herzen left Russia in 1847 and settled eventually in London, where he published *Kolokol* (The Bell), a periodical that served as a focal point for radical criticism of the tsarist regime. See also E. Acton, *Alexander Herzen and the Role of the Intellectual Revolutionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Izbrannye ekonomicheskie proizvedeniya* (Moscow, 1948), 1:423.

to the government's heavy-handed response to university students' demands for greater autonomy later in the same year. Many, like Chernyshevsky, saw in the government's actions vindication of their belief that the autocracy was too imbued with patriarchal values and too closely bound to the privileged elements in society ever to become an agency for progress and satisfactory social reform. Frustrated and embittered, by early 1862 radicalized intellectuals and students were calling for revolutionary upheaval as the only way to effect the great changes in social, sexual, economic, and political relations that they believed were necessary and possible, if only sufficient will and the right means could be found. In their minds, the autocracy had replaced serfdom as the preeminent symbol and source of Russia's oppressiveness and backwardness.

But while dissatisfaction with Alexander's reforms intensified the radicalization of the intelligentsia, this process had actually begun several years earlier with increasingly acrimonious disputes within the intelligentsia over a series of philosophical, aesthetic, and political questions. Initially occasioned by the conflict between youthful proponents of materialist and scientific views and older adherents of idealist, chiefly left-Hegelian beliefs, these disputes helped to precipitate a fundamental split in the intelligentsia between advocates of evolutionary reform and those who believed that fundamental change could be achieved only by revolutionary means. In these conflicts, Chernyshevsky and *What Is to Be Done?* played a central role in both popularizing materialist, positivist, and rational utilitarian ideas among the intelligentsia and persuading many of its younger members that radical action was possible as well as necessary.

## **The Development of a Revolutionary Utopian**

Chernyshevsky's background eminently suited him for this role. His upbringing, education, and relations with his parents fostered in him the intellectual vigor, commitment to ideas, stern moral integrity, ascetic habits, and concern for the welfare of others that marked both his personal character and his developed ideological beliefs. Although gifted and self-confident intellectually, however, Chernyshevsky felt insecure personally and behaved awkwardly in social situations. To overcome his diffidence and shyness, he used his superior intellectual abilities to gain recognition, acceptance, and a sense of self-worth. Thus from an early age he used his knowledge to help others—his schoolmates at the Saratov seminary, the members of the Vvedensky circle in St. Petersburg, his students at the Saratov gymnasium, the few women with whom he became involved, the readers of his essays and articles. Yet his altruism was tinged with paternalism. Convinced of the correctness of his views, Chernyshevsky often advanced them selfrighteously and remained intolerant of criticism. Didactic journalism proved to be an ideal *métier* for the brilliant yet insecure son of an Orthodox priest who in his life and writings tried to reconcile the conflicting tensions between egoism

and altruism, Western individualism and Russian collectivism, scientific discovery and moral certainty, and technological change and agrarian harmony.

Chernyshevsky was born on July 12, 1828, in Saratov, a large provincial town and trading center of about 50,000 people on the middle Volga.<sup>11</sup> In typical fashion, his father, Gavriil Ivanovich, had acquired his position as priest at the Sergievsky Church on condition that he marry his predecessor's daughter, Evgeniya Egorovna Golubeva. Untypically, the match proved successful, and by all accounts the Chernyshevskys provided a warm, caring, and secure environment for Nikolai, their only child to survive into adolescence. Indeed, his mother's solicitousness and overprotectiveness may have contributed to the extreme self-confidence with which Chernyshevsky later expressed his views, even when faced with severe tsarist persecution. His father's approach to his early education undoubtedly also bolstered Chernyshevsky's self-confidence while developing his intellectual skill. Unusually well read in secular as well as religious literature for a provincial priest, Gavriil Ivanovich taught his son several languages and encouraged him to read widely in the family's extensive library. This process of self-education fostered in Chernyshevsky both an independent mind and a voracious appetite for reading, particularly works of or about literature. The family's modest yet comfortable means reinforced his love of reading, as few resources remained for other diversions, while the example of his father, a highly capable, hard-working, and well-respected cleric, shaped Chernyshevsky's serious and diligent approach to his studies. But while this family environment clearly nurtured many positive characteristics in Chernyshevsky, its extreme closeness and insularity may also have contributed to the social awkwardness and personal insecurity that he exhibited throughout his life.

Chernyshevsky entered the Saratov seminary in 1842, at the age of fourteen. He was already more widely read than most of his teachers, let alone his peers, and proved to be a brilliant student. The resulting adulation of his instructors and admiration of his schoolmates undoubtedly strengthened his intellectual self-confidence and sense of self-worth, thereby compensating somewhat for his shyness and lack of social skills. Chernyshevsky won the respect of his fellow students, moreover, by helping many of the less able among them to get through their lessons and exams. This altruism toward his peers derived partly from his father's own kindness and teachings on Christian charity and partly from Chernyshevsky's sympathy for his less fortunate fellow students, many of whom came from impoverished backgrounds. But while the sight of poverty, brutality, and social inequality so evident throughout Saratov may

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<sup>11</sup> For works in English on Chernyshevsky's life, see the Bibliography, below, esp. the books by Lampert, Pereira, Randall, and Woehrlin. Soviet scholarship, which generally portrays Chernyshevsky as a precursor to Bolshevism and exaggerates his revolutionary activities, can be sampled in such works as Iu. M. Steklov, *N. G. Chernyshevsky, ego zhizn' i deyatel'nost'*, 2 vols. (Moscow and Leningrad, 1928), and M.V. Nechkina, *Vstrecha dvukh pokolenii. Iz istorii russkogo revolyutsionnogo dvizheniya kontsa 50-kh-nachala 60-kh godov XIX veka* (Moscow, 1980). Chernyshevsky's diaries, letters, notes for an autobiography, and other writings are available in *N. G. Chernyshevsky, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 16 vols. (Moscow, 1939–1953), esp. vols. 1 and 14–16 (hereafter PSS).

have incited his compassion, particularly when filtered through his father's Christian ideals and the vague notions gleaned from such left-Hegelian social critics as Belinsky and Herzen in *Otechestvennye zapiski* (Notes of the fatherland), Chernyshevsky still had not moved very far beyond the orbit of his parents' beliefs.

This situation changed dramatically with the young man's departure from Saratov in the summer of 1846. He was now eighteen. Believing that their son's scholarly talents would enable him to attain a more exalted position than was possible within the clergy, and spurred by a dispute between Gavriil Ivanovich and his superiors, Chernyshevsky's parents decided to send him to St. Petersburg University. The move coincided with Chernyshevsky's own growing interest in secular ideas and in the relationship between literature and society. Moreover, the prospect of an academic career excited him. In a letter to his cousin A. N. Pypin written shortly after his arrival in St. Petersburg he declared:

We firmly resolve, with all the strength of our soul, to help end this period in which learning has been foreign to our spiritual life, so that it may cease to be like a strange coat, a sorrowful, impersonal aping for us. Let Russia also contribute what it should to the spiritual life of the world, as it has contributed and contributes to political life, emerging powerfully, distinctively, redemptively for humanity, in another great field of life—learning—as it has already done in one—state and political life. And let this great event be achieved, even if only in part, through us! Then we will not have lived in this world in vain; then we may view our earthly life with tranquillity and tranquilly pass on to life beyond the grave. To help work for the glory, not fleeting but eternal, of one's fatherland and for the good of mankind—what can be higher and more desired than that? We pray to God He will grant this as our destiny.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, Chernyshevsky saw in the intellect and ideas powerful means by which to serve society and, in so doing, to achieve social prominence as well as personal satisfaction.

Chernyshevsky's five years at St. Petersburg University proved pivotal in shaping the ideas with which he would later attempt to change Russian society. Following a pattern typical among university students, he soon grew disillusioned with what he considered to be the formalism, intellectual torpor, and, at best, mild reformism of the majority of his instructors.<sup>13</sup> Though officially a student of literature and philology, he devoted most of his time to questions of philosophy, political economy, and the social role of literature. With a small and changing circle of friends, chosen primarily for their ideas and intellectual abilities, he followed the exploits of such republicans as Louis Blanc during the revolution in France in 1848–1849, explored the works of French utopian socialists such as Charles Fourier and his disciple Victor Considérant, and de-

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 14:48.

<sup>13</sup> See Brower, *Training the Nihilists*.



bated Ludwig Feuerbach's materialist critique of religion.<sup>14</sup> The vibrancy, dynamism, and optimism of these ideas could not fail to appeal to idealistic young intellectuals such as Chernyshevsky, especially when contrasted with the seemingly stagnant ultra-conservatism promoted even more intensively by the Russian government in reaction to the revolutionary events in Western Europe.<sup>15</sup> Resolving the conflict between atheistic materialism and religion proved to be particularly agonizing for Chernyshevsky, not least because of its serious implications for his relationship with his parents. But attracted by the potential for effective individual as well as social action which he saw implicit in Feuerbach's emphasis on man's creative capacity, Chernyshevsky abandoned Orthodoxy for an equally holistic materialist world view. His acceptance of the tsarist sociopolitical order dissolved along with his faith in God. Henceforward he advanced, ardently and often intolerantly, the most extreme views among the small circle of radical intellectuals gathered around I. I. Vvedensky, an older ex-seminarian from Saratov who taught literature at two military academies in St. Petersburg. But while ruthless in debate, Chernyshevsky remained personally compassionate. For several years he helped to support a fellow student whose ideas he admired, despite his own meager resources.<sup>16</sup>

Chernyshevsky returned to Saratov in March 1851 a materialist, atheist, and proponent of socialism. Although profoundly alienated from the tsarist state and the beliefs of most Russians, however, he had yet to challenge the established order openly. Indeed, he had returned to his native town partly in response to his mother's urging but primarily in the hope of finding more time to complete the master's thesis that he needed for entree to an academic career, hardly a revolutionary pursuit. And while testing the boundaries of the politically acceptable in his literature classes at the Saratov gymnasium, Chernyshevsky remained carefully within them. Nor apparently did he form close ties with the few political exiles living in Saratov at this time. Presaging his later journalistic career, Chernyshevsky limited his revolutionary activities to teaching his students to think critically, especially about tsarist society.

At the end of his brief return to Saratov, Chernyshevsky married Olga Sokratovna Vasileva, an event that dramatically affected his life. The match at first glance seems an odd one, since Olga Sokratovna's character and interests clashed sharply with those of Chernyshevsky. The free-spirited, frivolous, and coquettish daughter of a provincial doctor, she proved largely indifferent to Chernyshevsky's political views and social concerns. Materialistic rather than materialist, she seemed to gain appreciation of her husband only with his ability to provide for her comforts. Not surprisingly, Cherny-

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<sup>14</sup> On these influences, see pp. 16–19 below and text nn. 39–41, 84, 94, and 267. A good discussion of these ideas can be found in G. Lichtheim, *A Short History of Socialism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970).

<sup>15</sup> For a perceptive discussion of the impact of the revolutions of 1848 on Russian intellectuals, see I. Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), pp. 1–21.

<sup>16</sup> In *What Is to Be Done?* Chernyshevsky's superhero, Rakhmetov, likewise supports several radical students.

shevsky's parents opposed the marriage. Yet it satisfied many of their son's deepest needs. Though he sincerely loved Olga Sokratovna, Chernyshevsky also saw in their marriage an important rite of passage that promised to dispel his social awkwardness. "I must marry," he confided to his diary at this time, "also because I will then become a man, rather than the child I am now. Then my timidity, shyness, etc. will disappear."<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the marriage provided Chernyshevsky with both an excuse to break with his parents on an issue other than his religious apostasy and a reason to return to St. Petersburg: he had to obtain a position that could support a wife and family. Finally, his relationship with Olga Sokratovna enabled Chernyshevsky to substantiate many of his ideas, particularly in regard to the emancipation of women. Influenced strongly by the romantic feminist views of the French author George Sand<sup>18</sup> and generally treating people as the reflections of abstract ideas, he pictured himself as liberating his wife from a confining family situation, a view apparently not shared by Olga Sokratovna. He promised and gave Olga Sokratovna complete independence and ascendancy in their marriage, to the point of living in separate rooms and indulging her whims while he himself still adhered to his former ascetic habits. Despite his solicitousness, evidence suggests that his wife's preference for material comfort over freedom strained their relationship, especially during the early years of the marriage. But even this need to satisfy his wife's desires provided Chernyshevsky with a justification for his intense journalistic activity and the consequent neglect of his family.

As if to emphasize his rejection of his parents' beliefs, Chernyshevsky defied social convention by marrying Olga Sokratovna only ten days after his mother's sudden death, in April 1853, and quickly departed for St. Petersburg. Unable to decide between an academic and a journalistic career, he barely supported himself and his wife by teaching, translating popular English novels, and penning literary reviews while endeavoring to finish his master's thesis on the aesthetic relations between art and reality. Unexpected talent as a literary critic, philosophical and personal clashes with his thesis adviser, and chance pushed as well as drew Chernyshevsky toward journalism. The popularity of his reviews in *Otechestvennye zapiski* and *Sovremennik* (The contemporary) attracted the attention of the latter's editor and publisher, Nikolai Nekrasov, a radically inclined romantic poet who also possessed remarkably good business sense.<sup>19</sup> Nekrasov soon offered Chernyshevsky a permanent position on the staff of his journal, despite the intense disagreements between the radical young critic and the older, more moderate, and philosophically idealist contributors to *Sovremennik* on nearly every subject, from aesthetic values to political views. The same disagreements led Chernyshevsky's thesis adviser, the moderate literary scholar and state censor A. V. Nikitenko, first to delay the public defense of the thesis until 1855 and then to conspire to block conferment of the degree until 1858. Thus effectively barred from an academic

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<sup>17</sup> PSS, 1:483.

<sup>18</sup> On this influence, see pp. 23–24 below.

<sup>19</sup> On Nekrasov, see text nn. 106, 218, and 295.

career, Chernyshevsky had little choice but to devote his energies to journalism. His timing proved propitious. The death of Nicholas I in 1855, Russia's humiliating defeat in the Crimean War, and the conflict emerging within the intelligentsia over philosophical orientation, aesthetic values, and sociopolitical ideals together provoked an unprecedented outburst of vigorous and often acrimonious journalistic debate that offered Chernyshevsky ample opportunity to fulfill the ambitions revealed earlier to his cousin.

The ensuing decade proved to be the most intellectually productive and socially active period in Chernyshevsky's life. Indeed, journalism suited his temperament, talents, and needs perfectly. While awkward and unimpressive in public, in print Chernyshevsky deployed his sharp intellect, a biting polemical style laced with moral fervor, and wide familiarity with Western European as well as Russian literature and sociopolitical ideas with devastating effect. As a contributor to, and then editor of, one of mid-nineteenth-century Russia's most prominent "thick journals"—the monthly literary and political periodicals that provided the main medium for public discourse at this time—he became an influential critic of the injustices and deficiencies of the existing order as well as a preeminent spokesman for radical social and political change. As Chernyshevsky's popularity grew, subscriptions to *Sovremennik* soared, thereby extending the reach of his ideas.

Two principal conflicts, pitting him against both political moderates and the tsarist state, shaped most of Chernyshevsky's writing during these years. Concentrating initially on literary criticism, he sought to formulate a theory of aesthetics that both embodied his materialist and positivistic beliefs and transformed art into a weapon for radical social transformation. In thus linking art with social action, Chernyshevsky reflected a view common among the intelligentsia at this time, that literature and literary criticism could serve as powerful forces of historical progress. But his extreme assertion—expounded most comprehensively in his master's thesis—that literature should be judged solely on the basis of its fidelity to reality and its social utility challenged the idealism and aesthetic values of even moderate critics of the regime, to say nothing of their aristocratic sensibilities. In the ensuing conflict over the nature of art, Chernyshevsky and his youthful allies suggested that their critics' moderation and commitment to idealism derived largely from a self-interested desire not to upset the status quo, while their opponents imputed Chernyshevsky's ideas in part to the lack of culture allegedly resulting from his social origin and upbringing. Ivan Turgenev, for example, a moderate who at the time was the most renowned contributor to *Sovremennik*, remarked that Chernyshevsky and his supporters "are resentful that they were brought up on vegetable oil, and so they arrogantly strive to wipe poetry off the face of the earth . . . and establish their coarse seminarian principles."<sup>20</sup> Clearly social differences as much as philosophical and aesthetic disagreements shaped the response to

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<sup>20</sup> A. I. Panaeva (Golovacheva), *Vospominaniya* (Moscow, 1956), p. 265, quoted in N. Pereira, *The Thought and Teaching of N. G. Chernyshevsky* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), p. 60.

Chernyshevsky's ideas and exacerbated the conflict that was pushing moderate and radical intelligentsia apart.

The adoption of a program of reform by Alexander II only widened this gulf. Turning from the later 1850s almost exclusively to questions of political economy and social theory, Chernyshevsky quickly concluded that Russia's social injustices and lack of development could not be overcome through evolutionary means, especially reforms undertaken by the tsarist state. In his view, the relationship of mutual dependence between the autocracy and privileged social groups precluded meaningful state action until a social revolution had restructured political power. Chernyshevsky believed, moreover, that if this revolution was to succeed, it would need to overturn the patriarchal relations that existed within the family as well as between social groups and between the state and society. Thus he became an ardent advocate of women's rights as a means to pursue social revolution generally, and thereby helped to raise the "woman's question" in midnineteenth-century Russia.<sup>21</sup> But Chernyshevsky condemned not only the inadequacy of the government's proposals. He also harshly criticized the moderate intelligentsia who supported these proposals and again questioned their integrity as well as their intelligence. Moderates countered that Chernyshevsky's radicalism not only was impractical but also threatened to frighten the government away from the more realistic path of gradual reform and to unleash the destructive passions of the still ignorant masses. The break between moderates and radicals within the intelligentsia was complete.

While calling for radical social action over state reform, however, Chernyshevsky took care to remain within the boundaries set by state censorship and to avoid personal involvement in revolutionary activities. Nonetheless, the government blamed the upsurge of revolutionary and student activism in the early 1860s on the subversive influence of *Sovremennik* and its radical editor. Therefore when Chernyshevsky ignored warnings to moderate the journal's political line, the government reacted to student protests at St. Petersburg University and a series of suspicious fires in the northern capital in early 1862 by closing *Sovremennik* in June and arresting Chernyshevsky on largely fabricated charges the following month. While imprisoned and awaiting trial in the Peter-Paul Fortress, Chernyshevsky produced his last significant and most influential work, the novel *What Is to Be Done?* In early 1864 he was convicted of subversion, largely on the basis of false evidence, and sentenced to fourteen years at hard labor (later reduced to seven), to be followed by permanent exile.

Chernyshevsky spent the next eighteen years in prison or in exile in eastern Siberia, far from his family, friends, or sources of intellectual stimulation. Isolation, poverty, frustrated hopes, and anxiety over his family's welfare broke his spirit as well as his health. Although he continued to write, most of what he produced lacked the sharpness

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<sup>21</sup> On the "woman's question" in nineteenth-century Russia, see Engel, *Mothers and Daughters*; R. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); G. A. Tishkin, *Zhenskii vopros v Rossii v 50-60 gg. XIX v.* (Leningrad, 1984).

and focus of his earlier works. Only the autobiographical novel *Prologue*, published in London in 1877, had much literary merit. Olga Sokratovna visited him once. But the journey proved so exhausting for her that Chernyshevsky forbade her to repeat it and even urged her to divorce him in order to find a husband who could offer her more security.<sup>22</sup> In 1883, having subdued the revolutionary movement of the 1870s, the government allowed Chernyshevsky to move to the more populous and less remote port of Astrakhan, on the Caspian Sea, where he lived a relatively lonely existence with his wife for the next six years. He was permitted to return to Saratov only in June 1889, four months before his death. While the government's harsh treatment of Chernyshevsky ended his active career, it also transformed him into a martyr and thereby undoubtedly enhanced the appeal of *What Is to Be Done?* It is perhaps fitting that a man who valued the intellect so highly and tended to treat people as personifications of ideas became himself the mythicized symbol of Russian radicalism.

## The Ideology of a Revolutionary Utopian

Chernyshevsky's chief intellectual accomplishment lay in synthesizing the ideas of contemporary Western European social critics, political economists, and philosophers into an ideology of radicalism that appealed to angry young intelligentsy caught in the backward conditions of mid-nineteenth-century Russia.<sup>23</sup> The appeal of his ideas derived both from their successful melding of au courant European theories with Russian cultural, especially Orthodox religious, values and from the crucial role that they assigned to *déclassé* intellectuals in the effort to overcome Russia's problems. Though he condemned both the European capitalist present and the patriarchal tsarist past, Chernyshevsky combined secular ideas with religious values, Western European democratic individualism with Russian collectivism and paternalism in a way that promised intellectuals self-fulfillment and social prominence while still binding them closely to the community. Materialist philosophy, utilitarian ethics, science, and technology became the means through which an educated elite would transform traditional social institutions into a prosperous agrarian utopia where both the material welfare of the masses and the creative needs of intellectuals would be satisfied. Chernyshevsky thus offered an ideological vision that promised to resolve the tensions produced by educa-

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<sup>22</sup> Prerevolutionary Russian law treated marriage as a religious institution and therefore assigned jurisdiction over cases of divorce to appropriate ecclesiastical bodies. Although severely restricting divorce, the Orthodox church did allow it in the event that a spouse was exiled to Siberia for conviction of a serious criminal offense. See also text n. 66. On Russian divorce law and the controversies surrounding it from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, see W.G. Wagner, "The Trojan Mare: Women's Rights and Civil Rights in Prerevolutionary Russia," in *Civil Rights in Prerevolutionary Russia*, ed. L. Edmondson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>23</sup> Works in English on Chernyshevsky's ideas are listed in the Bibliography. For a sampling of Soviet scholarship on various aspects of Chernyshevsky's thought, see the recent collection of essays edited by M. T. Iovchuk, *N. G. Chernyshevsky i sovremennost'* (Moscow, 1980).

tional reform, Western European competition and cultural intrusion, and the advent of secularization and impact of science in a still predominantly agrarian Christian community.

Philosophical materialism provided the foundation for both Chernyshevsky's critique of the tsarist sociopolitical order and his optimistic belief in the possibility of transforming that order through action informed by scientific knowledge.<sup>24</sup> Influenced strongly by the German materialists Ludwig Büchner and especially Ludwig Feuerbach,<sup>25</sup> Chernyshevsky claimed that body, mind, and spirit represented merely different aspects of a single, unitary human organism that was an integral part of nature. Action, thought, and emotion thus were nothing more than sensual responses to external stimuli and therefore were governed by natural laws. Chernyshevsky argued that these laws could be discovered by rigorous application to human society of the methodology and concepts developed in the natural sciences by such pioneers as the French physiologist Claude Bernard.<sup>26</sup> Human beings would then be able to reshape their social as well as natural environment in accordance with their needs. Religious belief and philosophical idealism impeded progress toward this end, Chernyshevsky asserted, by projecting a false image of human nature which obscured knowledge of reality. Social, political, and religious institutions likewise tended to preserve distorted images of reality in order to protect the power and privileges of the social groups that benefited from these institutions. For Chernyshevsky, then, human progress required both the constant advance of scientific understanding and the elimination of those institutions that perpetuated ignorance.

Chernyshevsky's theory of aesthetics, which so enraged his moderate opponents, followed logically from his materialist epistemology.<sup>27</sup> For him, art represented a medium for revealing, vicariously experiencing, and thereby better understanding reality. Reality itself could not be transcended, only comprehended. Idealist notions of pure art or beauty therefore were not simply false but dangerous, because they obscured reality and subordinated it to an unrealizable ideal. Chernyshevsky concluded that art should therefore be judged on the basis of its fidelity to reality and its ability to expand human knowledge. Hence his theory of aesthetics essentially endeavored to transform art into an instrument of education. Taking this principle a step further in *What Is to Be Done?*, Chernyshevsky sought not only to explain reality but also to change it by providing radical youth with guidelines for social behavior and political action. By

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<sup>24</sup> Chernyshevsky's fullest statement of this position may be found in "The Anthropological Principle in History," in N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Selected Philosophical Essays* (Moscow, 1953), pp. 49–135.

<sup>25</sup> In his book *Kraft und Stoff* (Force and matter) (1855), the German physician and philosopher Ludwig Büchner provided a materialist interpretation of the universe which rejected God and explained both mind and thought as physical states of the brain produced by matter in motion. On Feuerbach, see text n. 41.

<sup>26</sup> On Bernard, see text n. 119.

<sup>27</sup> Chernyshevsky gives his fullest statement of this theory in "The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality," in *Selected Philosophical Essays*, pp. 281–422.

thus emphasizing in his fictional as well as his critical writing the need to understand and affect the present, Chernyshevsky contributed significantly to the development of aesthetic realism in mid-nineteenth-century Russia despite the extremeness of his views.

In addition to materialism, Chernyshevsky also drew heavily on British utilitarianism to explain human behavior and to refute idealist conceptions of morality.<sup>28</sup> The resulting theory of rational egoism enabled him to reconcile the individual's need for personal self-fulfillment with the collective interests of the community. Put simply, Chernyshevsky argued that all human behavior was motivated by the desire to maximize personal pleasure and to avoid pain. Since human motivation thus was both constant and universal, differences in the behavior of people could be explained only by the different ways in which their socioeconomic environment led them to act in pursuit of their self-interest. Crime and courage, avarice and charity, all emanated from the same egoistical impulse. Chernyshevsky concluded that religious and philosophical idealist concepts of free will and morality therefore could neither explain nor alter human action. "Good" and "evil" became relative terms, their use based on whether people perceived the actions of others as beneficial or harmful to them; the conflict between good and evil simply reflected the clash of interests between competing individuals or social groups. We should resolve such conflicts by maximizing the pleasure of the largest number of people, asserted Chernyshevsky, since that would bring the greatest benefit to society. Building on this idea, he added that enlightened individuals recognized that the maximization of society's interests also best served their personal interests because their welfare depended directly on society's general level of prosperity. Self-interest, he contended, therefore led such "rational egoists" to work toward the creation of socioeconomic and political institutions that ensured that personally pleasurable and socially desirable action coincided for each individual. As Christian charity had provided the way to personal salvation for his father, service to the community became the way to personal self-fulfillment for the secularized son.

Chernyshevsky based his defense of cooperative socialism as well as his critique of capitalist individualism and tsarist patriarchy on this theory of rational egoism. Drawing heavily on the work of French utopian socialists and British political economists,<sup>29</sup> he argued that a political economy based on cooperative labor and collective ownership could satisfy the needs of the individual and society more effectively than either capitalism or the tsarist order because it would channel the pursuit of self-interest toward improving the welfare of the group as well as of the self. Economic output expanded more rapidly as a result, Chernyshevsky contended, because individuals worked more efficiently as a group than they did separately and because they worked more productively when they retained the fruits of their labor. Indeed, believing that the value

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<sup>28</sup> See especially his essay "Anthropological Principle."

<sup>29</sup> See n. 14 above, text nn. 148 and 187, and Lichtheim, *Short History of Socialism*. For Chernyshevsky's writings on social, political, and economic questions, see PSS, vols. 4–9.

of a good derived from the amount of labor embodied in it, Chernyshevsky idealized manual labor and asserted that it provided the chief source of personal pleasure. He therefore denounced both capitalism and the patriarchal serf economy as exploitive as well as inefficient because they promoted a competitive pursuit of self-interest that deprived especially workers and peasants of the product, and thus the value, of their labor. Economic productivity consequently suffered because laborers expended less effort in their work while the idle rich had to invent unproductive pastimes in order to satisfy their need for sensual stimulation. Both the capitalist and the tsarist patriarchal systems thus depressed a society's overall welfare by preventing the majority of its members from achieving their full productive potential. This was particularly the case in regard to women, who were prevented under both systems from pursuing socially productive and personally fulfilling occupations even when their intelligence surpassed that of men.

In Chernyshevsky's view, then, the source of Russia's economic backwardness and social oppressiveness lay in its patriarchal socioeconomic and political structures. Socialist transformation of these structures promised growth and prosperity as well as personal liberation. Following the ideas of his fellow social critics Alexander Herzen and Mikhail Bakunin,<sup>30</sup> Chernyshevsky believed that the existence of the peasant commune provided Russia with a unique opportunity to undertake this transformation directly, without first having to experience the evils of capitalism.<sup>31</sup> While not idealizing the commune, he argued that it could be transformed through advanced European technology and science, and through the ideas of such thinkers as Fourier, Considérant, and Robert Owen,<sup>32</sup> into a highly productive cooperative agricultural community. Initially hoping that the state might direct this process, Chernyshevsky concluded from the course of emancipation that the tsarist regime was imbued too deeply with patriarchal values and bound too closely to the landed nobility to promote such change. Referring also to the abandonment by French liberals of their ideals when faced with the demands of the masses in 1848–1852, Chernyshevsky began to assert that political structures in

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<sup>30</sup> On Herzen, see pp. 25–26 below and n. 9 above. Descended from a wealthy aristocratic family, Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876) became a leading exponent of anarchism in nineteenth-century Europe and participated in revolutionary movements in France and Saxony in 1848–1849. Exiled to Siberia for his political activities, he escaped in 1861 to London, where his quarrel with Marx helped split the international socialist movement. Perhaps his most famous work is his treatise *God and the State* (1882). On Bakunin, see A. Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); J. Joll, *The Anarchists*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 67–96.

<sup>31</sup> On this argument and Chernyshevsky's views on it, see T. Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and "The Peripheries of Capitalism"* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983); A. Gerschenkron, "Economic Development in Russian Intellectual History of the Nineteenth Century," in *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1966), pp. 169–77.

<sup>32</sup> See nn. 14 and 29 above. These thinkers may also have reinforced the Christian values that Chernyshevsky received originally from his father.



general emerged historically as the means by which dominant social groups preserved their power and privileges. Since these groups would never voluntarily surrender their power, significant social or political change could not be achieved through gradual reform, whether promoted by the state or by liberals. Hence only a social revolution that destroyed patriarchal relations within the family and society and thereby undermined the autocratic political system could clear the way for socialist transformation and economic growth. Considering moderates to have been too thoroughly seduced by the comforts of the old regime to risk real change, Chernyshevsky declared that only the younger, radical members of the intelligentsia could lead this revolution and guide the subsequent transformation of society.

The growing influence of natural science and scientific methodology among European intellectuals generally during the latter half of the nineteenth century gave Chernyshevsky's ideas an important advantage in the ideological conflict that erupted within Russia's educated elite at this time. The apparent objectivity of materialism and utilitarianism enabled him to deny the legitimacy of both idealist ethics and the values underlying existing political, social, and religious institutions while simultaneously providing legitimacy to his own ideals in the guise of scientific fact. Yet despite his sincere profession of materialism and his pretensions to scientific objectivity, Chernyshevsky remained essentially an idealist. Following the earlier radical Russian critic Vissarion Belinsky,<sup>33</sup> for example, he argued that an accurate depiction of social reality entailed a critique of its injustices and an indication of how they could be overcome. Such a critique implied an ideal of justice against which to measure reality. Nor did Chernyshevsky simply explain or describe actions and relationships in terms of socioeconomic utility; he also judged them in terms of moral categories. Failure to work toward the goals that he defined was not merely illogical or inexpedient but also immoral. His utopian vision projected a harmonious community where egalitarian and just social relations remained unaffected by constant technological change. Indeed, this vision appealed to educated young Russians precisely because it combined familiar Orthodox Christian ideals with new utopian socialist and democratic models and invested the amalgam with scientific certainty, thereby providing youthful intelligentsia with firm moral guidelines during a period of social and ideological dislocation. The very fact that Chernyshevsky concentrated his efforts so singlemindedly on educating this intellectual elite testifies to his belief that history was moved at least as much by ideas as by material forces. Armed with the proper ideas, these "new people" could reshape rather than simply react to the Russian environment, in the process creating a society that was more just as well as more productive.

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<sup>33</sup> A commoner like Chernyshevsky, Vissarion Belinsky (1811–1848) was an outspoken advocate of radical views as well as Russia's most prominent literary critic during the late 1830s and 1840s. Denouncing the idea of "art for art's sake," he argued that literature should comment critically on social and political reality, but without sacrificing its aesthetic qualities. For a perceptive essay on Belinsky, see Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, pp. 150–85.

This combination of moral and scientific certainty helps explain the stridency, intolerance, and self-righteousness with which Chernyshevsky promoted his ideas. It also explains the blend of democratic collectivism and elitist paternalism that characterized these ideas. For while extolling service to the community as the path to personal self-fulfillment, Chernyshevsky portrayed an elite that served society largely by shaping it in accordance with the elite's own view of social justice. As a result, much like the Christian precepts from which he drew sustenance, Chernyshevsky's ideas contained the potential for authoritarianism as well as for liberation. The tension between egoism and altruism, evident in his life and explored in his fictional characters, thus remained unresolved.

But if Chernyshevsky was a paternalistic elitist, he was no more so than either apologists of the tsarist regime or his moderate opponents within the intelligentsia. Indeed, his arguments effectively exposed the dilemma confronting Russian moderates, whose ideals also were incompatible with autocracy and alien to the majority of the Russian people. Moderates no less than radicals had to destroy the old regime and impose their values on the rest of society in order to realize their goals. Facing the Scylla of political disorder and the Charybdis of social upheaval, they tended to opt for order at the expense of social change.<sup>34</sup> In pursuing his ideals, Chernyshevsky at least focused directly on the poverty, hunger, and oppression that afflicted the majority of the population. By doing so from a materialist and scientific perspective, he helped provoke a more sophisticated debate over Russia's economic backwardness by calling attention to the sociological and technological sources of this problem. Perhaps most impressive, however, Chernyshevsky persuaded the younger generation of the intelligentsia of the possibility as well as the nobility of acting to overcome Russia's social and economic problems. He thereby provided *déclassé* intellectuals with a social role that gave them considerable self-esteem regardless of the success or failure of their actions. The bible for these radical intellectuals became the novel *What Is to Be Done?*

## **The Genesis of a Utopian Novel: The Writing of *What Is to Be Done?***

*What Is to Be Done?* represents the best-known and most comprehensive statement of Chernyshevsky's ideas. Through it he exerted extraordinary influence on generations of Russian radicals. The actions of these radicals and the reactions of their opponents cannot be fully understood without reference to the source that inspired or enraged them. Rakhmetov, the totally rational revolutionary ascetic and superhero, makes both Lenin and Dostoevsky more comprehensible; Vera Pavlovna, the emancipated woman

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<sup>34</sup> D. Offord, *Portraits of Early Russian Liberals: A Study of the Thought of T. N. Granovsky, V. P. Botkin, P. V. Annenkov, A. V. Druzhinin, and K. D. Kavelin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); W. Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution: The Constitutional Democratic Party, 1917–1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

who tears asunder the conventional family and the institution of marriage, helps explain both Sofya Perovskaya and Konstantin Pobedonostsev.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Chernyshevsky both followed and contributed to a rich Russian literary tradition by presenting the major statement of his ideas in the form of a novel. Written as a response to Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, *What Is to Be Done?* in turn provoked Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. The book thus represents a major work of Russian literature as well as one of the key documents for understanding nineteenth-century Russian social and political thought, revolutionary activity, and social conflict.

Chernyshevsky produced *What Is to Be Done?* while incarcerated in the Peter-Paul Fortress, where he sat awaiting trial as his case was laboriously investigated. Prevented from writing any further essays or articles, he turned to fiction as a medium for expressing his ideas. The novel was not meant as a diversion or as a substitute for more important work. Chernyshevsky explained subsequently to the official Commission of Inquiry, "For a long time I have planned . . . to apply myself to literature. But I am convinced that people of my character must do this only in their later years... A novel is destined for the great mass of the public. It is a writer's most serious undertaking, and so it belongs to old age. The frivolity of the form must be compensated for by the solidity of the thought."<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the protestations of the narrator in the novel notwithstanding, Chernyshevsky meant his work to stand in the great tradition of Russian literature represented by Gogol and Turgenev.

In late 1862 Chernyshevsky asked the prison commandant for permission to begin work on a novel. His request granted, he set to work and produced the entire novel within four months, between December 14, 1862, and April 4, 1863. The first part of the manuscript was then submitted to the prison censor, who, whether carelessly or for devious purposes, passed it and forwarded the manuscript to the censor of the journal *Sovremennik*. Passed again, the novel was sent to the journal's editor, Nekrasov, who promptly lost it in a cab. He managed to recover the manuscript only after advertising in the official gazette of the St. Petersburg police. With what is perhaps the greatest irony of Russian letters, the novel that the police helped to retrieve turned out to be the most subversive and revolutionary work of nineteenth-century Russian literature.

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<sup>35</sup> Daughter of a nobleman who had been governor of St. Petersburg, Sofya Perovskaya (1853–1881) became a revolutionary activist in the 1870s and helped to orchestrate the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, for which she was executed the same year. An outstanding scholar of civil law as well as a leading exponent of ultraconservative views in late-nineteenth-century Russia, Konstantin Pobedonostsev (1827–1907) exerted a strong influence on state policy as an adviser to Alexander III (r. 1881–1894) and Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917) and as oberprocurator of the Holy Synod (i.e., the chief lay administrator of the Orthodox church). On Perovskaya, see Engel, *Mothers and Daughters*, and D. Footman, *Red Prelude: A Biography of Zhelyabov* (London: Cresset Press, 1944); on Pobedonostsev, see R. Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev: His Life and Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968).

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in F. Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1966), p. 178; emphasis added.

Its publication has aptly been called “the most spectacular example of bureaucratic bungling in the cultural realm during the reign of Alexander II.”<sup>37</sup>

*What Is to Be Done?* appeared in numbers 3, 4, and 5 of *Sovremennik* for 1863, and was published subsequently as a separate volume. A rough draft, lacking sections 19–23 of Chapter 5 and all of Chapter 6, was discovered much later in the archive of the Peter-Paul Fortress and published in 1929. An authoritative version of the novel edited by T. I. Ornatskaya and S. A. Reiser appeared in the Academy of Sciences Literary Monument Series in 1975. Their text is basically a reprint of the original journal version, which was carefully collated with manuscripts housed in the Central Government Archive of Literature and Art in Moscow. We have used this edition in preparing the present translation.

Although a number of Western European literary texts exerted a significant influence on Chernyshevsky’s novel, the works of three authors, all mentioned specifically in the text of the novel, merit special attention. First among these writers is the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose novel *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) served as one of Chernyshevsky’s most important sources.<sup>38</sup> Rousseau’s *Julie d’Etange* provided a model for Chernyshevsky’s Julie Letellier, the semiliberated French courtesan who acts as a foil for his heroine, Vera Pavlovna. And like Rousseau’s Saint-Preux, Chernyshevsky’s Lopukhov is a man of strong character and absolute rationality. Most important, Chernyshevsky’s Vera Pavlovna is meant to be perceived as a new, “improved” version of Rousseau’s Julie. Through her character Chernyshevsky sought to show how the ideal of women’s equality articulated by Rousseau could be realized in practice. This lineage is stated explicitly in Vera Pavlovna’s fourth dream, where Chernyshevsky describes Rousseau as the figure who inaugurated the “modern phase” of feminism by providing the first model of an intelligent and independent heroine.

The novels of the French author George Sand, particularly *Jacques* (1834, translated 1844), also strongly influenced the feminist theme as well as the plot of *What Is to Be Done?*<sup>39</sup> Throughout her works Sand emphasizes the primacy of love and the absolute right of a woman to achieve romantic fulfillment—if not with her legal husband, then with her heart’s desire. Thus at the end of *Jacques*, Sand’s hero chooses to sacrifice his love for Fernande in order to set her free to love Octave. He makes his own suicide appear to be an accident and “quits the scene” without remorse. It is particularly notable for our purposes that the hero’s sister, Sylvia, tries to dissuade Jacques from his chosen course by arguing that there really should be something else to life besides

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<sup>37</sup> J. Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860–1865* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 285.

<sup>38</sup> See J. Scanlan, “Chernyshevsky and Rousseau,” in *Western Philosophical Systems in Russian Literature: A Collection of Critical Studies*, ed. A. Mlikotin (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1979), pp. 103–20, and text n. 252.

<sup>39</sup> See A. P. Skaftymov, “Chernyshevsky i Zhorzh Sand,” in *Stat’i o russkoi literature* (Saratov, 1958), pp. 161–83; text n. 30; and PSS, 3:340–45.

love. She even suggests to the hero that he start all over again, perhaps in the New World.

While Sand's heroine may achieve personal fulfillment, however, she contributes little to society. So just as Chernyshevsky's Vera Pavlovna is a new version of Rousseau's Julie, she also represents an advance over Sand's Fernande. Living not for love alone, Vera Pavlovna pursues her own course of spiritual and intellectual development. She has her own work (organizing sewing cooperatives), which she finally abandons only to pursue an even nobler calling, the study of medicine—as many “new men” do—in order to achieve complete independence and equality. In Chernyshevsky's view, then, the emancipation of women requires both freedom in love and involvement in socially useful labor, especially of the type favored by male intellectuals. Indeed, Chernyshevsky considered love and labor to be complementary, with the sensual stimulation of the former yielding greater creativity and productivity in the latter.

By the same token, Chernyshevsky's Lopukhov represents an advance over Sand's hero. Seeking to extricate himself more rationally than Jacques from his own love triangle, Lopukhov stages a fictitious suicide. Then heeding Sylvia's advice to Jacques, as it were, he chooses to start life afresh in the New World. He later returns to Russia, finds a suitable mate, and ultimately settles down to live in complete harmony with her alongside Vera Pavlovna and Kirsanov.

Finally, Chernyshevsky was also influenced by the English novelist Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854), which he had reviewed in *Sovremennik*.<sup>40</sup> While appreciating Dickens' hardheaded realism and biting social criticism, however, Chernyshevsky took issue with what he described as the English author's “deviations” from that admirable path: his fondness for plots centering on love and sentiment and his reliance on conventional morality and happy endings. Similarities in characters and themes abound between *Hard Times* and *What Is to Be Done?* Bounderby's “rugged individualism” has been transformed into the “new men's” “rational egoism”; Gradgrind's “heartless utilitarianism” has been revised, particularly to accommodate emotions; Dickens' industrial institutions (coal mine, factory, trade union) find their counterpart in Vera Pavlovna's sewing cooperative and commune. Sleary's circus and the values of imagination and recreation it represents have become the picnics and gala balls of Chernyshevsky's emerging utopia. And Dickens' solidly liberal criticism of all the major institutions of mid-nineteenth-century England—economic, political, social, religious, educational, and domestic—has become, in Chernyshevsky's novel, a radical critique of mid-nineteenth-century Russia, with the ultimate goal of revolutionary transformation replacing that of gradual reform.

While Rousseau, Sand, and Dickens proved to be the three most important Western authors whose novels influenced Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?*, within the Russian literary tradition it was Herzen's *Who Is to Blame?* (1841–1846) and Turgenev's

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<sup>40</sup> PSS, 16:147–49. See also text n. 31.

Fathers and Sons (1862) that exerted the greatest impact.<sup>41</sup> Like Chernyshevsky subsequently, Herzen began where Sand's Jacques left off. In his novel he too created a romantic triangle that develops into a short-lived ménage à trois until the conflict is resolved.<sup>42</sup> In Herzen's novel, however, it is the rival, not the husband, who departs and resigns himself to a life of aimless wandering. Yet Beltov's decision brings no relief to the principal players: Lyubov's health declines while her husband sinks deeper into drink. The tragic unhappiness resulting for all those involved offered little hope for either the emancipation of women or the personal fulfillment of critical intellectuals in mid-nineteenth-century Russia.

Herzen's novel thus represents more than a love story. *Who Is to Blame?* is a novel of ideas and issues given artistic form through vivid characterization. In particular, Herzen was concerned with the same basic questions that agitated Chernyshevsky: defining the social role of intellectuals and determining their ability to affect Russia's future. Yet Herzen offered more pessimistic answers than his successor. His chief male character, the aristocratic Vladimir Beltov, is an "ideological hero," a man of noble soul but weak character, who fails to find a way to translate his lofty ideals into effective action and thereby relieve Russia's oppressiveness. The reader is left to wonder whether the fault lies with the man, the constraints of his environment, or the rigidity of his ideals. Beltov's tragedy thus is not merely personal-psychological but also sociopolitical, and Herzen managed to combine these two levels in a compelling work of fiction. But the question posed by Herzen's title—the responsibility for his characters' ineffectuality and for Russia's oppressiveness—remained unanswered because the author had no answer. Chernyshevsky, ascribing blame to both the patriarchal tsarist system and Beltov's misplaced idealism, would pose a different, more practical question in the title of his novel. In doing so, he too would present both a romantic triangle and ideological hero(es) in his book.

Between Herzen's *Who Is to Blame?* and Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?* stands (both chronologically and ideologically) Turgenev's controversial novel *Fathers and Sons*. In it the author treats as his central problem the relationship between ideology and romantic love, or, more generally, between reason and emotion. The young hero, the *raznochinets*<sup>43</sup> Bazarov, an ideological "nihilist" who exalts reason and denies the significance of emotion or poetry, encounters love and passion in the form of Odintsova (and to a lesser extent Fenechka), and consequently discovers the "abyss of romanticism" within himself. The discovery undermines both his ideology and his sense of self. Forced to confront his own mortality, he "quits the scene" by what can

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<sup>41</sup> One might also want to consider Druzhinin's *Polin'ka Saks* (1847) and Avdeev's *Podvodnyi kamen'* (1860).

<sup>42</sup> See the introduction to A. Herzen, *Who Is to Blame?* trans. M. R. Katz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 15–39.

<sup>43</sup> A term (lit., "person of diverse ranks") used in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russia to indicate someone, usually an intellectual or professional, who was not of noble birth and who had left his or her original social estate without having been ascribed a new one.

be interpreted as a senseless, self-destructive act. Reason without idealism, Turgenev seems to say, can provide neither a guide to action for the intelligentsia nor a solution to Russia's ills.

While Turgenev's hero articulates a much more explicit ideology than Herzen's *Beitov*, Bazarov's nihilism still remains destructive at best. He aims only "to clear the ground" and has absolutely no positive program in mind. One can also argue that the objects of Bazarov's romantic love are themselves unworthy of him: on the one hand, a spoiled and cautious aristocrat; on the other, a sweet and innocent peasant maiden. In terms of neither his ideology nor his love could Bazarov be perceived as a flattering portrait of the "new man." In contrast, the hero's weak-willed liberal friend, the nobleman Arkady Kirsanov, manages to achieve a measure of happiness as well as modest economic progress by combining his reason with idealism and an acceptance of such traditional values as love of family, nature, and the land.

Chernyshevsky considered *Fathers and Sons* to be a dastardly caricature of his close friend and fellow radical critic Nikolai Dobrolyubov.<sup>44</sup> In his own novel he sought to refute Turgenev's portrayal of the "new men" (and women) and to present a more "accurate" image that would demonstrate the possibility of reconciling "rational egoism" and romantic love in a single ideology that allowed for effective action. Chernyshevsky consequently borrowed names from Turgenev's work (Kirsanov and Lopukhov),<sup>45</sup> selected his heroes from the same class (the *raznochintsy*), and gave them the same noble academic calling (medicine). But he transformed Bazarov's negative, ill-conceived, and easily abandoned nihilism into "rational egoism," Bazarov's "abyss of romanticism" into mature, "rational" love, and his self-destructive urge into a revolutionary movement. Even Turgenev's caricature of a "liberated woman" (Kukshina) was replaced by the genuinely emancipated Vera Pavlovna. Chernyshevsky's novel must thus be seen as part of an ongoing debate in Russian literature, with each author developing, refuting, recasting, and transforming the characters, plot, and themes of his predecessors' work.

## The Structure of What Is to Be Done?

The first Soviet commissar of education, A. V. Lunacharsky, once suggested that the key to the structure of *What Is to Be Done?* lies in its "vulgar people, new people, superior people, and dreams."<sup>46</sup> This remark suggests a hierarchy of characterization; in fact, there are two, one for heroes and the other for heroines, with opportunity for comparison and contrasts both within and between the two groups.

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<sup>44</sup> On Dobrolyubov, see text n. 11; E. Lampert, *Sons against Fathers: Studies in Russian Radicalism and Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 226–61; Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, pp. 187–203.

<sup>45</sup> The name Lopukhov probably is derived from the *lopukh* (burdock) that grows on gentry estates in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*.

<sup>46</sup> A. V. Lunacharsky, *Russkaya literatura: Izbrannye stat'i* (Moscow, 1947), p. 164.

Among males, the three most important “vulgar” characters (all from the nobility) are Misha Storeshnikov, dominated by a desire for Vera Pavlovna’s respectability; Jean Solovtsov, passionately in love with Katya Polozova’s wealth; and Serge, absolutely devoted to Julie Letellier’s will. The first two, both ultimately unsuccessful suitors, demonstrate no possibility whatever of improvement, thereby apparently contradicting Chernyshevsky’s own theory of environmental determinism. Serge appears minimally acceptable and, with Julie’s prompting, even manages to act nobly on a few occasions.

The main heroes of the novel, Lopukhov and Kirsanov, occupy the next level up. Both of these “new men” emerge from the midst of the *raznochintsy*, both pursue medical studies, and both are strong proponents as well as exponents of Chernyshevsky’s central tenet of “rational egoism.”

On the highest level in the masculine hierarchy stands Rakhmetov, the “superior person,” an “extraordinary man.” A descendant of an old Russian family of wealthy aristocrats, he manages to overcome this handicap to become a revolutionary ascetic, a prodigy of self-discipline, a virtuous and incorruptible militant, devoted to the cause of revolution. His life story has been shown to bear a close resemblance to the Russian hagiographic tradition, particularly to the Life of Aleksei, Man of God,<sup>47</sup> while both his teachings and his deeds reveal a multitude of religious (specifically Christian) themes and motifs.<sup>48</sup> Chernyshevsky’s one attempt to humanize his superhero—he gives him a penchant for fine cigars—does little to bring Rakhmetov down to earth. He remains an artificial creation, a model for emulation, placed in the novel both to humiliate mere mortals and to inspire them to become at least “new men,” if not “superior” ones.

A similar hierarchy of characters exists on the female side. On the lowest level stands Marya Aleksevna, Vera’s greedy and deceitful mother; Julie Letellier, the French courtesan; Nastya Kryukova, the “fallen woman”; and Katya Polozova, the mistaken woman. But Chernyshevsky displays much greater generosity toward these “vulgar” women than he does toward his men. Actually eulogized before being dismissed, Marya Aleksevna is explained as the product of her environment. Circumstances also account for the behavior of Julie, who sympathizes with Vera’s plight and assists her on several occasions. Rescued from her life of prostitution by Kirsanov, Nastya becomes a productive member of the sewing cooperative. Kirsanov also rescues Katya from the error of her ways; she becomes a virtuous character and falls in love with Lopukhov-Beaumont. Thus although apparently more capable of redemption than men, women still have to depend on their male counterparts for liberation.

Vera Pavlovna, of course, represents the outstanding model of the “new woman.” From Rousseau’s Julie and George Sand’s heroines she has inherited a belief in the centrality of love. But like her Russian predecessors, in particular Herzen’s Lyubov, she is a full participant in the debate over the “woman question” in Russian letters. In one

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<sup>47</sup> See K. Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 49–50.

<sup>48</sup> Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, pp. 206–18.



sense the entire novel can be said to describe the development of Vera Pavlovna's consciousness both as a human being and as a woman. Here Chernyshevsky's humanizing touches, including the heroine's fondness for fine boots in her wardrobe and fresh cream in her tea, prove more successful in tempering the idealized aspects of her character.

But Chernyshevsky's heroine has a long way to go before she becomes an emancipated woman. The process requires self-reflection, study, and engagement in cooperative labor. Three times during the course of the action Vera Pavlovna too must be aided by men who appear just in the nick of time. Lopukhov rescues her from the oppressive environment of her family; Kirsanov frees her from a loveless marriage and from her ultimately unfulfilling work in the sewing cooperative; and finally, Rakhmetov releases her from her guilt and her intellectual error by explaining the true meaning of all her thoughts, feelings, and desires. Thus although Vera Pavlovna represents a significant advance over Herzen's pathetic Lyubov and Turgenev's isolated Odintsova and ridiculous Kukshina, she still must be seen as a "new woman" in the making. But then again, she also must be perceived as representing attainable qualities.

At the highest level in Chernyshevsky's female hierarchy stands the mysterious spirit who appears to Vera Pavlovna in each of her four dreams. This goddess identifies herself as "Love for Humanity," but is also called by the tautological sobriquets "Bride of Her Bridegrooms" and "Sister of Her Sisters." She represents dispassionate wisdom, omniscience, and virtue, and leads Vera Pavlovna through a process of self-discovery and self-realization toward ultimate emancipation. When Vera asks in her fourth dream for a glimpse of the goddess's face, there occurs what has been called a "reverse transfiguration"<sup>49</sup> as the spirit reveals that she possesses none other than Vera Pavlovna's own face and form, since Chernyshevsky's heroine represents the highest form of female virtue attainable at that time. Like Rakhmetov, the mysterious goddess appears as a model for emulation, to humiliate and inspire mortals to reach and attain at least the earth, if not yet the stars.

The literary technique employed by Chernyshevsky in expressing his ideas through these hierarchies of characters has aroused considerable controversy. F. B. Randall acknowledges that the novel is not modern in any formal sense and that it does not depend in any way on the beauty of its language. But he cites its elaborate plot, serious conversation, detailed characterization, and Victorian sense of humor as well as the author's didacticism as hallmarks of Chernyshevsky's novelistic technique.<sup>50</sup>

William Woehrlin and N. G. O. Pereira, both historians, come closer to articulating the popular view of Chernyshevsky as a writer. Woehrlin repeatedly uses such terms as "artistic failing," "incapacity as a writer," and "literary failure" to describe the author

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>50</sup> F. B. Randall, N. G. Chernyshevskii (New York: Twayne, 1967), p. 130.

and his work.<sup>51</sup> Pereira declares that by any artistic standards *What Is to Be Done?* is “simply a bad novel” and that its author’s forte was clearly “not literary talent.”<sup>52</sup>

Two recent works in English have shed new light on Chernyshevsky’s technique and should occasion a major reconsideration of his reputation as a writer. In a book devoted primarily to a study of Dostoevsky’s *Diary of a Writer*, Gary Saul Morson includes some extremely insightful remarks about Chernyshevsky’s *What Is to Be Done?*<sup>53</sup> He analyzes it as a literary utopia that makes extensive and effective use of metaliterary techniques to implicate its readers. He draws attention to the author’s strategy of alternating narrative and metanarrative: the interruptions, inquisitions, essays, and so on all form part of what Morson describes as Chernyshevsky’s “didactic framebreaking.” Thus, for a contemporary audience, reading the novel became a form of complicity with the author as he engaged in a political act designed to implicate his readers. The author’s Aesopian language should thus be viewed not merely as a literary technique employed to evade tsarist censorship but as one of the work’s principal themes.

In the first comprehensive study of Chernyshevsky’s novel, Irina Paperno argues that the basic structural principle of the novel consists in the organization of the narrative world in terms of the opposition of contrasting qualities, concepts, and characters. She identifies a mechanism for the resolution of these oppositions through which, after a series of formal operations, a quality is identified with its opposite. She studies this “reconciliation of oppositions” in all its variations and at every level of structure in the novel.

In addition Paperno interprets *What Is to Be Done?* as a “new Gospel.” Moving beyond Chernyshevsky’s obvious allusions to the Bible and the Christian tradition, she explores the implications of title, subtitle, structural patterns, and motifs (wedding, death and resurrection, sainthood, martyrdom). She concludes that the novel represents nothing less than the “New Testament of the late nineteenth century—a true positivistic Gospel,” one that fulfilled its role in Russian letters not in spite of its artistic faults but rather because of them. Paperno provides a convincing argument both for the tremendous emotional appeal that the novel had for Russian readers of the 1860s and for its impact on Russian society and politics.

## Responses to *What Is to Be Done?*

The response to *What Is to Be Done?* was immediate and passionate. Radical young intelligentsy found in the novel an appealing solution to what they considered to be the problems plaguing mid-nineteenth century Russia as well as to their own sense of alienation, uncertainty, and helplessness. On the one hand, the novel offered the vision of

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<sup>51</sup> W. Woehrlin, *Chernyshevskii: The Man and the Journalist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 314, 316, 317.

<sup>52</sup> Pereira, *Chernyshevsky*, p. 85.

<sup>53</sup> G. Morson, *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky’s Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 99–104.

a future in which Russia was prosperous, socially just, and on a par with Europe as a member of a new world community. Indeed, through the application of science and technology to the peasant commune, Russia could move from last to first in the march of human progress. On the other hand, *What Is to Be Done?* exalted the current status of the intelligentsia by stressing its members' nobility of character and their central role in the process of social and economic development. Through knowledge and their own rational actions, they too could fulfill Christ's prophecy that the last shall be first.<sup>54</sup> It might be added that this social inversion also overcame Chernyshevsky's personal inadequacies and problems. In the novel, the socially graceless and shy Chernyshevsky is transformed into the accomplished Lopukhov, skilled in conversation, dancing, business, and cards; as Vera Pavlovna, the frivolous and materialistic Olga Sokratovna comes to share her husband's ideals and concerns. But while "new Russia" had been transfigured by industrial technology, the elimination of all patriarchal relations, and sexual as well as intellectual freedom, it remained primarily a rural society where the individual found meaning and selffulfillment through his or her contribution to an agrarian community. Chernyshevsky's utopia thus retained a comforting anchor in the thisworldly present while projecting a transcendental other-worldly vision of the future.<sup>55</sup> The combination proved inspirational.

By convincing educated young Russians of the need for radical action, *What Is to Be Done?* widened the rift between reformers and revolutionaries within the intelligentsia beyond repair. Denouncing the Alexandrine reforms as inadequate, radical intellectuals, disaffected women, and idealistic youths immediately accepted the novel as a creed of personal morality and a program for social action. The failure of their efforts to liberate themselves and transform society through scientific study, defiance of social conventions, and the organization of cooperative enterprises frequently owed as much to their impracticality as to tsarist suppression, but the suppression was real enough to convince many of them that Chernyshevsky was right to reject liberal methods. Propelled toward more violent means, they and later Russian revolutionaries were still inspired by the author's idealized image of dedicated and self-sacrificing intellectuals, capable of transforming society through knowledge and action.<sup>56</sup>

This spiritual message inspired not only the populist youths and terrorists who willingly endured personal hardship and risked imprisonment or execution to proselytize among the people or to kill tsarist officials, and even Alexander II himself in 1881, in the people's name. It also stirred Russian Marxists, who otherwise rejected Chernyshevsky's ideas as idealistic and therefore unrealistic. Declared Georgi Plekhanov, an erstwhile populist considered to be the father of Russian Marxism:

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<sup>54</sup> Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, p. 217.

<sup>55</sup> F. Manuel and F. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1979), pp. 1, 16–20, 759.

<sup>56</sup> See Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement*, pp. 96–121; Engel, *Mothers and Daughters*, pp. 72–80; Woehrlin, *Chernyshevsky*, pp. 317–19; Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, *passim*.

Who has not read and reread this famous work? Who has not been charmed by it, who has not become cleaner, better, braver, and bolder under its philanthropic influence? Who has not imitated the purity of the principal characters? Who, after reading this novel, has not reflected on his personal life, has not subjected his personal striving and tendencies to a severe examination? We all draw from it moral strength and faith in a better future.<sup>57</sup>

And defending *What Is to Be Done?* against a critic in a Swiss café, Lenin called Chernyshevsky

the greatest and most talented representative of socialism before Marx... Under his influence hundreds of people became revolutionaries... He plowed me up more profoundly than anyone else... After my brother's execution, knowing that Chernyshevsky's novel was one of his favorite books, I really undertook to read it, and I sat over it not for several days but for several weeks. Only then did I understand its depth... It's a thing that supplies energy for a whole lifetime.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, paying tribute to Chernyshevsky's influence on him, Lenin named his own seminal pamphlet of 1902 on the role and organization of the revolutionary party *What Is to Be Done?* The novel's enduring legacy, then, lay in the provision of an idealized model for emulation and a moral creed for Russian social revolutionaries. It was a strange legacy for a professed materialist to leave behind, but not one that Chernyshevsky would have disavowed.

Moderates, in contrast, resented the novel's harsh criticism of their beliefs and moral character, while conservatives were incensed by its condemnation of traditional values and institutions. Both denounced it as the progeny as well as the generator of moral decay, spiritual degeneration, and social collapse. For conservatives, however, Chernyshevsky's radicalism was simply the inevitable outcome of liberal reformism. Thus the novel helped to harden the attitude of conservatives against further reform of Russian social and political institutions.

The literary response to *What Is to Be Done?* proved equally strong. The novel spawned a special genre of antinihilist literature, including such works as Tolstoy's play *The Infected Family* (1863-1864), Aleksei Pisemsky's *Troubled Sea* (1863), and Nikolai Leskov's *No Way Out* (1864), and culminated in the greatest anti-nihilist novel of the nineteenth century) Dostoevsky's *Possessed* (1872).<sup>59</sup> In addition, the figure of Chernyshevsky appeared unflatteringly as a fictional character in a number of works, ranging from Dmitry Grigorovich's *School of Hospitality* (1865) to Vladimir Nabokov's novel *The Gift* (1937).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Quoted in R. Mathewson, Jr., *The Positive Hero in Russian Literature*, 2d ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), p. 81.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in N. Valentinov, "Chernyshevsky i Lenin," *Novyi zhurnal*, no. 27 (1951), pp. 193-94.

<sup>59</sup> See C. Moser, *Antinihilism in the Russian Novel of the 1860's* (The Hague: Mouton, 1964), pp. 74-80, 118-19.

<sup>60</sup> See S. Davydov, "The Gift: Nabokov's Aesthetic Exorcism of Chernyshevskii," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 19 (1985), 357-74.

But by far the most fascinating literary response provoked by *What Is to Be Done?* appeared shortly after the novel was published—Dostoevsky’s brilliant *Notes from Underground* (1865). A discussion of the complicated relationship between these two works can be found in Joseph Frank’s cultural biography of Dostoevsky.<sup>61</sup> There Frank combines the insight of two Soviet critics, V. L. Komarovich) who demonstrated that Dostoevsky’s work was structurally dependent on Chernyshevsky’s novel, and A. P. Skaftyrnov, who explored the role of the underground man as his creator’s spokesman. Frank argues that the underground man is really a parodistic persona whose life exemplifies the tragicomic impasses resulting from his acceptance of all the implications of reason in its then-current Russian incarnation, especially those that Chernyshevsky chose to disregard.

## Soviet and Western Criticism of *What is to be Done?*

By and large, Soviet criticism of Chernyshevsky’s *What Is to Be Done?* has been ideological and reductionist. Typical is the statement made by Piotr Nikolayev in the introduction to the recent Soviet translation of the novel into English:

Characteristic of Russian prose in general, and *What Is to Be Done?* in particular, is its noble social sentiment aspiring to conscious service in the people’s name towards a better life on this earth. It is a rare example of a work of fiction consummating the social and economic thought of its country and its time. In the fullest sense, it became a weapon in the hands of its author, a revolutionary scholar and man of letters. For it was conceived in the thick and consecrated to the cause of battle.<sup>62</sup>

There are a few exceptions. Grigory Tamarchenko’s monograph *Chernyshevsky-romanist* (*Chernyshevsky the novelist*) and his introduction to the authoritative edition in the *Literary Monument Series* represent valuable contributions to our understanding of the work, as does S. A. Reiser’s article in the same volume.<sup>63</sup> Otherwise, one falls back on the earlier studies by M. P. Alekseev and A. P. Skaftymov, which explore Chernyshevsky’s relations to Western European literature; T. A. Bogdanovich’s monograph on the private lives of men of the 1860s; and a few articles by Yu. K. Rudenko, including one on characterization.<sup>64</sup> Two volumes of Soviet commentary on the novel,

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<sup>61</sup> Frank, *Dostoevsky*, pp. 310–47.

<sup>62</sup> N. G. Chernyshevsky, *What Is to Be Done?* trans. L. Beraha (Moscow, 1983), Introduction, pp. 10–11.

<sup>63</sup> N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Chto delat’?* ed. T. I. Ornatskaya and S. A. Reiser (Leningrad, 1975), pp. 747–81, 782–833.

<sup>64</sup> M. P. Alekseev, “N. G. Chernyshevsky v zapadno-evropeiskikh literaturakh,” in N. G. Chernyshevsky, ed. V. E. Evgen’eva-Maksimova (Leningrad, 1941), pp. 242–69; Skaftymov, “Chernyshevsky: Zhorzh Sand”; T. A. Bogdanovich, *Lyubov’ lyudei shestidesyatikh godov* (Leningrad, 1929), pp. 1–64;

one by N. L. Brodsky and N. P. Sidorov (1933), the other by M. T. Pinaev (1963), also contain a few valuable insights.<sup>65</sup>

Western criticism has served Chernyshevsky somewhat better, but it was not until Irina Paperno's penetrating study of the author's life and work that a really first-rate monograph has been available. Books by Randall (1967), Woehrlin (1971), and Pereira (1975) have been referred to earlier. The first emphasizes Chernyshevsky as a writer and argues that he constitutes a major figure in Russian letters whose novel deserves to be read as literature. Woehrlin concentrates on the role of *What Is to Be Done?* in public debate and its impact on Russian youth. Pereira describes Chernyshevsky neither as the thoroughgoing revolutionary that his Soviet admirers assert him to be nor as the gravedigger of liberal humanism his anti-Soviet detractors portray, but rather as the first full-fledged theorist of democratic socialism in Russia.

## English Translations of *What is to be Done?*

While Western criticism may have served Chernyshevsky somewhat better than its Soviet counterpart, Western translators have done the novel a distinct disservice.<sup>66</sup> Until now only two American translations of the novel have appeared, both in 1886, both woefully inadequate. They are flawed by numerous inaccuracies and infelicities, and their English is now antiquated. The first was published by Benjamin R. Tucker, a famous American anarchist who knew no Russian and probably based his translation on a French version. Tucker's version was "revised and abridged" (i.e., censored and truncated) by Ludmilla Turkevich and published by the Vintage Russian Library in 1961. When this volume went out of print it was reissued by Virago Books in 1983 in a so-called expanded form by Cathy Porter with only a small portion of the omitted material reinstated.

The second American translation was published by Nathan Haskell Dole, an American man of letters, and S. S. Skidelsky. Although Dole knew Russian, his translation also suffers from numerous blunders, literalisms, awkward phrases, and infelicitous expressions. After having been out of print for many years, his version was recently reissued by Ardis Publishers in a facsimile edition with a new introduction by Kathryn Feuer. Although Feuer claims that her volume provides a complete translation of Chernyshevsky's novel, in fact the reprint contains all the omissions of Dole's Victorian version, including a number of erotic passages.

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Yu. K. Rudenko, "Obrazy 'novykh lyudei' i vopros o printsipakh," *Russkaya literatura*, no. 3 (1977), pp. 16–32.

<sup>65</sup> N. L. Brodsky and N. P. Sidorov, *Kommentarii k romanu N. G. Chernyshevsky "Chto delat'?"* (Moscow, 1933); M. T. Pinaev, *Kommentarii k romanu N. G. Chernyshevsky "Chto delat'?"* (Moscow, 1963).

<sup>66</sup> See M. R. Katz, "English Translations of Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?*" *Slavic Review*, 46/1 (1987), 125–31.

In addition to these American translations, a Soviet edition of *What Is to Be Done?* translated by Laura Beraha was published by Raduga in 1983. Though it is at least complete, one scholar has characterized it accurately as “mutilated by the translator’s determined use of outdated and confused British (especially Cockney) and U.S. (Western cowboy) slang.”<sup>67</sup>

The publication of this new translation is intended to make the complete text of Chernyshevsky’s *What Is to Be Done?* readily available to English and American readers for the first time. The text is accompanied by a comprehensive commentary designed to make the novel comprehensible to the general reader. A list of principal characters (including accent marks for pronunciation) precedes the text, and a selected bibliography of works in English follows it. It is our hope that the availability of a complete, accurate, and readable version will allow English and American readers to fathom the impact of Chernyshevsky’s novel on human lives as well as the source of its power to make history.

Readers will find a rich work of synthesis that creatively fashioned many of the salient ideas then current in Western Europe into a coherent ideology that addressed universal themes as well as the historical problems and conditions of mid-nineteenth century Russia. For in seeking solutions to Russia’s ills, Chernyshevsky explored the nature of marriage and the family, human intimacy, and the need for sexual freedom. In evaluating the tsarist social order, he examined the basis of relations between social groups, the role of women, the sources of prostitution, and the relationship between social structure and political power. Turning to economics, he discussed the sources and meaning of backwardness, the process and social costs of development, and alternative forms of organizing production. As a religious thinker, he committed sacrilege by having his characters violate Christian sacraments, rituals, and beliefs and by establishing his own religion of atheism, complete with its own appropriation of those same religious patterns, symbols, images, and motifs.<sup>68</sup> In the realm of psychology Chernyshevsky explored human emotions and motivations, particularly the tension between egoism and altruism and between reason and irrationality. To be sure, his ideas on these issues often seem simplistic and naive, especially to late-twentieth-century eyes gazing back over the destruction as well as accomplishments that human reason, science, and technology have wrought.<sup>69</sup> Like the intelligentsia generally, Chernyshevsky overestimated the power of ideas and human reason to solve complex social problems. His belief in human intellect and in a universal human nature led him to prescribe solutions to problems, whether of peasants or of women, that often reflected his values and needs more than those of the intended beneficiaries. But in exploring so many aspects of human life, Chernyshevsky’s novel still challenges its readers to think about

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<sup>67</sup> Nikolai Chernyshevsky, *What Is to Be Done?* Introduction by K. Feuer (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986), p. xxxv.

<sup>68</sup> Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, p. 206–18.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Randall, *Chernyshevskii*, p. 159; Woehrlin, *Chernyshevskii*, p. 3; Pereira, *Chernyshevsky*, p. 85.

them. That, too, is a legacy the moralistic teacher from Saratov would probably not have disavowed.



# Principal Characters

## Rozálskys

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Pável Konstantínych             | Caretaker of Storeshnikov's property and assistant head clerk |
| Márya Aleksévna                 | His wife  |
| Véra Pávlovna (Vérochka, Vérka) | Their daughter  |
| Fédya                           | Their son   |
| Matryóna                        | Their servant   |

## Storéshnikovs

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Anna Petrónva                           | Widow of a councillor of state |
| Mikhail Iványch (Mísha, Míshka, Michel) | Her son                        |

## Pólozovs

|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Vasíly  | Factory owner                       |
| Katerína Vasílevna (Kátya)                          | His daughter                        |
| Dmítiry Sergéich Lopukhóv (a.k.a. Charles Beaumont) | Medical student and Fedya's tutor   |
| Alexánder Matvéich Kirsánov (Sásha)                 | Medical student and Dmitry's friend |
| Alekséi Petróvich Mertsálov                         | Their friend; a chaplain            |
| Natálya Andréevna Mertsálova (Natásha)              | His wife                            |
| Yúry Mosólov  | Another friend                      |
| Nastásya Borísovna Kryúkova                         | A prostitute                        |
| Julie Letellier                                     | A French courtesan                  |
| Serge   | Her lover                           |
| Jean Solovtsóv                                      | Serge's friend                      |
| Rakhmétov ("Nikítushka Lómov")                      | "An extraordinary man"              |

**What Is to Be Done?**

**From Tales about New People**<sup>1</sup>  
Dedicated to my friend O. S. Ch.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The “new people” are the younger generation of radical intellectuals discussed in the Introduction. The text’s many biblical allusions suggest that, like the disciples of Christ, these “new people” will be instrumental in transforming both individuals and society and thereby will establish paradise on earth.

<sup>2</sup> Chernyshevsky’s wife, Olga Sokratovna (1838–1918), whom he married in April 1853. On Olga Sokratovna, see Introduction, pp. 11–12, 15.

# I. The Fool

On the morning of July 11 1856, the staff of one of the large hotels near the Moscow Railway Station in Petersburg was in a quandary, almost in a state of distress. On the previous evening at nine o'clock, a gentleman had arrived carrying a suitcase. He had taken a room, submitted his passport for registration, and ordered tea and a cutlet. He said that he wished not to be disturbed because he was very tired and wanted to get some sleep, but had asked to be awakened at eight o'clock the next morning because he had urgent business. He had locked his door; after a brief rattle of cutlery and crockery, all had become silent—apparently he had fallen asleep. At eight o'clock the next morning a servant knocked at the guest's door, but there was no answer. The servant knocked more loudly, very loudly indeed, but still there was no reply. Apparently the guest was sound asleep. The servant waited a quarter of an hour, tried to wake him again, but was no more successful. Then he conferred with the other servants and with the waiter. "Perhaps something has happened to him?" "We must break the door down." "No, that'll never do: a door can be broken down only in the presence of the police." So they would attempt to awaken him once more, knocking even more loudly; if that didn't work, they would send for the police. They made one last try, but failed to awaken him. They sent for the police; now everyone was waiting to see what would happen. A police officer arrived around ten o'clock. First he tried knocking; then he ordered the servants to knock. The result was exactly the same. "Well, lads, we have no choice but to break down the door."

They broke down the door. The room was empty. "Look under the bed." The guest wasn't there, either. The police officer went over to the table, on which lay a sheet of paper inscribed with large letters: "I shall leave here at eleven P.M. and shall not return. You will hear me on the Liteiny [Foundry] Bridge<sup>1</sup> between two and three o'clock in the morning. There is no need to suspect anyone else."

"So that's it! Now it's all clear. No one could make head or tail of it," said the police officer.

"What is it, Ivan Afanasievich?" asked the waiter.

"Bring me some tea and I'll tell you all about it."

For a long time afterward the policeman's story served as the subject of animated retelling and discussion in the hotel. The story goes as follows:

About 2:30 A.M., on a dark, cloudy night, there was a sudden flash of light and the sound of a shot from the middle of the Liteiny Bridge. The night watchmen ran toward

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<sup>1</sup> Now a permanent structure; at the time of the novel, a pontoon bridge across the Neva River.

the noise and a few passers-by gathered around. But no one was there and there was nothing left on the spot from which the sound had come. It appeared that someone had shot himself, rather than shot at someone else. A few men volunteered to dive; after a while some boathooks were produced and then even a fisherman's net. They dived, searched, fished around, caught some fifty large spars, but failed to retrieve even one body. How could they? It was so dark! During those two intervening hours the body must have been washed out to sea. Go and search along the shore. There emerged, as a result, a group of "progressives" who rejected the previous proposition: "Perhaps there never was a body. Maybe it was some drunk or mischiefmaker fooling around—someone who fired a shot and then ran off. Or else, I wonder, could he be standing here right now among this bustling crowd, chuckling about the fuss he's caused."

But the majority, as always when they are behaving sensibly, turned out to be "conservative" and defended their position: "What nonsense! Fooling around! No, someone put a bullet through his head and that's all there is to it!" The progressives were defeated. But, as usual, the victorious party split immediately after its victory. All right. So he blew his brains out. But why did he do it? Some of the conservatives were of the opinion that he was "dead drunk"; others argued that perhaps he had "gone broke." Someone else observed that he was simply a fool. On this view, "simply a fool," everyone was in agreement, even those who denied that he had shot himself. Indeed, whether it was someone drunk or broke who had shot himself, or some mischiefmaker who hadn't shot himself but was only playing a trick, it was still a stupid, foolish thing to do.

Thus the affair on the bridge that night came to an end. The next morning in the hotel at the Moscow Railway Station it was discovered that the fool had not been fooling around at all, but really had shot himself. But in the resolution of this affair there remained one element with which even the defeated party could agree: namely, that even if someone had not been making mischief but really had shot himself, he was still a fool. This result, satisfactory for all concerned, was particularly sound precisely because of the triumph it afforded the conservatives. Indeed, if someone had merely played a prank with that shot on the bridge, then, in fact, it would still be open to question whether the person was a fool or merely a mischiefmaker. But someone who shot himself on the bridge! Who would shoot himself on a bridge? How could it happen? For what purpose? How stupid to do it on a bridge! Therefore, this someone was undoubtedly a fool.

Once again doubts began to occur: someone had shot himself on a bridge. But people don't shoot themselves on bridges; therefore, he didn't shoot himself. But toward evening the staff of the hotel was summoned to the police station to identify a peaked cap that had a bullet hole in it and had been fished out of the water. Everyone confirmed that the cap was the very one the guest had been wearing. Thus he had undoubtedly shot himself; the spirit of protest and progress was decisively defeated.

Everyone was in agreement that he was a "fool." But suddenly they all declared: "How shrewd to do it on a bridge! If his aim was poor, it would obviously end his

suffering at once. Good thinking! If he had been wounded, he would have fallen into the water and drowned before he could regain consciousness. Yes indeed, on a bridge . . . very clever!"

One couldn't make any sense whatever of this whole affair: he was both a fool and very clever.

## II. The First Consequence of This Foolish Affair

On the same morning, a little after eleven o'clock, a young lady was sitting in one of three rooms in a small cottage on Kamenny [Stone] Island.<sup>1</sup> She was sewing and, in a low voice, singing a bold and daring French song.<sup>2</sup>

"We are poor," went the words of the song, "but we are working people; we have strong hands. We are uneducated, but not stupid, and we long for light. We shall study—knowledge will set us free. We shall work—labor will enrich us. This will come to pass. If we live a little longer, we shall live to see it":

Ça ira,  
Qui vivra, verra.

[This will come to pass,  
He who lives, will see it.]

"We are coarse, but it is we ourselves who suffer from this coarseness. We are full of prejudices, but it is we ourselves who suffer as a result—we understand this. We shall search for happiness, we shall discover humaneness, and we shall become good. This will come to pass. If we live a little longer, we shall live to see it.

"Labor without knowledge bears no fruit. Our own happiness is impossible without the happiness of others. We shall become educated, we shall be enriched; we will be happy and will become brothers and sisters. This will come to pass. If we live a little longer, we shall live to see it.

"Let us study and work; let us sing and love; there will be heaven on earth. Let us rejoice in life. This will come to pass, it will come to pass soon, we shall all live to see it":

Donc, vivons,  
Ça bien vite ira,  
Ça viendra,  
Nous tous le verrons.

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<sup>1</sup> An island in the Neva estuary which became a popular site for summer cottages (dachas), particularly of the St. Petersburg social elite.

<sup>2</sup> An allusion to the revolutionary song *La Marseillaise*, later the French national anthem. Chernyshevsky altered the original French lyrics and replaced them with his own in order to express his revolutionary enthusiasm, faith in knowledge, and idealization of labor. Throughout the novel Chernyshevsky uses the device of deliberate mistranslation to illustrate his theory of social inversion and transformation.

[So let us live,  
It will soon come to pass,  
It will come to pass,  
We shall all see it.]

The song was bold and daring and its tune was cheerful. It contained two or three somber notes, but they were submerged in the overall joyfulness of its melody; they disappeared in the refrain and vanished in the concluding couplet—at least, they were supposed to be submerged, to disappear, and they would have if the lady had been in a different mood. But right now these few somber notes are more audible than all the others. Having noticed this, she seems to rouse herself. She lowers her voice on these somber notes and begins to sing the more cheerful ones that followed with greater spirit. But once again her thoughts wander from the song to her own preoccupations and the somber notes gain the upper hand. Obviously the young lady does not want to give herself up to sadness; however, it appears that sadness will not leave her alone, try as she may to cast it off. But whether the cheerful song is sad or whether it becomes cheerful once again as it is supposed to, the lady continues sewing very diligently. She is a good seamstress.

A young maid enters the room.

“Masha, look at how well I can sew! I’ve almost finished the sleeves on this dress I’m planning to wear to your wedding.”

“Yes, but it’s much plainer than the one you embroidered for me!”

“I should hope so! Surely the bride must be the most elegantly dressed woman at her own wedding!”

“I have brought a letter for you, Vera Pavlovna.”<sup>3</sup>

A look of perplexity passed across Vera Pavlovna’s face as she began to open it. The envelope bore a Petersburg postmark. “How can that be? Why, he’s in Moscow!” She hastily unfolded the letter and suddenly grew pale; the hand holding the letter dropped to her side. “No, it isn’t so! I didn’t manage to read it all. It couldn’t have said that!” And again she raised her hand with the letter. All of this occurred within a few seconds. But the second time her gaze remained fixed for several moments on the few lines of the letter. Her bright eyes grew dimmer and dimmer and the letter dropped from her limp hand onto the sewing table. She covered her face with her hands and began to sob. “Oh, what have I done? What have I done?” And she sobbed once again.

“Verochka, what’s the matter? Since when have you become a crybaby? What on earth is the matter?”

A young man entered the room with quick but light, careful steps.

“Read the letter,” she said. “It’s on the table.”

She was no longer sobbing; she sat completely stilt scarcely breathing.

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<sup>3</sup> The name Vera Pavlovna suggests both faith (vera) and the Apostle Paul. In the Orthodox tradition, Vera was also the name of an early Christian martyr and therefore came to represent a maiden dedicated to Christ.



The young man took the letter. He also turned pale and his hands began to tremble. He looked at the letter for a very long time) even though it was only thirty words or so in all: "I was disturbing your peace and quiet. I am quitting the scene. Don't pity me; I love you both so much that I am very pleased with this decisive act. Farewell."

The young man stood rubbing his forehead for quite some time; then he began to twirl his mustache and stare at the sleeve of his overcoat. Finally he collected his thoughts. He took a step toward the young woman; she was still sitting motionless as before) scarcely breathing) as if in a stupor. He took her hand.

"Verochka!"

But as soon as his hand touched hers, she jumped up with a terrible scream, as if hit by an electric shock. She swiftly stepped back from the young man and impetuously pushed him away.

"Get away! Don't touch me! You have blood on your hands! His blood! I can't bear to look at you! I shall leave you! At once! Get away from me!" She kept pushing and shoving the empty air; suddenly she staggered, fell into a chair, and covered her face with her hands.

"His blood is on me! On me, as well. You're not the guilty one. I am. I alone! What have I done? Oh, what have I done?"

She sobbed and gasped for breath.

"Verochka," he said softly and timidly, "my friend!"

She took a deep breath, and in a calm but still quivering voice she spoke as best she could: "My dear, leave me now! Come back in an hour and I'll have calmed down. Get me some water and then leave me."

He obeyed her in silence. He went to his own room, sat down again at the desk where only a quarter of an hour ago he had been sitting so serenely and contentedly, and took up his pen... "One must know how to control oneself at times like these; I have the willpower. All this will pass . . . it will pass." And unbeknownst to him his pen was writing in the middle of some article: "Will she be able to bear it? How awful—our happiness has been ruined..."

"My dearest! I'm ready now. Let's talk!" came a call from the other room. The young woman's voice sounded hollow but steady.

"My dear, we must part. I have made the decision. I know it will be difficult, but it would be even more difficult for us to go on seeing each other. I am his murderer. I have killed him for your sake."

"Verochka, how are you to blame?"

"Don't say anything. Don't try to make excuses for me or I'll grow to hate you. It is I . . . I am to blame for everything. Forgive me, my dear. I've made a decision that's very painful for you—and, my dear, for me, too. But there's nothing else I can do. In a short while you yourself will see that it has to be like this. There's no other choice, my friend. Listen to me. I am leaving Petersburg. It will be easier for me to live far away from places that would remind me of my past. I'll sell all my things and be able to live for some time on the money I get for them. Where? In Tver, in Nizhny Novgorod

. . . I don't know where! It doesn't matter. I'll try to give singing lessons. I'll probably find some pupils because I'll settle in a large town. If I don't find any, I'll become a governess. I don't expect to need anything, but if I do, then I'll certainly turn to you. Take care that you set aside a small amount of money for me just in case. You know that I have so many needs and expenses, even though I try to be frugal. I won't be able to get along without that. Do you hear? I am not refusing your assistance. This will prove to you, my dear, that you still remain precious to me... And now let's bid farewell forever! Set off for town—at once, immediately! It'll be easier for me once I'm left here alone. I shall be gone by tomorrow. Then you may come back. I'll go to Moscow, make inquiries, and find out in which provincial towns I'd be most assured of finding pupils. I forbid you to see me off at the station. Farewell, my dear. Give my your hand for the very last time.”

He wanted to embrace her, but she prevented him from doing so.

“No, don't, I won't allow it! It would be an insult to him. Give me your hand. See how I clasp it! Now, farewell!”

He did not release her hand.

“Enough. Now go.” She freed her hand; he dared not stop her. “Farewell!”

She looked at him very tenderly, but withdrew to her own room with a firm step, never once turning back to look at him.

He couldn't find his hat for the longest time. Five times he must have held it, but he didn't even know it. It was as though he were drunk. At last he realized that the hat he was looking for was in his hand. He stepped into the vestibule and put on his coat. He was approaching the gate when suddenly . . . “Who's chasing me? It's probably Masha... Vera has undoubtedly taken ill!” He turned around. Vera Pavlovna threw herself on his neck, hugging and kissing him.

“No, my dear, I couldn't stop myself! Now, farewell forever!”

She ran back, threw herself onto her bed, and let flow the tears she had been holding back for so long.

# Preface

“The subject of this work is love, the main character is a woman; that’s fine, even if the work itself is not that good,” says the female reader.

“That’s true,” I reply.

The male reader does not confine himself to such easy conclusions, since from birth man’s intellectual capability is greater than woman’s and also much better developed. He says . . . (she probably thinks it, but sees no need to say it, so I have no grounds to quarrel with her), the male reader says: “I know for a fact that the gentleman who committed suicide did not really commit suicide.” Seizing upon the phrase “know for a fact,” I reply, “You don’t know it for a fact, because you haven’t been told it yet. Why, you know nothing at all by yourself! You don’t even know that in the way I started this work I insulted you and humiliated you. You didn’t know that, did you? Well, now you do!”

Yes, the first pages of my story reveal that I have a very poor opinion of my public. I employed the conventional ruse of a novelist: I began my tale with some striking scenes taken from the middle or the end, and I shrouded them with mystery. You, the public, are kind, very kind indeed, and therefore indiscriminating and slow-witted. You can’t be relied upon to know from the first few pages whether or not a book is worth reading. You have poor instincts that are in need of assistance. For help you can look to two things: either the author’s reputation or his striking style. Since this is only my first novel, you haven’t yet formed an opinion of my literary talents. (Why, you have so many gifted authors to choose from!) My name could not have attracted you. So I was obliged to bait my hook with striking scenes. Don’t condemn me for it: you deserve all the blame. It’s your own simpleminded naiveté that compelled me to stoop to such vulgarity. But now that you’ve fallen into my hands, I can continue the story as I see fit without further tricks. No mysteries lie ahead: you will always know the outcome of every situation at least twenty pages in advance. And, to begin with, I shall even tell you the outcome of the entire novel: it will end happily, amidst wine and song. There will be neither striking scenes nor embellishments. The author is in no mood for such things, dear public, because he keeps thinking about the confusion in your head, and about the useless, unnecessary suffering of each and every one of us that results from the absurd muddle in your thoughts. I find it both pitiful and amusing to look at you. You are so impotent and spiteful, all because of the extraordinary quantity of nonsense stuffed between your two ears.

I’m angry at you for being so nasty to people in general. Since you belong to those people, why are you so nasty to yourself? That’s why I’m blaming you. You’re nasty out

of intellectual impotence. Therefore, even though I am blaming you, I'm also obliged to help you. How shall I begin to render you assistance? Perhaps by dealing with your thoughts at this very moment: "What sort of writer is this who talks to me in such an arrogant way?" I'll tell you what sort of writer I am.

I possess not one bit of artistic talent. I even lack full command of the language. But that doesn't mean a thing; read on, dearest public, it will be well worth your while. Truth is a good thing; it compensates for the inadequacies of any writer who serves its cause. Therefore, I shall inform you of the following: if I hadn't warned you, you might well have thought that this tale was being told artistically and that its author possessed great poetic talent. But now that I've warned you that I have no talent whatever, you know that any merit to be found in my tale is due entirely to its truthfulness.

But then again, dear readers, when I address you, it behooves me to spell everything out—since you're merely amateurs, and not at all experts at deciphering unstated meanings. When I say that I have not one bit of artistic talent and that my tale is a very weak piece of work, you should by no means conclude that I'm any worse than those authors whom you consider to be great, or that my novel is any poorer than theirs. That's not at all what I mean. I mean that my tale suffers from imperfections when it's compared with the works of genuinely gifted writers. As far as the worth of its execution is concerned, you can confidently place my tale side by side with the most famous works of your well-known authors. Perhaps you'd not do wrong to place it even higher than theirs! It certainly contains more artistry—rest assured on that point.

You may thank me. You so love to cringe before those who abuse you; so now you can cringe before me, too.

Yet there is among you, dear readers, a particular group of people—by now a fairly sizable group—which I respect. I speak arrogantly to the vast majority of readers, but to them alone, and up to this point I've been speaking only to them. But with the particular group I just mentioned, I would have spoken humbly, even timidly. There is no need to offer them any explanation. I value their opinion, but I know in advance that they're on my side. Good, strong, honest, capable people—you have only just begun to appear among us; already there's a fair number of you and it's growing all the time. If you were my entire audience, there'd be no need for me to write. If you did not yet exist, it would be impossible for me to write. But you're not yet my entire audience, although some of you are numbered among my readers. Therefore, it's still necessary and already possible for me to write.

# 1. Vera Pavlovna's Life with Her Family

## I.

Vera Pavlovna had a very ordinary upbringing. Her early life, before she made the acquaintance of the medical student Lopukhov, contained a few noteworthy events, but nothing unusual. Even then, however, her behavior showed itself to be somewhat exceptional.

Vera Pavlovna grew up in a multistoried house on Gorokhovaya [Pea] Street, between Sadovaya [Garden] Street and the Semenovskiy Bridge. At the present time this house is designated by an appropriate number, but in 1852, when there were no such numbers, the house carried the inscription: "Residence of the Councillor of State<sup>1</sup> Ivan Zakharovich Storeshnikov." That's what the inscription said; but Ivan Zakharovich Storeshnikov had died in 1837 and since then the house had belonged to his son, Mikhail Ivanovich—or so the legal documents indicated. But the tenants knew that Mikhail Ivanovich was only the former owner's son, and that the real proprietor was his widow, Anna Petrovna.

Then, as now, the house was large; it had two gates, four doorways onto the street, and three courtyards within. In 1852, just as now, the owner and her son lived in the rooms on the ground floor with their windows looking out on the street. Anna Petrovna remains just as handsome a woman now as she was then. Mikhail Ivanovich is just as handsome an officer now as he was then.

I don't know who now resides in the fourth-floor apartment to the right atop the filthiest of the many back staircases off the first courtyard. But in 1852 these rooms were inhabited by the manager of the building Pavel Konstantinych Rozalsky, a portly, handsome man; his wife, Marya Aleksevna, a tall thin, sturdy woman; their daughter, a young unmarried woman, none other than Vera Pavlovna; and their nine-year-old son, Fedya.

Besides being the manager of the building, Pavel Konstantinovich worked as an assistant to the head of a government department. He received no income from this position, and only a modest one from being manager. Anyone else would have earned

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<sup>1</sup> Fifth highest of the fourteen civil service ranks introduced by Peter the Great in 1722. Attainment of a specific rank (initially the eighth, it was later raised repeatedly) conferred hereditary noble status on officials from other social estates.

much more, but as Pavel Konstantinych himself used to say, he had his scruples. The landlady, however, was entirely satisfied with him. During his fourteen years of managing he had managed to accumulate a sum of about 10,000 rubles. No more than 3,000 or so had come from the landlady's pocket; the rest he had acquired at no cost whatever to his employer. Pavel Konstantinych was a pawnbroker.

Marya Aleksevna also was in possession of a tidy bit of capital—5,000 rubles or so, as she used to tell her fellow gossips, but in fact it was more than that. The origin of her capital dates back some fifteen years to the sale of a raccoon coat, miscellaneous scraps of clothing, and assorted bits of furniture that she had acquired at the death of her brother, an office clerk. Having realized a profit of some 150 rubles, she likewise put the money back into circulation by accepting pledges as collateral, taking far greater risks than her husband ever did. Several times she got caught at her own game. Once a swindler borrowed five rubles from her and left his passport as a pledge; it turned out to be stolen and Marya Aleksevna had to lay out an extra fifteen rubles to extricate herself from that affair. Another scoundrel once pawned a gold watch for twenty rubles; it turned out to have been lifted from a dead body and Marya Aleksevna had to hand over quite a hefty sum to get herself out of that mess. But if she suffered losses that her husband managed to avoid (since he was more discriminating in his choice of clients), she also realized greater profits. She even sought out special opportunities for making money. Once, when Vera Pavlovna was still very young— Marya Aleksevna never would have done it when her daughter was older, but there was absolutely no reason not to do it back then; the child would never have understood, thank you very much, if it hadn't been for the cook, who explained the whole thing to her very clearly. And the cook would never have done so, since it wasn't right to talk about such things to children, but it happened that the cook couldn't restrain herself after one of the worst beatings she'd ever received at the hands of Marya Aleksevna following a little fling with her boyfriend. (By the way, Matryona always sported a black eye, not from Marya Aleksevna but from her boyfriend—which was all right, since a cook with a black eye comes cheaper!) Be that as it may, one time a strange lady came to see Marya Aleksevna; she was quite unlike all her other acquaintances—very beautiful, well dressed, and rather splendid. She arrived and stayed for a prolonged visit. For a week the visit went smoothly, except that some civilian, also very handsome, kept dropping by to call as well; he brought Verochka candy, gave her nice dolls, and presented her with two books, both with pictures. In one there were nice pictures of animals and towns; Marya Aleksevna took the other one away from Verochka as soon as the gentleman had gone, so that Verochka managed to glimpse the pictures only once, when he himself first showed them to her. And so the new acquaintance stayed for about a week, and everything was quiet. All that week Marya Aleksevna didn't go near the cupboard (where the decanter of vodka stood), the key to which she never entrusted to anyone. She didn't beat Matryona, didn't hit Verochka, and didn't swear too loudly. Then one night Verochka was continually awakened by the strange lady's terrible screams and by a great commotion and bustle in the house. The next morning

Marya Aleksevna went to her cupboard and stood next to it longer than usual, all the while repeating, “Thank God it came out all right, thank God!” She even summoned Matryona over to the cupboard and said, “To your health, Matryonushka, you did a fine job.” Afterward, instead of fighting and squabbling, as she usually did following a visit to the cupboard, Marya Aleksevna gave Verochka a kiss and went off to bed. Another week passed quietly. The lady didn’t scream any more, but neither did she leave her room. Soon afterward she moved out of the house. Two days later another civilian arrived, not the same one as before; he brought along the police and abused Marya Aleksevna. But she conceded nothing and kept repeating, “I’ve no idea what you’re talking about. Check the house register if you want to know who my guest was.<sup>2</sup> An acquaintance of mine, Savastyanova—a merchant’s wife from Pskov—and that’s all!” Finally, after a good bit of swearing, the civilian left and never returned. Verochka witnessed the whole affair when she was eight years old; when she was nine, Matryona explained it all to her. However, there was only one such episode; others were different and not very frequent.

Once, when Verochka was ten and was accompanying her mother to the flea market, she received an unexpected wallop across the back of her head at the intersection of Gorokhovaya and Sadovaya streets along with the explanation : “Instead of gawking at the church, you idiot, why don’t you cross yourself? Can’t you see that all good people cross themselves?”

When Verochka was twelve she began to attend private school. She also started taking piano lessons from a drunken but very kind German piano teacher. He was a good teacher, and very inexpensive as a result of his drinking.

When she was fourteen she did the sewing for her entire family; bear in mind, of course, that the family wasn’t all that large.

When she was about to turn sixteen, her mother started shouting at her in the following manner: “Scrub that face of yours—you’re as dark as a gypsy girl! You’ll never get it clean! I must have given birth to a scarecrow—I don’t know who you take after.” Verochka put up with a great deal on account of her dark complexion and had become quite accustomed to think of herself as homely. Previously her mother had dressed her in rags, but now she began to spruce her up a bit. This better-dressed Verochka who accompanied her mother to church used to think, “These clothes would better suit someone else. Whatever I wear, I’m still a gypsy girl, a scarecrow—whether I’m in a cotton frock or a silk dress. It would be nice to be pretty. Oh, how I’d like to be pretty!”

When Verochka turned sixteen, she ceased taking piano lessons and stopped attending private school; instead, she began giving lessons in that very same school. Soon her mother found other pupils for her as well.

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<sup>2</sup> By law, the owner or manager of a residential building had to maintain a register (*domovaya kniga*) in which the names of tenants or temporary residents were recorded (see also n. 67 below).

After six months or so Verochka's mother stopped calling her a gypsy girl and a scarecrow and began to spruce her up even more. Meanwhile Matryona—this was already the third one after the aforementioned Matryona (the original's left eye was always blackened, whereas the replacement's left cheekbone was usually, but not always, bruised)—this third Matryona told Verochka that the head of her father's department, an important department head who wore an order around his neck,<sup>3</sup> was planning to propose to her. Indeed, the petty clerks reported that the department head had of late become better disposed toward Pavel Konstantinovich. The department head, in turn, began to express the opinion in the presence of his relatives that what he needed most was a good-looking wife, even if she didn't have a dowry, as well as the opinion that Pavel Konstantinych was not that bad a clerk.

It's not clear how all this would have ended, but the department head deliberated for a very long time and very judiciously . . . so that in the meantime another opportunity presented itself.

The landlady's son dropped in on the manager to say that his mother wanted Pavel Konstantinych to collect samples of various wallpapers, as she was planning to redecorate her apartment. Such requests had previously been communicated through the butler. Obviously the purpose of this visit would have been immediately apparent even to less worldly-wise folk than Marya Aleksevna and her husband. The landlady's son came and stayed for more than half an hour; he even deigned to have a cup of tea brewed from the choicest leaves. The very next day Marya Aleksevna presented her daughter with a necklace left as an unredeemed pledge; she also ordered two fine new dresses for her. The material alone cost 40 rubles for the first, 52 for the second; together with cutting, flounces, and ribbon the two dresses came to 174 rubles. At least that's what Marya Aleksevna told her husband, while Verochka knew that she had spent a total of less than 100 rubles (after all, she was present at the purchase); but two extremely fine dresses can be made for 100 rubles. Verochka was delighted with them and with the necklace, but most of all she was delighted that her mother at long last had agreed to start buying her shoes at Korolyov's.<sup>4</sup> Shoes from the flea market were so ugly, while those from Korolyov's fitted one's feet so beautifully.

The dresses had the intended effect: the landlady's son soon acquired the habit of visiting the manager and, it goes without saying, once there, he chatted more with the manager's daughter than with the manager and his wife, who, it also goes without saying, made a big fuss over him. The mother provided her daughter with complete instructions, everything she needed to know. There's no reason to repeat it all here—it's perfectly well known.

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<sup>3</sup> Tsarist orders and decorations were awarded to government officials and military personnel in recognition of long or distinguished service. The highest of these honors also ennobled recipients from outside the hereditary nobility.

<sup>4</sup> The exclusive shop of Leonty Korolyov and Sons was located across from the Anichkov Palace on Nevsky Prospekt, the main street in St. Petersburg.



One day after dinner her mother said, "Verochka, change into something a bit nicer. I have a surprise for you: we're going to the opera. I bought us some seats in the second circle, where all the generals' wives sit. And I did it all for you, you little fool. I don't spare even my last kopecks. And your father has spent so much on you that we all feel the pinch. We paid a small fortune to Madame for your private school; in addition, there was that drunken piano teacher! And you, you ingrate, you don't care! No, you have no soul! You're so unfeeling!"

That was all Marya Aleksevna said. She abused her daughter no longer; and what kind of abuse was it anyway? Marya Aleksevna was simply having one of her friendly little chats with Verochka. She'd long since stopped abusing her; nor had she beat her even once since she'd heard the rumor about her husband's department head.

They went to the opera. After the first act the landlady's son appeared in their box accompanied by two friends. One was a civilian, lean and very elegant; the other was in the military, portly and not so elegant. They sat down, settled in, and began to whisper among themselves, especially the landlady's son and the civilian, while the soldier said very little. Marya Aleksevna listened attentively and overheard almost every word, but she couldn't understand much because they were speaking entirely in French. She recognized only four or five words in their conversation: *belle*, *charmante*, *amour*, *bonheur* [pretty, charming, love, happiness]—but what good did that do? *Belle*, *charmante*—Marya Aleksevna had been hearing that her gypsy girl was *belle* and *charmante* for quite a while now; *amour*—Marya Aleksevna could see for herself that he was wallowing in *amour*; and if *amour*, then *bonheur* goes without saying—but what did it all mean? The big question is, when will he propose?

"Verochka, you're so ungrateful, as ungrateful as can be," Marya Aleksevna whispered to her daughter. "Why are you turning your face away from them? Have they insulted you by coming in? They've done you an honor, you little fool! What's the French word for 'wedding'? Is it *mariage*, or what, Verochka? And how about the French for 'bride' and 'groom,' and 'to be married'?"

Verochka told her.

"No, for some reason I haven't heard those words... Vera, you must have told me the wrong ones! Be more careful!"

"No, those are right—but you'll never hear those words from them. Let's leave. I can't stay here any longer."

"What? What did you say, you wretch?" Marya Aleksevna saw red.

"Let's go. Afterward you can do anything you like to me, but I'm not staying. I'll tell you why later. Mother dear," she said more loudly, "I have a terrible headache. I can't stay here any longer. I beg of you!"

Verochka stood up.

The gentlemen began to make a fuss over her.

"It will pass, Verochka," said Marya Aleksevna in a stern but decorous manner. "Take a little turn in the vestibule with Mikhail Ivanovich and your headache will pass."

"No, it won't. I feel quite ill. Quickly, Mother."

The gentlemen held the door and tried to escort Verochka by the arm, but the wretch wouldn't have it. They helped the ladies on with their coats and saw them out to the carriage. Marya Aleksevna haughtily glanced at the footmen: "Just look, you louts, look at these fine gentlemen! That one will soon be my son-in-law. Then I'll have some louts of my own. And you, my dear, if you continue to put on airs, you miserable creature, I'll smack you!" But wait a minute, wait just one minute. What was her son-in-law saying to that arrogant wench as he helped her into the carriage? Santé—I think that means "health"; savoir—to find out, visite—that's the same in our language, permettez—I ask permission. These words did little to diminish Marya Aleksevna's wrath; still they had to be taken into consideration. The carriage started on its way.

"What did he say as he helped you in?"

"He said that he would drop by tomorrow morning to inquire about my health."

"Tomorrow morning? You're not lying, are you?"

Verochka was silent.

"Thank your lucky stars!" But Marya Aleksevna could restrain herself no longer; she yanked her daughter's hair—only once and not too hard. "Welt I won't lay a finger on you. Only mind that you're cheerful tomorrow! Sleep well tonight, you little fool! Don't get it into your head to start bawling. Take care so that tomorrow you won't look too pale or have bloodshot eyes. I've let you off so far . . . but not for much longer. And I won't spare your pretty face, even if it means losing everything. I'll make you feel it!"

"You know that I gave up tears a long time ago."

"Welt there you are! And be a little more talkative with him."

"Yes, I will talk to him tomorrow."

"Good for you. It's about time you wised up. Fear God and honor thy mother, you shameless hussy!"

Ten minutes passed.

"Verochka, don't be angry with me. I abuse you only because I love you, and I want the best for you. You don't know how mothers dote on their children. Nine months I carried you in my womb! Now, Verochka, pay me back: be obedient. You'll see it's for your own good. Behave as I tell you and tomorrow he'll propose."

"Mama, you're mistaken. He isn't even considering a proposal. If you only knew what they were saying!"

"I know, all right; if it wasn't about marriage, then we all know too well what it was about! I wasn't born yesterday! We'll make him knuckle under! I'll drag him off to the church in a sack, pull him around the altar by his whiskers—and he'll thank me for it! There's no point in talking to you; I've already said too much. Young girls don't have to know all this—it's a mother's business. A girl is supposed to obey; you're still too young to understand anything. So, will you talk to him as I tell you?"

"Yes, I will talk to him."

“And you, Pavel Konstantinych, why are you sitting there like a bump on a log? Tell her that you, too, as her father, order her to obey her mother, and that her mother would never lead her astray.”

“Marya Aleksevna, you’re a very clever woman, but this is a risky business. Perhaps you’re going too far!”

“You idiot! Look what you’ve blurted out—right in front of Verochka! Now I’m sorry I woke you up! That old saying is correct: ‘If you don’t touch shit, it doesn’t stink.’ What a blabbermouth! Don’t try to think—just answer me: Is a daughter supposed to obey her mother or not?”

“Of course she is. No two ways about it!”

“Well then, as her father, order her to do so.”

“Verochka, obey your mother in everything. She’s a clever woman, very experienced. She won’t lead you astray. I command you as your father.”

Their carriage drew up at the gate.

“Enough, mama. I told you I would talk to him. Now I’m very tired and need my rest.”

“Go to bed and sleep well. I won’t disturb you. Get a good rest. You’ll need it for tomorrow.”

In fact, all the while they climbed the stairs Marya Aleksevna kept silent—and that wasn’t easy! And again, when Verochka went straight to her room saying that she didn’t want any tea, it wasn’t easy for Marya Aleksevna to say with some affection, “Verochka, come here.” Her daughter approached. “I want to give you my blessing before you retire. Now Verochka, bow your head.” Her daughter did so. “May God bless you, Verochka, as I now do.”

She made the sign of the cross over her daughter three times and held out her hand to have it kissed.

“No, mama, I told you a long time ago that I will not kiss your hand. And now let me go. I really don’t feel very well.”

Oh, how Marya Aleksevna’s eyes were about to blaze; but she gained control of herself and said meekly, “Go along now and get some rest.”

Verochka scarcely had time to undress and put away her clothes . . . though in fact all this took quite a while, since she kept lapsing into daydreams. She removed her bracelet and then sat holding it for a long time; she took off her earrings and fell into a reverie again. A good long time passed before she remembered that she really was very tired, that she’d found it difficult even to stand in front of the mirror, that upon reaching her room she’d sunk down onto a chair in exhaustion, and that she really should have gotten undressed more quickly and gone right to bed... No sooner had Verochka gotten into bed than into her room came Marya Aleksevna carrying a tray with Pavel Konstantinych’s very own large tea mug and a whole pile of rusks.

“Have some tea, Verochka! To your health! I’ve brought you some myself: see how your mother looks after you! I was sitting down there thinking, ‘How is it that Verochka

went to bed without her tea?’ There I sat drinking my own tea, thinking about you. So I brought you some. Drink it, my dearest daughter!”

Verochka thought that her mother’s voice sounded odd—in fact it was very kind and gentle, something that had never happened before. She looked at her mother in astonishment. Marya Aleksevna’s cheeks were flushed and her eyes were wandering.

“Have some tea. I’ll just sit here a while and look at you. When you drink it up, I’ll bring you another cup.”

The tea, which was half thick tasty cream, aroused Verochka’s appetite. She propped herself up on one elbow and began to drink. “Tea tastes so good when it’s fresh and strong, especially when it’s mixed with lots of cream and sugar. Extraordinarily good! Not at all like watery tea with one small lump of sugar—that’s awful! When I can afford it, I shall drink tea like this.”

“Thank you, mama.”

“Don’t go to sleep—I’ll bring you another cup.” She returned with more of the delicious brew. “Drink it and I’ll sit here for a while.”

She sat in silence for a moment; then she began to talk in a peculiar way, first in a very rapid patter, then drawing out her words.

“Well now, Verochka, you just said thank you. You haven’t thanked me in quite a while! You think I’m mean. Yes, I am, but only because it’s impossible not to be. I’ve become a little tipsy, Verochka. I had three glasses of punch and now I’ve become a little tipsy—at my age! And you’ve upset me too, Verochka. You’ve distressed me deeply. So I’ve become tipsy. I’ve had a hard life, Verochka. I don’t want yours to be like it. May you live in wealth! I’ve suffered so many torments, Verochka, so very, very many. You don’t remember what our life was like before your father became the manager here. We were so poor, so very, very poor—and I was an honest woman then, Verochka. No longer! No, I won’t commit another sin, I won’t lie to you, I won’t tell you that I’m still an honest woman. No indeed, that time is long past. Verochka, you’re an educated person and I’m not; still, I know everything that’s written in those books of yours. It says that one shouldn’t be treated the way I was. ‘You ‘re dishonest,’ people say. And as for your father—yes, he is your father, though Nadenka’s father was someone else—he’s a poor foot but he too taunts and humiliates me. Then I was overcome by meanness. If other people say I’m dishonest, I might as well be! And then Nadenka was born. So what of it? Whose fault was that? And who was it that got a good job? My sin was less than his in this case. They took her away from me—off to a foundling home. I could never find out where she was; I couldn’t get to see her. I don’t even know if she’s still alive. How could she be? It doesn’t hurt so much any more, but back then it wasn’t easy. I turned even more vicious! Then I turned mean. And our affairs started to improve. Who do you think got the job for your fool of a father? Me. And who do you think got him made manager? Me again. And then we started to live well. Why? Because I turned dishonest and mean, that’s why! I know, Verochka, in your books it says that only dishonest and mean people prosper. It’s all true, Verochka! Even your father has some money now—I got it for him. I have some

of my own, too, maybe even more than he has—and I got that to support myself in my old age. And then your father, the foory started to respect me. Now he’s at my beck and call—I have him well trained. Before that he persecuted me and humiliated me. For what? He didn’t need a reason, Verochka; it was just because I wasn’t mean enough. Your books say that we’re not supposed to live like this. Don’t you think I know that, Verochka? But in those books of yours it says that in order not to live like this, everything has to be organized differently; now, no one can live any other way. So why don’t they hurry up and set up a new order? Hey, Verochka, do you think I don’t know anything about those new systems described in your books? I know they’re good ones. Only you and I won’t live to see them! People are really stupid—how can you set up a new system with the likes of them? So let’s keep on living in the old order. That includes you! What sort of a system is it? Your books say that the old order is one of filching and fleecing. That’s true, Verochka. So if there’s no new order, let’s live by the old: filch and fleece. I’m telling you all this because I love you, becau . . . zzzz.”

Marya Aleksevna began to snore and soon slumped over.

## II.

Marya Aleksevna understood what was being said at the theater, but she still didn’t know what was going to come out of that conversation.

At the very same time she lay there snoring—she had been so upset by her daughter that in her distress she poured a great deal of rum into her punch—Mikhail Ivanych Storeshnikov was having supper in a very fashionable restaurant with the two cavaliers who had accompanied him to the theater. Another person had joined their group—a Frenchwoman who arrived with an officer. Supper was almost over.

“Monsieur Storeshnik!” Storeshnikov was overjoyed: during supper the Frenchwoman had addressed him on three separate occasions. “Monsieur Storeshnik! You will allow me to call you that, won’t you? It sounds so much nicer and it’s much easier to say. I never thought I would be the only woman in your company. I had hoped to see Adèle here. That would have been very nice, as I see her so seldom.”

“Unfortunately, Adèle has quarreled with me.”

The officer wanted to say something, but kept silent.

“Don’t believe him, Mademoiselle Julie,”<sup>5</sup> said the civilian. “He’s afraid to tell you the truth; he thinks you’ll be angry when you find out he’s rejected a Frenchwoman for a Russian.”

“I don’t know why we came here!” said the officer.

“Why, Serge, we came because Jean asked us to! And I’ve so enjoyed meeting Monsieur Storeshnik. But, Monsieur Storeshnik, shame on you! What poor taste you have!

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<sup>5</sup> The character of Julie is modeled both on the heroine of Rousseau’s novel *Julie: ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (see Introduction, p. 23, and n. 252 below, and on one of the mistresses of Nikolai Dobrolyubov (1836–1861), a radical critic who was closely associated with Chernyshevsky on the journal *Sovremennik*.

I would never have objected if you'd forsaken Adèle for that Georgian girl who was in the box with the two of them; but to reject a Frenchwoman for a Russian . . . Imagine! colorless eyes, straggly, colorless hair, and a foolish, colorless face—I'm sorry, not colorless, but as you say, 'blood and cream'—some dish that only Eskimos can stand! Jean, pass the ashtray to that man who's sinned against the Graces so he can sprinkle ashes on his guilty head!"

"You've spoken so much nonsense, Julie, that it's you, not he, who should sprinkle ashes on your head," said the officer. "The girl you call a Georgian is in fact that very Russian."

"You're joking!"

"A pure Russian," said the officer.

"Impossible!"

"You're wrong to think, my dear Julie, that there's only one type of beauty in our country as there is in yours. Yes, we have many blondes. But we're a combination of tribes—from fair-haired, like the Finns" ("Yes, yes, the Finns" the Frenchwoman took note), "to black-haired, much darker than the Italians, more like the Tatars or Mongols" ("Yes, the Mongols, I know" the Frenchwoman took note, "—they have all mingled their blood with ours! Those blondes you so despise are only one of our local types—the most prevalent, but by no means the only one.")

"That's astonishing! But she's magnificent! Why doesn't she go on the stage? But, gentlemen, I can only speak about what I saw. There's still a very important question: what about her feet? I've been told by your great poet Karasin that in all of Russia there aren't five pairs of smalt dainty feet."<sup>6</sup>

"Julie, it wasn't Karasin who said that—by the way, his name was Karamzin. He was a historian, and not a Russian but a Tatar.<sup>7</sup> There you have additional evidence for the diversity of our types. It was Pushkin who talked about women's feet. His verses were suited to his age, but by now they've lost most of their value. By the way, Eskimos live in America; our savages, the ones who drink reindeer blood, are called Samoyeds.<sup>8</sup>

"Much obliged, Serge. Karamzin was a historian; Pushkin I know; Eskimos live in America; and Russians have their Samoyeds. Yes, Samoyeds—it sounds so sweet—Samoyeds! From now on I'll be able to remember. Gentlemen, I'll have Serge tell me all this again when we're alone, or in different company. It's good for conversation.

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<sup>6</sup> Julie is indicating her ignorance of and disdain for Russian culture by confusing Russia's pre-eminent poet, Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), with the noted writer and historian Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826) (see n. 13 below). The reference is to Pushkin's novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin* (1825–1833): "Search Russia through, you'll scarce discover / Three pairs of truly dainty feet" (1:30).

<sup>7</sup> A writer of sentimental literature, Karamzin also produced several important historical works justifying autocratic rule in Russia. By referring to the Tatar origin of Karamzin's paternal ancestry, and thus associating him with the Mongol occupation, Chernyshevsky may be criticizing Karamzin's conservative ideology as well as insulting him personally.

<sup>8</sup> A nomadic, primarily reindeer-herding people inhabiting regions of northern Siberia; now called Nentsy.

Besides, knowledge is my passion. I was born to be a Madame de Staël, gentlemen.<sup>9</sup> But that's all beside the point. Let's return to the question of her feet."

"If you'll allow me to call upon you tomorrow, Mademoiselle Julie, I shall have the honor of bringing you her shoe."

"Yes, bring it to me; I shall try it on. It has aroused my curiosity." Storeshnikov was ecstatic—and why not? He'd just managed to grab on to Jean's coattail, and Jean had grabbed on to Serge's. Julie was one of the leading ladies among those in Serge's society. It was an honor, a very great honor, indeed!

"Her feet are all right" Jean confirmed. "But as a positive sort,<sup>10</sup> I'm interested in something more substantial. I surveyed her bust."

"She has a fine bust," said Storeshnikov, encouraged by such favorable reactions to the object of his predilection and concluding that now he could pay Julie a compliment, something he'd never dared before. "She has an enchanting bust, although, of course, to praise another woman's bust in present company is a sacrilege."

"Ha, ha, ha! This gentleman wishes to compliment my bust! I'm neither a hypocrite nor an imposter, Monsieur Storeshnik. I don't praise myself, nor can I tolerate others' praise for my deficiencies. Thank heaven I still have enough to be genuinely proud of. But my bust—ha, ha, ha! Jean, you've seen my bust—tell him! You're still silent, Jean! Your hand, Monsieur Storeshnik." She grabbed his hand. "You see, that's not really me! Feel over here . . . and here. Now you know! I wear a false bust just as I wear a dress, a skirt, or a chemise, and not because I like to (I think it better to do without such hypocrisy, but because it's what's expected in society. But for a woman who's lived as much as I—and how I 've lived, Monsieur Storeshnik... Now I'm a saint or a nun compared to what I was before. Such a woman cannot hope to preserve her bust!" Suddenly she burst into tears. "My bust! my bust! my innocence! Oh, God, why was I ever born?"

"You're liars, gentlemen" she shouted, jumping up and banging her fist on the table. "Slanders! You're all base! She's not his mistress. He wants to buy her. I saw how she turned away from him, how she burned with indignation and hatred. This is vile!"

"Yes" said the civilian, stretching lazily, "you were rather boasting, Storeshnikov. Your affair still hasn't reached its climax, yet you claim to be living with her. Why, you even broke up with Adèle in order to convince us. Yes, you described it all so well, but you were describing what you haven't yet seen. Never mind, it's not important. If it didn't happen a week ago, then it will a week from now—it's all the same. And you

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<sup>9</sup> The French-Swiss belle-lettriste Germaine de Staël (1766–1817, presided over an influential Parisian political and cultural salon until 1803, when she was exiled for her opposition to Napoleon. Moving to Coppet, near Lake Geneva, she once again attracted a brilliant literary circle and became an early popularizer of German romanticism.

<sup>10</sup> A reference to the displacement among younger Russian intellectuals of philosophical idealism, especially Hegelianism, by the materialist ideas of Ludwig Feuerbach and the positivist theories of August Comte (see nn. 41 and 108 below).

won't be disappointed by your imaginary descriptions; you'll find her even better than you thought. I've examined her; you'll be satisfied."

Storeshnikov was beside himself with rage. "No, Mademoiselle Julie, I assure you you're mistaken. Forgive me for daring to contradict you, but she is my mistress. What you observed was an ordinary lovers' quarrel resulting from jealousy. She saw that I spent the first act sitting in the box next to Mademoiselle Mathilde. And that's all there is to it!"

"You're lying, my friend, lying" said Jean and yawned.

"I'm not lying, not at all."

"Prove it. I'm a positive sort and cannot be convinced without proof."

"What kind of proof can I produce?"

"Now you're in retreat and proving that you're a liar. What kind of proof? It's not hard to find. Now then, tomorrow we'll all gather here again for dinner. Mademoiselle Julie will be so kind as to bring Serge, I shall bring my nice little Berthe, and you shall bring her. If you do, then I'll have lost and will pay for dinner. If you don't, then you'll be expelled from our circle in disgrace." Jean rang for the waiter. "Simon, be a good fellow: tomorrow I should like to order supper for six, just like when I got married to Berthe—you remember, just before Christmas?—and in the same room as then."

"How could I forget a supper like that, Monsieur? It shall be done."

The waiter left.

"What vile, base people! For two years I worked as a streetwalker in Paris, for another six months I lived in a house frequented by thieves, but never did I encounter such despicable characters as the three of you. My God, the company I'm forced to keep in society. What have I done to deserve such shame, O Lord?" She sank to her knees. "Oh, God, I am a weak woman. I was able to bear hunger, but those winters in Paris were so cold. It was so hard and the temptations were so great. I wanted to live and to love. Oh, God, surely it wasn't really a sin. So why are you punishing me now? Take me away from this circle of people, lift me out of this slime! Grant me strength to become a streetwalker in Paris again. I ask for nothing more—I'm unworthy of anything else. But deliver me from these people, these vile men!" She jumped up and ran toward the officer: "Serge, are you like them? No, you're better!" ("Better" replied the officer imperturbably.) "Isn't this disgusting?"

"Disgusting, Julie."

"But you stay silent? You permit it? Do you agree with it? Will you take part in it?"

"Come and sit on my lap, my dear Julie." He began to caress her and she calmed down. "How I love you at moments like this! You're a fine woman. Why don't you agree to marry me? How many times have I asked you? Say yes!"

"Marriage? The yoke? Prejudice? Never! I won't even allow you to talk about such nonsense. Don't make me angry. But . . . Serge, dear Serge! Forbid him. He's afraid of you—save her!"



“Calm down, Julie. That’s impossible. If it isn’t he, it’ll be someone else—it’s all the same. Look here, Jean is already hoping to win her over for himself. And there are thousands like him, you know. When a mother decides to sell off her daughter, you can’t protect her from everyone. As we Russians say, there’s no use beating your head against a brick wall. We’re a clever people, Julie. You see how serene my life is, having accepted this Russian principle?”

“Never! You’re a slave, but a Frenchwoman is free. She struggles—she falls, but she struggles. I won’t allow it! Who is she? Where does she live? Do you know?”

“I do.”

“Let’s go to her. I’ll warn her.”

“At one o’clock in the morning? Let’s go to bed instead. Good-bye, Jean. Good-bye, Storeshnikov. Obviously you shouldn’t expect us at your supper tomorrow night. You see how distraught she is. To tell you the truth, I don’t like this affair much either. Of course, you don’t care about my opinion. Good-bye.”

“The frenzied Frenchwoman,” said the civilian, stretching and yawning after Julie and the officer left. “She is an exciting woman, but this is a bit too much. It’s nice to see a fine woman sulk, but I couldn’t put up with her for four hours, let alone four years. Needless to say, Storeshnikov, our supper won’t be ruined because of her whims. I’ll bring Paul and Mathilde instead of them. And now it’s time we all went home. I must drop in on Berthe and then go on to see my little Lotta, who is so very sweet.”

### III

“Well, Vera, good for you! No tear-stained eyes. Obviously you realize that your mother is telling the truth, or else you’d be rearing up on your haunches.” Verochka showed signs of impatience. “All right, all right, I won’t carry on. Don’t get upset. Last night, before I fell asleep in your room, I may have said too much. I wasn’t in very good shape yesterday. You should never believe anything I say when I’m drunk. Do you hear? Don’t believe a word of it!”

Verochka recognized the old Marya Aleksevna once again. Yesterday it had seemed that a few human traits were peeking through the bestial cover; but now she was a beast once again. Verochka made an effort to stifle the disgust she felt, but she couldn’t. Once she had merely despised her mother; yesterday it seemed to her that she would stop hating her and might only pity her. But now she experienced that hatred again, though the pity was still there.

“Get dressed, Verochka! He’ll be here soon.” She scrutinized her daughter’s attire. “If you behave yourself, I’ll give you a nice pair of earrings with big emeralds. They’re a bit old-fashioned, but they could be remade into a fine brooch. They were pawned for one hundred and fifty rubles—two-fifty with the interest— so they cost more than four hundred. You hear me, I’ll give them to you.”

Storeshnikov arrived. Yesterday he'd spent a long time trying to figure a way out of the mess he'd made. He'd walked home from the restaurant and thought all along the way. By the time he arrived home he was calm—he'd come up with a plan—and now he was very satisfied with himself.

He inquired about Vera Pavlovna's health. "Just fine," she replied. He expressed relief and then declared that one should always make the best of good health. "Of course one should." And, in Marya Aleksevna's opinion, "of one's youth as well." He agreed completely and wondered if they might not like to take advantage of the evening for a little drive out of town; the weather was frosty, the road inviting. "With whom does he propose to drive?" "Why, just the three of us: you, Marya Aleksevna, Vera Pavlovna, and I." In that case Marya Aleksevna was in complete agreement. For now, she would go fix some coffee and a little snack while Verochka would sing something. "You will sing, Verochka, won't you?" added her mother in a tone of voice that allowed for no objections. "Yes, I will" replied the daughter.

Verochka sat down at the piano and sang "The Troika"—a song that had recently been set to music. Marya Aleksevna, who was eavesdropping on the other side of the door, considered this a good choice: in the song a young girl is making eyes at an officer. "That Verka is clever when she wants to be. A real minx!" Soon Verochka stopped singing—just as she should. Marya Aleksevna had given strict orders: first sing, then chat. Now Verochka was talking—but, to Marya Aleksevna's annoyance, it was all in French. "What a fool I am! I forgot to tell her to speak in Russian!" But Vera was talking softly, and smiling—that must mean that everything's still all right. But why are his eyes starting to bulge? Well, he's a fool—and that's what makes him a fool—all he can do is stare and blink. Just the kind of fool we need. There, she's letting him hold her hand. That Verka has become smarter. I'm proud of her."

"Monsieur Storeshnikov, I must speak with you in all seriousness. Last night you took a box at the opera in order to exhibit me to your friends as your mistress. I won't say that it was dishonest of you: if you were capable of understanding that, you wouldn't have done it. But I'm warning you: if you dare approach me in the theater, on the street, anywhere—then I shall slap your face. My mother may torment me" (at this point Verochka smiled); "come what may, it doesn't really matter to me. This evening you'll receive a note from my mother saying that our drive has been canceled because I'm not feeling well."

He stood there and stared blankly, just as Marya Aleksevna had observed.

"I'm speaking to you as if you lacked even a single spark of honor. But perhaps you're not yet entirely depraved. If so, then I beseech you: stop visiting us. In that case I could forgive even your slander. If you agree, give me your hand." She extended hers: he took it, not really understanding what he was doing.

"Thank you. Now go. Say that you must leave to prepare the horses for our drive."

He blinked some more. She had already turned back to her music and resumed singing "The Troika." It's a pity there were no connoisseurs present. It would have been curious to hear: surely they seldom have the opportunity of hearing a song sung

with such feeling. Perhaps there was even a little too much feeling; it was a bit too unaesthetic.

A moment later Marya Aleksevna entered, followed by the cook carrying a tray with coffee and a snack. Instead of sitting down, Mikhail Ivanych edged his way toward the door.

“Leaving so soon, Mikhail Ivanych?”

“I must make haste, Marya Aleksevna, to prepare the horses for this evening.”

“Why, there’s plenty of time, Mikhail Ivanych.” But he was already out the door.

Marya Aleksevna rushed back from the hallway with upraised fists.

“What on earth have you done, damn you, Verka? Huh?” But the accursed Verka was no longer in the drawing room. Her mother followed her to the bedroom, but her door was locked. Marya Aleksevna hurled all her weight against the door to break it down, but the door didn’t budge, and the accursed Verka replied, “If you break down my door, I’ll break the window and shout for help. You won’t take me alive.”

Marya Aleksevna raged for a long time but didn’t break down the door. Finally she grew tired of shouting. Then Verochka said: “Mother, I merely used to dislike you before; but after last night I began to pity you, too. You’ve known so much grief: that’s why you are what you are. I didn’t talk to you before, but now I want to, but only when you’ve stopped being angry. Then we’ll have a good chat, better than ever before.”

Needless to say, Marya Aleksevna did not exactly take these words to heart, but her exhausted nerves needed a rest; it also occurred to her that it might even be better to enter into negotiations with her daughter, since the wench was getting completely out of hand. Without Vera’s agreement, nothing could be done: there was no way of marrying her off to that fool Mishka unless she was willing. And Marya Aleksevna still had no idea what Verka said to him—after all, they did hold hands. What did it all mean?

Thus sat the weary Marya Aleksevna, alternating between ferocity and cunning, when suddenly the doorbell rang. It was Julie and Serge.

## IV.

Julie’s very first words upon awakening that morning were “Serge, does her mother speak French?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “You still haven’t given up that little scheme of yours?”

No, she hadn’t. Furthermore, after taking into account various clues related to the evening at the opera and determining that the girl’s mother probably did not speak French, Julie took Serge along as interpreter. It would have been his fate to tag along in any case, even if Verochka’s mother had been Cardinal Mezzofanti,<sup>11</sup> Serge didn’t complain; he accompanied Julie everywhere, much like the heroine’s confidante in one

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<sup>11</sup> Cardinal Giuseppe Mezzofanti (1774–1849), a noted professor at the University of Bologna who reputedly knew nearly fifty languages.

of Corneille's tragedies.<sup>12</sup> Julie had awakened late, had called in at Weichmann's<sup>13</sup> along the way, and then at four more stores not along the way because she needed to. As a result, Mikhail Ivanych had time to explain himself, and Marya Aleksevna had time to fly into a rage and calm down again, while Julie and Serge made their way from Liteiny Street to Gorokhovaya.

"And what pretext shall we give for our visit? Phew, what a foul staircase! Why, even in Paris I never saw one like this!"

"Never mind—any pretext that occurs to you. Her mother's a pawnbroker: take off your brooch. Wait, even better: the girl gives piano lessons. We'll say that you have a niece."

When she caught sight of Serge's uniform and Julie's splendor, Matryona, for the first time in her whole life, felt ashamed of her bruised cheek. She'd never before been face to face with such an imposing lady. Marya Aleksevna felt a similar reverence and indescribable astonishment when Matryona announced the arrival of a colonel and his wife. Especially the wife. Gossip that reached Marya Aleksevna's ears usually came from no higher level in society than that of low-ranking civil servants; gossip about real aristocrats usually died out somewhere in the ether, well before reaching her. Therefore, she conferred the full legal meaning on the terms "husband" and "wife" which Serge and Julie exchanged after the Parisian fashion. Marya Aleksevna recovered her wits quickly and came rushing in.

Serge said that he was delighted to have made their acquaintance the previous evening, etc., etc.; that his wife had a niece, etc., etc.; and that since his wife didn't speak Russian, he had come along to interpret.

"Yes, I thank the Lord" said Marya Aleksevna, "that Verochka has the talent to give piano lessons. And I'd consider it an honor if she were to be accepted into a house as fine as yours. However, our little piano teacher isn't feeling too well today." Marya Aleksevna spoke quite loudly so that Verochka would hear her and realize that a truce was being offered; she herself in spite of all her reverence, stared at her guests. "I don't know if she's feeling strong enough to come out and play something for you on the piano. Verochka, my dear, are you coming out or not?"

With strangers present, there wouldn't be a scene—so why not come out? Verochka unlocked her door, glanced at Serge, and blushed from shame and anger.

Even a set of poor eyes would have noticed her reaction; but Julie's eyes were sharper perhaps than even Marya Aleksevna's. The Frenchwoman came right to the point.

"My dear child, you're surprised and embarrassed to see the man in whose presence you were so insulted last night, and who probably had a hand in your humiliation. My husband is frivolous, but he's still better than those other rakes. Forgive him for

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<sup>12</sup> The French dramatist Pierre Corneille (1606-1684), whose main female characters frequently have confidantes. Considered the father of French classical tragedy, Corneille contributed to the flowering of French drama in the seventeenth century and is best known for his play *Le Cid* (1637).

<sup>13</sup> A fashionable shop on Nevsky Prospekt.

my sake. I've come to you with good intentions. The lessons for my niece are merely a pretext, but one we must preserve. Play something for me—the shorter the better—and then we'll go into your room and have a nice long talk. Heed my words, my child."

Is this the Julie who is known to all the aristocratic young men of Petersburg? Is this the woman whose pranks have caused even rakes to blush? No, surely this is a princess, whose ears have never been defiled by so much as a single rude word.

Verochka sat down to play her exhibition piece. Julie stood nearby while Serge had a conversation with Marya Aleksevna to ascertain the extent of her involvement with Storeshnikov. In a few minutes Julie interrupted Verochka, took her by the waist, walked up and down a bit, and then led her off to her room. Serge explained that his wife was satisfied with Verochka's playing, but wished to have a little chat with her, since it was essential to investigate the character of any piano teacher, etc., etc.; he continued to steer their conversation back to Storeshnikov. This was all well and good, except that Marya Aleksevna was becoming more vigilant and a little suspicious.

"My dear child" said Julie upon entering Verochka's room, "your mother is a very wicked woman. But if I am to know how to talk with you, I must first ask you why you were in the theater last night. I already know why from my husband, but I will come to understand your character from your account of it. Don't be afraid of me." After hearing Verochka's tale, she declared, "Yes, I can talk with you; I see that you have the requisite strength of character." In very tactful and delicate terms Julie told her about the previous night's wager. To this Verochka replied with the story of the proposed drive.

"Welt is he hoping to deceive your mother or are they conspiring together against you?" Verochka fervently asserted that her mother was not so wicked a woman as to be involved in such a conspiracy. "I'll see about that at once," said Julie. "You stay here—you aren't needed out there right now." Julie returned to the drawing room.

"Serge, he's already invited this woman and her daughter out for a drive this very evening. Tell her about dinner last night."

"My wife likes your daughter; now we need only set the price. I feel sure we won't disagree on that score. But let me finish the conversation about our mutual acquaintance. You have nothing but praise for him. Did you know that he speaks quite candidly about his relations with your family—for example, his purpose in inviting us into your box at the opera last night?"

The inquisitive glance before her went unnoticed as the thought flashed through Marya Aleksevna's head: "So that's it!"

"I am no gossip," she answered with displeasure. "I neither carry tales nor listen to them!" This was said with some acrimony, despite the reverence she felt for her guest. "Young men say all sorts of things to each other; it's nothing to worry about."

"Very well, but is this also what you would call gossip?" Then he began to describe the events at the dinner. Marya Aleksevna did not allow him to finish. At his first mention of the wager, she jumped up and roared in a fury, completely forgetting the important status of her visitors.

“So that’s what he’s up to! What a blackguard! What a scoundrel! That’s why he invited us out for a drive! He wanted to get me outside of town and then dispatch me to kingdom come in order to dishonor a defenseless girl. The filthy swine!” and so on and so forth. Then she began to thank her visitor for saving both her life and her daughter’s honor. “The fact is, my dear sir, right from the start I guessed you had some special reason for coming here; a piano lesson is only a lesson, but I knew you had some ulterior motive. Only I had something else in mind. I thought you had another bride picked out for him, and you wanted to snatch him away from us. I have sinned against you, accursed woman that I am. Be generous and forgive me! Now I can say that you’ve done us a great favor—one that will last us to the grave,” and so on and so forth. Numerous curses, words of gratitude, and apologies flowed forth in a disorderly stream.

Julie did not listen very long to this endless speech—the meaning of which was apparent to her from the tone of voice and the gestures. At Marya Aleksevna’s very first words, the Frenchwoman rose and returned to Verochka’s room.

“Well, your mother was not his accomplice and now she’s very angry at him. But I know people like her very well: they have no feelings whatever that can withstand financial considerations; soon she’ll set about finding you another match, and God knows how it will end. In any case, it won’t be easy for you. She’ll leave you in peace for a little while, but I assure you it won’t be for long. What will you do now? Do you have any relatives in Petersburg?”

“No.”

“That’s a pity. Do you have a lover?” Verochka didn’t know how to answer that question; she merely opened her eyes very wide in a strange sort of way. “Forgive me, please forgive me; it’s obvious that you don’t, but that’s even worse. It means you have nowhere to go. What shall we do? Well, listen. I’m not what I seem. I’m not his wife, I’m a kept woman. I am known throughout Petersburg as a very wicked woman, but I am really very honest. If you come to me, it will mean the end of your reputation. It’s dangerous enough that I’ve set foot in your apartment once; if I came here again, it would probably mean your ruin. Still we must see each other again, perhaps more than once—that is, if you trust me. You do? Then when would you be available tomorrow?”

“Around noon” replied Verochka. That was a little early for Julie, but no matter, she would ask to be awakened and would meet Verochka in the shopping arcade directly across from Nevsky Prospekt. It was the nearest one and would be the easiest place for them to find each other; besides, no one there would know Julie.

“Yes, and here’s a good idea: give me some paper so I can write that blackguard a letter that will get him under control.” Julie wrote: “Monsieur Storeshnikov. You are no doubt in a great predicament at the moment. If you wish to escape from it, be at my place at 7 P.M. J. Le Tellier.” “Now, farewell.”

Julie held out her hand, but Verochka rushed to embrace her; she kissed her, wept, and kissed her again. Julie was unable to hold herself back for long; she was not nearly so restrained in her tears as Verochka. She was deeply moved by joy and pride, knowing

what a good deed she was doing. She became ecstatic; she talked and talked through tears and kisses, and concluded with the exclamation "My friend, my dear child! God forbid that you should ever know what I feel now, when, after so many years, unsullied lips touch mine. May you perish rather than ever bestow a loveless kiss!"

## V.

Storeshnikov's plan was not so murderous as Marya Aleksevna had supposed; in her own way she had given the affair too crude a form, but she had discerned its essence. Later that evening Storeshnikov planned to steer the two ladies to the restaurant where the dinner was to take place; by that time they would be cold and hungry, in need of warmth and a cup of tea. He would slip some opium into Marya Aleksevna's goblet or cup; Verochka would lose her head when she saw her mother pass out; he would lead her into the room where his friends were gathered for dinner—and the wager would be won! After that, it hardly mattered. Perhaps in her confusion Verochka wouldn't understand anything and would agree to remain in unfamiliar company; and even if she were to walk out immediately, it wouldn't matter a bit. They would excuse it, since she'd only just embarked on the life of an adventuress; naturally she'd be a little embarrassed at first. Then he'd settle things with Marya Aleksevna with the help of some money—at that point, of course, there'd be nothing she could possibly do about it.

But now what could he do? He cursed his boastfulness in front of his friends and his slow-wittedness in the face of Verochka's sudden, sharp resistance. He wanted the earth to open and swallow him up. And it was in just such a state of mind that he received Julie's letter—healing balm to his wound, a ray of sunshine through impenetrable darkness, a firm roadway under the feet of a man sinking in a bottomless pit. Oh, she would help, that cleverest of all women, she would think of something, that noblest of all women! At ten minutes before seven he was standing at her door. "The mistress is expecting you. You may go in."

How majestically she was sitting; how sternly she looked at him! She scarcely nodded her head in answer to his bow. "I'm very glad to see you. Please be seated." She moved not a muscle of her face. He would receive a stern dressing down. Never mind: abuse me, but save me.

"Monsieur Storeshnik," she began in cold, measured tones. "You know my opinion of this affair that brings us together; I needn't go over it again. I have seen that young person about whom we spoke yesterday; I have heard about your visit to her today; consequently, I know everything and am glad to be spared the painful necessity of interrogating you. Your predicament is crystal clear, both to you and to me." ("Lord, it would be much better if she abused me," thought the defendant.) "It seems to me that you cannot possibly extricate yourself without somebody's help, and that you are unable to count on effective assistance from anyone but me. If you have any objection

to what I've said thus far, I'm waiting. Therefore" (after a pause), "you agree that there's no one but me in a position to help you. Then listen to what I can and will do for you. If what I propose seems appropriate, then I will state the conditions under which I am willing to assist you."

And in the same long-drawn-out style of an official document, she said she could send Jean a letter to the effect that after yesterday's outburst she had reconsidered, that now she wished to participate in the dinner, but had a previous engagement for that evening and therefore would ask Jean to persuade Storeshnikov to postpone the affair; she would arrange the date with Jean later. She read him the letter: in it Storeshnikov heard her conviction that he would win the wager and her opinion that he would be annoyed at having to delay his triumph. "Will this letter do?" "By all means." In that case, continued Julie in the same long-drawn-out official manner, she would dispatch the letter on two conditions. "You may accept them or not; if you do, I will send the letter; if you don't, I will burn it" and so on and so forth, in the same endless style that was driving the poor man out of his mind. The conditions, at long last. There were two of them: "First, you cease all pursuit of the young person in question; second, you refrain from mentioning her name in any conversation." "That's all?" thought Storeshnikov. "I was worried—who knew what the devil she'd demand, and what the devil I'd be ready to do." He agreed; his face radiated joy at the leniency of the conditions. But Julie did not relent one bit; she kept on and on, explaining everything... "The first condition is necessary for her; the second also, but even more so for you. I shall postpone the dinner for one week, then another, and soon the whole affair will be forgotten. But you must understand that the others will forget only if you refrain from mentioning so much as a single word about the person in question . . . " and so on and so forth. And she kept explaining and demonstrating, even the fact that the letter would be received by Jean in time. "I've made inquiries; he is dining at Berthe's" etc. "He will leave for your place after he finishes his cigar" etc., and on and on in the same manner. Or, for example, she went on in this way: "And so the letter is to be dispatched and I am very glad. Be so kind as to reread it. I do not enjoy your trust, nor do I demand it. Have you read it? Now be so kind as to seal it yourself. Here's an envelope. I shall ring. Pauline, be so kind as to deliver this letter" etc. "Pauline, I did not receive Monsieur Storeshnikov today; he was never here. Do you understand?" This excruciating process of salvation dragged on for almost an hour. At last the letter was dispatched and Storeshnikov breathed more easily, even though sweat was pouring from him.

Julie continued: "In a quarter of an hour you will have to hurry home so that Jean can find you there. But rest assured that I shall use these next fifteen minutes to say a few more words to you. It's up to you whether you follow my advice or not, but you must consider it carefully. I will not speak about an honest man's obligations toward a young woman whose name he's compromised. I know our fashionable young people too well to expect any good to come of that! But I believe that marriage to the young person in question would be very beneficial for you. As a straightforward



woman, I shall expound on the foundations of this opinion with great clarity, although some of what I have to say may be a bit delicate for your ears. However, one small word from you will be enough and I'll stop. You are a man of weak character and in danger of falling into the hands of some evil woman who would torment you and trifle with you. She is kind and generous; therefore she won't hurt you. Marriage to her, in spite of her humble origins and relative poverty, would significantly advance your career. Were she to be introduced into society with your financial means and her own beauty, intelligence, and strength of character, she would soon come to occupy a dazzling position. The advantages would be obvious for any man. But, aside from those that any husband would acquire by having such a wife, you, with your own particular personality, have more need than most for guidance—or, I shall say it outright—for supervision. Each one of my words has been carefully weighed and is based upon my observation of her. I don't demand trust, but I do recommend that you consider my advice carefully. I doubt very much that she would accept your offer; but if she did, it would be extremely advantageous for you. I shall not detain you any longer. You must hurry on home now."

## VI.

Of course Marya Aleksevna stopped nagging Verochka for refusing to go on the drive once she realized that Mishka-the-fool was not such a fool, and that he had almost managed to put one over on her. Verochka was left in peace and the next morning she headed off for the shopping arcade without any interference.

"It's freezing here and I don't like the cold" said Julie. "We must go somewhere else. But where? Wait a moment, I'll just drop into this shop and be right back." She bought a thick veil for Verochka. "Put this on—now you can visit me without danger. Don't lift the veil until we're alone. Pauline is very discreet, but I still don't want her to see you there. I'm too concerned about your welfare, my child!" In fact, Julie herself was wearing her maid's hat and coat as well as a thick veil. After warming herself, Julie heard Verochka's news and told her all about her meeting with Storeshnikov.

"Now, my child, there's no doubt that he'll propose to you. That type falls madly in love as soon as his advances are rejected. Do you know, my dear, that you treated him as if you were an experienced coquette? Coquetry—and I mean the genuine article, not its stupid, amateur imitations (they are revolting, just like any bad imitation of a good thing)—coquetry entails intelligence and tact applied to a woman's dealings with a man. For that reason quite naive young women, if only they possess intelligence and tact, sometimes behave like experienced coquettes without intending to. Perhaps my arguments will also have some effect on him, but the main thing is your resolve. Be that as it may, he will propose to you and I advise you to accept him."

"You—who yesterday said that it's better to die than bestow a single loveless kiss?"

“My dear child I that was said in a moment of distraction; it’s all well and good at such times! But life consists of prose and calculation.”

“No, never, never! He is disgusting and the whole thing is repulsive! I shall not debase myself! Let them devour me—I’ll throw myself out the window. I’ll go begging in the streets. I would rather die than give my hand to such a vile, base man.”

Julie began to list the advantages: you’ll escape from your mother’s persecution; you’ll end the danger of being sold off; he’s not an evil man, just not too bright; a man who’s not evil yet not too bright makes the best kind of husband for a clever woman of character; you’ll be mistress of your own house. She described in vivid colors the position of some actresses and dancers who don’t submit in love to their men and who dominate them. “This is the best possible position for a woman in society, except when, at least as far as society is concerned the woman receives not only independence and power but formal legal recognition of such a position—that is, when a husband relates to his wife as an admirer does to an actress.” She spoke at some length, as did Verochka; they both grew heated. Finally Verochka reached the point of pathos:

“You call me a dreamer and ask what I want out of life. I prefer neither to dominate nor to submit. I wish neither to deceive nor to dissemble. I don’t want to be concerned about other people’s opinions, or strive for what others advise, when I really have no need for it. I have not become accustomed to wealth, and have no need for it myself. Why should I seek it only because others consider that it’s good to have and therefore that it would be good for me? I’ve not been in society and have never experienced what it means to be dazzling; it still doesn’t attract me. Why should I make sacrifices for a brilliant position only because other people think it’s valuable? I’m unwilling to sacrifice not only myself but even my slightest whim for something I really don’t need. I want to be independent and live in my own way. I am eager to acquire only what I really need; what I don’t need, I don’t want and won’t want. I don’t know yet what I’ll need later. You say that I’m young and inexperienced and that in time I’ll change. So what? When I change, then I will; but for now, I don’t want a thing, nothing that I myself don’t desire. And you ask me what I want now: well I don’t even know myself. Do I want to love a man? I don’t know. When I awoke yesterday morning, I didn’t even know that I would want to love you; for several hours before I did, I didn’t know that I would, nor did I know how I would feel when I did. So now I don’t know how I would feel if I loved a man; I know only that I don’t want to submit to anyone. I want to be free; I don’t want to be obligated to anyone for anything. I don’t want anyone ever to say, ‘You’re obligated to do this for me!’ I want to do only what I desire and want others to do likewise. I don’t want to demand anything from anyone. I don’t want to impinge on anyone’s freedom and I want to be free myself.”

Julie listened and thought, pondered and blushed—for she was unable to refrain from bursting into fire when a flame was burning so close to her. She jumped up and in a voice breaking with emotion burst out:

“Yes, my child, it’s just as it should be! I would feel that way myself if I weren’t so corrupted. I haven’t been corrupted by being what the world calls a ‘fallen woman,’

or by the life I've lived, experienced, and suffered, or by the desecration to which my body has been subjected. No, I was corrupted by the fact that I became accustomed to idleness and luxury, that I wasn't strong enough to live on my own, that I had need for others. Therefore I tried to please, and had to do things I didn't want to do. That's what corruption is! Don't listen to what I said to you, my child; I was trying to corrupt you. What a torment! I cannot come into contact with purity without defiling it. Avoid me, my child, I'm a vile woman. Don't think about society. Everyone in it is repulsive, worse than I am. Where there's idleness, there's vileness, where there's luxury, there's vileness. Run away, my child, run away."

## VII.

More and more Storeshnikov thought, "What if I actually do up and marry her?" Something was happening to him that is quite common in the lives not only of people like him who are not self-sufficient, but even of those who possess an independent character, and even in the history of whole peoples. The books of Hume<sup>14</sup> and Gibbon,<sup>15</sup> Ranke<sup>16</sup> and Thierry<sup>17</sup> are full of such incidents. People carry on in one direction simply because they've yet to hear the words "Why not try the other way, my friend?" They hear that and immediately begin to turn around and go off in the other direction. Storeshnikov saw and heard that rich young men acquire poor but pretty young women as mistresses. Well, he'd tried to make Verochka his "mistress"; no other word had occurred to him. Now he heard some different words: "Take a wife." So he started thinking along that new line, just as he had previously thought about having a "mistress."

This is a genera, characteristic, one in which Storeshnikov very adequately represented some nine-tenths of the human race. Historians and psychologists maintain that in every individual, occurrence the common factor is "particularized" (as they say, by local, temporal, racial, and personal circumstances, and that it's these particulars that are crucial; that is, while each and every spoon remains a spoon, each and every person eats his broth or cabbage soup with his very own spoon, the one he holds in his hand, and it's precisely that spoon which should be examined. So why not examine it?

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<sup>14</sup> The Scottish empiricist philosopher, skeptic, and historian David Hume (1711–1776), whose chief works include *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739–1740) and *The History of England from Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688* (1754–1762).

<sup>15</sup> The English historian Edward Gibbon (1737–1794), whose *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788) emphasized the importance of each civilization's social and administrative institutions in shaping historical events. Gibbon's explanation of the decay of Roman institutions was meant in part to demonstrate that European civilization need not decline.

<sup>16</sup> The German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), whose efforts to transform history into an objective science, particularly through the rigorous analysis of primary sources, have continued to influence historical research and writing.

<sup>17</sup> Associated initially with the socialist Saint-Simon, the French historian Augustin Thierry (1795–1856) later wrote several historical works in which he accepted the division of society into competing classes but denied the inevitability of conflict among them.

Julie had already stated the most important point (as if she'd been reading Russian novels, in which the same point is always made): resistance inflames desire. Storeshnikov had become accustomed to the notion that he would "possess" Verochka. Just like Julie, I too like to call vulgar things by their real names, using the same crude, base language in which almost all of us constantly think and speak. For the last several weeks Storeshnikov had occupied himself with imagining Verochka in different "poses" and he wanted to see these fantasies realized. It turned out that she would not fulfill them in the role of mistress; well then, let her do it as wife—it didn't matter. The main thing was not what part she played, but the "poses" that is, the "possession." What filth, what pure filth—"possession." Who dares possess another person? One can possess a bathrobe or a pair of slippers. Yet, what nonsense: almost every one of us men possesses one of you, our sisters. Again, I say, what nonsense: how are you our sisters? You are our lackeys! Some of you—even many of you—dominate us; never mind—many lackeys exercise power over their masters.

After the evening at the theater, Storeshnikov's fantasies about Verochka's poses became inflamed as never before. Having shown his friends the mistress of his imagination, he realized that the mistress was much better than even he had dreamed. The vast majority of men come to appreciate beauty fully, just like intelligence or any other virtue, only after hearing the general consensus. Anyone can see that a pretty face is pretty, but how can one know how pretty it really is until its worth has been awarded a diploma? Naturally, no one noticed Verochka when she was seated in the balcony or in the back rows of the stalls; but as soon as she appeared in a box in the second tier, a large number of binoculars were trained on her. And what praises Storeshnikov heard sung as he escorted her into the lobby! And Serge? Why, he was a man with the most refined tastes! What about Julie? No . . . when such happiness comes along, there's no reason to agonize over what one calls the "possession" of it.

Storeshnikov's self-esteem was inflamed along with his sensuality, but it was also affected by the statement "I doubt that she'll accept you." What? How could she not accept him—with his uniform and his house? No, you are lying, Madame Frenchwoman! She'll accept me, she will, of course she will!

There was one more reason of a similar nature. Storeshnikov's mother would naturally oppose the match. In this case his mother was a representative of society. Up to now Storeshnikov had been afraid of his mother, and of course he was oppressed by his dependence on her. People who have no character are strongly attracted by the thought: "I'm not afraid. I have character."

There was also, naturally, the desire to use his wife to advance his career in society.

And, in addition to all this, Storeshnikov dared not approach Verochka in his former role; and yet he was dying to see her.

In a word, with every passing day Storeshnikov's desire to get married grew stronger and stronger. A week later, on Sunday, when Marya Aleksevna had returned from late mass and was considering how she might trap him, he himself appeared and made his proposal. Since Verochka refused to come out of her own room, he was able to speak

only with her mother. Marya Aleksevna, of course, said she would consider it a great honor, but that as a loving mother, she was obliged to consult her daughter. She asked that he be so kind as to return and receive an answer the following morning.

“That’s my Vera! Well done, the wench!” Marya Aleksevna said to her husband, astonished at such a sudden turn of events. “Just look at how she caught that fellow! All the while I kept thinking and thinking and couldn’t figure out a way! I thought it would be very difficult to lure him back. I thought the whole affair was ruined—but no, my turtledove didn’t spoil it after all; instead she brought about a happy ending. She knew how to behave! She’s a sly one, she is!”

“The good Lord is making the child wise,” intoned Pavel Konstantinych.

He rarely played any role whatever in domestic life. But Marya Aleksevna was a staunch guardian of good, old-fashioned customs, and on such a ceremonial occasion as a proposal for their daughter, she assigned to her husband the honorable role that rightfully belongs to the head of a family and master of a house. Pavel Konstantinych and Marya Aleksevna sat themselves down on the divan, a most solemn place, and told Matryona to ask the young mistress to join them.

“Vera” began Pavel, Konstantinych, “Mikhail Ivanych is doing us a great honor by asking for your hand in marriage. We replied that as loving parents we would not coerce you, but we ourselves would be very pleased. Inasmuch as you are the good, obedient daughter we have always known, you can rely on our experience. We never dared ask God to send us such a fine suitor. Will you accept him, Vera?”

“No” she replied.

“What did you say, Vera?” shouted Pavel Konstantinych. The whole matter was so clear that even he could shout without consulting his wife as to how he ought to behave.

“Have you gone mad, you fool? I dare you to repeat that, you disobedient wench!” shouted Marya Aleksevna, raising her fists at her daughter.

“Excuse me, mother” said Vera rising. “If you so much as touch me, I shall leave this house at once. If you lock me up, I shall throw myself out the window. I knew how you would take my refusal, and I have decided what to do. Sit down and stay seated or else I’ll leave.”

Marya Aleksevna sat down once again. “How stupid I was not to lock the front door” she thought. “She’ll throw open the bolt in a second and out she’ll go. There’ll be no stopping her. She’s mad!”

“I will not marry him. And, without my consent, I cannot be married.”

“Vera, you’re out of your mind” said Marya Aleksevna gasping for breath.

“How can this be? What will we tell him tomorrow?” asked her father.

“You’re not to blame because I won’t agree.”

This scene continued for another two hours. Marya Aleksevna raged; twenty times or so she began to shout and clench her fists, but Verochka said: “Don’t get up or else I’ll leave.” They ranted and raved, but got nowhere. It all came to an end when

Matryona walked in and asked whether she should serve dinner—the meat pie was overdone.

“Think it over until this evening, Vera—and think better of it, you fool!” said Marya Aleksevna aloud and then whispered something to Matryona.

“Mother, are you trying to do something to me? Take the key out of the door to my room or something else? Don’t: it will only make things worse.”

Marya Aleksevna said, “Don’t bother” to the cook. “What kind of a beast is she, that Verka? If only he weren’t taking her for her pretty face, I’d make it black and blue. But how can I touch her? She’ll disfigure herself, damn her!”

They went in to dinner. They ate in silence. After dinner Verochka went to her room. As usual Pavel Konstantinych lay down to have a snooze. But to no avail; he’d hardly begun to doze when Matryona entered and announced that the landlady’s servant had come. She was demanding to see Pavel Konstantinych at once. Matryona was shaking like an aspen leaf. Why on earth?

## VIII.

Why shouldn’t she be shaking, since this sorry state of affairs had come about all because of her? No sooner had she summoned Verochka to her mother and father than she ran over to tell the landlady’s cook’s wife that “your master has proposed to our young mistress.” In turn they called in the landlady’s youngest maid and accused her of being an unworthy friend for not having shared the news with them sooner. The youngest maid couldn’t understand why they were accusing her; she’d never hidden a thing from them. When they told her the news, she replied, “It’s the first I’ve heard of it!” They apologized for casting aspersions on her devotion. She went to pass the news along to the elder maid, who said, “This must have happened without his mother’s knowledge, since I’ve heard nothing about it, and I’m supposed to know everything that Anna Petrovna knows.” So she went to inform her mistress. That’s how Matryona caused the whole mess! “Damn my big mouth—it’ll be the end of me.” She knew that Marya Aleksevna would eventually discover how the news leaked out. As it turned out, however, Marya Aleksevna never did discover how the news leaked out.

Anna Petrovna moaned and groaned; twice she fainted—alone with the elder maid, which indicated just how upset she was. Then she sent for her son. He entered.

“Michet is it true what I hear?” she asked in a tone of irate suffering.

“What have you heard, maman?”

“That you have proposed to that . . . that . . . that manager’s daughter?”

“I have, maman.”

“Without consulting your mother?”

“I would have asked for your consent after receiving hers.”

“I assume that you could feel more assured of receiving her consent than mine.”

“Maman, nowadays this is how it’s done: you get the girl’s consent first, then inform your family.”

“‘How it’s done’? Maybe ‘how it’s done’ is for the sons of good families to marry God knows what and for their mothers to give their consent!”

“Maman, she’s not ‘God knows what’; once you get to know her, you’ll approve my choice.”

“‘Once I get to know her’! I’ll never get to know her! ‘Approve your choice’? I forbid you any further thoughts about your choice! Do you hear? I forbid it!”

“Maman, this is not how it’s done nowadays. I’m no longer a little boy for you to lead by the hand. I know what I’m doing.”

“Ah!” Anna Petrovna closed her eyes.

Mikhail Ivanych had yielded to Marya Aleksevna, Julie, and Verochka—but they were women of intelligence and character. Here, as far as intelligence was concerned, the battle was evenly matched, and if his mother had a slight edge in character, still her son was standing on solid ground. Up to now he’d feared his mother out of sheer habit; however, both of them were well aware that the “landlady” was not in fact the landlady, but only the landlord’s mother, and that the “landlady’s son” was not in fact the landlady’s son, but the landlord. For that reason the “landlady” was very slow to pronounce the decisive words “I forbid.” She dragged out the conversation, hoping to wear her son down and to exhaust him before it became an all-out battle. But her son had gone too far; there was no turning back. He had no choice but to persevere.

“Maman, I assure you that you couldn’t wish for a better daughter.”

“Monster! Matricide!”

“Maman, let’s discuss it calmly. Sooner or later I have to get married; a married man has more expenses than a single one. Of course, I could always marry the kind of woman who would need all the income from the house to support a family. But Vera will make you a very respectful daughter and we could continue living together as before.”

“Monster! Murderer! Get out of my sight!”

“Maman, don’t be angry. I’ve done nothing to wrong you.”

“Marrying some tramp—and he’s done nothing to wrong me!”

“Well, maman, now I will get out of your sight. I won’t allow you to call her such names in my presence.”

“Murderer!” Anna Petrovna fainted, and Michel left, well satisfied that he’d conducted the first (and most important, skirmish very successfully.

Seeing that her son had left, Anna Petrovna curtailed her faint. He was definitely getting out of hand. In reply to her saying, “I forbid you,” he said that the house belonged to him! Anna Petrovna racked her brains and vented her sorrow to the elder maid, who, in this case, completely shared her feeling of contempt for the manager’s daughter. After consulting her, she sent for the manager.

“Up to this point, Pavel Konstantinych, I’ve been very satisfied with you ; but now these intrigues in which you may not even be participating could force me to quarrel with you.”

“Your Excellency, as God is my witness, I’ve done you no wrong.”

“I’ve known for some time that Michel has been running after your daughter. I haven’t interfered because a young man can’t live without diversions. I indulge young men’s foolish pranks. But I’ll not tolerate any disgrace to our family. How did your daughter dare conceive such notions?”

“Your Excellency, she dared no such thing. She’s an obedient girl. We brought her up with respect.”

“What exactly do you mean to say?”

“Your Excellency, she would never dare oppose your will.”

Anna Petrovna couldn’t believe her own ears. Could such good fortune really and truly be hers?

“You must know what my wishes are... I cannot consent to such a strange, one might even say indecent match.”

“We can appreciate that, Your Excellency, and Verochka can, too. Why, she even said, ‘I wouldn’t dare,’ says she, ‘offend Her Excellency.’”

“Well, how did it all happen?”

“It happened, Your Excellency, when Mikhail Ivanovich declared his intentions to my wife and she told him that she couldn’t make any reply until tomorrow morning. My wife and I fully intended, Your Excellency, to come straight to you and inform you about it, but we dared not disturb Your Excellency at so late an hour. And when Mikhail Ivanovich left, we told Verochka, and she said, ‘I agree with you completely, papa and mama; we shouldn’t even think about it.’”

“So she’s a sensible and honest girl?”

“Of course, Your Excellency, and respectful, too!”

“Well, I’m very glad indeed that we can stay friends. I shall reward you for this. I’m even prepared to reward you now. That apartment on the second floor, off the main entrance, near the tailor—it’s empty, isn’t it?”

“It’ll be vacated in three days, Your Excellency.”

“It’s yours. You can spend up to one hundred rubles to redecorate it. And I’m giving you a raise of two hundred and forty rubles a year.”

“Please allow me to kiss Your Excellency’s hand!”

“Yes, yes. Tatyana!” The elder maid entered. “Bring in my blue velvet coat. This is a gift for your wife. It cost me a hundred fifty rubles” (actually only eighty-five, “and I’ve worn it only twice” (actually more than twenty times, “And here’s a present for your daughter.” Anna Petrovna gave the manager a very small lady’s watch. “I paid three hundred rubles for it” (actually only one hundred twenty). “I know how to reward; nor will I forget in the future. I indulge young people’s foolish pranks.”

Having dismissed the manager, Anna Petrovna called Tatyana once again.



“Ask Mikhail Ivanych to come in—no, wait. It’ll be better if I go in to see him.” She was afraid that her messenger would convey the gist of the manager’s news to her son’s lackey and that he in turn would tell her son; then the bouquet of flowers would wither, so to speak, and the force of her words wouldn’t have quite the same effect on her son.

Mikhail Ivanych was lying down and twirling his mustache with considerable satisfaction. “What on earth does she want now?” he wondered. “I don’t have any smelling salts in here!” He got up when his mother entered, but he saw a look of contemptuous triumph on her face.

She sat down and said, “Take a seat Mikhail Ivanych. Let’s have a little chat.” She smirked at him for some time. At last she said, “I’m very pleased, Mikhail Ivanych. Can you guess why?”

“I don’t know what to think, maman. You’re behaving so strangely...”

“You’ll see that it’s not really so strange; just think a little bit and perhaps you’ll guess why.”

Another long silence. He was in a quandary while she savored her triumph.

“You can’t guess? Then I’ll tell you. It’s very simple and natural. If you had even a spark of nobility, you’d have guessed. Your lover . . .” In their earlier conversation Anna Petrovna had minced her words, but now there was no reason to do so. Her enemy had been deprived of the means to defeat her. “Your lover—don’t object, Mikhail Ivanych, you yourself have declared that she’s your lover—that creature of low origin, poor breeding, and bad manners—even that despicable creature ...”

“Maman, I don’t wish to hear such words used to describe the young woman who will soon become my wife.”

“I wouldn’t have used them if I ever supposed that she would become your wife. But I began with the aim of explaining that this will never be and why it will never be. Allow me to finish. Then you’ll feel free to reproach me for any words you still consider inappropriate. As for now, allow me to finish. I wish to say that your lover, that creature without a name, with no upbringing, manners, or feeling—even she has put you to shame, even she has understood the full indecency of your intention...”

“What? What are you saying, maman? Tell me!”

“You’re the one causing the delay! I wish to say that even she—do you understand, even she—was able to understand and appreciate my feelings, even she, after learning of your proposal from her own mother, sent her father to inform me that she would never oppose my wishes and would not dishonor our family with her besmirched name.”

“Maman, are you deceiving me?”

“To my great good fortune and yours, I am not. She says that ...”

But Mikhail Ivanych was no longer in the room. He was on his way out, throwing on his overcoat.

“Hold him, Peter, hold him!” shouted Anna Petrovna. Peter stood by gaping at such an extraordinary order while Mikhail Ivanych was already descending the stairs.

## IX.

“Well, what happened?” Marya Aleksevna asked her husband when he returned.

“Everything’s fine, my dear. She knew everything already, and said, ‘How dare you?’ I said, ‘We don’t, Your Excellency. Vera has just refused him.’”

“What? What did you say? Is that what you blurted out, you stupid ass?”

“Marya Aleksevna ...”

“Ass! Scoundrel! Murderer! Assassin! Here’s what you get!” She slapped her husband’s face. “And here!” Again. “Let that be a lesson to you, you moron!” She seized his hair and began to pull. This lesson must have lasted quite a while because Storesnikov, upon rushing into their drawing room at the conclusion of his mother’s admonitions and long pauses, still, found Marya Aleksevna’s instruction in full swing.

“You ass! You didn’t even lock the door! Strangers can walk in and see God knows what! You should be ashamed, you swine!” That was all Marya Aleksevna could find to say.

“Where’s Vera Pavlovna? I must see her at once. Is she really going to refuse me?”

Circumstances were so difficult that Marya Aleksevna could only throw up her hands. The same thing happened to Napoleon after the Battle of Waterloo, where Marsha, Grouchy had proved to be as stupid as Pave, Konstantinych, and Lafayette had begun to make a row like Verochka. Napoleon had fought and struggled, had achieved great feats of military art, but all to no avail; he could only throw up his hands and say, “I give up. Let everyone do what they want with themselves and with me.”<sup>18</sup>

“Vera Pavlovna! Are you really refusing my offer?”

“Judge for yourself. How can I not refuse you?”

“Vera Pavlovna! I’ve offended you cruelly. I’m guilty and deserve to be shot, but I can’t bear your refusal” and so on and so forth.

Verochka listened to him for several minutes. Finally it was time to put a stop to it: it was too painful.

“No, Mikhail Ivanych, enough. Stop. I cannot consent.”

“If that’s the case, I beg you for one mercy: at the moment you’re still too keenly aware of my insult... But don’t give me your answer now. Let me have some time to earn your forgiveness. I may appear base and mean to you, but watch: perhaps I’ll mend my ways. I shall make every effort to do so. Help me! Don’t push me away now. Give me some time. I’ll do anything you say. You’ll see how obedient I can be. Perhaps you’ll even discover some good in me. Just give me time.”

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<sup>18</sup> Some historians have argued that Napoleon would have prevailed at Waterloo if Marshal Grouchy (1766–1847) had pursued the retreating Prussian army more energetically and attempted more assiduously to join his own forces with the main French army. In the political turmoil surrounding Napoleon’s attempted return, the Marquis de Lafayette (1757–1834) advocated replacing the reactionary Louis XVIII (1755–1824; king of France from 1814) with his allegedly more liberal Orleanist rival, Louis Philippe (1773–1850), who eventually succeeded to the French throne in 1830.

“I pity you” said Verochka. “I recognize the Sincerity of your love.” (Verochka! This isn’t love at all! It’s a mixture of tawdry vulgarity and filthy rubbish! That’s not what love is! Not every man who finds it upsetting to have his offer refused actually loves the woman! That’s not love at all. But Verochka still doesn’t know all this and she’s touched.) “You don’t want me to give you my answer now. All right. But I’m warning you: a delay will lead nowhere. I shall never give you any other answer than the one I gave you today.”

“I’ll earn it; I’ll earn another answer. You’ll save me!” He seized her hand and began to kiss it.

Just then Marya Aleksevna entered the room; in a sudden burst of emotion she wanted to bestow her blessing on these dear children without going through any formalities, that is, without Pavel Konstantinych; afterward she would summon him and they would bless the couple again formally. Storeshnikov shattered half her joy when he explained, with many kisses, that although Vera Pavlovna hadn’t yet given her consent, she hadn’t refused; she had postponed her answer. It was not very good news, but it was much better than before.

Storeshnikov returned home victorious. There was more talk about income from the house and once again Anna Pavlovna had no choice but to resume fainting.

Marya Aleksevna had absolutely no idea what to think about Verochka. In both word and deed her daughter appeared to be contradicting her wishes. But now it turned out that her daughter had overcome all obstacles that had stymied Marya Aleksevna. To judge by the progress of this affair, it seemed that Verochka was hoping for the same outcome as she, Marya Aleksevna; however, being the learned and refined person she was, her daughter was manipulating the material in a different way. But if that was the case, why didn’t she say to Marya Aleksevna, “Mama, calm yourself. I want the same thing as you.” Or does she resent me so much that in a matter like this, where we both need to work together, she wants to proceed without her mother? Marya Aleksevna could easily understand why Verochka would postpone her answer: she wanted to teach her suitor such a good lesson that he wouldn’t dare draw a single breath without her permission, and so that his mother, Anna Petrovna, would be forced into submission. She was obviously more cunning even than Marya Aleksevna. When she thought about it, her reflections brought her to just such a conclusion. But Marya Aleksevna’s eyes and ears were constantly seeing evidence to the contrary. What if her conclusions were wrong? If her daughter had no real intention of marrying Storeshnikov? She was such a wild beast—Marya Aleksevna had no idea how to tame her. In all likelihood that worthless Verka didn’t want to get married—that was beyond doubt. Marya Aleksevna had too much common sense to be deluded by her own cunning conclusion that Verochka was a skillful schemer. But this girl was arranging it so that if she did marry him (and the devil only knows what she had in mind—perhaps even that!), then she would be the undisputed mistress—holding sway over her husband, his mother, and even the house. What was there left to do? Wait and see—nothing more. Right now Verka still doesn’t want it, but she could get used

to the idea, stranger things have happened... She might even come to want it. One might even intimidate her a bit—only at the right time. But for now, one can only wait until that time comes. So Marya Aleksevna waited. Nevertheless, the conclusion that Verka was moving toward a match, although in complete opposition to her own good common sense, was still very tempting. Everything, except for Verochka's words and actions, confirmed this interpretation. The suitor behaved as smooth as silk. His mother protested for three weeks or so, but the son kept returning to the question of the house, and his mother began to yield. She expressed a desire to make Verochka's acquaintance, but Verochka would not go to see her. At first Marya Aleksevna thought that had she been in Verochka's place, she would have behaved more cleverly, even gone to see her; but after she gave it some thought, she realized that it was much more clever not to go. Oh, what a sly trick! Indeed, two weeks later, Anna Petrovna herself dropped in, under the pretense of wishing to inspect the redecoration of the new apartment. She was very cold, scathingly gracious. After hearing two or three biting words, Verochka withdrew to her own room. Until she actually left, Marya Aleksevna thought that she really shouldn't leave, that she should counter with even sharper words. But after Verochka left, Marya Aleksevna understood at once: yes, it was best to leave. Let her son finish her off. Two weeks later Anna Petrovna dropped in again, this time without any pretext for the visit; she simply said that she'd come for a visit and made no caustic remarks in Verochka's presence.

And so time passed. The suitor gave Verochka gifts; they were presented through Marya Aleksevna and of course remained in her possession, just like Anna Petrovna's watch—but not all of them. The less expensive ones were passed along to Verochka; Marya Aleksevna said they were unredeemed items left in pawn. After all, the suitor ought to see a few gifts displayed on his intended. When he did see them, he became convinced that Verochka had decided to accept his proposal—why else would she have accepted his presents? But why the delay? He understood, and Marya Aleksevna explained; she was waiting until Anna Petrovna's spirit was completely broken... And with redoubled ardor he ran his mother through her paces—an occupation that provided him no little pleasure.

Thus Verochka was left in peace; she was even pampered. She found this base servility disgusting and tried to be in her mother's presence as little as possible. Marya Aleksevna no longer dared enter her daughter's room; when Verochka sat there—which she did almost all day long—she was never disturbed. Occasionally she would allow Mikhail Ivanych to call upon her. He was as obedient as a child. When she told him to read, he would do so with the fervor of a student preparing for an examination. He gained very little from his reading; still he got something out of it. She tried to help him. He found conversation more comprehensible than books and made some progress—slow, minimal, but progress nonetheless. He began to treat his mother with a little more decency—preferring the bridle to the longe to keep her in check.

Three or four months passed in this way. There was a truce; tranquillity prevailed—but on any day the storm could break. Verochka's heart was heavy with such painful

waiting. If not today, then tomorrow—either Mikhail Ivanych or Marya Aleksevna would start pestering her again and demand her consent. Surely they weren't going to endure the wait forever.

If I wanted to create powerful confrontations, I would provide a thunderous resolution for this predicament. In fact, it wasn't like that at all. If I wanted to entice you with uncertainty, I wouldn't be telling you now that nothing of the sort took place. But since I'm writing without setting any traps, I'll say in advance that there will be no thunderous confrontation; this predicament will be resolved without storm, thunder, or lightning.

## 2. First Love and Legal Marriage

### I.

It's well known how such situations would have turned out in the old days. A fine young girl from a vile family with a vulgar man whom she doesn't like forced upon her as a suitor; he's a worthless, good-for-nothing character who would have gotten even worse, except that once taken under tow, he submits; little by little he starts to approximate an ordinary fellow—if not a good one, then at least not too bad a one either. At first the girl won't have him at all; then she begins to get accustomed to having him under her control. She becomes convinced that he represents the lesser of two evils—that is, between a husband like him and a family like hers, he's the lesser evil, and eventually she makes her admirer a very happy man. At first she's disgusted to learn what it means to make him a very happy man in the absence of love, but her husband is so very obedient. As we say, you may even come to like it once you get used to it. She develops into an ordinary, upstanding lady—that is, a woman good in and of herself, but one who becomes reconciled with mediocrity, and merely whiles away her life on earth. This is how it used to be with splendid young women and splendid young men—they all became good people who also lived on earth for no good reason, except to while their lives away. This was the way it was then because there were so few decent folk; the crop in the old days was so small that, as the proverb says, each ear of corn stood so far from the others that not one could make itself heard even by shouting. But neither a young man nor a young woman can live life all alone without withering; therefore they would either wither or become reconciled to mediocrity.

But nowadays other options are becoming more and more available: decent people have begun to meet one another. This development is inevitable, since each year the number of decent people has been growing. In time it will be the most common option; in even more time it will become the only option because all people will be decent. Then everything will be very wonderful indeed.

Everything is fine with Verochka now. That's why I'm recounting her story (with her permission), since, as far as I know, she's one of the first women whose life was arranged so well. The earliest examples retain historical interest: the first swallow always attracts considerable attention from northerners.

The episode that marked the turning point of Vera's life was as follows. The time came to prepare her younger brother to enter the gymnasium.<sup>1</sup> Verochka's father began to solicit from among his coworkers the name of an inexpensive tutor. One of his colleagues recommended a medical student named Lopukhov.

Lopukhov had given some five or six lessons before he and Verochka set eyes on each other. He worked with Fedya at one end of the apartment, while she kept to her own room at the other. As the date of Lopukhov's exams at the Academy neared, he moved his lessons from the morning to the evening because he needed his mornings to study. Arriving one evening, he found the whole family at tea.

There were familiar people sitting on the divan: the pupil's father and mother. The young lad was sitting on a chair next to his mother. A little way off sat an unfamiliar person—a tall, slender young woman, with a rather dark complexion and black hair—"nice, thick hair"—and dark eyes—"nice eyes, very nice eyes"—and with a southern type of face, "as if born in the Ukraine, or more likely the Caucasus. No matter, it's a very pretty face, only rather cold—not at all southern in that respect. She looks healthy: if all people were that healthy, there'd be fewer of us medics around. Yes, indeed, she has a healthy blush and an ample bosom—she'll never need a stethoscope. When she enters society she'll produce quite an impression. All the same, I'm really not interested in her."

Meanwhile, she looked at the tutor as he entered the room. No longer a youth, the student was of medium height, a little taller than average, with dark chestnut-colored hair, regular, even handsome features, and a proud, bold look—"not bad, and probably kind, but too serious."

She didn't add, "All the same, I'm really not interested in him," because that question had never even occurred to her. Hadn't Fedya already told her so much about him that she was bored to death? "He's very kind, sister, but not too talkative. I told him, sister, that you were the beauty around here, and he says, 'So what of it?' And, sister, I told him, 'Everyone loves a beauty.' And he says, 'Everyone's stupid.' And I said, 'Don't you?' And he says, 'I have no time.' And, sister, I asked him, 'So you don't want to make Verochka's acquaintance?' And he says, 'I have a lot of acquaintances already.' Fedya blurted all this out right after his first lesson and blathered on in the same way with several additions: "So, sister, today I told him that everyone looks at you wherever you go. And, sister, he says 'Good for her.' Then I said, 'Don't you want to have a look at her?' And he says, 'I'll get to see her soon enough.'" And afterward, "And then, sister, I told him what dainty hands you have, and he says, 'You just feel like chattering—can't you find something more interesting to go on about?'"

The tutor learned from Fedya everything there was to know about his sister. Lopukhov tried to stop him from talking about family affairs, but how do you prevent

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<sup>1</sup> The principal secondary school in the tsarist educational system. Most gymnaziya were established after the statutes on school organization of 1803 and 1804, which provided for the founding of such a school in each provincial capital. The curriculum emphasized classical studies and prepared students for entrance to universities as well as for service in the state bureaucracy.

a nine-year-old child from blurting out everything unless you intimidate him? You may manage to interrupt him by the fifth word or so, but by then it's too late. Children begin without any preface—they proceed straight to the heart of the matter. So, mixed in with all sorts of comments on various family matters, the tutor heard the following observations: "My sister has such a rich suitor! But mama says he's stupid!" "Mama's working hard to woo Vera's suitor!" "Mama says my sister has snared her suitor very skillfully!" "Mama says, 'I'm clever, but Verochka's even cleverer!'" "Mama says we'll drive his mother out of the house," and so on and so forth.

Naturally, being in possession of such information about each other, these two young people had little desire to become acquainted. So far, however, we know only that this was "natural" on Verochka's part. She hadn't reached that stage of development where she would attempt to "subdue the savage" or "tame the brute." She had no other fish to fry. She was glad to be left in peace. She was like a battered and tormented person who had somehow managed to assume a position where her broken arm had stopped throbbing and the pain in her side had abated. She was afraid to stir, lest the previous aches return in all her joints. Why should she be interested in making any new acquaintances, especially among other young people?

Yes, that's the way it was with Verochka. But what about him? He was a loner, according to Fedya, whose head was stuffed with books and anatomical specimens—which constitute the greatest pleasure and the sweetest nourishment for the soul of a good medical student. Or had Fedya slandered him?

## II.

No, Fedya hadn't slandered him. Lopukhov was precisely that kind of student whose head was stuffed with books (which ones, we'll soon see as a result of Marya Aleksevna's bibliographical research) and with anatomical specimens. Unless your head was stuffed full of anatomical specimens, it was impossible to become a professor. And Lopukhov was planning to become one. But just as we see that he'd learned very little about Verochka from the information communicated to him by Fedya, we must supplement the information provided by Fedya about the tutor, so that we may get to know him better.

As far as his finances were concerned, Lopukhov belonged to a very small minority of medical auditors—that is, students with no government stipends—who manage to live without starving or freezing to death. Exactly how they manage, and on what means, God only knows—it's totally incomprehensible to mortals. But our story has no need to treat at length people suffering from nutritional deficiencies; therefore it will include only two or three details about the time when Lopukhov found himself in such indecent circumstances.

He found himself in such a position for a very brief period—three years or so, even less. Before he entered the Medical Academy he'd enjoyed an abundance of nourish-



ment. His father was a petty bourgeois from Ryazan who lived well for his station, that is, his family had meat in their cabbage soup even when it wasn't Sunday and they drank tea every day of the week. Somehow he'd managed to send his son to a gymnasium; in addition, from the age of fifteen, his son began to contribute by giving lessons. The father's resources were insufficient to support the son in Petersburg. Still, during each of his first two years, Lopukhov received thirty-five rubles from home, and he managed to earn almost as much himself by copying documents freelance in one part of the Vyborg district.<sup>2</sup> It was precisely and only during this period that he experienced great hardship. He had no one to blame but himself: he was on the verge of being awarded a government stipend, except that he'd become involved in some sort of argument and was "put out to pasture." When he was in his third year, his affairs began to mend. The assistant to the local policeman offered him some lessons; then he began to find some more; during the last two years he was no longer existing in such need. He lived in the same apartment for over a year, in not one room but two—which meant that he wasn't poor—along with another fortunate young man named Kirsanov. They were the greatest of friends. Both had become accustomed early to struggling to overcome obstacles without assistance. In general, there were many similarities between them; if you encountered them separately, each one would appear to have the very same character. But if you met them together, you would observe that, even though they were both very candid and solid men, Lopukhov was somewhat more reserved, while his colleague was more expansive. Now we see only Lopukhov; Kirsanov will appear much later. And as for Lopukhov considered apart from Kirsanov, we can only note what must be repeated later about Kirsanov. For example, Lopukhov was preoccupied by arranging his life after graduation, an event that was only a few months away both for him and for Kirsanov. The two men had identical plans for the future.

Lopukhov knew for certain that he would become an intern in a military hospital in Petersburg; that was considered to be a fortunate placement—and soon he would receive a chair at the Academy. He didn't want to have a private practice. It's a curious thing: in the last ten years or so a number of our best medical students have decided upon graduation not to practice medicine—the only vocation that affords a medic the means of earning a decent living. At the first opportunity, they drop medicine and take up one of its auxiliary sciences—physiology, chemistry, or something of that sort. But every one of them knows that if he had a private practice, he would have a major reputation by the age of thirty, a secure life by the age of thirty-five, and by forty-five—great wealth. But they reason differently: you see, medicine is now in such an undeveloped state that, rather than treat patients, it's more important to prepare for the future so that doctors will possess the skill to administer treatment. And so, in the name of their beloved science (they delight in abusing medicine, even though they

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<sup>2</sup> Located on the right bank of the Neva River, the Vyborg district was a poorer, predominantly working-class area of St. Petersburg. It lay on the other side of the Liteiny (Foundry) Bridge from the more fashionable part of the city.

devote all their efforts to it), they reject wealth, even prosperity, and, you see, they sit in hospitals making interesting scientific observations. They dissect frogs, cut open hundreds of corpses a year, and at the first opportunity they outfit themselves with a chemical laboratory. The degree of seriousness with which they pursue these steadfast intentions depends of course on the arrangement of their domestic circumstances. If it's not required by their nearest and dearest, they may never practice medicine; that is, they relegate themselves to nearpoverty. If compelled by family necessity, however, they engage in only enough private practice to support their family, that is, a very small amount. And they only treat patients who are genuinely ill and can actually be treated, given the pitiful state of contemporary medicine—that is, not a very lucrative clientele. Lopukhov and Kirsanov belonged to this group of young people. They were scheduled to complete their course at the end of the year and had announced that they would take the exams (or, as they say in the Academy, “sit the exams”) in order to receive their medical degrees. Now they were both working on their doctoral dissertations, using up an enormous quantity of frogs. Both had chosen to specialize on the nervous system; strictly speaking, they were working together. But, as far as the actual presentation of their dissertations was concerned, their work was distinct. Each entered into his record of data only those facts that, though observed by both, were relevant to the subject of his own dissertation.

Now, at last, it's appropriate to speak exclusively about Lopukhov. There was a time when he was a rather serious drinker; this happened when he had no money for tea and sometimes none for boots. That kind of period is extremely conducive to bouts of drinking, not only because of a person's predisposition but also because of the enhanced possibility: it's cheaper to drink than to feed and clothe oneself. But his drinking came about as a consequence of depression over his intolerable poverty—and nothing more. As for the present, there's rarely been a man who has abstained for so long—and not only with regard to alcohol. In the old days Lopukhov had engaged in a rather large number of romantic adventures. Once, for example, it so happened that he fell in love with a touring dancer. What to do? He pondered and schemed, and finally set off for her apartment. “What do you want?” “I've been sent by Count So-and-So with a letter.” The servant easily mistook his student uniform for that of a clerk or a special orderly. “Give me the letter. Will you wait for an answer?” “The Count ordered me to wait.” The servant returned and announced with astonishment: “You're invited to come in.” “So there he is, that's the one! He cheers so loudly that I can even make out his voice from my dressing room! How many times have you been handed over to the police for creating a disturbance in my honor?” “Twice.” “Only twice? Well, and why have you come?” “To see you.” “Fine. And now what?” “I don't know. Whatever you want.” “Well, I know what I want. My breakfast. You see, the table's been set. Sit down and join me.” They made another place. She laughed at him and he laughed at himself. He was young, not bad-looking, not unintelligent, and very original. Why not have some fun with him? So she did, for two weeks or so, and then she said, “Clear out!” “I've been wanting to go, but I felt awkward.” “Then we part as friends?” They

embraced once again. Splendid! But all of this occurred a long time ago—some three years back—and for the last two years he’s refrained from such pranks.

In addition to his friends and two or three professors who’d recognized in him the makings of a good scientist, he met only the families of those young people he tutored. But he only “met” the families: he avoided any intimacy like the plague and treated all the members of the family coldly, except for his young pupils.

### III.

And so Lopukhov entered the room and saw the family, including Verochka, seated at tea; of course, the family, including Verochka, saw that the tutor had entered the room.

“Please be seated,” said Marya Aleksevna. “Matryona, bring another glass.”<sup>3</sup>

“If that’s for me, then thank you very much, but I don’t want any tea.”

“Matryona, no need for that glass.” (What a well-mannered young man!) “Why don’t you want any? You should have a little something.”

He looked at Marya Aleksevna. Then, as if by chance, he glanced at Verochka—or perhaps it wasn’t really by chance? Perhaps he had noticed the slight shrug of her shoulders? “And he’s noticed that I blushed,” she thought.

“Thank you, but I drink tea only at home.”

“On the other hand, he’s not so shy. He entered and bowed with ease,” thought the young woman sitting at one end of the table. “On the other hand, if she’s a spoiled brat, at least she’s ashamed of her mother’s vulgarity,” thought the young man sitting at the other end of the table.

Fedya soon finished his tea and went off to his lesson. Thus the most important result of the evening was only that Marya Aleksevna formed a favorable impression of the tutor, seeing that her sugarbowl would most likely suffer no major losses from the rescheduling of her son’s lessons from morning to evening.

Two days later the tutor once again found the family at tea; again he refused a glass, thereby setting Marya Aleksevna’s mind completely at ease. This time there was a new face seated at the table—an officer, on whom Marya Aleksevna fawned. “Ah,” he thought, “the suitor!”

The suitor, in accordance with his uniform and station in life, considered it necessary not merely to notice the tutor but, having done so, to size him up from head to toe with a slow, offhand glance, as is customary in good society. He’d just begun this process when he felt that the tutor was not only doing the same thing to him but even worse: he was looking him straight in the eye, and so intently that, instead of continuing with his own inspection, the suitor said, “Is your field a difficult one, Monsieur Lopukhov? . . . I mean medicine.”

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<sup>3</sup> In Russia women traditionally drank tea from a cup while men used a glass, sometimes in a metal holder.

"It is," he replied, all the while looking him straight in the eye.

The suitor noticed that his own left hand, for no good reason, was toying with the second and third buttons of his uniform. If things had gotten that bad, there was nothing left to do but drink up his glass of tea as quickly as possible in order to ask Marya Aleksevna for another. "If I'm not mistaken, you're wearing the uniform of such-and-such a regiment?" asked the tutor.

"Yes, I serve in that regiment," replied Mikhail Ivanych.

"Have you been in it for very long?"

"Nine years."

"Did you enter it as soon as you began to serve?"

"I did."

"Do you have your own company yet?"

"No, not yet." (Why, he's interrogating me as if I were his orderly!)

"Do you hope to get one soon?"

"Not for a while."

"Hmm." The tutor considered this sufficient and terminated the interrogation, once again staring his imaginary orderly straight in the eye.

"On the other hand . . . on the other hand ..." thought Verochka, "but what is 'the other hand'? At last I've discovered what it is. On the other hand, he behaves himself as Serge would, the man who accompanied dear Julie that time. He's no beast! But why does he say such strange things about young women, for example, that only stupid men love beautiful girls; besides, besides . . . what is 'besides'? I've discovered what it is—besides, why didn't he want to hear anything about me? Why did he say it wouldn't be interesting?"

"Verochka, would you play something for us on the piano? Mikhail Ivanych and I would be delighted to listen," said Marya Aleksevna when Verochka had put her second cup of tea down on the table.

"Why not?"

"And if you'd sing us a song, Vera Pavlovna," added Mikhail Ivanych in an ingratiating tone.

"Why not?"

"However," thought the tutor, "that 'Why not' sounds awfully like 'I'm willing to do anything just to get rid of you.'" Although he'd been sitting there for five minutes or so and had never glanced at her, he knew that she hadn't looked at her suitor even once except when she answered his question. Even then she looked at him exactly the same way she looked at her mother and father, coldly and without affection. Something wasn't quite right, just as Fedya had indicated. Then again, perhaps she really was a cold, proud young woman eager to enter high society—to hold sway and be dazzling. Perhaps she was displeased that a better suitor for her couldn't have been found. She would accept his offer, despising him all the while, because there was no one else to lead her where she wanted to go. All this was becoming more interesting.

"Fedya, drink up quickly," said his mother.

“Don’t hurry him, Marya Aleksevna, I would like to listen, if Vera Pavlovna will permit,” said the tutor.

Verochka picked up the first songbook that came to hand, not even looking to see what it was, opened it to the first piece she came to, and began to play mechanically. It didn’t matter what or how she played, as long as she could be done with it as quickly as possible. But it happened to be an interesting piece, something out of a fairly decent opera, and the girl’s playing became more animated. Upon finishing, she was about to rise.

“But you promised to sing, Vera Pavlovna. If I may be so bold, I would like to hear something from Rigasetta.” (All that season “La donna è mobile” was a very popular aria.)<sup>4</sup>

“Very well.” Verochka sang “La donna è mobile,” stood up, and went to her room.

“No, she isn’t a cold woman without a soul. This is very interesting,” thought the tutor.

“Wasn’t that nice?” said Mikhail Ivanych to the tutor in a normal tone, without sizing him up. “Why, there’s no need to have poor relations with people who know how to interrogate orderlies,” he thought. “Why not speak to the tutor without pretensions, so as not to anger him?”

“Yes, very nice.”

“Do you know music very well?”

“So-so.”

“Do you play?”

“A little.”

Marya Aleksevna, who was listening to this conversation, had a happy thought.

“What instrument do you play, Dmitry Sergeich?” she inquired.

“Piano.”

“Could we possibly ask you to favor us with a selection?”

“Gladly.”

He played a piece. He performed not brilliantly, but well enough, perhaps not at all badly.

After he had finished the lesson, Marya Aleksevna went up to him and said they were having a little party the following evening, in honor of her daughter’s birthday, and she wondered if he would like to attend.

Clearly there was a shortage of men, as is usual at such parties. Never mind, he’d get a closer look at this girl. There was something very interesting in her or about her. “Yes, thank you. I would.” But the tutor was mistaken. Marya Aleksevna had a much more important reason than providing dancing partners for the girls.

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<sup>4</sup> An opera by the Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901), first performed in St. Petersburg in 1853. Ironically, the aria in question, “Women Are Fickle,” is sung by one of the most fickle men in all of Italian opera.

Dear reader, you know, of course, well in advance that there will be a conversation between Verochka and Lopukhov which will clear up the misunderstanding between them and that they will fall in love. That goes without saying.

## IV.

Marya Aleksevna wanted to hold a big party on the occasion of her daughter's birthday, but Verochka begged her not to invite any guests; the former hoped to exhibit the new suitor, while the latter found the whole process very painful. They came to an understanding and agreed to hold a small party and to ask only a few of their closest acquaintances. They invited some of Pavel Konstantinych's colleagues (of course, those higher in rank and senior in position to him,) two of Marya Aleksevna's friends, and three young women who were Verochka's dearest companions.

In surveying the assembled guests, Lopukhov noted that there was no shortage of men. Each young woman was paired with a young man, either a potential or an actual suitor. Consequently, Lopukhov had not been invited as a dancing partner. So what was it, then? After some thought, he recalled that his invitation had been preceded by his demonstration at the piano. So he'd been invited to reduce their expenses by eliminating the need to hire a pianist. "Very well," he thought, "but I beg your pardon, Marya Aleksevna." He went up to Pavel Konstantinych.

"Well, Pavel Konstantinych, what do you think? Isn't it about time to play some whist? Look, the old folks are getting bored."

"What stakes do you play?"

"Any at all."

A hand was arranged at once and Lopukhov sat down to play. The Academy in the Vyborg district is a classical institution for playing cards. It's not at all unusual to find in someone's room (that is, in the room of some registered student) a game that's been going on for over a day and a half. It must be admitted that the sums of money that change hands at these card tables are considerably smaller than those at the English Club,<sup>5</sup> but the level of the players' skill is much higher. Lopukhov himself was a devoted player at one time, that is, when he was at his most destitute.

"Mesdames, how shall we play? We could take turns, but there are only seven of us left; we won't have enough ladies or gentlemen to make up a quadrille."

The first rubber was just ending when one of the girls, the boldest, ran up to Lopukhov.

"Monsieur Lopukhov, you simply must dance."

"On one condition," he replied, rising and bowing.

"What's that?"

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<sup>5</sup> Founded in 1770 by the British manufacturer Francis Gardner, the English Club was the oldest and most fashionable social establishment in prerevolutionary Russia. Its membership included many of the most prominent political, literary, and social figures of their day.

"I invite you to dance the first quadrille."

"Oh, my heavens! I'm already engaged for the first, but I'm free for the second."

Lopukhov made another deep bow. Two gentlemen were taking turns playing. Lopukhov asked Verochka to dance the third quadrille; she was engaged to Mikhail Ivanych for the first, and he'd promised the second to the bold young woman.

Lopukhov watched Verochka and was absolutely convinced of the error in his previous view of her as a girl without a sou who, in a cold and calculating manner, was out to marry a man she despised. He now saw before him an ordinary young girl who danced and laughed from the depths of her soul. Yes, to Verochka's shame it must be admitted that she was an ordinary young girl who loved to dance. She had insisted that there be no party, but once a small one had been arranged (excluding any exhibition of her suitor, that she would have found too burdensome), then, contrary to her own expectations, she forgot all about her grief. At that age one doesn't want to grieve; one wants to run, laugh, and make merry. The least opportunity compels one to forget one's grief for a little while. Lopukhov's sympathies were now at her disposal; still, there was a great deal that he did not yet understand.

He was intrigued by Verochka's strange predicament.

"Monsieur Lopukhov, I never expected to see you dancing," she began.

"Why not? Is it all that hard to dance?"

"Of course it isn't, in general; but for you, of course it is."

"Why is it so for me?"

"Because I know your secret—yours and Fedya's. You hold women in contempt."

"Fedya didn't quite understand my secret: I don't hold women in contempt, but I do avoid them. Do you know why? I have a fiancée who is so jealous that she told me their secret to make me avoid them."

"You have a fiancée?"

"Yes."

"What a surprise! A student, yet already betrothed! Is she very pretty? Are you in love with her?"

"Yes, she is a great beauty and I love her very much."

"Is she blonde or brunette?"

"I can't answer that. It's a secret."

"Well, good luck to her if that's a secret. But what secret did she reveal to you which would make you avoid the society of women?"

"Knowing that I don't like being in a bad mood, she conveyed such a secret to me that I can no longer look at any woman without getting into a bad mood. Therefore I avoid women."

"You can't look at any woman without getting into a bad mood? You're quite expert at paying compliments!"

"How can I say it any other way? To pity means to be in a bad mood."

"Are we really so pitiful?"

“Aren’t you a woman? All I have to do is tell you your most intimate desire and you’ll agree with me. It’s a desire shared by all women.”

“Tell me, please.”

“It is ‘Oh, how I’d like to be a man!’ I have yet to meet any woman in whom I couldn’t discover this most intimate desire. In the vast majority there’s no need to search for it; it expresses itself directly, with no summons necessary, as soon as the woman’s the least bit upset. Then you’ll immediately hear something of this sort: ‘We women are such poor creatures!’ or ‘Being a man isn’t at all like being a woman!’ or even the exact words, ‘Why wasn’t I born a man!’”

Verochka smiled. It was true: these words could indeed be heard from any woman.

“So you see how pitiful women are. If the most intimate desire of each and every one were to be fulfilled, there would be no women at all left on earth.”

“Yes, that seems to be so,” said Verochka.

“In precisely the same way that if the most intimate desire of every poor person were to be fulfilled, there would be none of them left on the earth. So, you see, how can one say that women are not pitiful? They are just as pitiful as the poor. Who enjoys seeing poor people? I’ve found it just as disagreeable to look at women since I discovered their secret. It was revealed to me by my jealous fiancée on the day of our betrothal. Up to that time I very much enjoyed being in the company of women; since then, my enjoyment has vanished, as if by magic. My fiancée cured me.”

“Your fiancée is a kind and clever woman. Yes, we women are poor, pitiful creatures!” said Verochka. “But who is your fiancée? You speak about her so mysteriously.”

“That’s my secret, which even Fedya won’t tell you. I share the desire of the poor completely, that poverty may cease; someday that desire will be fulfilled. Sooner or later we’ll be able to organize life in such a way that there’ll be no more poverty. But ...”

“No more poverty,” interrupted Verochka. “I’ve always thought that would happen, but I’ve never been able to figure out how. Tell me.”

“I can’t, but my fiancée could. Without her I can only say that she’s working on it; she’s very strong, stronger than anyone else on earth. We weren’t talking about her, but about women. I share the desire of the poor completely, that poverty should cease, because my fiancée will accomplish that. But I’m not in agreement with women’s desire that there be no more women left on earth, because that desire can’t possibly be fulfilled. I can’t agree with what can’t be. But I have another desire. I would like it if women would become friends with my fiancée. She’ll work on their behalf, as she does for so many, for everyone. If they became friends with her, I would no longer have any reason to pity them, and their most intimate desire—‘Oh, why wasn’t I born a man!’—would soon disappear. If women got to know her well they’d fare no worse than men.”

“Monsieur Lopukhov! Let’s dance another quadrille! Without fail!”

“I commend you for that,” he said shaking her hand in a serene and serious manner, as if he were her girlfriend or she his comrade. “Which one?”



"The last."

"Very well."

Marya Aleksevna brushed past them several times during that quadrille.

What would she have thought of their conversation if she'd overheard it? We, who heard the whole thing from beginning to end, maintain that it was a very strange conversation indeed to have while dancing a quadrille.

Now it was time for the last one.

"We were talking only about me," began Lopukhov. "It wasn't very polite of me to talk only about myself. Now I would like to be more polite and talk about you, Vera Pavlovna. You know that I had a much worse opinion of you than you had of me. But now . . . well, we'll come back to that later. There's still one thing I can't figure out. Please explain it to me. How soon is your wedding?"

"Never."

"Just as I supposed during the last three hours since I left the card table to come over here. Then why is he considered to be your suitor?"

"Why is he considered to be my suitor? Why indeed? Part of it is too painful to tell. The other part I can explain: I pity him. He loves me so much. You'll say that I should tell him directly what I think about our marriage. I have. He says, 'Don't say that. It will destroy me. Keep silent.'"

"That's the second reason. As for the first, the one you can't tell me, I can tell you: your family situation is horrible."

"It's tolerable now. No one torments me at the moment. They're all waiting, and they leave me alone, or almost alone."

"But that can't go on for very long. They'll begin to pester you again. What will you do then?"

"Nothing. I've thought about it and have decided. I won't remain here any longer. I can become an actress. What an enviable life! Independence! Independence!"

"And applause."

"Yes, that's nice too. But the main thing is independence! To do what I want, to live as I want, without asking anyone, without demanding anything from anyone, without needing anyone at all. That's the way I want to live!"

"Fine. Splendid! Now I have a favor: I could find out how it's done, whom to turn to. All right?"

"Thank you." Verochka shook his hand. "Do it at once: I want to escape as soon as possible from my vile, intolerable, humiliating position. I say, 'I'm calm and can bear it,' but is it really true? Can't I see what's happening to my reputation? Don't I know what everyone here thinks of me? She's a conniver and a schemer; she wants to be rich, to enter high society, to be dazzling; she'll keep her husband under her thumb, twist him around her finger, deceive him. Don't I know what they all think of me? I don't want to live like this! I don't!" She suddenly became pensive. "Don't laugh at what I say, but I do pity him. He loves me so much."

"He loves you? Does he look at you the way I do or not? Does he?"

“You look at me in a simple, direct manner. No, your look doesn’t offend me.”

“You see, Vera Pavlovna, that’s because . . . Never mind. But does he look at you the same way?”

Verochka blushed and remained silent.

“Then he doesn’t love you. That’s not love, Vera Pavlovna.”

“But . . .” Verochka didn’t finish.

“You wanted to say, ‘Well, if it’s not love, what is it?’ Never mind for now. But you yourself must admit that it’s not love. Whom do you love most of all? I’m not talking about that kind of love. I mean among your friends and relatives.”

“No one in particular, I’m afraid. I don’t love any of them very much. But wait: I recently met a very strange woman. She told me all sorts of terrible things about herself and forbade me to be on friendly terms with her. We met under extraordinary circumstances. She said that if I were ever really desperate, if it were really a matter of life or death, then I could turn to her. But under no other circumstances. I love her very much.”

“Would you want her to do something for you which she might find unpleasant or harmful?”

Verocka smiled. “How could that be?”

“Well, just imagine that you really wanted her to do something for you, and she said, ‘If I do this, it will torment me.’ Would you repeat your request? Would you insist on it?”

“I would sooner die.”

“There. You said it yourself. Now that’s love. But that love is simple affection, not passion. But what is love as passion? How is passion different from simple affection? In intensity. Thus, if love as simple affection in its weakest form (too weak when compared to passion) places you in such a relation to another person that you say, ‘It’s better to die than cause that person pain,’ if simple affection says that, what will passion say, since it’s a thousand times more intense? It will say: ‘I’d sooner die, than . . . demand? ask? No, than even permit that person to do anything for me except what he himself would find pleasant. I’d sooner die than have him feel pressured or force himself.’ Love is the kind of passion that would say that. If it isn’t, then it’s pure passion, and not love at all. I’ll leave you now. I’ve said all that I have to say, Vera Pavlovna.”

Verochka shook his hand.

“Good-bye. Why don’t you congratulate me? Today is my birthday.”

Lopukhov looked at her.

“It may just be. It may. If you’re not mistaken, then it may be good for me, too.”

## V.

“How sudden, how unexpected,” mused Verochka, alone in her room at the end of the evening. “It’s the first time we’ve spoken together, and yet we’ve become so close.

A half hour before we didn't know each other at all; an hour later we've become very close. How strange!"

No, it isn't strange at all, Verochka. People such as Lopukhov possess magic words that attract any aggrieved, offended creature. It's their fiancée who provides them with these words. But what's really strange, Verochka—though neither to you nor to me—is that you're so calm about it. Love is considered to be a disquieting emotion. But you'll fall asleep tonight like a baby, and your sleep won't be troubled or disturbed by dreams, unless you dream of happy children's games, forfeits or catch, perhaps of dancing, also happy and carefree. This may appear strange to others, but you don't know that it's strange, while I know that it's not. Anxiety in love isn't real love; if there's any anxiety, then something isn't as it should be, for love itself is happy and carefree.

"How strange/thinks Verochka. "I myself had pondered and anticipated all that he said about the poor, about women, and about love. Where did I get it from? Was it from the books I read? No, it's not the same: books contain hesitations and reservations. It's all so extraordinary and improbable, like a wonderful dream, only it won't come true. But to me it always seemed so simple, simpler than anything else, the most ordinary thing, impossible to be without, sure that it would be, the surest of all! I considered these books the very best there were. Take George Sand,<sup>6</sup> for instance—she's so kind and upstanding, but in her books it's all only dreams. What about our own writers? No, they have nothing of this sort at all! Or take Dickens.<sup>7</sup> He has it, but he doesn't really expect it to happen; he merely desires it because he himself is so kind, but he knows that it can never be. Why don't they know that this is impossible to do without, that this really must be accomplished, that it certainly will be—so that no one will ever be poor or unhappy again? Isn't this what they're all saying? No, they feel sorry, but they really think things will always stay just the way they are—maybe a little better, but still much the same. They didn't say what I've been thinking. If they had, I would have known that good, intelligent people think like that. It always seemed to me that I was all alone, the only one who thought like that, because I'm so foolish. Besides me, no one thinks like that and no one else is really waiting. But now here he is, saying that his fiancée has explained to all those who love her that everything will come to pass, just as it seemed to me. And she explained it all so clearly that everyone began to work to bring it about sooner. What a clever fiancée! But who is she? I'll find out, I really will. Yes, it'll be wonderful when there are no more poor people, when no one can coerce anyone else, when everyone is cheerful, good, and happy..."

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<sup>6</sup> Chernyshevsky greatly admired the French author George Sand (pseudonym of Amandine Dupin, baronne Dudevant; 1804–1876) for her feminist critique of marriage and of the unequal treatment accorded by society to women. Sand's novel *Jacques* (1834) clearly served as both inspiration and model for Chernyshevsky in *What Is to Be Done?* (On this influence, see Introduction, pp. 23–24.)

<sup>7</sup> Chernyshevsky greatly admired the English novelist Charles Dickens (1812–1870) for his stark, critical portrayal of the social effects of industrialization on England, particularly in such novels as *Hard Times* (1854). See also Introduction, pp. 24–25.

And with that, Verochka fell fast asleep; she slept soundly, with no dreams.

No, Verochka, it isn't strange that you've pondered all this and have taken it to heart, you simple girl, you who've never even heard the names of those who've begun to teach this way and who've proven that this must come to pass, that it certainly will, that it can't help but be. It isn't strange that you understood and took to heart those ideas that your books couldn't present clearly to you. Your books were written by people who studied these ideas when they were still just ideas; they seemed astonishing and exhilarating, but nothing more. Now, Verochka, these ideas are apparent in life; more books have been written by other people who consider these ideas splendid, but containing nothing astonishing. Verochka, these ideas are now part of the air we breathe, like the scent of fields when flowers are in bloom. These ideas penetrate everywhere; you heard them even from your drunken mother, who told you that life must be lived while explaining why she'd resorted to deceit and theft. She wanted to speak against your ideas, but she herself was developing them. You heard them from the impudent, corrupt Frenchwoman who drags her lover around behind her as if he were her maid; she does with him as she chooses. Nevertheless, upon returning to her senses, she sees that she has no freedom herself. She must please others and constrain herself—and it's all very painful. Already she seems to be doubting her own life with Serge, that good, gentle, kind man—and she says, all the same, "Even a person as bad as I am considers such relations to be sordid." Nowadays, Verochka, it isn't hard to acquire ideas such as yours. But others don't take them to heart. You do, and that's admirable, but even that's strange. What's strange in your wanting to be a free and happy person? That desire is neither a very puzzling discovery of science nor a great feat of heroism.

What's really strange, Verochka, is that there are people who don't share this desire, who have completely different ones; perhaps it's they who will find those ideas strange, my friend, with which you can fall asleep the first night of your being in love, that from thinking about yourself, your beloved, and your love, you should begin to think that all people should be happy and that one must work to bring this about soon. But, while you don't know how strange it is, I know that it isn't strange at all, that it alone is natural and humane. It's simply humane: "I feel joy and happiness" means "I want everyone to be joyful and happy." It's humane, Verochka, that both of these ideas are one and the same. You're a good girl; you're not foolish. Forgive me for saying it, but I find nothing astonishing about you. Perhaps half the young women I've known, perhaps more than half (I haven't counted—there are far too many), are no worse than you; and some of them, forgive me for saying so, are even better.

Lopukhov thinks you're a wonderful girl, no doubt about it; but it's not surprising that he should think so, since he's in love with you. And there's nothing astonishing about the fact that he's in love with you. You're quite lovable. Since he's in love, he must think about you in just that way.

## VI.

Marya Aleksevna brushed past her daughter and the tutor during the first quadrille, but during the second she did not appear near them, so engrossed was she in preparing some hors d'oeuvres in lieu of supper. Having finished with these labors, she inquired after the tutor, but he'd already gone.

Two days later he arrived for his lesson. The samovar was brought in, as was always the case at that time. Marya Aleksevna came into the room where the tutor gave Fedya his lessons. Matryona usually summoned Fedya to tea; since the tutor didn't take tea, he wanted to remain in the classroom and use the time to read through Fedya's notebook. But Marya Aleksevna invited him in to sit with her, as she wanted to have a talk with him. He came in and sat down at the table.

Marya Aleksevna began by interrogating him about Fedya's abilities, which gymnasium was better, and whether it might not be better to enroll the lad as a live-in student. The questions were natural enough, but weren't they being raised a bit prematurely? During this conversation she so earnestly and cordially urged the tutor to have some tea that he agreed to deviate from his own rule and accept a glass. Verochka came in after some time; she and the tutor exchanged bows, as if nothing had taken place between them, and Marya Aleksevna continued to talk about Fedya. Then the conversation took a sudden, precipitous turn when she began to inquire about the tutor himself. Who was he, what was he, who were his parents, were they people of means, how did he live, and what were his plans for the future? The tutor gave adequate answers, but remained rather vague. He had a family, they lived in the provinces, they were not wealthy, he supported himself by giving lessons, and he planned to become a doctor in Petersburg. In a word, nothing much came of the inquiry. Confronting such obstinacy, Marya Aleksevna got to the point in a more direct manner:

"So you say that you'll become a doctor here. Well, thank God—Petersburg doctors can earn a living. What about a family? Do you have your eye on a nice girl?"

What's all this? The tutor had almost forgotten about his fantastic fiancée and was just about to say, "No, I don't," when he suddenly thought "Ah, so she overheard our conversation!" He was very amused: what an absurd story he'd thought up then! Why did I devise such an allegory—it wasn't needed at all!<sup>8</sup> And now just look! They say that propaganda is harmful: look at the effect it's had on a woman whose heart is pure and who is not disposed to do evil. Well, so she overheard and understood. What of it?

"Yes, indeed I do," said Lopukhov.

"Are you engaged?"

"I am."

"Formally or just an understanding between the two of you?"

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<sup>8</sup> Lopukhov's fiancée is an allegorical representation of the revolutionary transformation of society which can be achieved through the knowledge gained from scientific study.

“Formally.”

Poor Marya Aleksevna! She had overheard the words “my fiancée,” “your fiancée,” “I love her very much,” “she is very beautiful,” and she had been reassured that the tutor had no designs on her daughter. By the second quadrille she could devote herself entirely to preparing some hors d’oeuvres in lieu of supper. But now she wanted to hear this reassuring story in greater detail and with more substance. She continued her questions; everyone enjoys hearing reassuring conversations. In any case, it was curious, everything was curious. The tutor provided more substance, although he preferred to keep his answers brief. Was his fiancée attractive? Extraordinarily so. Was there a dowry? No, but she would inherit a fortune. How large? Very. Enormous? Indeed. Over 100,000 rubles? Much more. How much? Why talk about it? Suffice it to say that it was very large. In cash? Yes, that too. Property, perhaps? That too. How soon? Very. And when will the wedding be? Soon. As it should be, Dmitry Sergeich, and before she comes into her inheritance, because afterward there’ll be no getting rid of suitors. Absolutely true. And how was it that God had sent him such good fortune and that no one else had snatched her away? Just so. Almost no one else knows that she’s to inherit a fortune. But he had found out about it? Yes. How? He had to confess that he’d been inquiring for some time before he discovered it. Was he sure that it was true? Indeed, he’d checked all the documents himself. Himself? Yes. Right away. Right away? Of course. Who in his right mind would take one step without checking? Precisely, Dmitry Sergeich, not one step. What good fortune! Surely the answer to his parents’ prayers! No doubt.

Marya Aleksevna had taken a liking to the tutor from the moment she found out that he didn’t drink tea; clearly he was a sound and solid man. He said little, but that was all to the good—he was no chatterbox. And what he said, he said well, especially concerning money. But as of the other evening she realized that the tutor was an excellent find, mainly as a result of his refusal to flirt with young ladies in any family where he was employed. Such an absolute prohibition is rare among our young people. By now she was completely satisfied with him. He was a very solid man indeed! Why, he’d never even bragged about having a rich fiancée. She’d had to pry each and every word out of him. And how he’d managed to sniff out the fortune. Obviously he’d been searching for a wealthy fiancée for some time—and just look how he’d managed to insinuate himself into her graces! Well, he certainly knows how to conduct his own affairs. He checked the documents himself, right away, he says. Who in his right mind, he says, would take one step . . . ? He’s a young man of unusual solidity.

At first Verochka could hardly refrain from smiling too noticeably, but gradually it occurred to her (How did it? No, it couldn’t be! Yes, it could ...) that while Lopukhov was answering Marya Aleksevna’s questions, he wasn’t talking to her at all but to Verochka. He was playing a trick on Marya Aleksevna and was in all earnestness telling only her, Verochka, the whole truth and nothing but.

Was she just imagining this or was it really so? Who knows? He did, and she would soon. As for us, chances are there’s no need for us to know: we only need the facts. And

the fact was that at first Verochka smiled while listening to Lopukhov, then realized that in all earnestness he was speaking to her, not to Marya Aleksevna, and that he was not joking, but telling the truth. Marya Aleksevna, who had listened very intently to Lopukhov right from the beginning, turned to Verochka and said, "Verochka, my dear, why are you sitting there like an oaf? By now you're well enough acquainted with Dmitry Sergeich. You should ask him to accompany you on the piano while you sing something!" What she really meant was "We have great respect for you, Dmitry Sergeich, and would like for you to become a close friend of our family. And you, Verochka, should not be shy with Dmitry Sergevich. I'll tell Mikhail Ivanych that he already has a fiancée, and he won't be jealous." That was the meaning of her words for Verochka and for Dmitry Sergeich—he was now no longer the "tutor" in Marya Aleksevna's mind, but "Dmitry Sergeich." As for Marya Aleksevna herself these words had yet a third, very natural and genuine meaning: We must flatter him. When he's rich, that rascal's friendship may eventually come in handy. That was the gist of Marya Aleksevna's words as far as she herself was concerned. But in addition, there was also a private meaning: After I've flattered him, I'll tell him how modest our means are and how difficult it is for us to pay one ruble per lesson. Marya Aleksevna's words contained all these meanings! Dmitry Sergeich said that he would finish the lesson first, and then he'd be glad to play something on the piano.

## VII.

Marya Aleksevna's words had many meanings, and no fewer results. Concerning their most private meaning, that is, a reduction in the cost of the lessons, she was more successful than she'd hoped to be. Two lessons later, when she once again raised the issue of their modest means, Dmitry Sergeich began to bargain, and bargain he did; for a long time he didn't give in, but held out for 75 kopecks (you recall that at the time there were still coins worth 75 kopecks). Marya Aleksevna never thought that he would go any lower, but contrary to all her expectations, she managed to knock the price down to 60 kopecks. It would seem that the private meaning of her words—the hope of reducing the price—contradicted her own opinion of Dmitry Sergeich (not Lopukhov, but Dmitry Sergeich) as a greedy scoundrel. Why should such a money-grubber conduct his financial affairs with any regard for their need? And if he did so, then she ought to have been disappointed to find him so frivolous, and consequently so harmful an influence. Of course, she would have reached that very conclusion had it concerned anyone else's business. But human nature is such that it's difficult to judge one's own affairs according to any general rule. People love to make exceptions in their own favor. When Collegiate Secretary Ivanov assures Collegiate Councillor Ivan Ivanych that he's devoted to him heart and soul Ivan Ivanych knows full well that he can't expect such devotion from anyone. Moreover, he knows that Ivanov in particular has sold his own father for a decent price at least five times before, thereby

outdoing Ivan Ivanych himself, who's sold his father only three times. Nevertheless, Ivan Ivanych believes that Ivanov is devoted to him; that is, he doesn't really believe it, but is favorably disposed toward him, and even if he doesn't believe it, he allows him to make a fool of him—all of which indicates that he believes him anyway, even though he really doesn't. What would you have us do with this characteristic of the human heart? It's bad, even harmful. Unfortunately, Marya Aleksevna wasn't exempt from this failing shared by almost all money-grubbers, schemers, and good-fornothings. Exceptions to the rule can be found only in two extreme cases of moral worth: either the man is a transcendental scoundrel, an eighth wonder of the world as regards knavish virtuosity on the order of Ali Pasha Yaninsky of Albania, Ahmed Djezzar of Syria, or Mehemet Ali of Egypt, who hoodwinked European diplomats as if they were babes-in-arms (as Djezzar did Napoleon the Great), at a time when swindling enveloped every living soul like an absolutely impenetrable coat of armor.<sup>9</sup> It was virtually impossible to break through it to any human weakness: pride, ambition, lust for power, self-love—nothing. But there are extremely few heroes of such swindles, and they can rarely be found on European soil, where the virtuosity of deception suffers from many human frailties. Therefore, if someone points to a swindler and says, “No one will ever succeed in duping that man,” you may boldly wager ten rubles to one, even though you may not be as cunning, that you will hoodwink him, if only you want to. And you may boldly wager a hundred rubles to one that he's prone to deluding himself one way or another, since the most common, general characteristic of all swindlers is that they delude themselves in some way. Louis Philippe and Mettemich seemed to be real experts, but look how beautifully both managed to ride their own delusions from Paris and Vienna all the way to lush locales and bucolic backwaters where they could enjoy the sight of some local yokel herding sheep.<sup>10</sup> While Napoleon was so clever—much cleverer than the two of them put together (in addition, he was said to possess a brilliant intellect)—but he deluded himself and landed on Elba. And, as if that wasn't enough,

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<sup>9</sup> Chernyshevsky is satirizing idealistic philosophy by suggesting that some scoundrels manage to transcend normal limits of human experience in their roguery. Nominally governor of the Ottoman province that contained Albania, Ali Pasha Yaninsky (1744?–1822) ruled the area as a quasi-independent despot until he was assassinated for resisting the Turks' attempts to unseat him. Ahmed Djezzar (1735–1804) was a Middle Eastern political adventurer who halted Napoleon's advance into Syria at Acre in 1799. Mehemet Ali (1769–1849), an Albanian tobacco merchant who entered Turkish service, helped to preserve Ottoman suzerainty in Egypt in 1799, forced the sultan to appoint him governor there in 1805, schemed with the French to expand his power, and ultimately founded the dynasty that ruled in Egypt until 1952.

<sup>10</sup> Sometimes known as the “bourgeois king,” Louis Philippe adopted the dress, manners, and political attitudes of the bourgeoisie, on whose support he relied after coming to power in France in 1830. At the outbreak of unrest in Paris in February 1848, he fled to England, where he died two years later (see also nn. 24 above and 41 below). As Austrian foreign minister from 1809 and chancellor from 1821, Prince Klemens Metternich (1773–1859) acquired the reputation of a schemer and a reactionary through skillful diplomatic maneuvering designed to preserve the traditional monarchical and aristocratic order in post-Napoleonic Europe. Having lost power during the revolutions of 1848, he also fled briefly to Britain before returning to live in retirement in Austria.



he went even further and succeeded so well that he deluded himself all the way to St. Helena.<sup>11</sup> It was so very difficult, almost impossible, yet he managed to overcome all obstacles en route to that island. Just read Charras's *History of the Campaign of 1815*;<sup>12</sup> it poignantly portrays the zeal and skill with which he deluded himself. Alas, even Marya Aleksevna wasn't exempt from this harmful proclivity.

There are very few people whose consummate skill in deceiving others can serve as a suit of armor against self-delusion. On the other hand, there are lots of people whose simple purity of heart serves them admirably in this respect. According to the testimony of all the Vidocqs and Vanka-Cains of the world, there's no task more difficult than duping a sincere, honest man if he has the least bit of intelligence and life experience.<sup>13</sup> Reasonably intelligent individuals are never hoodwinked individually. But they possess another, equally harmful form of this human frailty: they are subject to mass delusion. A swindler will never be able to lead a single individual by the nose; but as for a large group taken together, their noses are always ready and willing! Meanwhile, the swindlers, weak as individuals and each led by his own nose, when taken together can never be led by their noses. That's the whole secret of world history.

But there's really no need to delve into world history here. We're telling a tale, so let's get on with it.

The first result of Marya Aleksevna's words was a reduction in the price of the tutor's lessons. The second, as a direct consequence of the first, was that Marya Aleksevna became even more convinced of the tutor's (i.e., no longer the tutor's, but Dmitry Sergeich's) absolute reliability. She even came to the conclusion that conversations with him would be useful for Verochka and might make her more inclined to marry Mikhail Ivanych. This conclusion was very brilliant indeed, and Marya Aleksevna would never have arrived at it on her own, had she not encountered clear, incontrovertible proof of Dmitry Sergeich's beneficial influence on Verochka. We shall now see how she acquired this proof.

The third result of Marya Aleksevna's words was, naturally, that Verochka and Dmitry Sergeich began to spend a considerable amount of time together, with the mother's permission and encouragement. After finishing his lessons around eight o'clock, Lopukhov would remain at the Rozalsky house for another two or three hours. He'd play a game of cards with the lady of the house, the man of the house, and the suitor; he'd chat with them; he'd play the piano while Verochka sang, or she'd play while he listened; sometimes he'd talk with Verochka—Marya Aleksevna

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<sup>11</sup> Exiled first to the island of Elba, Napoleon was banished after Waterloo to the more distant St. Helena, where he died in 1821.

<sup>12</sup> *Histoire de la campagne de 1815: Waterloo* (Brussels, 1858; Russ. trans., 1868), by the French military officer and political figure Jean-Baptiste-Adolphe Charras (1810–1865).

<sup>13</sup> The son of a baker, François Eugene Vidocq (1775–1857) was a political adventurer and memoirist who founded the French security police as well as the modern private detective agency. Initially a robber, Vanka-Cain (Osip Ivanov, 1718–?) subsequently became a police agent in Moscow before returning to his original calling, for which he was exiled to Siberia in 1755.

wouldn't object or interfere, although, of course, she'd never leave them alone without supervision.

Oh, no, it goes without saying, she never left them alone; even though Dmitry Sergeich was a very fine young man, the old saying still rings true: Don't hide things carelessly and you won't lead a thief into temptation. She had no hesitation whatever in considering Dmitry Sergeich a thief—not in any critical way, but in a commendable one. Or else why should she respect him and want to make him a close acquaintance? One doesn't want to associate with fools, does one? Of course one should associate with fools when there's something to be gained by it. But so far Dmitry Sergeich had nothing of his own; therefore, one could cultivate his friendship only for his virtues, that is, for his intelligence, reliability, prudence, and ability to manage his own affairs. And if every person has the devil knows what in mind, then all the more need to beware of such a clever man. Consequently, one would have to watch him very carefully. Marya Aleksevna did just that. But all of her observations only confirmed Dmitry Sergeich's reliability and trustworthiness.

How, for example, could one have detected the presence of amorous intrigues? By his peeking down her corset. Well, when Verochka plays the piano and Dmitry Sergeich stands right next to her listening, Marya Aleksevna watches to see whether he will peek down her corset. No, not even close! Sometimes he doesn't even look at Verochka, but elsewhere, wherever his gaze leads; or else he does look at her, straight in the eye, so simply and coolly that it's immediately clear he's doing so only out of politeness, while he himself is thinking about his fiancée's dowry. His eyes are never on fire as Mikhail Ivanych's are. How else might amorous activities be recognized? By words of love. But no such words are heard. In fact, they hardly speak to each other. He talks more with Marya Aleksevna. Or else he started bringing books to Vera Pavlovna.

Once when Verochka had gone to visit a friend, Mikhail Ivanych was paying a call on Marya Aleksevna. Marya Aleksevna picked up some of these books and brought them in to show him.

"Have a look, Mikhail Ivanych. I've almost figured out the title of this French book all by myself: *Gostinaya*,<sup>14</sup> that must mean it's a manual on social etiquette, but I can't make out the German one."

"No, Marya Aleksevna, it's not *Gostinaya*, it's *Destinée*;<sup>15</sup> that means destiny."

"What kind of destiny? Is that the title of a novel a fortune-telling guide, or a book on dream interpretation?"

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<sup>14</sup> *Gostinaya*: drawing room. See n. 39 below.

<sup>15</sup> Trying to pronounce the French title as if it were Russian, Marya Aleksevna confuses the French word *destinée* with the Russian *gostinaya*. The book in question is *Destinée sociale* (1834–1838), a socialist treatise written by Victor Considérant (1808–1893), a disciple of the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier (1772–1837). On Considérant, see also nn. 40 and 94 below.

“Well, Marya Aleksevna, let’s have a look and find out.” Mikhail Ivanych flipped through a few pages. “Most of it deals with series, Marya Aleksevna.<sup>16</sup> It’s a scholarly book.”

“Series? That’s good—that means how to conduct monetary transactions.”

“Yes, that’s what it’s all about, Marya Aleksevna.”

“Well, and what about the German book?”

Mikhail Ivanych read the title slowly: “On Religion, by Ludwig, that is, by Louis XIV, Marya Aleksevna. It’s a book by Louis XIV. He was king of France, Marya Aleksevna, the father of the king whose place is now occupied by Napoleon.”<sup>17</sup>

“That means it’s a book on religious matters?”

“Yes indeed, Marya Aleksevna.”

“That’s good, Mikhail Ivanych. Although I know that Dmitry Sergevich is a respectable young man, nevertheless you have to keep your eye on each and every young man.”

“Of course, that’s not what he has in mind, Marya Aleksevna; but all the same, I’m very grateful to you for your vigilance.”

“One must be vigilant, Mikhail Ivanych; a mother’s obligation is to protect her daughter’s purity. I can vouch for Verochka’s. But here’s what I’m wondering, Mikhail Ivanych: what religion was the king of France?”

“Catholic, naturally.”

“And in his book, is he trying to convert others to the papist religion?”

“I think not, Marya Aleksevna. If a Catholic archbishop had written it, then undoubtedly he’d be trying to convert others to the papist religion. But a king wouldn’t concern himself with such matters. As a wise ruler and politician, he simply wishes to instill piety.”

Well, what more is to be said? Marya Aleksevna couldn’t help but see that Mikhail Ivanych, in spite of his limited intelligence, was very sound in his reasoning. Nevertheless, she wished to clarify matters once and for all. Two or three days later she said to Lopukhov, while playing a game of preference with him and Mikhail Ivanych: “Say, Dmitry Sergeich, I want to ask you something. Did the father of the preceding king of France, the one whose place is now occupied by Napoleon, did he order baptism in the papist religion?”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Marya Aleksevna and Mikhail Ivanych are confusing the financial term “series” (in Russian, *seriya*, with *Considérant*’s use of the term to denote a form of cooperatively organized labor.

<sup>17</sup> Mikhail Ivanych is confusing the German left-Hegelian and materialist philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) with the French king Louis XIV. Feuerbach argued in his two most influential treatises, *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) and *Lectures on the Essence of Religion* (1851), that God and other religious images derive from the projection of idealized human characteristics onto personified deities as a result of ignorance and fear. While thus demystifying and anthropologizing God, Feuerbach also deified man. In his *Lectures* Feuerbach claimed that egoism was an inherent human trait that would not disappear with the overthrow of religion.

<sup>18</sup> Marya Aleksevna is inquiring about Louis XIV. Lopukhov assumes of course that she is asking about Philippe Egalité.

“No, Marya Aleksevna, he did not.”

“And is the papist religion a good thing, Dmitry Sergeich?”

“No, Marya Aleksevna, it is not. I play the seven of diamonds.”

“I only asked out of curiosity, Dmitry Sergeich. Although I’m not an educated woman, I thought it would be interesting to know. How many did you fail to write off Dmitry Sergeich?”

“None, Mary Aleksevna. They train us well at the Academy. A doctor has to know how to play cards.”

For Lopukhov these questions remained a complete mystery. Why did Marya Aleksevna need to know whether Philippe Egalité had ordered baptism in the papist religion?

After all this, wouldn’t it have been excusable if Marya Aleksevna had stopped exhausting herself as a result of this unceasing vigilance? He doesn’t peek down the girl’s corset, his face shows no particular emotion, and he lends her religious books. What more could one ask for? But no, Marya Aleksevna wasn’t satisfied by her own vigilance. She went so far as to arrange a test, as if she’d studied the same rule of logic that I too learned by heart: The observation of phenomena that occur in and of themselves must be verified by experiments, conducted according to a well-formulated plan, in order to ensure the most profound insight into the mysteries of such relationships. She arranged a trial as if she’d read Saxon the Grammarian’s account of how Hamlet was tested in the forest by a maiden.<sup>19</sup>

## VIII. Hamlet’s Trial

One day Marya Aleksevna announced at teatime that she had a headache; she poured out the tea, locked the sugarbowl, and then went off to lie down. Vera and Lopukhov remained sitting in the tearoom, which was right next to the bedroom where Marya Aleksevna had retired. In a few minutes the patient summoned Fedya. “Tell your sister that I can’t fall asleep while they’re talking. Let them move somewhere else where they won’t disturb me. And say it nicely so that Dmitry Sergeich won’t be offended. You know what good care he takes of you!” Fedya went and conveyed his mother’s request. “Why don’t we move to my room, Dmitry Sergeich?” asked Verochka. “It’s far enough away from mother’s bedroom so that we won’t disturb her.” That, of course, is exactly what Marya Aleksevna had expected. In a quarter of an hour she crept along in stocking feet, without her shoes, up to the door of Verochka’s room. It was half-open. Between the door and the jamb there was a nice crack. Marya Aleksevna applied her eye to it and pricked up her ears. This is what she saw:

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<sup>19</sup> Saxon the Grammarian (c. 1150–1220) wrote *Historia Danica*, an account of the early Danish kingdom which contains the legend on which Shakespeare based his play *Hamlet*. The story relates how Hamlet cleverly exposed his enemies’ plans during a rendezvous with a beloved maiden.

There were two windows in Verochka's room with a writing desk standing between them. At one window, near one end of the desk, sat Verochka knitting a woolen scarf for her father, dutifully carrying out Marya Aleksevna's orders. At the other window, near the other end of the desk, sat Lopukhov. He was leaning his elbow on the table and holding a cigar in his hand; his other hand was tucked into his pocket. Between them was a distance of some two arshins, perhaps more.<sup>20</sup> Verochka was looking intently at her knitting, Lopukhov at his cigar. The seating arrangement was most reassuring. This is what she heard: "... But must one view life in that way?" (These were the first words Marya Aleksevna overheard.)

"Yes, Vera Pavlovna, one must."

"In other words, those cold and practical people are telling the truth when they say that man is governed exclusively by the calculation of his own advantage?"

"Yes, they are telling the truth. What we call sublime emotion or ideal aspiration—all that, in the general course of life, is completely insignificant in comparison with each person's pursuit of his own advantage. And in essence these things constitute the same pursuit of advantage."

"Take you, for example. Are you that way?"

"What other way would I be, Vera Pavlovna? Now you'll learn about the fundamental source of my life. Up to the present time the focus of my life has been my studies, preparing me to become a doctor. Excellent. Why did my father send me to the gymnasium? He used to repeat again and again, 'Study, Mitya. When you've learned all you can, you'll become a civil servant. You'll support your mother and me and will enjoy a good life.' That's why I studied; without that calculation my father would never have sent me to the gymnasium. Our family needed a wage earner. As for me, although I came to love my studies, I wouldn't have wasted the time if I hadn't thought the investment would yield a good return. Soon I neared the end of my course in the gymnasium. I persuaded my father to let me enter the Medical Academy instead of taking a post in the civil service. How did this come about? My father and I realized that doctors live much better than lowranking civil servants or even department heads, which was as high a rank as I could reach. That's the reason I wound up in the Academy and why I stayed there: for a big hunk of bread. Without that calculation I would neither have entered the Academy nor remained there."

"But surely you loved your studies in the gymnasium and then you came to love medical science?"

"Yes, but that was icing on the cake. It may even be useful for achieving success. But while you can get along without icing, you can't manage without cake. Love for science was only a result of the process, not its motive. My real motive has always been one and the same: advantage."

"Let's assume that you're right—yes, you are right. All actions, as far as I can see, can be explained by advantage. But isn't that theory rather cold?"

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<sup>20</sup> An arshin is a measurement of length equivalent to 28 inches.

“Theory is supposed to be cold. The mind is supposed to make judgments about things coldly.”

“But it’s merciless.”

“It shows no mercy toward fantasies that are empty and harmful.”

“But it’s prosaic.”

“Poetic form isn’t appropriate for science.”

“So this theory, whose validity I have no choice but to accept, condemns people to a cold, pitiless, prosaic life?”

“No, Vera Pavlovna. The theory is cold, but it teaches man how to procure warmth. A match is cold, as is the side of the matchbox against which it’s struck, as is the wood—but together they produce the fire that cooks our food and heats our bodies. This theory is pitiless, but by following it people will cease to be pitiful objects of idle compassion. A lancet isn’t supposed to bend, or else we’d have to pity the patient, who’d be no better off for our pity. The theory is prosaic, but it reveals the genuine motives of life; poetry resides in the truth of life. Why is Shakespeare the greatest poet? Because his works contain more of the truth of life and less delusion than those of other poets.”

“Then I too will be merciless, Dmitry Sergeich,” said Verochka with a smile. “Don’t be deluded into thinking that you’ve discovered in me a stubborn opponent to your theory regarding the calculation of advantage or that you’ve made a new convert. For some time I’ve been thinking along the same lines as I’ve read in your book and heard from you. But I used to think that these were my own personal thoughts, and that intelligent, learned people thought otherwise; therefore I hesitated. Most of what one used to read was written in opposition and is full of censure and sarcasm against what one observes in oneself and in others. Nature, life, and reason lead in one direction, while books lead in another by saying, ‘It’s all foolish and base.’ You know those objections I expressed to you were in part comical even to me.”

“Yes, they are, Vera Pavlovna.”

“However,” she said, laughing, “we’re paying each other unusual compliments. I say, ‘Dmitry Sergeich, you shouldn’t feel so smug.’ And you say, ‘You’re very amusing with your doubts, Vera Pavlovna!’”

“Well,” said he, also with a smile, “it’s not in our own interests to pay compliments, so we don’t pay compliments.”

“Very well Dmitry Sergeich. People are egoists, isn’t that so? You’ve been talking about yourself; now I want to talk about myself.”

“And so you should. Every person thinks about himself most of all.”

“Very well. Let’s see if I can trip you up with some questions about me.”

“Let’s see.”

“I have a wealthy suitor. I don’t like him. Must I accept his proposal?”

“Calculate what’s the most advantageous for you.”

“The most advantageous? You know that I’m not well off. On the one hand, there’s my dislike for the man; on the other, domination over him, an enviable position in society, wealth, and hordes of admirers.”

“Consider all aspects, then choose what’s most advantageous for you.”

“And if I choose a rich husband and hordes of admirers?”

“I’ll say that you chose what you considered to be in your own best interest.”

“And what will you feel compelled to say about me?”

“If you acted dispassionately after thinking it all over carefully, then I’ll say that you acted in a reasonable manner and most likely won’t come to regret it.”

“But will my choice be reprehensible?”

“People who utter all sorts of nonsense may say what they like about it; people who possess a correct view of life will say that you acted as you should have. If you behaved as you did, it means that your personality is such that it was impossible for you to act differently under those circumstances. They will say that you acted out of necessity and, strictly speaking, you had no other choice.”

“And there would be no censure for my choice?”

“Who has the right to censure the consequences of facts, when these facts exist? Your personality in given circumstances constitutes a fact; your actions are necessary consequences of this fact, produced by the nature of things. You don’t answer for them, and it’s absurd to censure them.”

“You certainly don’t retreat from your theory. So I won’t earn your disapproval if I accept my suitor’s proposal?”

“I would be stupid to censure you.”

“And so I have your permission, perhaps even your approval, perhaps even your encouragement to proceed in such a manner?”

“My advice is always the same: calculate what’s advantageous; as soon as you follow that, you have my approval.”

“Thank you. Now my personal affairs have been settled. Let’s return to the more general question. We began with the proposition that man acts out of necessity and that his actions are determined by the influences under which these actions occur. Stronger influences take precedence over weaker ones. We left the discussion as we reached the point where, when an action has everyday significance, these motives are called ‘advantages,’ while their interplay in a person is called the ‘consideration of advantage.’ Therefore, a man always acts according to the calculation of his own advantage. Have I correctly conveyed this line of thought?”

“You have.”

“You see what a good student I am. Now we’ve finished with this particular question about those actions that have everyday significance. But there are still some problems remaining with the general question. Your book states that man acts out of necessity. But there are some cases in which it seems that my decision to act in one way or another depends on my caprice. For example, I sit playing the piano, leafing through pages of music. Sometimes I turn the page with my left hand, sometimes with my right.

Let's say that I've just turned the page with my right hand; couldn't I have used my left? Doesn't it depend on my caprice?"

"No, Vera Pavlovna. If you turn the pages without thinking which hand to use, then you'll use the hand that's more convenient—there's no question of caprice. If you think, 'Let me turn the page with my right hand,' then you'd do so under the influence of that idea, but the idea wouldn't have come from your caprice; it would have been a necessary result of other ..."<sup>21</sup>

On this last word Marya Aleksevna ceased her eavesdropping. "Well, now they've entered higher realms—it's way beyond me, and I have no need for it. What an intelligent, reliable, one might even say noble young man! What sensible rules he instills into Verochka! That's what it means to be educated: why, if I were to tell her the same thing, she wouldn't listen to me and would even take offense. I couldn't please her because I can't talk in that educated way. But as soon as he starts talking to her like that, she listens and sees that it's all true and she agrees. Yes, the old saying is true: Learning is light and ignorance is darkness. If I'd been brought up with some learning, would things still be the way they are now? I'd have had my husband promoted to the rank of general; I'd have gotten him a position in the provisions department, or in something else just as good. Well, of course I'd have to handle all his dealings with suppliers. He'd be a disaster! And I'd have built a much nicer house than this one. I'd have bought more than a thousand serfs. But now I can't. First of all, you have to show yourself to advantage in society. How can I do that when I don't speak a word of French, or any other language, for that matter? They'd say she has no manners and is only fit to swear in the Haymarket. It just won't do. Ignorance is darkness. Yes, indeed: learning is light and ignorance is darkness."

It was precisely this overheard conversation that led Marya Aleksevna to the conclusion not only that her daughter's conversations with Dmitry Sergeich were not dangerous for Verochka (she'd realized this before), but that they'd even be of some use to her and would assist her efforts to persuade Verochka to forsake her stupid, naive, girlish notions and bring the question of her engagement to Mikhail Ivanych to a swift and happy conclusion.

## IX.

Mrya Aleksevna's relations with Lopukhov verge on farce and show her in a comic guise. Both of these outcomes are decidedly unintended. If I had wanted to concern myself with what we usually call artistic merit, I would have concealed Marya Aleksevna's relations with Lopukhov, the account of which lends an air of vaudeville to this part of the novel. It would have been very easy to conceal them. The essential development of the story could have been explained without them. Would it have been

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<sup>21</sup> In his *Notes from Underground*, Dostoevsky gives a scathing critique of Chernyshevsky's denial that caprice or whim motivates human action. See Introduction, p. 33.



surprising if, even without his friendship with Mruya Aleksevna, the tutor had had the opportunity to exchange a few words with the young woman whose brother he was tutoring? Are that many words really needed in order for love to flourish? There was no need for Mruya Aleksevna's cooperation to guarantee the outcome of Verochka's meeting with Lopukhov. But I'm recounting this affair the way it happened, rather than the way needed to establish my artistic reputation. As a novelist I very much regret that I wrote several pages in which I stooped to the level of vaudeville.

My intention to present this affair as it really was, and not as it would be most convenient to relate, creates yet another unpleasant problem. I am displeased that Marya Aleksevna is shown in such a comic light with her reflections on the fiancée (thought up by Lopukhov), or with her fantastic speculations on the content of the books that Lopukhov gave Verochka to read, or with her discussion on whether Philippe Egalité converted his subjects to Catholicism, or what kind of books were written by Louis XIV. Everyone makes mistakes and these mistakes can become ridiculous if a person is discussing matters about which he knows nothing. But it would be unjust to conclude from Marya Aleksevna's ridiculous blunders that her favorable opinion of Lopukhov was based on these trifles alone. No, indeed. No fantasies about a rich fiancée or a pious Philippe Egalité would have clouded her common sense for one moment if she'd noticed anything the least bit suspicious in Lopukhov's actual words and behavior. But he really did behave himself in precisely the way that Mruya Aleksevna thought only a person of her own ilk would. Why, here was a spry young man who didn't peek into the corset of an attractive young woman, who did not go trailing around behind her, and who played cards with Mruya Aleksevna without making excuses, without pleading, "I'd better go sit and chat with Vera Pavlovna." He discussed various matters in a way that seemed to Marya Aleksevna to approximate her own. Just like her, he said that everything was based on advantage; that when a scoundrel acted like a scoundrel, there was no reason to get excited and whine about principles of honor that he ought to be observing; that the scoundrel was not a scoundrel for nothing, that he had to be one because of his circumstances, that not to be a scoundrel (apart from the fact that this was an impossibility) would be silly on his part, even downright absurd. Yes, Marya Aleksevna was quite right to realize that she and Lopukhov had a great deal in common.

I understand how much Lopukhov is compromised in the eyes of my enlightened public by Marya Aleksevna's sympathy for his way of thinking. But I don't wish to play favorites and won't conceal the evidence, even if it's harmful to Lopukhov's reputation, although I have just proved how I could have hidden the more unsavory side of his relations with the Rozalsky family. I shall do even more: I shall now explain how it was that he actually deserved Marya Aleksevna's favor.

Indeed, as has been demonstrated by the conversation between Lopukhov and Verochka, his way of thinking would appeal much more to people of Marya Aleksevna's ilk than to the eloquent advocates of various sublime ideals. Lopukhov saw things in the same way they appear to the large mass of humanity, except for these advocates

of sublime ideals. If Marya Aleksevna could repeat with considerable pleasure his advice to Verochka concerning Storeshnikov's proposal, then, with the same pleasure, he could attest to the veracity of her drunken confession to Verochka. The similarity between their views was so great that enlightened and high-minded novelists, journalists, and other instructors of our public have long since proclaimed: "People such as Lopukhov are no different from Marya Aleksevna and her ilk." If such enlightened and high-minded writers have thus understood people such as Lopukhov, can we really condemn Marya Aleksevna for not seeing in him anything but what our best writers, thinkers, and teachers have seen?

Of course, if Marya Aleksevna had known even half of what these writers know, she'd have been smart enough to realize that Lopukhov was a bad match for her. However, in addition to the fact that she was ignorant, she had one other excuse for her mistake. Lopukhov had never said to her all that he could have. He was a propagandist, but not quite like the lovers of sublime ideals who constantly attempt to instill in the various Marya Aleksevnas the high-minded notions with which they are so entranced within their own selves. He had enough good sense not to attempt to straighten out a fifty-year-old gnarled tree. Both he and she understood the facts in the same way and discussed them between themselves. As a man with a theoretical education, he could arrive at conclusions from certain facts—something that people like Marya Aleksevna couldn't do because they knew nothing except their everyday, personal cares and common aphorisms of popular, universal wisdom: proverbs, sayings, and other similar old, aged, age-old, and ancient pronouncements. As for conclusions, the two of them never went that far. If, for example, he had begun to explain the meaning of "advantage" (which he'd discussed with Verochka), Marya Aleksevna would probably have winced, realizing that the advantage of his advantage was not exactly the same as that of her advantage. But Lopukhov didn't explain this to her, nor did he explain it in his conversations with Verochka, because she already understood the meaning of this word from the books that formed the basis of their conversation. Of course, it's true that in attesting to the veracity of Marya Aleksevna's drunken confession, Lopukhov would have added: "Since by your own admission, Marya Aleksevna, the new ways are better than the old, I don't forbid those people who take pleasure in it to work to establish the new order. Regarding the stupidity of people, a factor you consider to be an obstacle to setting up the new order, I'm in complete agreement with you. It is an obstacle. But, Marya Aleksevna, you yourself won't argue when I say that people become smarter rather quickly when they realize that it's to their advantage to do so, though they hadn't noticed the necessity of doing so before. You'll also agree that they've had no previous opportunity to acquire this intelligence; but if you provide them with this opportunity, then they'll gladly make use of it." But he didn't bring the conversation to this point with Marya Aleksevna—not out of cautiousness, though he was cautious, but simply because of the same good sense and decorum that kept him from conversing with her in Latin or burdening her with the latest medical discoveries that he himself found so

interesting. He possessed sufficient intelligence and discretion to refrain from inflicting on a person pronouncements that he or she could never understand.

But everything I say is intended to excuse Marya Aleksevna for not managing to sniff out what sort of man Lopukhov really was, and not as an excuse for Lopukhov himself. It would not be appropriate to exonerate him; the reasons will be made clear soon enough. While not exonerating him, some people might wish to excuse him out of love for their fellow man; they should not do so. For example, they might use the excuse that he was a medical student who studied natural science, and that this predisposed him to a materialist point of view. But that kind of excuse is very poor. There are any number of sciences that predispose one to this view: mathematics, history, social science, and all sorts of others. Is it really true that all geometers, astronomers, historians, political economists, jurists, publicists, and many other sorts of scholars are all materialists? Far from it! In other words, Lopukhov does not escape blame. Compassionate people who do not seek to exonerate him could also say in his defense that he's not completely devoid of several praiseworthy characteristics: he made the firm and conscious decision to refuse any material rewards and honors for the work he did for others, finding that the best reward was pleasure in the work itself. And when he met a young woman who was so pretty that he fell in love with her, he decided to treat her with a chaste regard, purer than that with which many brothers regard their own sisters. But, in reply to this defense of his materialism, it must be stated that no man is completely devoid of redeeming characteristics, and that materialists, whatever they are, are still materialists; and by that very fact alone it is resolved and proved that they are base and amoral people who cannot be excused, because to do so would constitute a display of indulgence toward their materialism. Therefore, without exonerating Lopukhov, no excuse is possible. Nor can he be exonerated because the lovers of sublime ideals and the defenders of exalted aspirations, who have declared that materialists are base and amoral people, have lately shown themselves to such advantage, from the point of view of both intelligence and character, in the eyes of all decent people (materialists and nonmaterialists alike), that it now seems superfluous to defend anyone against their censure, while to direct attention to their words has become indecent behavior.

## X.

Needless to say, the main theme of conversation between Verochka and Lopukhov was not which way of thinking should be considered the more justified. In general they spoke very little with each other, and their long conversations, being so infrequent, concerned only peripheral topics, such as ways of thinking and other such subjects. For they knew that a pair of very acute eyes was following their every move. Therefore, they exchanged few words about the main subject that concerned them both, and usually only when they were choosing music for playing and singing. The main subject, which

was allotted so little time in their not very frequent long conversations, and which did not play a very significant role even in their short exchanges, this subject was not their feelings for each other. No, they did not exchange so much as a word about them after their few vague words in their very first conversation on that festive evening. They had no time to discuss such matters. In the two or three minutes available for the exchange of ideas without fear of being overheard, they hardly managed to treat the one main subject—namely, the efforts and plans about how and when Verochka could be delivered from her terrible predicament. And this fact left them neither the time nor the inclination to discuss feelings.

The morning after their very first conversation Lopukhov investigated the means by which one can become an actress. He knew that a young girl would face many unpleasant dangers en route to a career on the stage, but he assumed that with her strength of character she might eventually achieve her goal honorably. It turned out not to be so. Two days later when he came for his lesson he had to tell Verochka, “I advise you to give up the idea of becoming an actress.” “Why?” “Because you’d even do better to accept your suitor’s proposal.” That was the end of the conversation. This was said as they were leafing through music, he to play and she to sing. Verochka felt depressed and several times lost the beat, even though she was singing a song she knew well. When the piece was over and they began to discuss which one to choose next, Verochka managed to say: “That seemed the best way. It was painful to hear that it’s not possible. But no matter. It will be harder for me to go on, but go on I will. I shall become a governess.”

When he returned two days later she said: “I could not find out how one goes about looking for a position as governess. Could you help me, Dmitry Sergeich? I have no one besides you.”

“It’s a pity that I have so few acquaintances who might now be useful. The families in which I give lessons or used to are all people of modest means, and so are their acquaintances, but I’ll try.”

“My friend, I’m taking up your time, but I have no other choice.”

“Vera Pavlovna, you musn’t worry about my time—since now I am your friend.”

Verochka smiled and blushed. She’d failed to notice that she’d replaced the name “Dmitry Sergeich” with the words “my friend.”

Lopukhov smiled too.

“You didn’t mean to say that, Vera Pavlovna. You may take it back if you regret it.”

Vera smiled again. “Too late,” she said, and blushed again, “but I don’t regret it,” she added, blushing even more.

“If necessary, you’ll see what a loyal friend I can be.”

They shook hands.

You have now heard in their entirety their first two conversations after that festive evening.

Two days later in the *Police Gazette*<sup>22</sup> there appeared a notice to the effect that a young gentlewoman able to speak French, German, etc., was seeking a position as a governess. Inquiries should be sent to Soand-so, at such-and-such an address, in Kolomna.<sup>23</sup>

Lopukhov now found it necessary to devote a great deal of time to Verochka's affairs. Every morning he set off, usually on foot and went from the Vyborg district to his acquaintance in Kolomna, whose address was listed in the announcement. The distance was considerable, but he was unable to locate a suitable acquaintance who lived any closer to the Vyborg district. Necessity required that the acquaintance meet a number of conditions: a decent apartment, reasonable family circumstances, and a respectable appearance. A poor apartment would result in offers of inadequate conditions for the governess. If the reference were to lack respectability and a good family situation, it would reflect adversely on the young woman he was recommending. Of course Lopukhov couldn't use his own address in the announcement. What would people think of a young woman if the only person assisting her was a poor student? Thus Lopukhov got his exercise. After collecting from his acquaintance the addresses of those who'd come to make inquiries about the governess, he continued his expedition. The acquaintance said that he was the young woman's distant relative and was only acting as an intermediary, but that she had a nephew who would stop by the following day to negotiate conditions. The nephew arrived (on foot and not in a carriage), inspected the prospects, and, needless to say, was usually dissatisfied by what he observed. One family was too arrogant; in another, the mother was all right, but the father was a fool; in a third, the opposite was true. In those families where one could actually survive, the conditions were unsuitable for Verochka, or she had to know English, which she didn't; or they really wanted a nanny instead of a governess; or the people were all right, although poor, but there was no room in the apartment for Verochka, except in the nursery—where there were already two young children, two infants, a nanny, and a wetnurse. But the announcement continued to appear in the *Police Gazette*, inquiries continued to arrive from those seeking governesses, and Lopukhov did not lose hope.

This search continued for another two weeks. On the fifth day, when Lopukhov returned from his trekking around Petersburg and lay down on his couch, Kirsanov said to him, "Dmitry, you have become a poor partner in our work. Every day you disappear for the whole morning, and half the time you disappear in the evenings as well. Perhaps you're giving too many lessons. Is this the right time to take on more? I'd like to drop those I already have. I've got about forty rubles—enough to last three months, until the end of term. Don't you have even more money stowed away, a hundred rubles or so?"

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<sup>22</sup> *Vedomosti S.-Peterburgskoi gorodskoi politsii*, an official gazette published from 1839 to 1883.

<sup>23</sup> An outlying, predominantly poor and working-class district of St. Petersburg near Pokrovsky (Protector's) Square (now called Turgenev Square).

“More—almost a hundred fifty. But I’m not giving lessons. I dropped them all except for one. I have some business to attend to. When I finish it, you won’t be able to complain about my being so poor a colleague.”

“What sort of business?”

“Well, you see, the household where I’m still giving lessons, although the family itself is rotten, includes a decent young woman. She wants to become a governess to escape from that household. I’m looking for a position for her.”

“Is she a worthy young woman?”

“She is.”

“Well, that’s good. Keep looking.” And with that their conversation ended.

Hey, Messrs. Kirsanov and Lopukhov! You are both learned men, but you haven’t guessed how really good it is! Let’s suppose that what you were talking about is also good. Kirsanov never even thought of asking whether the young woman was pretty, and Lopukhov never thought of mentioning it. Kirsanov never thought of saying, “My friend, you haven’t fallen in love, have you? Look at how much effort you’re going to!” And Lopukhov never thought of saying, “Well, my friend, I’ve become very interested in her.” Or, if he didn’t want to say that, he never thought of staving off such a guess by saying, “I don’t want you to think, Alexander, that I’ve fallen in love.” You see, both of them considered that when the business concerned the deliverance of another person from a bad situation, it was entirely irrelevant whether or not that person (even if that person happened to be a young woman) had a pretty face; and as for falling in love or not falling in love, that didn’t even come up for discussion. They were not even aware of the fact that they were thinking this. And that is precisely what’s the best thing about it. They were not even aware that they were thinking this.

However, doesn’t this demonstrate to the perspicacious sort of reader (as it does to the majority of ordinary men of letters, consisting of the most perspicacious gentlemen), does this not demonstrate, I repeat, that Kirsanov and Lopukhov were both withered men, devoid of any “aesthetic streak”?<sup>24</sup> Not long ago this phrase was fashionable among aesthetic men of letters who possessed elevated aspirations. “Aesthetic streak.” Perhaps it’s still in vogue among them. I don’t know, since I haven’t seen them for quite a while. Is it natural that two young men possessing even the least drop of good taste and a glimmer of feeling wouldn’t be interested in the subject of good looks when they talked about a young woman? Of course, these are men who lack any artistic emotion (aesthetic streak). According to the opinions of others who have studied human nature in circles richer in aesthetic emotion than even a group of our own aesthetic men of letters, young men in similar situations will infallibly discuss a woman precisely within the context of her physical appearance. But that was the way it used to be, gentlemen; not any more. That may be the way it still is, but not among the group of our young

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<sup>24</sup> A sarcastic reference to a group of writers and literary critics, including Vasily Botkin (1811–1869) and Alexander Druzhinin (1824–1864), who opposed Chernyshevsky’s political views and advocated art for art’s sake in contrast to his materialist and social utilitarian aesthetic.

people who are now referred to as “modern youth.” These young people, gentlemen, are somewhat strange.

## XI.

“Well, my friend, still no luck?”

” Not yet, Vera Pavlovna. But don’t despair: something will turn up. I’m visiting two or three households every day. Surely a decent one will turn up sooner or later.”

“Ah, but if you only knew how hard, my friend, how very hard it is for me to remain here. When I could not imagine how near was the chance to escape from this humiliation and filth, then I forced myself into a kind of lifeless stupor. But now, my friend, it’s too hard to breathe in this foul, putrid air.”

“Patience, Vera Pavlovna, patience. We’ll find something!”

This kind of conversation went on for a week.

On Tuesday: “Patience, Vera Pavlovna, patience. We’ll find something.”

“My friend, I’m causing you such trouble and you’re losing so much time! How shall I ever repay you?”

“You will repay me, my friend, if you don’t get angry at me.”

Lopukhov said this and became flustered. Verochka looked at him. No, it wasn’t that he hadn’t finished what he had to say. He hadn’t intended to go on and was waiting for some answer from her.

“But whatever for, my friend? What have you done?”

Lopukhov became even more flustered and seemed to grow a bit sad.

“What’s the matter, my friend?”

“No, you haven’t even noticed,” he said gloomily, and then he began laughing very cheerfully. “Oh, my God,” he said, “how stupid I am, how very stupid! Forgive me, my friend.”

“What on earth for?”

“Never mind. You’ve already repaid me.”

“Ah, so that’s it! What a character you are!”

“All right, call me what you will.”

On Thursday there occurred the trial of Hamlet according to Saxon the Grammarian. For several days afterward Marya Aleksevna took some respite (a very brief one) from her supervision.

Saturday. After tea Marya Aleksevna went to check the linen returned by the laundress.

“My friend, it seems that something can be arranged.”

“Really? If only . . . oh, Lord . . . oh, my Lord, the sooner, the better! I think I’ll die if this goes on much longer. When will it be? And how?”

“It will be decided tomorrow. It’s almost certain, almost.”

“What? How?”

“Calm down, my friend, or we’ll be noticed. You’re nearly jumping for joy. Marya Aleksevna could come back in for something at any moment.”

“You’re a fine one to talk. You came in here so radiant that mama could hardly take her eyes off you.”

“What of it? I told her why I was so cheerful. I realized that I had to tell her something, so I said, ‘I’ve found an excellent position.’”

“You’re intolerable, simply intolerable! You dwell on warnings, but you still haven’t told me what the offer is. Go on, tell me.”

“This morning Kirsanov—you know, my friend, that my comrade’s name is Kirsanov...”

“I know that, you insufferable man! Tell me immediately, without any nonsense.”

“You keep interrupting me, my friend.”

“Oh, my Lord! Still reprimanding instead of telling me about the offer. I don’t know what to do with you! I’d make you go down on your knees, but I can’t do that here. I order you to fall to your knees in your own apartment and I want to receive a note from Kirsanov telling me that you’ve done so. Do you hear what I shall do with you?”

“All right, I’ll go down on my knees. But for now I’ll keep silent. After I’ve carried out the punishment and have been forgiven, then I’ll speak.”

“I forgive you, you intolerable man, only tell me.”

“Thank you. But you have forgiven me, Vera Pavlovna, when you yourself are to blame. You keep on interrupting.”

“What’s this? You called me Vera Pavlovna? What ever happened to my friend?”

“It was a reprimand, my friend. I’m a stern judge and quick to take offense.”

“A reprimand? How dare you reprimand me? I don’t want to listen to you.”

“You don’t?”

“Of course not. What else is there to hear? You’ve said everything already: the offer is almost certain and will be settled tomorrow. You see, my friend, you still know very little today. What else is there to hear? Good-bye, my friend.”

“But just listen, my friend... My friend, listen to me.”

“I won’t and I’m leaving. There now, I’ve returned. Now tell me immediately and I won’t interrupt. Oh, my Lord, if only you knew how you’ve cheered me up! Give me your hand. You see how warmly I clasp it, how very warmly.”

“But why are there tears in your eyes?”

“Thank you. Thank you.”

“This morning Kirsanov gave me the address of a lady with whom I have an appointment tomorrow. I’m not personally acquainted with her, but I’ve heard a great deal about her from our mutual acquaintance who acted as an intermediary. I know her husband; we’ve met many times at the home of this acquaintance. Judging by all of this, I’m sure that life in their household will be tolerable. And when she gave her address to my acquaintance to pass along to me, she said she was certain that we could come to an agreement on the terms. In other words, my friend, one can consider that the matter is almost entirely settled.”



“Oh, how splendid that will be! What joy!” Verochka kept repeating. “But I want to know soon, as soon as possible. After you see her will you come right to us?”

“No, my friend. That would arouse suspicion. I come here only to give lessons. Here’s what we’ll do. I will send a letter to Marya Aleksevna saying that I can’t come on Tuesday and would like to move the lesson to Wednesday. If it says ‘Wednesday morning,’ that will mean that the matter is settled. If it says ‘Wednesday evening,’ then it’s fallen through. But it’s almost sure to say ‘Wednesday morning.’ Marya Aleksevna will tell Fedya, and you, and Pavel Konstantinych.”

“When will the letter arrive?”

“In the evening.”

“So long to wait! No, I won’t have the patience. And what will I learn from the letter? Only yes. And then I’ll have to wait until Wednesday! What torture! If it’s yes, then I want to leave here as soon as possible. I’ll want to know immediately. How can we arrange it? Here’s what I’ll do. I’ll wait for you on the street after you leave your appointment with the lady.”

“My friend, that would be even more indiscreet than if I came here directly. No, it would be better if I came.”

“No, it might not be possible to talk here. In any case mama would get suspicious. No, my plan is better. I have a thick veil and no one will recognize me.”

“Well, it might actually work. Let me think a minute.”

“There’s no time to think. Mama could come back at any moment. Where does this lady live?”

“On Galernaya [Galley] Street, next to the bridge.”

“What time will you be there?”

“The appointment is set for noon.”

“From twelve o’clock on I’ll be sitting on the last bench along Konnogvardeisky [Horseguard] Boulevard at the end closest to the bridge. I said I’d be wearing a thick veil. But here’s a clue: I’ll be holding a sheaf of music. If I’m not there, it means I’ve been delayed. But you should sit down on that bench and wait for me. I may be late, but I’ll definitely come. What a good plan! I’m so grateful to you! How happy I’ll be! And how’s your fiancée, Dmitry Sergeich? You’ve just been demoted from my friend to Dmitry Sergeich. How happy I am, how very happy!” Verochka ran to the piano and started to play.

“My friend, what degradation of art! What debasement of good taste! Operatic arias abandoned for a sprightly galop.”<sup>25</sup>

“Yes indeed!”

A few moments later Marya Aleksevna came in. Dmitry Sergeich played a game of two-handed preference with her; at first he was winning; then he allowed her to recoup, and finally he lost 35 kopecks. It was the first time he had allowed her such a triumph, and he left with her feeling very satisfied indeed, not with the money, but

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<sup>25</sup> A lively French dance in 2/4 time.

with the victory itself. Even those hearts that are most mired in materialism can know purely idealistic joys—which goes to show that the materialistic explanation of life is unsatisfactory.

## XII. Verochka's First Dream

And Verochka has a dream.

She dreams that she's locked up in a damp, dark cellar. Suddenly the door flies open and she finds herself in a field, running about and skipping. She thinks, "How did I not die in that cellar? It's because I had not yet seen this field; if I had, then surely I would have died in the cellar." And once again she is running about and skipping.

Now she dreams that she's stricken by paralysis and thinks, "How can I be paralyzed? This happens only to old men and women, not to young girls." "Oh, yes, it does, very often," says an unfamiliar voice. "But now, as soon as I touch your hand, you'll be cured. You see, you're cured already. Get up!" "Who's that talking? How much better I feel! The illness has passed." And Verochka stands, walks, and runs; once again she's in the field, skipping and running. Again she thinks, "How could I have endured that paralysis? It's because I was born paralyzed and didn't know that others can walk and run. If I'd known, then surely I couldn't have endured it." And she runs and skips.

Now she sees a young woman walking across the field. How strange! Both her face and her gait, everything about her keeps changing, constantly changing. First she's English, then French; now she's German, then Polish; she becomes Russian, English again, then German, again Russian. How can it be that she has one and the same face? Surely an English girl doesn't resemble a French girl or a German a Russian. Even though her face keeps changing, she still has the same face. What a strange creature! And her expression changes constantly, too: how meek, how angry, then sad, then cheerful. Everything keeps changing! Still, she's so kind. How can it be that even when she's angry, she's still so kind? And what a beauty she is! Although her face keeps changing, it becomes even more beautiful with every transformation. The girl approaches Verochka.

"Who are you?"

"He used to call me Vera Pavlovna, but now he calls me 'my friend.'"

"Oh, so it's you, the same Verochka who fell in love with me?"

"Yes, I love you very much. But who are you?"

"I am the bride of your bridegroom."

"Which bridegroom?"

"I don't know. I don't know all my bridegrooms. They know me, but it's impossible for me to know them. I have so many. Choose a bridegroom for yourself from among them. I want all my sisters and my bridegrooms to choose only each other. Were you locked up in a cellar? Were you stricken by paralysis?"

"I was."

“And have you been delivered now?”

“I have.”

“It was I who released you, and I who cured you. Remember that there are still many who have not yet been released and not yet cured. Release them. Cure them. Will you do it?”

“I will. But what’s your name? I’m so eager to know it.”

“I have many different names. I tell each person the name he should use. You shall call me Love of Humanity. That’s my real name. Not many people use it. But that’s what you shall call me.”

Now Verochka is walking through a town. She comes upon a cellar where some young girls are locked up. Verochka touches the lock and it falls away. “Come out,” she says, and they do. She comes upon a room where some young girls are paralyzed. “Get up,” she says, and they do. They stand and begin to walk. And now they’re all out in the field, running about and skipping once again. Oh, what fun! How much nicer it is to be together with them than to be all alone! Oh, what fun!

### **XIII.**

Of late Lopukhov had very little time to spend with his academic associates. Kirsanov, who did keep up with them, happened to mention in reply to their questions what was occupying so much of Lopukhov’s time. As we know, it was one of these mutual acquaintances who provided the address of the lady Lopukhov was now going to see.

“How wonderfully things will be arranged, if it all works out,” Lopukhov thought on his way to see her. “In two years, at the most two and a half, I’ll have a position at the university. Then I’ll be able to earn a living. Meanwhile she’ll be living harmoniously with Madame B., if only Madame B. really is a fine woman, as I have no reason to doubt.”

And indeed Lopukhov discovered that Madame B. was a kind and intelligent woman, with no pretensions, even though because of her husband’s position, her own fortune, and her family she could have had considerable pretensions. The terms she proposed were fair, the household was most suitable for Verochka, and everything was turning out extremely well, just as Lopukhov had expected. Madame B., for her part, found Lopukhov’s answers to her questions about Verochka’s character most satisfactory. Everything was moving ahead well. After half an hour more of discussion, Madame B. said, “If your young aunt finds my terms agreeable, then I’ll invite her to accept the position and move in, the sooner the better as far as I’m concerned.”

“She finds them agreeable. She has authorized me to act on her behalf. But now that we’ve settled the affair, I must tell you something that wasn’t worth mentioning before we reached our agreement. This girl is no relative of mine. She’s the daughter of

a civil servant in whose family I give lessons. Except for me, she had no one to whom she could entrust this matter. But I'm not related to her in any way."

"I knew that, Monsieur Lopukhov. You, Professor N." (she named the person who had provided her with the address), "and your comrade who spoke with him about this matter all know each other to be sufficiently honorable so that you could discuss your friendship with a young woman without compromising her in the eyes of the other two. Professor N. has a similar opinion of me; knowing that I was looking for a governess, he considered it within his rights to tell me that this young woman wasn't your relative. Don't blame him for his indiscretion. He knows me very well. I'm also an honest person, Monsieur Lopukhov, and I too understand who deserves respect. I trust Professor N. as much as I trust myself and as much as he trusts you. But Professor N. didn't know her name; now it seems that I can ask you what it is, since we have concluded our discussion and either today or tomorrow she will be joining our household."

"Her name is Vera Pavlovna Rozalskaya."

"Now I have something else to explain. It may seem strange to you, given my solicitude for my children, that I've decided to settle this affair with you, never having seen the young woman who will have such a close relationship with my children. But I know very, very well the kind of people who belong to your circle. I know that if one of you' takes such a friendly interest in another person, then that person must be a rare find for a mother who wants her own daughter to become a truly fine person. Therefore a personal inspection seems completely unnecessary and inappropriate. I'm paying a compliment to myself, and not to you."

"I'm very pleased now for Mademoiselle Rozalskaya. Her own home life is so awful that she would be very happy in any decent household. But I never imagined that she would enjoy the truly wonderful life that awaits her in your home."

"Yes, Professor N. told me that she has a difficult life at home."

"Very difficult." Lopukhov began to tell Madame B. all that she needed to know so that in her conversations with Verochka she could avoid all subjects that would remind the girl of past unpleasantness. Madame B. listened sympathetically and at last shook Lopukhov's hand and said, "No more, Monsieur Lopukhov, or else I shall break down completely. At my age" (almost forty), "it would be absurd to reveal that I still can't listen with equanimity to an account of family tyranny such as I myself endured during my youth."

"Allow me to say one more thing. You'll probably consider it of so little importance that it may not even be worth mentioning. Still it's better to warn you. This young woman is running away from a match that is being forced upon her by her mother."

Madame B. became more thoughtful. Lopukhov looked at her for some time and became more thoughtful, too.

"If I'm not mistaken, this circumstance does not seem as insignificant to you as I'd hoped?"

Madame B. appeared to be terribly upset.

“Forgive me,” he continued, seeing how upset she was. “Forgive me, but I see that it disturbs you.”

“Yes, it’s a very serious matter, Monsieur Lopukhov. Leaving home against your parents’ wishes could provoke a major quarrel. But, as I told you, that doesn’t matter. If she were escaping merely from their coarseness and tyranny, it would still be possible to smoothe over the difficulty one way or another; in the last resort one could expend a certain sum of money and they would be content. That’s insignificant. But . . . when that kind of mother is forcing a match—it means that the suitor is wealthy and the match advantageous.”

“Of course,” said Lopukhov despondently.

“Of course, Monsieur Lopukhov, of course he’s wealthy. That is precisely what disturbs me. In such a case the mother can never be appeased. And you know about the rights of parents!<sup>26</sup> In this instance they would take full advantage of them. They would initiate a lawsuit and carry it through to the end.”

Lopukhov rose.

“And so I’ve only to ask you to forget everything I’ve said to you.”

“No, wait. At least let me vindicate myself somehow. Good Lord, I must seem very nasty to you now. The thing that must make any decent person feel sympathy and spring to the girl’s defense gives me pause. Oh, what pitiful beings we are!”

It was pitiful indeed to look at her: she wasn’t feigning. She really was in great distress. She was so embarrassed that for quite a while her speech was rather incoherent; then she managed to compose her thoughts. But, whether incoherent or composed, her words conveyed no new information to Lopukhov. And by now he himself was quite upset. He was so preoccupied by what she’d just disclosed to him that he couldn’t concern himself with her explanations on the occasion of the disclosure. After he’d allowed her to have her say, he spoke:

“Everything you’ve said in your own defense has been in vain. I was obliged to stay so as not to appear rude or to make you think that I blame you or that I’m angry. But I must confess that I wasn’t really listening to you. Oh, if only I didn’t know that you were absolutely right. Yes, how splendid it would be if you were wrong. I’d tell her that we couldn’t agree on terms or that you weren’t to my liking, and that’s all there was to it. She and I could continue to hope that we’d find another opportunity for deliverance. But now, what can I possibly tell her?”

Madame B. began to weep.

“What can I tell her?” repeated Lopukhov as he descended the stairs. “What will she do? What will she do?” he wondered as he turned from Galernaya Street into the lane that leads to Konnogvardeisky Boulevard.

Needless to say, Madame B. was not absolutely right in the way grownups are when they prove to children that they can’t reach out and touch the moon. Given her own

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<sup>26</sup> Prerevolutionary Russian law granted parents nearly unlimited authority over their children, including the power to have them incarcerated for disobedience. See also n. 66 below.

status in society and the rather important connections stemming from her husband's position, it was very likely, even certain, that if she really had wanted Verochka to live in her household, Marya Aleksevna could not have snatched her daughter away, nor could she have created any serious unpleasantness either for her or for her husband, who would have been the official respondents in the case, and whose welfare she had in mind. Nevertheless, Madame B. would have incurred a great deal of trouble, and perhaps even a few unpleasant exchanges. She would have had to ask favors of various people, whose services it might have been better to reserve for her own needs, not for those of others. Who is obligated, and what reasonable person would wish to behave any differently? We have no right whatever to condemn Madame B. And Lopukhov was not wrong to despair over Verochka's deliverance.

## XIV.

Meanwhile Verochka sat for a very long while on the agreed-upon bench; each and every time a peaked service cap came around the corner, her heart began to beat. Finally! It was he! Her friend! She jumped up and ran to meet him.

Perhaps he would have managed to appear more cheerful as he approached the bench, but taken unawares, much sooner than he had expected to show her his face, he was caught with a gloomy expression.

"No luck?"

"None, my friend."

"But it was almost certain? Why no luck? How could it be, my friend?"

"Let's head toward home. I'll accompany you and we can chat. In a few moments I'll tell you why we had no luck. But for now let me think. I still haven't gathered my thoughts. We need to come up with something new. Let's not despair; we'll think up something." With these last few words he was trying to cheer himself up, but not having much success.

"Tell me at once. I can't bear to wait. You say 'come up with something new.' Does that mean everything we thought up before is useless? Can't I become a governess? Oh, poor, unfortunate me!"

"Why should I deceive you? No, you can't. I wanted to tell you. But have patience, my friend, have patience! Be strong. The strong will eventually succeed."

"I am strong, my friend, but it's very difficult."

They walked on for several moments in silence.

What's this? Yes, she has something under her coat.

"My friend, you're carrying something. Give it to me and I'll carry it for you."

"No, there's no need. It isn't heavy. Never mind."

They continue on again in silence. They walk for a long time.

"I was so excited that I couldn't get to sleep until two o'clock this morning. And when I did, I had such a wonderful dream! I dreamed that I was being liberated from

a stuffy cellar, that I'd been paralyzed and was cured, and then I ran out into a field with many other girls who'd also been freed from cellars and cured of their paralysis. It was so much fun to run around in that spacious field. But my dream hasn't come true. I thought I wouldn't be returning home."

"My friend, give me your bundle, I'll carry it for you, since it's no longer a secret."

Once again they continue on in silence. Thus they walk for a long time.

"My friend, do you know what I've concluded as a result of the discussion with that lady? You can't leave home without Marya Aleksevna's permission. You can't. No. Here, let me take your arm. I'm worried about you."

"No, it's nothing. It's just a little hard to breathe under this veil."

She throws off the veil. "Now that's better. I'm all right."

("How pale she is!") "No, my friend, don't think about what I just said. I didn't mean it. We'll manage somehow."

"How will we, my friend? You're saying that just to console me. There's nothing we can possibly do."

He remains silent. Once again they walk on in silence.

("How pale! How very pale!") "My friend, there is one way."

"What's that, my dear?"

"I shall tell you, my friend, but only after you've calmed down a little. We must discuss it dispassionately."

"Tell me immediately. I won't calm down until you do."

"No, you're too agitated, my friend. You can't make important decisions now. In a little while. Soon. Here's the entrance. Good-bye, my friend. As soon as I see that you're able to reply dispassionately, I'll tell you."

"When will that be?"

"The day after tomorrow at my lesson."

"That's too long to wait."

"I'll come tomorrow on purpose."

"No, sooner."

"Tonight."

"No, I won't let you go. Come in with me now. You say I'm upset and I can't reason. All right. Have dinner with us. You'll see how calm I can be. After dinner mama will take a nap and then we can talk."

"But how can I just walk in with you? If we enter together, your mother will get suspicious again."

"Suspicious! What do I care? No, my friend. In fact, it would be better if you come in. I had my veil raised and someone could have seen us."

"You're right."

## XV.

Marya Aleksevna was very surprised indeed to see her daughter and Lopukhov come in together. She set about examining them with utmost scrutiny.

"I dropped in on you, Marya Aleksevna, to say that since I'll be busy the day after tomorrow I'll come for the lesson tomorrow instead. Let me sit down. I'm very tired and upset. I'd like to have a little rest."

"What on earth is the matter with you, Dmitry Sergeich? You look awfully gloomy."

"Are they returning from an amorous rendezvous, or did they just happen to meet by chance?" Marya Aleksevna wondered. "If it were the former, shouldn't he be more cheerful? If they'd had a lovers' quarrel because she wouldn't agree to his desires, then he'd certainly be angry; but in that case he'd never have escorted her home. And once more she went straight to her room and didn't even look at him: no sign of a quarrel. No, it looks as if they just met by chance. On the other hand . . . the devil knows what they're up to. One has to be vigilant."

"There's nothing wrong, Marya Aleksevna, but Vera Pavlovna looks a bit pale, at least it seems so to me."

"Verochka? It happens occasionally."

"Perhaps it just seems so to me. I confess that my head is spinning from so many ideas."

"What is it, Dmitry Sergeich? Have you had some kind of disagreement with your fiancée?"

"No, Marya Aleksevna. I'm pleased with my fiancée. But I'd like to quarrel with my parents."

"What are you saying, my dear fellow! Dmitry Sergeich, how can you quarrel with your parents? I'd never have thought it of you, my dear boy."

"It's an impossible situation, Marya Aleksevna. It's that kind of family. They demand God knows what from a man, more than he can ever do."

"That's a different story, Dmitry Sergeich. You can't please everyone; one must know one's limits, that's for sure. If that's what it is, a quarrel about money, then I certainly can't blame you."

"Forgive me if I'm rude, Marya Aleksevna. I'm so upset that I need to have some rest among pleasant and well-respected company. I can't find that kind of company anywhere except in your house. Permit me to invite myself to dinner with you today. Let me send Matryona out to make a few special purchases. I think that Denker's Wineshop isn't far from here; he doesn't stock the very best wines, but it will do."<sup>27</sup>

Marya Aleksevna became furious at the first mention of his staying to dinner, but when he mentioned Matryona, she managed to stifle her fury and her face assumed an expectant expression: "Let's just see, my fine friend, what you'll contribute to the dinner. From Denker's—well now, it ought to be something good!" But her fine friend,

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<sup>27</sup> Denker, a prominent Petersburg vintner, owned several shops throughout the city.



who wasn't looking at her expression, had already taken out his cigar case, torn off a corner of a long-lost letter, taken out a pencil, and was now writing something down.

"If I may be so bold as to inquire, Marya Aleksevna, what kind of wine do you prefer?"

"My dear Dmitry Sergeich, I must confess that I know nothing about wines and hardly ever drink them. It's not a woman's affair."

"Oh, sure," thought Lopukhov, "from the first glance one could tell from your face that you don't drink."

"Of course not, Marya Aleksevna. But even young ladies can drink maraschino liqueur. Will you allow me to order some?"

"What's that, Dmitry Sergeich?"

"It's hardly a wine at all. It's more like a sweet syrup." He took out a ten-ruble note. "I think that'll be enough." He glanced over his list. "Just in case, here's another five rubles."

Three weeks' earnings, his allowance for a whole month! But he had no choice: he needed a large bribe for Marya Aleksevna.

Marya Aleksevna's eyes became moist and the sweetest smile imaginable took full possession of her face.

"Is there a confectionery nearby? I don't know if they sell any walnut cake, the best as far as my taste goes, Marya Aleksevna. But if they don't, we'll take whatever they have. Please don't be offended."

He went out to the kitchen and sent Matryona off to make the purchases.

"Let's splurge today, Marya Aleksevna. I want to toast the quarrel with my parents. Why not go on a binge, Marya Aleksevna? Things couldn't be better with my fiancée. And once that's in the bag, we'll really start living! Am I right, Marya Aleksevna?"

"Right you are, my dear Dmitry Sergeich. But what's this I see? You're throwing a lot of money around! I wouldn't have expected it from such a reasonable man. Could it be you've received an advance from your fiancée, or what?"

"No, I haven't, Marya Aleksevna, but if I've got some money, then we can splurge. What kind of advance? That's not the point! You can't make do on advances! Business must be conducted on the up and up, or else you'll arouse suspicion. And it's dishonorable, Marya Aleksevna."

"Dishonorable, Dmitry Sergeich. Dishonorable, indeed. In my opinion honor must always be maintained."

"Right you are, Marya Aleksevna."

During the half hour or three-quarters of an hour remaining until dinner the conversation continued in a most amicable way about various honorable subjects. Dmitry Sergeich, incidentally, declared in a burst of candor that the date of his wedding was fast approaching. What about Vera Pavlovna's marriage? Marya Aleksevna couldn't say much, since she wasn't putting any pressure on her daughter. Of course not. But in his estimation Vera Pavlovna would soon agree to marry. She hadn't actually said anything to him, but he had eyes to see. "You and t Marya Aleksevna, we're old birds,

and as they say, old birds can't be caught with chaff. I may still be young, but I too am an old bird, an old hand. Isn't that right, Marya Aleksevna?"

"Yes indeed, my boy, an old hand!"

In short, this pleasant heart-to-heart with Marya Aleksevna so revived Dmitry Sergeich that his grief entirely disappeared. He was more cheerful than Marya Aleksevna had ever seen him. "That sly rogue! That rascal! He's already snitched over a thousand rubles from his fiancée; his parents have found out that he's lined his pockets and now they've begun to pester him. And he says, 'No, dear mama and papa, as a dutiful son, I'm prepared to respect you, but I have no money for you.' What a scoundrel! It's very pleasant to chat with such a fellow, especially when, after hearing Matryona's return, you run into the kitchen pretending that you're going to the bedroom to fetch a handkerchief, and you see that the wine cost twelve rubles fifty kopecks, and that we'll only drink a third of it at dinner, and that the confectioner's cake cost one ruble fifty kopecks—and that, it's safe to say, is money thrown away—on a cake! Still, there'll be some left over, and I can serve it to my old cronies instead of preserves—and not only not suffer any loss, but actually save money."

## XVI.

Verochka is sitting in her room.

"Did I do the right thing in making him come in? Mama looked at us so intently.

"And what an awkward position I've put him in! How can he stay to dinner?"

"My God, what will ever become of poor me?"

'There's one way,' he says. No, my dear, there isn't any.

"Yes, there is one. There it is: the window. When things become too difficult, I shall throw myself out of it.

"How ridiculous! 'When things become too difficult.' What about now?"

"When you do throw yourself out a window, how fast you travel! It's as if you're flying instead of falling. It must be very nice. But then you hit the sidewalk—how hard it is! Is it painful? No, I doubt there's time enough to feel the pain. Still it's very hard. But that's for one brief moment; on the other hand, before that moment, there's the air-soft as a featherbed—and it parts so easily and gently... Yes, that's lovely..."

"And then what? Everyone will stare—the skull's split open, the face is smashed, bloodied, and muddied... No, if only you could spread some clean sand on the spot beforehand—but even the sand here is dirty... No, I mean some of the cleanest, whitest sand: now that would be nice! Then your face wouldn't be so smashed: It would stay clean and wouldn't frighten anyone.

"In Paris the poor, unfortunate girls poison themselves with charcoal fumes. That's a good way, a very good way. Not like throwing yourself out the window.

"They're talking so loudly. What are they saying? No, I can't make it out.

“And I would leave him a note telling him everything. I told him then, ‘This is my birthday.’ How bold I was that day! How could I have been so bold? I was so foolish and didn’t understand a thing.

“Yes, those poor girls in Paris are very clever. So why can’t I be clever, too? How amusing it would be. They’ll enter my room and won’t be able to see anything. It’ll be full of fumes and the air will be green. They’ll get frightened. What on earth? Where’s Verochka? Mama will shout at papa, ‘Why are you standing there? Break open the window!’ They will and then they’ll see me. I’ll be sitting at my dressing table, my head slumped forward and my face covered by my hands. ‘Verochka, are you overcome with fumes?’ I’ll make no reply. ‘Verochka, why don’t you say something?’ ‘Oh, she has suffocated!’ They’ll start to scream and cry. How amusing it will be when they start to cry, and mama will say how much she loved me.

“Yes, but he’ll feel sorry for me. Well, I’ll leave him a note.

“Yes, I’ll consider that and maybe I’ll do just what those poor girls in Paris do. Once I say it, I’ll do it. I’m not afraid.

“What is there to be afraid of? It’ll be so nice! But I’ll wait a bit to find out what this ‘one way’ is that he’s talking about. No, there isn’t any way. He only said that to calm me down.

“Why do people try to do that? It really isn’t necessary! Can you ever comfort someone when there’s no way to help? Even though he’s smart, he tried, too. Why? It’s so unnecessary.

“Why is he talking like that? It’s as though he were cheerful! He sounds cheerful!

“Can he really have come up with another way?

“No, there isn’t any.

“But if he hasn’t, then why does he sound so cheerful?

“What has he come up with?”

## XVII.

“Verochka, come to dinner!” called Marya Aleksevna.

In fact, Pavel Konstantynych had returned and the pie had been ready for some time—not the one from the confectioner’s, but Matryona’s own homemade pie with meat filling left over from yesterday’s soup.

“Marya Aleksevna, have you ever tried a glass of vodka before dinner? It’s good for you, especially this kind here, flavored with the rind of bitter oranges.<sup>28</sup> I’m speaking as a doctor. Please, try some. No, no, you must. As a doctor I’m prescribing that you try some.”

“Well, since one should always follow a doctor’s orders—but only half a glass.”

“No, Marya Aleksevna, half a glass won’t do you any good.”

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<sup>28</sup> Russians often flavor their vodka with a variety of fruits, herbs, and grasses, both for allegedly medicinal purposes and to provide an assortment of tastes to complement foods served before meals.

“What about you, Dmitry Sergeich?”

“I’ve grown old and settled down, Marya Aleksevna. I’ve taken the pledge.”

“My word, it certainly warms me up!”

“That’s why it’s good for you, Marya Aleksevna.”

(“How very cheerful he is! Could there really and truly be a way? And since when has he become so friendly with her? Why won’t that sly fellow even look at me?”)

They sat down to dinner.

“And now Pavel Konstantinych and I will try some ale. It’s just like beer, no more, no less. Try some, Marya Aleksevna.”

“If you say it’s like beer, I’ll try it. Why shouldn’t I drink some beer?”

(“Good Lord, so many bottles! How foolish I am! That’s what this ‘friendship’ is all about!”)

(“What a scoundrel he is! He’s not drinking. He merely sipped his ale. It’s good stuff, this ale. It smells a bit like kvass<sup>29</sup> and it has a kick. Yes, quite a kick. As soon as I marry her off to that Misha Storesnikov, I’m going to give up vodka and switch to ale. This fellow will never drink himself into a stupor! At least sip some, you rascal! Well, so much the better for me. But I bet if he really wanted to, he could drink like a fish.”)

“You really ought to drink something, Dmitry Sergeich.”

“I’ve drunk quite a bit in my time, Marya Aleksevna. I’ve built up a reserve that’ll last for a good long while. When I had neither work nor money, I drank; when I have both work and money, I don’t need to. I feel good even without it.”

The entire dinner continued in this same way. The confectioner’s pie was served.

“Dear Matryona Stepanovna, what will we drink with dessert?”

“Right away, Dmitry Sergeich, right away.” Matryona returns carrying a bottle of champagne.

“Vera Pavlovna, you haven’t drunk anything and neither have I. Now let’s both drink. To my fiancée and to your suitor!”

“What’s this?” I thinks Verochka. “Is that it?”

“May God grant happiness to your fiancée and to Verochka’s suitor,” says Marya Aleksevna. “And may He allow us old folks to see Verochka married soon.”

“Don’t worry, you’ll see it very soon, Marya Aleksevna. Right, Vera Pavlovna? Right!”

“Could it be he really means it?” wonders Verochka.

“Yes, Vera Pavlovna, of course it is. Just say yes.”

“Yes,” says Verochka.

“There now, Vera Pavlovna, you’ve been worrying your mother for nothing. ‘Yes,’ you said, and that’s that. So now we’ll drink another toast. To Vera Pavlovna’s wedding—the sooner, the better! Drink up, Vera Pavlovna! Don’t worry, it’ll all be all right. Let’s clink our glasses. To your wedding day!”

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<sup>29</sup> A popular fermented drink made from fruits, vegetables, or, most commonly, black bread.

They clink.

“God willing, God willing! Thank you, Verochka, you’re a great comfort to me in my old age!” says Marya Aleksevna, wiping away her tears. The English ale and the maraschino liqueur have put her in a sentimental mood.

“God willing, God willing,” repeats Pavel Konstantynych.

“How pleased we all are with you, Dmitry Sergeich,” says Marya Aleksevna at the end of dinner. “How very pleased. You’ve treated us to a feast in our own house. You’ve made it a holiday!” By now her eyes are more mellow than bright.

Not every crafty scheme turns out as well as this one. Lopukhov had not counted on this result when he bought the wine. He’d merely intended to bribe Marya Aleksevna in order to remain in her good graces after having invited himself to dinner. Would she really get drunk in the presence of an outsider? Even though she had considerable regard for him, she still didn’t trust him entirely—after all, whom could she trust? And she herself had never expected that matters would progress so rapidly. She’d planned to postpone the main treat until after tea. But the flesh is weak. She could have withstood the vodka and any familiar beverage, but the ale and other delicacies proved too great a temptation for her inexperience.

Dinner turned out to be a festive occasion, worthy of a nobleman; therefore Marya Aleksevna told Matryona to fetch the samovar, as befits such a splendid repast. But she and Lopukhov were the only ones to partake of this gentility. Verochka said that she didn’t want any tea and went to her room. Pavel Konstantynych, a most uncultured man, went to lie down as usual, right after the last course. Dmitry Sergeich drank slowly; after finishing one cup, he requested another. At this point Marya Aleksevna gave out; she excused herself by saying that she’d been feeling badly ever since that morning. The guest begged her not to stand on ceremony and he was soon left there all alone. Lopukhov drank a second cup, followed by a third, and then dozed in the armchair—dead drunk, in Matryona’s judgment, just like her own treasure, Marya Aleksevna. Meanwhile, her own treasure was snoring away; it must have been this snoring that awoke Dmitry Sergeich after Matryona had cleared away the samovar, the cups, and herself into the kitchen.

## XVIII.

“Forgive me, Vera Pavlovna,” said Lopukhov upon entering her room. He spoke very softly and his voice was shaking now, although he’d been shouting during dinner. He also said “Vera Pavlovna” instead of “my friend.” “Forgive my impertinence. You must understand what I was saying: a husband and wife cannot be separated. You will be free.”

“My dear. You saw that I was crying when you came in.<sup>30</sup> Those were tears of joy.” Lopukhov kissed her hand, many times.

“So, my dear, you are liberating me from this cellar. How kind and clever you are! How on earth did you think of it?”

“I thought of it that evening while we were dancing together.”

“My dear, even then I thought you were a kind man. You are liberating me, my dear. I’m prepared to be patient, now that I know I’ll be leaving this cellar. It won’t be so stuffy in here anymore. How will I be leaving it, my dear?”

“Here’s how, Verochka. It’s now almost the end of April. My work at the Academy will be done by the beginning of July. I must finish so I can earn enough for us to live on. Then you’ll leave this cellar. You need only endure another three months, even less. You will leave. I’ll become a doctor. The salary isn’t large, but it will do. I’ll start a private practice, as large as it needs to be, and we’ll be able to live.”

“Oh, my dear, we’ll need very, very little. But there is one thing: I don’t want to live on your money. Why, even now I’m giving lessons. I shall lose them as soon as mama tells everyone that I’m the villain. But I shall find other lessons. I’ll be able to live. Isn’t that right? I shouldn’t be living on your money, should I?”

“Who told you that, my dear friend Verochka?”

“Oh, he still asks who told me! Weren’t you the one who was always going on about it? And what about all your books? A good half of each one is devoted to this question.”

“All my books? My going on about it? But when, Verochka?”

“When? Who was it who said that everything is based on money? Who was it, Dmitty Sergeich?”

“Well, what of it?”

“Do you think I’m such a silly little baby that I can’t draw a conclusion based on premises, as your books would say?”

“But what conclusion? God knows what you’re going on about, my dear friend Verochka.”

“Oh, you sly one! You do want to be a despot! You want me to be your slave.<sup>31</sup> No, sir. That will never be, Dmitty Sergeich. Do you understand?”

“You explain it and I’m sure to understand.”

“You said, Dmitty Sergeich, that everything is based on money. Your books said that the person who has money has both power and rights. That means that as long as a woman is living at a man’s expense, she’s in a state of dependence. Isn’t that correct, Dmitty Sergeich? You assumed that I didn’t understand and would be your slave. No, Dmitty Sergeich, I won’t allow you to be a tyrant over me. You would tl,’ to be a kind, beneficent despot, but I don’t want even that, Dmitty Sergeich. So, my dearest, how

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<sup>30</sup> Vera and Lopukhov have switched to the familiar *ty* from the more formal *vy*. Like French and German, Russian contains two forms of the pronoun “you,” one indicative of politeness or formality between equals or deference to a superior, the other of affection, condescension, or authority.

<sup>31</sup> The image of woman as slave appears once again in Vera’s fourth dream (see below, pp. 359–79).

shall we live? You will cut up people's arms and legs, feed them vile potions, and I will give piano lessons. How else shall we arrange our life?"

"Well, well, Verochka. Each of us will guard his own independence as much as he can from the other, no matter how much he loves the other, no matter how much he trusts the other. I don't know whether or not you'll succeed in doing what you say, but that really doesn't matter. Once a person has resolved to do it, that's really enough protection from the other. He feels that he can get along on his own, that he can refuse support if he has to, and that feeling alone is almost enough. But what funny people we are, Verochka! You say you don't want to live at my expense and I praise you for saying it. Who else says such things, Verochka?"

"Amusing, very amusing, my dear. But what of it? We'll live as we choose, as best suits us. How else shall we arrange our life, my dear?"

"Vera Pavlovna, I've already expressed my thoughts about one aspect of our life which you were kind enough to reject totally with your own plan, calling me a tyrant and a slavemaster. Be so kind as to devise your own arrangements for other aspects of our relationship. I consider it futile to make any other suggestions, and then have you destroy them in the same way. Verochka, my friend, tell me yourself how you plan to live; no doubt the only thing left then for me to say will be 'How cleverly you've thought it all out, my dear!'"

"What's this? You deign to pay me compliments? You desire to be courteous? I know all too well that flattery serves to disguise domination as humility. I ask you to speak more directly in the future. You praise me to excess, my dear. I'm embarrassed. No, don't praise me or I'll become too arrogant."

"All right, Vera Pavlovna, I'll begin to be rude to you, if that's more to your liking. There's so little femininity in your nature that you'll probably devise schemes that are thoroughly masculine."

"Tell me, my dear, what does this 'femininity' entail? I realize that a woman's voice is contralto, and a man's is baritone. What follows from that? Is it really worth discussing just so that we stay contraltos? Is it really worth entreating us? Why is everyone trying to persuade us to remain feminine? Isn't that absurd, my dear?"

"Yes, indeed, Verochka, and crude<sup>32</sup> as well."

"Well, my dear, I for one shall not worry about femininity. With your permission, Dmitry Sergeich, I'll express thoroughly masculine ideas about how we are to arrange our life. We will be friends. But I want to be your best friend. I have yet to say how I despise your dear Kirsanov!"

"You shouldn't, Verochka. He's a fine person."

"I detest him. I shall forbid you to see him."

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<sup>32</sup> Suggesting both vulgarity and banality, the Russian word *poshlost'* is difficult to translate precisely. Essentially it expresses the intellectual's disdain for the philistine values and false pride imputed to the petty bourgeoisie. "Self-satisfied mediocrity" or "unjustified self-satisfaction" comes closest to the Russian meaning.

“A splendid beginning. You’re so frightened of my despotism that you want to make your husband into a puppet. How, pray tell, can I stop seeing him when we’re sharing our living quarters?”

“Yes, and undoubtedly you’re always in each other’s arms.”

“Naturally. At teatime and at dinner. Only our hands are so busy, it’s rather difficult to embrace.”

“And you’re inseparable for days on end.”

“No doubt. I in my room, he in his. Is that almost inseparable?”

“Well, if that’s the case, why can’t you stop seeing him altogether?”

“Because we’re friends. Sometimes we feel like talking, and we do so as long as it’s no burden to the other.”

“You sit together, embrace and quarrel, quarrel and embrace. I detest him.”

“What on earth are you saying, Verochka? We have never quarreled. We live almost separately. We’re friends, that’s true. But what of it?”

“So, my dear, I’ve fooled you! I’ve really fooled you! You didn’t want to tell me how we would arrange our life together, but you’ve told me everything. How I’ve fooled you! Listen now and I’ll tell you how we’ll live, according to your own account. First, we’ll have two rooms, one for you and one for me, as well as a third room where we’ll have tea and dinner, and receive those guests who come to see both of us, not you or me exclusively. Second, I’ll never dare to enter your room so as not to pester you: Kirsanov doesn’t either, and that’s why you never quarrel. Nor will you enter my room. That’s the second point. Now for the third. Oh, dear, I forgot to ask you about this one. Does Kirsanov interfere in your affairs or you in his? Do you have the right to question each other about anything?”

“Oh, now I know why you’re so interested in Kirsanov! I won’t answer.”

“No, I detest him in any case. And don’t say it: there’s no need to. I know the answer. You have no right to question each other about anything. And so, third: I won’t have the right to question you about anything, my dear. If you want to or have to tell me something about your affairs, then you’ll tell me yourself. And the opposite is also true. These are our three rules. What else?”

“Verochka, the second point demands explanation. We’ll see each other in the neutral room for tea and dinner.<sup>33</sup> But imagine the following circumstance. We drank our tea together in the morning and now I’m sitting in my own room, not daring to poke my nose into yours. That means that I won’t see you until dinner, correct?”

“Of course.”

“Fine. Let’s say that an acquaintance drops by and tells me that another friend of mine will be coming over at two o’clock. But I have to go out on business at one. May

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<sup>33</sup> Chernyshevsky established similar living arrangements with his own wife, Olga Sokratovna, apparently in accordance with wishes she expressed before their marriage. The relationship between Vera and Lopukhov also recalls the practices of some early Christian sects.



I request that you convey the necessary message to the friend who'll be coming at two o'clock? May I ask you to do that if you plan to be at home?"

"Of course you may. Whether or not I agree to do it is another matter. If I refuse, you can't object, nor can you seek an explanation. But you may certainly ask whether I'm willing to provide assistance. That you may do."

"Good. But I didn't know all that at teatime, and I'm not allowed to enter your room. How then will I make my request?"

"Oh, Lord, how simple-minded you are, like a little child! What sort of dilemma is it, please tell me! Here's exactly what you should do, Dmitry Sergeich. You go into the neutral room and say, 'Vera Pavlovna!' I answer you from my own room, 'Yes, Dmitry Sergeich, what is it?' You say, 'I'm going out. I expect that a Mr. A.' (you insert the name of your friend) 'will be coming by to see me. I have a message I'd like to give him. May I request, Vera Pavlovna, that you deliver the message?' If I say no, our conversation is ended. If I say yes, I'll come into the neutral room and you'll tell me what the message is that I should convey to your friend. Now, you little child, do you know what you must do?"

"Yes, dear Verochka. But all joking aside, what you describe really is the best way to arrange our life. But where did you come up with these ideas? I recognize them, and I even remember where I read them.<sup>34</sup> But you couldn't have seen any of those books and there were no such details in the ones I lent you. Did you hear them from someone? From whom? Surely I'm the first decent person you've ever met?"

"My dear, is it really all that hard to arrive at these ideas independently? I have observed family life. I'm not talking about my own, which is so unusual. But I do have friends and I've been in their homes. My God, you can't imagine how much unpleasantness I've seen between husbands and wives, my dear!"

"Well, Verochka, I can imagine it."

"Do you know what I think, my dear? People ought not to live the way they do—all together, under one roof. They should see each other only on business or when they get together to relax and have a good time. I frequently observe and wonder why we're so polite to strangers. Why do we always try to behave better when a stranger is present than in our own families? People do behave better among strangers. Why is that so? Why do we feel worse with our nearest and dearest those whom we love? Do you know what I'd like you to do, my dear? Please continue to treat me from now on as you've done up to now. This hasn't kept you from loving me, nor has it interfered with our being best friends. How have you behaved up to now? Have you ever answered me rudely or reprimanded me? No. People say that you can't be rude to a strange woman or girl that you can't reprimand her. Alright, my dear. Now I am your betrothed and soon I'll become your wife. Nevertheless, you'll treat me just as you're supposed to

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<sup>34</sup> Probably a reference to George Sand's novel *Jacques*, or perhaps to her works in general (see n. 30 above).

treat a stranger. My friend, I think that will be the best way of ensuring our lasting harmony and abiding love. Isn't that right, dear?"

"I don't know what to make of you, Verochka, although you've certainly surprised me before this."

"You wish to flatter me, dear. No, my friend, it's not as difficult to understand as you think. I'm not the only one to have these ideas. They're shared by many girls and young women as innocent as I. But they can't tell their suitors or their husbands what they think. They know that if they did, they'd be considered immoral. But I fell in love with you, my dear, because you didn't think that. Do you know when I fell in love with you? It was that first time we talked on my birthday. When you said that women are poor creatures and deserve to be pitied—that's when I fell in love with you."

"And when did I fall in love with you? You know already that it was on the same day, but when exactly?"

"How amusing you are, my dear. The way you say it, it's impossible not to guess the answer. And as soon as I do, you'll begin to flatter me again."

"Stilt hazard a guess."

"Well, it's obvious. When I asked you if it really was possible to arrange things so that people would be happy."

"For that, Verochka, I must kiss your hand again."

"Enough, my dear, I don't like it when men kiss women's hands."

"Why not, Verochka?"

"You know the answer to that, my dear. Why ask me? Don't ask such things."

"Yes, my friend, it's true. I shouldn't ask such things. It's foolish. I'll ask you only when I really don't know what you mean. As for now, you wanted to say that no one should have his or her hand kissed."

Verochka started laughing.

"Now I forgive you because I've managed to have a laugh at your expense. You see, you wanted to test me, but you yourself didn't know why it was wrong. No one should have his or her hand kissed—that's true, but I wasn't talking about that situation in general. I was only talking about the practice of men kissing women's hands. My dear, that should be very embarrassing for women. It means that they aren't considered as equals to men; it means that a man can't lower his dignity before a woman, that she's so much lower that however much he degrades himself before her, he's still not her equal, but much higher than she is. But if you don't think that, my dear, why should you kiss my hand? Listen. Do you know what just occurred to me, my dear? We aren't behaving very much like an engaged couple."

"Yes, that's true, Verochka, we aren't. But then, what are we?"

"Lord knows, my dear. Here's the thing: it's as if we've already been married for a long, long time."

"Yes, indeed, my friend. That's the truth. We're old friends and nothing's changed."

"Only one thing has changed, my dear. I now know that I'm leaving this cellar and I'm going to be free."

## XIX.

Thus they chatted: a somewhat unusual first conversation between fiances. They shook hands and when Lopukhov went home, it was Verochka who locked the door behind him, since Matryona was sitting in a tavern, relying on the fact that her “treasure” would still be snoring away for a long time to come. And indeed, her treasure did just that.

After returning home around seven o'clock, Lopukhov wanted to get down to work, but he couldn't. His mind was preoccupied; he was still thinking about what had preoccupied him all the way from the Semyonovsky Bridge to the Vyborg district. Amorous fantasies, of course. Yes, indeed, only they weren't quite amorous and not quite fantasies. The life of a man who possesses only limited means has its prosaic aspects, and it was on them that Lopukhov was dwelling. What else? A materialist thinks exclusively about advantage, and indeed he was considering only that. Instead of lofty poetic and sublime visions, he was concerned with the sort of amorous fantasies appropriate to a crude materialist.

“Sacrifice. It seems to be almost impossible to drive that idea out of her head. That's bad. If you think that you're obligated to another person for something special, then relations with that person are already somewhat strained. She's sure to find out. My friends will tell her what an admirable career I had awaiting me. Even if they don't, she'll figure it out by herself. ‘So, my friend, it was for me that you gave up your career.’ Well, we can assume that it won't be the money. Neither my friends nor she will hold that one against me. So I must be grateful that she won't think, ‘It was for me that he remained impoverished; without me he could have been rich.’ They won't think that! But she'll find out that I wanted a scholarly reputation and that I could have achieved one. That will distress her. ‘Oh, what a sacrifice he made for me!’ But I hadn't been planning to make sacrifices. I haven't been foolish enough to make any so far, and I hope I never will. I did what was best for me. I'm not the sort of person who makes sacrifices. No one is. It's a fallacious concept. Sacrifice is all stuff and nonsense.<sup>35</sup> One does what's most pleasurable. But go and try to explain that to her! It's theoretically comprehensible, but as soon as a person is confronted with the facts, he becomes emotional. ‘You,’ he says, ‘you are my benefactor.’ Hasn't the bud of this future blossom already appeared? ‘You,’ she says, ‘you've released me from the cellar. You're so good to me.’ What need was there for me to release you if the idea hadn't appealed to me? Do you think I'm releasing you? Forget it! Do you think I would have taken the trouble if it didn't give me pleasure as well? Perhaps I released myself! Yes, absolutely, myself! I want to live and love, do you understand? I'm doing it all for myself. How can I rid her of that pernicious feeling of gratitude that will burden her? I'll manage it somehow. She's a clever girl. She'll understand

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<sup>35</sup> “Zhertva—sapogi vsmyatku” (lit., “sacrifice is half-baked boots”), a colloquial expression borrowed from Gogol's *Dead Souls*, vol. I, chap. 9.

that it's pure nonsense. Of course, this isn't at all what I had intended. I thought that if she managed to escape from that household, we could postpone marriage for two years or so. During that time I'd have become a professor and my financial position would have been satisfactory. But a delay proved to be impossible. Well, what losses have I incurred? Was I thinking about myself when I decided to arrange my financial affairs first? What does that mean to a man? Nothing! It's a woman who feels the lack of money. I have a pair of boots; my coat is not worn through at the elbows; I have a bowl of cabbage soup; my room is warm—what the hell more do I need? That much I'll always have. So then, what losses have I incurred? But it's not enough for an attractive young woman! She needs to have pleasures and success in society. But she won't have enough money for that. Of course, she won't think she'll miss it. She's a clever girl and honest. She'll think to herself, 'That's all trifles, rubbish I despise'; and she will, too. But does it really help if a person doesn't realize what he lacks, or, if he does, he insists that he doesn't need it at all? That's an illusion, a fantasy. Human nature is stifled by reason, circumstances, and pride. It keeps silent and doesn't make itself known to one's consciousness, all the while silently doing its work of undermining life. A young girl shouldn't have to live like that; a beautiful woman shouldn't have to live like that. It's not right if she's dressed worse than others, if she lacks sparkle on account of her limited means. I pity you, poor dear. I thought things would somehow turn out a little better for you. But what about me? I'm the winner. It's still uncertain whether she'd have married me two years from now, but now she will..."

"Dmitry, come and have some tea."

"Coming." Lopukhov headed into Kirsanov's room, but along the way he had more time to reflect. "It's certainly true that one's own ego comes first; that's where it begins and ends. I started with the idea of sacrifice—what dishonesty! As if I were really giving up a scholarly reputation and a position in the department. What nonsense! What difference will it make? I'll still be working, I'll still get a chair, and I'll still be serving medicine. It's very amusing for the theorist to observe how egoism can play with one's own ideas in practice."

Since I'm forewarning the reader about everything, I'll tell him not to assume that Lopukhov's monologue contains any mysterious hint by the author concerning some important future development in relations between Lopukhov and Vera Pavlovna. Her life will not be undermined by an inability to sparkle in society or to dress elegantly, and her relations with Lopukhov will not be spoiled by any "pernicious feeling" of gratitude. I'm not the sort of author whose every word hides some kind of surprise. I describe what people thought and what they did, and that's all. If some action, conversation, or internal monologue is needed to characterize a person or situation, then I'll relate it, even if it should prove to have no influence on the future course of my novel.

"Now, Alexander, you won't be able to complain that I'm lagging behind you at work. I'll soon catch up."

"What, have you finished with your efforts on that girl's behalf?"

"I have."

“Will she become a governess at Madame B.’s?”

“No, she won’t. Things have turned out differently. She’ll be able to lead a tolerable life in her own home for the time being.”

“Well, that’s fine. It’s hard to be a governess. Meanwhile, I’ve finished with the optical nerve, my friend, and am about to start on the next pair. Where did you stop?”

“I still have to finish up my work on ...”

Here there followed all sorts of anatomical and physiological terms.

## XX.

“It’s now the twenty-eighth of April. He said that matters would be arranged by the beginning of July; let’s suppose the tenth, since that’s not the very beginning. I can use that date. Perhaps, just to be sure, I should take the fifteenth. No, the tenth is better. How many days are left? No need to count today, as there are only five hours left. There are two days remaining in April; thirty-one days in May plus those two is thirty-three; thirty days in June plus thirty-three is sixty-three; ten days in July. That makes seventy-three days in all. Is that all? Only seventy-three days? And then freedom! I shall escape from this cellar! How happy I am! My dearest, how clever it was of him to think of it! How very happy I am!”

This was Sunday evening. On Monday there was a lesson, rescheduled from Tuesday.

“My friend, my dearest, how glad I am to be with you again, even for a moment. Do you know how much longer I have to stay in this cellar? Will your affairs be settled soon? By the tenth of July?”

“They will, Verochka.”

“Then I have to stay in this cellar only seventy-two more days, not counting this evening. I’ve already crossed out one day. I’ve made a calendar, just like schoolchildren do, and I’m crossing off the days. How wonderful it is to cross out days.”

“My dearest, dearest Verochka. Yes, you won’t have to languish here for long. The two and a half months will pass quickly and then you’ll be free.”

“How wonderful it will be! But, my dearest, you musn’t talk to me or look at me any more, or play the piano each time you come. And I won’t always come out of my room to see you. No, I won’t be able to bear it! I will come out, but only for a minute, and I’ll look at you in a cold and unfriendly way. Now I’ll return to my room. Farewell, my dear. When will you return?”

“On Thursday.”

“Three days! So long! But then there’ll only be sixty-eight more days left.”

“Even fewer. It should be possible to get you out of here by the seventh.”

“The seventh? So now there are only sixty-eight days left! How happy you’ve made me. Farewell, my dear!”

Thursday.

“My dear, I have only sixty-six more days here.”

“Yes, Verochka, time passes quickly.”

“Quickly? No, dear. The days have become so long. At any other time a whole month would have gone by, instead of only these last three days. Good-bye, my dear, we shouldn’t talk for long. We are clever, aren’t we? Good-bye. Still sixty-six days left to stay in this cellar!”

(“Hmm, hmm. It’s natural that I didn’t notice. Time flies at my work. And I’m not the one in the cellar. Hmm, hmm. Yes.”)

Saturday.

“My dear, there are still sixty-four days left! What anguish! These two days were longer than the previous three. What anguish! What vileness, my dear, if you only knew. Good-bye, my sweet, till Tuesday. These next three days will be even longer than all the last five. Goodbye, my dear.”

(“Hmm, hmm. Yes! Hmm! Her eyes look bad. She doesn’t like to cry. It isn’t good. Hmm. Yes.”)

Tuesday.

“Oh, my dear, I’ve stopped counting the days. They’re not passing quickly, not passing at all.”

“Verochka, my dear, I have a favor to ask you. We need to have a long talk. You’re so eager for your freedom. Give yourself some; we need to talk.”

“We do, my dear, we really do.”

“Then this is what I ask you. Tomorrow, whenever it’s most convenient, it doesn’t matter when, just tell me—you’ll be on that same bench on Konnogvardeisky Boulevard. Will you come?”

“I will, my dear, I certainly will. At eleven o’clock—is that all right?”

“Fine. Thank you, my dear.”

“Good-bye, dearest. I’m so glad you thought of that. How is it that I was too silly to think of it? Good-bye. We will have a long talk. And I’ll get a breath of freedom. Good-bye, my dearest. Tomorrow at eleven o’clock, without fail.”

Friday.

“Verochka, where are you going?”

“Who, me, mama?” Verochka blushed. “To Nevsky Prospekt, mama.”

“Good. I’ll go along with you, Verochka. I have to go into the Shopping Arcade.<sup>36</sup> What’s this, Verochka? You say you’re going to Nevsky and yet you’ve put on that dress? You should be better dressed to walk along Nevsky. People will see you.”

“I like this dress. Wait a moment, mama, I need to get something from my room.”

They set off, and now they’re on their way. They’ve reached the Shopping Arcade and are walking along Sadovaya Street, not very far from the corner of Nevsky—close to Ruzanov’s shop.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Marya Aleksevna is referring to the Gostiny Dvor (court or house of merchants), a massive, two-story arcade of shops on Nevsky Prospekt.

<sup>37</sup> A ladies’ perfumery and toiletry shop in the Gostiny Dvor.

“Mama, I have two words to say to you.”

“What is it, Verochka?”

“Good-bye, mama. I don’t know when I’ll see you again. If you don’t get angry, then it will be tomorrow.”

“What, Verochka? I don’t understand.”

“Good-bye, mama. I’m going to join my husband. Dmitry Sergeich and I were married three days ago. Coachman, to Caravannaya [Caravan] Street, please.”

“Twenty-five kopecks, madame.”

“Fine, let’s get going. Mama, he’ll drop in on you this evening. Don’t be angry at me, mama.”

These last words barely reached Marya Aleksevna’s ears.

“Coachman, I’m not really going to Caravannaya Street. I only said that so you’d hurry and I could get away from that woman quickly. Turn left, along Nevsky. I’m going much farther than Caravannaya Street, all the way to Vasilievsky Island, the Fifth Line past Middle Prospekt. If you get me there quickly, I’ll give you a good tip.”

“So you tricked me, madame! That’ll cost you fifty kopecks.”

“If you drive quickly.”

## XXI.

The wedding arrangements were not very elaborate, nor were they entirely conventional.

For two days or so after the conversation during which they became engaged, Verochka rejoiced over her imminent emancipation. By the third day her “cellar,” as she called it, seemed twice as unbearable as before. On the fourth day she began to cry, which she detested, but she didn’t cry for long. On the fifth day she cried for longer. On the sixth she no longer cried, but her anguish prevented her from sleeping.

Lopukhov saw this and uttered his first monologue, “Hmm, hmm.” He looked again, and uttered his second “Hmm, hmm. Yes. Hmm.” In the first, he inferred something, but didn’t know exactly what it was. In the second he explained the inference to himself. “No, it won’t do—having shown her a glimpse of freedom, to leave her in confinement.” He thought about it for the next two hours: an hour and a half en route from the Semenovskiy Bridge to the Vyborg district, and a half hour at home on his sofa. For the first quarter of an hour he thought without knitting his brows; for the remaining hour and three-quarters he knitted his brows. At the end of two hours he struck his forehead and exclaimed, “You meathead! You’re worse than the Postmaster in Gogol’s comedy.”<sup>38</sup> He looked at his watch. “Ten o’clock—there’s still time.” He left his apartment.

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<sup>38</sup> In Gogol’s satirical comedy *The Inspector-General* (1836), the incompetence and naiveté of the bumbling postmaster Ivan Kuzmich Shpekin contribute greatly to the selfdelusion and downfall of the town’s mayor and other leading citizens.

During the first quarter of an hour, when he wasn't knitting his brows, he was thinking, "It's all nonsense! Why must I finish my course? I won't die if I don't get a diploma. Who needs it? I can earn as much money, maybe even more, giving lessons and doing translations, as I can being a doctor. What nonsense!"

In fact, to tell the truth, there was really no reason for him to knit his brows. In part the problem turned out to be solvable because ever since his last lesson, he'd had a premonition of something akin to these reflections. Now he understood. If we were to remind him of his ruminations beginning with the subject of sacrifice and ending with the theme of woman's elegance, we could accuse him of having had a premonition from then on of something of the sort, since there would be no other way of explaining the appearance of his idea, "I'll give up a scholarly career." At that time it didn't occur to him that he'd give it up, but his instinct was already saying, "You will, and without delay." And if we accuse Lopukhov the pragmatist of specious logic in his answer, "I'm not giving up anything," he would triumph as a theoretician and would reply, "Here's another example of how egoism determines both our thoughts (I should have seen it, but didn't, because I wanted to see something else) and our actions. Why else did I force the girl to stay in her cellar for an extra week when I should have foreseen it and made all the necessary arrangements then!"

But nothing of the sort occurred to him because he was forced to knit his brows and, having done so, he had to ponder for an hour and three-quarters the words "Who will marry us?" The reply was always the same: "No one will." Suddenly, instead of this "no one," the name Mertsalov popped into his head. It was then that he struck his forehead and swore at himself for good reason. How was it that he didn't think of Mertsalov right from the start? But perhaps that wasn't such a good reason because it was strange indeed to think of Mertsalov as a person to marry them.

In the Medical Academy there are a great many students of different kinds, among them seminarians.<sup>39</sup> They have acquaintances in the Theological Academy; through them, so did Lopukhov. One of the students he knew in the Theological Academy, not an intimate but a close acquaintance, had finished his studies a year ago and was now a priest in some large building with endless corridors on Vasilievsky Island.<sup>40</sup> It was to see this person that Lopukhov now set off. Because of the extraordinary circumstances and the lateness of the hour he even hired a cab.

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<sup>39</sup> Some students were from the clerical estate and had attended an Orthodox seminary before entering a university or other institute of higher education. Chernyshevsky had been such a student. Before the mid-nineteenth century the sons of clergy normally pursued higher education only in theological academies. Hence tsarist universities and secular institutes of higher education were dominated by sons of the nobility, wealthy and poor alike.

<sup>40</sup> Probably a reference to the main building of the University of St. Petersburg, although it could also be either the Academy of Fine Arts or the elite Military Academy (Kadetsky Korpus). All three buildings are located on Vasilievsky Island, in the Neva estuary opposite the central part of St. Petersburg.



Mertsalov was at home alone reading some recent work, either by Louis XIV or by someone else of the same dynasty.<sup>41</sup>

“So that’s all there is to it, Aleksei Petrovich. I understand that it entails a large risk for you. It’ll all be all right if we make it up with her parents, but what if they press a lawsuit?<sup>42</sup> Then there could be trouble for you, and there probably will be. But ...” Lopukhov couldn’t come up with a single “but.” How indeed can you persuade a person to place his head in a noose for your sake?

Mertsalov thought about it for a long time, he too trying to come up with a “but” to authorize himself to run such a risk; but he couldn’t come up with a single one either.

“What can I do? I’d like to... A year ago I did exactly the same thing, but now I feel bound, as you soon wilt too. It’s a shame! I should help you, but when you have a wife you’re afraid to act take a chance.”

“Hello, Alyosha,” said an attractive and lively young blonde, aged seventeen, who was just coming back from visiting her parents. “Regards from everyone. Hello, Lopukhov. We haven’t seen you for some time. What’s that you’re saying about wives? You’re always putting the blame on them!”

Mertsalov apprised his wife of the facts. The young woman’s eyes began to sparkle.

“But Alyosha, they won’t gobble you up!”

“There’s a risk, Natasha.”

“A very great one,” Lopukhov confirmed.

“Well, what’s to be done? Take the risk, Alyosha. I beg you.”

“If you won’t accuse me of having forgotten all about you in facing this dangerous situation, Natasha, then it’s all settled. When do you want to be married, Dmitry Sergeich?”

Consequently, there were no more obstacles remaining.

On Monday morning Lopukhov said to Kirsanov, “Do you know what, Alexander? I’m thinking about turning over my share of our work to you. Take my papers and specimens. I’m giving it all up. I’m leaving the Academy. Here’s my resignation. I’m getting married.”

Lopukhov related the story in brief.

“If you or I were stupid, Dmitry, I’d tell you that you’re mad. But I’m not saying that. I’m sure you’ve thought through all possible objections more carefully than I. And if you haven’t, it makes no difference. I don’t know if you’re acting foolishly or wisely; but I’m not stupid enough to try to dissuade you when I know it’s not possible. Do you need my assistance in any way, or not?”

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<sup>41</sup> See n. 41 above.

<sup>42</sup> Under prerevolutionary Russian law, marriage without parental consent constituted a crime for which both the groom and the bride could be punished, and so could all who assisted them. The Orthodox church could annul the marriage, although in the nineteenth century it rarely did so. Moreover, as Marya Aleksevna realized, judicial action in such cases was lengthy, costly, and generally ineffectual (see also n. 50 above).

“We need to find a three-room apartment in an inexpensive neighborhood. I’ll be busy at the Academy, trying to get my documents by tomorrow.<sup>43</sup> You could look for the apartment.”

On Tuesday Lopukhov received his documents and set off to tell Mertsalov that the wedding could take place the next day.

“What time suits you, Aleksei Petrovich?” It didn’t matter to Aleksei Petrovich, since he’d be home all day. “In any case, I should be able to send Kirsanov to warn you.”

On Wednesday at eleven o’clock Lopukhov arrived at Konnogvardeisky Boulevard and had to wait there so long for Verochka that he began to worry. But there she was, hurrying along.

“Verochka, my friend, has something happened?”

“No, my dear, it’s nothing. I’m late because I overslept.”

“What time did you fall asleep?”

“I didn’t want to tell you, dear. It was seven o’clock. But I just lay there thinking. No, it was even earlier, six o’clock.”

“Here’s what I wanted to ask you, my dear Verochka. We must get married as soon as possible so we can both get some peace of mind.”

“Yes, dear, we must. As soon as possible.”

“So, in three or four days ...”

“Oh, if only we could, dearest, it would be very clever of you.”

“I shall find an apartment in three days for sure, and I’ll buy what household goods we need. Then we’ll be able to move in together.”

“Yes, my dear, we will.”

“But first we have to get married.”

“Oh, yes, I’d completely forgotten that.”

“Well, we can get married today. That’s what I wanted to ask you.”

“Let’s go, dear, and let’s get married. How did you manage to arrange everything? What a clever man you are, my dear!”

“I’ll tell you along the way. Let’s go.”

They arrived at the building, made their way through long corridors to the church, found the guard, and sent for Mertsalov. He lived in the very same building with the endless corridors.

“Now, Verochka, I have yet another request. You do know that during the ceremony the couple is supposed to kiss?”

“Yes, my dear. How embarrassing!”

“Well, so that it won’t be too embarrassing then, let’s kiss each other now.”

“So be it, my dear. But couldn’t we do without it?”

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<sup>43</sup> In prerevolutionary Russia, city dwellers as well as peasants who left their villages were required to carry an internal passport attesting to their place of residence, religion, marital status, occupation, etc. Students enrolled in institutions of higher education also had to deposit their gymnasium diplomas with the relevant authorities.

“No, not during the ceremony. So we must be prepared.”

They kiss.

“It’s good we had time to prepare, my dear. Here comes the guard. Now it won’t be too embarrassing during the ceremony.”

But it wasn’t the guard. The guard had gone to fetch the sexton. It was Kirsanov, who’d been waiting for them at Mertsalov’s.

“Verochka, this is Alexander Matveich Kirsanov, the man you so despise and whom you want to forbid me ever to see.”

“Vera Pavlovna, why do you want to come between our two loving hearts?”

“Precisely because they’re so loving,” said Verochka, shaking Kirsanov’s hand. Smiling all the while, she wondered aloud, “Will I come to love him the same way you do? You love him very much, don’t you?”

“Me?” replied Kirsanov. “I love only myself, Vera Pavlovna”

“You don’t love him?”

“We lived together and didn’t argue. That’s enough.”

“And he doesn’t love you?”

“Not that I’ve noticed. But let’s ask him. Do you love me, Dmitry?”

“I have no particular dislike for you.”

“Well . . . if that’s true, Alexander Matveich, I shall not forbid him to see you and I too shall come to love you.”

“Now that’s much better, Vera Pavlovna.”

Aleksei Petrovich arrived. “Here I am. Let’s go into the church.” He was very cheerful and made a few jokes, but once the ceremony began, his voice began to tremble. “What if they do press a lawsuit? Natasha, go home to your father. Your husband can’t provide for you and it’s a wretched life to have a living husband but have to eat your father’s bread!” Still, after a few words he regained complete control of himself.

Natalya Andrevna—or Natasha, as Aleksei Petrovich called her—arrived in the middle of the ceremony. Afterward she invited the young couple to a small breakfast she’d prepared. They accepted. They laughed, danced two quadrilles in couples and even some waltzes. Aleksei Petrovich, who didn’t know how to dance, played the violin. An hour and a half passed by quickly and completely unnoticed. The wedding was very jolly.

“I think I’m expected home for dinner,” said Verochka. “It’s time. Now, dear, I’ll be able to endure the next three or four days, or even more, in my cellar without much difficulty. I won’t have to languish any more. Now I have nothing to fear. No, there’s no need to come with me. I’ll go home alone so no one will notice us together.”

“Never mind, they won’t gobble me up. Don’t feel guilty, friends!” said Aleksei Petrovich while accompanying Lopukhov and Kirsanov, who’d remained behind a few more minutes to allow Verochka to leave alone. “Now I’m very glad that Natasha gave me such strong encouragement.”

The next day, after four days of searching, an acceptable apartment was found at the far end of Line Five on Vasilievsky Island. With a reserve of only 160 rubles, Lopukhov

had agreed with his friend that for the time being he and Verochka couldn't even consider acquiring furniture, crockery, and other household items. Therefore they rented three furnished rooms with board included from a local petty bourgeois couple.<sup>44</sup> The old man passed his days peacefully tending a stand where he peddled buttons, ribbons, pins, and so on, near the fence between Lines One and Two on Middle Prospekt; he spent evenings chatting with his old wife. She passed her days darning hundreds and thousands of items of old clothes brought to her by the armful from the flea market. This landlord and landlady also functioned as the couple's servants. All this cost only thirty rubles a month. At that time (some ten years ago) life in Petersburg was inexpensive, even by Petersburg standards. This set of arrangements provided them with the means to live for three, perhaps even four months. Ten rubles a month should suffice for tea, etc. And within four months Lopukhov hoped to find lessons, some kind of literary work, or employment in a merchant's office—it didn't matter what. On the very same day they found the apartment (and an excellent one it was, which is why they had to look for it so long, but finally managed to find it), Lopukhov, who had come as usual on Thursday for his lesson, said to Verochka, "You can move in tomorrow, my friend. Here's the address. I'll say no more to you now, lest someone notice."

"You have saved me, my dearest!"

But now, how was she to leave her house? Tell them outright? Verochka would have considered that, but her mother might hurl herself into the fray and lock her up. Verochka decided to leave a letter in her room. After Marya Aleksevna had heard that her daughter was planning to head off in the direction of Nevsky Prospekt and had announced that she'd go with her, Verochka returned to her room and reclaimed the letter. She thought it better, more honest, to tell her straight to her face. Surely her mother wouldn't create a scene in public. She need only take care that when she told her mother she was standing a reasonable distance from her. Then she would jump into a cab and hurry away before her mother could manage to grab hold of her sleeve.

In precisely this manner did the striking scene in front of Ruzanov's shop occur.

## XXII.

But so far we've witnessed only the first half of this scene.

For a moment—no, even less than a moment—Marya Aleksevna, who suspected nothing of the sort, stood there stupefied. She was trying, but kept failing to understand what it was that her daughter was saying. What did it all mean and how could it be? But this was only for a moment or even less... She roused herself and shouted some expletive, but her daughter's cab was already turning onto Nevsky. Marya Aleksevna

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<sup>44</sup> The Russian word *meshchanin* (petty bourgeois) is applied to the lower urban social groups, including petty tradesmen, craftsmen, artisans, etc.

ran several steps in that direction. She needed a cab. She hurled herself to the sidewalk. “Cabbie!” “Where to, madame?” Where to, indeed? She thought she’d heard her daughter say “Caravannaya Street,” yet the cab had turned left onto Nevsky. Where should she go? “Catch up with her, that bitch.” “Catch up with whom, madame? Tell me where you want to go! How can I go without any directions, not knowing where you’re headed?” Marya Aleksevna lost her temper and began swearing at the cabbie. “You’re drunk, lady, I can see that,” he replied, and drove off. Marya Aleksevna kept hurling insults after him, called to some other cabbies, tore off in one direction for a few steps, then another, waved her arms, and finally came to a halt again under the colonnade. She stood there stamping her foot in a rage. A group of some five lads peddling all sorts of wares near the Shopping Arcade soon gathered around her. They feasted their eyes on her, exchanging remarks of a more or less disrespectful nature, and addressed her with both wisecracks and well-intentioned advice. “That’s the way, lady—crooked, and it’s still so early! Good for you, lady!” “Lady, hey lady, buy five lemons from me! Use them as a chaser. I’ll sell them to you cheap!” “Lady, hey lady, don’t listen to him. Lemons won’t help! What you need is a hair of the dog that bit you!” “Lady, hey lady, you sure can curse! Let’s have a contest to see who can outdo the other!” Marya Aleksevna, not knowing exactly what she was doing, boxed the ear of the closest of her interlocutors—he was a lad of about seventeen who was sticking his tongue out at her, not without considerable grace. His cap flew off and his full head of hair came to hand. Marya Aleksevna seized hold. This act filled her remaining interlocutors with indescribable enthusiasm. “That’s the way, lady! Give it to him!” “Hey, Fedka, give it to her back!” someone remarked, but most of them were decidedly on Marya Aleksevna’s side. “What can Fedka do against this lady? Give it to him, lady, give it to him! He’s got it coming to him, the bastard.” By now there were many other spectators in addition to the group of boys: cabbies, shopkeepers, and passers-by. Then Marya Aleksevna seemed to come to her senses. Pushing Fedka’s head away with one last mechanical shove, she walked across the street accompanied by ecstatic shouts of praise from her interlocutors.

She managed to realize that she was heading home only when she passed the gates of the Corps of Pages.<sup>45</sup> She took a cab and arrived home safely. She smacked her own Fedya after he let her in; then she ran to her cupboard, smacked Matryona, who’d come to see what all the fuss was about, ran back to her cupboard and then into Verochka’s room. A minute later she came out to her cupboard again and soon ran back into Verochka’s room, where she remained for some time. Then she wandered around other rooms, swearing all the while, but there was no one left to smack. Fedya had escaped to the back stairway; Matryona, after peeking through a crack into Verochka’s room and noting that Marya Aleksevna was advancing toward her, ran headlong and ended

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<sup>45</sup> The elite military and general educational academy founded in 1802 for boys of aristocratic families.

up not in the kitchen but in the bedroom under Marya Aleksevna's bed, where she remained in safety until she was peaceably summoned.

Matryona couldn't say whether or not Marya Aleksevna wandered through empty rooms shouting and cursing for a very long time; it must have been so because when Pavel Konstantinych returned home from work, he caught it too, both "ideally" and "materially."<sup>46</sup> But all good things come to an end. When at last Marya Aleksevna shouted, "Matryona, serve dinner," Matryona realized that the storm had ended. She came out from under the bed and went in to serve dinner.

Marya Aleksevna refrained from swearing all during dinner; she merely snarled, with no aggressive intentions, simply for her own satisfaction. Then, instead of going to lie down, she sat completely alone—first in silence, then grumbling; then she stopped grumbling and sat in silence again. At last she shouted, "Matryona! Go wake your master and send him in to me."

Matryona, expecting further orders, hadn't dared slip out to the tavern or anywhere else. She did as she was told and Pavel Konstantinych made his appearance.

"Go tell the landlady that your daughter married that devil with your permission. Say that you opposed my wishes. Say that you did it to please her since you knew that she was against the match. Tell her it's all my fault and that you were carrying out her wishes. Tell her it was you who arranged the match. Understand me?"

"Yes, Marya Aleksevna. That's a very clever plan you thought up."

"Well, go do it! It doesn't matter if she's having dinner: call her away from the table! Hurry up, while she still doesn't know anything."

The plausibility of Pavel Konstantinych's words was so evident that the landlady would have believed him even if he hadn't possessed the gift of persuasive and reverential explication. So great was his persuasiveness that the landlady would have forgiven him even if there hadn't been conclusive proof that he'd always opposed his wife and had intentionally matched Verochka with Lopukhov in order to thwart her proposed mismatch with Mikhail Ivanych. "How did they get married?" Why, Pavel Konstantinych had provided them with a generous dowry. He gave Lopukhov 5,000 rubles in cash and paid for the entire wedding and all household furnishings. It was he who'd carried their notes back and forth, he who'd arranged their rendezvous at the apartment of his colleague Filantiev, a department head and a married man ("Because, even though I'm a humble fellow, Your Excellency, I still value my daughter's maidenly honor"). "We really couldn't afford to hire a tutor for my young son; that was just a pretext, Your Excellency." He went on and on. Pavel Konstantinych painted his wife's perfidy in the blackest of colors.

How could she possibly not be convinced and not forgive him? And the news itself provided her with great, unexpected joy! Joy softens the heart. The landlady began her

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<sup>46</sup> A play on the conflict between idealist and materialist philosophical systems. Chernyshevsky and other young radical writers based their criticism of both the tsarist sociopolitical system and the ineffectiveness of the previous generation of Russian intellectuals on materialist ideas.

valedictory address with a very lengthy preamble on Marya Aleksevna's vile thoughts and deeds; at first she demanded that Pavel Konstantinych send his wife packing. But he entreated her; the landlady herself had said it more for show than for anything else. Finally her decision was announced: Pavel Konstantinych would stay on as manager, their street-front apartment would be forfeited. They would be moved to the back courtyard on the understanding that his wife never set foot anywhere near the front, lest the landlady catch sight of her face, and that she be required to come and go through the gates farthest from the landlady's windows. Of the twenty rubles a month additional salary, he would forfeit fifteen, keeping only five as a reward for his zeal in carrying out the landlady's wishes and for his expenses in connection with his daughter's wedding.

### **XXIII.**

Marya Aleksevna had several different schemes in mind for dealing with Lopukhov when he showed up that evening. The one closest to her heart consisted of hiding two doormen in the kitchen; at a signal from her, they would hurl themselves upon Lopukhov and give him a sound thrashing. In the most pathetic scenario she and Pavel Konstantinych would solemnly proclaim a parental curse on their disobedient daughter and on him, her criminal accomplice, followed by an explanation that such a malediction was so powerful that even the earth, as everyone knows, refuses to receive the remains of children cursed by their parents. But these were all merely dreams, just like the landlady's idea of separating Pavel Konstantinych from his wife. Such schemes, like any sort of poetry, serve no practical purpose except to comfort the heart, providing the basis for endless, solitary reflections and certain dramatic explanations useful in future conversations; to wit, here is what I could have and would have done, had I not relented so generously.

The schemes to thrash Lopukhov and to curse her daughter constituted the "ideal" side of Marya Aleksevna's thoughts and feelings. The "real" side of her mind and soul took a much less elevated, much more practical direction. This disparity is the inevitable result of every human being's frailty. Once Marya Aleksevna regained her senses near the gate of the Corps of Pages, she understood that her daughter really had disappeared, that she'd gotten married and had escaped from her. These facts entered her consciousness in the form of the following mental exclamation: "I've been robbed!" All the way home she kept exclaiming either aloud or to herself, "I've been robbed!" Therefore, pausing only a few moments through human weakness to convey her grief to Fedyia and Matryona (each and every one of us is so distracted by the expression of his or her feelings that in the rush of emotion we forget the mundane interests of the moment), Marya Aleksevna ran into Verochka's room, searched the drawers of her dressing table and her closet, and cast a hurried glance around the room. "No, everything seems to be here!" Then she set about verifying this comforting

impression by a more meticulous examination. It turned out that all of Verochka's dresses and other possessions had been left behind, except for one pair of modest gold earrings, one old muslin dress, and the old coat that Verochka was wearing when she left the house. Regarding this question of "real life," Marya Aleksevna expected that Verochka would give Lopukhov a list of the things she required. She firmly resolved not to hand over any gold jewelry or other such items; she would provide four of her plainest dresses and some of her most worn underclothes. To part with nothing at all was impossible: honorable decorum would not allow that, and Marya Aleksevna was a stickler for the rules.

The second question of "real" life was their future relationship with the landlady. We've already seen that Marya Aleksevna managed to resolve this problem very successfully.

Now, for the third question: What to do with the wench and the villain, her daughter and uninvited son-in-law? Anathematize them? That wouldn't be difficult, but it would serve only as a dessert to a more substantial repast. And that could take only one form: presenting a petition, initiating a lawsuit, and going to court.<sup>47</sup> At first, in her agitated state, Marya Aleksevna looked at this solution to the problem in the "ideal" sense; from that point of view it seemed to be very attractive. But the calmer she became after the storm was spent, the more the affair appeared to her in a different light. No one knew better than she that lawsuits required money and more money; such cases, though tempting in their ideal beauty, demanded larger and larger sums and dragged on for a very long time. After consuming a great deal of money, they often came to absolutely nothing in the end.

What was there to do? In the last analysis it turned out that there were only two possibilities: to excoriate Lopukhov to her own satisfaction and reject all his efforts to claim Verochka's belongings and then to threaten to lodge an official complaint. But she'd have to abuse him in the strongest possible terms, to her heart's content.

However, she didn't even manage to abuse him at all! Lopukhov arrived and began in the following way: "Verochka and I ask that you forgive us, Marya Aleksevna and Pavel Konstantinych, for acting without your consent..."

At that point Marya Aleksevna screamed, "I curse her, the good-for-nothing girl!"

But instead of the phrase "good-for-nothing girl" she managed to get out only the first syllable, because Lopukhov announced in a very loud voice: "I will not listen to your abuse. I have come to discuss the business at hand. You're angry and unable to talk calmly. Therefore I will speak with Pavel Konstantinych alone, and you, Marya Aleksevna, can send in Fedya or Matryona to summon us after you've calmed down." As soon as he said this he began to move Pavel Konstantinych toward his study; he spoke so loudly that there was no possibility of outshouting him. Marya Aleksevna was forced to stop talking.

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<sup>47</sup> See n. 66 above.



He led Pavel Konstantinych as far as the parlor door, stopped there, turned, and said: "Well now, Marya Aleksevna, it looks as if I may be able to talk to you, too. But we must speak calmly and only about the business at hand."

She was just about to start screaming again, but he interrupted her: "If you can't speak calmly, then we'll leave."

"Where are you going, you fool?" shouted Marya Aleksevna to her husband.

"He's dragging me away."

"If Pavel Konstantinych were to be similarly inclined to deal with me in an impassioned way, then I would also leave. It really doesn't matter to me. But Pavel Konstantinych, why do you allow her to call you such names? Marya Aleksevna doesn't understand how things work. She probably thinks she can do whatever she wants to us. But you're a civil servant, and you must know how things are done. Tell her she can do nothing to Verochka now, and even less to me."

"That bastard knows there's nothing I can do to them," thought Marya Aleksevna, so she told Lopukhov that she'd flared up at first as a mother, but now she could speak with more composure.

Lopukhov returned with Pavel Konstantinych and they all sat down. He asked her to listen until he finished everything he had to say; then she'd get a chance to speak. He started talking, raising his voice considerably whenever she tried to interrupt him; thus he managed to finish his speech. He said that it was impossible to unmarried them and therefore the affair with Storeshnikov was a lost cause, as they themselves knew full well. Consequently, a lawsuit would both tire them out and be to no avail, but they could do as they wished. If they had extra money available, they might even be encouraged to try. There was really no reason to be upset since Verochka had never intended to marry Storeshnikov; that had always been an unrealizable scheme, as Marya Aleksevna must have known herself. A girl has to be married off sooner or later, and that entails considerable expense for the parents. There is the dowry and then the wedding itself, which costs a fair amount, but the dowry is the main thing. Consequently, Marya Aleksevna and Pavel Konstantinych ought to be grateful to their daughter for getting married without causing them any expense whatever. That's the way he spoke, more or less, and he carried on in this detailed way for a full half hour.

When he finished, Marya Aleksevna realized that there was nothing to be gained by talking to such a villain; therefore she began to speak about her own feelings. She was personally aggrieved by the fact that Verochka had gotten married without requesting parental consent because it was so very painful to a mother's heart. Once they touched upon the subject of maternal feelings and grief, the conversation for both of them naturally began to assume the form "Well, we can't not speak about that, since that's what propriety demands." So they satisfied all the demands of propriety and did speak about it. Marya Aleksevna said that as a loving mother, she felt aggrieved. Lopukhov said that as a loving mother, she ought not to. After they fulfilled a measure of propriety by appropriately lengthy digressions on feelings, they moved on to another point, also required by propriety; namely, how they, on the one hand, had always

desired their daughter's happiness, while he, on the other hand, had absolutely no doubt about that. When the conversation had dragged on for the appropriate length of time on this subject, they began to say their good-byes, accompanied by lengthy explanations dictated by the rules of gentry decorum. As a result of all this, it turned out that Lopukhov, who appreciated the distress suffered by her maternal heart, did not ask Marya Aleksevna to grant her daughter permission to meet her mother at the present time because perhaps such a meeting would still be too painful for that maternal heart. But, as Marya Aleksevna would continue to hear about Verochka's great happiness (which, of course, had always been her sole desire), perhaps her heart would be sufficiently softened so that she might find herself in a position to meet with her daughter without grieving.

When they had agreed upon this, they parted amicably.

"What a villain!" said Marya Aleksevna after showing her son-in-law to the door.

That night she even dreamed that she was sitting near the window and saw a splendid carriage coming along the street. It stops and an elegant lady gets out with a man; they come into her room and the lady speaks. "Mama, look how well my husband dresses me!" The lady is none other than Verochka. Marya Aleksevna looks and sees that the material for Verochka's dress is very expensive. Verochka says, "The material alone cost five hundred silver rubles, but that's nothing for us, mama. I have a dozen such dresses. Better look at my fingers, mama! These cost even more." Marya Aleksevna looks at Verochka's fingers and sees rings with large diamonds. "This ring cost two thousand rubles, mama, and this one is even more, four thousand rubles, mama. Look at my bosom, mama. This brooch is even more expensive. It costs ten thousand rubles!" And the man (it's Dmitry Sergeich, says, "All this is nothing for us, dear Marya Aleksevna. The really important thing is in my pocket. Here, mama dearest, look at this thick wallet and see how it's bulging with hundred-ruble notes. I am giving it to you, mama, because it too is nothing for us! But this wallet, which is even thicker, dear mama, I won't give to you; it contains no paper money, only bank drafts and promissory notes. Each one is worth more than the entire wallet I gave you, dear mama, Marya Aleksevna!" "Dmitry Sergeich, my dear son, you certainly know how to ensure the happiness of my daughter and her whole family. But how did it come about, my dear son, that you acquired so much wealth?" "Dear mama, I've gone in for tax farming."<sup>48</sup>

Upon awakening, Marya Aleksevna thought to herself, "He really ought to go in for tax farming."

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<sup>48</sup> Until 1863, the Russian government raised a significant portion of its revenues by selling monopoly rights over the sale of vodka and some other commodities in a particular area. Holders of these rights, called tax farmers, often abused them and thereby managed to amass large fortunes.

## XXIV. Eulogy of Marya Aleksevna

You cease to be an important personage in Verochka's life, Marya Aleksevna. In parting with you the author of this tale asks that you not complain about quitting the scene at a moment that is less than advantageous to you. Don't think that you've lost our respect as a result. We leave you after you've been made a fool of—but this in no way diminishes our view of your intelligence, Marya Aleksevna. Your mistake doesn't bear witness against you. You encountered a sort of people you weren't used to dealing with; it was no sin to be deceived by them, judging from your own former experiences. Your entire previous life led to the conclusion that people are divided into two categories—fools and swindlers: "Anyone who isn't a fool is surely a swindler," you thought, "and not to be a swindler means that you're fool." This view, Marya Aleksevna, was very accurate; until quite recently, Marya Aleksevna, it was completely accurate. You had encountered people who talked extremely well; you realized that every one without exception was either a schemer who pulled the wool over other folks' eyes with fine phrases or a full-grown silly child, ignorant of life and unable to apply himself in any way. For that reason, Marya Aleksevna, you didn't believe in fine phrases; you considered them either stupid or deceptive, and you were right. Your view of other people was completely formed when you encountered the first woman who was neither stupid nor a swindler; you're to be forgiven for being confused, for pausing to consider, for not knowing what to think or how to treat her. Your view of other people was completely formed when you encountered the first honorable man who wasn't a simple-minded, pitiful child, who knew life as well as you, whose judgments were no less accurate than yours, and who knew how to do business no less skillfully than you. You're to be forgiven for making a mistake and taking him for the same kind of rascal that you are. These mistakes, Marya Aleksevna, don't diminish my respect for you as a clever and capable woman. You dragged your husband out of obscurity and you've provided for your old age—these are both good things that were difficult for you to achieve. The means you employed were bad, but your environment provided you with none other. The means belong to your environment, not to your personality; the dishonor is not yours, but the honor is to your intelligence and your strength of character.

Are you content, Marya Aleksevna, with this acknowledgment of your good qualities? Of course, because you never thought of claiming to be kind or good. In a moment of involuntary candor, you acknowledged that you're a wicked and dishonest person, and that you considered neither wickedness nor dishonesty to be dishonorable in your case, demonstrating that you couldn't have been different given the circumstances of your life. Consequently, you won't be too concerned if I don't add to this eulogy of your intelligence and strength of character any praise of your virtues. You don't think you have any and wouldn't consider them virtues; you'd be more likely to consider them stupidity. Therefore, you demand no further praise beyond what I've already given you.

However, I can say one more thing in your honor. Of all the people I dislike and with whom I would prefer to have nothing to do, I would still rather deal with you than with the others. Of course you're ruthless when it comes to your own advantage. But if there's no advantage to you in doing harm to someone, you won't do it simply for the sake of some stupid little passion. You figure it's not worth spending the time, effort, and money uselessly. Naturally, you'd be delighted to roast your daughter and her husband over a slow fire, but you managed to curb your desire for revenge and to reason coolly about the matter; you realized that you couldn't succeed in roasting them. It's a great quality, Marya Aleksevna, to be able to recognize an impossibility! Having done so, you chose not to initiate a lawsuit that would have failed to ruin those who'd caused you such irritation. You realized that those insignificant annoyances that a lawsuit could have caused them would have caused you much greater inconvenience and loss. Therefore you abandoned the idea. If it's impossible to vanquish the enemy, if inflicting a small wound on him would result in inflicting a larger one on yourself, then there's no point in beginning the battle. Having understood this, you had the good sense and courage to submit to the inevitable without causing useless harm to yourself and to others. That's also a great quality, Marya Aleksevna. Yes, one can still deal with you, because you don't wish evil for evil's sake if it's to your own detriment. That's a very rare quality, and a very great one, Marya Aleksevna. There are millions of people who are far more dangerous to themselves and to others than you are, even though they don't look as horribly harmful as you do. Of all those bad ones, you're still better than most precisely because you're not unreasonable and not dimwitted. I'd be glad to wipe you off the face of the earth, but I respect you. You don't do too much damage. You're now engaged in a bad business because your environment demands it; but if we were to provide you with a different environment, you'd gladly become harmless, even beneficial, because you don't want to do evil without financial reward, and if it were in your own interest, you'd do anything at all you'd even act decently and nobly if necessary. You are capable of it, Marya Aleksevna. You're not to blame that this capacity is inactive in you, and that antithetical capacities are active instead. You still have it, and that can't be said of the others. Worthless people aren't capable of doing anything; you're merely a bad person, not a worthless one. Morally speaking, you're better than most.

"Are you content, Marya Aleksevna?"

"What should I be satisfied with, my good sir? My circumstances are rather poor, aren't they?"

"That's as it should be, Marya Aleksevna."

Mikhail Ivanych is also revealing his ignorance of French history by asserting that Louis XIV (1613–1715; king of France, 1643–1715) was the father of Louis Philippe (1773–1850; king of the French, 1830–1848), who was overthrown in 1848 and succeeded by Napoleon III (1808–1873; emperor of the French, 1852–1870). In fact, Louis Philippe's father was Philippe Egalité (1747–1793), duc d'Orléans, head of the rival Orléanist branch of the Bourbon family, who was guillotined in 1793.

## 3. Marriage and Second Love

### I.

Three months have passed since Verochka escaped from her cellar. The Lopukhovs' affairs are progressing well. He's found sufficient lessons and has obtained work at a publishing house translating a textbook on geography. Vera Pavlovna has two pupils of her own—nothing to envy, but not too bad either. Together they're earning about eighty rubles a month; although they can lead only a very modest existence, they're not in any need. Their means are increasing gradually and they reckon that in about four months or even less they'll be able to furnish their household (and that's just what happened subsequently).

Of course their life was not arranged precisely the way Verochka described it, half-jesting and half-serious, on the day of their fantastic engagement; still it was very close to that. The old man and woman in whose house they lived had a great deal to say to each other about the strange way these newlyweds lived; it was as if they weren't newlyweds at all not even husband and wife, but as if they were God knows what.

"Well, Petrovna,<sup>1</sup> as I see it and as you tell it, it's as if, how can I put it, she was his sister or he was her brother."

"What a comparison! There's no ceremony between brother and sister. But just look at them! He gets up, puts on his dressing gown, and sits waiting until you bring in the samovar. He makes tea and then calls her, she's also all dressed when she comes out. What kind of brother and sister is that? Here's what I think: sometimes poor people live together in one apartment because of their poverty. That's what I'd compare them to."

"And how is it, Petrovna, that the husband can't enter his wife's room? If she's not dressed he won't go in! What do you say to that?"

"And what about how they separate at bedtime? He says) 'Good night, dear, sleep well!' They part and each goes to his own room; they sit reading books and sometimes he's writing. Listen to what happened once. She went to bed and was reading a book. I was merely listening through the partition. I couldn't fall asleep for some reason or other. I heard her get up. Only, what do you think? She stood in front of the mirror to comb her hair. Just like she was planning to greet visitors. I heard her leave her room. So I went into the corridor, stood on a chair, and peeked through the transom into his

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<sup>1</sup> In Russian, a person normally is referred to by his or her first name followed by a patronymic formed from the father's first name. Use of the patronymic alone, as here, is a form of lower-class slang.

room. I heard her come up to his door. 'May I come in, dear?' she asks. 'Just a minute, Verochka,' he says. He'd also gone to bed. He puts on his clothes, his dressing gown too. I figure he's about ready to put on a tie, but no, he doesn't. He straightens out his clothes and says, 'You may come in now, Verochka.' She says, 'There's something in this book I don't understand. Can you explain it to me?' He does. She says, 'Forgive me for disturbing you, dear.' He says, 'It's nothing, Verochka. I was only resting. You didn't disturb me at all.' And she left."

"She left?"

"Left."

"He did nothing?"

"Nothing. Don't be so astonished that she left, but that she got dressed before she went in! He says, 'Wait a minute' then gets dressed and says, 'Come in.' So now tell me, what kind of custom is that?"

"Here's what I think, Petrovna. It's some sort of sect. You know there are all kinds of them."<sup>2</sup>

"It seems like that. Maybe you're right!"

Another conversation.

"Danilych, I asked her about their customs. I said, 'Don't get angry that I'm asking, but what religion are you?' 'The usual' she says, 'Russian Orthodox.' 'And your husband?' 'He's Orthodox, too,' she says. 'You wouldn't belong to any sect, would you?' 'No,' she says, 'why do you ask?' 'Here's why, ma'am. I don't know whether to call you Miss or Mrs. Are you living with your husband or not?' She laughed and said, 'I am.'"

"She laughed?"

"She laughed and said, 'I am.' 'Then why do you have such a custom that you don't see him unless you're dressed first, as if you weren't living with him?' She says, 'So he won't see me disheveled. It's got nothing to do with any sect.' 'Welt what is it, then?' I asked. 'So that there'll be more love and fewer quarrels.'"

"Welt that certainly seems to be true, Petrovna. They're always in good form."

"And here's what else she said. 'If, she says, 'I don't want strangers to see me in disarray, and if I love my husband more than anyone else, then I should never show myself to him without washing my face first.'"

"That seems to be true, too, Petrovna. Do you know why we covet our neighbors' wives? Because we see them all dressed up and we see our own in disarray. That's what it says in the Scriptures, the proverbs of Solomon.<sup>3</sup> He was the wisest king of all."

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<sup>2</sup> Particularly after the schism in the Russian Orthodox church in the late seventeenth century, a number of radical, often regionalized Christian sects emerged, especially among the peasantry and lower urban classes, as a form of both religious dissent and social protest. See also n. 57 above.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, the proverbs of Solomon contain no such statement. In Chernyshevsky's original manuscript, Vera Pavlovna's landlord adds, "Whether or not the proverbs of Solomon really say this, I don't know for sure." On Chernyshevsky's use of deliberate mistranslation, see n. 5 above.

## II.

All was going well with the Lopukhovs. Vera Pavlovna was usually cheerful, but once, five months or so after their wedding, Dmitry Sergeich returned home from a lesson to find his wife in a peculiar state of mind. Her eyes were shining with pride and joy. Dmitry Sergeich recalled that for the last several days he'd observed in her signs of pleasant restlessness, cheerful reflection, and tender pride.

"My friend, you seem so very happy! Won't you share it with me?"

"Yes, I think I am happy; but wait a while, my dear. I'll tell you when it's for sure. I must wait a few more days. It's going to be a source of great joy. I know you'll be happy; Kirsanov and Mertsalov will like it, too."

"What in the world is it?"

"Have you forgotten our agreement, my dear? No questions! I'll tell you when it's for sure."

Over a week passed.

"I'm ready to share my joy with you, my dear. But you must advise me, since you know all about it. You know that I've wanted to do something for quite a while. Welt now I've conceived a plan to organize a dressmaking establishment. Isn't that a good idea?"

"Welt my dear, we've had an agreement that I was to refrain from kissing your hand. But that was a general rule; it didn't apply to occasions such as this one. Give me your hand, Vera Pavlovna."

"Later, my dear, after I've succeeded."

"But when you have, you won't give me your hand to kiss! Then Kirsanov, Aleksei Petrovich, and everyone else will kiss it. But for now I'm still the only one. Your intention alone deserves it."

"By force? I'll scream!"

"Go ahead!"

"I'll get flustered, my dear, and I won't say anything. As if it were so important!"

"It is, my friend. We all talk a lot but do nothing. You began thinking about all this after we did, but you resolved to get down to work sooner."

Verochka laid her head on her husband's chest and hid her face. "You're praising me too much."

Her husband kissed her head. "What a clever little head."

"Stop it, dear. It's impossible to tell you anything; look at the way you're behaving."

"I'll stop. Tell me more, my good Verochka."

"How dare you call me that?"

"Well then, my wicked Verochka."

"Oh, you! You keep on interrupting. Sit quietly and listen. It seems to me the main thing is, right from the start, when I have to choose a few people, I must do it very carefully. They must be genuinely honest and good, not frivolous or fickle, but reliable

and gentle, so that futile quarrels won't break out among them and they in turn will be able to select other people. Isn't that right?"

"It is, my dear."

"So far I've found three such young women. Oh, how I've searched! For the last three months I've been visiting shops and making acquaintances. And now I've found them. They're splendid girls, and I've become well acquainted with them."

"And they have to be experts at their trade. Your business must stand on its own merits and everything should be based on commercial calculation."

"Of course it must."

"So what else is there? Why do you need my advice?"

"About the details, my dear."

"Tell me about them. You've probably thought them all out yourself and can adapt to the circumstances. You know that the most important things are principle, character, and ability. Details are determined by the particular conditions of each situation."

"I know. Nevertheless, when you say it's so, I'll feel more certain."

They talked for a long time. Lopukhov found nothing to correct in his wife's plan, while she found that it was being elaborated and clarified in the process of telling him about it.

The next day Lopukhov carried the following announcement to the office of the Police Gazette: "Vera Pavlovna Lopukhova is now accepting orders for ladies' dresses, underwear," etc., "at reasonable rates," and so on and so forth.

That very same morning Vera Pavlovna set off to visit Julie. "She doesn't know my married name. Tell her that it's Mademoiselle Rozalskaya."

"My child, you've come to see me without a veil, quite openly, and you give your own name to my servant! This is madness! You'll ruin yourself, my child!"

"I'm now a married woman and can go where I want and do what I want."

"But your husband will find out."

"He'll be here in an hour."

The questions began: How did she get married? Julie was ecstatic. She hugged and kissed her and wept. After this paroxysm had passed, Vera Pavlovna began to explain the reason for her visit.

"You know we only remember our old friends when we need them. I have a big favor to ask of you. I'm setting up a dressmaking establishment. Send me your orders and recommend me to your friends. I can sew well and I have good assistants. You even know one of them."

Julie did indeed know one of them to be an excellent seamstress.

"Here are some samples of my work. And I made this dress I'm wearing. You can see how well it fits."

Julie carefully examined the fit of her dress; then she scrutinized the stitching on a shawl and a pair of sleeves. She was very satisfied.

"My child, you could be very successful. You have skill and good taste. But you will need an elegant shop on Nevsky Prospekt."



“Yes, and in time I’ll have one. That’s my goal. But for now, I’ll take in orders at home.”

They finished their business and began to talk about Verochka’s marriage once again.

“That Storeschnik fellow went on a terrible binge for two weeks. Then he made it up with Adele. I’m very happy for her. He’s a good fellow. It’s a pity, though, that Adele has no character.”

Once launched on this subject, Julie began to describe the adventures of Adele, among others. Mademoiselle Rozalskaya was a married woman now, so Julie saw no need to restrain herself. At first she spoke rationally; then she got more and more carried away and began to describe her revels with great enthusiasm; she went on and on. At first Vera Pavlovna was embarrassed, but Julie didn’t notice it. Then Vera Pavlovna recovered her self-possession and began to listen with the same painful interest with which one examines the features of a well-loved face disfigured by disease. But soon Lopukhov arrived. Julie was instantly transformed into a respectable society lady, endowed with the sternest tact. She didn’t maintain this pose for long, however. After congratulating Lopukhov on having so beautiful a wife, she became excited again. “Yes,” she cried, “we must celebrate your marriage.” She ordered an impromptu breakfast, complete with champagne. Verochka had to drink half a glass to toast her marriage, half a glass to her new establishment, and half a glass to Julie’s health. Her head started spinning. Then she and Julie began to shout, yell, and raise a rumpus. Julie pinched Verochka, jumped up, and began to run around, chased by Verochka. They ran through all the rooms, bouncing on chairs. Lopukhov sat and laughed. It came to an end when Julie decided to boast about her strength. “I can lift you into the air with one hand.” “Oh, no, you can’t.” They started to struggle, but fell onto the sofa; they no longer tried to stand up, but merely continued to shout and giggle; soon they both fell asleep.

This was the first time in a long while that Lopukhov didn’t know what to do. Should he wake them? What a pity to spoil such a cheerful encounter with an awkward conclusion. He stood up quietly and looked for something to read. He found a book, *The Chronicles of the Oval Window*, compared to which *Faublas* seemed pale indeed.<sup>4</sup> He settled down on a sofa at the other end of the room and began to read. A quarter of an hour later he dozed off out of sheer boredom.

Two hours later Pauline woke Julie. It was time for dinner. They sat down to eat without Serge, who was attending some gala affair. Julie and Verochka became raucous again and then grew more serious; by the time they parted, both were entirely serious.

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<sup>4</sup> Chernyshevsky is comparing the satirical novel *Les Chroniques de l’Œil de Boeuf* (1829–1833, by Napoleon’s commissar of war, G. Toucharo-Lafosse (1780–1847), with the picaresque nove, *Les Aventures du chevalier de Faublas* (Paris, 1787–1789), by the republican sympathizer Jean-Baptiste Louvet de Couvra, (1760–1797). Immensely popular though insubstantial, the *Chroniques* expose the intimate lives of French monarchs from Louis XIII to Louis XVI; Louvet’s work humorously relates the amorous adventures of a French aristocrat at the end of the eighteenth century.

Julie inquired (it hadn't occurred to her before) as to why Verochka was opening a dressmaking establishment. Why, if she were concerned about money, it would be much easier to become an actress or even a singer, since she had such a powerful voice. At this inquiry they both sat down again. Verochka began to explain her idea, and Julie became enthusiastic once more. She showered blessings mixed with tears upon her, declaring that she, Julie Letellier, although a fallen woman, nevertheless knew what virtue was all about. There were more tears, embraces, and then more blessings.

Four days later Julie arrived at Vera Pavlovna's and presented her with rather a lot of orders as well as the addresses of several of her acquaintances from whom she might receive even more. She brought Serge along with her, having insisted upon it, saying, "Lopukhov called on us. Now you must pay them a visit." Julie behaved in a dignified manner and managed to keep it up without the least indiscretion, even though they spent considerable time at the Lopukhovs'. She realized that there were no walls, only thin partitions, and she knew how to protect other people's reputations. She did not become excited; instead, she assumed a more bucolic pose. She dwelled with delight on all aspects of the Lopukhovs' impoverished way of life, concluding that it was the best way to live, even the only way, and that true happiness was feasible only in modest surroundings. She went so far as to announce to Serge that they should go off to live in Switzerland, settle in a small house amidst fields and mountains on the shore of a lake, and there love each other, catch fish, and tend their garden.<sup>5</sup> Serge said that he was in complete agreement, but would wait to see what Julie would say about it three or four hours later.

The noise of Julie's elegant carriage and the clatter made by her wonderful horses produced a staggering impression on the inhabitants of the Fifth Line between Middle and Small Prospekts, where nothing comparable had been seen at least since the time of Peter the Great, if not earlier.<sup>6</sup> Many eyes observed how the miraculous phenomenon halted before the locked gates of a small, one-story house with seven windows, how an even more astonishing phenomenon emerged from that wonderful carriage: a splendid lady and a glittering officer, whose high position was indisputable. Disappointment was widespread when the gates were opened a moment later and the carriage drove into the courtyard: the curious had been deprived of the hope of seeing the majestic officer and the even more majestic lady again at their departure. When Danilych returned home from work, the following conversation with Petrovna ensued.

"Well, Danilych, it seems that our tenants must be descended from important people. Today a general and his wife came to visit them. She was dressed so well that I don't even know how to describe her, and he had two stars on him."

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<sup>5</sup> Perhaps a reference to the satirical masterpiece *Candide* (1759), by the leading Enlightenment philosopher, François Marie Arouet (Voltaire, 1694–1778). Chernyshevsky may be contrasting the activism of his "new people" with the social disengagement of both Julie and *Candide*. At the end of Voltaire's novel, *Candide* declares that "we must cultivate our garden."

<sup>6</sup> Chernyshevsky is making a joke, since obviously no street could have existed at this spot before the founding of St. Petersburg by Peter the Great in 1703.

It was truly amazing that Petrovna had seen two stars on Serge, who didn't have any at all, and, if he did, he probably wouldn't have worn them while escorting Julie. But that she actually saw two stars and was neither mistaken nor bragging, it's not she who so testified, but I who vouch for it. She did see them. You and I know very well that he had no stars; however, from Petrovna's point of view, it was impossible not to see two stars on someone with that appearance. And so she saw them. I'm not joking when I say that she really did.

"And what livery the lackey wore, Danilych: English cloth, five rubles an arshin.<sup>7</sup> He was such a stern man, so dignified, but he spoke politely. He let me feel the wonderful cloth on his sleeve. Obviously they have money to burn.<sup>8</sup> They spent about two hours with our tenants, Danilych, everyone talking so simply, just like you and me. They didn't even bow to them, but sat laughing with them. Our young man sat with the general, both of them sprawling in armchairs and smoking. Our tenant sprawling and smoking with a general! And that's nothing! His cigarette went out and he borrowed the general's to light his own! I can't tell you how respectfully the general kissed our young lady's hand. What can we make of all this, Danilych?"

"Everything comes from God, that's what I think. Whether its friends or relatives, it all comes from God."

"So it does, Danilych. There's no doubt about it. I think that either he or she must be a brother or a sister of the general or his wife. To tell you the truth, I think she's the general's sister."

"Why do you think that Petrovna? It doesn't seem like that to me. If it were, then our young people would have more money."

"Welt Danilych, and what if her mother gave birth to her out of wedlock or her father wasn't married? That would explain the faces, since there's really no resemblance."

"That could be it, Petrovna, out of wedlock. It sometimes happens."

During the next four days Petrovna enjoyed great importance in her rag shop. For three days the shop attracted a number of customers from that other one across the way. In the interest of enlightenment, Petrovna even neglected her mending for a while to satisfy the general thirst for knowledge.

One result of all this was that about a week later Pavel Konstantinych came to visit his daughter and son-in-law.

Marya Aleksevna had been collecting information about her daughter and the villain—not constantly or carefully, but just in general, purely out of scientific curiosity. One of her fellow gossips who lived on Vasilievsky Island had been commissioned to make inquiries about Vera Pavlovna whenever she was in their neighborhood. She would pass this information along, sometimes once a month, sometimes more often, as it happened. The Lopukhovs were living in harmony. No scandal to report. There was

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<sup>7</sup> See n. 44above.

<sup>8</sup> A Russian proverb, "vidno, chto deneg-to kury ne klyuyut," which literally means "clearly they have so much money that even the chickens won't peck at it."

one thing, though: they had a lot of young friends, almost all of them men, and all of very modest means. They too were living modestly, but obviously there was some money. Not only were they not selling anything, they were actually buying. She had made herself two silk dresses. They purchased two sofas, a table to match, and half a dozen chairs, all secondhand. They paid only forty rubles, but the furniture was of good quality and worth about a hundred. They've notified their landlords to look for new tenants. "In a month we're going to move into our own apartment," he said. "We're very grateful to you for everything." And the landlords replied, "As we are to you."

Marya Aleksevna was comforted by these reports. She was a coarse woman and a very wicked one; she tormented her daughter and was ready to kill her or ruin her for her own interests; and she cursed her for thwarting her scheme to become rich. All of this was true. But does it follow that she felt no love at all for her own daughter? No, it doesn't follow in the least. When her scheme was ruined, when her daughter had escaped her clutches forever, what was left to be done? There was no use crying over spilled milk. After all, she was her daughter. Now there was no chance that doing any harm to Vera Pavlovna could serve Marya Aleksevna's interests, and the mother sincerely wished her daughter well. Then again, it's not that she wished her God knows what; but that makes no difference. At least she wasn't spying on the girl's every move. The measures adopted for watching her daughter were casual, just so, because, you'll agree, how was it possible not to do it? The well-wishing was just as casual, but still, you'll agree, Verochka was her daughter after all. Why not be reconciled? All the more, since that villain of a son-in-law, to all appearances, seemed to be a reliable man; perhaps he might even prove useful later on. Thus Marya Aleksevna gradually moved toward the idea of renewing relations with her daughter. It would take at least half a year, perhaps a whole year, to reach that stage. There was no need to rush; time has patience. But news of the visit by the general and the general's wife suddenly pushed the matter ahead the rest of the way. The villain had proved himself to be a scoundrel as well. A former miserable little student with no rank, with only a few kopecks to his name, had become friends with a young, and therefore obviously very important, wealthy general and had introduced his wife to the general's wife. Such a man will go far. Or was it Verochka who'd made the acquaintance of the general's wife and who'd introduced her husband to the general? It didn't matter. It meant that Verochka would go far.

And so, right after receiving news of this visit, Marya Aleksevna dispatched her husband to inform Vera Pavlovna that she had forgiven her daughter and was now inviting her to pay a visit. Vera Pavlovna and her husband returned home with Pavel Konstantinych and spent the early evening there. The meeting was cool and somewhat strained. They spoke mostly about Fedya, since that wasn't a delicate subject. He was attending the gymnasium. They had persuaded Marya Aleksevna to enroll him as a live-in student there. Dmitry Sergeich would visit him and Vera Pavlovna would invite him to spend holidays with them. Somehow or other they managed to stretch

the conversation out to teatime and then the Lopuhkovs made haste to depart. They said that they were expecting guests at home that evening.

For the last half year Vera Pavlovna had been breathing pure air; her lungs had become unaccustomed to the oppressive atmosphere of cunning words (every single one of which was uttered for reasons of greedy self-interest) and to hearing deceitful thoughts and base schemes. Her former cellar made a horrible impression on her. The filth, vulgarity, and prevailing cynicism all struck her now as a harsh novelty.

“Where did I find the strength to live in such vile confines? How did I manage to breathe in that cellar? I not only lived there but even remained in good health. That’s astonishing, incomprehensible! How did I manage to foster a love for the good? It’s hard to understand and most improbable,” thought Vera Pavlovna after she’d returned to her own apartment. She felt as if she’d been saved from suffocation.

Not long after returning home, the guests they’d been expecting arrived. They were the usual visitors: Aleksei Petrovich, Natasha, and Kirsanov. They passed the evening as always, but Vera Pavlovna’s new life with its purity of thought and its community of wholesome people seemed twice as delightful to her. As usual, the conversation was both cheerful, with many reminiscences, and serious, about everything under the sun: from historical events of the time (the civil strife in Kansas which was the forerunner of the Great Civil War between the North and the South,<sup>9</sup> which in turn was to be the forerunner of even greater events, not only in America, preoccupied this little circle. Now everyone talks about politics; then only a few people did, including Lopukhov, Kirsanov, and their friends); the current debate about the chemical basis of agriculture according to Liebig’s theory;<sup>10</sup> the laws governing historical progress—an unavoidable subject of conversation in such circles at that time;<sup>11</sup> the great importance of distinguishing real desires, which seek and find their own fulfillment, from phantasmic desires, which can’t be fulfilled and don’t need to be, like a false thirst during a fever, which admits to only one satisfaction, curing the organism, whose diseased condition engenders those phantasmic desires through a distortion of real ones; to the significance of this fundamental distinction established at that time by anthropological philosophy.<sup>12</sup> They talked about other things as well both similar to these and not so

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<sup>9</sup> The bloody battles between supporters of slavery and abolitionists over the extension of slavery into the Kansas-Nebraska Territory during the mid-1850s presaged the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861.

<sup>10</sup> The German chemist Baron Justus von Liebig (1803–1873), a professor at Giessen and Munich universities, whose work in agricultural chemistry contributed significantly to the development of artificial fertilizers.

<sup>11</sup> The discontented, educated Russians who gathered together in the 1850s to discuss political and social issues frequently debated the nature and sources of historical progress, partly in order to define their own social role. The work of the English historian Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–1861) proved particularly attractive to members of these circles because of its emphasis on scientific method and on the expansion of knowledge as the basis of historical development.

<sup>12</sup> A reference to the ideas of Feuerbach (see n. 41 above, as well, as to their extension by Chernyshevsky in his important treatise “The Anthropologica, Principle in Philosophy” (Sovremennik, no. 4

similar, but related. At times the ladies listened in to this learned discourse; it was conducted in such a simple way that it hardly seemed like learned discourse; often they intervened with questions of their own. But it goes without saying that for the most part they didn't listen,<sup>13</sup> and even doused Lopukhov and Aleksei Petrovich with water when they got too excited over the enormous importance of mineral fertilizers. But Aleksei Petrovich and Lopukhov persevered unwavering in their learned discourse. Kirsanov didn't provide much assistance; he was more on the side of the ladies, even entirely so. The three of them played the piano, sang songs, and laughed until late into the night, when, exhausted, they finally managed to separate the invincible zealots of serious conversation.

### III. Vera Pavlovna's Second Dream

Now Vera Pavlovna falls asleep and has a dream. First she sees a field. Her husband, that is, her sweetheart, and Aleksei Petrovich are walking across it. Her sweetheart says, "You want to know, Aleksei Petrovich, why one kind of dirt produces wheat that's so white, tender, and pure, while another kind doesn't."<sup>14</sup> Soon you'll come to understand the difference yourself. Look at the root of this fine stalk: there's dirt all around it, but it's fresh dirt, one might even say 'clean dirt.' Smell it: it's damp and unpleasant, but it's neither moldy nor putrid. You know that in the language of the philosophy to which we both subscribe<sup>15</sup> this 'clean dirt' is called 'real dirt.' It's 'dirty,' to be sure; but if you look at it carefully, you'll see that all its elements are healthy in and of themselves. They constitute 'dirt' in this particular combination, but if the arrangement of atoms were to be slightly altered, something else would emerge. And that new substance would also be healthy because the basic elements are sound. Where does the healthy quality of this dirt come from? Observe the condition of this field: you can see that there is ample drainage for the water. Consequently, there can be no stagnation."

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[1860]; available in English in N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Selected Philosophical Essays* [Moscow, 1953], pp. 49–135). This article provides a theoretical statement of both the materialist philosophy and the idea of rational egoism which underlie the present novel (on both, see Introduction, pp. 16–19).

<sup>13</sup> Russian women active in revolutionary circles seldom engaged in theoretical debate, particularly in the presence of men, whose condescension toward them generally discouraged them from voicing an opinion.

<sup>14</sup> In Vera's dream Chernyshevsky uses Liebig's theories regarding the fertility of different types of soil (see n. 82 above) to expound his own idea that socioeconomic conditions shape an individual's character, and that therefore the revolutionary transformation of these conditions will ensure social justice and prosperity by fostering appropriate personality traits. By linking the biblical parable of the sower (Luke 8:8) with Liebig's theories on soil chemistry, he is also trying to provide scientific proof for the utopian as well as Christian idea of transformation. In chap. 6 of his novel *Fathers and Sons* (see n. 147 below and Introduction, pp. 26–27), Turgenev has the ineffectual liberal Pavel Kirsanov seek the advice of his nihilist hero, Bazarov, regarding the usefulness of Liebig's discoveries.

<sup>15</sup> That is, materialism.

“Yes, movement is reality,” replies Aleksei Petrovich, “because movement is life; reality and life are one and the same. But life has as its main element labor; consequently, the main element of reality is labor, and the truest sign of reality is activity.”

“So you see, Aleksei Petrovich, when the sun begins to warm this dirt and that warmth begins to rearrange the elements into more complex chemical combinations, that is, into those characteristic of higher forms, then the stalk that grows in this dirt with the help of sunlight will be healthy.”

“Yes, because it’s the dirt of real life,” says Aleksei Petrovich.

“Now let’s cross over to this other field. Let’s pull up a plant and examine its root. It’s also ‘dirty.’ Note its character: it’s not difficult to observe that this dirt is rotten.”

“That is, it’s phantasmic dirt, according to scientific terminology,” says Aleksei Petrovich.

“Indeed. Its elements are in an unhealthy condition. Moreover, it’s only natural that no matter how they might be rearranged, and whatever substances unlike dirt might emerge from these very same elements, they’d still be unhealthy and rotten.”

“Yes, because the elements themselves are unhealthy,” says Aleksei Petrovich.

“It won’t be hard to discover the cause of this unhealthiness.”

“That is, the cause of this phantasmic stagnation,” says Aleksei Petrovich.

“Yes, of the stagnation of these elements; we need only observe the condition of this field. You see, the water has no outlet; therefore it stagnates and putrefies.”

“Yes, the absence of movement is the absence of labor,” says Aleksei Petrovich, “because in an anthropological analysis<sup>16</sup> labor constitutes the fundamental form of movement which provides the basis and content of all other forms: recreation, relaxation, amusement, enjoyment. Without labor to precede them, these other forms have no reality. And without movement there’s no life, that is, no reality, because the dirt is phantasmic, putrid. Until very recently no one knew how to restore such fields to health; but now a method has been discovered. It’s called ‘drainage.’<sup>17</sup> Excess water is channeled off into ditches, leaving only the required amount. And this water is kept in motion; thus the field acquires its reality. But until this method is applied, the dirt remains phantasmic, that is, stagnant; it can’t produce any healthy vegetation. Meanwhile, as expected, healthy plants appear in the real dirt, since it’s healthy. ‘That which was to be proved ...’ Q.E.D., as it’s said in Latin.”<sup>18</sup>

Precisely how “that which was to be proved” is said in Latin, Vera Pavlovna was unable to make out.

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<sup>16</sup> See n. 84 above.

<sup>17</sup> An allegory for revolution (see n. 86 above). In the Aesopian language employed during this period to avoid tsarist censorship, Russian radicals referred to mechanical processes such as “drainage” to indicate revolutionary means of change and chemical processes to signify evolutionary change. Thus Chernyshevsky’s emphasis on drainage rather than on chemical improvement indicates his advocacy of revolution.

<sup>18</sup> Quod erat demonstrandum (Lat.), “which was to be proved.”

“Aleksei Petrovich, you do enjoy amusing yourself with low Latin and syllogisms,” says her sweetheart, that is, her husband.

Vera Pavlovna goes up to both of them and says, “Enough of your analyses, identities, and anthropologisms. Gentlemen, please talk about something else so I can participate in your conversation; or better still, let’s play a game.”

“Yes, let’s,” says Aleksei Petrovich. “Let’s play confession.”

“Oh, yes, let’s. That will be great fun,” says Vera Pavlovna. “Since you suggested it, show us how it’s done.”

“With pleasure, my ‘sister,’” says Aleksei Petrovich. “But first, how old are you, my dear sister? Eighteen?”

“Almost nineteen.”

“But not quite. Therefore, let’s say eighteen. We’ll all confess up to that age, since we must maintain equality in all conditions of the game. I’ll confess for both myself and my wife. My father was a sexton in the main town of our province; he was also a bookbinder. My mother rented rooms to seminary students. Day and night my parents talked and worried about how to provide our daily bread. My father was inclined to drink, but only when our situation became intolerable (and that was genuine sorrow), or when his income would permit. He would turn over all his money to my mother, saying, ‘Woe my dear, now we won’t have to struggle for the next two months. So I’ve left myself half a ruble and will have a drink in celebration’ (and that was genuine joy). My mother would often get angry; sometimes she even beat me, but only, as she used to say, when her back ached from carrying heavy kettles and pots, washing clothes for the five of us plus five seminary students, scrubbing the floors dirtied by our twenty feet (which didn’t wear galoshes), and taking care of our cow. This was genuine nervous distress caused by too much work and lack of rest. And when, for all that, ‘ends didn’t meet,’ as she used to say—that is, when there wasn’t enough money to buy boots for one of my brothers or shoes for one of my sisters—then she used to beat us. She also used to hug us when we, foolish kids that we were, would offer to help her with her work, when we did something clever, or when she had a rare moment to relax and her ‘back pain had eased,’ as she used to say. Those were genuine joys.”

“Oh, enough of your genuine joys and sorrows,” says Vera Pavlovna.

“In that case, you’ll now hear Natasha’s confession from me.”

“I don’t want to listen. I know it’ll have the same sort of genuine joys and sorrows.”

“That’s absolutely true.”

“Perhaps you’d be interested in hearing my confession,” says Serge, appearing from God knows where.

“All right, let’s hear it,” says Vera Pavlovna.

“My father and mother, even though they were well off, also talked and worried about money constantly. Even rich people aren’t free of such worries.”

“You don’t know how to confess, Serge,” says Aleksei Petrovich politely. “Tell us why they worried about money, what kind of expenses concerned them, which needs they were hard-pressed to satisfy.”



“Yes, of course, I understand why you’re asking,” says Serge. “But let’s leave that topic and turn to another. They also worried about their children.”

“But were their children assured of receiving their daily bread?” asks Aleksei Petrovich.

“Of course, but they had to worry about ...”

“Don’t confess, Serge,” says Aleksei Petrovich. “We know your whole story: concern for the superfluous, worry about the unnecessary—that’s the soil that produced you. It was phantasmic. Therefore, take a good look at yourself; you weren’t born a stupid man. You seem to be very good, perhaps neither worse nor less intelligent than we are. But what good are you? Of what use are you?”

“I’m good for escorting Julie wherever she wants to go and I’m of use so that she can carouse,” answers Serge.

“We see, then, as a result,” says Aleksei Petrovich, “that phantasmic or unhealthy soil ...”

“Oh, I’m so fed up with your realities and phantasms! Their meaning has been clear for ages, yet still you go on explaining!” says Vera Pavlovna.

“Wouldn’t you like to have a little chat with me?” asks Marya Aleksevna, who’s also appeared from God knows where. “Gentlemen, please leave us alone. A mother would like to speak with her daughter.”

Everyone disappears. Now Verochka sees herself all alone with Marya Aleksevna. Her mother’s face assumes a sarcastic expression.

“So, Vera Pavlovna, you’re an educated lady now, so pure and noble,” says Marya Aleksevna, her voice shaking with rage. “You’re so kind. How can I, a vulgar, mean drunkard, possibly speak to you? You have a nasty, wicked mother, Vera Pavlovna. But allow me to inquire, madame, what it was that your mother was always so concerned about? Providing for your daily bread! And in your opinion, in your learned opinion, this is a genuine, real human concern, is it not? You heard abusive language and you saw wickedness and meanness. But permit me to inquire, what purpose did it serve? Was it for nothing, for some trifle? No, madame! No, indeed! Whatever life your family led, it wasn’t an empty, phantasmic one. You see, Vera Pavlovna, I’ve learned to speak just like you, using that scientific language. But now, Vera Pavlovna, are you distressed and ashamed that your mother is such a nasty, vile woman? Would you prefer it if I were kind and honest? I’m a witch, Vera Pavlovna; I can cast spells and can grant your wish. Be so good as to observe, my dear, how your wish is now being granted: your wicked mother is now disappearing. Behold your good, kind mother and her daughter.”

Vera Pavlovna sees a room. A drunken, unshaven, disgusting man lies snoring near the threshold. It’s impossible to see who he is, as his face is half shielded by his arm, half covered with bruises. There stands a bed. A woman is lying on it. Yes, it’s Marya Aleksevna, only now she’s so kind! But how pale her face is, how decrepit she is at age forty-five, how exhausted! Near the bed stands a young girl of about eighteen. Yes, it’s I, Verochka—except I’m all in rags. And what’s this? My complexion is sallow, my features are gross, and the room is barren. There’s hardly any furniture in it. “Verochka,

my dear, my angel," says Marya Aleksevna, "lie down and rest, my treasure. Why are you looking at me? I'll just lie here by myself. But you haven't slept for three nights."

"Never mind, mama, I'm not tired," says Verochka.

"You know, I'm not feeling any better, Verochka. How will you manage without me? Your father's income is so meager; he can't support you. You're an attractive girl; there are many wicked people in the world. There'll be no one to protect you. How I fear for you!" Verochka weeps.

"Don't be offended, my dear. I'm not saying this to reproach you, but to warn you. Why did you go out on Friday, a day before I fell ill?" Verochka weeps.

"He'll deceive you, Verochka. Give him up."

"No, mama."

Two months later. How can it be that in one brief moment two months have passed? On a chair sits an officer. A bottle stands on the table before him. Verochka is sitting on his lap.

Another two months pass by in an instant.

A lady is sitting on a sofa. Verochka stands before her.

"Do you know how to iron, my dear?"

"I do."

"What are you, my dear? A serf or a free woman?"

"My father is a civil servant."

"Then you belong to the nobility, my dear. In that case, I'm afraid I can't hire you. What sort of servant would you make? Go away, dear, I can't use you."

Verochka is out on the street.

"Marnzelle, hey, mamzelle," says some tipsy young man. "Where to? I'll go with you!" Verochka runs toward the banks of the Neva.<sup>19</sup>

"Welt my dear, have you seen enough of what it would be like to have a kind mother?" asks the former Marya Aleksevna, the real one. "I'm good at casting spells, aren't I? Haven't I figured it all out very well? Why have you fallen silent? Don't you have a tongue? I'll squeeze the words out of you! Hey, it's hard to get anything out! Welt have you been out shopping?"

"Yes, I have," replies Verochka, trembling.

"And have you seen and heard?"

"Yes, I have."

"Do they live well; all those learned types? They read books and devise new worlds where people do what's good. They do, don't they? Speak!"

Verochka remains silent, trembling.

"Hey, I can't get a peep out of you! Do they live well, I'm asking you!"

Verochka remains silent and feels a cold shudder.

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<sup>19</sup> An allusion to the last resort (suicide) by women in St. Petersburg who were forced by economic circumstances into prostitution.

“Not a peep! Do they live well, I ask you ! Are they good people? Do you want to become like them? Silence. Don’t turn your mug away! You listen to me, Verka,<sup>20</sup> listen to what I have to say. You’re learned now, educated with money that I stole. You dream about the good, but if I hadn’t been so wicked, you wouldn’t even know what the good is! Do you understand? Everything comes from me! You are my daughter, understand? I am your mother.” Verochka weeps, trembles, and shudders.

“Mama, what do you want from me? I can’t love you.”

“Am I asking you to love me?”

“At least I’d like to respect you, but I can’t.”

“Do I need your respect?”

“Well, then, what is it, mama? Why have you come to talk to me and terrify me? What do you want from me?”

“Be grateful, you ingrate. Don’t love me or respect me. I’m evil: how can you love me? I’m nasty: how can you respect me? But you must understand, Verka, that if I hadn’t been who I was, then you wouldn’t be who you are. I was nasty, but you are good. I was wicked, but you are kind. Understand, Verka, and be grateful.”

“Go away now, Marya Aleksevna. I’d like a word with my little sister.”

Marya Aleksevna disappears.

The Bride of her Bridegrooms, the Sister of her Sisters now takes Verochka by the hand.

“I have always wanted to be kind to you, Verochka, since you’re so kind yourself, and I always resemble the person with whom I’m speaking. But now you’re very sad, and you see, so am I. Look, am I attractive in my sadness?”

“More attractive than anyone in the whole world.”

“Kiss me, Verochka. We’re both in distress. You know, your mother was telling you the truth. I don’t love her, but I do need her.”

“Can’t you do without her?”

“Later it will be possible, when people no longer need to be wicked. But for now it isn’t. You see, good people are unable to stand on their own two feet; the wicked are clever and strong. You see, Verochka, there are different kinds of wicked people. Some want things to get worse, others better—all to further their own interests. Your mother needed you to become educated. She took all the money that you were paid for giving lessons. She wanted her daughter to land a rich son-in-law; therefore it was necessary for you to be cultured. You see, she had nasty thoughts, but advantages resulted from them. Didn’t you get any benefits? But this isn’t necessarily the case with all wicked people. If your mother had been Anna Petrovna, would you have studied so much, become so educated, learned to recognize and cherish the good? No, you would never have been allowed to perceive it. They would have made a plaything out of you, a doll. Isn’t that so? Such a mother needs a doll for a daughter, because she’s one herself and plays with other dolls. Your mother is a mean person, but she’s still a person, and it

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<sup>20</sup> A pejorative diminutive form of Vera.

was important to her that you be more than a doll. You see how diverse wicked people are! Some of them interfere with my work; I want young men and women to develop and become people, they want them to remain dolls. Other wicked people assist me: they don't actually want to help, but in providing young men and women with an opportunity to develop, they are in fact amassing the means that enable them to do so. And that's all that I really need. Yes, Verochka, now I can't do without these evil people to oppose the other type. My wicked people are very wicked indeed, but good grows up beneath their hands. Yes, Verochka, be grateful to your mother. Don't love her, for she is evil; but you owe her everything. Acknowledge it: without her, you would not exist."

"And will it always be so? It won't, will it?"

"No, Verochka, it won't be so later. When the good are strong, I won't need the wicked. This will happen very soon, Verochka. Then the wicked will see that they can no longer be wicked. Those who were already developing will become good, since they remained wicked only because it was disadvantageous for them to become good. Since they know that good is better than evil, they'll come to love the good as soon as it's possible to do so without harming themselves."

"And what will become of the wicked who were dolls? I pity even them."

"They will still play with dolls, but with harmless ones. And you see, they won't bear children who take after themselves. Soon all people will become developed. I shall teach their children to become people, not dolls."

"Oh, how wonderful that will be!"

"Yes, but even now it's good because the process has already begun. At least it's good for those who are helping to bring it about. Verochka, when you help the cook prepare dinner, even though the kitchen is stuffy and smoky, you feel just fine. What do you care if it's stuffy and smoky? Everyone enjoys sitting down to dinner, but the person who helped in the preparations enjoys it most of all and finds it twice as delicious! You like sweets, don't you, Verochka?"

"Yes, I do," she replies, smiling to find herself accused of liking sweets and of helping to make them in the kitchen.

"Then why are you still so sad? Oh, but you aren't any longer."

"You're so kind!"

"And cheerful, Verochka, I'm always cheerful, even when I'm sad. Aren't I?"

"Yes, whenever I feel sad, you appear to be sad too, but you always drive my grief away at once. I always become cheerful when I'm with you, so very cheerful."

"Do you remember my little song, 'Donc vivons'?"<sup>21</sup>

"I do."

"Welt then, let's sing it."

"All right."

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<sup>21</sup> See n. 5 above.

“Verochka! Did I awaken you? In any case, tea’s ready. I was beginning to get worried; I heard you moaning, but when I came in, you were already singing.”

“No, my dear, you didn’t wake me. I would have awakened by myself. What a dream I just had, my dear! I’ll tell you about it over tea. Run along now so I can get dressed. By the way, Dmitry Sergeich, how dare you enter my room without permission? You forget yourself. Were you worried about me, my dear? Come here, I shall give you a kiss for that. There, now that I’ve kissed you, run along, go on, for I must get dressed.”

“So be it, but let me serve as your maid.”

“Welt all right, dear, but it’s so embarrassing!”

## IV.

Vera Pavlovna’s dressmaking shop was quickly established. The basic principles were simple, in fact so simple in the beginning that there really isn’t much to be said about them. Vera Pavlovna told the first three seamstresses nothing more than that she would pay them slightly higher wages than they would have received at other shops. There was nothing special about the business. The seamstresses realized that Vera Pavlovna was neither an idle woman nor a frivolous one; therefore they accepted her offer to work in the shop without hesitation. The fact that a woman of modest means wanted to establish a dressmaking shop was no cause to hesitate. These three young women found three or four more, choosing them carefully, as Vera Pavlovna had requested. Nor was there anything special, anything that might arouse suspicion in these conditions of choice. A modest young woman wants all the workers in her shop to be straightforward and of good character, reasonable and easy to get along with. What’s so unusual about that? She doesn’t want any quarrels, and that’s that; therefore, she was behaving sensibly, no more and no less. Vera Pavlovna got very well acquainted with the newly chosen girls before she told them that they were accepted; that’s only natural. It also shows her to be a woman of good common sense, and that’s that. There’s nothing to ponder, nothing to distrust.

Thus they worked for about a month for the agreed-upon wages. Vera Pavlovna was constantly in the shop and they got to know her well. For all her goodness, they saw that she was also an economical, careful, and reasonable woman; thus she earned their complete confidence. Nor was there anything special about this either; the only thing one could say was that she was a good employer whose business was doing well. She knew how to run it.

But when the month was over Vera Pavlovna walked into the shop carrying some kind of account book and asked the seamstresses to stop their work and listen to what she had to say. In very simple terms she began to explain extremely comprehensible things, but things the seamstresses had never before heard from her or from anyone else.

“Now that we know each other well,” she began, “I can say that you are good workers and good girls. And you probably wouldn’t say that I’m some sort of fool. That means that I can speak with you frankly about my ideas. If anything seems strange about them, you’ll think it over carefully and won’t say right away that my ideas are stupid, because you already know that I’m not a foolish woman. Here are my ideas.

“Good people have said that dressmaking establishments can be organized so as to make them much more profitable for seamstresses to work in than the ones we now know. I would like to try. Judging by the first month, it seems entirely possible to me. You’ve been receiving your wages regularly. Now I’ll tell you how much money I have left over as profit after paying your wages and all other expenses.” Vera Pavlovna read out the amount of income and expenses for the whole month. Under expenses, beside wages paid out, were all the other costs: rent for the rooms, light, even a ruble or so which Vera Pavlovna paid for a cab while on business for the shop.

“You see,” she continued, “I have this amount of money left over. Now, what shall we do with it? I established the workshop so that profits would go into the hands of the seamstresses themselves for the work they’ve done. Therefore I’m distributing the money among you. This first time each of you will get an equal share. Later on, we’ll see if that’s the best way to divide it, or if there isn’t another, more advantageous way.” She distributed the money.

For a while the seamstresses were so astonished that they were unable to come to their senses; then they began to thank her. Vera Pavlovna allowed them to express their gratitude for the money to their hearts’ content, so as not to offend them by refusing to listen and by appearing indifferent to their opinions and inclinations. Then she continued.

“Now I must tell you the most difficult thing of all that I will ever have to say. I don’t even know if I can explain it very well. Nevertheless, I must say it. Why haven’t I kept the money myself? Why would I want to establish a workshop if I wasn’t going to keep the income from it? As you know, my husband and I are in no great need. We’re not rich, but we have enough to live on. If I felt the lack of anything, I’d only have to tell my husband—no, I wouldn’t even have to do that. He himself would notice that I needed more money, and I would have more. Now he’s occupied not with those things that are most profitable, but with those he likes best. But we love each other very much, and he always wants to do what will make me happy, just as I do for him. Therefore, if I lacked money, he would pursue a more profitable occupation than his present one. He would manage to find something, because he’s such a clever and resourceful man. But you know him a little. If he isn’t doing that, then it means the money we have is enough for me. And that’s because I have no great passion for money. You know that people have different passions, not all of them only for money. Some like to go to balls, others like to wear fine clothes or play cards. All these people are prepared to ruin themselves for their passions, and many do. No one is surprised that they hold these passions dearer than money. It happens to be my passion to set up this enterprise with you. And not only won’t I ruin myself with my passion, but I don’t even spend

any money on it. I'm only pleased to be able to do it, even if I earn nothing myself. I see nothing unusual in this. Who expects to earn any income from his passion? Most people spend their money on it. But I'm not going to do that. In other words, I enjoy an advantage over others because I can indulge my passion and take pleasure in it while incurring no loss, while others have to pay for their pleasure. Why do I have this passion? Here's why. Many good, clever people have written books on the subject of how one should live on this earth so that all people may be happy. According to them, the most important thing is to organize workshops according to a new system.<sup>22</sup> I'd like to see if together we can establish the new system they prescribe. It's the same as wanting to build a fine house, plant a nice garden, or erect a greenhouse for one's own enjoyment. I want to organize a nice sewing shop so that I may enjoy it.

"Of course, it would be fine if I did nothing else every month except distribute the profits among you as I do now. But clever people say that there's a much better way of doing it so that we receive even higher profits and make better use of them. They say that things can be organized very well. So we'll see. Little by little I'll tell you what else we can do according to the ideas of these clever people, and you yourselves should keep watch and take notice. If it occurs to you that something can be done better, we'll try that too, gradually, as best we can. But I can assure you that I won't organize anything new without your participation. The only changes will be those that you yourselves want. Clever people have said that things turn out well only if people themselves desire it. That's what I think, too. So you've no need to fear anything new; everything will continue to be done in the same way unless you wish to change it. Nothing will be changed without your consent.

"And here's my last pronouncement as owner, made without your advice. You see that accounts must be kept and care must be taken so that we have no unnecessary expenses. Last month I did it alone; I no longer want to do that. Choose two of you who can work together with me. I'll do nothing without them. It's your money, not mine; therefore, you must look after it. This enterprise is still new and we don't know yet which of you is best suited to this task, so at first you must choose people for a short term. In a week you'll see whether you should choose someone else or leave those two in the position."

These extraordinary words aroused lengthy debate. But Vera Pavlovna had already obtained their confidence; she spoke very simply, without looking too far ahead and without painting alluring prospects that, after momentary ecstasy, would engender distrust. Therefore, the girls didn't think that she was mad, and that was essential. The enterprise proceeded apace.

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<sup>22</sup> The cooperative forms of labor advocated by such utopian socialists as Charles Fourier, Victor Considérant (see nn. 39 and 40 above), and, especially, Louis Blanc (1811–1882), a French journalist and political activist who figured prominently in the revolutionary events of 1848 in France and whose work Chernyshevsky respected greatly.

Of course it did. Here's a brief history of the workshop over the next three years, during which it constituted the principal feature of Vera Pavlovna's own personal history.

The girls from whom the nucleus of the workshop was formed were chosen very carefully; they were good seamstresses and had a direct interest in the success of the enterprise. Therefore, it was only natural that the work proceeded well. The workshop didn't lose a single customer who had ever entrusted an order to it. A certain amount of envy was manifested by other shops and sewing establishments, but this had no real impact except that in order to curtail their nagging, Vera Pavlovna soon found it necessary to obtain the right to display a sign above her workshop. Soon they began to receive more orders than the girls who'd originally entered the workshop could handle, and their number began to increase gradually. In a year and a half almost twenty girls were employed, later even more.

One of the first consequences of giving a vote in managing the whole enterprise to the girls themselves was a decision that could have been expected. During the first month of self-management the girls decided that it wouldn't do for Vera Pavlovna to work without compensation. When they informed her, she said that they were right. They wanted to give her one-third of the profits. For a while she put that amount aside until she could convince the girls that this contradicted the basic idea of their system. They couldn't understand this for quite a long time. At last they came to realize that Vera Pavlovna had refused a special share of the profits not out of any sense of pride but only because the nature of the enterprise demanded it. By this time the workshop had grown to such an extent that Vera Pavlovna alone couldn't cope with all the cutting, and it was necessary to hire another worker. They paid Vera Pavlovna the same wages as the second cutter. The share of the profits she'd previously put aside was now returned to the till by her own request, minus the wages due her as a cutter. The remainder was used to establish a bank. For about a year Vera Pavlovna spent most of her day in the workshop and worked no fewer hours than any other girl. When she saw the possibility of spending less than a full day there, her wages were reduced accordingly.

How were the profits to be divided? Vera Pavlovna wanted to achieve the goal of equal division among all. This was accomplished, but only toward the middle of their third year of operation; before then they passed through several different stages, starting with a division of the profits in proportion to the wages of each. Soon they realized that if a girl missed several days of work because of illness or some other valid excuse, it wasn't fair to reduce her share of the profits that resulted not from her own labor during those days but from the overall progress of their work and the general condition of the shop. Then they agreed that the cutters and the girls who received extra wages for delivering orders and for performing other duties were already being sufficiently compensated by their individual wages and that it would be unjust for them to receive a larger share of the profits as well. The ordinary seamstresses who had no extra duties were so modest that they wouldn't insist on this, even after they



noticed the injustice of the previous order, which they'd helped to establish. It was the other girls, those with extra duties, who felt the awkwardness of receiving more and who refused it, once they came to appreciate the idea of the new system. However, it must be said that this temporary modesty (the patience of the ones and the refusal of the others) did not represent any special feat, given the constant improvement in the affairs of both groups. The most difficult thing of all was to develop the idea that the ordinary seamstresses should each receive the same share of the profits, although some managed to earn more wages than others, and that those who worked better than others were already being sufficiently compensated by receiving higher wages. This was the final change in the distribution of profits made in the middle of the third year, after the workers understood that receipt of profits is not a reward for the skill of individual workers, but rather the result of the general nature of the enterprise, its organization and its goal. This goal was the greatest possible equality in distribution of the fruits of labor for participants in the enterprise, regardless of their personal characteristics. Any profit sharing by workers depended precisely on the nature of the workshop. The nature of the workshop, its spirit, and its order consisted in the unanimity of all; to achieve this unanimity, each participant was equally important. The tacit consent of the most timid or the least talented was no less essential in the maintenance and development of the enterprise for the general good and success of the whole than the active zeal of the liveliest or most talented.

I choose to omit many details here, because I'm not really describing the workshop, merely mentioning it insofar as it's necessary to characterize Vera Pavlovna's "activity. If I dwell on some particulars, it's only because I want to show how she led the way step by step, and how she patiently, indefatigably, and resolutely maintained her own rule: not to issue pronouncements, but to consult, explain, offer cooperation, and assist in carrying out the decisions reached by the entire group.

The profits were divided every month. At first each girl took her full share and spent it separately. Each one had her own pressing needs, and there was no habit of acting in concert. When, as a result of constant participation in the enterprise, they had acquired the habit of considering the entire operation of the workshop, Vera Pavlovna directed their attention to the fact that since the quantity of orders varied considerably from month to month, in especially profitable months it might not be such a bad idea to put aside a part of the profits to distribute during the less profitable ones. The accounts were kept very precisely. The girls knew that if one of them left the workshop, she would receive her fair share of the profits remaining in the till without any delay. Therefore they agreed to the proposal. A small reserve of capital was formed and it gradually grew. They began to seek different ways of using it. From the very beginning they all understood that it could be used to make loans to those who encountered some need for extra cash; no one wanted to charge interest for the use of their funds. Less prosperous people believe that the best financial assistance is always interest-free. After the establishment of a bank, they organized a purchasing agency. The girls found that it was advantageous to buy tea, coffee, sugar, footwear, and many other things

through the workshop, which could purchase goods in large volume and therefore at cheaper prices. Some time later they went even further. They realized that it might be similarly advantageous to organize the purchase of bread and other supplies bought daily in bakeries and retail shops. But they immediately realized that to do this, they would have to live in the same neighborhood. They began to move in together, a few to an apartment, not far from the workshop. Thus they were able to organize their own purchasing agency to deal with the bakery and other retail shops. Within a year and a half almost all the girls lived in one large apartment; they had a common table and they purchased their provisions just like a large household.

Half of the girls were single. Several had older relatives, mothers or aunts. Two supported their fathers and many had younger brothers and sisters. Three girls were unable to move into the common apartment because of family ties: one mother was hard to get along with, the other was the wife of a civil servant and didn't want to live with peasant girls, and the third had a drunk for a father. They made use only of the purchasing agency, just as the married seamstresses did. Except for these three, all the other single girls who had relatives to support lived in the common apartment. There were two or three to a room, and their relatives were settled according to their needs. Two older women had separate rooms while the rest lived together. There was one room for young boys and two for young girls. It was decided that boys could live there only until the age of eight; older boys were sent out as apprentices.

An accurate account was kept of everything so that the entire group was of the firm conviction that no one was being offended or exploited by anyone else. The charges for room and board for the single girls were simple to calculate. After some hesitation they decided to set the rate for a brother or sister up to eight years old at one-fourth the amount of an adult; girls from eight to twelve were charged one-third, and from twelve up, one-half. From the age of thirteen girls became apprentices in the workshop unless something else had been arranged. It was decided that at sixteen they became full members of the group if it was agreed that they had acquired the requisite sewing skills. Naturally the charge for adult relatives was the same as that for the seamstresses themselves. There was also a special charge for a single room. Almost all of the old women and all three of the old men who were living in the apartment worked in the kitchen and helped with other household chores; of course they were compensated for this work.

All of this can be portrayed in words very quickly; and even in reality it all seemed very easy, simple, and natural once it was established. However, it was very slow to be organized and each new step was accompanied by considerable discussion; every change was the result of a whole series of efforts. It would be too long and dry to describe other aspects of life in the workshop in as much detail as I've devoted to the distribution and investment of profits. So as not to weary the reader, many things will have to be omitted, while others will be mentioned only briefly. For example, the workshop established its own agency for selling ready-made clothes, which were assembled when they weren't busy filling private orders. Although they didn't have a separate store,

they'd entered into an agreement with one of the shops in the Shopping Arcade; they also had a small stand in the flea market where two of the old women were in charge. There's one other aspect of life in the workshop which must be described in greater detail.

From the very first Vera Pavlovna had begun to provide books. After giving the seamstresses instructions, she began to read aloud to them and would continue to do so for half an hour or even an hour, unless she was interrupted sooner by the need to provide further instructions. Then the girls would get a rest from listening; more reading was followed by another rest. Needless to say, from the very beginning the girls conceived a liking for reading; some had been avid readers even before. Within two or three weeks this reading during work hours had become a regular institution. After three or four months several excellent readers emerged from the group. It was decided that they would replace Vera Pavlovna and would read for half an hour each, and this time would be counted as part of their work. Once Vera Pavlovna had been relieved of her obligation to read aloud, she began to relate more tales of her own devising (some of which she'd already done as an alternative to reading). Gradually her tales began to resemble light lectures on various fields of knowledge. Then—and this was a very large step—Vera Pavlovna saw the possibility of establishing a regular course of instruction. The girls were so eager to learn and their work was going so well that they decided to take a long break in the middle of the day just before dinner to conduct their lessons.

“Aleksei Petrovich,” said Vera Pavlovna one day during a visit to the Mertsalovs, “I have a favor to ask of you. Natasha has already sided with me. My workshop is becoming a lycée<sup>23</sup> of all kinds of learning. Come and be one of our professors.”

“What would I teach? Latin and Greek, perhaps? Or logic and rhetoric?” asked Aleksei Petrovich with a laugh. “My specialty is not terribly interesting either to you or to another individual whom I know very well.”<sup>24</sup>

“But it's precisely as a specialist that you're needed. You'll serve as our shield of morality and a guarantor of the correct orientation of our curriculum.”

“Now that's true! I can see that there could be no morality without me. Name the subject.”

“Well, Russian history, for example, or an outline of world history.”

“Splendid. I'll lecture on that subject and it will be supposed that I'm an expert. Excellent. Two occupations : professor and shield.”

Natalya Andrevna, Lopukhov, two or three students, and Vera Pavlovna herself acted as the other “professors,” as they jokingly referred to themselves.

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<sup>23</sup> A French secondary school. In Russia the term designated a *specia*, boarding school for children of the social elite. Vera Pavlovna's educational efforts reflect the movement to educate adult workers and members of similar urban groups in special “Sunday schools” that were organized in several Russian cities during the late 1850s. Radical intellectuals often used these schools as a forum for disseminating revolutionary ideas.

<sup>24</sup> Mertsalov is referring to Rakhmetov, Chernyshevsky's revolutionary superhero, who appears later in the novel.

In addition to instruction, entertainment was arranged. There were parties in the evening and outings to the countryside. At first these were infrequent; then, when more money became available, they were held more often. They rented boxes at the theater. By the third winter they bought a subscription for ten inexpensive seats to hear Italian opera.<sup>25</sup>

There was much joy and happiness for Vera Pavlovna; there was also a great deal of work and trouble, even some disappointment. The misfortune of one of the finest girls in the workshop made a particularly strong impression not only on her but on the entire workshop. Sashenka Pribytkova, one of the three original seamstresses whom Vera Pavlovna had hired, was extremely attractive and very sensitive. She was engaged to a nice, kind young man, a civil servant. Once, when she was out walking along the street rather late at night, she was accosted by some "gentleman." She quickened her pace. He pursued her and seized her hand. She tugged and pulled away, but the movement of her hand struck his chest and caused this fine gentleman's watch to fall out onto the pavement. This fine gentleman seized Pribytkova with considerable aplomb and, seized by a sense of his own legal rights, he shouted, "Stop, thief! Police!" Two policemen came to the scene and carted Pribytkova away to the jail at the police station. For three days not a word was heard from her in the workshop and no one could imagine what had become of her. On the fourth day a kind soldier, one of the attendants at the jail, brought Vera Pavlovna a note from Pribytkova. Lopukhov left at once to make inquiries. They were very rude to him and he was twice as rude back. Then he went off to see Serge. Serge and Julie were out of town at some large affair and returned only the next day. Two hours later the district police officer apologized to Pribytkova and went to apologize to her fiancé. But he couldn't find the young man. He'd been to the jail to see Pribytkova the evening before and had found out the gallant's name from the arresting officers. He went to find him and promptly challenged him to a duel. Before hearing the challenge, the gallant had apologized for his mistake in a rather sarcastic tone; after hearing the challenge, he burst out laughing. The civil servant replied, "Surely you won't refuse this challenge," and then slapped his face. The gallant grabbed a stick and the civil servant shoved him away. The gallant fell; his servants ran in to see what the noise was all about. They found their master lying dead on the floor; he'd been knocked down and in falling had struck his temple on the sharp end of a carved wooden table leg. The civil servant wound up in prison, a criminal action was instigated, and there was no end to the matter in sight. What else is there to say? Nothing much, except that from then on Pribytkova was a pitiful sight to behold.

There were a few other episodes in the workshop, not of a criminal nature, but not very cheerful either. These were ordinary affairs after which young girls weep for a good long time, whereas young men or middle-aged men have enjoyed a brief but pleasant

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<sup>25</sup> Italian opera was performed regularly at the Mikhailovsky Theater (now called the Maly Theater) in St. Petersburg.

diversion. Vera Pavlovna realized that with prevailing ideas and circumstances, such episodes were inevitable; no amount of caution on the girls' part or solicitude by others on the girls' behalf could succeed in protecting them each and every time. It was exactly the same with smallpox in days of old, before people learned how to prevent the disease. Now a person who suffers from smallpox has only himself to blame, and even more those close to him. But that wasn't always so. In the past, there was nothing to blame—except a vile epidemic, a filthy village or town, or even another person suffering from the disease who came into contact with someone else, rather than locking himself up under quarantine until he recovered. So it is now with these episodes. Someday people will be rid of this kind of smallpox as well; the remedy is already available,<sup>26</sup> but people still prefer not to swallow it, just as they chose not to adopt any cure against smallpox for years and years. Vera Pavlovna understood that this foul epidemic was sweeping relentlessly through towns and villages and claiming victims from even the most solicitous hands. Still, that's poor consolation when you know only that "I'm not to blame for your misfortune, nor are you, my friend." Nevertheless, each one of these ordinary episodes brought Vera Pavlovna much sorrow and even greater effort. Sometimes she had to go in search to render aid; more often she didn't need to search, just to help—to soothe, restore courage, bolster pride, and to explain that "as soon as you stop crying, you'll see that there's really nothing to cry about."

But much greater, oh, so much greater, were the joys! Except for the sorrows, it was all joy. The sorrows were individual and infrequent occurrences. Today or in half a year, you start grieving over one, while at the same time you rejoice over all the others. And after two or three weeks, you can even rejoice over that one. The ordinary course of events was bright and cheerful; it constantly filled Vera Pavlovna with joy. If the routine was upon occasion grievously broken by sorrows, the exceptionally joyous events, which were more frequent than the sorrows, more than compensated for them. For example, they would succeed in finding an excellent position for the younger brother or sister of one of the girls. In the third year two girls passed an exam to become private tutors. What good fortune for them! There were several similar happy events. The most frequent cause for celebration in the whole workshop and the most common source of Vera Pavlovna's joy were the marriages. There were rather a lot of them, all of them good matches. Each wedding was arranged with great gaiety. They held many evening parties both before and after the event, and the bride-to-be received many surprises from her friends in the workshop. They were provided with a dowry from the reserve fund. But here again, there was much work for Vera Pavlovna; needless to say, she had her hands full. At first, Vera Pavlovna did one thing that was considered tactless: when the first bride asked her to act as proxy mother during the ceremony, Vera Pavlovna refused. The second bride made the same request and had the same result. Most often Natasha Mertsalova acted as proxy mother, or even Natasha's mother, who was also a very fine woman, but never Vera Pavlovna. She would dress the bride and escort

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<sup>26</sup> Another allegorical allusion to the revolutionary transformation of society.

her to the church, but only as one of her friends. The first time the girls thought that her refusal indicated some sort of displeasure; but that wasn't it. Vera Pavlovna was pleased to be asked, but wouldn't agree to the request. The second time they realized that it was simply her modesty. Vera Pavlovna didn't want to appear as the official patroness of the bride. In general she avoided any form of influence; she tried to push others to the forefront and succeeded in doing so. Many ladies who came into the workshop with orders were unable to distinguish her from the two other cutters. But Vera Pavlovna took the greatest possible pleasure in the workshop when explaining to someone that the entire system was organized and maintained by the girls themselves. With these explanations she was trying to convince herself of what she wanted to believe; namely, that the workshop could function without her, that other workshops of the same sort could appear completely independent of theirs, even—Why not? It would be splendid! Best of all!—even without any supervision from someone outside the seamstresses' ranks, but entirely as a result of the ideas and skills of the seamstresses themselves. That was Vera Pavlovna's fondest dream.

## V.

And thus almost three years have passed since the establishment of the workshop, more than three since Vera Pavlovna's wedding. How quietly and actively have these years gone by, how full of serenity, joy, and all good things they were!

Upon awakening, Vera Pavlovna lies in bed for a long time luxuriating; she loves to do so. It's as if she were dozing a bit, but not quite, thinking about what she has to do. So she lies there, not quite dozing and not quite thinking. Yes, she is thinking: "How warm, soft, nice, and splendid to luxuriate in the morning." And so she does, until from the neutral room (no, we must say one of the neutral rooms, since there are now two in this, the fourth year of their marriage) her husband, that is, her "dearest," says, "Verochka, are you awake?" "Yes, my dearest." That means that her husband can make the tea, as he does every morning, while Vera Pavlovna (no, in her own room she's Verochka, not Vera Pavlovna) starts to get dressed. How long it takes her! No, she gets dressed quickly, in a minute or so, but she spends a long time splashing in the basin (she so enjoys splashing) and brushing her hair. No, it's not the brushing that takes time; she does that in one minute; she spends a long time playing with her hair because she loves it so. Moreover, she sometimes spends a very long time on one particular item in her wardrobe—her shoes. She has wonderful shoes. In general, her wardrobe is very modest, but shoes are her passion.

Now she's come out to drink her tea. She embraces her husband and asks, "How did you sleep, my dear?" During tea she chats with him about various matters, both trivial and serious. However, Vera Pavlovna (no, Verochka . . . at morning tea she's still Verochka) doesn't drink tea as much as she drinks cream. Tea is merely a pretext for cream, which fills more than half her cup, since cream is also her passion. It's hard

to get good cream in Petersburg, but Verochka manages to find the real, unadulterated stuff. She dreams of having their own cow; well, if things continue as they have been going, it might even be possible in a year or so.

But now it's ten o'clock. Her "dearest" goes off to his lessons or to work. He's employed in a manufacturer's office. Vera Pavlovna (now she's definitely Vera Pavlovna until the next morning) attends to her household chores. She has only one servant, a young girl, who has to be shown everything. As soon as she's been trained, you have to start all over again. Vera Pavlovna can't keep servants for very long; they go off and get married. Within half a year or so you'll see Vera Pavlovna making herself a cape or a pair of cuffs to act as proxy mother at another wedding. She can no longer refuse: "But Vera Pavlovna, you arranged it all! There's no one else besides you."

Yes, there are many household chores. Then she sets off for her own lessons—rather a lot, about ten hours a week. More would be difficult to handle, and she hardly has enough time. Before the lessons she spends rather a long time in the workshop; after returning from the lessons, she must look in again. Then there's dinner with her "dearest." They quite often have guests—one, more often two, but no more than that. Even when there are two guests it entails sufficient labor: preparing an extra dish so that there'll be enough food to go around. If Vera Pavlovna is tired when she returns, dinner is simple. She sits in her own room resting before dinner. The meal is one she's helped with earlier, but it's completed without her. If she isn't tired when she comes home, then things really start happening in the kitchen. A special dish appears at the table, some kind of pastry, more often than not something eaten with cream—that is, something to serve as a pretext for eating cream.

During dinner Vera Pavlovna talks and asks questions; she usually talks more than she asks. And how could it be otherwise? There's so much news to report just about the workshop alone! After dinner she sits with her dearest for another quarter of an hour. Then it's goodbye, and they retire to their own rooms. Once again Vera Pavlovna lies on her bed, reading and luxuriating. She often takes a little nap, even very often; as much as half the time she dozes for an hour or an hour and a half. This is her weakness, almost a vulgar one, but Vera Pavlovna naps after dinner whenever she can. She loves it, feeling neither shame nor remorse at this vulgar habit. She gets up after sleeping or lounging for an hour and a half or even two hours; then she gets dressed and returns to the workshop, where she remains until teatime. If there are no guests coming that evening, she chats with her dearest, spending a half hour or so in the neutral room. Then it's "Good night, my dearest"; they kiss and part until tea the following morning. Then Vera Pavlovna works, sometimes until very late, almost two in the morning, reading or resting from her reading at the piano in her own room. The piano was purchased not that long ago; before that they'd rented one. It was quite an event when they purchased their own piano. It proved to be cheaper, too. It was

bought by chance for only a hundred rubles. It was a little old Erard,<sup>27</sup> and all the necessary repairs cost only another seventy rubles. But it produces an excellent sound. Occasionally her dearest would come to hear her singing, but only occasionally. He had a great deal of work to do. Thus they passed the evening: working, reading, playing, and singing—but reading and singing most of all.

That's when there were no guests. But very often they had guests in the evening— young people for the most part, younger than her dearest, and younger than Vera Pavlovna herself. Among them were also the teachers from the workshop. They have a great deal of respect for Lopukhov and consider him one of the best minds in Petersburg. Perhaps they aren't mistaken at all, and their real tie with Lopukhov consists in the fact that they find it useful to converse with him.<sup>28</sup> They share unlimited veneration for Vera Pavlovna; she even allows them to kiss her hand without feeling any humiliation. She behaves as if she were fifteen years older than they are, that is, if she's not being silly. But, to tell the truth, she usually acts very silly, running around and playing along with them. They're delighted: they dance a galop or a waltz, chase each other about, play the piano, chat and laugh, but most of all, they sing. But all this chasing, laughter, and everything else in no way prevent these young people from idolizing Vera Pavlovna totally, unconditionally, and boundlessly. They respect her more than most people respect their older sisters, as even a good mother isn't always respected. Moreover, the songs they sing aren't pure nonsense, although sometimes there's some of that, too.<sup>29</sup> For the most part Vera Pavlovna performs serious songs; at times she plays serious music without singing, and her listeners sit in silence.

Rather often the Lopukhoffs entertain older guests, about their own age. For the most part they are Dmitry's former colleagues and their acquaintances, two or three young professors, almost all unmarried. The Mertsaloffs are almost the only married visitors. The Lopukhoffs don't go visiting all that often, and almost solely to the Mertsaloffs or to Natasha's parents. These kind and simple old folks have a large number of sons who occupy respectable positions in various departments. Thus Vera Pavlovna gets to see a rather broad and diverse society in their comfortable home.

Vera Pavlovna really enjoys this free, open, and active life, which is not without its sybaritic side—luxuriating in her soft, warm bed, as well as savoring real cream and pastries with cream.

Can life really be any better in this world? Vera Pavlovna thinks not.

Yes, and for someone in her early youth it could scarcely be better.

But years pass, and as they do, life gets continually better if it goes on as it should and as it does now among a very few. Someday it will be like that for everyone.

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<sup>27</sup> A piano made by Sébastien Érard (1752–1831), an innovative French instrument maker whose designs contributed significantly to the mechanism used in the modern grand piano.

<sup>28</sup> An indication that Lopukhov and the teachers from the workshop had formed an underground revolutionary circle.

<sup>29</sup> An allusion to such revolutionary songs as *La Marseillaise* (see n. 5 above).



## VI.

One day toward the end of summer the girls had gathered in their customary fashion for a Sunday outing in the country. During the summer they went out to the islands in boats almost every holiday.<sup>30</sup> Vera Pavlovna usually went along with them; this time Dmitry Sergeich was coming too, which is why the outing was to be so special. His company was a rarity: it was only the second time that summer he was going along with them. When the girls in the workshop heard the good news, they were very pleased. Vera Pavlovna would be even more cheerful than usual and one could expect that the outing would be very, very lively. A few girls who'd been planning to spend Sunday elsewhere changed their plans and joined those preparing to go on the outing. They had to take five large dinghies instead of four, and even that turned out to be insufficient, so they took six. The group consisted of some fifty people or more: over twenty seamstresses (only six didn't participate), three older women, a dozen or so children, the seamstresses' mothers, sisters, and brothers, three young suitors (one was a watchmaker's apprentice, the second a merchant, and neither of them yielded an inch in manners to the third, a teacher in the district school), five or six other young men of diverse callings including even two officers, and eight or nine students from either the university or the Medical Academy. They took along four big samovars, great piles of baked goods, and huge amounts of cold veal and similar supplies. These people were young; there would be plenty of activity in the fresh air, so one could count on hearty appetites. They also took along half a dozen bottles of wine: not much for fifty people (including more than fifteen healthy young men).

And indeed, the outing turned out to be even better than expected. Nothing was lacking. They danced in a group of sixteen couples, then in twelve, then eighteen, and one quadrille even in twenty. They played a game of tag<sup>31</sup> —almost twenty-two couples—and then devised three swings between trees. In the intervals they ate and drank tea. For half an hour (no, less, much less) almost half the group listened to an argument between Dmitry Sergeich and two students who were closest to him of all his younger friends.<sup>32</sup> They attacked each other for inconsequentiality, moderatism, and bourgeois tendencies.<sup>33</sup> These were general charges. But then each and every one in particular was accused of a special fault: for one it was romanticism, for Dmitry Sergeich, schematism, for another, rigorism. Needless to say, it was difficult for the

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<sup>30</sup> Several of the islands in the Neva estuary became favorite recreational spots for the inhabitants of St. Petersburg.

<sup>31</sup> Gorelki ("catch", is a popular Russian game in which one player tries to catch the others, who in turn run away in pairs.

<sup>32</sup> Part of the group clearly had formed a radical circle, and were using the outing as a pretext to get together to discuss revolutionary ideas and strategy. One of the students, the "rigorist," is Rakhmetov (see n. 96 above).

<sup>33</sup> "Inconsequentiality" means inconsistency, while "moderatism" signifies moderation. Radicals used these epithets to accuse their comrades or opponents of insufficient dedication and effectiveness in their pursuit of the revolutionary cause.

uninitiated to tolerate these investigations for more than a few minutes. Even one of the debaters, the romantic, couldn't stand more than an hour and a half;<sup>34</sup> he ran off to join the dancers, but not without his moment of glory. He was indignant at some moderatist (it could have been me, except I wasn't there),<sup>35</sup> and knowing that the object of his wrath was quite advanced in years, he exclaimed, "Why are you talking about him? I'll quote some words uttered several days ago by a very respectable person, a very clever woman: 'A person can maintain an honest way of thinking only up to the age of twenty-five.'" "I know that lady," said an officer who, unfortunately for the romantic, had just come up to the debaters. "It was Madame N. and I was there when she said it. She really is an excellent woman, but she was caught because only half an hour before that she'd boasted that she herself was twenty-six years old. Remember how she laughed along with everyone else?" Then all four of them burst out laughing, and the romantic ran off laughing, too.

But the officer replaced him in the debate; the enjoyment was even greater than before and lasted right up to teatime. The officer attacked the rigorist and the schematist more fiercely than the romantic had, while he in turn was accused of Auguste Comteanism.<sup>36</sup> After tea the officer declared that so long as he still had some years of honest thought left, he wasn't averse to joining other people of the same age. Dmitry Sergeich, and then even the unwilling rigorist, followed his example. They refused to join in the dancing but did agree to play a game of tag. When the men decided to run races, jump over a ditch, and wrestle, the three thinkers showed themselves to be very enthusiastic contenders in these masculine pursuits. The officer took first place jumping over the ditch; Dmitry Sergeich, a very strong man, got upset when the officer defeated him in a wrestling match. He'd hoped to come in second in this event, behind the rigorist, who'd effortlessly lifted both the officer and Dmitry Sergeich into the air and then pinned them both to the ground. This aroused no further ambition in either Dmitry Sergeich or the officer. The rigorist was an acknowledged athlete. However, Dmitry Sergeich in no way wished to endure the affront of being defeated by the officer. He wrestled with him five times; five times, even though with some difficulty, the officer pinned him. After the sixth bout, Dmitry Sergeich acknowledged that he was undoubtedly the weaker of the two: both were utterly exhausted. Then the three thinkers lay down on the grass and continued their argument. Now it was Dmitry Sergeich who

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<sup>34</sup> Perhaps a reference to Chernyshevsky's coeditor of the journal *Sovremennik*, the poet and publisher Nikolai Nekrasov (1821–1878), whose popularity among younger radical intellectuals rested as much on his willingness to publish their work as on his own verse criticizing the tsarist social and political order.

<sup>35</sup> Chernyshevsky is referring to his own inability to take part in such events because of his imprisonment.

<sup>36</sup> The French philosopher and sociologist August Comte (1798–1857) founded the positivist school of philosophy and originated the term "sociology" to signify the scientific, empirical study of society. He believed that such study would lead to reforms that could ensure social harmony and bring about general well-being. Although influenced by his ideas, Chernyshevsky branded Comte "inconsequential" because of the idealism expressed in his later works.

turned out to be the Auguste Comtean and the officer a schematist, while the rigorist remained a rigorist as before.

They left for home at eleven o'clock. The older women and children fell asleep in the boats. It was a good thing they'd brought along plenty of warm clothing. Meanwhile the others talked incessantly; in all six dinghies there was no end to the merriment and laughter.

## VII.

Two days later during morning tea Vera Pavlovna remarked to her husband that she didn't like the pallor of his face. He replied that he'd slept badly and that he'd not been feeling too well since last evening, but that it was nothing. Probably he'd caught a mild cold on their outing, no doubt from lying on the grass so long after the races and the wrestling match. He scolded himself for being so careless and convinced Vera Pavlovna that there was no cause for concern. He went about his usual business. At evening tea he said that he was feeling much better.

The next morning, however, he announced that he ought to stay home for a few days. Vera Pavlovna, who'd been very concerned the day before, was now extremely alarmed. She demanded that Dmitry Sergeich send for a doctor. "But I'm also a doctor, and I can treat myself if need be. For the moment that isn't necessary," he replied. But Vera Pavlovna was insistent. So he wrote a note to Kirsanov saying that his illness was minor, but that he was asking him to come simply in order to please his wife.

As a result Kirsanov was in no hurry. He stayed at the hospital until dinner and it was already six o'clock in the evening when he arrived at the Lopukhovs'.

"Well, Alexander, it's a good thing I called you," said Lopukhov. "It's not dangerous, and probably won't be, but I have pneumonia. Of course, I could have cured myself without you, but do call in on me. It can't be helped. It's needed to ease my conscience, since I'm not a bachelor like you."

For a long time they probed; Kirsanov sounded Lopukhov's chest and they both agreed that Lopukhov's diagnosis was correct. It wasn't dangerous and probably wouldn't be, but he did have a bad case of pneumonia. He would have to remain in bed for a week and a half or so. Lopukhov had let the illness go a bit too far; still it wasn't very serious.

Kirsanov had to spend a long time with Vera Pavlovna to soothe her fears. At last she was completely convinced that they weren't deceiving her and that in all probability the illness was not only not dangerous but not even too serious. Still, only "in all probability"! How many things can happen against all probability?

Kirsanov began to visit the patient twice a day. They both saw that there weren't any complications and that the illness wasn't dangerous. On the fourth day Kirsanov said to Vera Pavlovna, "Dmitry is doing fine. For the next three or four days it may be rough going, but no worse than yesterday. Then he'll start to mend. But I need to

have a serious talk with you, Vera Pavlovna. You're behaving badly! Why aren't you getting any sleep at night? He doesn't need a nurse to sit up with him and he doesn't need a doctor. You'll harm your own health and all for nothing. Why, even now your nerves are somewhat strained."

He tried to reason with her for a long time, but to no avail. "Never," she said, "impossible." "I'd be glad to, but I couldn't possibly," that is, get some sleep at night and leave her husband unattended. At last she replied, "Everything you say to me now, he has said to me before, many times, as you well know. Of course I would have obeyed him sooner than you. In other words, I cannot."

There was no way to counter such an argument. Kirsanov shook his head and left.

He came back to see the patient at ten o'clock that evening and sat at his side for about a half hour along with Vera Pavlovna. Then he said to her, "Vera Pavlovna, now you must go and get some rest. We both beseech you. I'll spend the night here."

Vera Pavlovna was embarrassed. She herself was half convinced (even more than half) that there really was no need to sit up all night next to the patient and that she was forcing a busy man like Kirsanov to waste his time. What about it? Perhaps it wasn't really necessary? Perhaps, but who knows? No, she couldn't possibly leave her dearest alone! Who knows what might happen? He might want a drink or a cup of tea. He's so considerate! He wouldn't wake me up. That means she'd have to attend him. There was no need for Kirsanov to stay; she wouldn't allow it. She said that she wouldn't leave because she wasn't all that tired, and that she got lots of rest during the day.

"In that case, forgive me, but I must ask you to leave, I simply insist on it."

Kirsanov took her by the hand and almost had to lead her to her own room by force.

"I really feel guilty before you, Alexander," uttered the patient. "What a ridiculous role you have to play, sitting up at night with a sick man whose illness doesn't require it. But I'm very grateful to you. I couldn't persuade her to find a nurse, since she was afraid to leave me alone. There was no one she would trust."

"If I had realized that she can't possibly be at peace entrusting you to someone else, then, needless to say, I wouldn't have sacrificed my own comfort. But I hope that now she'll get some rest. After all, I'm both a doctor and your friend."

In fact, as soon as she reached her bed, Vera Pavlovna collapsed upon it and fell fast asleep. The three sleepless nights she'd spent were not significant in and of themselves, nor was her anxiety. But the anxiety on top of three sleepless nights, without any rest during the day, was really very dangerous. Another two or three days without sleep and her condition would have been far worse than her husband's.

Kirsanov spent another three nights with the patient. This didn't tire him at all naturally, because he slept very soundly, only taking the precaution of locking the door so that Vera Pavlovna couldn't observe his negligence. She suspected that he was fast asleep at his post, but she was calm nevertheless. He was a doctor, after all, so there was nothing to fear. He knows when he can sleep and when he can't. She was ashamed

that she'd been unable to calm herself before, that she'd troubled Kirsanov. But now he paid no attention whatever to her assurances that she could get some rest even if he weren't there. "You are to blame, Vera Pavlovna. Therefore you must be punished. I no longer trust you."

But four days later it was obvious to her that the patient was almost well; the evidence was too clear even to her skeptical mind. That evening the three of them sat together playing cards. Lopukhov was no longer lying down, but almost sitting up, and his voice was strong. Kirsanov could now curtail his sleepy night watches and told them so.

"Alexander Matveich," said Vera Pavlovna, "why have you been neglecting me entirely? I'm talking about myself now. You're still good friends with Dmitry, he goes to see you rather frequently. But up until his illness you hadn't been to see us for almost half a year. And it's been that way for quite a while. Remember what good friends you and I were in the beginning?"

"People change, Vera Pavlovna. Then again, I'm working very hard, if I say so myself. I hardly go visiting. There's no time, and besides, I'm lazy. I get so tired from spending my days in the hospital and at the Academy that I can't bear to change into any other clothes from my uniform except my dressing gown.<sup>37</sup> Friendship is a good thing, but—don't be offended—lying on a sofa in one's dressing gown smoking a cigar is even better."

The truth was that Kirsanov had hardly visited the Lopukhovs at all for over two years. The reader has not found his name among the list of usual guests; among infrequent visitors he had long been the most infrequent of all.

## VII.

The perspicacious reader (I'm addressing only the males in the group, since the females are too clever to bore us with their shrewd guesses; therefore, once and for all, I declare that I'm not addressing them. There are also among my male readers a few who aren't stupid; I'm not addressing them either. But the majority, including almost all men of letters and those purporting to be men of letters, are perspicacious people with whom I always enjoy chatting.) And so it is this perspicacious reader who says, "I understand where all this is leading. A new romance is beginning in Vera Pavlovna's life. Kirsanov will play a role in it. I understand even more. Kirsanov has been in love with Vera Pavlovna for some time now and that's why he stopped visiting the Lopukhovs." Oh, how perceptive you are, my perspicacious reader! As soon as I tell you something, you immediately reply, "I knew that," and you rejoice in your perspicacity. I bow before you in admiration, O perspicacious reader!

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<sup>37</sup> As a staff member of the Medical Academy, Kirsanov was considered a state servant and therefore wore a uniform.

And so a new person is appearing in Vera Pavlovna's life. I would have to describe him if I hadn't done so already. When I spoke of Lopukhov, it was difficult to distinguish him from his closest friend, and I was unable to say anything about him which could not also be said about Kirsanov. All that the perspicacious reader can really discover from the following list of Kirsanov's characteristics will be a repetition of the description of Lopukhov. Lopukhov was the son of a petit bourgeois who was reasonably well off for his class, that is, they had meat in their cabbage soup fairly often. Kirsanov was the son of a clerk in a district court, that is, they rarely had meat in their cabbage soup, which also means that they sometimes did. From his early youth, almost since childhood, Lopukhov had earned his own living. From the age of twelve Kirsanov had helped his father by copying documents; by the time he was in his fourth year at school he was also giving lessons. Both men made their own way in life through their own efforts, with neither connections nor acquaintances.

What sort of man was Lopukhov? One didn't really learn French in the gymnasium, and in German class one learned only to decline *der*, *die*, *das* with a few mistakes. But upon entering the Academy, Lopukhov soon realized that one can't go far in science knowing only Russian. He took a French dictionary and whatever books he could lay his hands on—*Télémaque*,<sup>38</sup> some novels by Madame de Genlis,<sup>39</sup> and a few issues of our very clever journal *Revue étrangère*<sup>40</sup>—not very tempting works, but still he took them. He was, naturally, an avid reader. He said to himself, "I won't open another Russian book until I can read French fluently." And he did just that. He proceeded with German in a different manner. He rented a corner in an apartment where a large number of German workmen lived. His corner was squalid, the Germans were boring, and it was a long walk to the Academy, but he endured it nevertheless, for as long as he needed to.

It was different with Kirsanov. He learned German by reading various books with the help of a dictionary as Lopukhov had French, but he learned French in a different way, concentrating on one text without a dictionary: the Gospels—a very familiar work.

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<sup>38</sup> *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699; first published in translation in Russia in 1747); written by the influential French writer, mystical Catholic theologian, and pedagogue Archbishop François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon (1651-1715) for the edification of Louis, dauphin de France, the heir to the French throne. The book extolled the virtues of limited monarchy and agrarian life. Fénelon is best known for his innovative, though still conservative and moralistic, ideas on the education of women.

<sup>39</sup> The French writer Stéphanie-Félicité du Crest de Saint-Aubin, comtesse de Genlis (1746-1830), a disciple of the French Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was a tutor to Louis Philippe (see n. 41 above, and the author of rationalist children's stories and sentimental novels that were very popular in early-nineteenth-century Russia.

<sup>40</sup> *The Revue étrangère de la littérature, des sciences et des arts* (St. Petersburg, 1832-1863), a journal that contained primarily works by foreign, especially French, writers and descriptions of life abroad.

He acquired the New Testament in the Geneva translation and read it through eight times.<sup>41</sup> By the ninth he understood everything. He was all set.

What sort of man was Lopukhov? Here's what sort. One day he was out walking along Kamennooostrovsky [Stone Island] Prospekt in his well-worn uniform (returning home from a lesson three versts past the Lycée<sup>42</sup> for which he had received fifty kopecks). From the other direction heading toward him was a portly gentleman, out on a constitutional. The portly gent headed straight for him, not about to give way. Now at that time Lopukhov had a rule never to yield to anyone except a woman. They bumped shoulders. The gentleman, turning slightly toward Lopukhov, said, "What sort of swine are you, you pig!" He was about to continue this edifying speech when Lopukhov turned to face him, seized the gentleman in a bear hug, and deposited him in the gutter, very carefully. He stood over him and said, "Don't move or I'll drag you out there where the mud is deeper." Two peasants came by, looked, and applauded. A civil servant went past, looked, and didn't applaud, but smiled sweetly. Some carriages drove by but no one looked out—they couldn't have seen that someone was lying in the gutter. Lopukhov stood there for some time; then he took the gentleman by the hand (rather than in a bear hug), lifted him up, led him back to the street, and said, "Oh, my dear sir, did you stumble? I trust you haven't hurt yourself. Allow me to brush you off." A peasant came by and began to help brush him off; two petit bourgeois went past and they helped as well. They finished brushing him off and everyone went his own way.<sup>43</sup>

Kirsanov didn't have that kind of experience, but had a different one. A certain lady who had several people doing her bidding decided that she should have a catalogue made of the library left her by her husband, who'd died some twenty years before, and who'd been a devoted follower of Voltaire.<sup>44</sup> Why it was that twenty years later a catalogue was needed isn't at all clear. Kirsanov was chosen to do the job, for which he would receive the sum of eighty rubles. He worked on it about a month and a half. Suddenly the woman decided that the catalogue wasn't really needed at all. She came into the library and said, "Don't trouble yourself, I've changed my mind. Here's what I owe you for your labor." She handed Kirsanov ten rubles. "Madame," he said, using the lady's full title, "I've done more than half the work. Out of seventeen bookcases I've already catalogued ten." "Do you mean to say that I've underpaid you? Nicolas, come in here and have a little talk with this gentleman." Nicolas came crashing in. "How dare

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<sup>41</sup> A French Protestant translation of the Bible made first by Pierre Robert Olivétan (1506-1538) in 1535, the Geneva Bible was reworked by Calvin between 1545 and 1551 and thereafter was revised and reissued several times.

<sup>42</sup> In 1844 the ultra-elite Lycée at Tsarskoe Selo (founded 1811; see n. 95 above) was moved to St. Petersburg and renamed the Aleksandrovsy Lycée.

<sup>43</sup> Lopukhov's behavior is meant to demonstrate both his rejection of the established social hierarchy and his basic humanitarianism. Having asserted his equality by defying his nominal social superior, he humanely helps the gentleman out of the gutter into which he has pushed him.

<sup>44</sup> On Voltaire, see n. 77 above.

you insult maman?" "Why, you young whippersnapper," said Kirsanov (an unjustified expression, as Nicolas was at least five years older than Kirsanov). "You should listen before you interfere." Nicolas screamed for the servants. "Oh, the servants, eh? I'll show you servants!" In a twinkling of an eye the lady shrieked and fainted; Nicolas realized that he could no longer move his arms, both of which were pinned to his sides as if by an iron band (which was really Kirsanov's right arm) and that Kirsanov's left hand, which had yanked his head back by the forelock, was now grabbing him around the throat. Kirsanov said, "See how easily I could strangle you," and he began to squeeze the throat. Nicolas realized how easily indeed he could be strangled; Kirsanov released his grip on Nicolas's throat so that he could breathe but didn't take his hand completely away. Turning to the Goliaths who'd appeared at the door, Kirsanov said, "Stop right there or I'll choke him. Step aside or I'll strangle him." Nicolas understood all this in a twinkling of an eye and indicated by a gesture that yes indeed, the gentleman was telling the whole truth. "Now, brother, you'll escort me to the stairs," said Kirsanov, turning again to Nicolas and maintaining his hold. He went into the hallway and down the stairs, accompanied from afar by tender looks from the Goliaths. On the bottom step he released his grip on Nicolas's throat, pushed him out the way, and went off to find a shop where he could buy himself a cap to replace the one he'd left as Nicolas's booty.

Welt what difference do you see between these two men? All of their most outstanding traits belong not to the two individuals but to a type—one so different from those to which you are accustomed, O perspicacious reader, that any individual differences are masked by general similarities. When seen among others these people are like a few Europeans among the Chinese; the Chinese can't distinguish between them, seeing only one thing—that they're all "redheaded barbarians, ignorant of ceremony."<sup>45</sup> In Chinese eyes the French are just as "redheaded" as the English. And the Chinese are correct: in their relations with them, all Europeans behave as one, not as individuals, but as representatives of a type, and nothing more. None of them eats cockroaches or woodlice, none cuts people up into small pieces; they all drink vodka and wine made from grapes instead of rice; even the one thing that the Chinese recognize as their own native custom, tea drinking, is done differently by Europeans, who take their tea with sugar rather than straight.

In just the same way people of the type to which Lopukhov and Kirsanov belong seem to be alike to people of a different sort. Each of them is a man of courage, unwavering and unyielding, capable of grappling with any task; upon doing so, he keeps a firm grasp on that task so that it doesn't slip away. This is one side of their character. On the other hand, each of them is a man of such irreproachable honesty that it never even occurs to us to ask, "Can this man be relied upon unconditionally?" This is as clear as the fact that each man is alive and breathing. As long as his chest continues to rise and fall with each breath, it's both passionate and true: you can lean

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<sup>45</sup> The source of this curious quotation is unknown.



your head upon it confidently and rest it there. These general characteristics are so prominent that any individual differences behind them are blurred.

This type arose among us not that long ago. Before then there were only isolated individuals who foreshadowed it. They were exceptions and as such they felt isolated and impotent. As a result they did nothing; they experienced despair or exaltation, romanticized or fantasized; that is, they couldn't partake of the main characteristics of this type—cold-blooded practicality, measured and calculated activity, and active common sense. Though they were people of the same nature, they had not yet developed into this type. This type arose quite recently. It didn't exist yet during my time, though I'm not very old, perhaps not old at all. I myself couldn't develop in that way, since I grew up in a different era. Because I don't belong to this type, I can express my unabashed admiration for it. Unfortunately, I'm not praising myself when I say that these people are truly splendid.

This type appeared quite recently but now it's propagating quickly. It was engendered by its epoch; it's an emblem of it, and (shall I say it?) it will vanish together with it all too quickly. Its fate was to appear not that long ago and to vanish very soon. These people couldn't even be found just six years ago; three years ago they were despised; and now—but it doesn't really matter what people think of them now. In a few years, a very few, people will call out to them, "Save us!" What this type says will be done by all. A few years later, perhaps not even years, but a few months later, they'll be cursed, driven from the stage, hissed at, and insulted. So what? Hiss and hurl insults, drive them away and curse them; you got your use out of them, and that's enough for them. And amidst the noise of hissing and the thunder of curses they'll leave the stage, proud and humble, stem and kind, just as they always were. But won't even one of them be left on stage? No. How will we fare without them? Badly. But life will still be better after them than before. Years will pass and people will say, "Life is better after them, but it's still not good." And when they say this, it will mean that the time has come for this type to reappear. It will be reborn in even greater numbers and in better forms, because there will be more good in the world then, and all that's already good will be better. History will repeat itself in a new form. And so it will continue until such time as people say, "Welt now life is good." Then this special type will cease to exist because all people will be of this type. It will be difficult to understand that there ever was a time when this type was regarded as special, and not as the general nature of all people.

## IX.

But just as Europeans among the Chinese seem to have one and the same face and one way of acting only in Chinese eyes, in fact there are incomparably more variations among Europeans than among the Chinese. So, too, in this new, apparently single type, the diversity of personalities develops into numerous varieties that differ from

one another more than all the individuals of all the other types differ among themselves. There are all kinds: sybarites and ascetics, stern people and tender, and others, and others besides... But just as the most savage European is very gentle, the most cowardly very brave, and the most voluptuous very moral in the eyes of the Chinese, so it is with them. The most ascetic consider that men need more comforts than people not of their type can imagine; the most sensual are stricter in their moral precepts than moralizers of another type. But they have their very own ideas about morality and comfort, sensuality and virtue. They view these things in their own special way, all in the same way. They view it not only in the same way, but in such a way that somehow morality, comfort, virtue, and sensuality all seem to be one and the same thing. But again, all this is only when viewed from the point of view of the Chinese; among themselves there's a great variety of conceptions according to their different natures. But how can we grasp these differences in nature and concepts among them?

Europeans reveal their variety in conversations among themselves, but only among themselves, not in the presence of the Chinese. Thus the very great variety among people of this type becomes apparent when they're conducting their own business, but only then and not with outsiders. We have met two people of this type, Vera Pavlovna and Lopukhov, and we've seen how relations were arranged between them. Now a third person appears. Let's see what differences emerge when we're given an opportunity to compare one with the other two. Vera Pavlovna sees before her both Lopukhov and Kirsanov. Previously she had no choice; now she does.

## X.

But first we must say a few words about Kirsanov's external appearance. He has regular and handsome features, just like Lopukhov. Some people regard Kirsanov as the better looking of the two, others Lopukhov. Lopukhov has a darker complexion, chestnut-brown hair, sparkling brown eyes that appear almost black, an aquiline nose, thick lips, and a somewhat oval face. Kirsanov has dark blond hair, dark blue eyes, a straight Grecian nose, a small mouth, and an oblong face, remarkably pale. Both are fairly tall men and both slender; Lopukhov is a bit broader in frame, Kirsanov a bit taller.

Kirsanov's circumstances are rather good. He already occupies a chair. The great majority of the faculty had been against him; not only didn't they want to give him a chair, they didn't even want to grant his degree. But that proved to be impossible. Two or three young men, and one of his former professors who wasn't so young, all of them his friends, had declared to the rest of the faculty some time before that there was a certain man named Virchow who lived in Berlin,<sup>46</sup> and one named Claude

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<sup>46</sup> The German pathologist Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902) contributed significantly to several branches of medical research, especially cellular pathology, and pioneered sanitary reform in medical practice.

Bernard who lived in Paris,<sup>47</sup> and a few more men whose names I can't remember and who lived in different cities, and that these Virchows, Claude Bernards, and others were the luminaries of medical science. All of this seemed to us extremely unlikely, since we knew very well that the luminaries of medical science were Boerhaave<sup>48</sup> and Hofeland.<sup>49</sup> Harvey was also a great scientist, who discovered the circulation of the blood;<sup>50</sup> and Jenner, who taught us how to vaccinate against smallpox.<sup>51</sup> Those names we knew, but we didn't recognize these Virchows and Claude Bernards. What sort of luminaries were they? On the other hand, how the devil could you tell for sure? Well, it was this very same Claude Bernard who'd spoken respectfully about Kirsanov's work when the young student was still completing his studies. Therefore, it proved to be impossible: they granted Kirsanov's degree and a year and a half later they awarded him a chair. The students said that with his arrival the contingent of good professors had increased significantly. He didn't take on private patients and declared that he'd given up practicing medicine. But he spent a great deal of time in the hospital; some days he had dinner there and occasionally even spent the night. What was he doing there? He said he was working on behalf of science, and not for the patients: "I'm not treating anyone. I'm merely making observations and doing experiments." The students confirmed this, adding that at the present time only quacks treated patients, since it wasn't possible to cure them yet. The hospital attendants thought differently. They said among themselves, "Well, if Kirsanov's taking this patient into his ward, it must be a difficult case." Afterward they would remark to the patient, "Take heart. It's a rare disease that can stand up to this doctor. He's a real master and will be like a father to you."

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<sup>47</sup> The French physiologist Claude Bernard (1813–1878) is considered the founder of experimental medicine both for his path-breaking research, especially on the digestive process, and for his theories on scientific methodology, expressed most fully in his famous treatise *Introduction à la médecine expérimentale* (1865).

<sup>48</sup> The Dutch physician and humanist Hermann Boerhaave (1668–1738) revived the Hippocratic method of bedside instruction for training physicians and instituted the practice of conferences between physicians and pathologists to diagnose diseases after his studies demonstrated the link between symptoms and lesions.

<sup>49</sup> The German physician Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland (1762–1836) taught at Jena and Berlin universities, helped to pioneer the use of vaccination, and treated such distinguished people as Goethe, Herder, and the Prussian royal couple.

<sup>50</sup> Widely considered to be the founder of modern medicine, the English physician William Harvey (1578–1657) contributed significantly to comparative anatomy and embryology. He was also first to demonstrate the function of the heart and the complete circulation of the blood.

<sup>51</sup> The English physician Edward Jenner (1747–1823) helped to eradicate smallpox and laid the foundation for modern immunology by proving that exposure to cowpox provided immunity to smallpox. The comparison of Kirsanov with medical scientists of such standing as Jenner is meant to indicate not only Kirsanov's exceptional personal qualities and the social utility of his work but also the attainment by Russian scientists of equality with their European counterparts.

## XI.

During the first few months of Vera Pavlovna's married life Kirsanov visited the Lopukhovs very often, almost every other day, or, to be more accurate, almost every day. Soon, right from the beginning, he became extraordinarily friendly with Vera Pavlovna, just as friendly as he was with Lopukhov. This situation continued for about half a year. One day the three of them were sitting together: he, the husband, and she. The conversation was proceeding as usual, without any ceremony. Kirsanov was chatting more than the other two, when he suddenly fell silent.

"What's the matter, Alexander?"

"Why have you gone so quiet, Alexander Matveich?"

"Oh, it's nothing much—just feeling depressed."

"That rarely happens to you, Alexander Matveich," said Vera Pavlovna.

"And never without some cause," said Kirsanov in a somewhat strained tone.

A little while later, somewhat earlier than usual, he got up and left, taking his leave simply as always.

Two days later Lopukhov told Vera Pavlovna that he'd dropped in on Kirsanov and that it seemed to him that he was received in a rather strange way. Kirsanov was trying hard to behave in a friendly fashion toward him, which was completely unnecessary in their relationship. Looking him straight in the eye, Lopukhov had said, "Alexander, you seem to be angry at someone. Is it me?"

"No."

"Verochka?"

"No."

"Well, then, what is it?"

"Nothing at all. Why do you think so?"

"You're not being very nice to me today. You seem constrained, trying hard to be friendly, and annoyed at something."

Kirsanov kept reassuring him copiously that there was nothing wrong, and by so doing demonstrated conclusively that he was indeed annoyed. Then he must have become ashamed; he was his old self again—simple and good. Lopukhov, availing himself of the man's reasonableness, asked him again, "Well Alexander, now tell me, what were you sulking about?"

"I never did anything of the kind," he replied, and once again he became unctuous and disagreeable.

What a mystery! Lopukhov could recall nothing that might have offended him; that didn't even seem possible given their mutual respect and warm friendship. Vera Pavlovna also tried hard to recall if she'd offended him in any way; she too could think of nothing. She knew that as far as she was concerned, it was impossible for the very same reason as in her husband's case.

Two more days passed. It was very unusual for four days to go by without Kirsanov coming to visit the Lopukhovs. Vera Pavlovna began to wonder whether he might be

ill. Lopukhov dropped by to see. Ill? Nonsense! But he was still sulking. Lopukhov questioned him persistently. After repeated denials, he began to utter some nonsense about his feelings for Lopukhov and Vera Pavlovna, how he loved and respected them. From everything he said, it seemed that they were neglecting him, but how exactly—and this was the worst part of all—there wasn't the slightest indication in his bombastic speech. It was clear that the gentleman had taken offense. All this was so strange to behold in a man such as Lopukhov considered Kirsanov to be that the guest said to his host, "Listen, you and I are friends. You should be ashamed of yourself." Kirsanov replied with affected forbearance that perhaps it was indeed petty on his part, but what could he do if he'd been offended by so many things? "Well, by what?" Kirsanov began to list a multitude of instances that had offended him of late, all of the following kind: "You said that the lighter a man's hair is, the drabber he is in general. Vera Pavlovna said that the price of tea had risen. The former was a caustic remark about the color of my hair; the latter, a hint that I 'm eating you out of house and home." Lopukhov stood there stupefied. The man had gone mad or was obsessed by pride; more accurately, he'd simply become a fool, a petty fool.

Lopukhov returned home sadly. He was grieved to see that side of a man whom he'd loved so much. In reply to Vera Pavlovna's inquiries as to what he'd learned, he answered sadly that it was best not to talk about it; Kirsanov had uttered unpleasant nonsense and was probably indisposed.

Two or three days later Kirsanov must have come to his senses and realized the extreme vulgarity of his wild behavior. He came to visit the Lopukhoffs and acted normal. Then he began to describe how vulgar he'd been. From Vera Pavlovna's reaction he realized that she hadn't heard any of his inanities repeated by her husband and he sincerely thanked Lopukhov for his discretion. So, to punish himself, he began to tell her everything he'd said. Then he became deeply moved; he apologized and declared that he'd been indisposed and things turned out badly once again. Vera Pavlovna tried to say that he should forget it, that it was all a mere trifle. He latched on to the word "trifle" and began to utter the same kind of trite nonsense he had spoken during the earlier conversation with Lopukhov. With great delicacy and subtlety he developed the theme that of course it was only a mere "trifle," since he well understood his insignificance in the eyes of the Lopukhoffs, and that he deserved no better, etc., etc. All of this was said with the darkest, subtlest innuendos accompanied by the most cordial expressions of respect and sincerity. Hearing it all Vera Pavlovna was as stupefied as her husband had been. When Kirsanov left, they recalled that he'd been acting strange for several days before his first vulgar outburst. They hadn't noticed it or understood it then; now all of his previous remarks had become clear—they were in the same vein, but only pale indications of what was to come.

After this Kirsanov began to visit the Lopukhoffs fairly frequently, but a continuation of their previous simple relations was no longer possible. For those few days such a long ass's ear had stuck out from behind a respectable man's mask that the Lopukhoffs would have lost too much of the respect they'd had for their former friend

even if that ear were to be hidden away again forever. But that ear continued to show itself every now and then, not for so long a time, and it was quickly concealed, still it was there—pitiful, rotten, petty.

Soon the Lopukhovs grew cold toward Kirsanov; once having been provided with a valid excuse not to enjoy his visits there, he stopped them entirely.

But he continued to meet the Lopukhovs at the homes of certain mutual friends. In a little while Lopukhov's aversion to him began to lessen. Kirsanov behaved quite decently, as a gentleman. Lopukhov began to drop in on him. In a year or so Kirsanov even renewed his own visits to the Lopukhovs and became his former excellent self—simple and honest. But his visits were infrequent. Clearly he found it awkward to recall the details of those absurd scenes he'd enacted. Lopukhov had almost forgotten all about it. So had Vera Pavlovna. But once relations are broken off, they can't really be reestablished. To all appearances he and Lopukhov were friends again, and in fact Lopukhov began to respect him as before and visit him frequently. Vera Pavlovna also restored to him part of her previous affection, but she saw him very rarely.

## XII.

And now Lopukhov's illness, or more precisely, Vera Pavlovna's extraordinary attachment to her husband, forced Kirsanov to spend more than a week in intimate, daily contact with the Lopukhovs. He realized that he was walking a perilous path when he decided to sit up at night with the patient to relieve Vera Pavlovna of her vigil. He was so glad and proud of the fact that about three years ago, having observed the first signs of passion in himself, he'd so successfully managed to do all that was necessary to arrest its development. He felt so good as a result. For two or three weeks he'd been drawn to the Lopukhovs', but at the same time he experienced more pleasure from the awareness of his resolve in the struggle than pain from the deprivation. Within a month the pain had completely disappeared and there remained only satisfaction with his own integrity. His soul was so calm, so sweet.

But now the danger was greater than ever before. During the three intervening years Vera Pavlovna had, of course, undergone great moral development. Then she was scarcely more than a child, but not any more. The feeling she inspired no longer resembled the amusing attachment to a little girl whom one both loves and laughs at simultaneously. Vera's development was not only moral. If a woman's beauty is genuine, then here in the North such a woman continues to improve with each passing year. Yes, three years of life at such a period do a great deal to develop much that is good in the soul, in the eyes, in facial features, and in the whole person, provided that person is good and life is, too.

The danger was great, but only for Kirsanov. What danger was there for Vera Pavlovna? She loved her husband. Kirsanov was not so empty-headed and stupid as to consider himself a dangerous rival to Lopukhov. It was not out of false modesty that he

thought so. All respectable people who knew both him and Lopukhov considered them equals. On Lopukhov's side there was the immeasurable advantage that he'd already earned Vera's love. Yes, he'd done so, and had also won her heart. Her choice had been made; she was very satisfied and happy with it. The idea of looking for something better couldn't even occur to her. Wasn't she happy? Why, it was foolish even to think about such a thing! To worry about her or Lopukhov would have been no more than absurd self-conceit on Kirsanov's part.

And for this nonsense, for a month or two, maximum, of heartache, he was going to allow a woman to strain her nerves and risk serious illness by sitting up nights on end in a sickroom; and merely to avoid any unimportant and brief disruption in the serenity of his own life was he going to permit serious harm to come to another, no less worthy person? Why, that would be dishonest! And such a dishonest act is fundamentally much more unpleasant than any slight struggle within himself which he would have to endure, and concerning the outcome of which (in proud satisfaction at his own resolve) he had no doubt.

This is the way Kirsanov reasoned when he decided to relieve Vera Pavlovna of her unnecessary vigil.

The need for the vigil passed. To maintain appearances and to avoid effecting a break so abrupt that it would attract attention, Kirsanov was compelled to visit the Lopukhoffs two or three more times, then a week later, then in a month, then in six months. At that point his absence could be adequately explained by other obligations.

### **XIII.**

Everything was going well with Kirsanov, as he'd expected. His attachment was renewed, and became even stronger than before, but his struggle with it was manageable and entailed no serious torment. Now Kirsanov is visiting the Lopukhoffs for the second time, one week after Dmitry Sergeich's recovery, and staying until nine o'clock in the evening. That's enough: propriety has been maintained. He would come again in two weeks. The separation has almost been accomplished. Now he need stay only another hour or so. Within this week the development of his passion has almost been arrested; in a month it will pass completely. He's very pleased with himself. He takes part in the conversation so naturally that he himself rejoices in his success; as a result of his satisfaction, the naturalness of his conduct increases all the more.

Tomorrow Lopukhov had been planning to go outside for the first time. Consequently Vera Pavlovna was in a particularly good mood and was rejoicing almost as much as—no, certainly even more than—the convalescent himself. Their conversation touched on his illness and they all laughed about it, facetiously praising Vera Pavlovna's conjugal self-sacrifice, very nearly ruining her own health by worrying about something that wasn't worth worrying about.

“Well you may laugh,” she said, “but I know you wouldn’t have had the strength to behave any differently if you’d been in my position.”

“Just look at the influence that the concern of others exerts on a person,” said Lopukhov. “Why, that person himself is partially subject to the delusion that he needs God-knows-what kind of care when he sees how worried others are. I could have gone outside three days ago, yet I remained inside. This morning I wanted to go out, but I postponed it for another day just to be on the safe side.”

“Yes,” Kirsanov confirmed, “you could have gone outside some time ago.”

“That’s what I call heroism, and to tell the truth, I’m sick of it. I’d like to run outside at once.”

“My dear, you were behaving so heroically for my sake. If in fact you’re so eager to put an end to your quarantine, let’s go outside at once. I’ll soon be going over to the workshop for half an hour. Let’s go together: it would be very nice if the very first visit you paid after your illness was to our shop. The girls will take notice and be very pleased by such attention.”

“All right, let’s go together,” said Lopukhov with noticeable pleasure at the thought of breathing in some fresh air that very day.

“What a tactful hostess I am,” said Vera Pavlovna. “Alexander Matveich, it never occurred to me that perhaps you might not want to come with us.”

“No, on the contrary, it would be very interesting. I’ve been meaning to go there for some time.”

And indeed, Vera Pavlovna’s idea was a fortuitous one. The girls really were pleased that Lopukhov should pay them his first visit after his recovery. Kirsanov really was interested in the workshop. How could a man of his way of thinking not be so? If a special reason hadn’t prevented him, he would have been one of the most enthusiastic instructors in it from the very beginning. Half an hour, perhaps even an hour, flew by unnoticed. Vera Pavlovna took him through various rooms showing him everything. As they were returning from the dining area to the workrooms, a young woman came up to Vera Pavlovna who’d not been there before. She and Kirsanov exchanged glances.

“Nastenka!”

“Sasha!”<sup>52</sup> and they embraced.

“Sashenka,<sup>53</sup> my friend, I’m so glad to see you!” The girl kept kissing him, laughing and crying at the same time. When she’d recovered from her joy, she said, “No, Vera Pavlovna, I can’t talk about business now. I can’t bear to part with him. Sashenka, let’s go to my room.”

Kirsanov was just as glad as she was, although Vera Pavlovna had observed considerable sadness in his eyes when he first recognized her. There was good reason: the girl was in the final stages of consumption.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Diminutive form of Alexander.

<sup>53</sup> Another diminutive form of Alexander.

<sup>54</sup> Tuberculosis of the lungs was a widespread disease in nineteenth-century Europe and was a common fate of heroines in European literature of the period.



Nastya Kryukova had joined the workshop about a year before, and even then she was very ill. If she'd remained in the shop where she'd been working previously, she surely would have been dead long since from overwork. But in this workshop she'd been given a chance to live a little longer. The girls had released her from any real sewing; there was plenty of other work to be done which would pose no threat to her health. She looked after about half the everyday needs of the workshop, helping to supervise various storerooms and to receive orders. No one could argue that Kryukova was less useful in the workshop than any of the other girls.

The Lopukhovs left without waiting for the end of the meeting between Kirsanov and Kryukova.

## XIV. Kryukova's Story

Early the next morning Kryukova went to see Vera Pavlovna. "I'd like to talk with you about what you saw yesterday, Vera Pavlovna," she said. Then she was at a loss for some time as to how to go on. "I don't want you to think ill of him."

"What do you mean? You yourself seem to be thinking ill of me, Nastasya Borisovna!"

"No, had I been someone else, I'd never have thought this. But you know I'm not like the others."

"No, Nastasya Borisovna, you have no right to talk about yourself like that. We've known you for a year. Many members of our community have known you even longer."

"So I see that you don't know anything about me."

"No, on the contrary. I know a great deal about you. You worked as a maid, most recently for the actress N. When she got married, you left to get away from her husband's father. Then you went to work in a shop, after which you came to us. I know all this with all the details."

"Of course, I was sure that Maksimova and Sheina, who knew all about me before, wouldn't tell my whole story. All the same, I thought you or the others might have heard about me from someone else. Oh, I'm so glad they don't know everything! I'll tell you anyway, so you'll know how kind Kirsanov is. I was a very wicked girl, Vera Pavlovna."

"You, Nastasya Borisovna?"

"Yes, Vera Pavlovna, I was. And I was very insolent, shameless, and always drunk. That's why I'm so sick now, Vera Pavlovna; in spite of my weak chest, I used to drink too much."

Vera Pavlovna had encountered similar cases on three or four other occasions. Girls whose behavior was irreproachable after they met Vera Pavlovna had told her that for some time before they'd been leading wicked lives. She was astonished the first time she heard such a confession. But after thinking about it for a few days, she asked herself, "What about my own life? The soil I grew up in was also bad, but it didn't stick to me;

thousands of women who grow up in families no better than mine manage to remain pure just the same. What's so extraordinary about emerging from that humiliation intact, if good fortune has enabled you to be spared?" When she listened to the second confession of this sort she was no longer so astonished that the girl making it had preserved all the noble qualities of a human being: unselfishness, loyalty in friendship, a tender heart—even a fair share of innocence.

"Nastasya Borisovna, I've already had conversations such as the one you wish to begin. It's painful both to the speaker and to the listener. I'll respect you no less, probably more than ever, now that I know how much you've endured. But I understand everything even without having heard you out. Let's not talk about it: there's no reason for you to explain yourself to me. I myself spent many years in great misery. I try not to think about it now, and I don't like to talk about it. I find it all very painful."

"No, Vera Pavlovna, I feel differently. I want to tell you how kind he is. I want someone to know how obligated I am to him. Who can I tell besides you? It will be a relief to me. Of course, there's nothing to be said about the kind of life I led—it's the same for all such poor creatures. I only want to tell you about how I first became acquainted with him. I enjoy talking about him so much. Since I'm going to move in with him, you should know why I'm leaving the workshop."

"If telling the story will give you pleasure, Nastasya Borisovna, I'd be glad to hear it. Just let me pick up some work to do."

"Yes, but I can't do any work. The girls have been kind enough to find me a job suited to my health. I want to thank each and every one of them. Vera Pavlovna, tell them that I asked you to thank them for me.

"I used to walk along Nevsky Prospekt, Vera Pavlovna. I'd just gone out that day, and it was still early. A student went by and I accosted him. He said nothing, but crossed to the other side of the street. He looked back at me. I ran up to him and seized his hand. 'No,' I say, 'you're so good looking I won't let you go.' 'I beg you to let go of me,' he says. 'No,' I reply, 'come with me.' 'No need to,' he says. 'Well then I'll go with you. Where are you going? I just won't leave you.' I was so shameless, much worse than the others."

"Perhaps, Nastasya Borisovna, you were ashamed because you were really very bashful."

"Yes, perhaps. At least I've observed that in others. Of course, I didn't understand it at the time, only much later. So when I said to him that I would definitely go with him, he started to laugh and said, 'Come if you want to, but it will be in vain.' He wanted to teach me a lesson, as he explained later. He was annoyed that I was chasing after him. So I went along and told him all sorts of nonsense. He was silent. We arrived at his place. For a student he was living comfortably even then. He received twenty rubles a month from his lessons and at the time he was living alone. I sprawled on his sofa and said, 'Well, give me some wine.' 'No,' he says, 'I won't give you any wine, but

you may have some tea if you'd like.' 'With punch,'<sup>55</sup> I said. 'No, without.' I began to do all sorts of foolish things, behaving in a shameless manner. He sat there staring straight ahead, not paying me any attention; this irked me. Nowadays one can meet lots of young men like him, Vera Pavlovna. Recently young men have gotten a lot better; such a man used to be a rare find. But even this was insulting, so I started to abuse him. 'If you're going to be so wooden,' I said, adding some insult, 'then I'm going to leave.' 'Why leave now?' he said. 'Have some tea. The landlady will bring the samovar any minute. But no more abuse.' He addressed me using only polite forms.<sup>56</sup> 'Why don't you tell me who you are and how this happened to you.'

"So I began to tell him a story that I'd thought up. We all make up different stories and that's why no one ever believes us. But there are some girls who don't make up stories: there are in fact some wellborn and well-educated girls among us. He listened and said, 'No, that isn't a very good story. As much as I'd like to believe it, I can't.' We were already drinking our tea. Then he said, 'Do you know what I can see from your constitution? Drinking is bad for you. Your lungs have probably been affected by it already. Why don't you let me examine you?' Well, Vera Pavlovna, you won't believe it, but I was embarrassed! And what kind of life had I been leading? I'd been behaving so shamelessly just before. He noticed this and said, 'No, I only want to examine your lungs.' Although he was only in the second year at school, he already knew a great deal of medicine; he was way ahead in science. He listened to my chest. 'You know,' he said, 'you shouldn't drink at all. Your lungs are in bad shape.' 'What? Not drink?' I said. 'That's not possible for the likes of us!' It really isn't, Vera Pavlovna. 'Well,' he said, 'then give up that sort of life.' 'Why should I give it up? It's fun!' 'No,' he said, 'it's not much fun. Now I have to get to work. Run along.' So I left, angry that the evening had been wasted. I was also offended that he was so unresponsive. We have our pride, you know.

"Well, about a month later I happened to be in that neighborhood again. 'I'll just drop in on that wooden fellow,' I thought, 'and have some fun with him!' It was just before dinner. I was feeling well rested from the night before and wasn't drunk yet. He was sitting with a book. 'Hello there, you wooden creature.' 'Hello,' he said, 'how are you?' I started behaving foolishly again. 'I'll chase you away,' he said. 'Stop it. I told you I don't like it. You're not drunk now, so you can understand. Better listen to what I have to say: your face looks sicker than before. You must give up drinking. Straighten up your clothes and let's have a good chat!' Indeed, my chest had already begun to ache. He examined me again and said that my lungs were much worse. He said a great deal. My chest was so painful that I broke down and cried. I didn't want to die. Why was he scaring me with all that talk of consumption? I said to him, 'How can I give up this kind of life? The madam won't release me. I owe her seventeen rubles.' They keep us constantly in debt so that we have no other choice. 'Well,' he said, 'I don't have

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<sup>55</sup> An alcoholic drink made of rum boiled with sugar, water, and fruit flavoring.

<sup>56</sup> See n. 54 above.

seventeen rubles right now, but come again the day after tomorrow.' That seemed so strange to me! That wasn't at all why I'd said it. And how could I have expected it anyway? I couldn't quite believe what I'd heard. I cried all the more, thinking he was making fun of me. 'It's a sin to abuse a poor girl when you can see she's crying,' I said. I didn't believe him for the longest time, even when he assured me that he was in earnest. And what do you think? He got hold of the money and two days later handed it over to me. I could hardly believe it even then. 'But how on earth?' I said. 'Why on earth are you doing this if you want nothing from me?'

"I paid off the madam and rented myself a room. But there was nothing else I could do. We're issued special passports.<sup>57</sup> What can you possibly do then? I had no money. So, I resumed my previous life—no, not exactly. What a difference, Vera Pavlovna! I received only certain acquaintances, those men I knew to be good, who wouldn't abuse me. And I didn't drink. That's why it was so different. Compared to my previous life, it was easy for me. No, it was still difficult. Here's what I want to say: you may think it was difficult because I had so many male friends—five or so. But I was fond of them all; that wasn't it. Forgive me for saying so, but I'm being honest with you. And I still think that. You know me. Am I immodest now? Who's heard anything but good of me? I spend a lot of time with the children in the workshop. Everyone likes me. The old women can't claim that I've taught them anything bad. But to be honest with you, Vera Pavlovna, I still think that. If you're fond of a man, then there's no harm, provided there's no deceit. It's a different story if there's deceit.

"That's how I lived. Three months passed and I was able to get some rest because my life was so calm. Although I felt guilty about money being involved, I no longer considered myself a wicked girl.

"But Sashenka used to visit me at that time, Vera Pavlovna, and I would visit him. Now I've returned to the main subject that I should have been talking about all along. He didn't come for the same reason as the others, but to make sure I hadn't returned to my previous weakness and started drinking wine again. Indeed, during the first few days he gave me support because I felt a strong craving for it. But I was ashamed: what if he came by and saw me? Undoubtedly I couldn't have resisted without his help because my friends, all good people, would say, 'I'll send for some wine.' But I was so ashamed before him that I said, 'No, you mustn't.' Or else I would have been tempted. The idea that wine was harmful to me would not have been enough. Then, after about three weeks, I began to grow stronger. My craving for wine passed, and I abandoned my drunken ways. All the while I was saving up money to pay him back. In about two months I repaid the full amount. He was so happy that I did. The next day he brought me some muslin for a dress and a few other things that he'd bought with that money. He used to visit me after that, still only as a doctor looking after a

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<sup>57</sup> To control the spread of venereal diseases, prostitutes in prerevolutionary Russia were required to register regularly with local authorities, who issued them certificates ("yellow tickets"), attesting to their "health."

patient. Then, about a month after I'd repaid him, during one of his visits he suddenly said, 'You know, Nastenka, now I am starting to find you attractive.' Indeed, wine can spoil one's looks, and the effect doesn't fade at once; but by then it had, and my face had become more delicate, my eyes clearer. Then too, I'd given up my old habits and begun to talk modestly. Do you know that my ideas became more modest as soon as I stopped drinking? I would still get words mixed up and sometimes I lapsed into absent-mindedness from my former slovenliness. But by then I was getting accustomed to behaving myself and talking more modestly. As soon as he said that he was starting to find me attractive, I was so happy that I wanted to throw myself on his neck, but I didn't dare. He said, 'So you see, Nastenka, I'm not so unresponsive?' He said that I'd become sweet and modest, and he began to caress me. How? He took my hand and placed it on his and then began to stroke mine with his other hand. All the while he was looking at my hand. In fact, at that time my hands were very white and delicate. As soon as he took my hand (you won't believe it), I blushed. After my life, Vera Pavlovna, it was strange to be acting like an innocent young maiden, but that's what happened. In spite of my embarrassment (it's amusing to say it, Vera Pavlovna, but in spite of my embarrassment, that's the truth!), I said to him, 'Why are you befriending me, Alexander Matveich?' He replied, 'Because you're an honest woman now, Nastenka.' Those words, calling me an honest woman, made me so happy that I burst into tears. Then he asked, 'What's the matter, Nastenka?' He kissed me. And do you know what? As a result of that kiss my head started to spin, and I fainted. Can you believe it, Vera Pavlovna, can you believe that such a thing could happen to me after the life I'd led?

"The next morning I was sitting at home weeping, wondering what I could do now, a poor creature, how could I live? The only choice was to throw myself into the Neva. I felt that I couldn't go on living the way I had been. Come what may, I might starve to death, but I couldn't go on. You see, this meant I'd been in love with him for some time. But since he'd shown me no affection whatever and I'd had no hope that he'd ever find me attractive, this love had died away within me. I wasn't even aware that it still existed. But now it all came to light again. Naturally, when you feel that kind of love, how can you look at anyone else except the man you love? You yourself feel that it's impossible. Everything else disappears, except that one man. So there I sat and wept, wondering what I could do and how I could live. And I'd really made up my mind to go and see him once more and then drown myself. I cried the whole morning. Then suddenly I noticed that he'd come in. He began to kiss me and said, 'Nastenka, will you come live with me?' I told him what I'd been thinking about. Then we started to live together.

"That was such a happy time, Vera Pavlovna. I think there are very few people who can have enjoyed such happiness. How he liked looking at me! Many times I'd wake up and he'd be sitting there with a book. He'd come over to look at me and would forget all about the book and just sit there looking. But he was so modest, Vera Pavlovna. I could understand that later, when I began to read and find out how love is described in novels; only then was I able to judge. But with all his modesty, he still

loved to feast his eyes on me. What a feeling when the man you love is looking at you with delight! It's a joy that one can hardly imagine. Like the first time he kissed me: my head started to spin, and I sank into his embrace. You would think the feeling is sweet, but it's not; it's not that at all. Then, you see, your blood is boiling and you feel anxious; in that sweet feeling there's some element of torment so that it's even a bit painful. Of course, it goes without saying that it's sheer bliss; one might easily sacrifice one's life for such a moment—and people do, Vera Pavlovna. It's sheer bliss, but that's not it either; that's not it at all. It's just the same when you sit alone daydreaming and think, 'Oh, how I love him!' But then there's no anxiety, no pain in that pleasure; you feel so calm and so quiet. Well it's just like that, only a thousand times stronger when the man you love looks at you lovingly. You feel such serenity. It's not that your heart is pounding. No, that would mean you were experiencing some anxiety. Rather it's beating evenly, pleasantly, softly; your chest becomes broader, you breathe more easily. Yes, that's the truth; it's very easy to breathe. Oh, how easy it is! Thus an hour or two pass by like a single minute; no, not a minute, not a second—no time at all. It's just like when you fall asleep and then wake up. When you do, you know that a great deal of time has passed since you fell asleep. How did this time pass? It wasn't even a single moment. And it's just like awakening after a long sleep: you feel no exhaustion, only freshness and energy—as if you've had a good rest. And so it is: you've had a good rest. I said, 'It's very easy to breathe.' That's the most genuine feeling. What power there is in his glance, Vera Pavlovna. No other caress can comfort you in that way or give you such pleasure as his glance. Of all the things that make up love, there's nothing else so tender.

"How he loved to look at me! How he feasted his eyes on me! Oh, what rapture! No one can imagine it who hasn't experienced it for herself. But you know all this, Vera Pavlovna.

"And how is it that he never tired of kissing my eyes and my hands; then he starts kissing my breast, my feet, everything. How is it that I feel no shame when I'd already become the kind of girl then that I am now? You know, Vera Pavlovna, that a look from another woman embarrasses me. Our girls will tell you how bashful I am. That's why I live in a separate room. How strange it is, quite beyond belief, but when he looks at me and kisses me, I feel no shame. It's so pleasant and so easy to breathe. Why is it, Vera Pavlovna, that I'm embarrassed by other girls, but feel no shame at his glance? Perhaps it's because he no longer seems to be another person; we've become one and the same. It's as if he weren't looking at me, but I was looking at myself as if he weren't kissing me, but I was kissing myself. That's just how I imagine it, and that's why I feel no shame. But you know all this. There's no need to tell you. But as soon as I start thinking about it, I can't tear myself away from the thought. No, I'll go now, Vera Pavlovna. It's impossible to talk about anything else at the moment. I merely wanted to tell you how kind Sashenka is."

## XV.

Kryukova finished telling her story to Vera Pavlovna during the days that followed. She lived with Kirsanov for about two years. The symptoms of her illness seemed to have disappeared. Then, at the end of the second year, just as spring was arriving, her consumption suddenly manifested itself in the late stages of development. Had she continued to live with Kirsanov, Kryukova would have been condemning herself to an early death. If she separated from him, she might be able to count on another period of remission. They decided to part. If she took up some demanding work, that would also mean her end. She had to find a position as a housekeeper, maid, or nanny—something of that sort, and in a household where there'd be no exhausting obligations and, even more important, no unpleasantness. Rather rare conditions, these! But a suitable position was found. Kirsanov had some acquaintances who were budding actors. Through them Kryukova was hired as a maid by an actress in the Russian theater,<sup>58</sup> an excellent woman. Oh, how many times did Nastya and Kirsanov say farewell . . . and each time they changed their minds. "Tomorrow I shall leave to take up my position," she would say. But one tomorrow followed another. They cried and wept in each other's arms; the actress, who knew the circumstances surrounding her new maid, finally came to fetch her. She had guessed why her maid was so late in appearing; she carried her away from the prolonged farewell that threatened her health.

As long as the actress remained on stage, Kryukova lived very well. The actress was a sensitive woman, and Kryukova valued her position—it would have been hard to find another like it. Since she never experienced any unpleasantness with the actress, Kryukova soon became quite attached to her. Seeing this, the actress became even kinder to her. Kryukova lived a tranquil existence; there was very little development of her disease, almost none. But then the actress got married, left the stage, and settled in her husband's household. There, as Vera Pavlovna had previously heard, the husband's father began to make advances to the maid. Kryukova's virtue was not, it must be said, subject to temptation, but a domestic quarrel ensued. The former actress started to shame the old man, and the father began to get angry. Kryukova did not wish to be the cause of a family squabble. Even if she did, she couldn't have lived tranquilly in that position; so she left it.

That was about two and a half years after her parting from Kirsanov. She hadn't been seeing him at all during this time. At first he used to visit her; but her joy at their meeting had such a detrimental effect on her that he asked her permission to cease his visits for her own good. Then Kryukova tried to work as a maid in two or three other households; but she found so much anxiety and unpleasantness everywhere that it became preferable to hire herself out as a seamstress, even though it meant condemning herself to the rapid development of the disease. It would have progressed all the same

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<sup>58</sup> The Aleksandrinsky Theater (now the Pushkin Dramatic Theater) was founded in Petersburg in 1832.

as a consequence of any unpleasantness; it was better to suffer the same fate without bitterness, as a result of the work alone. A year as a seamstress completely undermined Kryukova's health. When she entered Vera Pavlovna's workshop, Lopukhov, who was their house doctor, did everything possible to slow the course of her consumption. He did a great deal, that is, a great deal if one considers the difficulty involved in obtaining even these meager results. Her end was fast approaching.

Until recently Kryukova had been living under the usual delusion of consumptive patients, imagining that her disease had not progressed very far; therefore she did not seek out Kirsanov for fear of his injurious effect on her. But about two months ago she began to press Lopukhov to tell her how long she had left to live. She didn't say why she wanted to know; Lopukhov, who saw nothing in her questions except the usual attachment to life, didn't consider it his right to tell her how near the crisis really was. He reassured her. But, as most often happens, she wasn't reassured and merely refrained from doing the one thing that might have afforded her some joy at the end. She knew that she didn't have long to live; all her feelings were determined by that thought, but the doctor convinced her that she must still take care of herself. She knew that she had to trust him more than herself. Therefore, she listened to him and didn't seek out Kirsanov.

Of course, this misunderstanding couldn't last for very long. As the crisis approached, Kryukova's questions would have become more persistent. Either she would have revealed that she had a special reason for wanting to know the truth or else Lopukhov or Vera Pavlov-na would have guessed that there was a particular urgency in her inquiries. Then, two or three weeks later, perhaps only a few days later, the result would have been exactly the same as what actually happened a little earlier and somewhat unexpectedly for Kryukova, thanks to Kirsanov's appearance in the workshop. But now the misunderstanding was over, as a result not of the further course of her questions but of an accidental circumstance.

"How happy I am, how very happy! I kept meaning to come and see you, Sashenka!" cried Kryukova ecstatically when she led him to her room.

"Yes, Nastenka, and I'm just as happy as you are! Now we'll never be parted. Come and live with me," said Kirsanov, overcome by a feeling of compassionate love. Having said it, he suddenly thought, "How could I have said that? She's probably not aware that the end is so near."

But either she didn't understand the meaning of his words at first or she understood but didn't bother to pay any attention to the meaning. Her joy at the resumption of their love stifled any sorrow at the thought of her impending doom. Whichever it was, she was overjoyed and said, "What a kind man you are to love me the way you did before."

But when he left, she did cry a little; it was only now that she grasped, or was able to realize that she grasped, the meaning of the resumption of their love: "There's no reason to protect you now—it won't do any good. At least have some joy while you can."



And she really was very' happy. He didn't leave her for a moment, except for those hours he had to spend in the hospital or the Academy. Thus she lived for almost a month. They were together all the time. They told many stories, about what each had been doing during the time of their separation, recalling even more often the pleasures of their previous life. They took walks together; he hired a carriage, and every evening they rode through the outskirts of Petersburg and admired them. People find nature so pleasant that they enjoy even the pitiful, miserable scenery around Petersburg, which cost millions and tens of millions of rubles. They read together, played cards and lotto; she even began to learn how to play chess, as if she had the time to master the game.

On several occasions Vera Pavlovna spent late evenings with them after they returned from one of their outings, or, more often, she dropped by during the morning to distract Kryukova when she was left alone. When the two women were alone together, Kryukova would talk, at length and passionately, about nothing but how kind and tender Sashenka was, and how much he loved her.

## XVI.

Four months or so passed. Kirsanov was deceived first by his worries about Kryukova, then by his memories of her. It seemed to him that now he was out of danger as far as Vera Pavlovna was concerned. He didn't avoid her during her visits to Kryukova, when she met him and spoke to him, or afterward, when she tried to distract him. And, in fact, while he was in mourning, he wasn't aware of having any feelings for Vera Pavlovna, except that of friendly gratitude for all her help.

But—(the reader already knows the meaning of this “but,” just as you always know “beforehand” what's going to happen following the pages you've just read)—but, of course Kirsanov's feeling for Kryukova at the time of their second meeting wasn't at all like hers for him. Any love for Kryukova had long since passed. He merely remained fond of her, as one does of a former lover. His previous love was only a result of his youthful desire to love someone, anyone at all. Naturally, Kryukova was no match for him because they were really no match for each other as far as their development was concerned. When he outgrew his youth, he could feel sorry for her, but no more. He could be tender to her for memory's sake or out of compassion, but that's all. Indeed, his grief at losing her faded away very quickly; but even after the grief had disappeared, he imagined that he was still preoccupied with it. When he noticed that he no longer felt any grief but merely recalled it, he saw that he'd become quite involved with Vera Pavlovna and that he'd come upon a great misfortune.

Vera Pavlovna tried to distract him; he allowed himself to be distracted, considering that he was in no danger. Perhaps he didn't realize that he was in love with Vera Pavlovna, and that in submitting to her care, he was courting disaster. And what was happening now, some two or three months after Vera Pavlovna had begun to distract him from his grief over Kryukova? Nothing more than that all during this period

he spent almost every evening at the Lopukhovs' or else he escorted Vera Pavlovna somewhere, sometimes with her husband but more frequently without. That's all there was to it. But it was more than enough not only for him but for her as well.

What is Vera Pavlovna's day like now? Up until evening it's the same as before. But now it's about six o'clock. Previously she would go to the workshop alone or sit in her room working. But now, if she has to visit the workshop in the evening, Kirsanov has been told the day before, and he arrives in time to escort her. Along the way, both there and back (not a very long trip), they chat about something or other, usually the workshop. Kirsanov is now her most active associate in matters pertaining to it. Once there she's occupied giving various instructions, while he too has a lot to do. Thirty girls find quite a few favors to ask and requests to make; surely it would be convenient for him to assist? In between these tasks, he sits chatting with the children. Even here a few girls participate in the conversation about everything under the sun—how splendid the stories are from *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights*,<sup>59</sup> many of which he'd read to them, or about the white elephants that are so esteemed in India (just as many of us love white cats). Half the group considers that this shows a lack of taste. White elephants, cats, and horses—all are albinos, a sickly breed. You can tell from their eyes that they don't enjoy as good health as animals with real color.<sup>60</sup> The other half of the group takes the side of the white cats.

"Do you know any more details about the life of Mrs. Beecher Stowe, whose novel we all know from your stories?"<sup>61</sup> asks one of the older participants in the discussion. No, Kirsanov doesn't know anything more but he could find out because he too is curious. But he could tell them something about John Howard, who was almost the same sort of person as Mrs. Beecher Stowe.<sup>62</sup> Then Kirsanov would tell them stories or argue with members of the group, the junior half of which is always the same, while the senior half constantly changes.

After Vera Pavlovna has finished her business, she returns home with him to have tea. The three of them sit together for a long time afterward. Nowadays Vera Pavlovna and Dmitry Sergeich spend much more time over their tea than they did before Kirsanov joined them.

An hour or sometimes two of almost every evening the three of them spend together without other company are devoted to some musical activity. Dmitry Sergeich plays

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<sup>59</sup> The anonymous Arabic literary classic in which the heroine, Scheherazade, relates a different tale each night to her husband for 1,001 nights to prevent him from killing her.

<sup>60</sup> Chernyshevsky is suggesting that the upper classes have become pallid and weak through idleness, in contrast to the robust ruddiness of people who work for a living. He may also be alluding to the conflict between black slaves and white slaveowners in the antebellum United States.

<sup>61</sup> The novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) by the American author and philanthropist Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) helped to fan abolitionist sentiment on the eve of the American Civil War.

<sup>62</sup> The English philanthropist and penologist John Howard (1726–1790) was an early pioneer of prison reform who died of typhus while investigating methods for confining military convicts in Russia.

and Vera Pavlovna sings, while Kirsanov sits and listens. Sometimes Kirsanov plays; then Dmitry Sergeich sings together with his wife.

But it often happens nowadays that Vera Pavlovna hurries home from the workshop to dress for the theater. They frequent the opera now, about half the time all three of them together, the other half, just Kirsanov and Vera Pavlovna. Besides, the Lopukhovs have started to entertain guests more often. Previously, except for some young people (And what sort of guests are they? More like one's own nephews!), the Mertsalovs were their only guests. But now the Lopukhovs have become close to two or three other nice couples. The Mertsalovs and two couples have agreed to take turns organizing little evening parties with dancing for their circle every week. Sometimes there are six couples present, even as many as eight. Lopukhov never goes to the opera without Kirsanov, or to visit other couples, but Kirsanov often escorts Vera Pavlovna alone on these outings. Lopukhov says that he prefers to stay at home in his everyday clothes on his own sofa. Therefore, they spend only about half their evenings as a threesome; but at such times they're together without interruption. It's true that when the Lopukhovs are entertaining no other guests besides Kirsanov! the sofa often draws Lopukhov away from the room where the piano is. It's now been moved from Vera Pavlovna's room into the living room! although this fact doesn't really help Dmitry Sergeich much. Within a quarter of an hour or at most half an hour, Kirsanov and Vera Pavlovna have also abandoned the piano and are sitting next to him on the sofa. In fact, Vera Pavlovna doesn't sit there for long; she soon manages to recline on the sofa, but in such a way that her husband isn't disturbed in the least. It's a large sofa; that is, it's really not all that spacious, but she's slipped one arm around her husband! and therefore he's still comfortable sitting there.

Thus pass another three or more months.

The idyll is no longer in fashion, and I myself don't like it very much, that is, I personally don't like it, just as I don't like taking walks or eating asparagus. There's a lot I don't like! But it's impossible for any one person to like every kind of food and all forms of recreation. Yet I know that these things, although not to my personal taste, are very good things and that they are to the liking, or would be, of a much greater number of people than those who, like me, prefer a game of chess to taking a walk or a plate of sauerkraut with hempseed oil to asparagus. I even know that the majority, who doesn't share my penchant for a game of chess and would be glad not to share my enthusiasm for sauerkraut with hempseed oil, has tastes no worse than mine. Therefore I say, take as many walks as you like, and let sauerkraut with hempseed oil disappear from the face of the earth, as long as there remains just a little left as an antiquarian relic for a few eccentrics like me!

Similarly I know that for the vast majority of people no worse than I am, happiness must have its idyllic character. So I exclaim, let the idyllic character of life reign over all others! For a few eccentrics who aren't fond of idylls! there'll be other kinds of happiness, but the majority requires the idyll. And as for the fact that it's no longer fashionable and therefore people spurn it, that's no real objection at all. They

shun the idyll as the fox in the fable spurned the grapes.<sup>63</sup> They think it inaccessible; consequently they conclude, “Let it no longer be fashionable.”

But it’s pure nonsense that the idyll is inaccessible. It’s not only a fine thing for almost all people, but even feasible, very much so. It wouldn’t be all that difficult to establish—not just for one person or even for a dozen men, but for all people. Why, it’s impossible for five people to sustain the Italian opera, but it’s entirely feasible for all of Petersburg to do it, as everyone can see and hear.<sup>64</sup> Why, the Complete Collected Works of N. v. Gogol (Moscow, 1861) is impossible for a dozen people to sustain, but for the whole reading public it’s entirely feasible and not even expensive, as everyone knows. But until there was Italian opera for the whole town, only a few odd concerts were available to particularly devoted music lovers; until the second part of *Dead Souls* was published for the whole reading public, only a few particularly devoted admirers of Gogol were able to prepare their own handwritten copies, despite the labor involved.<sup>65</sup> A handwritten manuscript can’t compare to a printed book; a few odd concerts are no match for the Italian opera. But still, they’re both good, each in its own way.

## XVII.

If an outsider had come to consult with Kirsanov about the position in which he found himself when he came to his senses, and if Kirsanov had been a total stranger to all those involved in the affair, he’d have said to the outsider, “It’s too late to remedy the situation by running away. I don’t know how it will turn out, but it’s equally dangerous both to run away and to stay here; as for those whose peace of mind concerns you, your running away would be more dangerous than staying here.”

Of course Kirsanov would have said this only to the sort of man who was similar to him or Lopukhov, that is, a man of resolute character and unfailing honesty. It would be useless to discuss such matters with other people, because they’d undoubtedly behave in an abominable and worthless way; they’d shame the woman, dishonor themselves, and then go around to their friends whining or boasting, savoring either their heroic virtue or their amorous appeal. Neither Lopukhov nor Kirsanov would enjoy talking with such people about the way honorable men should behave. But Kirsanov would be correct in telling anyone of his own ilk that running away now would be almost worse than staying. The implications would be clear. “I know how you’d have to behave if you stayed: so as not to reveal your feelings, since that’s the only way you could stay

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<sup>63</sup> In Aesop’s fable “The Fox and the Grapes,” the fox convinces himself that some tasty-looking grapes are unpalatable merely because they are beyond his reach.

<sup>64</sup> An allusion to the popularity of Italian opera among fashionable Petersburg society (see also n. 97 above).

<sup>65</sup> The date of publication given by Chernyshevsky is inaccurate. Multivolume editions of Gogol’s collected works were published in 1842, 1857, and 1862. Although Gogol burned most of the second part of his masterpiece *Dead Souls* (vol. 1, 1842; vol. 2, 1855), fragments of it survived and circulated among intellectuals in manuscript form until it was published in 1855.

and not become a scoundrel. The task before you is to disrupt as little as possible the serenity of a woman whose life is going along smoothly. It already seems impossible not to disrupt it at all. The feeling that's incompatible with her present relations has probably (why say 'probably'—it's better to say 'undoubtedly') arisen in her already, but she hasn't noticed it quite yet. It's not yet known whether it will manifest itself to her soon without your instigation. But your departure now would serve as that instigation. In other words, your departure would merely hasten the very process you seek to avoid."

However, Kirsanov was considering this affair not as an outsider but as a participant. He imagined that it would be harder to leave than to remain. His feelings were inducing him to stay. Consequently, wouldn't that mean submitting to those feelings, yielding to desire, if he stayed? What right did he have to believe so absolutely that he would not reveal his feelings or provide any instigation by a word or a glance? Therefore, it would be wiser to leave. In one's own affairs it's difficult to distinguish how much one's reason has been seduced by the sophistries of desire, because honesty is saying, "If you go against desire, you'll have a greater chance of behaving in an honorable way." This represents a translation from theoretical language into ordinary speech. The theory that Kirsanov advocated considers fine words such as "honorable" to be ambiguous and obscure. In his own terminology Kirsanov would have expressed himself thus: "Every man is an egoist and so am I. Now the question is, what's most advantageous for me, to leave or to stay? By leaving, I'll suppress one private feeling in myself; by staying, I risk upsetting my sense of human dignity by a stupid word or glance occasioned by that particular feeling. That feeling can be suppressed; in time my serenity will be restored and I'll once again be content with my life. But if I ever act against my own human nature, then once and for all I shall forfeit the possibility of serenity and self-satisfaction and will poison my entire life. My position is like this: I love wine. Before me stands a glass containing some very good wine, but I suspect that the glass has been poisoned. I can't determine whether my suspicion is well founded or not. Should I drink the glass or spill it out so that it no longer tempts me? I mustn't call my decision honorable or even honest—these words are too grand. I'll call it merely calculated and sensible. I spill out the glass. In doing so I deprive myself of some pleasure and cause myself some displeasure, but I protect my health, that is, the possibility of drinking much more wine for a very long time—wine that I'll know for sure hasn't been poisoned. I'm not behaving foolishly; and that's all the praise I deserve."

## XVIII.

How could he withdraw? His previous trick of pretending to be offended, displaying some vulgar side of his character and using it as a dodge—all that would never do. You couldn't try the same thing twice. The second time would merely reveal the true meaning of the first and show him to be acting the hero not only in these new circum-

stances but in the previous ones as well. And, in general, it was necessary to reject any abrupt break in their relations. Such a departure would be easier, but it would be too dramatic and attract attention, that is, it would now be too base and vulgar (according to Kirsanov's theory of egoism, it would be a foolish miscalculation). Consequently, only one, the most difficult and painful way, remained: a quiet withdrawal in a slow, unobtrusive manner, in such a way that no one would even notice that he was leaving. This was a difficult and a delicate matter—to disappear from sight so that no one noticed your movements, even though all eyes were focused on you. But there was nothing else to be done. He had to do it. Besides, according to Kirsanov's theory, it shouldn't be painful, but even pleasant. The more difficult a task, the more one delights (according to egoism) in one's strength and agility at accomplishing it successfully.

And he accomplished it very successfully indeed. He didn't betray his intention by a single word, either implied or stated, or by a single glance. He was as free and jovial with Vera Pavlovna as ever; it was obvious that he enjoyed her company as much as before. But various obstacles arose which began to prevent him from visiting the Lopukhovs as often as he used to, or from spending the entire evening with them. Somehow it seemed that more often than ever Lopukhov would grab him by the arm or by the lapel and say, "No, friend, you can't get away from this debate just yet." More and more of the time that Kirsanov spent at the Lopukhovs' turned out to be at his friend's side on the sofa. And all this came about so gradually, no one noticed the change as it was occurring. When obstacles arose, Kirsanov refrained from exaggerating them; on the contrary, he regretted them (but not every time—that would never do). The obstacles appeared so natural and unavoidable that sometimes the Lopukhovs themselves would urge him to leave, reminding him that he'd forgotten his promise to be at home today, because he was expecting certain acquaintances of whom he'd been unable to rid himself. Or he'd forget that today, if he didn't call in on So-and-so, that person would take offense. Or he'd forget that he'd at least four hours of work left to do before morning; didn't he want to get any sleep at all that night? Why, it was ten o'clock already! What was he doing there fooling around with them? It was high time for him to head home and get to work! Kirsanov didn't even heed their reminders all the time. He just wouldn't go to see his acquaintance: let the fellow get angry! Or the work wouldn't go away—there was still time to do it, and he'd spend the rest of the evening with them. But these obstacles kept mounting. Learned pursuits all the more persistently took Kirsanov away evening after evening. "The devil take these learned pursuits!" he'd occasionally and casually exclaim. Meanwhile his acquaintances imposed more and more obligations on him. "And what obligations," he'd sometimes, also casually, complain. While it seemed a bit odd to him, it was all perfectly clear to the Lopukhovs: Kirsanov was becoming better known. That's why increasing numbers of people were requiring his services. And he couldn't neglect his work; it would be a mistake to slack off. Indeed, he'd been so lazy during the last few months that it

would be difficult for him to get back to work again. “But you really must, brother Alexander.” “Yes, it’s high time you did, Alexander Matveich!”

This maneuver was a difficult one. Week after week it was necessary to drag out this about-face and move as slowly and smoothly as the hour hand on a clock. Look at it as attentively as you please, you won’t see it budge, but it goes about its business very quietly all the same, moving ever so slowly away from its previous position. On the other hand, Kirsanov the theoretician derived immense enjoyment from the exercise, admiring his own agility. Egoists and materialists act only to satisfy themselves! Yes—and Kirsanov could swear, placing his hand on his heart, that he was acting only to satisfy himself. He rejoiced at his skill and his mettle.

Thus passed a month, perhaps a little more. If someone had been reckoning, he would have found that during that month Kirsanov’s intimacy with the Lopukhovs diminished not in the least, although the time he spent with them had been reduced to a quarter of its previous level; and of that time, the proportion spent with Vera Pavlovna had been reduced by another half. In another month, in spite of their unwavering friendship, these friends would see very little of each other—and it would be in the bag!

“Lopukhov has sharp eyes. Surely he’s noticed something!”

“No, not a thing.”

“What about Vera Pavlovna?”

“No, she hasn’t noticed anything, either.”

“Has she noticed anything in herself?”

“No, Vera Pavlovna hasn’t noticed anything in herself, either. But she does have a dream.”

## **XIX. Vera Pavlovna’s Third Dream**

And Vera Pavlovna has a dream.

After tea and a brief chat with her “sweetheart,” she’s returned to her own room to lie down—not to sleep, for it was much too early for that. Why, it was only half past eight! No, she hasn’t even gotten undressed. She simply lies down to read. And there she is on her bed reading; but soon the book slips from her hands and Vera Pavlovna begins to ponder: “Why have I been feeling a little bored lately? Perhaps it’s not boredom at all, but nothing in particular. No, it’s not boredom. Today I simply remembered that I wanted to go to the opera, but Kirsanov was so preoccupied that he was too late to buy any tickets. As if he didn’t know that when Bosio is singing, it’s impossible to get two-ruble tickets by eleven o’clock.<sup>66</sup> Of course, one can’t blame him: he was at work until five o’clock this morning; surely it was almost five, even though he

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<sup>66</sup> In the late 1850s the celebrated Italian mezzo soprano Angiolina Bosio (1830–1859) performed regularly in St. Petersburg, where she enjoyed considerable popularity among operagoers and, thanks to her frequent appearances at charitable events, students and radical intellectuals.

wouldn't admit it... Still, it is his fault. Yes, from now on I shall ask my sweetheart to buy the tickets and shall go to the opera with him. My sweetheart would never forget, and he's always glad to accompany me. He's so sweet, my sweetheart. And now, on account of Kirsanov, I missed hearing *La Traviata*.<sup>67</sup> How awful! I'd go to the opera every night if there were a performance every night—any opera at all, no matter how bad, as long as Bosio were singing the main role. If I had a voice like hers, I would sing all day long. I wonder if I could ever get to meet her? How could it be arranged? That artillery officer is friendly with Tamberlick<sup>68</sup> —perhaps he could arrange it. No, that's impossible. What a peculiar idea! Why should I want to meet Bosio? Would she really sing for me? Surely she has to save her voice.

“And when did Bosio ever have time to learn Russian? How clear her pronunciation is! But what funny words! Where did she unearth such vulgar doggerel? Why, yes, she must have used the same Russian textbook I did. Those very same verses were quoted to illustrate the rules of punctuation. How absurd to include such lines in a grammar book! If only they hadn't been so vulgar! But there's no reason to think about the words; instead one should listen to how she sings:

Seize, oh, seize  
The hour of delight;  
Give up to love  
The years of youth...<sup>69</sup>

“What strange words: both ‘years’ and ‘youth’ have the wrong accents!<sup>70</sup> But what a voice she has, and what feeling! Yes, her voice has become much better lately, incomparably so. Miraculous! How could it have become so much better? I didn't know how to arrange to meet her, but now she herself has come to visit me! How did she learn of my desire?”

“You've been summoning me for some time,” says Bosio in Russian.

“I, summon you, Bosio? How could that be, when I don't even know you? But I'm very glad to see you.”

Vera Pavlovna parts her bed curtain to shake hands with Bosio, but the singer begins to laugh. Why, it isn't Bosio at all! It turns out to be de Merrick playing the gypsy girl in *Rigoletto*.<sup>71</sup> Yet while the gay laughter is characteristic of de Merrick, the voice still belongs to Bosio. She pulls back and hides herself behind the bed curtain.

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<sup>67</sup> Verdi's opera was first performed in St. Petersburg in Italian in 1856 and in Russian in 1858.

<sup>68</sup> The Italian tenor Enrico Tamberlick (1820–1889) performed frequently in St. Petersburg, where he enjoyed considerable success, particularly in the role of the Duke in *Rigoletto* (see n. 28 above).

<sup>69</sup> A partially misquoted passage from Pushkin's lyric poem “To Adele” (1822). Chernyshevsky substituted the word *naslazhden'ya* (delight), which actually appears two lines earlier, for the word *upoen'ya* (ecstasy).

<sup>70</sup> Vera Pavlovna is obviously unaware of the older use of the Russian word *leto* to denote “year” as well as “summer.” In the plural, *léta* means years and *letá*, summers.

<sup>71</sup> The celebrated French soprano Henriette Méric-Lelande (?–1867) performed frequently in Italian operas in St. Petersburg.



How annoying! The curtain hides her, but it wasn't there before! Where did it come from?

"Do you know why I've come?" asks the singer, laughing as if she were de Merrick, but still she's Bosio.

"Who are you? You're not de Merrick, are you?"

"No."

"Well, are you Bosio?"

The singer laughs. "You'll find out soon. But for now, we must attend to my reason for coming. I want to read your diary with you."

"I don't have a diary. I've never kept one."

"Look here! What's this lying on the table?"

Vera Pavlovna looks. There on the bedside table lies a notebook bearing the inscription "V. L.'s Diary." Where did it come from? Vera Pavlovna picks it up and opens it. It's written in her own hand. But how could that be?

"Read the last page," says Bosio.

Vera Pavlovna reads, "Once again I'm obliged to stay home alone for long evenings. But it doesn't matter; I'm used to it."

"Is that all?" asks Bosio.

"Yes, that's all."

"No, you're not reading everything."

"There's nothing more written here."

"You won't fool me," says the visitor. "What's this here?" A hand reaches out from behind the bed curtain. What a beautiful hand! No, this splendid hand isn't Bosio's. And how did it extend through the bed curtain without parting it?

The visitor's hand touches the page. Beneath it new words appear which weren't there before. "Read," says the visitor. Vera Pavlovna's heart grows heavy. She hasn't looked at these lines yet; she doesn't know what's written here; but even so her heart grows heavy. She doesn't want to read these new lines.

"Read," insists the visitor.

Vera Pavlovna reads. "No, it's so boring to be alone now. It wasn't always so. Why wasn't I bored before when I was alone, but now I am?"

"Turn back a page," says the visitor.

Vera Pavlovna turns back a page and reads, "Summer of this year." What a way to write a diary! I should have written: 1855, June or July, and should have marked the date... Instead of that, "Summer of this year. As usual we go to the country, to the islands. This time my sweetheart is joining us. How nice for me." "Gh, so it's August. What date? The fifteenth or the twelfth? Yes, sometime around the fifteenth. It's that excursion after which my poor sweetheart fell ill," thinks Vera Pavlovna.

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all."

"No, you're not reading everything. What's this here?" asks the visitor, and again the splendid hand appears through the unopened bed curtain and touches the page. New

words appear. Vera Pavlovna reads them against her will: “Why doesn’t my sweetheart accompany us more often?”

“Turn to another page,” says the visitor.

“My sweetheart’s so busy, and it’s all for my sake. He works for me, he does.” “That’s the answer to my question,” thinks Vera Pavlovna joyfully.

“Turn to another page.”

“What honest, noble people these students are, and how they respect my sweetheart. It’s so amusing to be with them. It’s as if we were all brothers and sisters: no one stands on ceremony.”

“Is that all?”

“Yes, that’s all.”

“No, read on.” And again the hand appears and touches the page. New lines appear and Vera Pavlovna reads them against her will: “The sixteenth of August,” “that is, one day after our trip to the islands,” thinks Vera Pavlovna. “That means we went on the fifteenth.” “My sweetheart spent the whole time talking to that Rakhmetov, the rigorist,<sup>72</sup> as they refer to him in jest, and to his other comrades. He spent scarcely a quarter of an hour with me.” “That’s not true, more than half an hour, I think, yes, more than that, I’m sure,” thinks Vera Pavlovna. “Plus the time we sat together in the boat...” “The seventeenth of August. Yesterday the students spent the whole evening with us.” “Yes, that was the day before my sweetheart fell ill,” she thinks. “My sweetheart talked to them all evening. Why does he spend so much time with them, and so little with me? Surely he’s not working all the time. Why, he himself says that he’s not working all the time, that it’s not possible to work without relaxation, that he relaxes a good deal, and that he thinks about something special to relax. But why does he think alone? Why not with me?”

“Turn to another page.”

“July, and every other month up to my sweetheart’s illness, the same last year, and the same before that, too. The students were here five days ago, and yesterday as well. I enjoyed myself with them—it was so amusing. They’ll come again tomorrow or the day after, and we’ll have some more fun.”

“Is that all?”

“Yes, that’s all.”

“No, read on.” The hand appears again and touches the page. New lines emerge beneath it and Vera Pavlovna reads them against her will.

“The beginning of this year, particularly at the end of spring. Yes, previously I enjoyed myself with the students—and that was that. But now I often wonder about something. These are merely children’s games and will continue to amuse me for a good long time. No doubt even when I’m an old lady and too old to play myself,

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<sup>72</sup> See n. 104 above. Rakhmetov may have been modeled in part on the radical student Dmitry Karakozov (1840–1866), a former student of Chernyshevsky’s at the Saratov gymnasium who was executed in 1866 after attempting to assassinate Emperor Alexander II (see also n. 159 below).

I'll marvel at the games of the young which remind me of my own childhood. But even now, although I look upon these students as if they were my younger brothers, I don't always want to be 'little Verochka' when I seek respite from serious thoughts and labors. I'm already 'Vera Pavlovna'; sometimes it's pleasant to amuse myself like little Verochka—but not all the time. Vera Pavlovna would sometimes like to amuse herself and still remain Vera Pavlovna. It would be with people of the same age and experience."<sup>73</sup>

"Turn back a few more pages."

"In a few days I'll be opening a dressmaking establishment. I went to see Julie in search of orders. My sweetheart came to fetch me. Julie insisted that we stay for lunch; she served champagne and prevailed upon me to drink two glasses. She and I began to sing, run around, and wrestle. It was so much fun. My sweetheart looked on and laughed."

"Is that really all there is?" asks the visitor. Again new words appear beneath her hand and Vera Pavlovna reads them against her will.

"My sweetheart only looked on and laughed. Why didn't he join in our merriment? It would have been even more fun. Perhaps it would have been too awkward? Maybe he wouldn't have known how to take part in our games? No, it wouldn't have been awkward at all and I'm sure he would have known how to play. That's just his character. He doesn't interfere; he encourages and rejoices—but no more."

"Turn one page ahead."

"Today my sweetheart and I went to visit my parents for the first time since we were married. I found it very painful to see the kind of life that had so stifled and oppressed me before my marriage. My sweetheart! What an abominable existence he delivered me from! That night I had a terrible dream. My mother was reproaching me for ingratitude; she was telling the truth, but the truth was so awful that I began to moan. My sweetheart heard me and came into my room, but by then I was already singing (all of this in my dream), because my beloved beautiful woman had come to console me. My sweetheart acted like my maid. It was very embarrassing. But he was so modest and merely kissed my shoulder."

"Is that really all that's written? You won't fool me. Read on..." Once again new words emerge under the visitor's hand and Vera Pavlovna reads them against her will.

"It was almost insulting."

"Turn back a few more pages."

"Today I was waiting for my friend D. on the boulevard near the Noryi [New] Bridge.<sup>74</sup> The lady at whose house I hoped to be a governess lives nearby. But she didn't agree to it. D. and I returned home despondent. Before dinner I sat in my

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<sup>73</sup> In Russian the affectionate diminutive form of first names is generally used only with children. By contrasting her proper name with its affectionate diminutive, Vera is insisting on her own intellectual maturation and personal independence.

<sup>74</sup> The former name of the Nikolaevsky (Nicholas, Bridge (now the Lieutenant Schmidt Bridge), the first permanent span across the Neva River, built in 1842–1850.

room and thought that it would be better to die than to live as I had, when suddenly, at dinner, D. says, 'Vera Pavlovna, let's drink to the health of my fiancée and your intended.' I could hardly refrain from bursting into tears of joy in front of everyone at such unexpected deliverance. After dinner D. and I talked at length about how we'd arrange our lives. How I do love him! He's leading me out of the cellar."

"Read it all."

"There is no more."

"Look closely." Again new lines emerge beneath the visitor's hand.

"I don't want to read any more," says Vera Pavlovna in fear. She hasn't even managed to decipher what's written in those new lines, but she's already afraid.

"When I order you to read, you have no choice."

Vera Pavlovna reads.

"Can it be that I love him because he's leading me out of the cellar? Do I really love him or my deliverance from the cellar?"

"Turn back further. Read the very first page."

"Today, on my birthday, I spoke with D. for the first time and fell in love with him. I've never before heard such noble, comforting words spoken by anyone. How he sympathized with everything that merits sympathy; he wants to help anyone who's in need of help. He's so convinced that happiness is possible for all mankind and that it must eventually come into being; that malice and grief are not eternal; and that a bright new life is rapidly approaching. How my heart swelled with joy when I heard these assurances from such a serious, learned man. My own thoughts were confirmed by his words... He was so very kind when he spoke about us, poor women. Why, any woman would soon come to love such a man! How clever he is, how noble, how kind!"

"Good. Turn again to the last page."

"But I've read that one already."

"No, that wasn't the last one. Turn one more page."

"But there's nothing here."

"Read on! You'll see how much is written there." And again lines that were not there before emerge at a touch of the visitor's hand.

Vera Pavlovna's heart grows cold.

"I don't want to read it. I can't."

"It's an order. You must."

"I can't and I won't."

"Then I shall read what you wrote. Listen.

"He is a noble man; he is my liberator. But nobility inspires respect, confidence, friendship, and readiness to act in concert. A liberator is rewarded with gratitude and devotion—but that's all. Perhaps his nature is more passionate than mine. When his blood seethes, his caresses burn. But there exists another kind of need—a need for quiet, calm caresses, and the desire to doze blissfully in a sea of tenderness. Does he share this need? Are our natures and needs really compatible? He's prepared to die for me, and I for him. But is that enough? Is his life sustained by thoughts of me? Is

mine nourished by thoughts of him? Do I love him with the kind of love I yearn to feel? Previously I hadn't recognized the need for this quiet, tender feeling. No, my feeling for him isn't..."

"I don't want to hear any more!" cries Vera Pavlovna, tossing aside the diary with indignation. "You're a vile, wicked creature! Why did you come here? I didn't summon you. Go away!"

The visitor laughs with a gentle, kind laugh.

"No, you don't love him. These words were written by your own hand."

"I curse you!"

With this exclamation Vera Pavlovna awakens. Before she realizes that she's been dreaming and has only just awakened, she jumps up and runs out of her room.

"Embrace me, my dear, protect me! I had an awful dream!" She snuggles up to her husband. "Caress me, my dear, be tender, protect me."

"Verochka, what's the matter?" Her husband embraces her. "You're trembling." He kisses her. "You have tears on your cheeks and a cold sweat on your brow. And, my dear, you ran in here barefoot across the cold floor. I'll kiss your little toes to warm them up."

"Yes, caress me, save me! I had a nasty dream. I dreamed that I didn't love you."

"But, my dear, whom do you love, if not me? No, it was an absurd, idle dream!"

"Yes, I do love you. Only, caress me, kiss me. I do love you and want to love you."

She holds her husband tightly and snuggles up to him. Soothed by his caresses, she falls asleep quietly, still kissing him.

## XX.

The next morning Dmitry Sergeich had no need to summon his wife to tea: she was already there, snuggled up next to him. She was still asleep. He looked at her and wondered, "What's the matter with her? Why was she so frightened? What caused that dream?"

"Stay here, Verochka, I'll fetch you some tea. Don't get up, my dear, I'll bring you the basin and you can wash right here."

"Good. I won't get up. I'm so comfortable. I'll just lie here for a while. How ingenious you are, dear, and how I do love you. There, I've washed. Now you can bring me some tea. No, first give me a hug!" Vera Pavlovna held her husband in an embrace for quite a long time. "Oh, my dear, what a silly girl I am! How I came running in to you! What will Masha think? No, we'll hide the fact that I woke up here in your room. Fetch my clothes so I can get dressed. Caress me, my dear, caress me. I want to love you; I need to love you; I will love you as never before!"

Vera Pavlovna's room now stands empty. Without concealing anything from Masha now, she's moved into her husband's room. How tender he is, how affectionate. "How could I ever think that I didn't love you, my dear? How silly I am!"

“Verochka, now that you’ve calmed down a bit, my dear, tell me about that dream you had a few nights ago.”

“Oh, it was all such nonsense. I’ve already told you all there is to tell. I merely dreamed that you weren’t caressing me enough. But I feel better now. Why haven’t we always lived together like this? I never would have had such an awful dream. It was a horrible, terrible dream and I don’t want to think about it anymore.”

“But without it we wouldn’t be living together as we are now.”

“That’s true. I’m very grateful to that terrible woman. She really isn’t so horrible after all, she’s good.”

“What ‘woman’? Do you have a new friend now in addition to that other ‘beautiful woman’ of yours?”

“Yes, I do. Some other woman came to me with an enchanting voice, much better than Bosio’s. And what fine hands she has! Oh, what wonderful beauty: her hand was all I saw. The rest of her was hidden behind the bed curtain (that’s why I had to leave the place where I had that dream). I dreamed that there was a bed curtain and that my new guest was hiding behind it. What splendid hands she had, my dear! She sang to me about love and explained what love is all about. Now I understand, my dear. How foolish I was before! I didn’t understand a thing. I was such a little girl, a foolish little girl.”

“My dear, my angel, there’s a time for everything. The way we were living before was love, and the way we are living now is also love. Some people need one kind of love, other people need a different kind. Before, one kind of love was enough; now you need another. Yes, you’ve become a woman now, my friend. You need something now that you never needed before.”

A week passes. Two weeks. Vera Pavlovna luxuriates. She goes to her own room only when her husband isn’t home or when he’s working. But no, even when he’s at work she often sits near him in his study. When she sees that she’s disturbing him, that his work demands his complete attention, then why interfere? But everyone has only a little of that kind of work. The larger part of even scholarly research is purely mechanical. Therefore, he sees his wife sitting near him about three-quarters of the time, and sometimes they even caress each other. Only one modification was required: they had to purchase another sofa, smaller than her husband’s. That way after dinner Vera Pavlovna can stretch out luxuriously on her own little sofa. Her husband sits alongside admiring her.

“Why are you kissing my hands, my dear? You know I don’t like it.”

“Really? I forgot that it offends you; well then, I’ll offend you.”

“My dear, you have liberated me once again. You have rescued me from wicked people, saved me from myself. Caress me, my dear, caress me!”

A month passes. After dinner Vera Pavlovna luxuriates on her soft, small, but wide sofa in their room, that is, in her husband’s study. He’s sitting next to her on the sofa; she embraces him, lays her head on his chest, but soon becomes pensive. He kisses

her, but her pensiveness doesn't pass; tears have welled up in her eyes and are almost ready to pour forth.

"Verochka, my dear, why are you so pensive?"

Vera Pavlovna weeps, but makes no reply. No. She wipes away her tears.

"No, don't caress me, my dear. Enough. Thank you!" she says, looking at him so tenderly and sincerely. "Thank you. You're so kind to me."

"Kind, Verochka? What do you mean?"

"Kind, my dear. You're very kind."

Two more days pass. Vera Pavlovna is luxuriating once again after dinner. No, she's not luxuriating; she's only lying there thinking—in her own room on her own bed. Her husband's sitting next to her; he's embracing her and also thinking.

"No, there's something wrong. There's something lacking in me," thinks Lopukhov.

"How kind he is and how ungrateful I am," thinks Vera Pavlovna.

That's what they're both thinking.

She says, "My dear, go back to your own room and do a little work or get some rest." She tries and even manages to say these words in a clear, cheerful tone.

"Why are you chasing me away, Verochka? I feel wonderful here..." and he tries and even manages to say these words in a clear, not cheerless tone.

"No, go on, my dear. You're doing enough for me. Go and get some rest."

He kisses her. She loses her train of thought; once again she can breathe sweetly and easily.

"Thank you, my dear," she says.

Meanwhile Kirsanov was perfectly happy. This time the struggle was a bit more difficult; but then again, it afforded him much more inner satisfaction. This feeling didn't pass away as soon as the struggle ended; it would warm his heart for a long time, to the end of his days. He had behaved honorably. Yes. He brought them closer together. Yes, he really had. Kirsanov lay on his sofa smoking. He thought, "Be honorable, that is, calculate carefully; make no errors in your calculations. Remember that the whole is greater than any of its parts, that is, your human nature is stronger and more important to you than each of your individual aspirations. Favor its advantage over that of each individual aspiration if you find they're in conflict. That's all there is to it. To state it simply: be honorable and everything will turn out very well indeed. There's only one rule, and how simple it is; it represents the entire result of science, the whole code of laws needed for a happy life. Yes, happy are they who are born with the ability to grasp this one simple rule. And I'm rather fortunate in this regard. Of course, I'm much indebted to my development, more so than to my nature. But this will gradually become a general rule inculcated by one's upbringing and life circumstances. Then it will be as easy for everyone to live on earth as it is now for me. Yes, I'm very satisfied. However, I really should drop in on them. I haven't been there in three weeks. It's high time, even though I'll find it unpleasant. I no longer feel drawn there. But it's time. In a few days I'll stop by for half an hour. Or shall I postpone it for another month? I think so. Yes, my retreat has been accomplished; my maneuvers have been completed.

I ‘ve disappeared from sight; now they won’t even notice whether I haven’t been there for three weeks or three months. It’s very pleasant to reflect from afar on people with whom one has behaved so honorably. I shall rest on my laurels.”

Meanwhile, Lopukhov, two or three days later, also after dinner, walks into his wife’s room, lifts his Verochka up in his arms, and carries her to the ottoman in his own room. “Have a rest here, my friend,” he says, enjoying looking at her. She smiles and begins to doze. He sits reading. Then she opens her eyes wide and begins to think.

“How his room is arranged! There’s nothing in it except what’s absolutely necessary. No, he has his own whims, too. There’s that enormous box of cigars I gave him last year. It hasn’t been opened yet; it’s still waiting its turn. Yes, that’s his only whim: cigars are his one extravagance.<sup>75</sup> No, here’s another one: a photograph of that old man. What a noble face, what a combination of benevolence and perspicacity in his eyes, in his entire expression! Dmitry went to a great deal of trouble to get it, for no one has any photographs of Robert Owen anywhere.<sup>76</sup> He wrote him three letters. Two of the messengers never found the old man; the third found him and plagued him until a really excellent photograph could be taken. How happy Dmitry was when he received it along with a letter from that ‘holy old man,’ as Dmitry used to call him. It was a letter in which Owen even had some praise for me, based on Dmitry’s words.<sup>77</sup> And here’s yet another extravagance: my portrait. For half a year he saved up enough money to commission a good artist; how he and that young painter pestered me. Only two portraits, and nothing else. Would it really be all that expensive to buy some engravings and photographs as I’ve done in my room? And he has no fresh flowers, while I have so many. Why doesn’t he need them, while I do? Is it really only because I’m a woman? What nonsense! Or is it because he’s such a serious, scholarly person? But Kirsanov has engravings and cut flowers in his room, and he’s also a serious, scholarly person.

“And why does it bore him to spend so much time with me? I know that it costs him a great deal of effort. Is it really because he’s such a serious, scholarly person? But Kirsanov is . . . No, no, Dmitry’s a good, kind man. He’s done everything for me; he’s ready and willing to do anything for me. Who could possibly love me the way he does? And I do love him; I’m ready to do anything for him...”

“Verochka, you’re not asleep, my dear friend?”

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<sup>75</sup> Lopukhov continues the line of cigar-smoking radicals in Russian fiction. His predecessors include Beltov in Herzen’s novel *Who Is to Blame?* and Bazarov in *Fathers and Sons* (1862), by the politically moderate Ivan Turgenev (1818–1883) (on both, see Introduction, pp. 25–27). In *What Is to Be Done?* Chernyshevsky sought in part to refute the critical depictions of the “new people” in Turgenev’s work. While Beltov’s cigar represents an old aristocratic habit and Bazarov’s a defilement of nature meant to offend the liberal Kirsanovs, Rakhmetov’s cigar humanizes Chernyshevsky’s extraordinary man.

<sup>76</sup> Believing that environment shaped individual character, the British utopian socialist and reformer Robert Owen (1771–1858) founded several self-sufficient communities based on the principle of cooperative labor in an attempt to foster social harmony, justice, and general well-being.

<sup>77</sup> Chernyshevsky uses this reference to Vera Pavlovna’s sewing cooperative to link his own ideas on social and economic reform with Owen’s.



“Dearest, why don’t you have any fresh flowers in your room?”

“If you’d like, my dear, I’ll get some. First thing tomorrow. It simply hadn’t occurred to me that it would be a good idea. But now I see that it would.”

“I’d also like to suggest one other thing: buy yourself some photographs. Even better, I’ll use some of my own money to buy you some flowers and photographs.”

“Then I’d certainly enjoy them. I’d have liked them anyway, but if you buy them they’ll provide even greater pleasure. But Verochka, why were you so pensive just now? You’ve been thinking about your dream. Will you let me ask you to tell me more about that dream that frightened you so?”

“My dear, I really wasn’t thinking about it just now. It’s very painful for me to recall it.”

“But, Verochka, perhaps it would be good for me to know more about it.”

“If you like, my dear. I dreamed that I was annoyed because I couldn’t go to the opera. I was thinking about Bosio. Then some woman appeared to me whom I took to be Bosio at first, but she kept hiding from me. She made me read my own diary. It said there only how much we loved each other, but when she touched a page with her hand, new words appeared saying that I didn’t love you.”

“Forgive me, my friend, for asking you another question. Was it really only a dream?”

“My dear, if it had been otherwise, wouldn’t I have told you? I informed you about my dream right away.”

This was said so tenderly, so sincerely, so simply that Lopukhov experienced a feeling of warmth and sweetness in his heart, a feeling of the kind that one fortunate enough to experience it never forgets for the rest of his life. Oh, what a pity that so few men ever come to know this feeling! Compared to it all the joys of happy love are insignificant. This feeling always fills a man’s heart with the purest contentment, the most sacred pride. These words that Vera Pavlovna uttered with some sadness contained a reproach, but its meaning was “Dear friend, don’t you know that you’ve earned my complete trust? A wife is supposed to conceal from her husband the secret stirrings of her heart: such are the established relations between them. But, my dear, you’ve behaved in such a way that there’s no need for me to hide anything. My heart is as open to you as it is to me.”

This is a husband’s great merit. This reward is earned only by high moral worth. One who’s earned it can properly consider himself to be a man of irreproachable nobility. He can boldly hope that his conscience is clean and will always remain so; that his fortitude will never fail him; that whatever trials and tribulations befall him, he’ll remain serene and steadfast; that fate has almost no control over the world of his soul; that from the time he’s earned this great honor to the end of his life, whatever blows are inflicted, he’ll be content in the awareness of his own human dignity. We now know Lopukhov well enough to see that he wasn’t a sentimental person; however, he was so touched by his wife’s words that his face became quite flushed.

“Verochka, my dear, you’ve reproached me.” His voice shook for the second and last time in his life. The first time was a result of the doubt surrounding his hypothesis;

now it was shaking from joy. "You've reproached me, Vera, but this reproach is dearer to me than all your words of love. I've offended you by my nasty question, but I'm so happy that it occasioned such a reproach. Look, there are tears in my eyes. This is the first time in my life since childhood that I've cried."

He didn't take his eyes off Vera for the whole evening; it never once occurred to her that he was making any effort to be tender. That evening was one of the happiest of her life, at least up to that point. Several years after these events that I'm now relating to you, she'll have many more happy days, months, and years. It will be when her children have grown and she'll regard them as people who are happy, and deservedly so. This joy is greater than all others; what in every other personal joy is but a rare, transitory intensity, will be for her the ordinary level of everyday happiness. But this still lies in the future for her.

## XXI.

But after his wife fell asleep on his lap, and after he placed her on her own little sofa, Lopukhov began to ruminate in earnest about her dream. The important point for him was not whether she loved him; that was her own business and she had no control over it, nor, as he could plainly see, did he. That would resolve itself: there was no point in thinking about it except at one's leisure. But there was no time for that now; he had to figure out what had caused the premonition that she didn't love him.

This was not the first time he sat plunged in thought. During the last several days he'd realized that he would be unable to retain her love. It was a painful loss, but what was to be done? If he could have altered his own nature and acquired that propensity for quiet tenderness which her nature demanded, oh, then, of course, it would be a different story. But he realized that even the attempt would be in vain. If such an inclination is neither endowed by nature nor instilled by life experience independent of a person's intentions, no one can create it in himself through force of will. Without this propensity, nothing can be done as it ought to be. Consequently, the question was resolved. Previous reflections had been wasted on this matter. But now, having dispensed with his own point of view (as an egoist he always thought of himself first, and about others only when there was nothing left of his own to think about), he could apply himself to someone else's point of view, namely, hers. What could he do for her? She still didn't understand what was happening; her heart had not experienced life as much as he had. Why, that was only natural. She was four years younger than he; at the beginning of young adulthood, four years make quite a difference. Couldn't he, the more experienced one, grasp what she couldn't? How could he decipher her dream?

Soon Lopukhov arrived at a hypothesis: the cause of her ominous thoughts must be found in the circumstances that produced her dream. Its motivation must have

some connection to its content.<sup>78</sup> She says she was annoyed because she couldn't go to the opera. Lopukhov began to examine their way of life; gradually it all became very clear. She used to spend the major part of her free time alone, just as he did. Then a change took place: she was constantly being entertained. Now once more their previous mode was returning. She couldn't accept this resumption with indifference: it wasn't in her nature, nor was it for the large majority of people. There was nothing mysterious about it! From here it was a very short step to the supposition that the key to understanding the whole situation was her close relationship with Kirsanov followed by his estrangement. Why did Kirsanov withdraw? The reason was self-evident: a lack of time, a great deal of work. But it was impossible to deceive an honest and intelligent man, one experienced in life, particularly one who advocated the theories Lopukhov did, by any tricks or ruses. He could, however, fool himself as a result of inattention, by failing to pay sufficient attention to some fact or other. Indeed, Lopukhov had made just that kind of mistake when Kirsanov had withdrawn the first time. To tell the truth, he'd seen no reason and therefore felt no desire to conduct a thorough investigation of the motives for his withdrawal. He'd only been interested in discovering whether he was responsible for the breach in their friendship. It was clear that he wasn't, so there was nothing more to think about. Why, he was neither Kirsanov's tutor nor his mentor, obliged to direct his pupil's steps onto the path of righteousness, when the other person understood these things just as well as he did. And, in fact, what need was there to do so? Was there really something particularly significant for him in his relations with Kirsanov? When you're a good fellow and want me to like you, then it's very pleasant; if not, then I'm sorry, but be on your way—it's all the same to me. It makes very little difference whether there's one fool more or less on this earth. I mistook a fool for a good person; I regret it, but that's that. If our own interests aren't connected to a man's actions, then his actions will interest us but little if we are serious people, with the exception of two instances. However, these two seem to be exceptions to the rule only for those people accustomed to defining the word "interest" in too narrow a sense of ordinary reckoning. The first instance is if these actions hold any interest for us from a theoretical perspective, as psychological phenomena explaining the nature of a particular individual; that is, if we have any intellectual interest in them. The second instance is if the fate of a person depends on us and we would experience guilt for lack of attention to his actions; that is, if we have any moral interest in them. But there was nothing whatever in the foolish tricks Kirsanov had played at the time that Lopukhov would not have considered to be the most ordinary manifestations of contemporary conventions. Nor was there anything unusual about a man who had decent convictions yielding to vulgarity engendered by those conventions. Lopukhov couldn't possibly conceive that he might play an important part in Kirsanov's fate. Why on earth would

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<sup>78</sup> On the one hand Chernyshevsky draws on the biblical tradition of revelation, and on the other hand he anticipates Freud's theories by using dreams and their interpretation as the principal medium through which Vera liberates herself.

Kirsanov require his solicitude? Consequently, be on your way, my friend, go wherever you like. I 've no need to think any further about you.

But it's not like that now. Kirsanov's actions appear to have an important bearing on the interests of the woman he loves. He can't help thinking about them very carefully. But to think about a fact carefully and to grasp its cause are almost one and the same for a person with Lopukhov's cast of mind. Lopukhov found that his theory provided an infallible means for analyzing the movements of the human heart; I must confess that I agree with him entirely on this point. During the long years that I've relied upon this theory as true, it's never led me astray and never once refused to reveal the truth to me, however deeply this truth was concealed by some human action. The truth is that this theory itself is not so easily embraced. One has to have lived and thought in order to be able to grasp it.

After only about half an hour of reflection Lopukhov understood Kirsanov's relations with Vera Pavlovna completely. But for a long time he sat there thinking about it. There was no reason to explain it any further, but it was interesting nonetheless. His discovery was complete in every detail, but it was so intriguing that he was unable to fall asleep for a very long while.

However, was it really worth straining his nerves with insomnia? Why, it was already three o'clock in the morning. If he couldn't get to sleep, he'd take some morphine. He took two pills; then he wanted "to go and have a look at Verochka." But instead of going and looking, he moved his armchair over to her sofa, sat down, took her hand, and kissed it. "My dearest," she mumbled half asleep, "you've been working too hard, and all for me. How kind you are and how much I love you."

No spiritual travail can withstand a sufficient dose of morphine. This time two pills proved to be enough; he was becoming drowsy. Consequently, the spiritual travail was roughly equivalent in strength (according to Lopukhov's materialist viewpoint) to four cups of strong coffee. One pill would have been too little, and three would have been too much. He fell asleep, still chuckling over this comparison.

## XXII. A Theoretical Conversation

The next day, upon his return from the hospital, Kirsanov was just about to lie down like a sybarite to read and smoke a cigar after his late dinner when in walked Lopukhov.

"An uninvited guest is worse than any Tatar,"<sup>79</sup> said Lopukhov in a jovial voice, but his tone was not really all that jovial. "I'm disturbing you, Alexander, but it can't be helped. I have to do it. I want to have a serious talk with you. I wanted to come over

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<sup>79</sup> A Turkic-speaking people, originally nomads of eastern Centra, Asia, the Tatars participated in the Mongol invasion and occupation of the eastern Slavic lands from the mid-thirteenth to the fifteenth century. In Russian usage, "Tatar" and "Mongol" become virtually synonymous and frequently appeared as a kind of popular racist epithet, as here.

sooner, but I overslept this morning and then I wouldn't have found you in." Lopukhov was speaking in earnest.

"What does this mean? Has he really guessed?" wondered Kirsanov.

"Let's have a talk," continued Lopukhov, taking a seat. "Look me straight in the eye."

"Yes," thought Kirsanov, "there's no doubt about it. He's going to talk about it."

"Listen, Dmitry," said Kirsanov in an even more serious tone of voice. "You and I are friends, but there are some things that even friends can't allow each other to do. I ask you to cut this conversation short. Right now I'm not much inclined toward serious talk. I never am." Kirsanov's eyes glared with hostility as if before him stood a man who he suspected was about to commit a crime.

"It's impossible not to speak about it, Alexander," continued Lopukhov in a calm but slightly hollow voice. "I've now come to an understanding of your maneuvers."

"Silence! I forbid you to speak unless you want me to be your eternal enemy or wish to lose my respect."

"Some time ago you weren't afraid of losing my respect, remember? Now it's all clear. I didn't pay any attention then."

"Dmitry, I beg you to leave, or else I shall."

"You can't leave. Do you suppose I'm concerned with your interests?"

Kirsanov remained silent.

"My position is advantageous. Yours in conversation with me is not. I appear to be a man performing a great and noble deed. But that's nonsense. I must behave according to common sense. Alexander, I ask you to stop all these maneuvers. They will get you nowhere."

"What? Is it really too late? Forgive me," replied Kirsanov quickly. He couldn't decide whether it was a feeling of joy or sorrow that Lopukhov's last words provoked.

"No, you haven't understood me correctly. It isn't too late. Nothing has happened so far. We'll have to see what comes next. However, I don't really understand what you're talking about, Alexander, just as you don't really know what I'm talking about. We really don't understand each other, right? We have no real need to understand each other, right? These riddles that you don't understand must be very unpleasant. Well, there aren't any. I haven't said a thing. I have nothing to say to you. Give me a cigar. Absent-mindedly I forgot to bring my own along. I'll have a smoke and then we'll discuss some learned questions. That's really why I came over. I had nothing better to do and wanted to engage in some learned discussion. What do you think about these strange experiments to produce artificial albumin?"<sup>80</sup> Lopukhov moved another armchair up close so that he could stretch out his legs; he got himself comfortable,

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<sup>80</sup> From the late eighteenth until the early twentieth century, European scientists tried persistently to synthesize albumin, a form of protein used extensively in textile printing, food processing, and other processes. Nineteenth-century radicals believed that its successful synthesis would improve the lot of the poor by both increasing the supply of food and reducing its cost.

lit up his cigar, and continued his speech. "In my opinion it's a great discovery if the results can be shown to be correct. Have you repeated the experiments?"

"No, but I must try."

"You're fortunate to have a good laboratory at your disposal. Please try to repeat the experiments, and be as careful as possible. Why, it could mean a complete revolution in regard to the question of food, as well as the whole life of mankind! The manufacture of a fundamental nutritive substance directly from inorganic matter! That's extraordinary, worthy of Newton's discovery!<sup>81</sup> Don't you agree?"

"Of course, but I have serious reservations about the accuracy of the experiments. Sooner or later we'll get there, no doubt about it. It's clear that science is heading in that direction. But we haven't got there yet."

"Is that what you think? So do I. That means our conversation is at an end. Good-bye, Alexander. In taking my leave, I request that you resume your frequent visits to us, as before. Good-bye."

Kirsanov's eyes, which had been glaring with hostility at Lopukhov all the while, now blazed into indignation.

"Apparently, Dmitry, you still wish me to believe that you have base thoughts."

"On the contrary. But you must visit us. There's nothing strange about that! Why, you and I are friends. What's odd about my request?"

"I cannot. You're embarking on a reckless undertaking, therefore one that's despicable."

"I don't understand what task you're referring to; I must say that I don't like this conversation any more than you did two minutes ago."

"I demand an explanation, Dmitry."

"There's no need. There's absolutely nothing to explain and nothing to understand. You're getting excited over nothing."

"No, I can't let you get away," Kirsanov said, taking Lopukhov by the arm as he started to leave. "Sit down. You began talking when it wasn't necessary. You demand God-knows-what from me. Now you must hear me out."

Lopukhov sat down.

"What right do you have?" Kirsanov spoke with even greater indignation than before. "What right do you have to demand of me something that's so painful? Why am I obligated to you? What for? It's absurd. Try to get rid of this romantic nonsense! Behavior that you and I consider normal will really only come into being when society's concepts and conventions have changed. Society must be reeducated; it's being done through the development of life. A person who's been reeducated will certainly help others. But until society's been reeducated completely reorganized, you do not have the right to place another's fate at risk. Don't you see what a terrible thing this is, or have you taken leave of your senses?"

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<sup>81</sup> See n. 163 below.

“No, I don’t understand a thing, Alexander. I don’t know what you’re talking about. You tend to read some astonishing hidden meaning into your friend’s simple request that you stop neglecting him because he enjoys your company. I don’t understand why you’re getting so agitated.”

“No, Dmitry, you won’t wriggle out of this conversation by making a joke. I must prove to you that you’re insane for having conceived of such a base idea. There are quite a few things that you and I don’t admit, aren’t there? We don’t admit that a slap in the face in and of itself dishonors a person; that’s both a stupid and harmful prejudice, nothing more. But then, do you have the right to subject a man to such a slap in the face? Why, that would constitute a base criminal act on your part and would deprive a person of his peace of mind. Do you understand, you fool? Do you understand that if I love another person, and you demand that I give him a slap in the face (which, according to both you and me, is pure nonsense, rubbish), do you understand that if you demand this, I’ll consider you to be a fool and a base man? If you force me to do it, I’ll kill either you or myself, depending on whose life is more expendable. I’ll kill you or myself, rather than do what you demand. Do you understand that, you fool? I’m talking about a man and about a slap in the face, which, although an absurdity, can still deprive a man of his peace of mind. Besides men, there are also women on this earth, and they are also people. Besides a slap in the face, there are other kinds of nonsense, which we rightly believe to be nonsense, but which also deprive people of their peace of mind. Do you understand that if you subject another person (even a woman) to some form of what we rightly believe to be nonsense (it doesn’t matter what form), do you understand that such an act is disgusting, vile, and dishonorable? Do you hear me? I’m saying that your scheme is dishonorable.”

“My friend, you are absolutely right about what’s honorable and dishonorable. But I don’t know why you’re saying all this and I don’t understand what bearing it has on me. I haven’t said one thing to you about any intention to jeopardize anyone’s peace of mind, nothing of the kind. You’re imagining it all nothing more. I’m simply asking you as my friend not to neglect me, because as your friend I enjoy spending time with you. That’s all there is to it. Will you comply with your friend’s request?”

“It’s dishonorable, as I’ve told you. I won’t do anything that’s dishonorable.”

“That’s certainly very commendable. But you’re all upset because of some figment of your imagination and now you’ve plunged into theory. Obviously you want to theorize to no purpose, with no application to reality. Well then, I will also begin to do so, equally in vain, and I’ll pose a question to you which bears no relation to anything, except to clarify an abstract truth, with no applications whatsoever. If someone can give pleasure to another person without causing himself any discomfort, then in my opinion calculation demands that he do so, because he himself would receive some pleasure from it as well. Isn’t that so?”

“That’s rubbish, Dmitry. What you say is all wrong.”

“I’m not saying anything, Alexander. I’m merely engaging in theoretical speculation. Here’s another question. If some need is aroused in a person, can our attempt to stifle

that need ever lead to anything good? What's your opinion? Isn't it rather that such an attempt can never lead to anything good? It merely results in a situation where the need increases enormously. And this is unhealthy; or it turns in a false direction—and that's both harmful and vile; or, in being stifled, it stifles life as well. And that's a great shame."

"That's not the point, Dmitry. I'll pose this theoretical question in another form. Does anyone have the right to subject another person to any risk, when that person's life is just fine without risk? You and I know that there'll come a time when all the needs of every man's nature will be entirely satisfied; but we also know full well that that time has not yet come. For the present a reasonable person is content if he can live comfortably, even if not all the sides of his nature are nurtured by that very situation in which he so comfortably lives. Let's suppose, as an abstract hypothesis, that such a reasonable person exists. Let's suppose that this person is a woman. Further, again as an abstract hypothesis, let's suppose that the comfortable situation in which she lives is called marriage, and that this person is content with her situation. Now, I ask, given these conditions and this abstract hypothesis, who has the right to subject this person to the risk of losing something good (with which she is content), just to see whether this person might be able to acquire something better (which she could easily do without)? The Golden Age will dawn, Dmitry, we know that, but it still lies ahead. The Iron Age is passing, it has almost passed; but the Golden Age has not yet arrived.<sup>82</sup> If, according to my abstract hypothesis, some strong need of this person (let's assume, only for the sake of an example, the need for love) were completely unsatisfied, or were ill satisfied, then I would say nothing against such a person's incurring a risk herself, but only that particular kind of risk, and certainly not any other risk, inflicted on that person by someone else. But if that person does find a sufficient satisfaction of that need, then she shouldn't subject herself to any risk. Let's suppose, in the abstract, that she doesn't wish to incur any risk. I say that she's right and sensible in not wishing to incur any; further, I say that anyone who subjects such a person to risk is acting in a stupid and senseless way. What can you possibly say to refute this hypothetical conclusion? Nothing! Understand, then, that you have no right."

"If I were in your place, Alexander, I would have said exactly the same as you did. I, too, am merely supposing that you have some personal interest in this question. I know that it really doesn't concern either of us and that we're speaking merely as scholars about some of the more intriguing aspects of our general scientific views that seem valid to us. According to these views, each person evaluates every issue from his own point of view defined by his personal relationship to the matter. And only in this respect am I saying that if I were in your place, I would have said exactly the same as you did. And in my place, you would say the same as I. From a general scientific point

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<sup>82</sup> By referring to the transformation of the prerevolutionary "Iron Age" into a post-revolutionary utopian "Golden Age" in almost alchemical terms, Chernyshevsky is alluding to the transformation of society through technological change as well as through social revolution.



of view, this is an undisputable truth. A in B's place is B; it in B's place, A were not B, that would mean that A was not exactly in B's place. A would have failed to get there—isn't that right? Consequently, you can't object to this, nor can I to your words. But, following your model, I shall construct a hypothesis that is similarly abstract and has no application to anything whatsoever. First, let's suppose that there exist three individuals—an assumption that contains in and of itself nothing impossible. Then let's suppose that one of them has a secret that he wishes to conceal from a second, and especially from a third; let's suppose that the second guesses the secret and says to the first, 'Do what I ask you or I'll reveal your secret to the third.' What do you think about this case?"

Kirsanov went a bit pale and twirled his mustache at length.

"Dmitry," he said at last, "you're treating me very badly."

"And why the devil should I treat you well? What do I care about you, pray tell? Besides, I don't understand what you're talking about. We're speaking as scholars; we're posing various abstract problems to each other. I finally managed to pose one that made you stop and think; now my scholarly pride is satisfied. Therefore, I shall conclude this theoretical discussion. I have a great deal of work, no less than you have. And so, farewell. By the way, I almost forgot. Alexander, you will honor my request to visit us, your good friends who are always so glad to see you, won't you? You'll come as often as you did in previous months?"

Lopukhov rose.

Kirsanov sat there examining his fingers as if each one stood for an abstract hypothesis.

"You're treating me very badly, Dmitry. I have no choice but to honor your request. However, I shall impose one condition on you in return. I'll visit you; but if I ever leave your house to go somewhere not unaccompanied, you must go with us everywhere. I don't want to have to invite you, do you hear? You must come with us even without my asking. Without you, I shall go nowhere—neither to the opera nor to see acquaintances—not one step."

"Don't you think I will find this condition offensive, Alexander? What are you, a thief in my eyes, or what?"

"That's not what I mean. I wouldn't offend you by suggesting that you regard me as a thief. I'd place my life in your hands without hesitation. I'd hope that I have the right to expect the same of you. It's for me to understand what I mean. You must just do as I ask; that's that."

"Now I understand as well. Yes, you've already done a great deal in this regard. Now you want to go to even more trouble. Well, in this case, you're right. Yes, you must force me. But, as grateful as I am to you, my friend, nothing will come of it. I've tried to force myself. I have willpower, just as you do, and I too have conducted maneuvers, no less than you. But those things that are achieved through calculation, through a feeling of obligation, through an effort of the will, and not through the attraction of nature, emerge stillborn. You can only destroy something that way, just

as you've been destroying yourself; you can't give life." Lopukhov was deeply moved by Kirsanov's words, especially when he said, "It's for me to understand what I mean." "Thank you, my friend. Why have we never embraced each other before? Perhaps you'd like us to do so now?"

If Lopukhov as a theorist had examined his actions during this conversation, he would have remarked with pleasure, "How true the theory is: egoism plays with man. I concealed the most important thing. 'Let's suppose,' he said, 'that this person is content with his or her situation.' That's just where I should have said, 'Alexander, your assumption is wrong.' But I was silent because it wasn't to my advantage to speak. It's pleasant to observe as a theorist the tricks that egoism plays in practice. You retreat from the battle because it's a lost cause, but your egoism twists your gestures so that you act the role of a man performing noble deeds."

If Kirsanov as a theorist had examined his actions during this conversation, he would have remarked with pleasure, "How true the theory is: I wanted to preserve my peace of mind and rest on my laurels, but I wound up saying, 'You have no right to risk a woman's peace of mind. And this means (you will understand) that I really was performing noble deeds to my own detriment, for a certain person's peace of mind and for yours, my friend. Therefore you must bow before the magnanimity of my soul.' It's pleasant to observe as a theorist the tricks that egoism plays in practice. I retreated from the battle so as not to play a fool and scoundrel; I rejoiced as if I'd performed heroic deeds of generous nobility. You refuse to yield at the first word of an invitation so as not to have to worry about yourself again, and so as not to be deprived of that sweet rejoicing over your own nobility. But egoism twists your gestures so that you act the role of a man persisting in noble endeavors."

But neither Lopukhov nor Kirsanov had the opportunity to become a theoretician and to make these pleasant observations. The practical aspects of this matter weighed on both of them rather heavily.

## XXIII.

The renewal of Kirsanov's frequent visits was explained very naturally. Having been so distracted and having neglected his work for five months or so, he'd had to spend about a month and a half catching up without any letup. Now that he'd managed to catch up with his neglected work, he could appropriate his time more freely. This fact was so clear that it needed almost no explanation.

It was really all so obvious and splendid that it aroused no suspicions in Vera Pavlovna's mind. Meanwhile, Kirsanov played his part with the same irreproachable artistry as before. He was afraid that when he first arrived at the Lopukhovs' after the learned conversation with his friend, he'd make a fool of himself. He'd either blush from excitement when he saw Vera Pavlovna for the first time or he'd too obviously avoid looking at her at all, or something of the kind. But no, he was satisfied with

himself, and rightfully so, at the moment he met her again. He displayed the pleasant, friendly smile of a man glad to return to old friends from whom he'd been separated for some time, a calm demeanor, and the lively and carefree conversation of a man who had nothing on his mind except those thoughts that he uttered freely. Had you been the most vicious gossip and scrutinized him with the most eager desire to find something inappropriate, you still wouldn't have seen him as anything but a man who was very glad that he had the time available and who was able to spend a pleasant evening enjoying the company of his good friends.

If the first moments were carried off so well, what would prevent him from bearing up for the rest of the evening? And if he could carry off the first evening, would it be difficult to continue on following evenings? There wasn't one single word that wasn't free and easy, not a single glance that wasn't clear and simple, direct and friendly. And that's all there was to it.

But while Kirsanov was behaving himself no worse than before, the eyes that were looking at him were inclined to notice much more than any other eyes could possibly have seen. Yes, no other eyes would have noticed. Lopukhov himself, whom Marya Aleksevna earlier acknowledged to be a born tax farmer,<sup>83</sup> was surprised at his friend's self-possession, which didn't betray Kirsanov even for a single moment. As a theorist he derived great pleasure from these observations; almost against his will he found the psychological significance of this phenomenon very interesting from the scientific point of view. However, Vera's dream visitor had neither sung her song nor forced Vera to read that diary in vain. One's eyes become all too keen when this visitor whispers in one's ear.

Even those eyes could find nothing, but the dream visitor whispered, "Isn't it possible to see something, even though there's really nothing here, as I myself know; nevertheless, let's try to take a good look." The eyes began to look, and although they really didn't see anything, the mere fact that they were looking was quite enough for them to notice that something was not quite right.

For example, Vera Pavlovna, her husband, and Kirsanov are just setting off for an ordinary little evening gathering at the Mertsalovs'. Why isn't Kirsanov waltzing at this informal little party, when even Lopukhov is? The general rule is: "Even if you're a seventy-year old man and have wound up here, you must make a fool of yourself just like everyone else. Here no one looks at anyone. Everyone shares one and the same idea: the more noise and movement, the more enjoyment for each and every person." So why isn't Kirsanov waltzing? Now he's started to, but why did he wait so long before beginning? Was it really worth spending that much time debating whether he would or wouldn't take such an important step? If he hadn't started to waltz, then his secret would have been half revealed. If he had, but not with Vera Pavlovna, then his secret would have been entirely revealed all at once. But he was too skillful an actor playing his role. He didn't want to dance with Vera Pavlovna, yet he realized at once that it

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<sup>83</sup> See n. 72 above.

would be noticed. Therefore, as a result of his brief hesitation, which had no visible relation to Vera Pavlovna or to anyone else on earth, there remained in her memory only a small, very slight question that, in and of itself would have gone unnoticed even by her, despite the whisperings of her dream visitor, if that very same visitor hadn't been whispering a large number of just such small, insignificant questions into her ear.

For instance, when they were returning from the Mertsalovs' and making arrangements to hear the opera *The Puritans*<sup>84</sup> the next day, and Vera Pavlovna said to her husband, "My dear, you really don't like this opera. You'll be bored. I'll go with Alexander Matveich. He enjoys every opera. If you or I wrote one, I think he'd listen to that, too," why didn't Kirsanov support Vera Pavlovna's opinion? Why didn't he say, "Really, Dmitry, I won't get you a ticket"? Why was that? Of course, the fact that her "dearest" wanted to go along anyway didn't raise any questions. He's been escorting his wife everywhere since the time she asked him to spend more time with her. He hasn't forgotten that; therefore it was perfectly natural that he'd want to go along. That only confirmed the fact that he was a kind man and she really ought to love him. That's true enough, but Kirsanov didn't know that. So why didn't he support Vera Pavlovna's opinion? Of course, these are mere trifles, almost unnoticeable; Vera Pavlovna almost forgot all about it, but these unnoticed grains of sand kept falling onto one side of the scales, even though they went unnoticed. But here, for example, is a conversation that was more like a large pellet than a small grain of sand.

The next day when they were going to the opera in a hired carriage (for it was cheaper than going in two cabs), their conversation touched on, among other subjects, the Mertsalovs, at whose apartment they'd spent the previous evening. They praised their harmonious life, observing that it was a rarity. Everyone agreed, including Kirsanov, who said, "Yes, and another good point about Mertsalov is that his wife can bare her soul to him freely." Kirsanov was the one who said it; each of them thought about saying the same thing, but it fell to Kirsanov to utter it. Why did he? What did it mean? If you took it in one way, it would sound like a compliment for Lopukhov and a tribute to Vera Pavlovna's happiness with him. Of course, it could also have been said without a thought for anyone except the Mertsalovs. But if one assumes that Kirsanov was thinking about both the Mertsalovs and the Lopukhovs, it means that it was being said for Vera Pavlovna's benefit. But to what end?

Isn't that always the way it is: if a person's inclined to look for something, he finds it wherever he looks. Even if there's no trace of it at all he still finds clear evidence. Even if there's not even a shadow, still he sees not only a shadow of what he's looking for but everything he's looking for. He sees it in the most unmistakable terms, and these terms become clearer with each new glance and every new thought.

Here, in addition, there really was a very tangible fact concealing within itself the solution to the entire matter. It was clear that Kirsanov respected the Lopukhovs. Why

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<sup>84</sup> *I Puritani* (1835), an opera by the noted Italian composer Vincenzo Bellini, (1801–1835), was first performed in St. Petersburg in 1840.

had he made himself scarce for more than two years? It was obvious that he was a completely honorable man. How was it, then, that he'd posed as such a vulgar person? As long as Vera Pavlovna didn't have to think about these things, she hadn't thought about them, just as Lopukhov hadn't. But now she tended to think about them.

## XXIV.

Slowly and imperceptibly this discovery dawned upon her. Steadily there accumulated all sorts of small, almost insignificant impressions of Kirsanov's words and actions to which no one else would have paid any attention; she herself could scarcely notice them, for most were merely supposed or intimated. Gradually she became more and more intrigued by one question: Why had he avoided her for almost three years? An idea was slowly taking shape: "Such a man could not possibly have withdrawn merely as a result of petty vanity, which he lacks completely." Yet behind all these inexplicable reflections there arose into her consciousness even more slowly and more obscurely from the deepest recesses of her being the question "Why am I even thinking about him? What is he to me?"

One day after dinner Vera Pavlovna was sitting alone in her room sewing and thinking; she was reflecting very calmly, not about him, but about this and that, the household, the workshop, and her lessons. Gradually, very gradually her thoughts turned to the subject that for some reason or other had been occupying her more and more of late. Recollections surfaced, and then insignificant questions; they grew and multiplied; then thousands of them swarmed in her mind, growing larger and larger, all merging into a single question whose form was becoming clearer and clearer: "What is happening to me? What am I thinking about? What am I feeling?" Vera Pavlovna's fingers neglected their sewing; her work slipped from her downcast hands. She turned a little pale and then blushed; she became even paler and then her cheeks became bright red. A moment later, with cheeks as white as snow and eyes wild, she ran into her husband's room, threw herself on his knees, embraced him convulsively, laid her head on his shoulder so that it would both support her and hide her face, and with a choking voice she uttered, "My darling, I love him." Then she burst into tears.

"So what, my dear? Why should that upset you?"

"I don't want to hurt you, my dear. I want to love you."

"Try, dear, wait and see. If you can, then fine. Calm down. Give yourself some time, and you'll see what you can and can't do. You're so fond of me. How could you hurt me?"

He stroked her hair, kissed her head, and squeezed her hand. For a long time she was unable to stop her convulsive weeping, but gradually she calmed down. He'd been awaiting this confession for some time; consequently he was able to receive it with equanimity, but then again she was unable to see his face.

"I don't want to see him. I 'll tell him he must stop visiting us," Vera Pavlovna said.

“As you see fit, my friend. Do what’s best for you. When you’ve calmed down, we can talk about it. No matter what happens between us, you and I can’t help but be friends. Give me your hand. Squeeze mine. There, see how warmly you did that?” Each of these phrases was uttered after a long pause during which he stroked her hair and caressed her as a brother does his grieving sister. “Do you remember, my friend, what you said to me when we became engaged? ‘You’re setting me free.’” There was another long silence and more caresses. “Do you remember when we talked for the first time about what it meant to love someone? It means to delight in what’s good for the other person, to take pleasure in doing everything that makes the other person happy. Isn’t that so?” Again, silence and caresses. “What’s best for you will also give me pleasure. But you must decide what’s best for you. Why be so distressed about it? If you’re all right, then I will be too.”

These halting words, repeated many times with slight variations, took up a considerable length of time, which was painful for both Lopukhov and Vera Pavlovna. But calming down gradually, Vera Pavlovna at last began to breathe more easily. She embraced her husband warmly and repeated just as warmly, “I want to love you, my dear, you alone. I don’t wish to love anyone else.”

He didn’t point out to her that this was beyond her control. It was essential to let some time pass so that her strength would be restored by her settling calmly on some one thought or other, it didn’t matter which. Lopukhov managed to write a note that he gave Masha to deliver to Kirsanov in case he should come: “Alexander, don’t come in just now. Don’t visit us for a little while. There’s nothing wrong, nor will there be. She just needs some rest.” “She just needs some rest,” and “there’s nothing wrong”—what a wonderful combination! Kirsanov came, read the note, told Masha that he’d come for the note, that he had no time to stay because he had to go somewhere else, and that he’d call in on his way home when he’d done what was requested in the note.

The evening passed by peacefully, to all appearances. Vera Pavlovna spent half the time sitting quietly in her own room, having sent her husband away; the rest of the time he sat next to her and comforted her with the same few words, but even more, of course, by the fact that his voice was calm and serene. Of course, it wasn’t wildly cheerful, but neither was it mournful; rather it was thoughtful, as was his face. Vera Pavlovna heard this tone of voice and looked at the expression on his face; she began to think, not completely, but somewhat (no, not somewhat, but almost completely), that there really was nothing at all the matter, that she had mistaken a simple fancy for a strong passion, and that it would dissipate in a few days, leaving no trace whatsoever. Or else she reasoned that she wasn’t thinking it, rather just feeling that it wasn’t so. Of course! It wasn’t so! Yes, yes, it was. More and more firmly she believed that she was indeed thinking it. And indeed she was, she really was... Besides, how could one help thinking it while listening to Lopukhov’s calm and serene voice; he kept repeating that there really was nothing wrong. She fell fast asleep listening to his voice; she slept soundly, dreamed of no night visitors, and awoke late the next morning feeling renewed vigor.

## XXV.

"The best distraction from thinking is work," thought Vera Pavlovna, and she was quite right. "I'll spend every day in the workshop until I'm completely cured. That will help me."

So she began to spend every day in the workshop. The first day she really was sufficiently distracted from thinking; on the second, she was merely exhausted, but hardly distracted from her thoughts; by the third day, she wasn't distracted in the least. Thus one week passed by.

The struggle was difficult. Vera Pavlovna's face grew pale. But her outward appearance was quite calm; she tried to seem cheerful and even succeeded in doing so without lapses. But if no one noticed anything and her pallor was ascribed to some slight indisposition, how could Lopukhov be deceived? He already knew the entire situation; he didn't even have to look at her.

"Verochka," he said a week later, "we're living together as if bearing witness to the truth of the old adage that a cobbler always goes around barefoot and the tailor's clothes always fit him badly. We teach others to live according to our economic principles, while we ourselves refuse to organize our own life accordingly. One large household is more advantageous than several small ones, isn't it? I would like to apply that rule to our own household. If we began to live with someone, then the two of us as well as those who lived with us would begin to save almost half of our expenses. I could give up these damned lessons that I detest so; my salary from the job at the factory would be sufficient. I could relax, pursue my scholarly work, and renew my own career. Of course, we must select only people we could get along with. What do you think?"

For some time now Vera Pavlovna had been looking at her husband with suspicious eyes, burning with indignation, just as Kirsanov had looked at Lopukhov on the occasion of their theoretical discussion. When he finished talking her face was on fire.

"I beg you to stop this talk. It's utterly inappropriate."

"Why, Verochka? I'm speaking only about financial advantage. People of modest means like us can't ignore such considerations. My work is difficult, some of it even detestable."

"I won't allow you to talk to me in that way," Vera Pavlovna said and got up. "I won't allow you to use such obscure phrases. Have the courage to say what you mean."

"I only wanted to say, Verochka, that considering our own advantage, it would be a good idea for us to ..."

"Again! Silence! Who gave you the right to patronize me? I shall come to hate you!" She quickly left and locked herself in her own room.

This was their first and last quarrel.

Vera Pavlovna remained locked in her own room until late that evening. Then she went into her husband's room.

“I said such stem words to you, my dear,” she said. “But don’t be angry. You see that I’m engaged in a struggle. Instead of trying to support me, you began to lend assistance precisely to what I’m struggling against, hoping, yes, hoping to prevail.”

“Forgive me, my dear, for beginning in such a crude manner. Are we reconciled now? Let’s have a little talk.”

“Oh, yes, we are reconciled, my dear. But don’t work against me. I’ve enough trouble struggling against myself.”

“It’s to no purpose, Verochka. You’ve allowed yourself time to examine your own feelings; now you can see that it’s more serious than you wanted to believe at first. Why torture yourself?”

“No, my dear, I still want to love you and I don’t want to hurt you in any way.”

“My friend, you want what’s best for me. Well, do you think I enjoy or require your continued suffering?”

“But you love me so much, my dear.”

“Of course I do, Verochka, very much; that goes without saying. But you and I understand what love is. Isn’t it when a person rejoices in the joy and suffers from the suffering of the loved one? In tormenting yourself, you’ll torment me.”

“That’s true, my dear. But you will suffer if I submit to this feeling. I don’t know why it ever arose in me. I curse it!”

“How it arose and why it did doesn’t really matter. It can’t be helped. Now there’s only one choice left: either you suffer, and I do too, or you curtail your suffering, and mine too.”

“But I won’t suffer, my dear. It will pass. You’ll see, it will.”

“Thanks for your efforts. I appreciate them because they show that you have the will to do what you think necessary. But understand, Verochka, your efforts seem necessary only to you, not to me. Looking at your situation from the outside, I can see it more clearly than you. I know that your efforts will be useless. Struggle on, as long as your strength permits. But don’t worry about hurting me. You know how I look at it; my opinion is unshakable and is in fact justified. But you understand all this. Can you really expect to deceive me? Will you ever lose your respect for me? I can say more. If your affection for me ever changes, will it really diminish? Isn’t the opposite true? Won’t it increase because you didn’t discover me to be your enemy? Don’t feel sorry for me. In no way will my fate be pitiable, because you haven’t been deprived of happiness on my account. But enough of this. I find it painful to speak about it for very long and it must be even more painful for you to hear it. Remember, Verochka, what I have said. Forgive me, Verochka. Go back and think it over. Even better, get some sleep. Don’t think about me; think about yourself instead. Only in thinking about yourself can you prevent me from experiencing unnecessary anguish.”



## XXVI.

Some two weeks later, while Lopukhov was sitting in his factory office, Vera Pavlovna spent an entire morning in a state of extreme agitation. She threw herself down on the bed and covered her face with her hands; a quarter of an hour later she jumped up, paced around the room, and dropped into an armchair. She began to pace again with unsteady, jerky movements; then she threw herself down on the bed, paced again, went over to her desk several times, stood by it, and then ran away. Finally she sat down, wrote a few words, and sealed the envelope. Half an hour later she seized the note, tore it up, burned the shreds, and resumed pacing. Then she wrote another letter, tore it up too, burned the shreds, and resumed pacing. Once again she wrote a letter; then, hurriedly, scarcely managing to seal it, ran into her husband's room and threw it onto his desk, ran back to her own room, fell into an armchair, and sat there motionless, covering her face with her hands. Half an hour passed, perhaps even a whole hour. Then a bell rang: it was he. She ran into his room to recover the letter, tear it up, and burn the shreds. Where was it? Not there! Where on earth was it? She rifled hastily through his papers. Where was it? Masha was already opening the door; from the thresh-old Lopukhov could see that Vera Pavlovna was fleeing from his study and running back to her own room. She was pale and distraught.

He didn't go after her; instead he went into his study. Coolly and slowly he examined his desk and the area near it. For several days he'd been expecting something of this sort, either a conversation or a letter. And here it was: a letter, with no address, bearing her seal. Of course, she must have been searching for it to destroy it, or she had just delivered it. No, she must have been looking for it. His papers were in disarray. But how could she possibly have found it? She must have been in such a feverish state to have thrown it so violently; like a hot coal burning her hand, it had slid the length of the desktop and landed on the windowsill nearby. There was almost no need to read it; he knew its contents already. Still, how could he refrain from reading it?

"My dear, I have never been so attached to you as I am now. If only I could die for you! Oh, how happy I'd be to die, if only it would make you happier! However, I cannot live without him. I'm hurting you, my dear, killing you, my friend, and I don't wish to do so. I'm acting against my own will. Forgive me, forgive me."

For a quarter of an hour, perhaps even longer, Lopukhov stood at his desk and stared at the arm of the chair next to him. Although he'd expected this blow, it was still very painful; although he'd thought it all out and had decided exactly what to do after receiving such a letter or hearing such a confession, nevertheless he was unable to collect his thoughts right away. At last he did so. He went into the kitchen to deal with Masha. "Please wait to serve dinner until I tell you. I don't feel very well and must take some medicine before dinner. But don't you wait. Have your dinner, and don't hurry. There's plenty of time before I can eat. I'll tell you when."

From the kitchen he went in to his wife's room. She lay there burying her face in a pillow. Hearing him enter, she shuddered and said, "You found it and read it! My God, I must be mad! It's not true! It was only my fever."

"Of course, my friend, your words cannot be taken seriously because you were too agitated. Such matters aren't decided so easily. You and I will have plenty of time to consider this affair and talk it over calmly, since it's so very important to us both. Meanwhile, my friend, I'd like to tell you about my business. I've managed to make rather a lot of changes, all the ones that were needed, and now I'm very satisfied. Are you listening?" Needless to say, she didn't know whether she was listening or not. She could have answered only that whether she listened or not, she did hear something, only she didn't really care to understand what it was. Nevertheless she did hear something and she was able to discern that it related to something entirely different and had nothing whatever to do with her letter. Gradually she began to listen because she was drawn into it. Her nerves were eager to be distracted by something other than that letter. Although she was unable to understand very much for quite a long time, she was still reassured by the cool and satisfied tone of her husband's voice. Then she even began to understand what he was saying.

"You should be listening because these things matter to me," her husband continued, after asking whether or not she was listening. "Yes, some very pleasant changes," he said and began to describe them in great detail. But she knew about three-quarters of it already. No, she knew all of it, but no matter. Let him talk on. How kind he is! And talk on he did: how he was fed up with giving lessons, why he was annoyed with a particular family or a certain pupil, how he was not fed up with his work in the factory office because it was so important and afforded him considerable influence over the workers, and what he was managing to achieve there. He'd rounded up some volunteers interested in promoting literacy and had taught them how to teach; he'd secured payment for them from the factory, having demonstrated that literate workers would be less likely to ruin machinery or spoil the work, because there would be less absenteeism and drunkenness on the job. The payment for these teachers was trifling, of course. Then he told her how he was rescuing workers from drunkenness; to do so he was often frequenting their taverns. He said a great deal more. The main thing was that he'd succeeded in establishing himself at the factory as a competent and resourceful person who'd gradually taken matters into his own hands. The conclusion of his story and the tastiest morsel of all as far as Lopukhov was concerned, was this: he was to be promoted to the position of assistant manager of the factory. The manager would become an honorary position, held by a trustee of the firm who would receive a nominal salary. But Lopukhov would be the actual manager. The trustee of the firm agreed to accept the honorary position as manager only on this one condition. "I can't," he said, "it's beyond me." "Well, you should accept the position so that an honest man will occupy the post. There's no need to interfere in the actual business. I shall run it." "Well if that's the case, then fine. I'll accept the position." But it's not so much the power that's important, but the fact that Lopukhov now receives a salary of 3500

rubles, almost a thousand more than he got before from all his other jobs including his previous post at the factory, his occasional literary hackwork, and his tutoring. Consequently, he's now able to give up everything except for the work at the factory, and that's excellent.

He went on talking for more than half an hour; at the end of his narrative Vera Pavlovna was able to agree that it really was very fine indeed. She was even able to rearrange her hair and come to dinner.

After dinner Masha was given eighty kopecks in silver for a cab to take a note to four different places announcing that Lopukhov was free that evening and would be glad to receive guests. In a short while the horrible Rakhmetov appeared; after him little by little a whole band of young people assembled. There began a fierce learned discussion, accompanied by an inordinate number of accusations of each in turn by the rest for all possible violations of logic. A few traitors to the noble art of debate enabled Vera Pavlovna to while away the evening; about halfway through she suddenly realized where Masha had been sent. How kind he was! Yes, this time Vera Pavlovna was absolutely delighted with her young friends, even though she didn't take part in their fun, but only sat by quietly. Why, she was even prepared to kiss Rakhmetov himself!

The guests left around three A.M.—late, but that was actually a good thing in itself. Vera Pavlovna, exhausted by the excitement of the day, had just gone to bed when her husband entered.

“When I was telling you about the factory, my dear Verochka, I forgot to mention one thing about my new position. It's really not all that important, and it's hardly worth mentioning, but I'll tell you all the same, just in case. However, I have one request to make. I'm ready to go to sleep and so are you. If I don't finish telling you all about it, we can talk again tomorrow. But for now I'll tell it to you briefly. You see, I agreed to accept the position of assistant manager on one condition: that I could begin work when I wanted to, a month or so from now, even two. I want to make use of this time. I haven't seen my parents in Ryazan<sup>85</sup> for the last five years. I plan to go visit them. Good-bye, Verochka. Don't get up now. There'll be time tomorrow. Go to sleep.”

## XXVII.

The next day when Vera Pavlovna emerged from her room, her husband and Masha were already stuffing two suitcases with his things. And all the time Masha was there; she never stepped out. Lopukhov had given her so many things to wrap, fold, pack, and repack that she had no opportunity to leave. “Verochka, would you help us, too?” And the three of them drank tea together, all the while sorting and packing his things.

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<sup>85</sup> An ancient citadel and the chief city of Ryazan province. It lies on the Oka River about 100 miles southeast of Moscow.

Vera Pavlovna scarcely had time to collect her wits when her husband announced, "It's ten thirty—time to leave for the railway station."

"I'll go with you, my dear."

"Verochka, my friend, I'm taking along two suitcases. There won't be anywhere to sit. You can ride with Masha."

"That's not what I mean. I'm going to Ryazan with you."

"Well, then, in that case, Masha can go with the suitcases and we can ride together."

The street is not particularly well suited to emotional outpourings. Besides, there was so much noise coming from the pavement. Lopukhov had difficulty hearing her, while she could hardly understand his replies even when he made any.

"I'm going to Ryazan with you," Vera Pavlovna repeated again and again.

"But your things aren't ready. How can you go? Get ready if you like. Do whatever you think best. But I have one request: wait until you receive a letter from me. It will come tomorrow. I'll write you one and mail it along the way. You'll get it tomorrow. Wait for it, I beg of you."

How she embraced him at the gallery of the station! How tearfully she kissed him as he entered the gate to the platform. Meanwhile he kept talking about his affairs at the factory, how well things were going, how delighted his parents would be to see him, how everything in the world is nonsense except one's health, and how she should take good care of herself. At the very moment of parting, through the bars of the fence, he said to her, "Yesterday you wrote that you'd never been so attached to me as you are now. That's true, my dear Verochka. And I'm no less attached to you. Affection for a person means desiring his happiness, as you and I know full well. Furthermore, there's no happiness without freedom. You didn't want to restrain me, nor I you. If you ever felt restrained by me, you would hurt me. Don't do that; do only what's best for you. Then we'll see. You write me and tell me when to return. Good-bye, my friend. That's the second bell. It's time to go. Good-bye."

## XXVIII.

This happened at the end of April. Lopukhov came back in the middle of June. He spent three weeks in Petersburg and then went on to Moscow on factory business, as he said. He left Moscow on the ninth of June. On the morning of the eleventh there occurred the baffling incident in the hotel at the Moscow Railway Station when the guest could not be awakened, followed two hours later by the scene at the dacha on Kamenny [Stone] Island.<sup>86</sup>

Surely now the perceptive reader can no longer fail to guess who it was who shot himself. "I've known for some time that it was Lopukhov," he says, thrilled by his own perspicacity. Well then, what's become of him? How was it that his cap was shot right

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<sup>86</sup> See n. 4 above.

through the band? “There’s no need for that! It was merely one of his tricks. And he himself was helping to drag the river for his own corpse, that rascal,” proclaims the perceptive reader. Well, God be with you, whatever you say, for there’s no way to talk you out of it.

## XXIX. An Extraordinary Man<sup>87</sup>

About three hours after Kirsanov left, Vera Pavlovna came to her senses; one of her first thoughts was that her workshop could not be abandoned. Yes, even though Vera Pavlovna loved to assert that the enterprise could run by itself, in reality she knew that she was merely flattering herself with that idea. In fact, the workshop needed a supervisor or the whole thing would collapse. On the other hand, now that the business was so well established, very little in the way of supervision was actually required. Natasha Mertsalova had two children;<sup>88</sup> even so, she could spare an hour to an hour and a half a day, although not every day. Surely she wouldn’t refuse, since she was doing so much work in the shop now. Vera Pavlovna began to sort through her personal effects. First she sent Masha to ask Natasha to stop by, then to an old woman named Rachel who dealt in used clothes and other items. One of the most resourceful of Jewish women, but still a good friend of Vera Pavlovna’s,<sup>89</sup> Rachel was absolutely honest with her, as are almost all small Jewish tradespeople when dealing with decent people. Rachel and Masha had to stop by the apartment in town to collect the dresses and other garments that had been left there, then call in at the furrier’s where Vera Pavlovna’s coats had been left in storage for the summer, and finally bring the whole pile out to the dacha, where Rachel would price the goods and purchase the whole lot at once.

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<sup>87</sup> Chernyshevsky seems to have drawn on both Orthodox hagiography and the life of a fellow radical in creating the character of Rakhmetov. On the one hand, Rakhmetov’s biography closely resembles the model presented in a popular saint’s life, *The Life of Aleksei, a Man of God*: a wealthy nobleman undergoes a religious conversion, gives away all his property, renounces worldly success, forgoes the love of a woman, dedicates himself to faith, and subjects his body to incredible self-mortification in his efforts to resist temptation. At the same time, Rakhmetov’s actions also resemble those of Pavel Aleksandrovich Bakhmetev (1828-?), a noble landowner from Saratov province who underwent a political conversion, embraced radical ideas, sold all his property in 1857, entrusting the proceeds to Alexander Herzen (see Introduction, p.6) to be used for the cause, and eventually emigrated to either the Marquesas Islands or New Zealand.

<sup>88</sup> The small role played by children in *What Is to Be Done?* is striking. They hardly appear in the novel; when present they act primarily as servants, as in Vera’s sewing cooperative and in the utopian world of her fourth dream. Even the heroine’s own child disappears after demonstrating the fruitfulness of her love for Kirsanov.

<sup>89</sup> Vera’s friendship with Rachel represents the transcendence of religious differences through revolutionary ideals as well as a criticism of the anti-Semitism prevalent in Russian society and embodied in Russian law.

Just as Masha was leaving, she was met by Rakhmetov, who'd been wandering around near the dacha for the last half hour or so.

"Are you going out, Masha? For very long?"

"Yes. I probably won't be back until late this evening. I have a lot to do."

"Is Vera Pavlovna home alone?"

"She is."

"Then I'll drop in and stay with her in your place. She may need something."

"Please do, or else I'll worry about her. Besides, I've forgotten something, Mr. Rakhmetov. Could you call on the neighbors (they have a cook and a nanny, both friends of mine) and ask them to order her dinner? She still hasn't eaten."

"Never mind. I haven't had my dinner either, and we can dine by ourselves. Have you eaten?"

"Yes, Vera Pavlovna wouldn't let me go out unless I had."

"Well, that's good. I was afraid she might have forgotten about you in her present condition."

With the exception of Masha and those who were her equals or superiors in simplicity of soul or dress, everyone was somewhat afraid of Rakhmetov. Even Lopukhov, Kirsanov, and all those who feared nothing and no one at times felt some trepidation before him. He held himself very removed from Vera Pavlovna. She found him boring; he never joined her circle of friends. But he was Masha's favorite, even though he was less amiable and less talkative with her than other guests were.

"I've come without an invitation, Vera Pavlovna," he began. "But I've seen Alexander Matveich and I know everything. Therefore, in the event that you require my services, I've decided to spend the evening at your place."

His services might indeed have been required, even at once. He could have helped Vera Pavlovna sort through the garments. Anyone other than Rakhmetov would have been invited to do so at that very moment, or might even have offered to help. But he didn't offer and wasn't invited. Vera Pavlovna merely shook his hand and said sincerely that she was very grateful for his concern.

"I'll sit in the study," he replied. "Call me if you need anything. If someone comes, I'll open the door. No need to trouble yourself."

With these words he proceeded very serenely to the study, took a large piece of ham and a chunk of black bread (weighing almost four pounds in all) from his pocket, sat down, ate everything up, chewing it all very well, and drank half a carafe of water. Then he went over to the bookshelves and began to look for something to read. "Too well known," "unoriginal," "unoriginal," "unoriginal," "unoriginal." This last word was applied to works by such writers as Macauley, Guizot, Thiers, Ranke and Gervinus.<sup>90</sup> "Ah, now

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<sup>90</sup> By contrasting Rakhmetov's "originality" with the alleged "unoriginality" of some of the most popular historians of the mid-nineteenth century, Chernyshevsky criticizes the latter as apologists of the bourgeois order. In his most famous work, *History of England from the Accession of James the Second* (5 vols., 1849-1861), the English historian Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) vividly recreates the social world of seventeenth-century England, albeit from a liberal and Protestant perspective. The

here's something I'm glad to find," he said after reading the words on the spines of several heavy tomes: *The Complete Collected Works of Newton*. He began to thumb quickly through some of the volumes; at last he found what he'd been looking for. With a smile he said, "Here it is, right here, *Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*.<sup>91</sup> Yes, up to now I've lacked any substantial foundation in this branch of knowledge. Newton wrote this commentary in his old age, when he was half in his right mind and half insane. It's the classical treatise on the connection between intellect and insanity. The question is one of universal, historical import: this particular combination occurs without exception in all events, in almost all books, in almost all brains. But here this question must appear in perfect form. In the first place, his mind was the most ingenious and most normal of all those known to us; in the second place, the insanity that affected it was both acknowledged and undisputed. Therefore, this book is the major work in its field. It should display the subtlest manifestations of the general phenomenon more tangibly than any other work; there can be no doubt whatever that these manifestations depict this particular combination of intellect and insanity. This book is worth studying." And with pleasurable zeal he sat down to read a book that has hardly been read by anyone but its original proofreaders for a hundred years or so. Anyone else would have found this book as tasty a dish as sand or sawdust. But Rakhmetov considered it a delicious morsel.

Nowadays there are only a few people like Rakhmetov. Up to the present time I've met only eight examples of this breed (among them two women).<sup>92</sup> They weren't at all alike except for one characteristic. The group includes both stern and gentle types, somber and cheerful, energetic and phlegmatic, sentimental and perpetually imperturbable. (One had a stern face, sarcastic to the point of impudence; another, a

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French politician and historian François Guizot (1787–1874) played a prominent role in the government of Louis Philippe (see nn. 24, 34, and 41 above). His many writings on French history and European civilization largely reflect his conservative views and belief in constitutional monarchy. In addition, to producing several voluminous and relatively superficial works on the French Revolution, the French statesman and historian Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877) also held several ministerial posts under Louis Philippe, opposed Napoleon III, and served briefly as president of the Third Republic (1871–1873). A member of the ill-fated Frankfurt Parliament during the revolution of 1848–1849, the German historian Georg Gottfried Gervinus (1805–1871) used his writings on European history and German literature to advocate liberal reform and national reunification. On von Ranke, see n. 22 above.

<sup>91</sup> The scientific investigations of Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), which resulted in discoveries of such far-reaching consequences as the laws of gravity and the composition of white light, never shook his fervent belief in biblical prophecies. In his *Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John*, first published posthumously in vol. 5 of *The Complete Collected Works* (5 vols., London, 1779–1785), Newton combined a scientific approach with his religious views to treat apocalyptic prophecies as predictions of future historical events. Henceforth, Chernyshevsky's fictional characters, like Newton himself and other believers in apocalyptic predictions, began to calculate the time remaining before the prophecy of revolution was to be fulfilled. This period turned out to be two years from the time at which Chernyshevsky was writing the novel, i.e., 1865.

<sup>92</sup> Chernyshevsky altered the number of these people in various drafts of his novel. Their precise identity also remains unknown, although scholars have proposed several likely candidates, including Nikolai Dobrolyubov (see n. 11 above), Pavel Bakhmetev (see n. 159 above), and Chernyshevsky himself.

wooden face, taciturn and indifferent to everything. Both wept in my presence several times, like hysterical women, not because of their own affairs, but rather in the middle of conversations on diverse matters. I ‘m sure they often cried when they were alone, too.) They had nothing in common except for one trait, but this trait united them into a single breed and distinguished them from all others. I used to laugh at those particular individuals, my intimate friends, when I was alone with them. They either got angry or didn’t, but they also used to laugh at themselves. In fact, there was a great deal that was very amusing about them: everything of importance about them was amusing, everything that characterized them as a breed apart. I love to laugh at such people.

The one I met in Lopukhov’s and Kirsanov’s circle, and whom I shall describe here, serves as living proof that a proviso needs to be added to that discussion of the properties of soil between Lopukhov and Mertsalov in Vera Pavlovna’s second dream.<sup>93</sup> The proviso is that whatever the quality of the soil, one can still come across tiny plots capable of producing healthy ears of grain. The genealogy of the main characters of my story (Vera Pavlovna, Kirsanov, and Lopukhov), if truth be told, goes no farther back than their grandparents; only with a great deal of effort could one discover a great-grandmother. (The great-grandfather has inevitably been obscured by the darkness of oblivion; all that’s known about him is that he was the great-grandmother’s husband and that his name was Kiril, because the grandfather was called Gerasim Kirilych).

Rakhmetov was descended from a family known since the thirteenth century, that is, from one of the oldest families not only in Russia but in all of Europe. Among the chiefs of the Tatar regiments massacred at Tver with their troops,<sup>94</sup> (an event that, according to the chronicles, occurred because they’d intended to convert the people to the Muslim faith—an intention they probably never had, but an event that in fact took place simply because they were the oppressors), among those chiefs was one named Rakhmet. His young son by a Russian woman whom he’d abducted, the niece of the chief court steward at Tver (that is, the high court marshal and field marshal),<sup>95</sup> had been spared on account of his mother and was rebaptized from Latyfe to Mikhail. The Rakhmetovs were descended from this Latyfe/Mikhail Rakhmetovich. At Tver they were boyars, in Moscow only grand officers of the tsar. During the last century

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<sup>93</sup> See above, pp. 180–88 and nn. 86 and 89.

<sup>94</sup> The massacre at Tver in 1327 appears to have been more closely related to the struggle between the princes of Moscow and Tver for predominance in northeastern Russia in the early fourteenth century than to the oppressiveness of Mongol rule, although that certainly played some role.

<sup>95</sup> Rakhmet is described as a Tatar *temnik* (translated here as “chief”), a high military leader directly subordinate to the khan. The Russian *dvorskii* (translated as “high court marshal and field marshal”) was at this time the high steward who managed a prince’s household and landed estates and performed other important administrative, judicial, and sometimes military functions. Rakhmetov’s mixed ancestry, though not unusual among the Russian nobility, may help explain his extraordinary character (but cf. nn.13 and 151 above).



in Petersburg, they were generals-in-chief, but not all by any means.<sup>96</sup> The family had proliferated and there weren't enough ranks of general-in-chief to go around. The great-great-grandfather of our Rakhmetov was a friend of Ivan Ivanovich Shuvalov, who'd rescued him from the disgrace into which he'd fallen as a result of his friendship with Münnich.<sup>97</sup> His great-grandfather was a colleague of Rumyantsev. He attained the rank of general-in-chief and was killed at the battle of Novi.<sup>98</sup> His grandfather accompanied Alexander to Tilsit and would have gone further than any of the others, but he forfeited his career early as a result of a friendship with Speransky.<sup>99</sup> His father served without success or disgrace, and retired at the age of forty with the rank of lieutenant general; he settled on one of his several estates scattered along the upper reaches of the Medveditsa River. These estates, however, were not very large; they consisted of only about 2,500 souls in all.<sup>100</sup> At the same time, given a large amount of rural leisure, he sired many children, about eight all told. Our Rakhmetov was the next to last; there was only one sister younger than he. As a result, our Rakhmetov was a man who had not too great an inheritance: he received only about 400 souls and 7,000 desyatinas of land.<sup>101</sup> No one knew how he'd disposed of the souls and 5,500 of

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<sup>96</sup> The transition of such men from somewhat independent boyars to bureaucratically organized state servitors bearing European titles reflects both the growth of Western influence and the transformation of appanage Rus' into Muscovite and, ultimately, imperial Russia. Chernyshevsky may be trying to emphasize the growth of state power and the constancy of noble oppressiveness throughout these transformations.

<sup>97</sup> A favorite of Empress Elizabeth (r. 1741–1762) and proponent of Westernization, Ivan Shuvalov (1727–1797) founded Moscow University in 1755 and the Imperial Academy of Arts in 1757. A prominent general under Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725, and powerful political figure during the reign of Empress Anna (r. 1730–1740), the German émigré field marshal Count Burkhard Christoph Münnich (1683–1767) exercised considerable influence as coregent of the infant emperor Ivan VI (r. 1740–1741), but was disgraced and exiled to Siberia when Elizabeth seized the throne in 1741.

<sup>98</sup> Count Peter Rumyantsev (1725–1796) proved to be one of Russia's most successful generals in the latter part of the eighteenth century, particularly during the Seven Years' War and Catherine the Great's Turkish wars. On August 4, 1799, a joint Russian and Austrian army commanded by the Russian field marshal Alexander Suvorov defeated a large French army near the northern Italian town of Novi.

<sup>99</sup> In July 1807, at Tilsit in East Prussia, Emperor Alexander I (r. 1801–1825) and Napoleon I concluded a peace treaty that restructured Central Europe, included Russia in Napoleon's blockade of British trade, and led to Russia's acquisition of Finland. Count Mikhail Speransky (1772–1839), the son of a village priest who rose to become an influential adviser to Alexander I in the early years of his reign, ultimately fell from grace when his liberal proposals for administrative, financial, and legal reform encountered powerful opposition. In this passage Chernyshevsky uses Rakhmetov's lineage to demonstrate the patriotism, bravery, leadership, and, in the last instance, enlightenment inherent in his superhero's family line, despite the reactionary attitudes of his father

<sup>100</sup> Before the abolition of serfdom in 1861, a noble landowner's wealth was measured by the number of male serfs, or "souls," that he possessed. Rakhmetov's father's holdings place him among the wealthiest 4% of all noble landowners at that time.

<sup>101</sup> A desyatina was a measure of land equal to about 2.7 acres. This passage reflects the pernicious effects of Russian inheritance law, under which all sons inherited both their father's title and an equal share of his estate. As a result, holdings tended to become fragmented and increasingly smaller with each generation.

his desyatinas; likewise, no one knew that he'd kept 1,500 desyatinas for himself. Nor did anyone even know that he was a member of the landed gentry, and that he had an income of about 3,000 rubles a year in rent on the remaining parcel of land. No one knew any of this while he lived among us. We learned it all later. Then, of course, we assumed that he must have belonged to that family of Rakhmetovs among whom were numbered many wealthy landowners—whose combined worth was estimated at 75,000 souls on various estates along the upper reaches of the Medveditsa, Khopior, Sura, and Tsna rivers, and who are always serving as district marshals of those places and who, one or another, are constantly serving as provincial marshals in one or another of the three provinces where the upper reaches of these same rivers flow through their ancestral lands.<sup>102</sup> We knew that our friend Rakhmetov lived on an income of about 400 rubles a year. For a student in those days, that wasn't a small sum at all, but for a landowner of the Rakhmetov family, it was a very small sum indeed. That's why each of us, who hardly concerned ourselves with such inquiries, merely assumed without asking that our Rakhmetov was a member of some declining branch of the family which had lost its lands, the son of some councillor in a provincial office of the Ministry of Finance who'd left his children a little capital.<sup>103</sup> And who could expect us to be interested in such things, anyway?

He was now twenty-two years old, having been a student since the age of sixteen. He'd interrupted his studies for almost three years. At the end of his second year he left to take charge of his estate, overcoming his guardian's opposition, incurring his brothers' curses, and causing his brothers-in-law to forbid his sisters ever to mention his name again.<sup>104</sup> Then he wandered through Russia traveling in various ways: on land and over water, by both ordinary and extraordinary means (on foot, by flat-bottomed boat, and by keeled ship)<sup>105</sup> He had many adventures, most of which he devised himself. Meanwhile, he supported two students at Kazan University and five at Moscow University at his own expense; but he brought no one along with him to Petersburg, where he himself planned to live. Therefore none of us knew that instead of 400 rubles, he had an income of some 3,000 rubles. This fact became known only later; at that time we knew only that he'd disappeared from sight and that he'd returned to Petersburg some two years before that day he sat in Kirsanov's study analyzing

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<sup>102</sup> The Medveditsa and Tsna rivers are located to the northwest, the Sura and Khopior rivers considerably east, of Moscow. Elected by *loca*, nobility under the administrative system created by Catherine the Great, district and provincial marshals of the nobility performed an important role in *loca*, administration and occupied a prominent position in provincial society.

<sup>103</sup> A provincial post that conferred extremely low social status. Impoverished nobles frequently took refuge in provincial service, where they formed part of the core of Russia's growing landless bureaucracy in the nineteenth century.

<sup>104</sup> This sentence suggests that Rakhmetov incurred both his guardian's opposition and his brothers' curses for freeing his serfs and providing them with allotments of land.

<sup>105</sup> A *rasshiva* was a large, flat-bottomed sailboat with pointed prow and stern used extensively on the Volga River and the Caspian Sea. A *kosnaya lodka* was a lighter, keeled craft.

Newton's interpretation of the Apocalypse. Now he'd joined the philological faculty; before then he'd been studying the natural sciences. That was all we knew.

But if none of Rakhmetov's Petersburg friends knew anything about his family background or his financial situation, everyone who knew him was very familiar with his two nicknames. One has already been mentioned in the course of this narrative, namely, "the rigorist." He accepted it with his usual slight smile of grim satisfaction. But when people started calling him Nikitushka or Lomov, or by the full form, Nikitushka Lomov,<sup>106</sup> he beamed broadly and sweetly, and for good reason. It was not by his birthright but by sheer strength of will that he'd acquired a right to bear a name so renowned among millions of people. This name thunders with glory along a strip of land some hundred versts wide across eight provinces. For readers who reside in the rest of Russia's territory, the meaning of this name must be explained. Nikitushka Lomov was a barge hauler who worked along the Volga River some fifteen or twenty years ago and was a giant of Herculean strength. He was two arshins and fifteen vershoks tall,<sup>107</sup> he was so broad in the chest and shoulders that he weighed some fifteen puds,<sup>108</sup> and he was solid, not fat. One fact will suffice to illustrate his strength: he received the salary of four men. Whenever his vessel arrived at a town, he would go to the market (or the "bazaar," as it is called along the Volga). All along the way boys would cry out from distant back streets, "Nikitushka Lomov! Here comes Nikitushka Lomov!" They all ran out into the streets leading from the harbor to the bazaar, and a whole crowd of people would follow along behind their Russian bogatyr.

When Rakhmetov came to Petersburg at the age of sixteen, he was an ordinary youth of somewhat above-average height and strength, but by no means remarkable. Out of any ten of his peers, two could probably have gotten the better of him. But in the middle of his seventeenth year he decided to acquire physical prowess and began to work hard at it. He took up gymnastics with considerable dedication. That was all right, but gymnastics can improve only the material available; one has to provide oneself with such material. And so, for a while, he spent several hours every day, twice as long as he practiced gymnastics, working at common labor that required physical strength. He carried water, chopped and hauled firewood, felled trees, cut stone, dug earth, and forged iron. He tried many different kinds of work and changed jobs frequently because with each job and every change, different muscles were being developed. He put himself on a boxer's diet. He began to nourish himself (precisely!) only on those

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<sup>106</sup> A legendary folk hero in the bogatyr tradition of morally pure men who are also large and mighty warriors, Nikitushka Lomov appeared in tales from the Volga region as a defender of the common people. By linking Rakhmetov to such a figure, Chernyshevsky compares his hero with legendary bogatyrs of Russia's past, demonstrates his solidarity with the common people, and indicates Rakhmetov's transformation through labor into a "new man" combining the best qualities of both the intelligentsia and the working class.

<sup>107</sup> That is, nearly seven feet. A vershok is a unit of length measuring about 1.75 inches. See also n. 44 above.

<sup>108</sup> That is, nearly 542 pounds. A pud is a unit of weight equal to about 36 pounds.

things reputed to build physical strength—beefsteak most of all, almost raw; since that time he’s continued on this regimen. About a year after adopting this program, he set off on his travels and had even greater opportunities to devote himself to building physical strength. He worked as a plowman, carpenter, ferryman, and laborer at all sorts of healthful trades. Once he even worked as a barge hauler along the whole length of the Volga, from Dubovka to Rybinsk.<sup>109</sup> If he’d told the captain of the barge and the crew that he wanted to work as a barge hauler, they’d have considered it the height of stupidity and would never have accepted him. So he went aboard as a passenger and became friendly with the crew and began to help them tow the boat. In a week he buckled himself into a harness, just like a real barge hauler. Soon they realized his strength and put him to the test: he outpulled three or four men, the sturdiest of his comrades. He was only twenty years old at the time, and his comrades on the barge christened him Nikitushka Lomov, in memory of their hero, who’d already departed the scene. The next summer he was traveling on a steamer. One of the many common folk on deck turned out to be one of his fellow workers from the barge the year before; that was how some students, his fellow travelers, learned about his nickname, Nikitushka Lomov. In fact, he had acquired and, without skimping on time I had maintained enormous strength. “It’s necessary,” he used to say. “It inspires respect and love of the common people. It’s useful and may come in handy someday.”

This idea had occurred to him when he was sixteen and a half, because it was then that his peculiar personality first began to develop. At the age of sixteen he’d come to Petersburg a nice, ordinary lad, having just completed his course of study at the gymnasium; he was a kind, honest young man who spent three or four months in the usual way, as all new students do. But soon he began to hear that among his comrades were some very clever minds whose way of thinking differed from that of others. He found out the names of five or six of these students; there were still only a few of them then. They interested him and he began to seek the acquaintance of some of them. He happened to become friendly with Kirsanov; that initiated the process of his rebirth into an extraordinary man, the future “Nikitushka Lomov” and “rigorist.” The first evening he listened to Kirsanov avidly; he wept and interrupted Kirsanov’s words with exclamations that cursed the things that must perish and blessed those that must survive.<sup>110</sup> He asked, “What books should I read first?” Kirsanov answered him. At eight o’clock the next morning he was up and walking along Nevsky Prospekt from the Admiralty to the Politseisky [Police] Bridge,<sup>111</sup> waiting to see which German or French bookstore would open first. He acquired what he needed and then read for more than three days and nights in a row, from 11 A.M. on Thursday to 9 P.M. on

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<sup>109</sup> Considerably north of Moscow, Rybinsk lies where the Volga flows into the Rybinsk Reservoir. Dubovka is a small town on the southern Volga, near present-day Volgograd.

<sup>110</sup> Rakhmetov’s sudden powerful embrace of revolutionary ideals corresponds to the emotional experience of religious conversion.

<sup>111</sup> Built in 1806–1808, the Police Bridge (now called the Narodny [People’s] Bridge) crosses the Moika River along Nevsky Prospekt.

Sunday, a total of eighty-two hours. The first two nights he had no trouble staying awake; the third night he drank eight glasses of strong coffee. By the fourth night even the coffee didn't help: he collapsed on the floor and slept for about fifteen hours. A week later he went to Kirsanov and demanded to know what books he should read next and to get some explanations. He became good friends with Kirsanov and through him met Lopukhov. Half a year later, though Rakhmetov was only seventeen and the others were already twenty-one, they no longer thought of him as a "young man," but as an "extraordinary man."

What sort of influential factors were there in his early life? Not many, but some. His father was a man with a despotic disposition, very intelligent, well educated, and ultra-conservative, in the same sense that Marya Aleksevna was ultraconservative, although he was an honest man. Needless to say, Rakhmetov had a difficult time at home. But that alone would not have been sufficient. In addition, his mother was a rather delicate creature who suffered from her husband's severe character. Besides, the boy himself could see what life was really like in the countryside. But even this would not have been sufficient. Here's the rest of it: at the age of fifteen he fell in love with one of his father's mistresses. This occasioned a great scandal, of course, and the brunt of it fell on the woman. He felt sorry for her because she had to suffer so much on his account. His thoughts began to stir; Kirsanov played the same role for him as Lopukhov had for Vera Pavlovna. There were, therefore, influential factors in his early life.

However, in the making of such an extraordinary man, of course the principal element had to have been nature. For some time before he'd left the university and had set off for his own estate, and later on his journey through Russia, he'd already adopted a set of original principles to govern his material, moral, and spiritual life. When he returned to Petersburg, these principles had already developed into a complete system, which he followed faithfully. He said to himself, "I shall not drink one drop of wine. I shall not touch any women." But he was so passionate by nature! "Why on earth? Such extreme measures are unnecessary!" "They are necessary. We demand complete enjoyment of life for all people. Therefore, in our own lives we must demonstrate that we demand this not to satisfy our own passions, not for ourselves alone, but for man in general. We must show that we're speaking according to principles and not passions, according to convictions and not personal desires."

Therefore he adopted a very austere way of life. To become and remain Nikitushka Lomov, he needed to eat beef, a great deal of beef. So he did. He regretted every kopeck he spent on any other kind of food. He ordered his landlady to purchase good quality beef, the very best cuts for him, yet everything else he ate at home was the cheapest. He gave up white bread and had only black bread at his table. For weeks at a time he never put a lump of sugar into his mouth;<sup>112</sup> for months at a time he ate no fruit, no veal, and no poultry. He would buy nothing of the sort with his own money. "I have

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<sup>112</sup> To conserve an expensive resource, less affluent Russians traditionally placed a lump of rock sugar between their teeth while drinking tea rather than stirring it into the brew.

no right to spend money on any luxuries I can do without.” Yet he’d been brought up on a sumptuous diet and had acquired refined tastes, as could be seen from his general remarks about food. Whenever he dined at someone else’s table, he enjoyed many dishes that he refused to eat at his own table; there were also certain foods he refused even then. The reason for this distinction was sound: “Anything the common people eat on occasion, I too can eat on occasion. Anything that is never available to them, I too must never eat. This is essential so that I can appreciate how difficult their life is compared to mine.” Therefore, if fruit was served, he would always eat apples, but never apricots. He would eat oranges in Petersburg, but not in the provinces. You see, the common people do eat oranges in Petersburg, but not in the provinces. He ate meat-filled pastries because “a good meat pie is no worse than a meat-filled pastry, and puff pastry is certainly familiar to the common people.”<sup>113</sup> But he wouldn’t eat sardines. He dressed very modestly, although he loved elegance. In all other respects he maintained a Spartan way of life. For example, he wouldn’t allow himself a straw mattress; he slept on a strip of felt, not even folding it double.

However, there was one count on which he did feel remorse: he hadn’t given up smoking. “Without my cigar, I can’t think. If that’s really so, then I’m right. But perhaps it’s a failure of will.” He couldn’t tolerate bad cigars; after all, he was raised in aristocratic surroundings. Out of his 400-ruble income, almost 150 went for cigars. “An abominable weakness,” he used to say. But it was only this one weakness that made it possible to defend oneself against him. If he began to push his charges too far, the person under attack could say, “Well, perfection is impossible—even you smoke.” Then Rakhmetov would double his denunciations, directing a large share of his reproaches at himself; the other person would get a smaller share of abuse, but by no means would he be entirely forgotten.

Rakhmetov managed to accomplish a great deal because in apportioning his time he imposed the same kind of limitations on his whims as he did on material things. Not a quarter of an hour a month was wasted on recreation; he needed no rest. “I have such a wide variety of pursuits,” he would say, “that switching from one to another constitutes a rest.” He spent no more time with his circle of friends (centered on Kirsanov and Lopukhov, than was necessary to remain in close contact with them. “That’s essential. Everyday occurrences demonstrate the usefulness of maintaining close contact with a certain circle of people. One must always have available sources of various kinds of information.” Other than visits to this circle, he never saw anyone except on business—and not for five minutes longer than that business required. He rarely received visitors and never allowed them to stay longer than their business required. Without any circumlocutions he would announce to his guests, “We’ve now concluded our business. Allow me to turn to other matters because I must guard my time.”

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<sup>113</sup> Russian cuisine abounds with all sorts of pies and pastries filled with a variety of meats, vegetables, and fish. Varying in size, these pastries range from the delicate and elaborate to the common, and can serve as either an hors d’oeuvre or a main dish.

During the first months of his rebirth he spent almost all his time reading. But this phase lasted only a little more than half a year. When he realized that he'd acquired a systematic way of thinking according to those principles he considered correct, he said to himself at once: "Now reading has become a matter of secondary importance. As far as that's concerned, I'm now ready for life." Then he began to devote to reading only the time that was free from other pursuits—and he had very little time of that sort. All the same, he extended the range of his knowledge with astonishing speed. Now, at the age of twenty-two, he was already a man of very solid erudition. This was because in this area he'd also established a rule: no luxuries or whims, only what was absolutely necessary. And what was that? He would say, "There are only a few fundamental works on every subject. All the rest merely repeat, dilute, and distort what's more fully and clearly stated in these few fundamental works. One need read only those; anything else is a terrible waste of time. Take Russian literature, for example. I would say, 'I'll read Gogol first of all.'<sup>114</sup> In thousands of other stories I can see, by reading only five or so lines on five different pages, that I'll find nothing but a corruption of Gogol. Why should I read them? It's the same in the sciences, even more obvious there. If I've read Adam Smith, Malthus, Ricardo, and Mill,<sup>115</sup> then I know the alpha and omega of their school of thought; I've no need to read any of the other hundreds of political economists, however distinguished they may be. By reading only five lines on five different pages I can see that I won't find one fresh idea. Everything there is borrowed and distorted. I read only original works, and only enough to grasp their originality.'" Therefore, there was absolutely no way to make him read Macaulay.<sup>116</sup> After spending a quarter of an hour glancing through various pages, he decided: "I know all the material from which these scraps are assembled." He read Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* with pleasure; then he

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<sup>114</sup> A brilliant satirist, Nikola, Gogo, (1809–1852) is famed for his scathing depiction of early-nineteenth-century Russian life in such masterpieces as "The Overcoat" (1842), *The Inspector General* (1836), and *Dead Souls* (1842, 1855) (see nn. 62 and 137 above).

<sup>115</sup> These are the four pillars of British classical political economy. In *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), the Scottish economist Adam Smith provided a brilliant theoretical analysis and justification of the capitalist market economy, developing in particular the theory of the division of labor and the idea that pursuit of individual self-interest would bring about general well-being. In *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798; rev. ed. 1803), the English economist Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834) linked economic development to population growth and contended that poverty was unavoidable because population increased more rapidly than the means of subsistence. The British economist David Ricardo (1772–1823) argued in *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817) that wages tend to stabilize around the subsistence level and that the value of a good derives largely from the labor needed to produce it. The British philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), one of the most important liberal thinkers of the nineteenth century, stressed inductive reasoning and empiricism as the basis of knowledge, advocated social and political reforms, espoused women's rights, and defended the primacy of individual liberty. Chernyshevsky's translation and critical discussion of Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) appeared in *Sovremennik* in 1860–1861.

<sup>116</sup> See n. 162 above.

began *Pendennis*, but closed it after reading only twenty pages.<sup>117</sup> “All this was said before in *Vanity Fair*. Apparently he has nothing more to say, so there’s no need to read it.” “Every book I read spares me from having to read hundreds of others,” he used to say.

Gymnastics, physical labor to develop his strength, and reading were Rakhmetov’s personal pursuits. Upon his return to Petersburg these activities occupied only about a quarter of his time. The remainder he devoted to matters of concern to others or to no one in particular,<sup>118</sup> constantly maintaining the same rule he had for his reading: not to waste time over secondary matters or subsidiary people, to occupy himself only with things of fundamental importance, those that shape secondary matters and second rate people without their participation. For example, outside his circle he made the acquaintance only of those people who had some influence over others. Someone who wasn’t an authority for other people couldn’t even enter into conversation with Rakhmetov. He would say, “You’ll excuse me, but I don’t have the time,” and would walk away. By the same token, no one could avoid becoming acquainted with Rakhmetov if the latter wanted it to happen. He simply appeared and declared what it was he required with the following prelude: “I wish to become acquainted with you. It’s essential. If this isn’t a good time, set another.” He paid no attention whatever to your petty concerns, even if you were his closest acquaintance and were begging him to become involved in your predicament. “I haven’t time,” he would say and turn aside. But he did get involved in important matters, when in his own opinion it was necessary, even though no one desired it. “I must,” he would say. The things he used to say and do on such occasions are beyond comprehension.

Take, for instance, my own acquaintance with him.<sup>119</sup> By that time I was no longer so young, and had already lived for quite a while; therefore, some five or six young people from my province would occasionally gather at my place. Consequently, I was already something of a valuable person for Rakhmetov; these young people were well disposed toward me, having discovered in me a similar disposition toward them. It was in this way that he heard my name. When I saw him for the first time at Kirsanov’s, I still hadn’t heard much about him. It wasn’t long after his return to Petersburg from his wanderings. He arrived after I did. I was the only one present whom he didn’t know. As soon as he came in he took Kirsanov aside; glancing at me, Rakhmetov uttered a few words. Kirsanov answered him with equally few words and was then

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<sup>117</sup> The prolific English novelist and satirist William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863) published *Vanity Fair*, a critique of upper-middle-class life and values, in 1848 (Rus. trans. 1850) and the autobiographical novel *Pendennis* in 1850 (Rus. trans. 1852). Thackeray was immensely popular in nineteenth-century Russia, but Chernyshevsky criticized his later works for failing to provide more pointed social commentary.

<sup>118</sup> An allusion to Rakhmetov’s revolutionary activity, which tsarist censorship prevented Chernyshevsky from mentioning directly.

<sup>119</sup> By having the narrator enter the fiction in this direct way, Chernyshevsky reveals his own relationship both with his fictional characters and with their revolutionary activities.



released. A minute later Rakhmetov sat down directly across from me, with only the small table near the sofa between us; from a distance of some one and a half arshins<sup>120</sup> he began to stare at my face with all his might. I was annoyed. He examined me without ceremony, as if I were a portrait and not a person. I frowned, but it made no difference to him. After staring at me for two or three minutes he said, "Mr. N., I must make your acquaintance. I know you, but you don't know me. Ask our host about me or someone else here you trust." He stood up and walked into another room. "Who is this character?" I asked. "That's Rakhmetov. He wants you to ask me if he deserves your trust. He does, unquestionably; he deserves your attention as well. He's more important than all the rest of us here put together," said Kirsanov, and the others confirmed it. Five minutes later he returned to the room where everyone was sitting. He didn't strike up a conversation with me and said very little to the others; the conversation was neither very significant nor scholarly. "Ah, it's already ten o'clock," he said after a little while. "At ten I have business elsewhere. Mr. N.," he said, turning to me, "I must have a few words with you. When I took our host aside to ask who you were, I looked at you, for I assumed you would in any case observe that I was inquiring about you. Consequently, it would have been foolish not to employ the gestures that naturally accompany such questions. When will you be at home so that I may call upon you?"

At that time I didn't desire any new acquaintances, nor did I appreciate his persistence. "I only sleep at home," I said. "I'm never there during the day."

"But you do sleep at home? What time do you return home to go to sleep?"

"Very late."

"For example?"

"Two or three in the morning."

"Very well. Name the time."

"If you absolutely insist, then the day after tomorrow at three-thirty A.M."

"Of course I should take your words as derisive and rude; perhaps you have your reasons—even valid ones, at that. In any case, I shall be at your place at three-thirty A.M. the day after tomorrow."

"Well, if you're so determined, it would be better if you came later. I shall be at home all morning until twelve noon."

"Very well. I'll call in at ten o'clock. Will you be alone?"

"Yes."

"Good."

He arrived and, with the same lack of circumlocution, came right to the reason for his wanting to make my acquaintance. We chatted for half an hour. It doesn't matter what we discussed; suffice it to say that he argued, "You should," and I replied, "No." Then he said, "You must," and I answered, "Not at all." Half an hour later he declared,

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<sup>120</sup> See n. 44 above.

“Obviously it’s useless to continue. Are you at least convinced that I’m a person who deserves your absolute trust?”

“Yes. Everyone said so and now I can see that for myself.”

“Yet still you won’t budge?”

“No.”

“Do you know what follows from this? You’re either a liar or a worthless fellow.”

How do you like that? What action would have been required if someone else had uttered such words? Challenge him to a duel? But Rakhmetov spoke in a voice utterly devoid of personal emotion, as if he were a historian judging dispassionately, his intention not to offend, merely to arrive at the truth. He himself was so peculiar that it would have been absurd to take offense; I could only laugh.

“Surely they’re one and the same thing,” I said.

“Not in this instance.”

“Well then, perhaps I’m both.”

“In this case that’s not possible. But you’re one or the other for sure. Either what you say is different from what you think and do, in which case you’re a liar, or you think and do exactly what you say, in which case you’re a worthless fellow. One or the other for sure. I assume it’s the former.”

“Think what you like,” I replied, still chuckling.

“Good-bye,” he said. “In any case, you should know that I retain complete confidence in you and am ready to resume our conversation whenever you wish.”

In spite of the strangeness of this episode, Rakhmetov was absolutely correct, both in the way he’d begun the conversation (since he’d inquired about me before he ever had) and in the way he’d concluded it. I really hadn’t told him what I was thinking, and he’d really had the right to call me a liar. Furthermore, it couldn’t be offensive, but was even flattering to me “in this instance,” as he’d said, because the instance was such that he really could retain complete confidence in me, perhaps even respect.

Yes, however rude Rakhmetov’s manners, everyone remained convinced that he acted as he did because it was the most sensible and simplest way to act. He would utter his harshest words and most horrible reproaches in such a way that no reasonable man could take offense. In spite of this phenomena, rudeness, he was basically a very tactful person. He always prefaced his comments in a particular way. He began each and every delicate explanation by saying, “You’re aware that I speak without any personal emotion. If my words are unpleasant, I beg you to excuse them. I consider it inappropriate to take offense at anything said in earnest, especially when it’s uttered out of necessity, with no intention to offend. Moreover, as soon as you consider it pointless to listen to my words, I’ll stop. I have the following rule: I always offer my opinion when I should but never impose it on anyone.”

And in fact he never did. It was absolutely impossible to save oneself from hearing his opinion when he considered it necessary, but he said only enough so that you could grasp what he wanted to say and how he planned to say it. He would do this in two or three words and then inquire, “Now you have some idea of my views on this matter.

Would you find it useful to hold such a conversation?" If you said no, he'd turn aside and walk away.

That's how he talked and conducted his business; he had a very great deal of it, none concerning him personally. He had no personal business: everyone knew that. But exactly what kind of business he did have, even our circle didn't know. It was clear only that he had a multitude of concerns. He was rarely at home, always on the go, generally on foot. But he was also constantly receiving people, either the same ones repeatedly or new ones altogether. Therefore he made it a rule always to be home between two and three P.M. It was at this time that he spoke about business and ate his dinner. Often he'd be away from home for several days in a row. Then one of his close friends, devoted to him body and sou, and silent as the grave, would sit in his place and receive his guests.

Two years after we see him sitting in Kirsanov's study reading Newton's Apocalypse, he left Petersburg, having informed Kirsanov and two or three others of his closest friends that he'd no further business there, that he'd done all he could, that only three years hence could something more be done, that he had these three years free and was planning to use them in a way best suited to his future activity.<sup>121</sup> Later we learned that he'd returned to his former estate, sold all his remaining land, received some 35,000 rubles, and visited both Kazan and Moscow, where he distributed almost 5,000 rubles among the seven students he was supporting so that they might complete their various courses of study.

This concludes the part of the story that's verifiable. It's not known where he went after Moscow. When several months had passed without word of him, people who knew more about him than the rest ceased to hide the things he'd asked them not to talk about when he was living there among us. It was then that our circle learned about his supporting those students and most of the rest of the things I've just told about his personal relations. We heard quite a few more stories, which by no means cleared things up; in fact, they didn't clear anything up, but served only to make Rakhmetov an even more enigmatic figure to our entire circle. Some of these stories were astonishing in their peculiarity or else totally contradicted the impression that our circle had of him as a person completely impervious to personal emotion, possessing no personal heart, if I may use that expression, no heart throbbing with sensations of personal life. It would be inappropriate to relate all these stories here. I'll include only two, one of each kind. The first is astonishingly strange; the second contradicts the previous conception of him held by our circle. I'm choosing from among those stories related by Kirsanov.

About a year before he vanished from Petersburg for the second and probably last time, Rakhmetov said to Kirsanov, "Give me a rather large amount of ointment for curing wounds inflicted by a sharp instrument." Kirsanov gave him a huge jar, assuming that Rakhmetov wanted to deliver it to some artel of carpenters or other

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<sup>121</sup> Chernyshevsky dates Rakhmetov's departure from St. Petersburg in mid-1859. According to the author's prophecy, a revolution was supposed to occur in Russia in 1865 (see n. 163 above)

workmen subject to frequent lacerations.<sup>122</sup> The next morning Rakhmetov's landlady came running to fetch Kirsanov in great alarm: "Mr. Doctor, I don't know what's become of my tenant. He hasn't come out of his room for some time. The door's locked. I looked through the crack and saw him lying there covered with blood. I began yelling, but he called through the door, 'It's nothing, Agrafena Antonovna.' What kind of nothing? Save him, Mr. Doctor, I fear for his life! He's so hard on himself."

Kirsanov ran off. Rakhmetov unlocked the door with a broad, grim smile and the visitor beheld a sight at which a person tougher than Agrafena Antonovna might have been aghast. The back and sides of Rakhmetov's underclothes (that's all he was wearing) were soaked in blood; there was blood under the bed; the felt on which he slept was also covered with blood; in the felt were hundreds of little nails, heads down and points up, sticking out almost half a vershok.<sup>123</sup> Rakhmetov had been lying on them all night. "What on earth is this, Rakhmetov?" cried Kirsanov in horror. "A trial," he replied. "It's necessary. Improbable, of course, but in any case necessary. Now I know I can do it."

Besides those things that Kirsanov saw, it was obvious that the landlady could tell a great many more interesting stories about Rakhmetov; but she was a simple-hearted and simply attired old woman who doted on him. It was impossible to get anything more out of her. This particular time she'd come to fetch Kirsanov simply because Rakhmetov allowed her to do so in order to calm her down. She wept bitterly at the idea that Rakhmetov might have wanted to kill himself.

About two months later, sometime at the end of May, Rakhmetov disappeared for a week or more, but no one noticed it then because he often dropped out of sight for a few days at a time. Now Kirsanov related the following story about how Rakhmetov had spent those few days. They constitute the "erotic episode" in Rakhmetov's life. Love grew out of an event worthy of Nikitushka Lomov.

Rakhmetov was going from the village of Pargolovo to town,<sup>124</sup> lost in thought and staring at the ground as he usually did. Not far from the Forestry Institute he was roused from his reflections by the cry of a desperate woman. He looked up: a horse pulling a lady's carriage had bolted. The lady was driving and had lost control; the reins were being dragged along the ground. The horse was only about two paces from Rakhmetov. He leaped into the middle of the road, but the horse galloped past and he didn't have time to seize the reins. He only managed to grab the rear axle. He brought the carriage to a halt and then fell down. A crowd ran over, helped the lady

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<sup>122</sup> An *artel* was a voluntary cooperative association of laborers or craftsmen who worked together, or sometimes only lived together to share expenses, under the guidance of an elected elder.

<sup>123</sup> That is, nearly an inch (see n. 179 above). On the hagiographic mode, for Rakhmetov's self-mortification, see n. 159 above. Writing from the confines of the Peter-Paul Fortress, Chernyshevsky is also suggesting that revolutionaries needed to prepare themselves for the rigors of tsarist imprisonment, corporal punishment, and/or possible torture.

<sup>124</sup> Pargolovo was then a popular hamlet for summer cottages (*dachas*) about six miles north of St. Petersburg; it now lies within the city limits of Leningrad.

from the carriage, and lifted Rakhmetov up. His chest was somewhat bruised, but the main thing was that the wheel had torn a rather large piece of flesh from his leg. The lady had already recovered and ordered that he be carried to her dacha, only about half a verst away. He agreed because he felt so weak but demanded that they send for Kirsanov at once, and no other doctor.

Kirsanov determined that the bruises on his chest were not too serious, but found that Rakhmetov was very weak from loss of blood. He had to remain there for ten days or so. Naturally the lady whom he'd rescued took care of him herself. He was so weak that he could do nothing at all; therefore he chatted with her. The time would have been lost in any case, so he talked and became quite involved in the conversation. The lady was a widow, only nineteen years old, moderately well off, fully independent, and an intelligent, decent woman. Rakhmetov's fiery speeches, not about love of course, fascinated her: "I see him in my dreams surrounded by a halo," she said to Kirsanov.<sup>125</sup> He also fell in love with her. Judging by his clothes and everything else, she concluded that he was extremely poor; therefore, on the eleventh day of his confinement, when he got up and announced that he was ready to go home, it was she who first confessed her love and proposed marriage.

"I've been more open with you than with most," he said. "You must see that people like me have no right to bind their destiny to someone else's."<sup>126</sup>

"Yes, that's true," she said. "You mustn't marry. But until it comes time for you to leave, you may still love me."

"No, I can't do that," he said. "I must suppress any love in myself: to love you would mean to bind my hands. They're already bound, and it will take me some time to untie them. But I'll manage. I must not love."

What became of this lady afterward? No doubt she experienced a great crisis in her own life; in all probability she too became an extraordinary person. I would like to know, but I don't. Kirsanov didn't tell me her name, nor did he know what had become of her. Rakhmetov asked him not to see the lady again and not to inquire about her. "If I supposed that you knew something about her, I'd never be able to resist asking about her. That would never do."

After learning about this incident, everyone recalled that for about a month or two, perhaps even longer, Rakhmetov was gloomier than usual. He didn't get angry at himself no matter how much he was teased about his abominable weakness, that is,

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<sup>125</sup> Another reference to the hagiographic origin of Rakhmetov's saintly character, rendered even more forcefully in the context of this novel by its revelation in a dream (see n. 159 above).

<sup>126</sup> Rakhmetov's abstinence from love finds its sources in the author's own theory of rational egoism and in his revolutionary fervor as well as in the religious traditions of early Christianity. In "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy" (see n. 84 above), Chernyshevsky asserted that the egoist could rationally decide to eschew personal enjoyments and advantages in order to serve science or some other worthy cause. In the tale "Alferev," also written during the author's imprisonment in the Peter-Paul Fortress, the hero brings himself and his comrades to grief by falling in love with a woman who does not share his revolutionary views.

his cigars; nor did he smile broadly or sweetly when flattered by hearing his nickname, Nikitushka Lomov. I remembered even more: three or four times during that summer, in conversations with me (sometime after our first chat he became fond of me because I teased him only when we were alone together), he answered my friendly jibes by saying, “Yes, do pity me. You’re right. Pity me. For I too am not an abstract idea, but a human being, one who longs to live life. Never mind. It will pass,” he would add. And he was right—it did. Only once more, as late as that autumn, when I’d annoyed him by too much teasing, did he repeat those same words.

Perhaps the perspicacious reader will guess from the above that I know more about Rakhmetov than I’m saying. Perhaps. I dare not contradict him, because he’s so perspicacious. But even if I do, who’s to tell how many more things I may know, about which you, O perspicacious reader, will never find out so long as you live. Here’s what I really don’t know: I don’t know where Rakhmetov is now, what he’s doing, or whether I’ll ever see him again. I have neither facts nor guesses, except for those that all his acquaintances share. When three or four months had passed after his disappearance from Moscow and no news about him had arrived, we all assumed that he’d left to travel, around Europe. This guess seemed to be correct. At least it was confirmed by the following circumstance. About a year after Rakhmetov disappeared, one of Kirsanov’s acquaintances en route from Vienna to Munich met a young man in a railway carriage, a Russian, who said that he’d traveled throughout the Slavic countries. Everywhere he’d made friends with people of all classes; he’d remained in each country long enough to get to know their ideas, customs, way of life, local institutions, and the material well-being of the major sectors of its population. For this purpose he’d lived in cities and towns alike and traveled on foot from village to village. Then he’d moved on to become acquainted with the Romanians and Hungarians in precisely the same way. He traveled through northern Germany, and then headed south to the German parts of Austria. He was now on his way to Bavaria, from there to Switzerland, and by way of Württemberg and Baden to France, which he planned to crisscross in the same way, and from there to England, always for the same purpose. He planned to spend about a year so occupied. If there was any time left, he’d visit the Spaniards and Italians; if not, then so be it, because that wasn’t so “necessary,” while it was “necessary” to study the other countries. Why? “For various reasons.” In any case, in a year it would be “necessary” for him to be in the North American states, the study of which he considered more “necessary” than that of any other country. He would remain there a long time, perhaps over a year, perhaps forever, if he found appropriate pursuits. But it was much more likely that in three years or so he’d return to Russia because it seemed that there—not now, but then, in three or four years—it would be “necessary” for him to be in Russia.<sup>127</sup>

All of this sounded very much like Rakhmetov, even all those “necessaries” that had so impressed the narrator. The age, voice, and features of the traveler, insofar as the

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<sup>127</sup> Another prophecy of the impending revolution in Russia (see nn. 163 and 193 above).

narrator could recall, also suggested that it was Rakhmetov. The narrator, however, had paid no special attention to his fellow traveler; besides, they were together for a short time, only two hours or so. The Russian had boarded the train in some small town and disembarked at some little village.

As a result, the narrator could describe the traveler's appearance only in very general terms. Absolute certainty was impossible, but in all probability it was Rakhmetov. On the other hand, who knows? Perhaps not.

There was another rumor circulating that a young Russian, a former landowner, had appeared before one of the greatest European thinkers of the nineteenth century, the father of modern philosophy, a German,<sup>128</sup> and had declared, "I have thirty thousand thalers, of which I need only five thousand.<sup>129</sup> I beg you to accept the rest." (This philosopher was then living in great poverty.)

"What on earth for?" he asked.

"To publish your works" was the reply.

Of course, the philosopher didn't accept the money. All the same, it seems that this Russian deposited the money in a bank under the philosopher's name, and then wrote a note to him as follows: "You may dispose of the money as you wish, even by throwing it into the water. You won't be able to return it to me because you'll never find me." Apparently the money is still in that bank. If this rumor is correct, then there's no doubt whatever that it was none other than Rakhmetov who'd appeared before that philosopher.

That's the sort of person who's now sitting in Kirsanov's study.

Yes, he was an extraordinary man, a specimen of a very rare breed. I haven't described a specimen of this breed in such detail merely in order to instruct you, O perspicacious reader, in the appropriate way (unknown to you, to treat such people. You'll never get to see even one example of this breed. Your eyes, O perspicacious reader, aren't constituted so that you can perceive such types. They're invisible to you. Only honest and bold eyes can see them. This description serves merely so that you'll know, even if only by hearsay, what kind of people exist on this earth. As for what purpose this description serves the female reader and the common reader, well, they themselves know.

Yes, people like Rakhmetov are funny, very amusing indeed. I say that for their own benefit, because I feel sorry for them. I say it to those noble people who are so fascinated by them: "Don't follow their example, O noble people," I say, "because the path to which they summon you leads to no personal joys." But the noble people don't listen to me. They reply, "No, it's not barren, it's rich—and even if barren here and there, still it doesn't take long to get past those places; we'll have the strength to reach other places that are rich in endless joy."

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<sup>128</sup> Feuerbach (see n. 41 above).

<sup>129</sup> The German thaler was worth three marks.

So you see, O perspicacious reader, it isn't to you but to another part of the public that I admit that people like Rakhmetov are funny. To you, O perspicacious reader, I shall say that these people aren't bad people. Otherwise, you might not understand that for yourself. Yes, they're not bad people. There are only a few of them, but through them everyone's life will flourish. Without them life would wither and go sour. There are only a few of them, but they make it possible for all people to breathe; without them people would suffocate. There's a great mass of honest and good people, but there are very few people like them. But these few people are within that mass, as theine is in tea, as bouquet is in fine wine. They are its strength and its aroma. They are the flower of the best people, the movers of the movers, the salt of the salt of the earth.<sup>130</sup>

### XXX.

"Well," thinks the perspicacious reader, "from now on the main character of this novel will be Rakhmetov. He'll outshine all the others. Vera Pavlovna will fall in love with him, and so, very soon, the exact same thing that happened to Lopukhov will happen to Kirsanov."

Nothing of the kind will happen, my perspicacious reader! Rakhmetov will spend the evening there and have a good chat with Vera Pavlovna. I shall not conceal one word of their conversation from you. You'll soon see that if I didn't want to share it with you, it would have been very easy for me to keep it to myself; the course of the action of my story would in no way be changed by its omission. Well in advance I'll tell you that after he's finished his little chat with Vera Pavlovna, Rakhmetov will take his leave; with that, he'll also take his leave from my narrative. He'll play neither a principal role nor a secondary one, nor any role at all in the rest of my novel.<sup>131</sup> But why then was he introduced and described in such detail? Well, my perspicacious reader, wouldn't you like to guess the reason? You'll be told why a few pages hence, following the conversation between Rakhmetov and Vera Pavlovna. As soon as he takes his leave, I'll explain it all to you at the end of this chapter. You may want to guess now what you'll be told then. It's not hard to guess if you've even the least notion of art, about which you so love to blather. But how could you guess? Well, I'll prompt you with more than half the answer: Rakhmetov has been introduced to fulfill the principal, most fundamenta, requirement of art, and exclusively to satisfy it. Well well, can you guess now? At least you can guess what this requirement is, what

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<sup>130</sup> Another biblical allusion comparing the "new people" with the disciples of Christ (see n. 1 above). In Matthew 5:13, Christ declares to his disciples, "You are the salt of the earth."

<sup>131</sup> Perhaps a veiled reference to Chernyshevsky's inability to participate further in political events because of his own incarceration. In any case, to underscore the difference between appearance, interpretation, and reality, Chernyshevsky provides the reader with several possible lines of development for Rakhmetov without indicating which will come to pass.



was needed to satisfy it, and how it was satisfied by the introduction of Rakhmetov, even though he has no influence or importance in the rest of the story. Come now, guess! My female reader and the common reader who doesn't go on at length about art already know the answer. But you, my wise male reader, you too must try to guess! You can have as much time as you need; for that purpose I'll put a long, thick black line between sections. See what good care I take of you? Pause over it and reflect as to whether you will or won't be able to guess the answer.

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Natasha Mertsalova arrived, shared Vera Pavlovna's grief, expressed sympathy, and then said that she'd gladly take charge of the workshop, even though she didn't know whether she could manage it. She grieved and sympathized again, and then began to help sort out the clothes. After asking the neighbors' maid to run to the bakery, Rakhmetov set up the samovar, made the tea, and served it. They all had tea. For about half an hour Rakhmetov sat with the ladies; he consumed five glasses of tea. He helped them empty half a huge pitcher of cream and consumed an enormous pile of biscuits, in addition to two plain rolls that served as the foundation for the rest. "I have a right to this delight because I'm sacrificing twelve hours of my time."

And so he indulged for a while and listened to the way the ladies were mourning; three times he expressed the opinion that it was "madness" to do it—that is, not to mourn, but to take one's own life for whatever reason (except as a result of a very painful and incurable physical ailment, or to avoid some painful and inevitable death, torture on the rack, for instance). Each time he expressed this opinion in a few strong words, as was his custom. He poured himself a sixth glass of tea, emptied the remaining cream into it, and took the rest of the biscuits (the ladies had finished their tea some time before). Then he bowed; armed with these supplies for the grand finale of his material delight, he retired to the study, where he spent some time as a sybarite, reclining on a sofa—a very common kind of sofa for anyone else, but one that for him was something of a Capuan luxury.<sup>132</sup> "I have a right to such a feast because I'm sacrificing twelve to fourteen hours of my time."

After finishing his material delight, he resumed the spiritual one, that is, reading Newton's commentary on the Apocalypse. About nine o'clock a police officer arrived to inform the suicide's wife about the particulars of the affair, which by now were already crystal clear. Rakhmetov said that the wife already knew and there was no point in talking to her. The officer was very glad to be spared such a harrowing scene. Then Masha and Rachel arrived to begin sorting clothes and goods. Rachel found that for everything, except the good fur coat (which she advised her not to sell because in three months or so she'd only have to get a new one, and Vera Pavlovna agreed), for everything else she could pay 450 rubles. It was Mertsalova's inner conviction that

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<sup>132</sup> After defeating the Romans at the Battle of Cannae in 216 B.C., the Carthaginian general Hannibal spent the winter at Capua, near Naples in south-central Italy, where his troops indulged themselves in luxurious living and debauchery.

this was a fair price. So by ten o'clock or so the commercial transaction had been completed. Rache, handed over 200 rubles (she didn't have any more cash with her) and said she'd send the rest with Mertsalova in two or three days. Then she collected her goods and left. Mertsalova stayed on for another hour, but she had to go home to feed her baby. She left, saying that she would come back tomorrow to accompany Vera Pavlovna to the railway station.

After Natasha Mertsalova had gone, Rakhmetov closed Newton's Commentary on the Apocalypse, put it carefully back on the shelf where it belonged, and sent Masha to ask Vera Pavlovna if he could see her. He could. He entered with his usual cool, unhurried manner.

"Vera Pavlovna, I'm now able to offer you a considerable degree of consolation. Earlier it was inappropriate; but now I can. First I must inform you that the general outcome of my visit will be consoling. You know that I don't waste words; therefore you should be calm in advance. I shall unfold the matter to you in its proper sequence. I told you that I'd seen Alexander Matveich and that I knew everything. That's really true. I actually have seen Alexander Matveich and I really do know everything. But I didn't say that I know everything from him; nor could I have said that, because actually I know everything not from him but from Dmitry Sergeich, who spent about two hours with me. I'd been notified that he was coming and therefore was at home to receive him. He spent two hours or even more with me after he wrote you that note which has caused you so much grief. It was he who asked me to..."

"You knew what he was planning to do, yet you didn't stop him?"

"I asked you to be calm because the general outcome of my visit will be consoling. I didn't stop him because his decision was well founded, as you'll soon see for yourself. As I was saying, it was he who asked me to spend this evening with you; knowing that you would be in mourning, he entrusted me with a commission. He chose me as his intermediary because he knew me to be a man who, once he's accepted a commission, will carry it out with absolute precision, and who cannot be deflected from its exact execution by any emotion or entreaties. He foresaw that you would beg me to violate his wishes, yet he trusted that I wouldn't be moved by your entreaties and would carry out his commission. I shall do so. Therefore, I ask you in advance, do not request any concessions from me. His commission was as follows: In taking his leave and preparing to 'quit the scene,' he ..."

"My God ! What has he done? Why didn't you stop him?"

"Try to understand the meaning of the phrase 'quit the scene,' and don't condemn me prematurely. He did use that phrase in the note you received, isn't that right? And we'll use precisely that same phrase because it's extremely accurate and very well chosen."

Vera Pavlovna's eyes began to display some confusion. More and more she realized, "I don't know what he means. What am I supposed to think?" Oh, that Rakhmetov, with al, the apparent absurdity of his circumstantial method of explanation, was a

master, a grand master in managing this affair. He was a superb psychologist who knew very well the laws of gradual preparation and could carry them out.

“And so, in taking his leave, according to his own very accurate expression, to ‘quit the scene,’ he left me a note for you...”

Vera Pavlovna jumped up.

“Where is it? Give it to me! And you could sit here all day and not give it to me?”

“Yes, I could because I saw the need to do so. Soon you’ll, be able to appreciate my reasons. They are well founded. First of all, I must explain the expression I used at the very beginning, namely, ‘the general outcome will be consoling.’ By ‘consoling’ I didn’t mean the mere receipt of this note, for two reasons: first, receipt of the note in and of itself wouldn’t be sufficient to deserve the name consolation, correct? Consolation requires something more. Therefore, the consolation must reside in the actual content of the note.”

Vera Pavlovna jumped up again.

“Calm down. I can’t say that you’re wrong. Having wamed you about the content of the note, I ask that you listen to the second reason for my stating that receipt of the note in and of itself won’t be sufficient consolation, and that I am referring to its content. The content of the note, the nature of which we’ve just determined, is so important that I can only show it to you, and can’t give it to you. You’ll read it, but you can’t have it to keep.”

“What? You won’t give it to me?”

“No. That’s precisely why I was chosen. Anyone else in my place would give you the note. It cannot remain in your possession because, by virtue of the extreme importance of its contents, the nature of which we’ve just determined, it cannot remain in anyone’s possession. If I gave it to you, you’d want to keep it. Therefore, so as not to have to resort to force in order to take it away from you, I won’t give it to you in the first place; I’ll merely show it to you. However, I shall do so only when you’re seated with your hands folded on your knees, and only after you’ve given me your word that you won’t raise your hands.”

If an onlooker had been present, no matter how sensitive his heart, he couldn’t have refrained from laughing at the solemnity of this entire procedure, in particular at the ritual ceremoniousness of this finale. It was undoubtedly ridiculous. But how good it would be for our nerves if, in the communication of such important news, a person were able to maintain even a tenth of Rakhmetov’s restraint during the preparation.

But Vera Pavlovna, not being an onlooker, could of course experience only the excruciating aspect of his slow pace. She herself appeared as a figure no less capable of amusing our observer as she quickly sat down, obediently folded her hands, and exclaimed in a most amusing voice (that is, with painful impatience), “I swear!”

Rakhmetov placed on the table a sheet of writing paper on which some ten or twelve lines were written.

Scarcely had Vera Pavlovna cast one glance at it when, at that very same instant, flushing and forgetting all her oaths, she jumped up. Like a flash of lightning her hand tried to grab the note, but it was already far, far away, in Rakhmetov's uplifted hand.

"I expected that; therefore, as you might have noticed, I never even let go of the note. In precisely the same way I'll continue to hold this page by the corner the whole time it will lie here on the table. Consequently, all your efforts to grab the note will be in vain."

Once again Vera Pavlovna sat down and folded her hands. Once again Rakhmetov placed the note before her eyes. She read it through with considerable agitation some twenty times. Rakhmetov stood next to her chair very patiently and kept his hand on the corner of the paper. About a quarter of an hour passed in this way. Finally Vera Pavlovna raised her hand very gently, obviously with no acquisitive intentions; she covered her eyes and said, "How kind he is, how very kind."

"I don't completely share your opinion and will explain why not. That will, not be part of my commission, merely the statement of my own view, which I also expressed to him at our last meeting. His commission consisted merely in showing you this note and then burning it. Have you seen it long enough?"

"No, more, more."

She folded her hands again, and again he showed her the note, standing there for another good quarter of an hour with the same patience as before. Again she covered her face with her hands and affirmed, "Oh, he's so kind, so very kind."

"You've studied this note as much as you possibly could. If you'd been in a calmer state of mind, by now you would have memorized not only its contents but the form of every single letter—since you've stared at it so attentively for so long. But in your current agitation all laws governing memory are invalidated, and your memory can betray you. Foreseeing this possibility, I have made a copy of the text; whenever you wish, you may see this copy at my house. After a certain period of time I'll probably be able to give you that copy. For now, I assume that I can burn the original, and then my commission will have been fulfilled."

"Show it to me once more."

He placed the note on the table again. This time Vera Pavlovna read it and continually lifted her gaze from the paper; obviously she was learning the text by heart and checking to see whether she'd memorized its contents. In a few minutes she sighed and no longer raised her eyes from it.

"Now I can see that you've had long enough. It's time. It's already midnight and I'd still like to express my views on this matter because I consider it useful for you to hear them. Do you agree?"

"Yes."

At that very instant the note was consumed by the candle flame.

"Oh!" cried Vera Pavlovna. "I didn't mean that! Why did you?"

"Yes, you merely said that you'd agreed to listen to me. But it's all the same now. Sooner or later I had to burn it." Having said this, Rakhmetov sat down. "Besides,

there's still my copy of the note. Now, Vera Pavlovna, I'll express to you my opinion on this matter. I'll begin with you. You're leaving. Why?"

"I would find it very painful to remain here. The sight of places that would remind me of the past would upset me."

"Yes, that feeling is unpleasant. But would it really be that much easier in any other place? Not very much. Besides, what are you really doing? To seek some slight relief you've abandoned to the mercy of fate some fifty people whose lives depend on you. Is that right?"

Gone was Rakhmetov's solemn, boring manner! Now his voice was lively, natural, simple, direct, and animated.

"Yes, but I was going to ask Natasha Mertsalova to replace me."

"That's not the same. You don't know whether she'd be capable of replacing you in the workshop. Her suitability has never been tested. The position requires rather rare ability. I'll bet ten to one that there's really no one to replace you and that your departure would destroy the whole enterprise. Is that fair? You'd be subjecting the well-being of some fifty people to almost certain, inevitable ruin. And for what? For some small personal convenience! Is that right? What tender solicitude to your own insignificant comfort, yet what indifference to the fate of others! How do you like this view of the whole affair?"

"Why didn't you try to stop me?"

"You wouldn't have listened to me. Besides, I knew you'd return soon and it would all come to nothing. How do you plead? Guilty?"

"All the way," said Vera Pavlovna, half in jest, but half (even more than half) in earnest.

"No, that's still only part of the way. All the way involves a great deal more. But first you'll receive a reward for your repentance: assistance in correcting your other fault. Are you quite calm now, Vera Pavlovna?"

"Yes, almost."

"Good. Do you think Masha is asleep? Do you still need her for anything?"

"Of course not."

"But you're already quite calm. You really ought to have told her to go to sleep. It's after midnight and she gets up very early. Who was supposed to remember that, you or I? I'll tell her to go to sleep. And here again, for your new repentance (since you're obviously repenting), there'll come another reward. I'll see what's left to eat in the kitchen. You haven't had any dinner today; I suspect that by now your appetite has returned."

"Yes, it has. Actually, now that you mention it, I can see that I'm very hungry indeed," said Vera Pavlovna, laughing aloud.

Rakhmetov brought in some cold leftovers from dinner. Masha had shown him where to find some cheese and a jar of mushrooms. The snack proved to be very tasty. He also brought in two place settings, doing everything himself.

"You see, Rakhmetov, the gusto with which I'm eating! It must mean that I was hungry. Yet I didn't realize it myself. Clearly I'd forgotten not only about Masha but about myself too. That must mean I'm not such a malicious criminal after all."

"Nor was it because I'm such a paradigm of solicitude for others that I reminded you about your appetite. I had a poor dinner myself and was hungry. Actually, I ate what another person would have considered enough for a dinner and a half—but you know how much I eat—enough for two strapping peasants."

"Oh, Rakhmetov, you're my guardian anget and not only because of my appetite. But why did you sit here all day and not show me that note? Why did you torture me for so long?"

"I had a good reason. It was essential for other people to see how upset you were so that word of your terrible state would spread and confirm the incident that so distressed you. Surely you wouldn't have wanted to feign sorrow! And it's impossible to replace true emotion entirely; the real thing always appears much more convincing. Now there are three sources of confirmation: Masha, Mertsalova, and Rachel. Mertsalova is particularly important, since she's not a member of your immediate circle. I was very glad that you decided to send for her."

"You're so very shrewd, Rakhmetov."

"Yes. It wasn't a bad idea to wait till night time, either. But that wasn't my doing—it was Dmitry Sergeich who thought of that."

"He's so kind!" said Vera Pavlovna with a sigh; but the truth is that she sighed not out of sorrow but only out of thankfulness.

"Hey, Vera Pavlovna, we'll talk about him later. He's been thinking clearly and behaving admirably lately. But we'll also find some faults in him, even some major ones."

"Rakhmetov, don't you dare talk about him like that. Do you hear? I'll get very angry."

"Are you rebelling? You'll be punished for that. Shal, I carry on? The list of your crimes has only just begun."

"Punish on, punish on, Rakhmetov."

"First you get a reward for submitting. Submission is always rewarded. You must have a bottle of wine around here somewhere. You could use a drink. Where might I find it? In the sideboard or the cupboard?"

"The sideboard."

There he found a bottle of sherry. Rakhmetov urged Vera Pavlovna to drink two glasses, while he lit up a cigar.

"What a pity that I can't have three or four glasses myself. I'd like to."

"Would you really, Rakhmetov?"

"I'm envious, Vera Pavlovna, very envious," he said with a laugh. "The flesh is weak."

"You! Weak! Thank God! But you astonish me, Rakhmetov. You're not at all what you seem to be. Why do you always appear to be such a gloomy monster? And why are you such a nice, agreeable fellow now?"

“Vera Pavlovna, I’m carrying out an agreeable obligation. Why shouldn’t I be agreeable, too? But this is a rare occasion. In general one sees such disagreeable things; how can one help being a gloomy monster? Only now, Vera Pavlovna, that you’ve had the chance to see me in a mood that I’d like to be in all the time, and since we’ve been so open with one another, let it remain our secret that I’m really not a gloomy monster because I enjoy it. It’ll be easier for me to fulfill my obligations if others don’t notice that I’d like not only to do that, but also to enjoy life. Now people don’t try to distract me or take up my time by forcing me to refuse their invitations. And now, so that you can more easily conceive of me as a gloomy monster, we must continue our investigation of your crimes.”

“What more do you want? You’ve already discovered two: neglect of Masha and the workshop. I’ve repented of both.”

“Neglect of Masha is merely a misdemeanor, not a crime. Masha didn’t perish because she had to rub her sleepy eyes one hour longer. On the contrary, she did it with the pleasant feeling that she was carrying out her duties. But for neglect of the workshop I really do want to take you to task.”

“But you’ve already done so.”

“Not completely. I want to finish the job. How could you possibly leave the workshop to its ruin?”

“But I’ve already repented. Besides, I wasn’t going to abandon it completely: Mertsalova had agreed to replace me.”

“We’ve already said that your intention to be replaced by her is not a good excuse. By using it you have pleaded guilty to a new crime.” Rakhmetov was gradually assuming a very serious tone again, though not a gloomy one. “You say that she’s replacing you. Has that been decided?”

“Yes,” said Vera Pavlovna, without her previous jocular tone, sensing that something bad was about to follow.

“Now see here. It’s been decided . . . by whom? By you and her? Without any inquiry as to whether those fifty people would agree to the change, whether they might prefer something else or find something better. Why, that’s despotism, Vera Pavlovna! So you’ve committed two major crimes: callousness and despotism. But the third is even more serious. An institution that more or less corresponds to very sound ideas about the organization of daily life, that serves more or less as a significant confirmation of their practicality (there are still so few practical proofs and each one is still so precious)—this same institution you were subjecting to the threat of destruction. You could have transformed it from a demonstration of practicality to proof of inapplicability, of the absurdity of your convictions, a means for rejecting a set of ideas beneficial for all humanity. You would have provided the defenders of darkness and evil with an argument against your own sacred principles. I’m not even talking about the fact that you might have destroyed the well-being of some fifty people. What do fifty people matter? You could have harmed the cause of all mankind and betrayed the idea of progress! That, Vera Pavlovna, in ecclesiastical language is called a sin

against the Holy Spirit.<sup>133</sup> It's said that a person can be forgiven any other sin but that. Is it true? How do you plead? How fortunate that everything turned out as it did, and that these sins were committed only in your imagination. I see that you're really blushing now, Vera Pavlovna. Good, I'll provide you with some consolation. If you hadn't suffered so much, you'd never have committed such criminal offenses, even in your own imagination. That means that the real offender in all this is the person who brought about your distress. Yet you keep repeating, "He's so kind, so very kind."

"What? Then in your opinion he's the one responsible for my suffering?"

"Who else? And this whole affair—he managed it very well I'm not arguing about that—why did it happen? Why all this fuss? It should never even have happened."

"Yes, I shouldn't ever have had that feeling. But I didn't ask for it. I even tried to suppress it."

"'You shouldn't have had that feeling!' You were blind to the true source of your guilt, yet you still blame yourself for something you didn't do. This feeling had to arise sooner or later, given your nature and that of Dmitry Sergeich. One way or another it would have developed. Here the fundamental feeling was not that you fell in love with another man: that's merely the consequence. The fundamental feeling was dissatisfaction with your previous relationship. What form should this dissatisfaction have taken? If you and he both, or even just one of you, had been less developed, less refined, or just bad people, then this feeling would probably have followed its customary form: hostility between husband and wife. You would have fought with each other if both of you were bad, or else one of you would have carped and the other would have been tormented. In any case, it would have been one of those domestic hells we have the chance to admire in such a large majority of couples. Of course, it would in no way have interfered with the emergence of your love for another person; but the main thing in such a case would have been the hell itself, the incessant carping at each other. Your dissatisfaction couldn't take this form because you're both decent people; therefore it developed into its mildest, gentlest, least offensive form—love for another person. So there's no point in talking about that love for another person—it's not the crux of the matter. The main point is your dissatisfaction with your previous position; the reason for that dissatisfaction was the incompatibility of your two natures. You're both good people, but when your character matured, Vera Pavlovna, when you lost your childish indecisiveness and acquired definite traits, it turned out that you and Dmitry Sergeich were not well suited to each other. Is there anything reprehensible in either of you? Take me, for example. I too am a good person. Could you bear to live with me? You'd hang yourself in despair after how many days?"

"After only a very few days," said Vera Pavlovna laughing.

"He's not so gloomy a monster as I am; still you and he are too mismatched. Who should have been the first to notice this fact? Who was older? Whose character was

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<sup>133</sup> Once again Chernyshevsky equates social revolution with the realization of God's kingdom on earth.



formed sooner? Who had more life experience? Why, he should have foreseen it and prepared you so that you wouldn't get frightened and wouldn't have to grieve. But he realized this only afterward, when the feeling he should have anticipated, but did not, had not only developed in full but even produced another one. Why didn't he foresee it and notice it? Was he stupid, or what? He was smart enough. No, he neglected his relationship with you, Vera Pavlovna. It was a result of his inattention and negligence, that's what! While you keep on saying, 'How kind he is! How he loves me!'" Rakhmetov had gradually become more animated. Although he was now speaking with considerable feeling, Vera Pavlovna still managed to interrupt him.

"I don't have to listen to you, Rakhmetov," she said in a tone of extreme dissatisfaction. "You're pouring abuse on a man to whom I am eternally grateful."

"No, Vera Pavlovna, if you didn't have to listen to me, I would never have started speaking. Do you think I realized all this only today? That I could say it all if I'd only just noticed it? You know it's impossible to avoid talking to me, if I consider a conversation necessary. In other words, I could have told you all this sooner, but I chose to keep silent, didn't I? It also means that if I've now begun to speak to you, it's necessary for me to do so. I say nothing before it's necessary. You know that I kept that note in my pocket for a full nine hours, even though I found it painful to look at you. But it was necessary for me to keep silent, so I did so. Consequently, if I now say that for some time I've been thinking about Dmitry Sergeich's relationship with you, then it's necessary for me to speak about it."

"No, I don't want to listen," said Vera Pavlovna in extreme agitation. "I ask you to be still, Rakhmetov. I want you to leave. I'm very grateful to you for having wasted I a whole evening on my account, but now I ask you to leave."

"Are you sure?"

"Very sure."

"Fine," he said laughing. "No, ma'am. You won't get away from me that easily, Vera Pavlovna. I foresaw this possibility and took appropriate precautions. The note that I burned he wrote on his own. But this one he wrote at my request. I can leave it with you because it's not an official document. Here it is." Rakhmetov handed another note to Vera Pavlovna: "July 11. 2 A.M. My dear friend Verochka. Listen to everything that Rakhmetov has to say. I don't know what he wants to tell you. I haven't asked him to say anything, and he hasn't given me any indication of what he wants to say. But I know that he never says anything unnecessary. Yours, D. L."

God knows how many times Vera Pavlovna kissed this note!

"Why didn't you give it to me sooner? Perhaps you have something else from him?"

"No, nothing else, since nothing else was necessary. Why didn't I give it to you sooner? As long as there was no need, I didn't find it necessary."

"Good Lord, what do you mean there was no need? To give me the pleasure of having a few lines from him written after we parted!"

"Well, if it was only for that reason, it wasn't so important," he said with a smile.

"Ah, Rakhmetov, you want to drive me crazy!"

“So now will this note cause a new quarrel between us?” he asked, laughing again. “If that’s the case, then I’ll take it and burn it. You know it’s said that people of our kind hold nothing sacred. We’re capable of any violence and villainy. Now may I continue?”

They both were calmer now, she from receiving the note and he from sitting in silence for a few moments while she was kissing it.

“Yes, I am obliged to listen.”

“He didn’t notice what he should have noticed,” began Rakhmetov in a serene tone, “and that’s produced unfortunate consequences. But while we can’t really blame him for something he didn’t notice, we can’t exonerate him either. Let’s suppose that he didn’t know all this would inevitably arise from the nature of the relations between your character and his; nevertheless, he should have prepared you for something of the sort, simply as a contingency, an undesirable, unexpected one, but one that could arise nonetheless. No one can vouch for the future; all things are possible. Surely he was already familiar with the axiom that says all things are possible. How did he leave you in such a state that when all this occurred you were so completely unprepared? The fact that he didn’t foresee it resulted from his negligence and was harmful to you; in and of itself that fact is of little consequence, neither bad nor good. But the fact that he didn’t prepare you for any contingency resulted from a very bad motive. Of course he was acting unconsciously, but man’s nature is revealed in those very acts. It would have gone against his own interests to prepare you, since any preparation would have weakened your resistance to a feeling not in accord with his own interests. You experienced such a powerful emotion that your own resistance was useless; but once again it was pure chance that the emotion arose with such strength. If it had been inspired by a less deserving man, though still a worthy one, it would have been less powerful. Feelings so strong that it’s useless to struggle against them are rare exceptions. There’s a much greater chance for the appearance of the kind of feelings that can be overcome if the will to resist hasn’t been totally weakened. It was precisely for this more likely possibility that he didn’t want to weaken it. That’s the reason he left you unprepared and subjected you to such suffering. What do you think about that?”

“It’s not true, Rakhmetov. He didn’t conceal his way of thinking from me. His convictions were as well known to me as they are to you.”

“Of course, Vera Pavlovna. Concealing them would have been too much! To interfere with the development of those convictions that would have corresponded to his own, to pretend to think something other than what he really thought—that would have been downright dishonorable. You would never have fallen in love with such a man! Have I ever called him a bad person? He’s a very good man; how could he be otherwise? I’ll praise him as much as you like. I’m merely saying that before this whole matter arose—once it did, he behaved admirably—but before it arose, he behaved badly. Why did you have to torment yourself? He said—though he didn’t have to say anything since it was so obvious—that you did it so as not to hurt him. How could the idea that this

would hurt him have occurred to you and stayed with you? It shouldn't have. How can one talk of hurt in this case? Why, it's absurd! Jealousy! Imagine!"

"Don't you recognize jealousy, Rakhmetov?"

"It shouldn't exist in a developed person. It's a distorted emotion, a false feeling, a despicable one, an outcome of the sort of thing that would make me refuse to let anyone wear my underclothes or use my cigar holder. It's the result of regarding a person as my own property, as an inanimate object."

"But, Rakhmetov, if you don't recognize jealousy, that leads to terrible consequences."

"For a person who feels it, the consequences are terrible; for a person who doesn't, there's nothing terrible about it at all or even important."

"But you're advocating total immorality, Rakhmetov."

"Is that what you think after living with him for four years? It's precisely in this respect that he's guilty. How many times a day do you have dinner? Once. Would anyone object if you had dinner twice a day? Probably not. Why don't you do it? Are you afraid of hurting someone, perhaps? Probably it's simply because it's unnecessary, or that you don't feel like it. Yet dinner is a very pleasant thing. But your reason—even more, your appetite—says that one dinner is pleasant, but not a second. But if you conceived the fantasy or the morbid whim to dine twice a day, would the fear of hurting someone deter you? No. If someone were offended by it or were to forbid it, you would merely conceal it. You would eat your food secretly—soiling your hands by grabbing it too quickly and your clothes by hiding it in your pockets—but that's all. There'd be no question of morality or immorality, only whether contraband is a good thing. Who's deterred by the thought that jealousy is a feeling worthy of respect and pity? Who says to himself, 'Oh, if I do this, I'll hurt someone!' Whom would this cause to suffer needlessly in a struggle? Only a few, the noblest ones, whose nature (have no fear) will never lead them into immorality. This nonsense won't deter the rest, but will merely force them to resort to schemes and deception, that is, to become really bad. That's all there is to it. Didn't you know all of this?"

"Of course I did."

"Well then, where are you going to find the moral worth of jealousy?"

"But he and I always spoke in the same vein."

"Probably not quite in the same vein; perhaps you said these words, but you didn't believe each other when you heard them. And you didn't believe them, of course, because you constantly heard them applied to all sorts of different subjects; perhaps they were even applied to this very subject but in a different vein. Otherwise, how could you have suffered for God knows how long? And what on earth for? Such torment over mere trifles! What distress for all three people, especially for you, Vera Pavlovna! Meanwhile, all three of you could have lived very calmly as you did the year before. You could have moved into one apartment or made some other arrangement, whatever, without causing any distress at all. You could have continued to have tea, the three of you together, and go to the opera together just as you did before. Why all this suffering?"

Why these crises? It's all because, thanks to his previous poor method of keeping you unprepared for such an eventuality, you persisted in thinking, 'I'm killing him'—which wouldn't have been true at all. Yes, he caused you a great deal of unnecessary grief."

"No, Rakhmetov. You say such horrible things."

"'Horrible things' again! So far as I'm concerned, here's what's really horrible: torment over trifles and crises over nonsense."

"So in your opinion our entire story is no more than a stupid melodrama?"

"Yes, an entirely unnecessary melodrama mixed with entirely unnecessary tragedy. And Dmitry Sergeich is to blame for the fact that instead of simple conversations of the most serene sort, such a heart-rending melodrama arose. His honorable course of action is hardly enough to compensate for his previous guilt in failing to avert this melodrama by not preparing both you and (probably) himself, to maintain a very calm attitude toward all of this, to regard it as pure nonsense, as something not worth drinking an extra glass of tea over, or not finishing one either. He's very much to blame. But he's paid enough for it, too.

"Now have another glass of sherry and go to bed, Vera Pavlovna. I've achieved the final goal of my visit. It's already three o'clock in the morning. If no one disturbs you, you'll sleep a very long time. I told Masha not to wake you before ten-thirty, so that tomorrow morning you'll barely have time to drink your tea before you have to rush off to the railway station. If you don't manage to pack all your things, you can come back soon or your things can be sent on. Which do you think would be best?' Should Alexander Matveich leave right after you, or will you come back yourself? You'll have a hard time with Masha, since it won't do for her to see that you're completely calm now. She won't notice it during your busy half hour of packing. It will be much worse with Mertsalova; I'll drop in on her early tomorrow morning and tell her not to come by here, since you had such difficulty sleeping and shouldn't be disturbed. I'll tell her she should go directly to the railway station."

"What thoughtfulness," said Vera Pavlovna.

"You shouldn't attribute it to him. This time it all comes from me. Except for the fact that I blamed him for the past (of course, to his face I spoke at greater length and with more force), and, I repeat, except for the fact that he's entirely to blame for all this needless suffering, he behaved quite admirably once the suffering began."

## **XXXI. A Conversation with the Perspicacious Reader Followed by His Expulsion**

Now tell me, O perspicacious reader, why Rakhmetov was introduced, if now he's gone and will no longer appear in my story? You've already been told that he has no role whatever in the action...

“That’s not true,” interrupts the perspicacious reader. “Rakhmetov is a principal character: he carried the note in which...”

“You’re very poor, my dear sir, in those aesthetic deliberations you so love,” I reply, interrupting him. “In that case would you also consider Masha a principal character? At the beginning of the story she also delivered a letter that horrified Vera Pavlovna. And what about Rachel? She gave Vera money for those goods, and without it Vera Pavlovna wouldn’t have been able to leave. Is Professor N. an important character because he recommended Vera Pavlovna as a governess to Madame B., and otherwise there would have been no scene upon her return from Konnogvardeisky Boulevard? Perhaps even the boulevard is a principal character? Without it there would have been no possibility of either meeting on it or returning from it. And Gorokhovaya Street must then emerge as the most important character of all, since without it no houses could stand there, including the Storeshnikovs’, nor would there be a manager, a manager’s daughter, or any story at all. Well, let’s assume that you’re right, that they’re all important characters (Konnogvardeisky Boulevard and Masha, Rache, and Gorokhovaya Street); still, only half a dozen words (or less, are devoted to each of them because their role is such that they deserve no more. But look at how many pages have been devoted to Rakhmetov.”

“Oh, now I understand,” says the perspicacious reader. “Rakhmetov was introduced in order to pronounce sentence on Vera Pavlovna and Lopukhov. He was needed for the conversation with Vera Pavlovna.”

“Oh, you’re so dumb, my dear sir! You’ve got it al, backward. Was it really necessary to introduce a special character so that he could express his opinion of the others? Perhaps your great literary artists introduce characters in their works and discard them according to those considerations, but I, although only a poor writer, understand nevertheless the requirements of true art somewhat better than that. No, my dear sir, Rakhmetov wasn’t needed for that at all! How many times have Vera Pavlovna, Lopukhov, and Kirsanov expressed their opinions of their own actions and relationships? They’re not stupid people; they can decide for themselves what’s good and what’s bad, and have no need for any prompting. Don’t you really think that Vera Pavlovna, while enjoying her leisure in a few days, would begin to recollect this chaos and would condemn her own disregard for the workshop, just as Rakhmetov did? And don’t you think that Lopukhov himself reflected on his relations with Vera Pavlovna in precisely the same way as Rakhmetov described them to her? He knew it all. Decent people know everything that can possibly be said against them; that’s precisely why, my dear sir, they’re such decent people. Didn’t you realize that? You’re very poor, my dear sir, in your understanding of the way decent people think. I’ll, say even more. Do you really suppose that in his conversation with Vera Pavlovna, Rakhmetov was acting independently of Lopukhov? No, my dear sir, he was merely Lopukhov’s agent; he himself understood that fact very well. Vera Pavlovna realized it a day or two later, and would have realized it the very moment Rakhmetov opened his mouth to speak if she hadn’t been so upset. That’s how things really were. Didn’t you understand

that? Of course, in his second note Lopukhov admitted in all honesty that he'd said not one word to Rakhmetov, nor he to Lopukhov, about the nature of Rakhmetov's forthcoming conversation with Vera Pavlovna. Lopukhov knew Rakhmetov very well; he knew precisely what Rakhmetov thought about certain matters and what he'd say about them. Decent people understand each other without having to explain themselves; Lopukhov could have written out in advance almost word for word everything that Rakhmetov said to Vera Pavlovna, precisely because he'd asked Rakhmetov to act as his intermediary. Shall I let you in on even deeper psychological mysteries? Lopukhov knew perfectly well that his own opinion of himself was shared by Rakhmetov (and Mertsalov, and Mertsalova, and even the officer who wrestled with him at the picnic on the island); and that soon even Vera Pavlovna would come to share that opinion, even though no one was ever going to tell her about it. She'd understand it at once, as soon as the first flush of gratitude had passed. Consequently, Lopukhov calculated that he'd lose nothing in the final analysis if he sent Rakhmetov, who was going to criticize him, since she herself would soon reach the same conclusions. On the contrary, Lopukhov would rise in her estimation, since she'd soon realize that he'd foreseen the nature of the conversation between her and Rakhmetov; she'd realize that he'd arranged the conversation and would understand why he'd done so. Then she'd think, 'What a noble person he is, He recognized that during those first days of greatest agitation my gratitude to him would be so great that it would overwhelm me. He took care to ensure that thoughts would occur to me which would lift this burden as soon as possible. Even though I got angry at Rakhmetov for abusing Lopukhov, I still realized that basically he was speaking the truth. I'd have reached the same conclusion myself within a week; but it wouldn't have been so important to me then, since I'd already have felt calm. But this way these thoughts were expressed to me the very first day and I was spared the spiritual oppression that would otherwise have lasted a whole week. That day those thoughts were extremely important to me and very useful... Yes, he's a very noble person.'

"Such was the scheme devised by Lopukhov; Rakhmetov was merely his agent. You see, my dear sir, O perspicacious reader, what schemers these noble people are, and how egoism plays in their souls. It's different from yours, dear sir, because they take their satisfaction elsewhere. They take their greatest satisfaction in having people whom they respect regard them as noble; to achieve this end, my dear sir, they work hard and devise all sorts of schemes no less diligently than you do in pursuit of your goals. Only your goals are different, and so the schemes you devise are not the same. You devise schemes that are worthless and harmful to others; they devise schemes that are honest and useful to others."

"How dare you speak to me so rudely?" exclaims the perspicacious reader, addressing himself to me. "I'll complain about you and I'll spread the word that you're an evil person!"

"Have mercy, dear sir," I reply. "Would I dare speak so rudely to you, since I respect your character as much as your intellect? I merely wish to enlighten you about certain

artistic matters that you so love. In this respect you're mistaken, dear sir, in assuming that Rakhmetov was introduced only to pronounce sentence on Vera Pavlovna and Lopukhov. There was no such necessity. The views he expresses about them contain nothing whatever that I couldn't have communicated to you, dear sir, as Lopukhov's own thoughts about himself, or as thoughts that Vera Pavlovna would have had eventually about herself and Lopukhov, even without Rakhmetov's intervention. Now, dear sir, here's a question for you. Why have I included this conversation between Rakhmetov and Vera Pavlovna? Do you understand that if I choose to convey a conversation between them instead of Lopukhov's or Vera Pavlovna's thoughts, then it was essential to convey not merely the thoughts that made up their conversation but also the conversation itself? Why was it necessary to convey that conversation? Because it took place between Rakhmetov and Vera Pavlovna. Now do you understand? You still don't? You're a fine one! Not too bright, are you? Well, then, I'll have to spoon-feed you. If two people converse, their characters become more or less apparent during the course of their conversation. Do you see where this is leading? Was Vera Pavlovna's character sufficiently clear to you before this conversation? It was. You learned nothing new about her. You already knew that she flares up, likes to joke, is not averse to a hearty snack and maybe even an occasional sip of sherry. In other words, the conversation was unnecessary to characterize Vera Pavlovna. Well then? There were two people conversing, she and Rakhmetov. If not her, then, well . . . guess!"

"Rakhmetov!" exclaims the perspicacious reader.

"Congratulations, you've guessed it! I like you for that. Now, you see, it's exactly the opposite of what you thought before. It wasn't that Rakhmetov was introduced to have this conversation, but the conversation was included for the sole purpose of making you better acquainted with Rakhmetov. As a result you saw that Rakhmetov wanted to have some sherry, but didn't, and that he's not always a 'gloomy monster.' On the contrary, when engaged in some pleasant business, he forgets his sorrowful thoughts and his burning grief. He jests and chats cheerfully, although he says that this rarely happens, that he's sad it occurs so seldom; that he himself isn't happy to be such a 'gloomy monster,' but that circumstances are such that a person with his ardent love for the good can't help being a 'gloomy monster.' If it weren't for that, he might spend the whole day joking, laughing, singing, and dancing.

"Now do you understand, my perspicacious reader, that while many pages were devoted to a direct description of Rakhmetov's character, many more served exclusively to make you better acquainted with an individual who is not at all a principal character in the novel? Tell me now why this figure was presented and described in such detail. Do you recall what I told you earlier? 'Exclusively to fulfill the fundamental requirement of art'? Now consider what that requirement is and how I've fulfilled it by presenting you with the figure of Rakhmetov. Have you figured it out? No, of course not! Well then, listen here. Even better, don't listen, since you won't understand. Leave me alone. I've made fun of you long enough. Now I'll speak with the public instead of with you, and I'll be very serious.

“The first requirement of art is as follows: one must always depict objects so that the reader can perceive their true form. For example, if I want to portray a house, I must see to it that the reader conceives of it as a house, and as neither a hovel nor a palace. If I want to depict an ordinary person, I must see to it that the reader conceives of him as neither a dwarf nor a giant.

“I wanted to depict decent, ordinary people of the new generation, those I meet by the hundreds. I took three such characters: Vera Pavlovna, Lopukhov, and Kirsanov. I consider them to be ordinary people; they see themselves as such, and their friends, who are the same sort of people, consider them to be ordinary. Where have I said anything different about them? What have I said that contradicts this? I depicted them with love and respect because every decent person is worthy of both love and respect. But did I ever bow before their superiority? Where do you see even the slightest indication that these people are God knows how lofty and beautiful and that I can conceive of nothing loftier and better than they and that they are ideal human beings? Just as I conceive of them, so they behave in my novel, no different from decent, ordinary people of the younger generation. Where are their noble deeds? They don’t commit base acts, nor do they behave in a cowardly manner; they have ordinary, honest convictions that they try to act upon, and that’s that. What kind of heroism is that, may I ask? Yes, I wanted to show people behaving just like all ordinary people of this type; I hope I’ve succeeded in doing so. I hope that those readers who are already acquainted with living examples of them will have seen from the very beginning that my main characters are not ideals at all but are no better than the general level of people of this sort; every one of them has experienced two or three incidents in which these people have acted no worse than my characters. Let’s suppose that other decent people have experienced events that aren’t exactly the same as those narrated here. Why, there’s absolutely nothing extraordinary or charming about the idea that all husbands and wives should be separated; look here, not every decent woman conceives a passionate love for her husband’s friend, not every decent man must struggle against his passion for a married woman (for three long years at that), and not every man is forced to shoot himself on a bridge or (in the words of the perspicacious reader), to disappear to God knows where from a hotel. But on the other hand, every decent person would by no means consider it heroic to behave in their place as these characters did. He’d be perfectly prepared if this were to happen, and indeed has many times behaved no worse in situations no less difficult or even more difficult than these, and still he wouldn’t consider himself an amazing kind of person. He would consider himself merely an average man, nothing special, reasonably honorable. The good friends of such a person (also people of the same type, since he wouldn’t be friends with other types) would also consider that he was a good person. They wouldn’t even think about getting down on their knees before him; they’d think that they’re the same type of person as he is. I hope I’ve managed well enough so that every decent man of the new generation will recognize an ordinary example of one of his good friends in my three main characters.



“But those readers who from the very beginning of my story will think about my main characters, Vera Pavlovna, Kirsanov, and Lopukhov: “Well, these are our good friends, simple, ordinary people, like us,” those readers still constitute a minority of the public. The majority is still on a much lower level than this. A person who’s never seen anything except hovels would look at a picture of an ordinary house and mistake it for a luxurious palace. How can one ensure that such a person should perceive the house as a house and not a palace? In the same picture one must depict at least one corner of a palace. From this corner it will be clear that a palace is really a structure of a completely different sort than the one in the picture, and the observer will realize that the building is really nothing more than a simple, ordinary house in which all people should live (if not in better ones).

“If I hadn’t shown you the figure of Rakhmetov, the majority of readers would have misunderstood the main characters of my story. I’d bet that up until the last sections of this chapter most of the public considered Vera Pavlovna, Kirsanov, and Lopukhov to be heroes, people of a higher nature, perhaps even idealized figures, maybe even inconceivable in reality because of their very great nobility. No, my friends, my mean, base, pitiful friends, you’re quite mistaken: it’s not they who stand too high, but you who stand too low. Now you see that they’re simply standing at ground level; they appeared to be soaring above the clouds because you’re sitting in some godforsaken underworld.<sup>134</sup> All people should and can stand on the same level as they. Superior natures, which you, my pitiful friends, and I cannot keep up with, aren’t like this at all. I showed you a faint outline of the profile of one of them: there you see very different features. But you can become an equal to the people described here in full, if only you wish to work a bit on your own development. Anyone who is beneath them is very low indeed. Come up out of your godforsaken underworld, my friends, come up. It’s not so difficult. Come out into the light of day, where life is good; the path is easy and inviting. Try it: development, development. Observe, reflect, read those books that tell you about the pure enjoyment of life, and about the fact that man can be kind and happy. Read them: such books gladden the heart. Observe life: it’s so interesting. Reflect: it’s so fascinating. That’s all there is to it! No sacrifices are needed, no deprivations required—they’re all unnecessary. Desire to be happy—that’s all. Only desire is needed. To attain it you’ll take delight in devoting yourself to your own development. That’s where true happiness lies. Oh, what delights accrue to the developed individual! Even things that another person experiences as sacrifice or sorrow, he experiences as satisfaction and enjoyment. His heart is wide open to joy and he has a great deal of it. Try it—it’s good!”

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<sup>134</sup> Chernyshevsky compares the reader and most of society with Vera Pavlovna before her liberation from the cellar through the revelations of her first dream (see pp. 129–31 above).

## 4. Second Marriage

### I.

Berlin

July 20, 1856

Much esteemed Madame, Vera Pavlovna:

My close acquaintance with the late Dmitry Sergeich Lopukhov leads me to hope that you will kindly admit into the ranks of your acquaintance a total stranger, but one who respects you deeply. In any case, I venture to think that you will not accuse me of importunity. In entering into correspondence with you I'm merely fulfilling a wish of the late Dmitry Sergeich. The information I will communicate about him can be considered completely reliable, for I will convey his thoughts in his own words, as if he himself were speaking. Here are his own words concerning the matter this letter aims to clarify.

“The ideas that produced the outcome so disturbing to those people closest to me” (I'm conveying Dmitry Sergeich's original words just as I said I would) “matured gradually. My intention changed several times before it assumed its definitive form. The circumstance that first occasioned these ideas came to my attention in an unexpected way, only when she” (Dmitry Sergeich means you) “fearfully told me about the dream that had so terrified her.<sup>1</sup> That dream seemed to me to be very important. As a person who could look at her emotional state from the outside, I realized at that very moment that a new episode in her life was beginning, one that would alter our previous relationship for a relatively long time to come. But a person tries to maintain a situation to which he's become accustomed to the bitter end; at the very depths of our nature lies a conservative element that we relinquish only out of dire necessity. Here, in my opinion, lies the explanation of my first proposition: I wanted to think, indeed I managed to think, that in time this episode would pass, and that our previous relationship would be reestablished. She wished to avoid this episode by means of a more intimate relationship with me. This distracted me; for several days I was oblivious of the impossibility of realizing her hope. Soon, however, I became convinced that this hope was in vain. The reason lay in my own character.

“I don't wish to defame my character by saying this, but here's my understanding of it.

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<sup>1</sup> That is, Vera Pavlovna's third dream (see pp.236–43 above).

“A man who lives his life as he should divides his time into three parts: work, pleasure, and rest or recreation. Pleasure demands rest, just as much as work does. Both in work and pleasure the general human component predominates over individual peculiarities. In work we act under the predominant motive of external, rational necessities; in pleasure, under the predominant motive of other, equally general necessities of human nature. Rest or recreation is the element in which the personality seeks to renew its strength from these stimuli that exhaust the reserve of human resources. It’s an element introduced into life by the person himself. Here the person acts entirely in accordance with his own peculiarities, his own individual proclivities. Both in work and in pleasure people are drawn to each other by a general powerful force that is higher than their own personal peculiarities, that is, by the calculation of advantage in work, and by equivalent needs of the organism in pleasure. But rest is different. It’s not a matter of a general force acting to smooth over individual particularities. Rest is the most personal affair: human nature demands more room for itself. A person is more individualized; his character is revealed much more in the kind of rest he considers easiest and most enjoyable.

“In this regard people are divided into two main categories. For people in the first category, rest or recreation is more pleasant in the society of others. Everyone needs solitude, but for these people solitude must remain an exception. The rule for them is life with other people. This class is much more numerous than the other one, which requires just the opposite. These people feel much freer when alone than in the society of other people. This distinction has been noted even in common parlance, where it’s been characterized by the words ‘sociable person’ and ‘reserved person.’ I belong to the group of unsociable people; she belongs to the sociable group. This is the entire secret of our history. It seems clear from this explanation that neither of us is to be blamed. Nor should we be blamed for the fact that neither of us had the strength to overcome this circumstance: people are powerless against their own natures.

“It’s rather difficult for anyone to understand the peculiarities of other natures. Each of us conceives of others in terms of our own selves. Whatever I have no need of, no one else does either—that’s the way our individuality leads us to think. Blatant indications are required to make me understand otherwise. Conversely, whatever brings me relief and a feeling of freedom must do the same for others. The naturalness of this way of thinking is my real excuse for observing the difference between her nature and my own too late. This mistake was compounded by the fact that after we began to live together, she valued me too highly. There was still no equality between us.<sup>2</sup> On her side there was too much respect for me; my way of life seemed to her to be exemplary. She took as a universal characteristic something that was my own personal peculiarity;

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<sup>2</sup> In Chernyshevsky’s view, equality between spouses requires the economic independence of both partners as well as their mutual respect and complete freedom to form personal, loving relationships. The author’s definition of equality emerges most clearly in Vera Pavlovna’s fourth dream (pp. 359–79 below).

for a while she was swept away by it. There was also another reason, even stronger than this one.

“The inviolability of the inner life isn’t much respected among undeveloped people. Each member of the family, especially the older ones, will quite unceremoniously poke his nose into your intimate life. The point isn’t that our secrets are violated as a result; we never fail to guard and conceal those secrets of greater or lesser value. Besides, not everyone has secrets; many people have nothing whatever to hide from their nearest and dearest. But everyone wants to have a corner of his inner life where no one else trespasses, just as everyone wants to have a separate room for himself alone. Undeveloped people pay little attention to one or the other; if you have a separate room, everyone comes crashing into it, not out of a desire to pry or intrude but simply because they can’t conceive that they might be disturbing you. They consider that only if you found them totally repugnant would you prefer that they not drop in on you unannounced. They don’t understand that even if you’re well disposed toward them, you may still be disturbed or annoyed by them. The sanctity of a threshold no one has the right to cross without the consent of the person living on the other side is recognized only in one room, the one that belongs to the head of the household, because only he can drive out anyone who drops in on him without his permission. The rest of us must suffer intrusions from anyone either senior to us or equal to us in position in the household.

“What is true of one’s own room also applies to one’s inner life. Anyone can intrude upon it for any reason whatsoever, without any need, without any intention, idly, and, most often, for nothing better than to jabber away and grate against your soul. A young girl has two dresses for everyday wear, one white, the other pink. She’s put on the pink one; here’s a chance for someone to grate against her soul. ‘You’ve put on your pink dress, Anyuta. Why did you do that?’ Anyuta doesn’t know herself why she put it on. She had to put something on! Besides, if she’d put on the white dress, the result would have been the same. ‘I just did, mama’ (or ‘little sister’) ‘You should have put on the white one.’ Why? The person speaking to Anyuta doesn’t know the answer; she’s simply jabbering. ‘Why do you seem so unhappy today, Anyuta?’ Anyuta’s neither particularly happy nor unhappy. But why not ask her about something that is neither obvious nor even real? ‘I don’t know. There’s really nothing wrong.’ ‘No, you’re unhappy for some reason.’ Two minutes later: ‘Anyuta, why don’t you sit down and play the piano a bit.’ Why? Who knows? And on it goes for the entire day. It’s as if your soul were an open street ogled at by anyone who happens to be sitting next to the window, and not because he needs to see anything in particular. No, he even knows that he won’t see anything necessary or even interesting, but he looks because he has nothing better to do. After all, what difference does it make? So why not have a look? The street really doesn’t mind. A person, however, takes no pleasure whatever from the fact that other people pester him.

“It’s only natural that this pointless and purposeless pestering can provoke a reaction. As soon as a person has a chance to be alone, he takes pleasure in his solitude for some time, even though by nature he may be inclined to sociability, not to seclusion.

“From this point of view, before marriage she was placed in an exceptionally difficult position. People pestered her and intruded into her soul, not merely idly, accidentally, occasionally, or even tactlessly, but systematically, unceasingly, continually, rudely and arrogantly, maliciously and malevolently intruding upon her, not simply with their unceremonious hands, but with hands that were rough and exceedingly dirty. That’s why her reaction was so strong.

“Therefore, my error shouldn’t be judged too harshly. For several months, perhaps even a year, I wasn’t mistaken. She really needed and enjoyed her solitude. That time was enough for me to form an opinion of her character. Her strong temporary need corresponded to my permanent need. Is there anything astonishing about my mistaking a temporary aspect of her character for a permanent one? Everyone’s predisposed to make judgments about other people according to his own self.

“An error was committed, and a very big one at that. I don’t blame myself, but I do wish to justify myself. In other words, I feel that others won’t be so lenient with me as I am with myself. In order to soften their reprimand, I should say a bit more about that side of my own character which is rather foreign to her and to a large number of people, because without such an explanation, it could be misunderstood.

“I cannot appreciate any form of rest other than solitude. To be with other people means to me to be occupied with something, either work or pleasure. I feel entirely free only when I’m completely alone. What shall we call this? Why is it so? With some people it results from reticence, with others bashfulness. A third group has a tendency to brood or to be depressed. A fourth lacks sufficient sympathy for other people. But it seems that there’s none of this in me. I’m frank and straightforward; I’m always ready to be cheerful and am never depressed. I enjoy observing people, but this activity is connected with work or pleasure; it’s something that requires rest when it’s over. For me that means solitude. As far as I can see, it’s simply a particular development in me of a desire for independence or freedom.

“Thus it was that the strength of her reaction against the previous all-too-disturbing situation in her family forced her temporarily to adopt a way of life that didn’t correspond to her permanent disposition. Her respect for me supported this temporary situation longer than it would have lasted on its own. It was during this period that I formed an opinion of her character, mistook a temporary characteristic for a permanent one, and stopped worrying. That’s the whole story. There was an error on my part, but little that was evil in it. For her part, there was nothing at all. Yet how much suffering it caused her, and what a catastrophe it was for me!

“When her fright following the terrible dream revealed her emotional state to me, it was already too late to rectify my mistake. If we’d noticed it sooner, is it possible that with constant effort she and I could have managed to establish a relationship that satisfied us both? I don’t know, but I think that even if we’d succeeded, nothing very

good would have come of it. Let's suppose that we'd made ourselves over well enough to make our relations harmonious. But making oneself over is effective only when it's directed against some evil proclivity; but those very proclivities that would have been made over in either her or me had nothing evil about them whatsoever. In what way is sociability either better or worse than a craving for solitude, or vice versa? After all, making oneself over always entails some violence, some breaking apart. In that breaking apart much gets lost; in that violence much dies away. The result that she and I might (only might, not necessarily would) have achieved wouldn't have merited such losses. We would both have deprived ourselves of a portion of our true color; we would have more or less stifled the freshness of our lives. And for what? In order to maintain certain positions in certain rooms. It would have been a different matter if we'd had children; then we should have had to consider carefully the impact of our separation on their fate. If their lives would be adversely affected, no effort should be spared to avoid that outcome. The outcome would be such joy from doing all that was necessary to preserve the best possible life for our loved ones. The result would be sufficient reward for all one's efforts. But as for us, what rational goal could be achieved?

"Therefore, given the situation, my error apparently even led to something better. As a result, both of us were spared a great deal of the 'damage.' My mistake occasioned considerable grief, but without it there probably would have been even more, and the result wouldn't have been so satisfactory."

Such were Dmitry Sergeich's words. From his persistence in occupying himself with this side of the affair, you can easily see, just as he himself said, that he felt there was something awkward about it, something not to his own advantage. He added quite openly, "I feel that in spite of everything I will not be completely exonerated by those who consider this matter without a certain sympathy for me. But I'm assured of her sympathy. She'll judge me even more generously than I judge myself. And I consider myself completely justified. Such is my opinion of the period before she had that dream." Now I'll convey to you his feelings and intentions after your dream revealed to him the unsatisfactory nature of the relations between you.

"I've said" (these are Dmitry Sergeich's words once again) "that from her very first words about that terrible dream I realized the inevitability of some episode quite different from our previous relations. I expected that it would have considerable force; it was impossible for it to be otherwise, given the energy of her nature and the level of her own dissatisfaction, which had already acquired considerable strength from its prolonged suppression. Nevertheless, at first this expectation appeared in the mildest form and the most advantageous one for me. I reasoned this way: She'll be distracted for a while by a passionate love for another person. Then, after two years or so, she'll return to me, since I'm such a fine man. The chances of her finding another as good as I are very low (I'm saying just what I think about myself; I lack the hypocrisy to underestimate my own worth). A satisfied feeling of love will thus lose some of its intensity. She'll see that although one side of her nature is less well satisfied by her life

with me, still, on the whole, life with me is easier and freer than with the other person. And then everything will be as it was before. Having been chastened by experience, I'll pay more attention to her. She'll acquire new respect for me and will feel even greater attachment than before; we'll live more harmoniously than ever.

“But (this is something very awkward for me to explain, yet it must be said nonetheless) how did I myself conceive of the possibility of our renewed relations? Was I overjoyed? Of course. But only that? No, I conceived of it as a burden, a pleasant one, to be sure, even a very pleasant one, but a burden nevertheless. I love her very much and will do violence to myself to accommodate her better. That will afford me pleasure, but at the same time my life will be somewhat constrained. That's the way I conceived of it when I'd calmed down after the first impression. I realized that I wasn't deceiving myself. She allowed me to experience this myself when she wanted me to try to keep her love. The month of satisfying her desire was the most difficult one of my life. There was no suffering involved—that word would be inappropriate; it would be absurd to use it here. As far as positive sensations are concerned, I experienced nothing but joy in satisfying her. But I found it tedious. That's the explanation of why the attempt to keep her love was so unsuccessful. In satisfying her, I was bored.

“At first glance it may seem strange that I wasn't bored by giving so many evenings to students for whom, of course, I wouldn't really put myself out; yet I felt great exhaustion when I gave up only a few evenings to the woman I loved more than myself, one for whom I was willing to sacrifice my life, and not only that; I was willing to suffer any torment for her. It may seem strange, but only to someone who hasn't yet penetrated to the heart of my relations with these young people to whom I was giving so much of my time. In the first place, I had no personal relations with them; when I spent time with them, I didn't feel that I was in the company of other human beings; rather, I merely perceived several abstract types exchanging ideas. My conversations with them were scarcely distinguished from my solitary reflections. With them only one side of me was occupied—the side that least requires rest, namely, my intellect. Everything else was asleep. Besides, these conversations had a practical, useful goal—they promoted the development of intellectual life, nobility, and energy in my young friends. This was work; but the work was so easy it served to replenish my efforts expended on other labors. It wasn't exhausting, but refreshing; but it was work nonetheless. Therefore, my personality made no demands for rest. I was seeking to serve, not to relax. All other parts of my being were asleep, except for my intellect. And that functioned without any admixture of personal relations for those individuals with whom I conversed. Therefore, I felt just as free as if I were alone. One might say that these conversations didn't even draw me out of my solitude. There was nothing here like relations in which the whole person participates.

“I know how awkward it is to utter the word 'boredom,' but in good conscience I can't avoid it. Yes, in spite of all my love for her, I felt relieved when I later became convinced that relations couldn't be reestablished that would allow us to live as comfortably as we had before. I began to be convinced of this just about the time she

began to notice that I found satisfying her desires a burden. Then I began to conceive of the future in a new way, one that was more pleasant for me. Having realized that we could no longer maintain our previous relations, I began to think how soon it would be possible—once again I must use an awkward phrase—how soon it would be possible to rid myself, to free myself of a situation that I found so tedious. Here's the secret of what must have seemed like generosity to a man who wished to blind himself with a superficial outlook, or to a man who was too distant to perceive the true nature of my motives. Yes, I simply wanted to free myself from a tedious situation. So as not to be hypocritical and ignore the good in myself, I won't deny that one of my motives was a desire for her well-being. But this motive was of only secondary importance; it was very strong, to be sure, but still much less intense than the first and main reason, my desire to escape from boredom. That was my real motive. Under its influence I began to examine her way of life carefully. I easily perceived that the change in her feelings, resulting from a change in her way of life, was produced primarily by the appearance and disappearance of Alexander Matveich. This forced me to think about him as well. I realized the reason for his strange actions, which previously had not attracted my attention. Afterward my thoughts took a new direction, as I have said, one that was more pleasant to me. When I saw that she not only wanted passionate love but felt passionate love herself, although she was still not conscious of it, and when I realized that this feeling was directed at a person who was entirely worthy and fully capable of replacing me, and that this person loved her passionately as well—I was overjoyed. It's true, however, that the first impression was painful: every important change is accompanied by some sorrow. I realized that in good conscience I was no longer able to consider myself indispensable to her. Yet I'd become accustomed to that; and, to tell the truth, I found it pleasant. So losing this relationship necessarily had a painful side to it. But it was only at first, and not for very long, that it prevailed over the other side, the one that made me feel overjoyed. Now I was assured of her happiness and felt serene in contemplating her fate. This was a source of great joy. But it would be in vain to conclude that this was my greatest pleasure. No, the personal feeling was once again much more important. I saw that I was becoming liberated from any compulsion. My words aren't intended to suggest that I consider single life any freer and easier than married life. No, if a husband and wife feel no need to constrain themselves in any way in order to gratify each other, if they're content without having to make an effort, if they please each other without trying, then the closer relations are between them, the freer and easier it is for them both. But relations between her and me weren't like that. Therefore, separation meant freedom for me.

“From this it's clear that I acted in my own self-interest when I decided not to interfere in her happiness. There was a noble side to my conduct, but the principal force was that of my own nature seeking its own good. That's why I had the strength to act so well, if I may say so myself. I didn't vacillate at all; I didn't create any unnecessary fuss or unpleasantness for others; and I didn't betray my obligation. It's easy when obligation corresponds to the inclination of your own nature.



“I left for Ryazan. Some time later she called me back, saying that my presence would no longer interfere with her life. But I saw that it did. As far as I could understand, there were two main reasons. She found it painful to see the man to whom, in her opinion, she was so exceedingly indebted. Here she was mistaken; she was in no way indebted to me, since I was acting far more for myself than for her. But she saw it differently and felt a large debt of gratitude to me. And that is a burdensome feeling; it has a pleasant side, but this predominates only when the feeling of gratitude isn’t too strong. When it is strong, it’s oppressive. The other reason—and once again it’s a fairly delicate matter to explain, but I have to say what I think—the other reason lies in the unpleasant abnormality of her position vis-à-vis social convention. She found it painful that society did not formally recognize her right to occupy that position. And so I realized that she would find it painful if I carried on my existence at her side. I won’t hide the fact that this new discovery had an aspect that was incomparably more painful than all the feelings I had experienced in earlier stages of this affair. I was still very favorably disposed toward her: I wanted to remain her close friend. I’d hoped that this would still be possible. When I saw that it could no longer be, I felt very, very sad. There was no recompense for this sadness in any calculation of self-interest. I can say that my decision, my final decision, was taken solely out of my attachment to her, only out of a desire for things to be better for her, exclusively from unselfish motives. On the other hand, never did my relations to her, even at the best of times, afford me such inner pleasure as did that resolution. Here I was acting under the influence of what I can call nobility, or more accurately, noble calculation, that is, where the general law of human nature acts entirely by itself, without borrowing any support from individual particularities. And here I learned what a sublime pleasure it is to feel oneself acting like a noble person, that is, as every man should act—not Ivan or Peter, but every man, without specifying any name. What a sublime pleasure to feel oneself simply a man—not Ivan or Peter, but a man, purely and simply. This feeling is too powerful; ordinary natures such as mine cannot endure too often being elevated to this level of feeling. But happy is he who has the occasional opportunity to experience it.

“There’s no need to explain the side of my behavior which would have been most unreasonable if I had been dealing with other people, but which was very clearly justified by the character of the person to whom I was yielding. As I was leaving for Ryazan, not one word was spoken between her and Alexander Matveich. When I was making my final decision, not one word was exchanged between him and me, or between her and me. But I knew him very well; I had no need to ascertain his thoughts in order to know what they were.”

I have conveyed Dimitry Sergeich’s words with literal accuracy, as I stated above.

I am a total stranger to you. But this correspondence upon which I have entered in fulfillment of the late Dmitry Sergeich’s request is so intimate that you are probably interested in learning who your strange correspondent is, since he’s so conversant with the inner life of the late Dmitry Sergeich. I am a former medical student. I have nothing more to add about myself. Recently I was living in Petersburg. Several days

ago I decided to travel and seek a new career for myself abroad. I left Petersburg the day after you learned about Dmitry Sergeich's death. For a special reason I had no documents and had to use someone else's papers, which one of our mutual acquaintances was kind enough to provide. He gave them to me on condition that I carry out several commissions along the way. When you next have the opportunity to see Mr. Rakhmetov, be so kind as to tell him that all his commissions have been carried out just as he requested. Now I shall wander around, probably in Germany, to observe the customs there. I have several hundred rubles and want to have a good time. When I'm tired of such idleness, I'll look for some employment. What kind? Who cares. Where? Wherever... I'm as free as a bird and can be as carefree as one, too. What a delightful situation!

It's likely that you may wish to favor me with a reply. But I don't know where I'll be a week from now—perhaps in Italy, or in England, or in Prague. Now I can live by my fantasy; I don't know where it will lead me. Therefore, use only the following address on your letters: Berlin, Friedrichstrasse, 20, Agentur von H. Schweigler.<sup>3</sup> Put your letter into another envelope and place it inside. On the inner envelope, instead of any address, write only the numbers 12345. That will indicate to the agents at Schweigler's that the letter should be forwarded to me.

Most esteemed Madame, accept my assurances of deep respect from a person who is a total stranger, but one who is profoundly devoted to you, and who will sign himself only as

A FORMER MEDICAL STUDENT

Most esteemed Sir, Alexander Matveich:

In accordance with the wishes of the late Dmitry Sergeich, I must assure you that he considered yielding his place to you to be the best possible solution to the whole affair. Given the relations that occasioned this change, relations that were being formed gradually over the three years after you had almost ceased your visits, therefore relations with which you had nothing to do, which arose solely from the incompatibility of these two people whom you later tried in vain to reconcile—given these relations, the final outcome, just as it occurred, was inevitable. Obviously Dmitry Sergeich could in no way attribute it to you. Of course, this explanation is superfluous; however, more for form's sake than anything else, he charged me with making it. One way or another, one person or another had to take the place that he couldn't fill, and another would take it only because Dmitry Sergeich was unable to fill it. The fact that it was you who came along was, in the opinion of the deceased Dmitry Sergeich, the best possible solution for everyone. I shake your hand warmly.

A FORMER MEDICAL STUDENT

“Oh, I know...”

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<sup>3</sup> The name Schweigler is derived from the German verb *schweigen*, to be silent or to hold one's tongue. The letter writer is indicating that the addressee is trustworthy.

What's that? A familiar voice... I turn around to look... Sure enough! It's he, the perspicacious reader, recently banished in disgrace for his total ignorance of the ABC's of art. Here he is again, once more with his old perspicacity, claiming that he knows something!

"Oh, I know who wrote that..."

I hastily seize the first convenient object that comes to hand which will suit my purpose—it's a napkin, because having transcribed the letter written by the former medical student, I've just sat down to lunch. So I seize a napkin and stuff it in his mouth. "Well, what if you do! Is that any reason to shout it from the rooftops?"

## II.

Petersburg

August 25, 1856

Dear Sir,

You'll understand how delighted I was to receive your letter. I thank you for it from the bottom of my heart. Your intimacy with the late Dmitry Sergeich gives me the right to consider you my friend too, if you'll allow me to use that designation. Dmitry Sergeich's character is evident in all the words you conveyed. He was always searching for the most hidden reasons for his actions and it gave him great pleasure to subsume them to his theory of egoism. However, this habit is shared by our entire circle. My Alexander is also fond of analyzing himself in this same vein. If only you could hear how he explains his own behavior in regard to me and Dmitry Sergeich over these last three years. According to him, he did everything out of egoistic calculation, for his own satisfaction. I too have adopted this habit, but it occupies me and Alexander somewhat less than it did Dmitry Sergeich. We agree with him entirely, but he had a stronger interest in theory. To hear us tell it, we three are the greatest egoists the world has ever known. Perhaps that's even true! Perhaps there were no great egoists before us! Yes, that seems to be the case.

Besides this trait shared by all three of us, Dmitry Sergeich's words reveal another one that belongs specifically to his own situation: the obvious aim of his explanation was to comfort me. Not that his words were insincere. No, he would never say something he didn't believe. But he overemphasized the part of the truth that could give me comfort. My friend, I'm very grateful for this, but I too am an egoist; I say that he shouldn't have worried about my peace of mind exclusively. We can justify ourselves much more easily than other people can justify us. To tell the truth, I don't consider myself guilty before him in any way. I'll say even more: I don't even consider myself obligated to feel grateful to him. I value his nobility, oh, how I value it. But I know that he behaved nobly not for me but for himself. Why, I too, when I didn't deceive him, did it not for him but for myself, not because deception would have been unfair to him but because it would have been repugnant to me.

I said that I don't blame myself, just as he said. But I also feel inclined to justify myself just as he did. In his own (very accurate) words, that means I foresee that others won't absolve me of blame (as easily as I did myself) for certain aspects of my behavior. I feel no desire to justify myself for that part of the affair for which he justifies himself; on the other hand, I want to justify myself for the part for which there is no need for him to justify himself. As for what happened before my dream, I'm convinced that no one will think me to blame in any way. But afterward, was I not the reason that the affair took such a melodramatic form and led to such a theatrical catastrophe? Shouldn't I have taken a much simpler view of the change in our relations, one that was already inevitable when my dream revealed for the first time our respective positions both to me and to Dmitry Sergeich? On the evening of the same day Dmitry Sergeich perished, I had a long conversation with that formidable Rakhmetov—what a kind, tender man he is! He told me all kinds of terrible things about Dmitry Sergeich. If I were to repeat them in a tone sympathetic to Dmitry instead of in the cruel, almost hostile one that Rakhmetov used, then those things might indeed be true. I suspect that Dmitry Sergeich fully understood the things that Rakhmetov would say; that had probably entered into his calculation. Yes, I needed to hear it then; it comforted me greatly. And whoever it was who arranged that conversation, I am very grateful for it, my friend. But even the formidable Rakhmetov had to acknowledge that Dmitry Sergeich behaved excellently during the latter half of the affair. Rakhmetov faulted him only for the first half, where Dmitry Sergeich felt the need to justify himself. I shall justify myself for the second half, although no one has told me that I am to blame for it. But each one of us—I'm speaking now about us and our friends, our entire circle—each one of us has a sterner judge than Rakhmetov. That judge is our own intellect.

Yes, I understand, my friend, that it would have been much easier for everyone if I'd taken a simpler view of this affair and hadn't attributed such tragic significance to it. According to Dmitry Sergeich's view, one should say even more. In that case he would have had no need to resort to such a theatrical climax, one that must have caused him great pain. He was driven to it only by my excessive alarm. I understand this was how it must have seemed to him, although he didn't charge you with conveying all this to me. I value his favorable attitude toward me all the more, and the fact that it hasn't diminished as a result of such an opinion. But listen, my friend, it's not entirely fair; it's not fair at all. It wasn't my mistake, not my excessive alarm that caused Dmitry Sergeich to experience something that he himself described as very painful. It's true that if I hadn't attributed such excessive importance to the change in our relations, it might have been possible to manage without the journey to Ryazan. But he says that he didn't find it painful. So here again, no great harm was done by my exalted view. The only thing that was painful for Dmitry Sergeich was the necessity of dying. He explained the inevitability of his decision in two ways: I was suffering from excessive gratitude to him and was tormented because I couldn't establish the relations with Alexander Matveich which social convention demanded. True, I wasn't

really completely at ease. I was burdened by my situation until his death, but he didn't guess the real reason. He thought his presence imposed an excessive burden of gratitude on me, but that wasn't quite true. People have a strong tendency to search for those ideas that can best soothe them. At the time Dmitry Sergeich saw the necessity of his death, this particular reason no longer existed. My feeling of gratitude toward him had long since moderated into a pleasant feeling. This was the only factor that had a connection with my previous exalted view of the affair. The other factor that Dimitry Sergeich mentioned, my desire to give my relations with Alexander Matveich a form acknowledged by society, no longer depended on my view of the affair. Rather, it followed from society's ideas. I had no power over it. But Dmitry Sergeich is totally mistaken in thinking that for this reason I found his presence painful. No, that would have been easy to arrange even without his death, if it had really been necessary, and if it would have been enough for me. If a husband lives together with his wife, that's all society needs not to create a scandal about the wife, no matter what kind of relations she has with another person. That's a great success! We see many examples where, thanks to the husband's nobility, the matter is resolved in this way; in all these cases society leaves the wife in peace. Now I consider this the best and easiest means of arranging affairs such as ours. Dmitry Sergeich had proposed it earlier, but I'd rejected it out of my own exalted feelings. I don't know how things would have turned out if I'd accepted it then. If I could have been content with the fact that society would leave me in peace, wouldn't create a scandal, and wouldn't want to know about my relations with Alexander, then, of course, the means that Dmitry Sergeich proposed would have been sufficient and he wouldn't have had to resort to suicide. Then, of course, I would have had no reason to wish for my relations with Alexander to be defined in any formal way. But it seems to me that this arrangement, satisfactory in a majority of cases such as ours, wouldn't be appropriate in our case. Our situation had the rare, peculiar feature that all three parties concerned were of equal strength. If Dmitry Sergeich had believed Alexander to be superior in terms of intellect, development, or character, if in yielding his place to Alexander he were yielding to superior moral strength, if his withdrawal hadn't been voluntary but had been merely a retreat of the weak before the strong, then of course I would have no reason to feel so burdened. It would be exactly the same if I were stronger than Dmitry Sergeich in terms of intellect or character, or if, before the emergence of my relations with Alexander, he'd been the sort so well characterized by the anecdote over which, you remember, my friend, we laughed so much—the one about two gentlemen who met in the foyer of an opera house, struck up a conversation, liked each other, and wanted to get better acquainted. "I'm Lieutenant So-and-So," said the one, introducing himself. "And I'm the husband of Madame Tedesco," replied the other.<sup>4</sup> If Dmitry Sergeich had been merely "the husband of Madame Tedesco," then of course there would have been no need for him to die. He would have yielded, submitted, and, if he'd been a noble person, he'd have seen nothing demeaning in

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<sup>4</sup> The Italian opera singer Fortunata Tedesco (1826-1875) first appeared in St. Petersburg in 1859.

his own submission and everything would have been splendid. But his relation to me and to Alexander was not at all like that. He wasn't weaker or baser than either of us, not by a single iota. And we knew it, and he knew it. His yielding was not the result of weakness, not at all! It was purely a matter of his own free will. Isn't that so, my friend? You can't deny that! Therefore, what was the situation in which I found myself? That, my friend, is the crux of the matter. I found myself in a situation of dependence on his free will. That's why my position was so painful and that's why he saw the necessity for his noble decision to perish. Yes, my friend, the reason for my feeling which compelled him to this act was much more deeply hidden than your letter explained. The overwhelming burden of gratitude no longer existed. It would have been easy to satisfy society's claims in the way Dmitry Sergeich proposed. Those claims would not even touch me, living as I did within our small circle completely cut off from such claims. But I remained dependent on Dmitry Sergeich. My position was based only on his free will; it wasn't independent. That is why it was so painful. Now you can decide whether this factor could be eliminated by my holding any particular view of the change in our relations. The important thing wasn't my view, but the fact that Dmitry Sergeich was an independent person, one whose actions were determined entirely by his own free will, by his will alone! Yes, my friend, you recognize and approve this feeling of mine. I don't wish to depend on anyone's will—no matter whose—even a person devoted to me, one I respect highly, one I trust as I do myself, one who, I am certain, would always gladly do what I required, one who values my happiness no less than I do. Yes, my friend, I don't want this and I know that you approve of my position.

But why am I saying all this? Why all this analysis, revealing the most hidden sources of feeling which no one could discover? I too, like Dmitry Sergeich, am engaging in this self-exposure in my own interest, so that I may say, "I'm not to blame. The affair depended on circumstances beyond my control." I make this remark because Dmitry Sergeich was so fond of such remarks. I wish to be in your good graces, my friend.

But enough of this! You had so much sympathy for me that you didn't regret spending several hours of your own time writing me a long letter (one that was so very precious to me). As a result I can see, as I diplomatically use precisely those phrases that you and Dmitry Sergeich used, yes, as a result, only as a result of this can I see that you would be interested in learning what became of me after Dmitry Sergeich said farewell and left for Moscow in order to come back and perish. When he returned from Ryazan, he saw that I was distraught. This became clearly apparent in me only upon his return. To tell the truth, while he was living in Ryazan, I didn't think about him very much. No, not as much as you suppose, judging by what he saw when he returned. But when he left for Moscow I realized that he was contemplating something unusual. It was obvious that he was winding up his affairs in Petersburg; it was clear that for a week or so he'd been waiting on certain matters in order to leave. And then—how could it have been otherwise? In the final days I sometimes observed some sadness in his face, which is quite capable of concealing secrets. I had a premonition

that something decisive was imminent, something drastic. When he boarded the train, I felt very, very sad. All the next day I grieved. On the morning of the third day I awoke even sadder; suddenly Masha brought me a letter. What a tormenting moment it was, what a tormenting hour, a tormenting day—but you know that. Therefore, my friend, I now understand better than ever the strength of my attachment to Dmitry Sergeich. I myself didn't think that it was so strong. Yes, my friend, I now know its strength; and you do too, because, of course, you know that I had decided to part with Alexander. All that day I felt my life had been shattered, poisoned forever. You know, too, my childlike ecstasy at the sight of that note from my good, kind friend, a note that completely altered my way of thinking. (Do you see how carefully my phrases have been chosen? You should be very satisfied with me, my friend.) You know all this because Rakhmetov left to accompany you after he put me on the train. He and Dmitry Sergeich were right in saying that I had to leave Petersburg in order to produce the desired effect—for the sake of which Dmitry Sergeich didn't hesitate to leave me in terrible agony for one whole day. I'm so grateful to him for that lack of mercy! He and Rakhmetov were also correct in advising Alexander not to visit me and not to accompany me to the station. Since there was no longer any need for me to go to Moscow, only to leave Petersburg, I stopped in Novgorod.<sup>5</sup> Several days later Alexander arrived there and brought with him documents attesting to Dmitry Sergeich's death. We were married about a week after his death and lived for a month or so near the railroad station in Chudovo,<sup>6</sup> so that Alexander could travel conveniently back to his hospital three or four times a week. We returned to Petersburg yesterday—and that's the reason it took me so long to answer your letter. It was lying in Masha's drawer and she'd almost forgotten all about it. Meanwhile, you were probably thinking up God-knows-what kind of reasons for my not answering.

I embrace you, my dear friend,

Yours,

VERA PAVLOVNA

I shake your hand, my dear friend. Only please don't pay me any more compliments, or I'll pour forth a whole stream of heartfelt pronouncements on your nobility. And of course there could be nothing more sickening for you than that! Do you know what? Doesn't it prove the existence of considerable stupidity both in you and in me that we are exchanging only a few lines? It does seem to indicate that we both feel a bit embarrassed. Now, let's suppose that's understandable on my part; what right do you have? But next time I hope to speak with you more freely and to write you a heap of local news.

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<sup>5</sup> The chief city of Novgorod province and in medieval times the center of a vast northern Russian principality that participated in the Hanseatic League. It lies on the Volkhov River about 100 miles south of Petersburg. Because the townspeople played a central role in the governance of the principality, the city came to symbolize the democratic aspirations of nineteenth-century Russian liberals and radicals. Hence Vera Pavlovna's trip there may have symbolic importance.

<sup>6</sup> A small town about sixty-five miles from Petersburg on the main railway line to Moscow.

Yours,  
ALEXANDER KIRSANOV

### III.

These letters, absolutely sincere, were really somewhat one-sided, as Vera Pavlovna noticed herself. Of course, both correspondents tried to lessen the strength of the painful shocks they'd suffered. Oh, these people are so clever! I've often heard from them, that is, from them and people like them, things that made me laugh in the middle of their emotional assurances that "it was nothing at all, really nothing." Naturally, I laugh both when these assurances are made to me by a stranger and when they're made in private conversation. But when the same thing is said to someone who needs to hear it, then I always go along and agree that it really was "nothing at all." An honorable man is such an amusing creature! I've always laughed at every honorable man with whom I've been acquainted.

Such an amusing creature, even to the point of absurdity. Take these letters, for instance. My friendship with ladies and gentlemen of this type has made me somewhat accustomed to these tricks of theirs. But what sort of impression would they make on an inexperienced, unspoiled person—for example, on the perspicacious reader?

The perspicacious reader has already managed to free his mouth of the napkin; shaking his head from side to side, he says solemnly, "What immorality!"

"Splendid! You've guessed it!" I say in praise of him. "Well, make us happy by saying a little more."

"And the author is an immoral man," intones the perspicacious reader. "See what kinds of behavior he condones."

"No, dearie, you're mistaken. There's much that I don't condone here. In fact, to tell you the truth, I don't condone any of it. It's all too contrived, too exalted. Life is much simpler."

"So then you're even more immoral?" asks the perspicacious reader, eyes bulging from astonishment at the incomprehensible immorality to which humanity, as represented in my person, has fallen.

"Much more immoral," I reply. And no one knows whether I'm telling the truth or making fun of the perspicacious reader.

The correspondence continued for another three or four months, actively on the part of the Kirsanovs, negligently and infrequently on the part of their correspondent. Then he stopped answering their letters altogether. It was obvious that he'd only wanted to convey to Vera Pavlovna and her husband those thoughts of Lopukhov's which were contained in that first long letter. After fulfilling this obligation, he considered any further correspondence unnecessary. After two or three of their letters had gone unanswered, the Kirsanovs understood and stopped writing.



## IV.

Vera Pavlovna is resting on her soft couch, waiting for her husband to return home for dinner from the hospital. Today she fussed very little over a dessert for the meal; she felt more like lying down and resting, since she'd worked her fill that morning. It's been like this for some time and for quite a while she'll continue to have plenty of work in the mornings because she's organizing a second workshop at the other end of town. Vera Pavlovna Lopukhova had lived on Vasilievsky Island. Vera Pavlovna Kirsanova resides on Sergievsky [Sergei] Street because her husband needs an apartment closer to the Vyborg district.<sup>7</sup> Natasha Mertsalova proved to be very capable of managing the shop on Vasilievsky Island; that was only natural, since she and the workshop were old friends. Upon her return to Petersburg, Vera Pavlovna realized that she didn't need to visit the workshop very often or stay very long. If she continued to go there almost every day, it was only because she was drawn there by affectionate attachment and was greeted there by the same. Perhaps for a little while longer her visits there won't be altogether without benefit, since Mertsalova still finds it necessary to confer with her on occasion. But this takes very little time and happens less and less often. Soon Mertsalova will have acquired enough experience so that she'll no longer need Vera Pavlovna's advice. Yes, ever since she returned to Petersburg Vera Pavlovna has been visiting the workshop on Vasilievsky Island more as a beloved guest than as an indispensable figure. What should she do? The answer was clear: she should organize another workshop in her new neighborhood at the other end of town.

So a new workshop was soon established in one of the side streets between Basseiny [Basin] and Sergievsky Streets. Much less effort was involved than with the first one. Five girls who comprised the basic staff transferred from the first workshop; their places were soon taken by new girls. The remaining staff was recruited from close acquaintances of those seamstresses who worked in the first shop. In other words, almost half the task was already done. The goal and structure of the workshop were familiar to all members of the company; the new girls came with the wish that the order that had taken so long to establish in the other workshop should be present here from the very first day. Oh, now the process of organization goes ten times faster than before, and with only about a third the trouble. Still, there's a great deal of work to be done, and Vera Pavlovna is as tired today as she was yesterday and the day before that, and as she was two months ago, only two months, although more than half a year has already passed since her second marriage. After all, she needed to have a honeymoon, and she enjoyed a long one. But now she's gone back to work.

Yes, today she's worked very hard and now she's resting. She's thinking about many things, a great many things, mostly about the present. It's so splendid and full! It's so full of life that she rarely has time to reminisce. Reminiscences will come later, much

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<sup>7</sup> The Medical-Surgical Academy was located in the Vyborg district, which also contained a substantial working-class population that could be proselytized by radical intellectuals such as Kirsanov (see n. 26 above).

later, not in ten years or even in twenty, but much later; it's not time for them now, and it won't be for some years to come. But they still come even now, on occasion; today, for example, she recollects something that occurs to her most often in these infrequent reminiscences. Here's what she recalls...

## V.

"Dearest, I'm going with you!"

"But you don't have your things ready."

"My dear, I'll come after you tomorrow, since you don't want to take me with you today."

"Think about it. Consider it. Wait for my letter. It will arrive tomorrow."

Now she was returning home. What was she feeling as she drove along with Masha? What was she thinking and feeling during that whole long trip from the Moscow Station to Middle Prospekt? She didn't know herself, so shaken was she by the sudden turn of events. Not even a full day had passed (there were still two hours left to make a full day) since he'd found her letter in his room) and he'd already gone. It was so soon, so sudden! At two o'clock in the morning she hadn't foreseen anything of the sort. He waited until she was so exhausted from that morning's upset that she could no longer resist sleep; he came in and said only a few words. Those words constituted merely an incomprehensible preface to what he really wanted to say; he said what he wanted in a very few short words: "I haven't seen my parents for quite some time. I plan to go visit them. They'll be very pleased." That's all; then he left at once. She ran after him) even though when he entered he had made her promise not to; still, she ran after him. Where is he? "Masha, where is he? Where?" Masha, who was still clearing away the tea service after the guests' departure, replied, "Dmitry Sergeich went out. As he came through he said he was going to take a walk." She should go back to bed. How on earth did she manage to fall asleep? She had no idea what that dawning morning would bring. He said that they would have time to talk things over. But as soon as she'd arisen, it was time to leave for the railway station. Yes, all this merely flashed before her eyes as if it never really happened, as if someone told her hurriedly what had occurred to someone else. Only now, having returned home from the railway station, did she come to her senses and begin to think about what was happening to her and what might become of her.

Yes, she'd go to Ryazan. She would. There was no other way. But that letter? What would it contain? No, why wait for that letter to decide what to do? She knew what would be in it. Still, she had to postpone her decision until she received the letter. Why? She would go. Yes, she would. That's what she thought for an hour or two, for three or four hours. But Masha had gotten hungry and was summoning her to dinner for the third time; this time it sounded more like an order than a summons. So what? It would provide a distraction. "Poor Masha, I've starved her to death." "Why did you

wait for me, Masha? You should have eaten your dinner and not waited.” “How could I, Vera Pavlovna?” Once again she thought about it for an hour or two. “I shall go. Yes, tomorrow. But I ‘ll wait for the letter because he asked me to. But whatever it contains—and I know full well what will be in it—all the same, whatever it contains, I will go.” This is what she thought for an hour or two. Well, it’s what she thought for one hour. But is that really what she thought for the second hour? No, although she did keep on thinking that, she also thought four words, four very little words, “He doesn’t want that.” She thought those four little words more and more; the sun was setting, but she kept thinking those four little words. Suddenly, just when the importunate Masha came in again, this time to demand that Vera Pavlovna have some tea, just at that moment there emerged from those four little words five new ones: “I don’t want that either.” What a good thing that importunate Masha had come in! She drove away those five new little words.

But even the beneficent Masha couldn’t drive away those five little words for very long. At first they didn’t dare appear by themselves; they were accompanied by their own refutation, “But I must go.” However, the refutation served only as a cover under which these five little words could return. At one moment they appeared together with their carrier, those four little words, “He doesn’t want that”; then, almost at the same time, these four little words were transformed again into the five little words, “I don’t want that either.” That’s what she thought for half an hour; after that, the four little words and the five little words began of their own accord to recast all of her previous words, even the most important ones. Of the three most important, “I shall go,” there emerged three new words, similar, but not quite the same: “Shall I go?” That’s precisely the way words appear and are transformed! But here comes Masha again: “I gave him a silver ruble, Vera Pavlovna, since it says here, ‘If he delivers this letter before nine o’clock, give him a silver ruble; after nine, only fifty kopecks.’ The conductor brought it, Vera Pavlovna; he came on the evening train. He said he did what he’d promised; he’d even taken a cab to make it faster.” A letter from him! Yes! She knew what it would contain: “Don’t come.” But she’d go anyway. She didn’t want to hear what the letter had to say; she wouldn’t listen to it. She’d go anyway, yes, she would. No, that’s not what the letter contained. Here’s what it said, and she had to listen to it: “I’m going to Ryazan, but not right away. I have a great deal of factory business to attend to along the way. In addition to Moscow, where I have so much to do that I’ll stay there about a week, I must also stop in two towns before Moscow and three towns after it, before I even get to Ryazan. How long I’ll spend in each place, and where I’ll be when, I can’t say with any certainty. Part of my business consists in collecting some money from our commercial correspondents,<sup>8</sup> and you know, my dear friend...” (Yes, that’s what was in the letter, “my dear friend.” He repeated it several times so that I’d see he was just as favorably disposed toward me as before and harbored no ill will. Vera Pavlovna recalled how she kissed those three words, “my dear friend.”, Yes, that’s

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<sup>8</sup> A commercial correspondent is an agent who represents a business firm.

what it said, "my dear friend, you know that when one is collecting money, it's often necessary to spend several days in a place where one had intended to be only a few hours. Therefore, I have no idea at all of when I'll reach Ryazan; I know only that it's not likely to be very soon." She recalled this letter almost word for word. What's this? Yes, he'd entirely eliminated the possibility of her clinging to him in order to remain close to him. What should she do now? Her previous words, "I must go to him," were being transformed into the words "But I mustn't see him" but this "him" didn't refer to the same person about whom she was thinking before. These words replaced all previous words; for an hour or two she thought, "I mustn't see him." Somehow or other at some point these words managed to change into other ones, "Will I really want to see him? No." By the time she began to fall asleep, these words had become "Can it be that I'll really see him?" Where's the answer? When did it disappear? Scarcely had these words emerged, when they joined with the words "Will I really never see him?" As she finally fell asleep near dawn, she did so with the words "Will I really never see him again?"

When she awoke later that morning, in place of all previous words there remained only a struggle between two phrases, "I won't see him" and "I will see him." This continued all morning. Everything else was forgotten in this struggle, everything. "Won't" tries to suppress "will." It catches hold of it and doesn't let go: "I won't see him." But "will" runs and gets away time and again: "I will see him." Everything is forgotten, everything, in the struggle of "won't" to suppress "will." Yes, and the big "won't" does suppress the little "will." Then it summons to its aid another small word, so that "will" has nowhere to run and hide: "No, I won't see him... No, I won't." Yes indeed, now these words grab hold of that fickle little "will." There's no place for it to escape from them. They've pinned it down between them: "No, I won't see him... No, I won't." But what's this she's doing? Her hat's already on; she glances into the mirror instinctively. Is her hair in place? Yes, she sees in the mirror that she has her hat on. Out of all these words that had emerged so forcefully, there remains only "will" to which is added a new phrase, "No going back." There is no going back, none. "Masha, don't wait for me to have dinner. I won't be dining at home today."

"Alexander Matveich hasn't yet returned from the hospital" said Stepan serenely. Indeed, why not be serene, phlegmatic? There was nothing peculiar in the fact of her appearance; not so very long ago she used to visit here quite often. "I thought that would be the case. Never mind, I'll just sit here. Don't tell him I'm here." She picked up a journal. Yes, she could read; she saw that she could. As soon as the phrase "No going back" had emerged, as soon as the decision had been made, she felt very calm. Of course, she didn't read very much; in fact, she didn't read anything at all. She examined the room and began to put it in order as if she were the mistress of the house. Of course, she didn't rearrange very much; in fact, she didn't rearrange anything, but she felt very calm. She could read as well as find something to do. She noticed that an ashtray hadn't been emptied, that the tablecloth needed adjustment, and that one chair had been left out of place. She sat there and thought, "No going

back; there's no other choice. A new life is beginning." She thought that for an hour or two. "A new life is beginning. He'll be so surprised and happy. A new life is beginning. How fortunate we are." The bell rings. She blushes a little and smiles. Footsteps. The door opens. "Vera Pavlovna!" He staggers. Yes, he actually staggers. He reaches for the doorhandle. But she runs to him and embraces him: "My dear, oh, my dear! He behaved so nobly; how much I love you! I couldn't live without you!" And then? What happened next? How did they get to the other side of the room? She doesn't remember. She remembers only that she ran up to him and kissed him; but how they got across the room, she doesn't remember that, nor does he. They remember only how they got around the armchair near the table, but as to how they moved away from the door... Yes, for several seconds both heads were spinning and their vision was blurred as a result of that kiss.

"Verochka, my angel!"

"My friend, I couldn't live without you. You loved me for such a long time but kept silent. How noble you are! And how noble he is, Sasha!"

"Tell me, Verochka, tell me how it happened."

"I told him I couldn't live without you. Then, the very next day, yesterday in fact, he left. I wanted to go after him. All day yesterday I thought that I would; but now, you see, I've been sitting here for some time."

"You've lost so much weight during these last two weeks, Verochka. Your hands look so pale." He kisses her hands.

"Yes, my dear, it was a very difficult struggle. Now I can really appreciate how much you suffered so as not to disturb my peace. How could you control yourself so well that I noticed nothing at all? You must have suffered a great deal."

"Yes, Verochka, it wasn't easy," he says, all the while looking at her hands and kissing them.

She suddenly starts laughing. "Oh, how inconsiderate I am! You must be tired, Sasha, and very hungry!" She frees herself from him and runs out.

"Where are you going, Verochka?"

She makes no reply. She's gone to the kitchen. Hurriedly, cheerfully, she says to Stepan, "Serve dinner—for two, as soon as possible. At once! Where are the plates and other things? Let me have them. I'll carry them in and set the table while you bring in the food. Alexander's so tired from his work at the hospital that we must serve his dinner right away." She comes in carrying plates on which knives, forks, and spoons are rattling. "Ha, ha, ha, my dear! The most urgent concern of two lovers at their first meeting is to have their dinner at once! Ha, ha, ha!"

He laughs too as he helps her set the table. He helps a little, but hinders more than helps because he keeps on kissing her hands. "Ah, Verochka, how pale your hands look!" he says, kissing them again.

They kiss and laugh.

"But Sasha, you must sit down at the table and behave yourself."

Stepan serves the soup. At dinner she tells him how everything happened. “Ha, hal my dear! How we two lovers eat! The truth is, I didn’t eat a thing all day yesterday.”

Stepan comes in with the last course.

“Stepan, I’m afraid I haven’t left you anything for dinner.”

“Welt Vera Pavlovna. I’ll just have to buy myself something to eat from the shop.”

“Never mind, Stepan. From now on you’ll know to prepare enough for two besides yourself. Sasha, where’s your cigar case? Give it to me.” She cuts a cigar and lights it before giving it to him. “Have a smoke, my dear, meanwhile I’ll go make us some coffee. Or would you prefer tea? No, my dear, our dinners must be better. You and Stepan have paid them too little attention.” She comes back five minutes later and Stepan brings in the tea service. Upon her return she notices that Alexander’s cigar has gone out. “Ha, ha, my dear. You’ve been daydreaming without me!” He laughs. “Go ahead, smoke!” she says, and lights the cigar again.

Remembering all this, Vera Pavlovna laughs even now. “How prosaic our romance was! Our first meeting—and soup; our heads spinning from the first kiss—and a hearty appetite! What a love scene! How very amusing! Yes, his eyes were shining. Then again, they still shine like that. And how many tears dropped onto my hands, which were so pale then. They aren’t any longer, of course. In fact, my hands are rather beautiful, he’s right about that.” Looking at her hands, Vera Pavlovna lowers them to her lap so that they appear under a light negligée. Once again she thinks, “He’s right about that” and smiles. She slides her hand slowly to her breast and firmly presses it there; Vera Pavlovna thinks, “He is right.”

“Oh, what on earth am I remembering?” Vera Pavlovna keeps on thinking and laughing. “What am I doing? As if it were connected to these recollections! Oh, no. That first meeting—dinner, the kissing of hands, my laughter and his, tears falling on my pale hands—all this was completely original. I sat down to pour tea. ‘Stepan, have you no cream? Can’t you get us some good cream from somewhere? No, there’s no time. Probably you can’t anyway. So be it. But tomorrow we’ll get some. Do smoke, my dear, you keep forgetting about your cigar.’”

Even before tea was finished the terrible clanging of the bell was heard. Two students came flying into the room, failing even to notice her in their great haste. “Alexander Matveich! There’s a very interesting patient!” they cry out, gasping for breath. “They’ve just brought him in. He’s got a very rare complication.” Lord knows the Latin term to designate the patient’s fascinating disease. “It’s very curious, Alexander Matveich. Your help’s needed at once! Every moment is critical. We even took a cab to get here faster.”

“Go ahead, dear, hurry up” she said. It was only then that the students noticed her and paid their respects; a moment later they swept their professor off with them. It didn’t take him long to get ready. He was still wearing his military jacket;<sup>9</sup> she hurried him along.

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<sup>9</sup> See n. 109 above.

“Will you come over to my place afterward?” she asked as she said good-bye.

“Yes.”

She waited for a long time that evening. It was ten o'clock and he still hadn't returned; then it turned eleven. No need to wait any longer. What's this all about? Of course, she wasn't the least bit worried that something might have happened to him. But it does show how long he was detained by the very interesting patient. What about that poor patient? Is he still alive? Did Sasha manage to save him? Yes, indeed, Sasha was detained for a very long time. He came back only at nine o'clock the following morning, having stayed at the hospital until four A.M.

“It was a very difficult and interesting case, Verochka.”

“Did you save him?”

“Yes.”

“Why did you get up so early?”

“I haven't been to bed.”

“You haven't been to bed? You haven't slept all night so as not to be late coming here? You heathen! Be so good as to go home at once and sleep until dinner, without fail, so that when I arrive I find you still asleep.” Two minutes later he was sent packing.

Such were their first two meetings. But their second dinner together was as it should be. They related their histories to each other in a reasonable manner. God knows what they'd said the day before. They laughed, grew pensive, and sympathized with each other. Each considered that the other must have suffered more... In about a week and a half they rented a small dacha on Kamenny Island and settled down there.

## VI.

It's not very often that Vera Pavlovna recalls the past of her new love. Yes, there's so much life in the present that little time remains for reminiscences. But when she does recall the past, then sometimes—at first, of course, it was only sometimes, but later it was more frequently—with every reminiscence she felt a certain dissatisfaction. At first it was weak, passing, and vague—with whom? at what? Then it became clear to her with whom: she was dissatisfied with herself. For what? She could already see which trait of her own character this dissatisfaction sprang from. Yes, she was very proud. But was she dissatisfied with herself only for the past? At first, yes, but lately she's noticed that her dissatisfaction also relates to the present. What how strange this feeling seemed when it began to appear; it was as if it were not she, Vera Pavlovna Kirsanova, who personally felt this dissatisfaction; rather, it was as if the dissatisfaction of thousands and millions of people were being reflected in her. It was not as if she were dissatisfied with herself but that these thousands and millions of people were dissatisfied with themselves through her. Who were these thousands and millions of people? Why were they dissatisfied? If, as before, she were living alone and thinking alone, this feeling would probably not have been so evident. But now she was constantly

with her husband; they thought together all the time, and his presence was mixed in with all her other thoughts. This fact helped her considerably to decipher her feeling. He himself couldn't explain the riddle directly; as long as this feeling was obscure to her, it was even more so to him. He found it difficult to conceive how she could feel this discontent that in no way darkened her personal satisfaction and didn't even touch anything personal. This was all very strange to him, a hundred times more obscure than it was to her. Nevertheless, she was helped considerably by the fact that she constantly thought about her husband, was with him constantly, looked at him, thought together with him. She began to notice that when this feeling of dissatisfaction came upon her, it was always accompanied by a comparison; in fact, it consisted of this comparison between her and her husband. Then there flashed before her mind the precise word: "difference, an offensive difference." Now she understood.

## VII.

"Sasha, how nice that N. N. is."<sup>10</sup> (Vera Pavlovna mentioned the name of that officer, the one in her horrible dream through whom she wanted to make Tamberlick's acquaintance).<sup>11</sup> "He brought me a new poem that isn't likely to be published very SOOO,"<sup>12</sup> said Vera Pavlovna at dinner. "We'll read it right after dinner, all right? I waited for you; I do everything together with you, Sasha. But I'd really like to read it."

"What kind of poem is it?"

"You'll see. We'll find out whether it's any good. N. N. says that he—I mean the author—is reasonably satisfied with it."

They settle down in her room and she begins to read:

Oh, the little box is brimming over

With calico and brocade.

Take pity, my sweetheart,

On the young man's shoulder.<sup>13</sup>

"Now I can see," said Kirsanov, after hearing several dozen lines, "that he's done it in a new style. But clearly it's his, Nekrasov's, right? I'm very glad you waited for me."

"So you should be," said Vera Pavlovna. They read the short poem through twice; thanks to their friendship with one of the author's acquaintances, it had come into their hands about three years before it was actually published.

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<sup>10</sup> See above, pp. 202–4 and n. 106.

<sup>11</sup> See above, pp. 236–43 and n. 140.

<sup>12</sup> A reference to Nekrasov's poem "The Peddlers," written in August 1861 and published that year in *Sovremennik*, no. 10. Chemyshevsky discussed the poem in the subsequent issue of *Sovremennik* (1861, no. 11). On Nekrasov, see n. 106 above.

<sup>13</sup> "The Peddlers," first stanza, ll. 1–4.



“Do you know which lines affected me the most?” Vera Pavlovna asked after she and her husband had read through several passages of the poem a few more times. “It’s not the verses in the main section of the poem, but others that attracted my attention. It’s when Katya’s waiting for her suitor’s return and is pining:

I would perish, unconsolable,  
If there were time to grieve;  
But the time is busy and hurried,  
I must finish up ten different things.  
However often it happens  
That a young married peasant woman  
can no longer endure, still  
The hay falls under the scythe, and  
The rye glitters under the sickle.  
With all her strength and might  
She has threshed in the morning and  
Has spread the flax till dark at night  
Over the dewy meadows.<sup>14</sup>

These lines aren’t the main ones in the narrative; they’re merely a prelude to the part where the worthy Katya dreams about her life with Vanya. But my thoughts are drawn to these verses.”

“Yes, that scene is one of the best in the poem, even though these lines don’t occupy a very prominent place in it. That means they must have coincided with your own thoughts. What are they?”

“Just this, Sasha. You and I have often said that a woman’s constitution is all but superior to a man’s; therefore women will most likely force men to take a secondary role in intellectual life, once the age of brute force has passed.<sup>15</sup> You and I reached this conclusion through observation of human life. There one can meet more women than men who’ve been endowed with native intelligence. So it’s seemed to both of us. You’ve even confirmed this conclusion with evidence from anatomy and physiology.”

“What insulting things you’re saying about men. You’ve gone even further than I have, Verochka, and I find it insulting. It’s a good thing that the future we both predict is still quite a way off. Or else I’d completely reject your opinion so as not to be forced to take a secondary role. Besides, Verochka, this is merely a probability; science has yet to collect sufficient data to resolve this question once and for all.”

“Of course, my dear. We were talking about why it is that so far historical facts contradict this conclusion which is so likely, given our observation of private life and given the structure of the human organism. To the present day women have played a very insignificant role in intellectual life because the age of brute force has deprived

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<sup>14</sup> “The Peddlers” fourth stanza, ll. 9–20.

<sup>15</sup> Another allusion to the transformation of society through technological and scientific progress as well as through social revolution.

them of the means to develop and of the reasons to strive for development. This explanation is sufficient. Yet here's another similar case. Judging by the amount of physical strength, a woman's organism is much weaker, yet it's more resilient, isn't that correct?"

"That point is much less dubious than the question of her natural endowment of intellect. Yes, indeed, a woman's organism is more resilient; it can better resist destructive material forces such as climate, weather, and unsatisfactory food. Medicine and physiology have paid too little attention to a detailed study of this question up to now, but statistics have already provided an indisputable general answer. The average life expectancy of a woman is greater than that of a man. From this it's obvious that the female organism is more resilient."

"It's even more obvious considering the fact that, in general, a woman's way of life is still much less healthy than a man's."

"There's additional evidence provided by physiology to support your conclusion. A woman reaches her full maturity somewhat earlier than a man. Let's assume that a woman's growth ends at about age twenty; a man's ends at about twenty-five, given our climate and our race. And let's assume, also approximately, that the same proportion of women live until the age of seventy as men live until sixty-five. If we consider the difference in periods of development, the preponderance of resilience in the female organism appears much stronger than even statistics would demonstrate, not taking into consideration the difference in their ages of maturity. Seventy years is three and a half times twenty. Sixty-five years must be divided by twenty-five. How much is that? Why, a little more than two and a half times—yes, two and six-tenths. In other words, a woman lives three and a half times her age of maturity while a man lives only two and a half times his. The resilience of her organism can therefore be measured by this proportion."

"Indeed, the difference is greater than I had assumed from my reading."

"Yes, but I chose merely two examples and used approximate figures, speaking from memory. However, the thrust of the conclusion is much the same as I've indicated. Statistics have already demonstrated that the female organism is more resilient. You've read these conclusions only in life-expectancy tables. If you add physiological evidence to the statistical data, then the difference emerges as much greater."

"That's so, Sasha. Then consider what I've been thinking, since now it seems even clearer to me. I've been thinking that if the female organism endures destructive material forces with greater resilience, then it's very likely that she should find it easier to survive moral distress as well. But in fact, that's not what we see."

"Yes, that conclusion is likely. Of course, it's still only a hypothesis; it's yet to be studied and special facts have yet to be collected. However, your conclusion emerges so closely from indisputable facts that it's difficult to question it. The resilience of the organism is very closely connected with the strength of the nervous system. It's most likely that a woman's nerves are more elastic and more durable; if that's so, they ought to tolerate distress and painful feelings with greater ease and endurance. In practice,

we see all too many examples of the opposite. A woman is frequently tormented by something that a man can bear quite easily. Science has yet to analyze thoroughly the reasons why, given our historical situation, we can observe phenomena that contradict what should be expected from the structure of the organism itself. One reason is obvious; it pervades all historical phenomena and all aspects of contemporary existence. That's the strength of prejudice, bad habit, false expectation, and false fear. If a person thinks, 'I can't' then he really can't. Women have been told, 'You're weak.' Therefore, they feel weak and really turn out to be so. You know examples when perfectly healthy people have wasted away and died as a result of the idea that they were supposed to grow weak and die. There are similar examples that affect whole masses of people, nations, humanity. Military history presents us with one of the most striking of these. During the Middle Ages the infantry imagined that it couldn't stand up against the cavalry, and so it really couldn't. Whole armies of infantrymen were dispersed like flocks of sheep by a few hundred riders until the English infantry appeared on the Continent. It consisted of proud, independent, small landowners who had no fear and who yielded to no one without a fight. As soon as these men, lacking the belief that they should flee in the face of cavalymen, arrived in France, a cavalry that greatly outnumbered them was defeated at every engagement. You recall the famous defeat of the French cavalry by the small army of English infantrymen at Crécy, Poitiers, and Agincourt.<sup>16</sup> The same story was repeated when the Swiss infantry decided that there was absolutely no reason for them to consider themselves weaker than the feudal cavalry. The Austrians, and later the Burgundian cavalry, much more numerous, began to suffer defeat at their hands at every engagement.<sup>17</sup> Then all the other cavalries tried to do battle with them; they were all constantly defeated. At that point everyone realized that 'infantry was stronger than calvary,' and of course it was. Yet whole centuries had passed when the infantry was very weak compared to the cavalry, merely because it considered itself so."

"Yes, Sasha, that's true. We are weak because we consider ourselves so. But it seems to me that there's another reason. I want to talk about myself and about you. Tell me, my dear, did I change very much during the two weeks you didn't see me? You were so upset. The change might have seemed greater than it was; or was it really so great? How do you recall it now?"

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<sup>16</sup> In their efforts to gain control over northern and western France during the Hundred Years' War of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the English kings Edward III (r. 1327–1377) and Henry V (r. 1413–1422) used English longbowmen with devastating effect to defeat the armor-laden aristocratic cavalry of their French opponents at the battles of Crécy (1346), Poitiers (1356), and Agincourt (1415). See also n. 223 below.

<sup>17</sup> In defending their autonomy against Habsburg pretensions in the fourteenth century and Burgundian claims in the fifteenth, the infantry of the recently confederated Swiss cantons used halberds (eight-foot axes) and pikes wielded in tight formations to decimate their opponents' cavalry, made up predominantly of noblemen. Chernyshevsky is suggesting that the social origin and presumed economic independence of the English bowmen and Swiss pikemen gave them the courage to vanquish their aristocratic foes.

“Yes, you really were quite pale and thin then.”

“You see, my dear, I now realize that it’s precisely this that irritates my pride. You loved me very deeply. Why wasn’t that struggle reflected in you with obvious symptoms? No one noticed that you’d grown pale or thin during those months after we separated. Why did you endure it so easily?”

“So that’s why those verses about Katya’s overcoming her grief through work made such an impression on you! You want to know whether I myself have ever experienced the truth of this observation. Yes, it’s entirely justified. I endured the struggle so easily because I had no time for it. When I did pay attention to it, I suffered a great deal; but daily necessity compelled me to forget all about it most of the time. I had to take care of my patients and prepare for my lectures. During this time, like it or not, I had some unwilling respite from my thoughts. On those rare days when I had a few hours to spare, I felt as if my strength were failing me. I think that if I’d had to spend a week alone with my thoughts, I would have gone mad.”

“Absolutely, my dear. I’ve just realized that that’s the whole secret of the difference between you and me. A person must have the kind of work that can be neither neglected nor postponed. Then a person is incomparably stronger.”

“But you had lots of work to do then, just as you do now.”

“Ah, Sasha, is my work really so pressing? I attend to it whenever I want, as much as I want. If I feel like it, I can cut it very short or postpone it altogether. To pay attention to work when my thoughts are in turmoil requires special willpower; only that could force me to work. I find no support in necessity. For example: I run the household and spend a great deal of time on it. But nine-tenths of the time I spend in this way is of my own choosing. With a competent servant wouldn’t everything go almost as well as it does now even if I spent much less time at it myself? So who needs it, if, with a larger expenditure of my time, things go just a little bit better than if I were to spend much less time at it? The need exists only in my desire. When your thoughts are at peace, you attend to these concerns; when they’re in turmoil, you toss these things aside because you can get along without them. You always throw over less important things for more important ones. As soon as your feelings are roused, they drive away all thoughts of such things. I also give lessons; these are somewhat more important. I can’t discard them at will. But even so, it’s still right. I attend to them only when I want to. Even if I pay less attention during the course of a lesson, it’s only a little less effective since teaching is too easy for me and fails to engage my mind. Besides, do I really earn my living through these lessons? Does my position really depend on them? Do they provide the principal means of support for my way of life? No, before it was Dmitry’s work, and now it’s yours that provides me with those means. Lessons flatter my feeling of independence and are by no means useless. Nevertheless, they entail no vital necessity for me. I tried to drive away thoughts that were tormenting me by spending more time than usual in the workshop. But once again I did it only by strength of will. I understood that my presence there was needed only for an hour or so, and that if I stayed any longer I was occupying myself with

some artificial task, useful but by no means essential to the enterprise. Besides, could the enterprise in and of itself really serve as an important support for ordinary people such as me? The Rakhmetovs are a different breed. They identify with the common cause<sup>18</sup> to such an extent that it becomes their own necessity, filling their lives. It even comes to replace their personal life. But that's beyond us, Sasha. We're not eagles, like he is. Personal life is the only thing that's indispensable to us. Is the workshop really a part of my personal life? It's a cause, not my own, but someone else's. I work at it not for myself but for others, though perhaps also from my own convictions. But can ordinary people such as we are—not eagles—can we really be concerned about others when we're in distress? Can we really be occupied by convictions when we're being tormented by feelings? No, we need a personal cause, one our life depends on, a cause that for me personally, for my way of life, for my own means, for my whole position, for my entire fate would be more important than all the impulses of my passion. Only such a cause could serve as a support in the struggle against passion; only such a cause would not be forced out of life by passion, but would itself suppress all passion. Only such a cause would provide both strength and rest. I want such a cause."

"Just so, my friend, indeed" said Kirsanov warmly, kissing his wife, whose eyes were sparkling with animation. "Absolutely. I never thought about it until now, but it's so very simple. I never noticed it before. Yes, Verochka, no one can think for another person. If you want to lead a good life, then think for yourself, look out for yourself, because no one can do it for you. To love you as I do, yet not understand it until you explained it to me! But" he continued, laughing now and still kissing his wife, "why do you see this need now? Do you plan to fall in love with someone else, Verochka? Is that it?"

Vera Pavlovna burst into laughter, and the two of them could say nothing for some time as a result of their mirth.

"Yes, now we can both experience this" she began at last. "Now I know for sure, and so do you, that nothing of that sort can occur to either of us. But seriously, do you know what I think now, my dear? If my love for Dmitry was not that of a fully developed person, then he really didn't love me in the way you and I understand the meaning of that word. His feeling was a combination of very strong affection for me as a friend and fleeting bursts of passion toward me as a woman. He felt a personal friendship for me, for me in particular; but these bursts of passion were directed at women in general. They had little relation to me, to me personally. No, that wasn't love. Was he ever preoccupied with thoughts of me? No, he wasn't. On his side, just as on mine, there was no real love."

"You're being unfair to him, Verochka."

"No, Sasha, it's true. There's no point in our singing his praises. We both know how much we respect him; we also know that no matter how easy he said it was for

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<sup>18</sup> In the Aesopian language used by Russian writers to avoid tsarist censorship, "the common cause" was a euphemism for revolution.

him, it really wasn't. Why, you too said that you found it easy to struggle against your passion. That's just splendid, and not made up, but one shouldn't take such repeated assurances literally. Oh, my friend, I understand how you suffered... This is how strongly I feel it..."

"Verochka, you'll strangle me. Now confess, in addition to your strength of feeling, you also wanted to show me your physical strength? Yes, you're very strong. And with a chest like that, how could you be anything but ..."

"My dear Sasha."

## VIII.

"Sasha, you didn't even let me get to what I wanted to talk about" Vera Pavlovna began some two hours later, when they sat down to tea.

"I didn't let you? Am I to blame?"

"Of course you are."

"And who started fooling around?"

"Well, aren't you ashamed?"

"Of what?"

"That it was I who started fooling around. Fie! To compromise a modest woman so by your indifference."<sup>19</sup>

"Indeed? And I thought that you preached equality. If that's true, then there's equality of initiative."

"Ha, ha, ha! What learned talk! Are you really accusing me of illogicality?<sup>20</sup> Don't I try to maintain equality of initiative as well? Well, Sasha, now I'm taking the initiative in resuming the serious conversation that we interrupted."

"Take it, but I refuse to follow your lead. Now I'll take the initiative and continue to interrupt. Give me your hand."

"But Sasha, we must finish talking."

"We'll have time for that tomorrow. Right now, as you see, I'm much too interested in investigating this hand."

## IX.

"Sasha, let's finish the discussion we interrupted yesterday. It's important because I'm planning to go with you and you must know why," said Vera Pavlovna the next morning.

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<sup>19</sup> Chernyshevsky depicted real, "rational" love as calm and serene, in contrast to the superficiality and transience of passionate love.

<sup>20</sup> Another epithet used by radicals to denote insufficient dedication or effectiveness in pursuit of the revolution. See n. 105 above.

“With me? You’re going with me?”

“Of course. You asked me, Sasha, why I needed a cause that my life could seriously hinge on, one that I’d value as much as you value your life’s work, one that would be just as demanding and would require as much attention from me as yours does from you. My dear, I need such a cause because I’m so very proud. For some time I’ve been burdened and embarrassed by the memory that my emotional struggle was so obvious and unendurable. You know I’m not talking about how painful it was; your struggle wasn’t very easy for you to bear, either. That all depends on the strength of the feeling, and I musn’t regret now that the struggle was so painful, since that would also mean regretting that the feeling was so strong. No! But why did I lack the firm support that you possess to resist the strength of that feeling? I want such a support, too. This merely suggested an idea to me, but of course the genuine need also exists. I want to be equal to you in all respects: that’s the main thing. I’ve found my cause. After I said good-bye to you yesterday, I thought about it for a long time and got the idea yesterday morning, without you. I wanted to confer with you yesterday as with a good friend, but you betrayed my confidence in your reliability. Now it’s too late for consultations: I’ve made my decision. Yes, Sasha, you’ll have to go to a great deal of trouble for me; we’ll be so happy, my dear, if I’m sure I’m capable of it!”

Yes, now Vera Pavlovna has found her life’s work, one she could never have conceived of before. Her Alexander’s hand would constantly be in hers; therefore, her path would be easy. Lopukhov had in no way hindered her, or she him, but that was that. No, there was more than that, of course, much more. She always felt sure, whenever she needed his support, that his arm, together with his head, would always be at her disposal. But only together with his head. Lopukhov didn’t begrudge offering her his head, just as he did his arm, that is, on important matters and at critical moments his arm and his head were just as available and reliable as Kirsanov’s.<sup>21</sup> He’d shown this all too well by the marriage when he sacrificed for her all his cherished notions of a scholarly career and wasn’t afraid to risk going hungry. Yes, when the matter was important, Lopukhov’s arm was offered. But this arm was generally rather distant. Vera Pavlovna was organizing her workshop. Had she needed his help in any way, he’d have given it gladly. But why had he done so little? He’d merely refrained from interfering; he approved and rejoiced. He had his own life and she had hers.

Now it was different. Kirsanov didn’t wait to be asked to participate in everything she did. He was as interested as she was in her everyday life, just as she was in his. She had an entirely different relationship than that with her first husband; consequently she felt as if she had new sources of activity. Thoughts began to arise within her and assume a practical necessity that had been known to her on a theoretical level but had

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<sup>21</sup> Although the text here reads “Lopukhov,” Chernyshevsky obviously meant Kirsanov. He also is alluding to the readiness of both characters, and of the “new men” in general, to undertake revolutionary activity.

never really affected her inner life. What one can't do, one doesn't even contemplate seriously.

The following ideas were those that Vera Pavlovna now began to consider actively and that served as the motivation for her activity.

## X.

“Almost all paths of civil life are formally closed to women. Many, almost all, are closed to us in practice, even those paths of social activity not barred by formal obstacles. Of all spheres of life we are crowded into only one, family life: to be a member of a family, and that's all. Besides this, what other occupations are open to women? Perhaps only that of governess or tutor, if men are kind enough to leave us anything. This single path is very crowded; we get in one another's way because there are too many of us. This way can scarcely provide us with independence because there are too many of us offering our services. No single one of us is ever needed simply because there are too many available. Who really values governesses? You need only advertise that you're looking for one and dozens of us, hundreds of us arrive, each trying to get the place away from the others.

“No, until women strive to branch out in different ways, they'll never enjoy independence. Of course, it's difficult to forge a new path. But in this respect I'm in a particularly advantageous situation. I should be ashamed not to make use of it. Women haven't been prepared for serious pursuits. I don't know how much help I need to prepare myself, but I do know that no matter how much I need his daily help, he'll be here with me. Nor will this be a burden for him; it'll be as enjoyable for him as it will for me.

“Many paths of independent activity that haven't been closed to us by law are barred by social custom. But of those paths, I can embark on any one I choose, as long as I've resolved to endure the initial opposition of social convention. One such path is considerably more familiar to me than all others. My husband is a doctor. Since he spends all his free time with me, it should be easy for me to attempt to become a doctor, too.

“It's very important indeed to have women doctors.<sup>22</sup> They would prove very useful to all women. It's much easier for a woman to talk to another woman than to a man. How much unhappiness, suffering, and death could be avoided! I must try!”

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<sup>22</sup> Medicine provided one of the few, and socially most prominent, careers open to Russian women during the late imperial period. They began to audit medical courses at several Russian universities and at the Medical-Surgical Academy in the early 1860s. Barred from this practice by the government in 1863, many Russian women continued their studies in Switzerland, where they often became politically radicalized. In 1872, partly in response to this development, the tsarist government once again permitted women to study medicine at some Russian institutes of higher education.



## XI.

Vera Pavlovna finished this conversation with her husband by putting on her hat and accompanying him to the hospital to test her nerve. Could she stand the sight of blood and would she be able to study anatomy? Given Kirsanov's position in the hospital, there were, of course, no obstacles to her undertaking such an experiment.

Without feeling the least bit ashamed, I've compromised Vera Pavlovna many times from a poetical standpoint. For example, I haven't concealed the fact that she dines every day, generally with a hearty appetite, and besides that, she takes tea twice a day. But now I've reached a point where, despite the shameless depravity of my conceptions, I'm beset by timidity and begin to wonder, "Might it not be better to hide this? What will people think of a woman who proves to be capable of studying medicine? She must have both coarse nerves and a hard heart! She's not really a woman, but a butcher!" Considering, however, that I haven't been presenting my characters as ideals of perfection, I calm down. Let people judge as they please the coarseness of Vera Pavlovna's nature. What do I care? Is she coarse? So be it.

Therefore I can declare very coldbloodedly that she's discovered an enormous difference between idle observation and active work, both for her own good and for the sake of others.

I remember how frightened I was when, as a twelve-year-old child who'd never seen a fire, I was suddenly awakened by the very loud noise of a general fire alarm. The whole sky was ablaze and scorching hot; charred logs were flying through the air of our large provincial town; there was a terrible uproar, much running about, and very loud shouting. I shook feverishly. Fortunately I managed to get to the fire, taking advantage of the fact that everyone at home was in a state of great confusion. The fire was moving along the embankment (that is, along the shore... there wasn't really an embankment). The shore was piled with firewood and bast;<sup>23</sup> young children my own age grabbed hold of these things and dragged them away from the burning houses. I took part, too. What had become of my fear? I worked very diligently until we were told: "Enough! The danger's passed." From that time on I knew that if one is afraid of a large fire, then one must run toward it and work very hard; one will no longer be afraid.

He who works has no time to be afraid or to feel revulsion or disgust.

And so Vera Pavlovna took up medicine. She was one of the first women of my acquaintance who began to work in this new area. As she did this she really began to feel herself becoming a different person. She thought, "In a few years I'll be able to stand on my own two feet." That's a splendid thought! There's no real happiness without total independence. Poor women! There are so few of you who experience this happiness!

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<sup>23</sup> The inner bark from a tree, which is cut into strips and then woven to make matting, shoes, etc.

## XII.

And so a year goes by; another year will pass, then a third, since her marriage to Kirsanov, and Vera Pavlovna's days will continue to pass as they do now only one year after her wedding, as they have since the wedding itself. Many years will go by in the same way, unless something special occurs. Who knows what the future holds? But up to the time I write these lines, nothing like that has happened; Vera Pavlovna's days pass just as they did then, a year or two after her marriage to Kirsanov.

After relaying the terribly compromising information about Vera Pavlovna's plan to study medicine and her ability to do so, it's easy for me to talk about anything now. Nothing else could harm her as much in the public's estimation. I must say that now on Sergievsky Street, just as previously on Vasilievsky Island, Vera's day is punctuated by three meals: morning tea, dinner, and evening tea. Yes, she's maintained her unpoetic habit of dining every day and taking tea twice a day. Moreover, she even finds this enjoyable. In fact, she's maintained all her unpoetic, unrefined, and unseemly habits.

Many other things in this new tranquil period have remained as they were in the previous one. The division of rooms into neutral and nonneutral space is the same, as well as the rule not to enter each other's nonneutral space without permission. The rule also remains in force not to repeat a question if, in reply to the first time it was posed, a person is told, "Don't ask." They agree that such an answer shouldn't inspire any further thought about that question; rather the question should be forgotten. They remain convinced that if a question deserved an answer, there would be no need to ask it, since everything would have been made perfectly clear without any questions, and the fact that a person is silent shouldn't mean anything in particular. All this remains the same in this new serene period, just as it was before. However, now, in the new serene period, everything is slightly altered, no, not altered, but not quite the same as it was before, and their life is really quite different.

For example, the neutral and nonneutral rooms are strictly divided, but permission to enter a nonneutral room at a certain time of day has been granted once and for all. That's because two of their three daily meals have been moved to nonneutral rooms. They customarily have morning tea in her room and evening tea in his. Evening tea is conducted without any special ceremony. The servant, still the same Stepan, brings the samovar and tea service into Alexander's room, and that's all. But with morning tea there's now a special procedure. Stepan places the samovar and tea service on a table in the neutral space closest to Vera Pavlovna's room; then he tells Alexander Matviech that tea is served, that is, if he finds Alexander Matveich in his own study. And if he doesn't? Then Stepan has no need to announce it; let them remember that it's time for tea. So, in accordance with this custom, they've made a rule that every morning Vera Pavlovna waits for her husband without his having to ask permission to enter. She really can't manage without her Sasha. Everyone will understand why as soon as I describe how she wakes up.

Upon awakening she luxuriates in her warm bed; too lazy to get up, she lies there thinking and not thinking, dozing and not dozing. If she's thinking, then it's about something related to that day or the next few days, or something connected to the household, the workshop, her acquaintances, plans, or else how to organize her day—in other words, she's not dozing. But in addition, there are two other considerations: and three years after her marriage there appeared still a third, which is now nestled in her arms, Mitya, named after her friend Dmitry, of course.<sup>24</sup> And those two other considerations are, first, the pleasant thought that her career now provides her with complete independence in life, and second, her Sasha. This latter couldn't even be called a special consideration, since it was part and parcel of everything she thought about because he participated in her entire life. When this idea, not a very special one but an ever-present one, stands alone in her mind (it very often and at great length does so), what should one call it? Is it a thought or a daydream? Is she asleep or awake? Her eyes are half-closed, her cheeks slightly flushed, as in sleep. Yes, she is dozing. Now you can see for yourself why very often time passes so quickly that Vera Pavlovna hardly has time to get up and take a bath. (This has been conveniently arranged and took considerable effort. It was necessary to run pipes from the kitchen faucet and the boiler into her room. And, to tell the truth, rather a great deal of firewood is expended on this luxury. But what of it? She can allow herself this extravagance now.) Yes, very often Vera Pavlovna manages to take a bath and then lie down again to rest, lounging until Sasha's arrival. Frequently, perhaps even more often, she lies there daydreaming and half-dozing, without having decided to bathe, when Sasha comes in.

How nice it is to take a bath every morning! At first the water is so very hot, then the hot's turned off, the other faucet's turned on, and the cold water starts to trickle in. Slowly, imperceptibly, the water in the bath begins to cool. How splendid! A half hour, sometimes more, sometimes a whole hour goes by, and still she doesn't want to leave her bath.

Then, all an her own, without a servant, she gets dressed. It's much nicer that way. All an her own, that is, unless she's dozed the time away. And if she has? Then there's no way to escape it! Escape from what? From Sasha's playing the role of maid. Sasha's awfully funny! Perhaps not even the mysterious touch of the whispering guest-singer's hand<sup>25</sup> could force the words "This is so embarrassing" to appear in her imaginary diary. In any case, her sweetheart takes upon himself the established duty of attending to morning tea.

There really was no other way. Sasha was absolutely right when he said that it should be so organized, because it was very pleasant to have one's morning tea, that is, mostly cream warmed by the addition of a small amount of very strong tea, in bed. Sasha would fetch the tea service. Yes, that occurred more often than his having to

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<sup>24</sup> That is, Lopukhov.

<sup>25</sup> See pp. 236–43 above.

come in with it,<sup>26</sup> and he would officiate while she lounged in bed. After drinking her fill, she'd continue to recline, now no longer in bed, but on her little sofa. It was so wide, but most of all it was very soft, almost like a featherbed. She'd rest until ten or eleven o'clock, when Sasha had to leave for the hospital, the clinic, or the academic auditorium. Over his last cup of tea Sasha would light up a cigar and one of them would remark to the other, "Let's get to work," or "Enough of this. Now to work." What kind of work? A lesson or review session for Vera Pavlovna, of course. Sasha is her medical tutor, but his help is needed even more to prepare her for examinations in those subjects in the gymnasium course which she found too tedious to study alone. A really awful one was mathematics; Latin was almost as tedious, but there was no choice. She had to suffer with both, but not too much. The examination to replace a gymnasium certificate for entrance into the Medical Academy really required little, very little. For example, I can't guarantee that Vera Pavlovna will ever be proficient enough in Latin to be able to translate even two lines of Cornelius Nepos,<sup>27</sup> but she can already understand the Latin phrases that occur in medical books, because this knowledge is essential for her, though not very profound. No, enough of this. I see that I'm compromising Vera Pavlovna beyond belief. No doubt the perspicacious ...

### XIII. A Digression On Bluestockings<sup>28</sup>

"A bluestocking! An extreme example of a bluestocking! I can't stand a bluestocking! Stupid and boring is the bluestocking!" cries the perspicacious reader with considerable heat, not all unwarranted.

My, how attached we've become, the perspicacious reader and I. He insulted me, I threw him out on his ear twice, and still we go on exchanging our innermost thoughts. A secret attraction of hearts! What can we do about it?

"O perspicacious reader" I reply, "you're right. A bluestocking is genuinely stupid and boring, and impossible to bear. You guessed it. But you haven't figured out who the bluestocking is. You'll see soon, as if in a mirror. A bluestocking holds forth self-confidently and with unreasonable affectation about literature and other learned things about which he knows absolutely nothing. He does so not because he has any interest in these matters, but merely to show off his intelligence (which, as it happens, he did

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<sup>26</sup> An indication that, while Vera Pavlovna and Kirsanov preserved their independence, their mutual love and passionate natures led them generally to sleep together. Through this intimate relationship Chernyshevsky demonstrates how the rational satisfaction of personal desires in fact binds individuals together more closely.

<sup>27</sup> A Roman historian and a correspondent and friend of Cicero, Cornelius Nepos (c. 100 B.C.–C. 25 B.C.) is noted particularly for his biographies of Atticus, Cicero, and the elder Cato. Chernyshevsky echoes a criticism often made by liberals and radicals, that the emphasis on classical studies in tsarist gymnasia ill prepared students for the modern world.

<sup>28</sup> A term originating in late-eighteenth-century England which indicated a woman who departed from social convention because of her strong literary tastes and learning.

not receive from nature), his sublime aspirations (of which he has as many as the chair on which he sits), and his education (of which he has as much as a parrot). Do you see whose ugly mug and sleek figure are reflected in that mirror? Yours, my friend! Yes, however much you grow your beard or however carefully you shave it off, you're still undoubtedly and indisputably a genuine bluestocking. That's why I tossed you out on your ear twice, merely because I can't stand bluestockings, a type ten times more prevalent among my fellow men than among women.

"Anyone who is purposefully engaged in some kind of work, no matter what, and no matter what kind of clothes this person wears, men's or women's, that person is simply someone engaged in his work. That's all there is to it."

## XIV.

This conversation about bluestockings has been very useful for the perspicacious reader (who is one himself), but it's taken me away from my account of how Vera Pavlovna spends her days now. "Now"—what does that mean? Whatever you like, from the time she moved to Sergievsky Street to the present. But, as a matter of fact, why continue this description? Merely to indicate that the change that had begun to affect the tenor of Vera Pavlovna's evenings ever since she renewed her acquaintance with Kirsanov on Vasilievsky Island had so evolved that now the Kirsanovs constituted the center of a rather large circle of young families living as harmoniously and happily as they do, and according to the same ideas. Music and singing, opera and poetry, parties and dances fill the spare evenings of these families because every evening there's a gathering at the home of one or another of them or an event arranged elsewhere for those who wish. Usually about half the entire circle is in attendance at these gatherings and at other occasions; the Kirsanovs, like the others, spend about half their evenings in this animated way. There's no more to say about it; it's all very clear. There's one thing, however, that unfortunately is all too deserving of detailed comment if many people are to understand it. Each one of us, even if he hasn't experienced it but just read about it, knows the difference for a young man or woman between an evening that is simply that and an evening spent with a sweetheart, between an opera you simply enjoy and one that you attend in the company of your beloved. There's a very big difference indeed. That's well known. But what's experienced by very few is the fact that the fascination that love imparts need not be a momentary phenomenon in a person's life. This bright light of our life need not illuminate merely the period of search and aspiration which we can simply call courtship or wooing. No, this period should really be only the dawning, gentle and beautiful in and of itself, but merely the harbinger of a day that shines with incomparably more light and warmth than the dawn. Its light and warmth will grow and grow, especially the warmth, and will keep on growing long past noon. This wasn't always so. Often when lovers were united, the poetry of their love would quickly disappear. Now, among those who are called

“contemporary people,”<sup>29</sup> it’s not like that at all. After they unite their love, the longer they live together, the more they’re illuminated and warmed by its poetry, until the end of the day, when their solicitude for their growing children will engulf all other concerns. Then this solicitude, much sweeter than personal enjoyment alone, takes precedence; but up to that time the personal enjoyment keeps growing. What people used to experience for only a few fleeting months contemporary people manage to preserve for many, many years.

Why is this so? It’s a secret, but I suppose I can reveal it to you. It’s a fine secret, easily applied and not difficult to use, but one must have both a pure heart and an honest soul, as well as a contemporary notion of the rights of man and respect for the freedom of the individual you live with. That’s all. It’s no more a secret than that. Regard your wife as you did your bride; recognize that at any moment she has the right to say, “I’m dissatisfied with you. Get away from me.” Regard her thus and nine years after your marriage she’ll still inspire in you the same poetic feeling she did as a bride; no, it will be even more poetic and more ideal in the good sense of that word. Acknowledge her freedom just as openly and formally, with no reservations, as you recognize your friends’ rights to value or spurn your friendship. Then, ten years or even twenty after your marriage, you’ll be just as dear to her as you were when you were a bridegroom. That’s how contemporary men and women live today. An enviable situation! That’s because they’re completely honest with each other; ten years after their marriage they love each other more passionately and poetically than they did on their wedding day. During those ten years neither has ever given the other a false kiss or uttered a false word. “A lie has never crossed his lips” was written about a character in a certain book. “There’s no falsehood in his heart” was also said about a character in a certain book, perhaps the same one.<sup>30</sup> People read that book and think, “What astonishing moral virtue is ascribed to him!” Those who wrote that book thought, “We’ve described the sort of person who’ll surprise everyone.” Those who wrote it didn’t foresee, and those who read it don’t understand, that contemporary people don’t admit into their circle of acquaintances anyone who doesn’t possess such a soul. They have no lack of friends whom they consider nothing more than contemporary people, worthy but very ordinary.

There’s but one regret: at the present time, for every contemporary person there are at least a dozen or more antediluvian types. It’s only natural, after all that the antediluvian world should be populated by antediluvians.

## XV.

“We’ve been living together three years now” (before it used to be one year, then two, soon it’ll be four and so on), “yet we still act like lovers who see each other infrequently

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<sup>29</sup> That is, the “new people.”

<sup>30</sup> The source of these quotations is unknown.

and secretly. Where did people come up with the idea, Sasha, that love fades when nothing really prevents people from belonging entirely to one another? These people didn't know true love, only erotic self-love or fantasy. Real love begins only when people begin to live together."

"Could it be that you've noticed something of this kind in me?"

"I've noticed something much more curious than that. In another three years you'll forget all about your medicine; three years after that you'll forget how to read. Of all your faculties pertaining to intellectual life, only one will remain—your vision, and even then you'll forget how to see anything else but me."

Such conversations didn't last very long and didn't occur too frequently, but still they did take place.

"Yes, love grows stronger each year."

"Have you heard those tales about the opium eaters? Their passion increases every year. Someone who's once tasted the delight that passion offers can only go on to experience it to a greater and greater degree."

"Yes. All strong passions are like that; the more they develop, the stronger they grow."

"Satiety! Passion doesn't know satiety; it knows only temporary relief."

"Only idle fantasy knows satiety, not the heart or the real, vital person, only the spoiled dreamer who's retreated from life."

"As if my appetite were weakened or my taste dulled because I don't starve myself, but instead have no trouble eating very well every day. On the contrary, my taste develops because my table has so much to offer. I'd lose my appetite only with life itself; one can't live without it." (This is clearly gross materialism, I observe together with the perspicacious reader.)

"Can human nature provide for an attachment to grow weaker, for it not to develop with time? When is friendship better and sweeter—a week, a year, or twenty years after it began? It's essential that people choose well so that they're really suited to be friends with each other."

These conversations are perpetual, but occur not too often. They're brief and infrequent. Indeed, why talk about this a great deal or very often?

The following kind of conversation, however, occurred more frequently and lasted longer.

"Sasha, what a great support your love is to me. Through it I'm becoming independent and casting off all reliance, even on you, yes, even on you. But what has my love brought to you?"

"Me? No less than to you. It gives my nerves a strong, constant, healthy stimulus that inevitably leads to the development of my entire nervous system." (Gross materialism, I observe once again, together with the perspicacious reader.) "Therefore, both my intellectual and moral strength grow as a result of my love."

“Yes, Sasha, I hear this from everybody. I’m a poor witness since my own eyes are partial. But everyone else sees it: your eyes sparkle and your gaze is stronger and sharper.”

“Verochka, why shouldn’t I praise myself or not praise myself in front of you? We’re now one person, and this must indeed be reflected in one’s eyes. My intellect has become stronger. When I draw a conclusion from observations, or prepare a general survey of facts, I can now do in one hour what used to take me several hours of work. Now I can grasp far more facts than before; my conclusions are broader and fuller. Verochka, if there’d been a spark of brilliance in me, then with this new feeling I would have become a great genius. If I’d been endowed by nature with the strength to make some small innovation in science, with this feeling I would have acquired the power to revolutionize all of science. But I was born to be merely a drudge, an obscure insignificant laborer, one who works on minor, particular problems. That’s the way I was even before you appeared. But now, you know, I’m no longer the same person. People have begun to expect more of me; they think I’m reorganizing one entire important branch of science, the theory of the function of the nervous system. Now I feel that I’ll fulfill their expectations. At the age of twenty-four a man’s outlook is broader and bolder than at twenty-nine” (later he would say at thirty, thirty-two, etc.); “but back then I was lacking in these powers, as compared to now. Yet I feel that I’m still growing, whereas without you growth would have stopped long ago. In fact, I hadn’t been growing for the last two or three years before we started living together. You’ve given me back the vitality of my early youth, the strength to move beyond where I would’ve stopped, where I’d already stopped without you.

“What about the energy of work, Verochka? Doesn’t that mean quite a lot? Labor takes on passionate exhilaration when one’s whole life is organized that way. You know how a cup of coffee or a glass of wine affects the mental energy of work; the kind of stimulation they provide to other people for an hour, followed by a letdown proportionate to that external, temporary excitement, I now feel all the time. My nerves are constantly so attuned; they’re strong and vital.” (Gross materialism yet again, we observe . . . and so on.)

And these conversations occurred even more frequently and lasted longer.

“A person who hasn’t yet experienced how love stimulates all of a person’s powers hasn’t known true love.”

“Love consists of promoting someone else’s development and of developing oneself.”

“Anyone who has no active powers will be endowed with them by love. Anyone who has them already will be given the means to use them.”

“Only a man who helps his beloved wife rise to independence truly loves her.”

“Only a person whose mind grows brighter and whose hands grow stronger knows true love.”

Conversations such as the following are very frequent.



“My dear, I’m now reading Boccaccio.”<sup>31</sup> (“What immorality!” we observe with the perspicacious reader. A woman reading Boccaccio! Why, only the two of us can do that. Besides, I also note the following: in five minutes a woman could hear more genuine nastiness, albeit of a very proper kind, from the mouth of a perspicacious reader than she could find in all of Boccaccio. Furthermore, of course, she wouldn’t hear from the reader one single bright, fresh, pure thought, of which Boccaccio has so very many.) “You were right, my dear, when you said how enormously talented he was. Some of his stories, in my opinion, deserve to be placed alongside the best dramas by Shakespeare in terms of their profundity and subtle psychological analysis.”

“How do you find the comical stories, where he stands so little on ceremony?”

“A few of them are amusing, but in general I find them boring, like any farce that’s too crude.”

“One must forgive him that. He lived five hundred years before us. Things that seem ‘too lewd or cheap to us now weren’t considered indecent then.”

“In the same way many of our customs and manners will seem crude and dirty in much less than five hundred years. But that’s beside the point. I’m talking about those wonderful stories where Boccaccio seriously depicts passionate, sublime love. Those stories show his great talent best. Here’s what I meant to say, Sasha. He depicts love very well and vividly, but judging from his work, one can see that in those days people didn’t understand the tenderness of love as we do now. Love was not felt so strongly then, even though it’s been said that his age was one when love was enjoyed most fully. No, no matter what, people didn’t enjoy love then even half as much as we do now. Their feelings were too superficial, their rapture too weak and momentary.

“The intensity of sensation is in proportion to the level of feeling from which it evolves in the organism. If it’s motivated exclusively by an external object or stimulus, it’s short-lived and encompasses only one particular side of life. A person who drinks merely because he’s offered a glass knows very little about the taste of wine; it affords him too little enjoyment. Pleasure is much stronger when it’s rooted in the imagination and when the imagination seeks an object and motive for enjoyment. It’s then that the blood runs faster, feels warmer, and conveys the sensation of much greater rapture. But this is still very weak compared to when those relations connected with rapture are rooted in the very depths of moral life. In that case the stimulation pervades the entire nervous system and excites it both forcefully and lastingly. Warmth infuses the whole being: it’s not merely the beating of one’s heart aroused by fantasy. No, the entire being feels extraordinary freshness and lightness. It’s as if there were a change in the atmosphere a person’s breathing, as if the air becomes much purer and richer in oxygen. It’s like sensations experienced on a warm, sunny day or what it feels like to be warmed by the sun. The tremendous difference is that freshness and lightness

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<sup>31</sup> The Italian poet, storyteller, and humanist Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) is best known for his classic, the *Decameron* (1348–1353), a collection of witty and often licentious tales that marked the transition from medieval to modern literary themes and strongly influenced the style of later Italian prose.

are developing in the nerves themselves and are perceived directly by them, without intermediary elements weakening that caressing strength.”

“I’m very glad I gave up that harmful fashion before it was too late. It’s true: nothing should hinder the circulation of the blood. But why rejoice afterward if one’s skin appears softer? That’s as it should be. And from what trifles! Perhaps, but such trifles spoil the legs. Socks should stay up by themselves without causing any constraint. The flow of the line then becomes harmonious and this gash disappears.”

“It doesn’t go away that fast. Even though I’d worn a corset only three years, I’d stopped before our life together. But the truth is that nowadays dresses pinch the waist anyway, even without a corset. But is it really true that this fashion too will pass, just as the leg has healed? Surely it’s going out of fashion even now and will soon pass entirely. How pleased I’ll be! What an unbearable style for a dress! It’s high time we understood that Greek women were smarter; we should wear dresses that are loose fitting right from the shoulder, just as they did. The style of our dresses ruins our figures. But my own lines are recovering and I’m very pleased about it!”

“How lovely you are, Verochka!”

“How happy I am, Sasha.”

His sweet speeches are

Like the babble of a brook;

His smile

And his kiss.<sup>32</sup>

Dear friend! Quench

Your kisses.

Even without them

My blood races when I’m near you.

Even without them

My face flushes,

My breast heaves,

And my eyes sparkle

Like stars at night.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> From the dramatic poem *Faust* (1808, 1833), by the preeminent German poet, dramatist, and novelist, as well as Weimar minister of state, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). An extremely complex work influenced by the excesses of the French Revolution and Napoleonic conquests in Germany, *Faust* proclaims the limitations of human knowledge and abilities, but nonetheless exalts the quest for truth. The passage, from “Gretchen’s Room” (Part I), should read: “And the magic stream / Of his words—what bliss! / The clasp of his hand / And, ah, his kiss!”

<sup>33</sup> From the poem “Russian Song” (1841; first published 1843), by the lyric poet Aleksei Koltsov (1809–1842), whose themes generally concerned nature, peasant life, and the countryside and whose popular verses were subsequently set to music. Chernyshevsky is quoting from a version of the poem that was altered slightly by the radical critic Vissarion Belinsky (1811–1848) and published in 1846.

## XVI. Vera Pavlovna's Fourth Dream

Vera Pavlovna has a dream.

From the distance she hears the sound of a familiar voice. Oh, how familiar it is now, and it's drawing nearer and nearer.<sup>34</sup>

Wie herrlich leuchtet

Mir die Natur!

Wie glanz die Sonne!

Wie lacht die Flur!<sup>35</sup>

[How splendid the brightness

Of nature around me!

How the sun shines!

How the fields laugh!]

Vera Pavlovna sees that it is so; everything is just like that.

The field glimmers with a golden tint; the meadow is covered with flowers; and hundreds upon thousands of blossoms unfold on bushes surrounding the meadow. The forest that rises up behind grows greener, whispers, and is decked out in bright flowers. A fragrance wafts in from the field, the meadow, the shrubs, and from the flowers that fill the forest. Birds flutter in the branches of the trees; their thousands of voices float down from above together with all the fragrances. Beyond the field, meadow, shrubs, and forest there appear other fields glimmering with gold, meadows swathed in flowers, shrubs decked with blossoms—stretching all the way to the distant mountains, covered with forests and lit by the sun. Here and there bright silvery, golden, purple, or translucent clouds lightly tint the brilliant azure of the sky along the horizon. The sun has just risen; nature rejoices and brings joy. It pours light and warmth, fragrance and song, love and bliss into the heart; and a song of joy and bliss, love and goodness pours forth from the heart. “Oh, earth! Oh, bliss! Oh, love! Oh, splendid golden love, like morning clouds over mountain-tops!”

O Erd'! O Sonne!

O Glück! O Lust!

O Lieb, o Liebe!

So golden schön,

Wie Morgenwolken

Auf jenen Höhn!<sup>36</sup>

[Oh, earth! Oh, sun!

Oh, happiness! Oh, delight!

Oh, love, oh, love!

So golden-beautiful,

Like morning clouds

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<sup>34</sup> The voice is that of Bosio (see above, pp. 236–43 and n. 138).

<sup>35</sup> The opening lines of Goethe's poem “Mailed” (“May Song”; 1771).

<sup>36</sup> Ll. 11–16 of Goethe's “Maileid.”

Over those hills!]

“Now do you recognize me? Do you see that I am beautiful? You still don’t. None of you yet knows me in all my beauty. Behold now what was, what is, and what shall be. Look and listen:”

Wohl perlet im Glase der purpurne Wein,  
Wohl glänzen die Augen der Gäste, . . .<sup>37</sup>

[The goblet sparkles with purple wine,  
The eyes of the guests shine brightly, . . . ]

At the foot of the mountains, on the outskirts of the forest, amidst the bushes flowering in tall, thick avenues, a palace looms up.

“Let’s go there.”

They walk; they fly.

A magnificent feast is in progress. Wine bubbles in glasses.

The guests’ eyes sparkle. It’s noisy, but whispers and laughter can be heard beneath the noise. Hands are squeezed in secret; at times an inaudible kiss is stealthily exchanged. “A song! A song! Our celebration isn’t complete without a song!” The poet rises: both his face and his mind are illumined with inspiration. Nature confides her secrets to him, history reveals its meaning, and in his song thousands of years of life parade by in a series of tableaux.

## 1.

The words of the poet ring out and the first scene appears.

Tents of nomads. Sheep, horses, and camels graze around the tents. In the distance stand groves of olives and fig trees. Farther still, on the horizon to the northwest, stands a double chain of lofty mountains. The summits are covered with snow, their slopes with cedars. But the shepherds are more slender than the cedars, their wives more graceful than the palms. Their indolent life is untroubled in its sweet state of bliss. They have but one concern—love. They spend all their time, day after day, in caresses and songs of love.

“No,” says the radiant beauty. “This isn’t about me. I didn’t exist then. This woman is still a slave. Where there’s no equality, I don’t exist. This goddess was named Astarte.<sup>38</sup> Look, here she is.”

A splendid woman. She wears heavy gold bracelets on her wrists and ankles and a heavy necklace of pearls and coral set in gold around her neck. Her hair is annointed with myrrh. There is sensuality and servility in her face, sensuality and vacuity in her eyes.

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<sup>37</sup> The opening lines of the poem “Die vier Weltalter” (“The Four Ages of the World”; 1802), by the German poet, dramatist, and historian Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805).

<sup>38</sup> A Semitic goddess of fertility and love corresponding to the Greek Aphrodite, Astarte was the most important female deity of the Phoenicians.

“Submit to your master. Sweeten his idleness in the intervals between his forays. You must love him because he has bought you: if you don’t, then he’ll kill you,” she says to the woman lying before her in the dust.

“You can see that this isn’t me” says the beauty.

## 2.

The inspired words of the poet ring out again.

A new scene appears.

A city. Mountains stretch into the distance to the north and east; far off to the south and east, but closer to the west, lies the sea. A wonderful city! Its houses are neither large nor luxurious from the outside. But there are many magnificent temples, especially on the hill with stairs leading up to gates of astonishing size and beauty. The entire hill is covered with temples and public buildings, each one of which would be sufficient to add to the beauty and glory of the most magnificent of today’s capitals. There are thousands of statues in these temples and throughout the whole town—any one of them would be enough to transform the museum in which it stood into the foremost collection in the whole world. How beautiful are the people who crowd the squares and streets! Each one of these young men, women, and girls could serve as a model for a statue. They are active, lively, cheerful people whose whole life is radiant and elegant. These houses don’t appear to be luxurious from the outside, but what a wealth of elegance and what a high capacity for enjoyment they reveal inside. One could easily lose oneself in admiration before each item of furniture and each piece of crockery. And these people are all so beautiful, so able to appreciate beauty, to live for love, to serve beauty.

Here’s an exile returning to the city that had ousted him from power; now he’s coming back to rule—everyone knows that. Why are no hands raised up against him? Because riding next to him on his chariot stands a woman of exceptional beauty (even among all these beautiful creatures). She presents him to the people, asking them to accept him, telling them that she is his patroness. Bowing down before her beauty, the people confer upon her beloved Pisistratus the right to rule over them.<sup>39</sup>

Here’s a courtroom. The judges are gloomy old men. The people may be won over, but not these judges. The Areopagus<sup>40</sup> is known for its merciless severity, its implacable impartiality. Gods and goddesses have come here to submit their affairs to judgment. And now this woman, considered by all to be guilty of horrendous crimes, is supposed to appear before them. She must die, this destroyer of Athens; each of the judges

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<sup>39</sup> Pisistratus (605?–527 B.C.) seized power in Athens around 560 B.C. Though he was twice sent into exile by his opponents, he returned and ruled tyrannically until his death.

<sup>40</sup> A council of aristocrats which acted as a religious authority and the highest court in ancient Athens.

has already decided the matter in his heart. But when the accused Aspasia<sup>41</sup> appears before them, they fall to the ground before her, saying, “You can’t be condemned, for you are too beautiful!” Is this not the kingdom of beauty? Is this not the kingdom of love?

“No” says the radiant beauty, “I didn’t exist then either. They bowed down before woman, but they didn’t consider her an equal. They worshiped her, but only as a source of pleasure. They didn’t yet acknowledge her human dignity. Where there’s no respect for woman as a human being, I still don’t exist. This goddess was named Aphrodite.<sup>42</sup> Look, here she is.”

This goddess wears no adornments at all. She’s so beautiful that her worshipers didn’t want her to wear any clothes: her marvelous shape was not to be hidden from their enraptured gaze.

What does she say to the woman almost as beautiful as she, who’s scattering incense on her altar?

“Be a source of pleasure for man. He’s your master. Live for him, not for yourself.”

Her eyes reflect only the languor of physical pleasure. Her stance is proud, as is her expression, but she takes pride only in her physical beauty. What sort of life was a woman condemned to lead during her reign? Man locked her up in the gynecium<sup>43</sup> so that no one but he, her master, could enjoy the beauty that belonged to him. She had no freedom. There were other women who called themselves free, but they sold both the enjoyment of their beauty and their freedom. “No, they had no freedom either. This goddess was half-slave. Where there is no freedom, there is no happiness and I don’t exist.”

### 3.

The words of the poet ring out again. A new scene appears.

An arena before a castle. Around it arises an amphitheater filled with a crowd of dazzling spectators. Knights are already waiting in the arena. Above it, on the castle balcony, sits a young woman. She holds a scarf in her hand. The victorious knight will receive that scarf and the right to kiss her hand. The knights fight to the death. Toggenburg<sup>44</sup> wins.

“Oh, knight, I love you as a sister would. Demand no other love from me. My heart pounds neither at your approach nor at your departure.”

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<sup>41</sup> Mistress of the Athenian statesman Pericles and renowned for both her intelligence and her beauty, Aspasia (5th cen. B.C.) became a controversial figure in Athens because of her involvement in public affairs.

<sup>42</sup> The Greek goddess of love, beauty, and fertility.

<sup>43</sup> The women’s quarters in ancient Greek houses.

<sup>44</sup> The hero of Schiller’s ballad “Ritter Toggenburg” (“The Knight Toggenburg”; 1798) (see n. 243 above).

“My fate is sealed,” he replies, and sets sail for Palestine. His fame spreads throughout Christendom. But he can’t go on living without seeing the goddess of his heart. He returns without having found oblivion in battle.

“Oh, knight, don’t come searching here. She’s gone off to a convent.”

He builds himself a hut; from it, unbeknownst to her, he can watch her open the window of her cell every morning. His whole life consists of waiting for her to appear at that window, beautiful as the sun. He has no other life except to catch a glimpse of his heart’s goddess; he has no other life until the day he dies. Even as his life is fading, still he sits by the window of his little hut, thinking only, “Will I ever see her again?”

“This isn’t about me at all,” says the radiant beauty. “He loved her as long as he didn’t touch her. If she’d become his wife, then she’d have become his subject. She’d have had to tremble before him. He’d have locked her up and stopped loving her. He’d have taken long hunting trips, gone off to fight wars, caroused with his comrades, and raped his vassals’ wives, while his wife would have been abandoned, locked away, despised. At that time, once a man touched a woman, he stopped loving her. No, I didn’t exist then. This goddess is named Chastity.<sup>45</sup> Look, here she is.”

She’s a modest, gentle, tender, beautiful woman—more beautiful than Astarte, even more beautiful than Aphrodite, but she’s pensive, gloomy, and sorrowful. Others bow their knees before her and bring her garlands of roses. She says: “My soul is sad unto deathly sorrow. A sword has pierced my heart. You must grieve as well. You are unhappy. The earth is a vale of tears.”

“No, no, I didn’t exist then,” says the radiant beauty.

#### 4.

“No, these goddesses aren’t at all like me. They continue to reign, but their kingdoms are in decline. The birth of each new kingdom initiates the decline of the previous one. I was born only when the last one began to crumble. Since my birth their kingdoms have declined more rapidly; soon they will completely disappear. Each new kingdom failed to replace its predecessor altogether, so that they all continue to coexist. But I shall replace them all; soon they’ll all disappear and I alone will remain to rule over the whole world. But they had to reign before me; my kingdom couldn’t have come into being without theirs.

“People used to be like animals. They ceased being so when man began to value woman’s beauty. But woman wasn’t as strong as man, and man was a coarse creature. At that time everything was decided by force. Having begun to value woman’s beauty, man took her as his own. She became his property, his chattel. This was the reign of Astarte.

“When man developed further, he came to value woman’s beauty more than ever and began to worship her. But woman’s consciousness wasn’t yet fully developed. He

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<sup>45</sup> An allusion to the Virgin Mary.

valued her only for her beauty. She was able to think only those thoughts that she heard from him. He said that he was a human being but that she wasn't; she still viewed herself as a splendid treasure belonging to him. She didn't consider herself human. This was the reign of Aphrodite.

"But soon the consciousness that she too was a human being began to awaken in her. What grief must have seized her at the dawning of even the weakest notion of her own human dignity! For she wasn't yet acknowledged to be a person. Man still didn't want to have her as a companion for himself, other than as his slave. She said, 'I don't wish to be your companion!' Then his passion made him entreat her and submit. He forgot that he didn't consider her a human being, and came to love her as an unattainable, untouchable, and inviolable maiden. But as soon as she believed his entreaty, as soon as he touched her, then woe unto her! She was in his hands, and those hands were stronger than hers. He was coarse; he made her his slave and despised her. Woe unto her! This is the sorrowful reign of the Virgin.

"But centuries passed. My sister (Do you know her? . . . She appeared to you before I did.) did her work. She preceded the others and has always existed. She existed before people were created and has always labored tirelessly. Her work was difficult, her successes gradual, but she toiled on and on and soon became more successful. Man became wiser; more and more, woman strongly perceived herself as a human being equal to him. And the time came, and I was born.

"That was not so long ago, not long ago at all. Do you know who first sensed that I had been born and who announced it to the others? It was Rousseau in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.<sup>46</sup> People heard about me for the first time in that book.

"Since then my kingdom has expanded. I still don't rule over very many people. But now my kingdom is growing rapidly and you can already foresee a time when I shall rule over all the earth. Only then will people fully appreciate my beauty. Those who acknowledge my power at this time are still incapable of obeying my will entirely. They are surrounded by crowds of people who are hostile to it. These people would torment them, poison their lives, if they knew my will and fulfilled it entirely. But I desire happiness; I require no suffering whatever. So I tell them: 'Don't do anything you will be persecuted for. Know my will only so far as you can without causing harm to yourselves.'"

"But can I ever know you fully?" asks Vera Pavlovna.

"Yes, you can. You're in a fortunate position. You have nothing to fear. You can do anything you want. If you knew my will entirely, you'd know I'd do nothing to harm you. You must not and will not desire anything for which you'd be tormented

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<sup>46</sup> A novel by the French-Swiss philosopher, political theorist, and skeptic JeanJacques Rousseau (1712–1778), *Julie: ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) contains a sharp critique of European society in general and the position of women in particular (see also Introduction, 23). Rousseau is perhaps best known for his theory, expressed most fully in *Treatise du contrat social* (1762), that human beings are naturally good and equal, but become corrupted by civilization. They therefore must enter into contracts establishing governments to correct the resulting inequalities.



by those who don't know me. You're now completely satisfied by what you have; you don't think about anything or anyone else, nor will you. I can reveal myself to you entirely."

"Tell me your name, then. You named the other goddesses, but you still haven't told me your name."

"So you want me to tell you my name? Look at me and listen to me."

## 5.

"Look and listen. Do you recognize my voice? Do you recognize my face? Haven't you seen it before?"

No, she hadn't seen her face, hadn't seen her at all. Why then did it seem as if she had? She'd seen her often during the last year, ever since she'd first spoken with him, when he first looked at her and kissed her, she'd been seeing this radiant beauty who didn't hide from her and who'd appeared to her as she did to him.

"No, I haven't seen you before, I haven't seen your face. You appeared to me, and I caught a glimpse of you, but you were surrounded by such radiance that I really couldn't see you. I only noticed that you were more beautiful than all the others. I heard your voice too, but only to recognize that it was lovelier than all the others."

"Behold, for your sake I shall dim the brightness of my aura for a moment; for a moment my voice will be heard without the enchanting quality I usually give it. For a moment I shall cease being a goddess just for you. There. Did you see? Did you hear? Do you recognize me? Enough! I'm a goddess again and shall remain so forever!"

Once more she's surrounded by the full brilliance of her radiance and her voice is inexpressibly enchanting. But for that one moment when she ceased to be a goddess and allowed herself to be recognized—could it be? Did Vera Pavlovna really see that face? Did she really hear that voice?

"Yes" replies the goddess. "You wanted to know who I am and you found out. You wanted to learn my name. I have no name other than that of the person to whom I appear. My name is her name. Now you have seen who I am. There's nothing nobler than a human being, nothing nobler than a woman. I am the woman to whom I appear, the one who loves and is loved."

Yes, Vera Pavlovna did see: it was she herself, but as a goddess.<sup>47</sup> The goddess's countenance was her own, her own living countenance, whose features were so far from perfection. Every day she encountered many faces that were much more beautiful than hers. Yet this was her very own face, glowing with the radiance of love, lovelier than all the ideals bequeathed to us by the great sculptors of antiquity and the great artists of the golden age of painting. Yes, it was she herself, but glowing with the radiance of love. In Petersburg, a city so lacking in beauty, there were hundreds of faces more beautiful

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<sup>47</sup> Drawing on both the Christian doctrine of transfiguration and Feuerbach's ideas, Chernyshevsky deifies Vera Pavlovna while anthropologizing his goddess (see n.41 above).

than hers. But she was far more beautiful than the Aphrodite in the Louvre,<sup>48</sup> lovelier than all the famous beauties known before.

“You’re seeing your reflection in a mirror just as you are, without me. In me you behold yourself as you are seen by the one who loves you. For his sake I merge with you. For him there’s no one more beautiful than you. For him all ideals pale beside you.”

Isn’t that so?

It is so, it is so!

## 6.

“Now you know who I am; next you shall learn what I am.

“I possess all the sensual pleasure that was contained in Astarte. She’s the ancestor of all of us, the other goddesses who replaced her. I possess all the ecstasy at the contemplation of beauty which was contained in Aphrodite. I possess all the reverence before purity which was contained in Chastity.

“But in me all these qualities are fuller, nobler, and stronger than in those others. What was in Chastity is combined in me with the qualities of Astarte and Aphrodite. In combination with other strengths, each of these qualities becomes even more powerful, greater as a result of the synthesis.<sup>49</sup> But much more power and splendor are bestowed on each of these qualities in me by that new element which wasn’t present in any of the earlier goddesses. That new element which distinguishes me from all others is ‘equal rights between lovers,’ that is, an equal relationship between them as human beings. As a result of this new element alone, everything I possess is much, oh so much more beautiful than it was in them.

“When a man acknowledges a woman’s rights as equal to his own, he’s renouncing the view of her as his personal property. Then she loves him as he loves her, only because she wants to. If she doesn’t so wish, then he has no rights over her whatsoever, as she has none over him. Therefore I am freedom.

“As a result of this equality and freedom, everything in me that was present in earlier goddesses has acquired a new character, a greater splendor, one that was unknown before me and that makes everything else insignificant.

“Previously sensual pleasure wasn’t known fully because without the free attraction of two lovers, neither could experience radiant rapture. Before me ecstasy at the contemplation of beauty was not fully known, because if beauty isn’t revealed through free attraction, there is no radiant rapture in its contemplation. Without free attraction both pleasure and delight are dull in comparison with what they are in me. My

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<sup>48</sup> That is, the statue of the Venus de Milo.

<sup>49</sup> In claiming that this merger makes the whole more powerful than the sum of its parts while also enhancing the quality of each part, Chernyshevsky reflects a central tenet of German idealist philosophy and anticipates the contemporary scientific concept of synergy. The idea also corresponds to Chernyshevsky’s belief that cooperative labor improves the welfare of both the individual and society.

chastity is purer than that of Chastity, who spoke only about purity of the body. I possess purity of heart. I'm free because in me there's neither deceit nor pretense. I say no word that I don't feel. I bestow no kiss barren of love.<sup>50</sup>

"But in and of itself the new quality in me that conveys loveliness greater than all earlier goddesses' constitutes my loveliness, greater than anything else. A master is embarrassed before his servant, a servant before his master; man is completely free only among equals. It's tiresome to be with one's inferiors; only among equals can one experience true joy. That's why before me, just as man did not know the full happiness of love, what he experienced was unworthy of being called happiness—it was merely momentary intoxication. As for woman—before me she was so pitiful. She was a subordinate, an enslaved creature, living in fear; before me she knew too little about the nature of love. Where there's fear, there's no love...

"Therefore, if you wish to express in one phrase what I am, it's 'equal rights.' Without them the pleasures of the body and delight in beauty are tedious, dull, and vile. Without them there's no purity of heart, only the deceptive purity of the body. As a result of this equality in me there is also freedom, without which I cannot exist.

"I've told you everything so that now you can tell others what I am. But at present my kingdom is still small; I must protect my people from the slander of those who don't yet know me. At this time I can't reveal my will fully to everyone. I shall do so only when my kingdom encompasses all people. When everyone becomes beautiful in body and pure in heart, then I will reveal all of my beauty to them. As for you, your fate is particularly fortunate. I'll neither confuse you nor harm you in describing to you what I'll be like when everyone becomes worthy of acknowledging me as their goddess, as opposed to now, when there are still so few. To you alone I will reveal the secrets of my future. Promise to keep silent and listen."

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## 8.

"Oh, my love, now I know your will completely. I know that it will come to pass, but what will it be like? How will people live then?"

"I can't tell you that by myself. I need the help of my older sister, the one who first appeared to you a long time ago. She's both my mistress and my servant. I can only be what she makes of me, and yet she works for me. Sister, come to my aid."

The Sister of Her Sisters, the Bride of Her Bridegrooms appears.

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<sup>50</sup> This passage recalls Julie's advice to Vera Pavlovna in chap. 1 (see p. 70 above).

<sup>51</sup> This section probably signifies the revolution, which Chernyshevsky obviously could not describe because of tsarist censorship.

“Greetings, sister” she says to the goddess. “Are you here too, sister?” she asks Vera Pavlovna. “Do you want to see how people will live when my ward, the goddess, rules over everyone? Then behold.”

There stands a building, a large, enormous structure such as can be seen only in a few of the grandest capitals. No, now there’s no other building like it! It stands amidst fields and meadows, orchards and groves. The fields grow grain, but they aren’t like the ones we have now; rather, they’re rich and abundant. Is that really wheat? Whoever saw ears and kernels like these? Now such ears and kernels can be grown only in greenhouses. The fields are our fields, but now such blossoms can be seen only in flower gardens. The orchards are full of lemons and orange trees, peach and apricot—how can they grow in the fresh air? Oh, there are columns surrounding them, all open for summer. Yes, these are greenhouses opened up for summer. The groves are our groves—oak and linden, maple and elm—yes, the groves are just like ours now. Great care has been lavished on them; there’s not a single diseased tree. But the groves are just like ours, they alone have remained the same as they were before. But this building—what on earth is it? What style of architecture? There’s nothing at all like it now. No, there is one building that hints at it—the palace at Sydenham:<sup>52</sup> cast iron and crystal, crystal and cast iron—nothing else. No, that’s not all; it’s merely the shell of the building, its external facade. Inside there’s a real house, a colossal one, surrounded by this crystal and cast iron edifice as if by a sheath, forming broad galleries around it on every floor. What graceful architecture in the inner house! What narrow spaces between the windows! The windows themselves are huge, wide, and stretch the entire height of each floor. The stone walls look like a row of pilasters that form a frame for these windows looking out onto the galleries. What sort of floors and ceilings are these? Of what material are these doors and windowframes made? What is it? Silver? Platinum? Almost all the furniture is made the same way! Wooden furniture here is merely a whim, something for variety’s sake. But of what are all the other pieces, the ceilings, and the floors made? “Try to move this armchair,” says the elder goddess. The metallic furniture is lighter than walnut. What kind of metal is it? Oh, now I know. Sasha once showed me a small piece of it that was as light as glass. They make earrings and brooches from it now. Yes, Sasha said that sooner or later aluminum would replace wood, and perhaps even stone.<sup>53</sup> How elegant it all is! Aluminum and more aluminum; all the spaces between the windows are hung with huge mirrors. What carpets on the floors! Here in this hall half the floor has been left uncovered and one can see that it too is made of aluminum. “You see, it’s been left unpolished so that it won’t be too slippery. Children play here, and adults do, too. In that hall the floor has been

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<sup>52</sup> A reference to the Crystal Palace, an innovative building of glass and steel designed by Sir Joseph Paxton and erected at Hyde Park in London for the Great Exhibition in 1851. Moved to Sydenham in 1854, it came to symbolize for radicals the transformation of society through science and technology.

<sup>53</sup> Aluminum, a metallic element first isolated by Friedrich Wöhler in 1827 and produced industrially in 1854, came to be used widely only during the twentieth century.

left completely uncovered for dancing. There are tropical flowers and trees everywhere. The entire house is a huge winter garden.”

But who lives in this house that is more magnificent than any palace? “Many people live here, a great many. Come along and we shall see them.”

They go out onto the balcony that leads off the top floor of the gallery. Why hadn’t Vera Pavlovna noticed them before? Groups of people are scattered throughout the fields. There are men and women everywhere, old people and young, together with children. But primarily there are young people. There are very few old men and even fewer old women; there are more children than old men, but not many of them either. More than half the children have remained inside to attend to the housework. They do almost all the chores and enjoy their work very much. A few old women work with them. But there are really very few old men and women here because people grow old very late. Life is so healthy and peaceful that it preserves one’s freshness.

The groups working in the fields are almost all singing. What kind of labor are they doing? Oh, they’re gathering in the grain. How quickly it progresses! Why shouldn’t it? Why shouldn’t they be singing? Machines are doing almost all the work for them—reaping, binding the sheaves, and carting them away. People have only to walk alongside, or ride, or drive the machines. How cleverly they’ve arranged it all for themselves. Although the weather’s very hot, it doesn’t bother them at all. They’ve erected a huge canopy over the part of the field where they’re working. As the work progresses, the canopy gets moved along too. How cool they stay! Why shouldn’t their labor go quickly and cheerfully? Why shouldn’t they be singing? I too wouldn’t mind harvesting under such conditions! And there are songs and more songs, all of them new and unfamiliar. Now they’re singing one of ours which I know too:

You and I will live like kings:

These people are our friends—

Whatever your heart desires,

I will acquire it all with them.<sup>54</sup>

Now the work is finished and everyone returns to the building. “Let’s go back to the hall and see how they dine” says the elder sister. They enter the largest of the huge halls. Half of it is occupied by tables that have already been set. There are so many of them! How many people dine here? A thousand or more. Not everyone’s here; those who prefer to eat in their own rooms dine there. The old men and women and the children who didn’t work in the fields have prepared everything. “To prepare food, do the housework, clean the rooms—this work is too easy for other hands,” says the elder sister. “It’s appropriate that such tasks be done by those who aren’t yet able or no longer able to do anything else.” What splendid place settings! All aluminum and crystal. Vases with flowers have been placed at the middle of the wide tables. The food has already been served. The workers have entered and sat down to dinner, as have those who prepared the meal.

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<sup>54</sup> From Koltsov’s poem “Flight” (1838) (see n. 239 above).

“Who’ll serve the food?”

“When? During the meal? Why? There are only five or six courses. Dishes that are supposed to be hot have been placed so they won’t get cold. Do you see these indentations? They’re steam tables,” explains the elder sister.

“You live well and like to eat well. Do you dine like this often?”

“Several times a year.”

“Here this is regular fare: anyone who wants to can have better food, whatever he wants, and a separate account is kept. No such account is kept for those who don’t ask for anything except the dishes prepared for all. Everything else is arranged in the same way. What everyone can afford together is provided free; but a charge is made for any special item or whim.”

“Is that really us? Is that really our country? I heard one of our own songs and they are all speaking Russian.”

“Yes, you see that river not far from here? It’s the Oka.<sup>55</sup> These people are Russians—for when I’m with you, I too am a Russian.”

“Did you accomplish all this?”

“All this was accomplished for my sake; I inspired it and inspire its completion. But it’s she, my elder sister, the worker, who’s bringing it into being. I merely delight in it.”

“And will everyone live like this?”

“Everyone,” says the elder sister. “For everyone there will be eternal spring and summer and joy everlasting. But we’ve shown you only the end of my half of the day, the work part, and the beginning of her half. We’ll look in on them again during an evening two months from now.”

## 9.

The flowers have withered and the leaves have begun to fall from the trees; the scene has become more desolate.

“You see, it would be tedious to keep looking at all this and very boring to live here,” says the younger sister. “I don’t want to live like this.”

“The halls are empty; there’s no one left in the fields or gardens,” says the elder sister. “I arranged all this according to the will of my sister the goddess.”

“Has the palace really been deserted?”

“Yes, for now it’s cold and damp. Why should anyone live here? Out of some two thousand people, only ten or twenty eccentrics remain who feel that for once it would provide a pleasant diversion to stay in this remote and solitary area and experience a northern autumn. Soon, during the winter, there’ll be constant changes: small groups of people who like winter outings will arrive to spend a few days here.”

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<sup>55</sup> A northern tributary of the Volga River, the Oka lies somewhat south and east of Moscow, to which it is connected by the Moscow River.

“But where are they all now?”

“Wherever it’s warm and pleasant,” says the elder sister. “In the summer, when it’s nice to be here and there’s work to be done, many different guests arrive from the south. We were in a building where all the inhabitants came from your country. But a great many houses had to be built to accommodate all the guests; in some, people from different lands have settled together with their hosts. Each person chooses the company that suits him best. But, having received this multitude of guests for the summer to help with the work, you can head south to spend the other seven or eight unpleasant months of the year; each person goes wherever he chooses. There’s a special region in the south where the majority of your people go. It’s even called “New Russia.”

“Is that where Odessa and Kherson are?”<sup>56</sup>

“That was in your time. Behold: here’s New Russia.”

Mountains are clad in gardens; between them stand narrow valleys and broad ravines. “These mountains used to be barren cliffs,” says the elder sister. “Now they’re covered with a thick layer of soil; groves of very tall trees grow among gardens. Below, in moist hollows, are coffee plantations. Date palms and fig trees stand above; vineyards are interspersed among sugar-cane plantations; in the green fields grows some wheat, but mainly rice.”

“What country is this?”

“Let’s climb a little higher and you’ll see its borders.”

Far off to the northeast are two rivers that flow together and head due east from where Vera Pavlovna stands. Farther to the south, still in the same southeasterly direction, lies a long, wide bay. The land extends far to the south, continually growing wider between that bay and another longer, narrow one that forms its western boundary. Between the small western bay and the sea far to the northwest lies a narrow isthmus.

“We’re in the middle of a desert,” says Vera Pavlovna in astonishment.

“Well, in the middle of a former desert. But now, as you can see, this whole expanse of land from the north, from that large river in the northeast, has been transformed into the most fertile fields, just as that other strip along the sea to the north once used to be and now is once again the strip that once upon a time was called ‘the land of milk and honey.’<sup>57</sup> You can see that we’re not far from the southern boundary of the cultivated land. The mountainous part of the peninsula is still a barren, sandy steppe, such as the whole area used to be in your day. With each passing year you Russians are pushing back the edge of the desert farther to the south. Other people

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<sup>56</sup> Both major cities and ports in southern Russia. Odessa is located on the coast of the Black Sea, while Kherson lies near the mouth of the Dnepr River. An extremely fertile area acquired by Russia during the late eighteenth century, this region generally was called “New Russia” (Novorossiia). Chernyshevsky obviously is playing on this name by locating his “new world” here.

<sup>57</sup> An allusion both to the land promised by God to Moses for the Hebrews (Exodus 3:8) and to the biblical garden of Eden. The area described is the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, viewed by Vera Pavlovna from the Sinai Peninsula, where, on Mount Sinai, Moses received the Ten Commandments.

are at work in other countries; everyone has ample room and enough work. Life is spacious and abundant. Yes, from the great northeastern river the entire expanse of land to the middle of the peninsula in the south is now green and covered with flowers. Throughout the whole area, just as in the north, enormous buildings stand three or four versts apart, like innumerable huge chessmen on a gigantic chessboard. Let's go down and enter one of them," says the elder sister.

It's the same sort of enormous crystal building, but its columns are white.

"They're made of aluminum," explains the elder sister. "It's very hot here and white doesn't absorb heat in the direct sun. It's a bit more expensive than cast iron, but it's better suited to local conditions."

Look what else they've invented! For a considerable distance all around the crystal palace there stand rows of tall, thin pillars; on top of them, high above the entire palace and for about half a verst around, stretches a white canopy. "It's continually being sprinkled with water," explains the elder sister. "From each pillar a small fountain rises above the canopy, spraying drops of water like rain. Consequently, it's cool to live here. You see, they can adjust the temperature as they please."

"But what if someone likes the intense heat and bright southern sun?"

"Do you see those pavilions and tents way out there in the distance? Everyone can live just as he pleases. I'm striving toward that end, working to bring it about."

"Then are there still cities left for those who want to live in them?"

"Yes, but there aren't very many people like that left. There are fewer cities now and they are all located near the best harbors as centers of communication and transportation. But these cities are larger and more splendid than before. Everyone visits them for a few days in search of diversion. The majority of their inhabitants change constantly. People go there only to work for a brief period."

"But what about those who want to live there all the time?"

"They do, just as you now live in those Petersburgs, Parises, and Londons of yours. Whose business is it? Who would interfere? Let each person live as he chooses. The vast majority, however, ninety-nine people out of a hundred, live as my sister and I have shown you because it's more pleasant and advantageous for them. But now let's go into the palace. It's already quite late in the evening and time to see them."

"But no, first I want to know how it all came about."

"How what came about?"

"How the barren desert was transformed into fertile land where almost everyone spends two-thirds of the year."

"How it came about? There's nothing strange about it! All of this happened not in one year, not even in ten; I accomplished it gradually. From the banks of the great river in the northeast and the shores of the great sea in the southwest, people transported clay on their mighty machines to bind the sand. They dug canals and irrigated the land; vegetation began to appear, and as a result, there was more moisture in the air. They moved forward, step by step, a few versts a year, sometimes only one, just as now they keep advancing toward the south. What's so unusual about that? People merely



became more intelligent and began to turn to their own advantage the tremendous means and resources that one had been wasted or used counterproductively. I've not been working and teaching in vain. It was even difficult for them to understand what was most useful. During your time people were still savages, such coarse, cruel and reckless creatures. But I kept teaching them. Once they began to understand, it was not hard for them to make progress. You know that I require nothing too difficult. Why, you yourself are doing something for me, in my own way! Is it really so hard?"

"No."

"Of course not. Remember your own dressmaking establishment? Did you have many resources? Any more than others?"

"No. We had no resources to speak of."

"But now your seamstresses have ten times more comfort. They enjoy life twenty times as much and experience unpleasantness a hundred times less than others who had the same resources as you. You've proven that even in your own time people can lead a free and easy life. One has only to be rational, to know how to organize, and to learn how to use resources most advantageously."

"Yes, yes. I know that."

"Let's see how people live only a short time after they've come to understand what you've long understood."

## 10.

They enter the building. It's the same sort of enormous, majestic hall. The evening is well under way. It's already three hours after sunset, a time for merrymaking. How brightly the hall is lit, but how? There are neither candelabra nor chandeliers! Oh, that's it! In the dome there hangs a large pane of frosted glass through which light pours into the room. Of course, that's just how it ought to be: pale, soft, bright light, just like sunlight. Yes, indeed, it's electric light.<sup>58</sup> There are about a thousand people in the hall, but it could easily accommodate three times that number.

"And it happens, when guests come to visit" says the radiant beauty, "there can be more people here."

"Welt what sort of event is it? A ball? Surely it's not just an ordinary weekday evening?"

"Of course."

"Nowdays this would be a palace ball. The women are dressed so elegantly. Yes, indeed, times have changed, that's clear from the cut of their dresses. A few ladies are wearing the clothes of our time, but obviously it's being done for variety's sake,

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<sup>58</sup> Electric lighting became widespread in urban Russia only in the early twentieth century. Linking social revolution with technological innovation, Chernyshevsky seems to presage Lenin's famous declaration in 1920 that "communism equals Soviet power plus electrification of the whole country." In contrast to Lenin, however, Chernyshevsky criticizes urban life; paradoxically his utopia is a predominantly rural society made prosperous and secure by industrial technology.

as an amusement. Yes, they're being silly, mocking our apparel. Others are wearing different costumes—the most diverse kinds, various eastern and southern styles, all much more graceful than ours. But the most popular costume is like what Grecian women wore during the elegant Athenian period. It's very light and loose-fitting. The men wear long, wide tunics without waists, like cloaks or togas. Apparently it's their ordinary domestic wear. How modest and lovely! It outlines their bodies so elegantly and exquisitely; it enhances the grace of all their movements. And what an orchestra! More than a hundred men and women! Best of all, what a chorus!"

"Yes, today in all of Europe you couldn't find ten fine voices like the hundred now gathered in this hall. It's the same in every other hall. The way of life here is so different: it's healthy and very elegant. As a result, the chest improves and the voice does too" explains the radiant beauty. But the members of both the orchestra and the chorus are constantly changing: some leave while others take their place. Some go off to dance, others return.

"It's an ordinary weekday evening. People dance like this and make merry every evening. But when have I ever seen such energy in merriment? But how can their merriment help but possess an energy unknown to us? They spend the morning engaged in very hard work. Anyone who hasn't put in a good day's work hasn't prepared his nervous system well enough to experience the fullness of such enjoyment. The merriment of simple people, when they have occasion to make merry, is so much more joyous, lively, and spontaneous than ours. But now our simple people have very meager means for amusement; here the means are so much greater than even ours are. Furthermore, the merriment of our simple people is marred by the memory of various inconveniences and deprivations, misfortunes and sufferings, and by a foreboding of even more in the future. They have but a fleeting moment when grief and need are forgotten. Is it ever really possible to forget one's grief and need entirely? Don't the deserts cover everything with sand? Don't the marshy miasmas<sup>59</sup> contaminate even a small amount of good land and air lying between desert and swamp? But there are no such memories here, no danger of grief or need, only the recollection of free and willing labor, of abundance, goodness, and enjoyment. Here we have only the expectation of more of the same in the future. What a contrast! And again, the nervous system of our workers today is strong, but nothing more; although they can withstand considerable merriment, they are coarse and insensitive. Whereas here their constitution is still strong, like that of our workers, as well as developed and impressionable, like our own. But they also possess a readiness to make merry, a healthy, strong desire for enjoyment which we lack; that's granted only to those of sound health who do physical labor. In such people these qualities are combined with all the delicacy of feeling that we possess. They have all our moral development combined with the physical growth of our strong

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<sup>59</sup> This reference to the contaminating effects of unwholesome marsh air (miasma, recalls Chernyshevsky's earlier discussion of soil qualities (see nn. 86 and 89 above).

working people. It's easy to understand why their merriment, enjoyment, and passion are so much stronger, broader, sweeter, and livelier than ours. What fortunate people!

"No, people still don't know what genuine merriment really is because neither the kind of life nor the sort of people necessary for it exists yet. Only people such as these can enjoy themselves completely and know the full ecstasy of pleasure. How they burst with health and strength, how graceful and elegant they are, how energetic and expressive their features! They're all so lucky, such handsome men and women, leading a free life of work and enjoyment. What fortunate people! What fortunate people!

"Half of them are enjoying themselves exuberantly in the large hall. But where's the other half?"

"Where are the others?" repeats the radiant beauty. "They're everywhere. Many are at the theater, some as actors, others as musicians, and still others as spectators, just as they desire. Some are in lecture halls, museums, and libraries. Others are in garden avenues or in their own rooms, relaxing alone or with their children. As for the rest: that's my secret.<sup>60</sup> In the hall you saw how their cheeks glowed and their eyes sparkled. You saw how they came and went. When they leave, it's I who lures them away. The room of each man and woman is my sanctuary. Within those walls my mysteries are inviolable. The curtained doors and thick carpets absorb every sound. Silence and mystery prevail. They return: it's I who brings them back from my kingdom of mysteries into the realm of light entertainment. I reign here.

"Here I reign. Everything is done for my sake! Work equals replenishment of feeling and strength for me; enjoyment equals preparation for me, relaxation after me. I constitute the purpose of life here; I am all of life."

## 11.

"Life's greatest happiness resides in my sister the goddess," says the elder sister. "But you see that every kind of happiness exists here, whatever anyone desires. Everyone lives as he wants; each and every person has complete will, yes, free will."

"What we've shown you will not soon reach its full development in the form you've just seen. Many generations will pass before everything you can now foresee is to be fully realized. No, not many generations. My work is progressing quickly, faster with each passing year. Nevertheless, you still won't enter into my sister's completed kingdom. But at least you've glimpsed it, and now you know what the future will be. It's radiant and beautiful. Tell everyone that the future will be radiant and beautiful. Love it, strive toward it, work for it, bring it nearer, transfer into the present as much as you can from it. To the extent that you succeed in doing so, your life will be bright and good, rich in joy and pleasure. Strive toward it, work for it, bring it nearer, transfer into the present as much as you can from it."

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<sup>60</sup> An allusion to sexual love.

## XVII.

Within a year the new workshop had been organized and established. The two establishments were closely connected: when one was overwhelmed with orders, it would send them to the other if the latter had time to fill them. A running account was kept in common between them. Their combined resources would prove sufficient to enable them to open a shop on Nevsky Prospekt if they could cooperate even more. This arrangement cost both Vera Pavlovna and Natasha Mertsalova considerable trouble. Although the two groups were on friendly terms and often entertained each other as guests, and although they frequently combined forces for excursions to the countryside, still the idea of merging the accounts of two separate enterprises was so new that it took a great deal of time and energy to explain it. However, the advantage of having a shop on Nevsky was obvious. After a few months of worrying about merging the two accounts into one, Vera Pavlovna and Natasha Mertsalova succeeded. A new sign appeared on Nevsky Prospekt: “Au bon travail. Magasin des Nouveautés.”<sup>61</sup> With the opening of the shop business began to increase more rapidly than before and became even more profitable. Natasha Mertsalova and Vera Pavlovna were already dreaming that in two years or so, instead of two sewing cooperatives, there might be four or five, then even ten or twenty.

About three months after the store opened, Kirsanov received a visit from a colleague with whom he was slightly acquainted. He told Kirsanov a great deal about various medical cases, but most of all about the astonishing success of his treatment method, which consisted of placing on the patient’s chest and stomach two long, thin bags filled with crushed ice wrapped in four napkins.<sup>62</sup> In conclusion he said that one of his acquaintances wished to meet Kirsanov.<sup>63</sup> Kirsanov agreed to this request. The encounter was amiable; their conversation touched on many subjects including the new shop on Nevsky. Kirsanov explained that it had been opened purely for commercial reasons. They spoke at length about the sign hanging over it. Was it really a good idea to include the word travail? Kirsanov said that travail means work, and that “Au bon travail” meant a store that filled its orders well. They discussed whether it wouldn’t be better to replace that motto with some surname. Kirsanov explained that his wife’s Russian surname would be bad for business.<sup>64</sup> At last he offered the following solution.

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<sup>61</sup> Chernyshevsky uses the name of Vera Pavlovna’s shop, Au bon travail (lit., “At the [sign of] good work”), to link her enterprise to the French utopian socialist belief in le droit au travail, “the right to work,” proclaimed in such books as Louis Blanc’s *Le Socialisme: Droit au travail* (1848) (see n. 94 above).

<sup>62</sup> Probably a reference to Kh. A. Nordstrom (1818–1885), a physician and adjunct professor at the Medical-Surgical Academy who treated all ailments with cold water applied in various ways.

<sup>63</sup> That is, Kirsanov was summoned by the tsarist political police to explain his wife’s enterprise. By demonstrating the regime’s ability to inhibit such activities, Chernyshevsky suggests that only revolutionary means can successfully transform society.

<sup>64</sup> An allusion to the members of the Kirsanov family in Turgenev’s novel *Fathers and Sons* (see n. 147 above). None of these characters, ranging from the aristocratic hypocrite Pavel Petrovich to the

His wife's first name was Vera, which in French is *foi*; would it do to replace "Au bon travail" by "A la bonne foi"? That would have only the most innocent meaning, "a conscientious shop," and the owner's name would actually appear on the sign. After some discussion it turned out that this would indeed be acceptable. Kirsanov managed to direct the conversation to such questions with particular zeal; in general he succeeded so well that he returned home feeling very satisfied.

In any case Natasha Mertsalova and Vera Pavlovna considerably clipped the wings of their own daydreams and concerned themselves more with preserving what they had already achieved than with forging ahead.

Thus, in view of the fact that Vera Pavlovna's and Natasha Mertsalova's excessive ardor began to cool, the establishments and the shop continued to exist, but not to expand. Still, they rejoiced even in the mere fact of this continued existence. Kirsanov's new acquaintance continued to visit and afforded him a great deal of pleasure. Two or more years passed by without any special events.

## XVIII. A Letter from Katerina Vasilievna Polozova

St. Petersburg

August 17, 1860

My dear Polina,

I'm so delighted with a new pursuit that I discovered only recently and am now so engrossed in it that I want to describe it to you. I'm sure you'll also take an interest in it. But the main thing is that perhaps you yourself may find the opportunity to do something similar. It's so pleasant, my friend.

The thing I want to describe to you is a sewing workshop. In fact, there are two of them, both organized along the same lines by a woman I met only two weeks ago, but with whom I quickly became friends. I'm now assisting her on condition that later she'll help me organize a similar workshop. Her name is Vera Pavlovna Kirsanova and she's still young, very kind and cheerful, and much to my liking—that is, more like you, Polina, than like me, your humble Katya. She's a bold and lively woman. After I learned by chance about her workshop (I was told about only one of them), I went directly to her with neither an introduction nor a pretext, declaring simply that I was interested in it. We took to each other right away, all the more when it turned out that her husband, Kirsanov, was the very same doctor who, you'll recall, rendered me such great service some five years ago.

After talking with me for about half an hour and realizing that my sympathies for such things were genuine, Vera Pavlovna took me into the workshop, the one she runs herself (the one established earlier has been taken over by one of her close friends, also a very nice young woman). Now I'll share with you the impressions of my first

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weak-willed liberals Nikolai Petrovich and Arkady Nikolaevich, was likely to appeal to Vera Pavlovna's circle.

visit. They were so novel and striking that I entered them in my diary (long since abandoned, but resumed now for a special reason that I may reveal to you later). I'm very glad I wrote them down then, for by now I would have forgotten a lot that struck me at the time. Now, only two weeks later, it all seems quite ordinary, as if it couldn't be done any other way. But the more ordinary it becomes, the more attached I grow to it because it's so very good. So, Polina, now begins the excerpt from my diary, supplemented by details I've learned since.

A sewing workshop. What do you think I saw there? We stopped at the entrance. Vera Pavlovna led me up a very fine staircase—you know, the kind where you might be met by a doorman. We climbed up to the third floor. Vera Pavlovna rang the bell and I found myself standing in a large hall with a piano and very decent furnishings. In a word, it looked as if we'd entered the apartment of a family earning some four or five thousand rubles a year. "Is this a workshop? Is this one of the rooms occupied by seamstresses?" "Well, it's the reception room and the hall for evening meetings. Now let's visit the rooms where the seamstresses actually live; right now they're in the workrooms and we won't disturb anyone."

Here's what I saw as we toured the rooms and here's what Vera Pavlovna said to me.

The whole establishment consists of three apartments opening onto one landing; these have been converted into one apartment by the addition of connecting doors. These apartments used to rent for 700, 550, and 425 rubles a year, for a total of 1,675 rubles. But, in letting all three on a five-year lease, the owner of the building agreed to reduce the total to 1,250 rubles a year. There are twenty-one rooms in the entire workshop, including two very large ones with four windows each, one of which serves as the reception room, the other as the dining room. Two other large rooms serve as the workrooms; all the others are residential. We toured some six or seven rooms in which the girls live (I'm still talking about my first visit there). The furniture in these rooms was very presentable, all made of mahogany or walnut. Some rooms have fulllength mirrors, others have very nice pier glasses;<sup>65</sup> there are several armchairs and sofas, all well made. The furniture in the various rooms is diverse, almost all purchased piecemeal and at low cost. The residential rooms resemble rooms in the apartments of middle-level officials, senior department heads, or young section heads who will soon become department heads. The larger rooms are occupied by three girls (in one case four), the others by two girls each.

We entered the workrooms; the girls who were occupied there seemed to be dressed like the daughters, sisters, or young wives of these same officials. Some wore dresses made of the plainest silk, others wore barege<sup>66</sup> or muslin. Their faces reflected the gentleness and tenderness that can come only from a life of contentment. You can imagine how all this surprised me. We stayed in the workrooms for a long time. There

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<sup>65</sup> A large mirror originally used to fill the space between windows.

<sup>66</sup> A thin, light fabric made of silk or cotton.

I made the acquaintance of several girls. Vera Pavlovna had announced the purpose of my visit. The girls' level of development varied; some used the language of educated society and were familiar with literature just as our young ladies are; they even had a decent understanding of history and of foreign lands. In other words, they knew everything that makes up the ordinary sphere of learning of a young lady in our society. Two girls were even very well read. Others who'd joined the workshop only recently were less developed, but you could still speak with each of them as with a girl who had some education. In general, the level of development was in proportion to the length of time each girl had been living in the workshop.

Vera Pavlovna attended to her own business; at times she approached me, but I was busy talking with the girls. Thus the time went until dinner. On weekdays dinner consists of three courses. That day they served rice soup, boiled fish, and veal. After dinner there was a choice of coffee or tea. The meal was so good that I ate with gusto and wouldn't have considered it a great deprivation to exist on such fare. And you know that my father still employs a very fine chef!

Such were my general impressions on my first visit. I'd been told that I'd see a workshop where seamstresses live and that I would be shown their rooms; also that I would meet seamstresses and would share their dinner. Instead, I visited apartments of people who were reasonably well off, united in one establishment. I saw girls like those belonging to middle-level officials or poor gentry. I shared their dinner, which, while not lavish, certainly satisfied me. What was this all about? How could it be possible?

When I rejoined Vera Pavlovna, she and her husband explained that there was really nothing surprising about what I saw. Meanwhile, as an example, Kirsanov jotted down for me on a scrap of paper a rough account that has been preserved among the pages of my diary. I'll copy it here for you, but first, a few more words.

Instead of poverty I saw contentment; instead of fifth, not merely cleanliness, but even some luxury in their rooms; instead of crudeness, considerable education. All this came about for two reasons. On the one hand, the seamstresses' income was increasing; on the other, they'd managed to save a great deal on their expenses.

Do you understand why they receive such a high income? They work for themselves; they're the real owners. Therefore they receive the portion of the income that otherwise would be the profit extracted by the owner of the enterprise. And that's not all. Working for their own benefit and on their own account, they take much better care of materials and they value their time more. Their work goes faster and costs less.

Obviously they realize a great savings in their living expenses. They buy everything in large quantities and pay cash because they get things cheaper than buying on credit or at retail prices. Items are chosen carefully, with considerable expertise and only after many inquiries; therefore not only is everything cheaper, but it's also of better quality than poor people can usually afford.

In addition, many other expenses are either drastically reduced or completely unnecessary. Consider this, for example. To walk two or three versts a day to the store puts extra wear and tear on shoes and clothes. The following example is trivial, but

it can be applied to other things of the same sort. If you don't own an umbrella, your dress can suffer major damage as a result of rain. Now listen to what Vera Pavlovna told me. Let's say a simple cotton umbrella costs two rubles. There are twenty-five seamstresses in the workshop. Umbrellas for all would cost fifty rubles. Anyone who didn't have one would face a loss much greater than two rubles. But since they live together and each one goes out only when it's convenient, in bad weather it rarely happens that many of them have to leave the house at the same time. They found that five umbrellas would be quite enough. These five umbrellas are of fine silk and cost five rubles apiece. The total expenditure on umbrellas was twenty-five rubles, or one ruble per seamstress. You see, each one gets to use a fine umbrella instead of a worthless one for only half the price. So it is with a large number of items, which together result in major savings. It's the same with their apartment and their board. For example, the dinner I described to you cost between 5 rubles 50 kopecks and 5 rubles 75 kopecks, including bread but not coffee or tea. There were 37 people at the table (not counting Vera Pavlovna and myself), although a few children were included in that total. Five rubles and 75 kopecks for 37 people comes to less than 16 kopecks per person and less than 5 rubles a month. Vera Pavlovna says that if a person were to dine alone on that amount of money, he could have scarcely anything but some bread and the poor stuff sold in some small shops. In an eating establishment such a dinner (but not so well prepared, would cost, according to Vera Pavlovna, roughly 40 kopecks (for 30 kopecks the quality would be considerably worse). The difference is understandable: the proprietor of an eating house who prepares dinner for twenty people or fewer must support himself on the money he receives, rent an apartment, and hire help. But here these extra expenses are either nonexistent or greatly reduced. A salary for two old women, both relatives of the seamstresses, is the entire cost of maintaining a kitchen staff. Now you'll understand the account that Kirsanov jotted down as an example when I visited there the first time. After he'd written it all out, he explained:

"Of course, I can't give you exact figures, and it would be hard to find them because, as you know, every commercial enterprise, every store, and every workshop has its own ratio between items of debit and credit, just as every household has its own way of economizing to keep track of all its expenses and its own ratio. I'm putting down these rough figures as an example. But so that this account will appear more convincing, I'll use figures that underestimate the advantages of our establishment in comparison with the actual expenses of almost any commercial enterprise and any poor small household.

"The income that a commercial enterprise receives from the sale of its goods," continued Kirsanov, "is divided into three main parts. One part goes to pay workers' salaries, the second for other expenses (including rent, light, and raw materials, and the third is the owner's profit. Let's suppose that receipts are divided among these parts in the following way: workers' salaries, one-half; other expenses (overhead), one-quarter; and profit, one-quarter. This means that if the workers receive a salary of one hundred rubles, fifty go to pay for other expenses and fifty go to the proprietor as profit. Let's



see how much the workers in our establishment receive.” Kirsanov began to read off his own figures:

“Now we can see,” continued Kirsanov, “that our workers receive 166 rubles and 67 kopecks, whereas at any other establishment they receive only 100 rubles. But our workers get even more. Working for their own benefit, they do so diligently, hence faster and more productively. Let’s assume that given their ordinary poor motivation they used to produce five items (for our purposes, let’s say five dresses). Now they can make six; this figure is too low, but we’ll use it anyway. That means that in the time it takes another establishment to earn five rubles, ours makes six.

“Therefore, our seamstresses receive twice the income of others,” continued Kirsanov. “Now, how is it used? Having twice the income, they use it much more profitably. There’s a double advantage, as you know. First, everything is purchased wholesale. Let’s assume that they save about one-third in this way; that is, things that would cost three rubles in small retail shops or on credit cost them only two rubles. In fact, the advantage is even greater. Let’s take the apartment as an example. If space in these rooms were rented separately to individuals, three or four people would live in each of the seventeen rooms with two windows—fifty-five people in all. Six people would live in each of the two rooms with three windows, and 9 in each of the two rooms with four windows, that is, 12 plus 18, for a total of 30, plus 55 in the smaller rooms, for a grand total of 85 people in the whole apartment. Each person would pay 3 rubles 50 kopecks a month, or 42 rubles a year. Therefore, the small landlords who make a business of renting separate spaces in each room would take in for the entire establishment a total of 42 rubles times 85 people, or 3,570 rubles. Our seamstresses pay only 1,250 rubles a year for this apartment, that is, about one-third that amount. It’s the same or almost the same for other things, almost for everything. I probably wouldn’t even come close to the true figure even if I increased the amount of savings to one-half, but I’ll leave it at onethird. And that’s still not all! Given the structure of their life, the seamstresses have no need to incur major expenses and they require many fewer things. Verochka has provided you with a good example: shoes and clothes. Let’s suppose that as a result the quantity of purchased items is reduced by onefourth. Instead of four pairs of shoes, three will suffice; three dresses are worn as long as four used to be. This ratio is still too small, but let’s see what savings result:

“Compare the life of a family spending a thousand rubles a year with that of a family spending four thousand. Wouldn’t you expect to find an enormous difference?” asked Kirsanov. “In our system the proportion is just about the same, if not more. We receive twice as much income and it’s used twice as profitably. Is it surprising that you find the life of our seamstresses very different from the one lived by people under the old order?”

Those are the sort of marvels I saw, my friend Polina, and that’s how easily it can all be explained. I’ve grown so accustomed to it now it seems strange that I was ever surprised by it. How is it that I didn’t expect to find it all just the way it is? Write me whether you might have the opportunity to join me in what I’m now preparing to

do, namely, organize a sewing workshop or something similar according to this system. It's so very pleasant, Polina.

Yours,

K.POLOZOVA

P.S. I completely forgot to tell you about the other workshop, but no matter; I'll do so next time. Now suffice it to say that the senior workshop has branched out even more, and as a result is in all respects far ahead of the one I've described to you. There are many differences between them in the details of their organization because everything is adjusted to suit individual circumstances.

## 5. New Characters and the Conclusion

### I.

In the letter to her friend, Katya Polozova mentioned that she was very grateful to Vera Pavlovna's husband. In order to explain why, I have to describe the kind of person her father was.

Polozov was a retired cavalry captain or staff captain;<sup>1</sup> while in the service, and according to the customs of the good old days, he led a dissipated life and squandered a rather large ancestral estate. When he had done so, he came to his senses, resigned his commission, and settled down to earn himself a new fortune. Having collected his few remaining crumbs, he realized that he had about ten thousand rubles left in banknotes;<sup>2</sup> he started a small business in the retail grain trade. He began to accept all sorts of small contracts, pursuing every profitable deal he could, and in about ten years he had accumulated considerable capital. With a reputation as a sound and shrewd man, with his rank, and with a name well known in the vicinity, he could choose as his bride any of the merchants' daughters in the two districts where he did business. He chose wisely, one with a dowry of about half a million rubles, also in banknotes. He was then about fifty years old; in other words, this was about twenty years before we see his daughter embarking on her friendship with Vera Pavlovna. After adding such a large sum to his own fortune, he broadened the scope of his business. Within the next ten years he became a millionaire in silver rubles, which were then the preferred currency.<sup>3</sup> His wife passed away; having been accustomed to provincial life, she'd kept him from settling in Petersburg. But now he moved to the capital. His business prospered even more, and in another ten years he was said to be in possession of some three or four million rubles. Spinsters and widows, both young and old, set their caps for him, but he didn't want to marry a second time—partly because of loyalty to the memory of his late wife, but more because he didn't want to impose a stepmother on his daughter Katya, whom he loved very much.

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<sup>1</sup> In Russian, *rotmistr* and *shtab-rotmistr*, the relatively modest eighth and ninth positions in the table of military ranks (see n. 7 above).

<sup>2</sup> That is, *assignat rubles* (*assignatsii*), the paper currency first introduced by the government in 1768–1769 to cover increased state expenses. The excessive issue of *assignatsii* led to their depreciation, so that by 1839 3.6 *assignat rubles* equaled one silver ruble.

<sup>3</sup> The currency reform of 1839 recognized the silver ruble as the basic monetary unit of the state.

Polozov continued to get on in the world; he would have had ten million instead of three or four if he'd gone in for tax farming,<sup>4</sup> but he felt an aversion to it and considered that only contracts and supplies were honest business. His fellow millionaires made fun of these subtle distinctions and they were not wrong. But he, even though he was wrong, clung to his opinion. "I'm engaged in commerce," he said. "I don't want to get rich by robbing." But about a year or so before his daughter made Vera Pavlovna's acquaintance, he was furnished with all too clear a demonstration that his commerce was essentially no different from tax farming, even though he thought it was. He had a huge contract for canvas, or provisions, or shoe leather—I don't remember which. With every passing year he'd become more stubborn and arrogant as a result of his age, his continued success, and the growing universal respect for him. Then he quarreled with a certain useful person. He flew into a rage, insulted him, and the whole thing turned ugly. After a week he was told, "Give it up." "I won't," he said. "You'll go broke," they said. "Perhaps," he said, "but I still won't." After a month he was told the same thing, and he replied similarly. Indeed, he didn't give it up, but he went broke anyway. The merchandise was rejected; beside that, whether genuine offenses had been committed or merely intended, Polozov's three or four million rubles vanished. At the age of sixty he became a poor man, that is, poor compared to what he had been. Comparisons aside, he was still reasonably well off. He retained a share of a stearine factory.<sup>5</sup> Not the least bit dejected, he became the manager of this factory and received a good salary. In addition, by a stroke of luck there remained several tens of thousands of rubles. If he'd been left with such a sum fifteen or even ten years ago, it would have been enough for him to scale still another sizable peak. But at the age of sixty it's much harder to rise in the world; Polozov decided that it was too late to attempt such a feat and that he lacked the strength. He thought only about arranging the sale of the factory as soon as possible, since his shares in it provided little income, and the factory, itself without any credit, was beyond rescue. He'd diagnosed the affair intelligently and managed to persuade the other major shareholders that a speedy sale was the only means of saving the money invested in the shares. He also thought about marrying off his daughter. But the main thing was to sell the factory, convert all his money into 5 percent bonds (which were then becoming very fashionable), and live out the rest of his days in peace, recollecting his past glory; he'd not only bravely endured its loss but even managed to retain his good cheer and his firmness.

## II.

Her father loved Katya and didn't allow any snobbish high-society governesses to hobble the girl too severely. "That's nonsense," he used to say about any correction to

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<sup>4</sup> See n. 72 above.

<sup>5</sup> A substance obtained from animal or vegetable fats and used to make soap, candles, and similar products.

her waistline, her manners, or anything else. When Katya was fifteen he even agreed with her that they could get along splendidly without any English or French governesses. Thus Katya relaxed and began to enjoy complete freedom at home. For Katya that meant that no one would interfere with her reading or dreaming. She had very few friends, only two or three close ones, but there was no end of suitors. Polozov had only one daughter and—one shudders to think—four million rubles!

But Katya read and dreamed, while the suitors despaired. She was already seventeen. So she read and dreamed, but didn't fall in love. Instead she began to grow thin and pale; then she took to her bed.

### III.

Although Kirsanov didn't maintain an active practice, he didn't believe that he had a right to refuse to attend consultations. About that time, a year or so after he became a professor and about a year before he married Vera Pavlovna, the luminaries among the Petersburg practitioners began to invite him, all too frequently, to assist them in their consultations. There were two reasons. First, it turned out that there really was someone named Claude Bernard who was alive and living in Paris.<sup>6</sup> One of the luminaries, who journeyed to Paris for God knows what worthy scientific reason, had actually seen Claude Bernard with his own eyes, that is, the real one in flesh and blood. He introduced himself by rank, title, medals, and famous patients; after listening to him for half an hour, Claude Bernard replied, "There was no need for you to come to Paris to study recent advances in medicine. In fact, there's no reason to leave Petersburg for that purpose." The luminary took this as a testament to his own pursuits; upon his return to Petersburg he mentioned Claude Bernard no fewer than ten times a day, adding at least five times the phrase "my learned friend" or "my distinguished colleague." After this, how could he fail to invite Kirsanov to attend consultations? It was unthinkable!

The second reason was even more important. All the luminaries realized that Kirsanov would never try to take away their patients. Not only wouldn't he do so, but he'd refuse to take cases even when they begged him to. It's well known that many big-time practitioners subscribe to the following custom: if, in their opinion, a patient is faced with the approach of an inevitable demise, and if, by some stroke of bad luck, the doctor is unable to get rid of the patient by sending him to take the waters or travel abroad, then he'll usually try to palm him off on another doctor, even offering the latter money: "Here . . . this is for you . . . just take him!" Kirsanov rarely accepted patients on request from a doctor who was merely trying to escape. He usually recommended one of his friends engaged in private practice, reserving for himself only a few cases that were particularly interesting from a scientific point of view. How then

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<sup>6</sup> See n. 119 above.

could one not include such a colleague who was both known to Claude Bernard and who never tried to take away one's patients?

Polozov the millionaire had as his doctor the biggest of these luminaries. When Katerina Vasilievna became dangerously ill, the consultants consisted exclusively of other luminaries. At last, when the case became very serious, the luminaries decided to call in Kirsanov. Indeed, they were confronted by a very difficult problem. The patient showed no signs of any known illness, yet her strength was failing rapidly. Some disease had to be found. The attending physician finally came up with atrophiea nervorum, "the suspension of nervous nutrition." I don't know whether such a disease exists in the whole world or not, but if it does, I'm sure it must be incurable. If, in spite of its incurability, the patient must still be treated, let Kirsanov or one of his young upstart friends do it.

So there was another consultation, this time with Kirsanov in attendance. They examined the patient and interrogated her. She answered willingly and very calmly. After her first few words, Kirsanov stood to one side and watched as the luminaries continued their examination and interrogation. When they'd exhausted themselves and tortured the patient as much as propriety demands on such occasions, they turned to Kirsanov and asked, "What do you think, Alexander Matveich?" He replied, "I haven't examined the patient sufficiently. I'll stay here. It's an interesting case. If I need another consultation, I'll tell Karl Fedorych," that is, the attending physician, whose face was radiating joy at having been rescued from his atrophiea nervorum.

When everyone else left, Kirsanov sat down next to the patient's bed. She smiled sarcastically.

"It's a pity we're not acquainted," he began. "A doctor must have his patient's trust. Perhaps I'll succeed in earning yours. They don't understand your illness; it requires a certain sagacity. There's no point in sounding your chest or prescribing various medicines. Only one thing is necessary: to understand your situation and to explore it together to see if something can be done. Will you help me do that?"

The patient was silent.

"You don't wish to talk to me?"

The patient was silent.

"You probably even want me to leave. I ask you for only ten minutes. If in ten minutes you still consider my presence here as useless as you do now, then I'll leave. Do you know that you have no disorder except for grief? Do you realize that if your present mental condition is allowed to continue, in two or three weeks, perhaps even less, it may be impossible to save you? Perhaps you won't even last that long. Consumption hasn't set in yet, but it's imminent, and at your age, under such circumstances, it develops with extraordinary speed and could carry you off in a matter of days."

The patient was silent.

"You make no reply. You remain indifferent. That means that nothing I've said is new to you. The fact that you're silent indicates that you agree. Do you know what almost anyone else would do in my place? Speak with your father. Perhaps a conversation with

him might even save your life. But, if you prefer, I won't do that. Why? I make it a rule that nothing should ever be done to help a person against his own will. Freedom comes before everything else, even life itself. Therefore, if you'd rather I didn't discover the reason for your dangerous condition, I won't. If you say that you want to die, I ask only that you explain the reasons to me. If they seem unfounded, I still won't have any right to interfere. If they seem well founded, I'll be obligated to assist you, and I'm prepared to do so. I'm ready to provide you with poison. On these conditions, then, I ask you to tell me the reason for your illness."

The patient was silent.

"You'd rather not answer. Then I have no right to continue these inquiries. But may I ask your permission to tell you something about myself that may serve to increase the trust between us? Yes? Thank you. Whatever the reason, you're suffering. So am I. I'm passionately in love with a woman who doesn't know and must never find out that I love her. Do you pity me?"

The patient was silent, but she smiled sadly.

"You say nothing, but you couldn't conceal the fact that you noticed these last words of mine more than any previous ones. That's enough. I can see that you and I share the same cause of our suffering. You prefer to die. I can understand that very well. But death from consumption is slow and painful. I'm prepared to help you die, if I can't help you in any other way. I'm telling you that I'm ready to provide you with poison—a splendid potion, fast-acting and utterly painless. On this condition are you willing to provide me with the means of determining whether your predicament is as hopeless as it seems to you?"

"You won't deceive me?" asked the patient.

"Look me straight in the eye and you'll see that I won't deceive you."

The patient hesitated for some time.

"No, I don't know you well enough."

"Anyone else in my place might have said that the feeling that torments you is a good thing. I won't say that yet. Does your father know about it? Remember, without your permission I won't speak to him."

"He doesn't know."

"Does he love you?"

"Yes."

"What do you think I'll say next? You say that he loves you; I've heard that he's not a stupid man. What makes you think there's nothing to be gained from revealing your feelings to him? Do you think he won't consent? If poverty were the only obstacle in the man you love, that wouldn't prevent you from trying to win your father's consent. That's what I think. In other words, you suppose that your father doesn't think well of him; there can be no other reason for silence before your father. Isn't that so?"

The patient was silent.

"Clearly, I'm not mistaken. What do I think now? Your father's a person with considerable life experience and one who knows people. You're inexperienced. If a

particular person seems good to you but bad to him, then in all probability you're making a mistake and not he. You realize that I must think that. Do you want to know why I'm saying something so unpleasant? I'll tell you. You may get angry at my words, even hate me for saying them, but you will say to yourself: 'He says what he thinks. He doesn't pretend or try to deceive me.' I'm winning your trust. Isn't it true that I'm being honest with you?"

The patient hesitated as to whether to answer or not.

"You're a very strange man, doctor," she said at last.

"No, not strange, merely not a hypocrite. I say just what I think. But this is only my hypothesis. Perhaps I'm mistaken. Give me the opportunity to find out. Tell me the name of the man you love. Then, and once again, only if you allow it, I'll speak to your father about him."

"What will you say to him?"

"Does he know him well?"

"Yes."

"In that case I'll advise him to consent to your marriage only on one condition: that a date for the wedding be set not at once, but in two or three months, so that you will have time to consider carefully whether your father may be right."

"He won't agree to that."

"In all probability he will. If not, I'll help you as I said I would."

Kirsanov went on in this manner for some time. At last he managed to get the patient to tell him the man's name and to allow him to speak with her father. However, it was even harder to handle the old man. Polozov was astonished to learn that his daughter's health was failing as a result of hopeless love; he was even more astonished to discover the name of the man she loved. He firmly declared, "Let her die rather than marry him! Death would be a lesser misfortune both for her and for me." This was a very difficult case, all the more so because upon hearing Polozov's reasons, Kirsanov realized that truth was actually on the side of the old man and not that of his daughter.

## IV.

Suitors by the hundreds swarm around the heiress of an enormous fortune; but the society that flocked to Polozov's dinners and parties was of that highly dubious type, of that excessively suspicious elegance that fills the halls of wealthy people such as Polozov, elevated above their own more or less decent but still not high-society circle, and possessing neither relatives nor connections in genuine, also more or less decent high society. They become the benefactors of scoundrels and fops lacking in external polish, not to mention internal worth. Therefore, Katerina Vasilievna was intrigued when, among the throngs of her admirers, there appeared a genuine society fellow of absolutely good breeding. His behavior was so much more elegant than that of all the others, his speech so much cleverer and more entertaining. Her father noticed very early



on that she had begun to show preference for him above the rest. Being a businesslike person, a firm and decisive man, as soon as he noticed, he had a talk with his daughter. "My dear Katya, Solovtsov is pursuing you relentlessly. Beware of him. He's a very bad man, utterly heartless. You'd be so unhappy with him that I'd sooner see you dead than his wife; it would be easier both for you and for me."

Katerina Vasilievna loved her father and was used to respecting his wishes. He never put any restrictions on her. She knew that he was speaking only out of love for her. But the main thing was that she was the sort of person who tends to think more about the wishes of those who love her than about her own caprices. She was one of those people who love to say to their nearest and dearest, "I'll do as you think best." She answered her father, "I like Solovtsov, but if you think it's better for me to keep away from him, I will."

Of course, she wouldn't have done so, nor, since by her very nature she was unable to lie, would she have said so, if she'd really loved him. But her affection for Solovtsov was still very weak, almost nonexistent at the time. He was merely more interesting than the others. She began to treat him coolly; everything might even have turned out all right, except that her father, in his fervor, had overdone it. Not by much, but it was enough for the cunning Solovtsov. He realized that he should now play the role of victim. How could he find a pretext for doing so? Then Polozov made a caustic remark at his expense. Solovtsov took his leave, his sense of self-respect intact, a look of sorrow in his eye, and ceased his visits. In a week Katerina Vasilievna received a passionate and extremely humble letter from him, to the effect that he'd never expected to have his love reciprocated. His happiness, he said, consisted merely of seeing her occasionally, not even talking to her, merely seeing her. But, he said, he was willing to sacrifice even that happiness, and would still be happy, or unhappy, and so on and so forth. He made no requests and had no desires. He didn't even ask for a reply. Several other letters followed in the same vein; at last they produced their effect.

But not very quickly. When Solovtsov ceased his visits, Katerina Vasilievna was neither sad nor pensive at first. Even before that she'd been somewhat cold to him, so she'd taken her father's advice to avoid him very calmly. Therefore, two months later when she became so sad, how could her father possibly imagine that Solovtsov was involved? He'd forgotten all about him!

"You seem a little sad, Katya."

"No, it's nothing. I'm all right." In a week or two her father asked, "Are you ill, Katya?"

"No, it's nothing."

Two weeks later her father said, "You really must see a doctor, Katya."

Katya began to be treated by a doctor. The old man was greatly relieved when the doctor found nothing seriously wrong with her, only a certain weakness and exhaustion, which he confidently attributed to the life Katerina Vasilievna had led last winter—attending a party every evening until two or three A.M., often until five A.M. This exhaustion would pass. But it didn't; it got worse.

Why didn't Katerina Vasilievna say anything to her father? She was sure it would do no good. Her father had been so firm with her that day; and he never wastes words. He doesn't like to express his opinions about people unless he's firmly convinced. He would never consent to her marrying someone he considered to be a bad person.

So Katerina Vasilievna dreamed and fantasized, reading Solovtsov's modest, hopeless letters, and after reading them for half a year or so, she stood one step away from consumption. Not from a single word could her father tell that her illness was caused by something for which he was partly to blame. His daughter was as affectionate to him as before.

"Are you unhappy about something?"

"No, papa."

"Are you upset about something?"

"No, papa."

Clearly, she wasn't. She was merely depressed, but that was a result of her weakness, her illness. Even the doctor confirmed that. But why was she ill? As long as the doctor considered it unimportant, he was content to blame dances and corsets. But when he detected danger, then it was time for atrophiea nervorum, "the suspension of nervous nutrition."

## V.

But if the practicing luminaries were in agreement that Mademoiselle Polozova was suffering from atrophiea nervorum as a result of the exhausting life she led, in contrast to her natural inclination toward reverie and pensiveness, Kirsanov needed to spend very little time examining the patient to determine that her decline was due to some moral cause. Before the consultation the attending physician had outlined the patient's situation for him: there were no disagreements within the family—the father got on well with his daughter. Meanwhile, the father had absolutely no idea what was causing the distress because the attending physician had none either. What on earth was going on? It was clear that the girl had considerable character, since she'd managed to conceal her distress for so long and since she'd given her father no opportunity to guess its cause. Her character was most apparent in the serene tone of her replies during the consultation. There wasn't a trace of irritation; she was enduring her fate stoically. Kirsanov realized that such a girl deserved his attention. Could he possibly help her? Of course, one way or another, this whole affair would be resolved someday, even without his intervention. But would it then be too late? Consumption was imminent; then no amount of solicitude would help.

He struggled with her for two hours or so until he succeeded in winning her confidence. He found out what the problem was and received her permission to have a talk with her father.

The old man was astonished to hear from Kirsanov that his daughter's love for Solovtsov was the cause of her illness. How could that be? Katya had taken his advice to stop seeing him so coolly and she'd seemed so indifferent when Solovtsov ceased his visits. How could she be dying of love for him? And can one really die of love? Such exaltation could not appear credible to a man accustomed to leading an exceptionally practical life and one used to regarding everything with cool common sense. Kirsanov spent a long time talking to him, but he kept repeating, "It's the child's fantasy. She'll suffer a bit and then she'll forget." Kirsanov went on explaining again and again and finally convinced him that it was precisely because she was a child that she would not forget and was about to die. Polozov understood and was convinced. But instead of yielding, he struck his fist on the table and said with intense determination: "If she dies, she dies, let her die. That's better than her being unhappy. It will be better both for her and for me!" These were the very same words he'd used with his daughter only half a year before. Katerina Vasilievna hadn't been mistaken in thinking that there was no use talking to him.

"Why do you object so? I believe you that he's a bad person, but is he really so worthless that life with him would be even worse than death?"

"Yes, he is. He has no soul. She's kind and gentle, while he's a depraved louse." Polozov launched into a long description of Solovtsov and painted a picture so bleak that Kirsanov couldn't object. And indeed, how could he help but agree with Polozov? Solovtsov was none other than that very same Jean with whom, once upon a time, before Storeshnikov's courtship, he'd supped after the opera, together with Serge and Julie.<sup>7</sup> It was absolutely true that it would have been better for a decent girl to die than become such a fellow's wife. He would pollute her, stifle her, and devour her with his loathsomeness. It would be much better for her to die.

Kirsanov lapsed into thought for several minutes.

"No," he said at last. "Why have I been taken in by your eloquence? There's no real danger here precisely because the fellow is so bad. She can't help but realize this if only she's given enough time to look at him calmly." Insistently he began to explain his plan. Earlier Kirsanov had said to Polozov's daughter, merely as a hypothesis, perhaps even an erroneous one, that she herself would reject her beloved if he really was unworthy. Now Kirsanov was absolutely convinced that she would do so precisely because the beloved was so very wicked.

"I won't argue that marriage is not so terribly important if one regards it dispassionately. When a wife's unhappy, why shouldn't she leave her husband? You consider this solution unacceptable. Your daughter was raised with those same ideas, so that for both of you it would truly inflict an irretrievable loss. Before she could ever be reeducated, she'd suffer with such a man until she died a death far worse than that caused by consumption. But one must approach this from a different angle. Why not rely on your daughter's good common sense? She's not insane, is she? Always rely

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<sup>7</sup> See pp. 59–64 above.

on reason, but allow it to operate freely; it'll never fail when the cause is just. You yourself are to blame. You've placed chains on your daughter's reason; remove them, and it will lead her over to your side if truth is there. Passion blinds a person when it encounters obstacles. Remove them and your daughter will become reasonable again. Give her the freedom to love or not and she'll see whether the man is worthy of her love. Let her become his fiancée and in a short time she herself will reject him."

This way of looking at things was still too novel for Polozov. He replied sharply that he didn't believe such nonsense; he knew life too well. He'd seen too many examples of people's stupidity to rely on their reason, let alone that of a seventeen-year-old girl. In vain Kirsanov objected that foolish acts are committed only in two cases: either in the heat of the moment, a fleeting burst of passion, or when a person is deprived of freedom and is irritated by restraint. These ideas were absolute nonsense to Polozov. "She's mad. It would be stupid to entrust a child with her own fate. It would be better to let her die." There was no way to disabuse him of these arguments.

Of course, no matter how fixed the ideas of a man in the wrong, if another man, more developed, more knowledgeable, and more understanding, constantly works to lead him into the light, his errors can't hold out for long. That's certain. But how much time would the mental battle require? Naturally even this conversation couldn't pass without producing results. Although hardly any immediate impact on Polozov could be detected, the old man would soon begin to reflect on Kirsanov's words—that was inevitable. And if one were to continue having such conversations with him, he'd eventually change his mind. But he was both experienced and proud of it and considered himself infallible; he was set in his ways and very stubborn. One could undoubtedly talk some sense into him, but not very quickly. Any delay would be dangerous. A long delay would probably prove fatal, yet such a delay was undoubtedly inevitable in a methodically intelligent struggle with him.

Kirsanov would have to resort to more radical means. It involved a risk, that was true; but with it, there was merely risk, whereas without it, there was certain death. Besides, the risk wasn't really as great as it would appear to a person any less firm than Kirsanov in his convictions about the laws governing human life. The risk wasn't that great at all. But it was serious. In this lottery there's only one losing ticket. There was almost no likelihood that it would turn up, but what if it did? One who takes a risk must be prepared to accept the consequences unflinchingly if the losing ticket turns up. Kirsanov observed the girl's calm, silent strength and was sure of her. But did he have the right to subject her to such a risk? Of course. As things stood, out of a hundred chances, there was only one that she wouldn't destroy her health in this whole business, and there was more than a fifty-fifty chance that she'd quickly die. But this way, out of a thousand chances, only one would be against her. Let her take her chances in the lottery—seemingly it was more terrifying because it was quicker, but it really was incomparably less dangerous.

"All right," said Kirsanov. "You don't want me to treat her by any means at your disposal. I'll have to resort to my own. Tomorrow I'll call for another consultation."

He returned to the patient and informed her that her father was a very stubborn man indeed—more so than he'd expected—and that it would be necessary to confront him in a very drastic manner.

"No, nothing will help," said the patient sadly.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Are you ready to die?"

"Yes."

"What if I decide to subject you to the risk of death? I mentioned this before in passing to win your trust and to demonstrate that I was prepared to do anything to help you. Now I'm talking about it seriously. What if I have to provide you with poison?"

"I've known for some time that my death was inevitable and that I had only a few days left to live."

"What if it's tomorrow morning?"

"The sooner the better." She spoke very calmly. When only one means of salvation remains, that is, to summon up one's own readiness to die, then one almost always succeeds. If you say, "Give in or I'll die," a person almost always gives in. But one must never make light of such a great principle as this. Nor can one lower one's self-respect; if the others don't give in, then one must really die. He explained his plan to her, one that was quite comprehensible from this discussion alone.

## VI.

Of course, in any similar case Kirsanov would never have considered running such a risk. It would have been much simpler: remove the girl from the household and let her marry whom she wished. But here everything was complicated by the girl's own ideas and by the character of the man she loved. Given her view of the indissolubility of marriage, she would have stuck with the wretch even after realizing that life with him was a torment. To unite them in marriage would be worse than killing her. Therefore, only one option remained—either kill her or give her the chance to come to her senses.

The next day they held a consultation. It consisted of the luminaries of high-society medical practice—five in all, each among the most distinguished. How else could one make an impression on Polozov? It was essential that the verdict be announced to him without any possibility of appeal. Kirsanov spoke; everyone listened gravely to what he said and gravely nodded their heads. What else could they do? After all you'll recall that Claude Bernard was alive and living in Paris. Besides that, Kirsanov was saying such strange things—devil take these young whippersnappers—that no one could understand a word he said. What else could they do but nod their heads?

Kirsanov said that he'd examined the patient very thoroughly and was in total agreement with Karl Fedorych that her illness was incurable. The patient's suffering

would be horrendous; in fact, each additional hour she lived entailed superfluous torment. Therefore, he considered it the obligation of the consulting physicians to resolve, out of love for their fellow man, to curtail the patient's suffering by administering a dose of morphine from which she would never awaken. Having announced such a solution, he invited the doctors to examine the patient once more in order to confirm or reject this opinion. The physicians did so, with considerable blinking of eyes under the barrage of Kirsanov's diabolically unintelligible explanations. They withdrew to the large hall, far away from the patient's room; there they confirmed Kirsanov's decision to curtail the patient's suffering by administering a fatal dose of morphine.

After reaching this decision, Kirsanov dispatched a servant to invite Polozov into the consultation hall. Polozov entered. The gravest of sages announced the doctors' decision in appropriately solemn and gloomy language and in majestically somber tones.

Polozov was thunderstruck. To expect death, even fairly soon, not knowing when or whether it would come, was one thing, but to hear that in half an hour she'd no longer be alive was altogether different. Kirsanov fixed Polozov with an intense stare. He was absolutely convinced of the impact, but the entire affair was still a strain on his nerves. For two minutes or so the old man stood in stunned silence. "No, it must not be! She's dying because of my stubbornness. I'll consent to anything. Will she recover?" "Of course," replied Kirsanov.

The luminaries would have been very angry if they'd had the time, that is, the time to exchange glances and realize that they and all their colleagues had been puppets in the hands of this young whippersnapper; but Kirsanov allowed them no time to wonder "how the others perceive me." After he instructed the servant to lead away the drooping Polozov, he thanked them all for the perspicacity with which they'd divined his intention, having understood that the cause of her illness was moral suffering, and how essential it had been to shock the stubborn old man who might otherwise really have been the cause of his own daughter's death. The luminaries parted, each one satisfied that his erudition and perspicacity had been demonstrated in front of all the others.

After hastily providing them with the attestation, Kirsanov went in to tell the patient about his success. At his first words she seized hold of his hand; he barely managed to withdraw it in time to prevent her from kissing it. "But I won't allow your father to come in and tell you the same thing for quite some time," he said. "First he must hear my lecture about how he's to conduct himself." He explained what advice he'd give her father and assured her that he wouldn't let the old man go until it had all been firmly implanted.

Shaken by the impact of the consultation, the old man was severely chastened. He now regarded Kirsanov in a very different light than he had the day before—a little the way Marya Aleksevna had regarded Lopukhov differently after he appeared in her

dream as a tax farmer.<sup>8</sup> Yesterday Polozov quite naturally thought, “I’m older than you and more experienced. There’s no one on earth cleverer than I. Besides, why should I listen to you, you penniless milksop; I was smart enough to earn two million rubles [in fact it had been only two and not four]! Match that and then we can talk.” Now, however, Polozov thought, “What a bear he is! He got his own way. He knows what he’s doing.” The more he talked with Kirsanov, the more vividly he imagined him in a form other than that of a bear, namely, an old forgotten recollection from his own life as a hussar. His riding master, Zakharchenko, was sitting astride Gromoboi (Zhukovsky’s ballads were still fashionable then among the ladies, and partly, as a result, among the cavaliers too, both military and civilian).<sup>9</sup> Gromoboi was being put through his paces smartly by Zakharchenko, but the horse’s lips were cut and dripping with blood. Polozov was somewhat horrified to hear Kirsanov’s answer to his first question, “Would you really have administered a fatal dose?”

“Absolutely! Of course,” Kirsanov replied with complete composure. “Naturally.”

“What a scoundrel!” Polozov thought. “He sounds like a cook about to wring a chicken’s neck.”

“Would you have had the courage?”

“In this case? Of course. Did you take me for a milksop?”

“You’re a frightening man,” repeated Polozov.

“That means you’ve yet to meet any really frightening men,” replied Kirsanov with a condescending smile, thinking to himself, “You ought to meet Rakhmetov.”

“But how did you manipulate all those doctors?”

“As if that were hard!” answered Kirsanov with a slight grimace.

Polozov again remembered Zakharchenko, who had observed to Staff Captain Voly-nov, “Why did you bring me this lop-eared nag to ride, Your Excellency? I’m ashamed to mount him!”

After putting a stop to Polozov’s interminable and repetitive questions, Kirsanov began to instruct him as to how he should behave.

“Remember that a person can use his reason only when he’s not undisturbed and that he doesn’t get angry only so long as others don’t irritate him. Remember too that his fantasies lose their value only when others don’t deprive him of them, but allow him to examine them himself to see whether they’re good or bad. If Solovtsov is as bad as you say (and as I certainly believe him to be), your daughter will see that for herself. But that will happen only if you don’t interfere or arouse in her the idea that you’re somehow scheming against him and trying to thwart them. One word from you against him could set the whole thing back two weeks; several words could destroy it forever. You must remain entirely aloof.” The instructions were seasoned with the following

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<sup>8</sup> See above, pp. 166–67.

<sup>9</sup> Gromoboi (“Battle Thunder”) was the hero of a ballad of the same name (1810) by the noted pre-Romantic Russian poet Vassily Zhukovsky (1783–1852). Zhukovsky, son of a rich noble landowner and a Turkish captive, was best known for his literary ballads and his translations of European poetry into Russian.

arguments: "Is it easy to force you to do something if you don't want to do it? No, but I forced you. That means I know what I'm doing. Therefore, you should believe what I say about what you must do. I know what I'm talking about; you must do the listening." Toward people such as Polozov was at that time, there's no other way to act except forcefully, grabbing them by the throat. At last Polozov yielded, promising to behave himself as instructed. But even after he was convinced that Kirsanov was right and that he must do as he was told, Polozov still couldn't figure out what sort of man Kirsanov was. He seemed to be on his side, but he was also on hers. He was forcing him to submit to his daughter's wishes, yet he wanted her to change her own mind. How could all this be reconciled?

"Very simply. I want you to allow her to be reasonable, that's all." Polozov wrote a note to Solovtsov asking him to be good enough to come see him about a very important matter. Solovtsov appeared that very evening. He came to a cordial but very dignified understanding with the old man. He was accepted as his daughter's intended on condition that the marriage not take place before three months had passed.

## VII.

Kirsanov couldn't abandon the case now. He had to help Katerina Vasilievna recover from her blindness; even more, he had to keep his eye on her father and support him in his resolve to adhere to the agreed method of noninterference. But he considered it was awkward to visit the Polozovs during the first few days after the crisis. Katerina Vasilievna, of course, was still in an exalted state; if he were to see (as he certainly expected) that her intended was worthless indeed, then even his own silent disapproval of him, not only a direct statement, would be very detrimental and would prolong her exaltation. About a week and a half later Kirsanov dropped by, but in the morning, so as not to meet the suitor directly, but to secure Katerina Vasilievna's permission to do so. She was feeling much better already, though still very pale and thin. She was completely healthy now, even though her former famous physician was busy prescribing remedies for her once again. When Kirsanov had returned her to his care, he'd said, "Let him treat you. None of his medicines can do you any harm now, even if you start taking them." Katerina Vasilievna greeted Kirsanov with rapture, but stared at him in amazement when he told her why he'd come.

"You saved my life and yet you need my permission to visit us!"

"But in his presence my visit here could seem like an attempt to interfere in your affairs without your permission. You know my rule: do nothing to help a person against his own will."

Kirsanov came on the second or third evening and found Katya's intended to be just as Polozov had described him. He also found Polozov behaving in a satisfactory manner; the well-trained old man wasn't interfering with his daughter. Kirsanov spent



the whole evening there, in no way revealing his opinion of Katya's suitor. In saying goodbye to her, he gave no indication whether he liked the man or not.

That was enough to arouse her curiosity and doubt. The next day she thought, "Kirsanov didn't say a word about him. If he'd made a good impression on Kirsanov, then he'd have told me. Could it be that Kirsanov didn't like him? What could he not have liked about him?" When her beloved arrived that evening, she examined his behavior and reflected on his conversation. She said to herself that she was doing it to prove that Kirsanov should not and could not find any flaws in him. That was really true. But the need to prove to oneself that there are no flaws in one's beloved soon leads to the discovery of flaws.

Kirsanov returned a few days later. Once again he said not a word to her about whether he liked her suitor or not. This time she couldn't restrain herself. At the end of the evening she asked, "Your opinion? Why don't you say something?"

"I don't know if you'll be pleased by my opinion and whether you'll consider it impartial."

"Don't you like him?"

Kirsanov was silent.

"Don't you like him?"

"I didn't say that."

"It's clear. Why don't you like him?"

"I'll wait until that's also clear to you."

The following evening Katerina Vasilievna scrutinized Solovtsov even more carefully. "He's fine. Kirsanov is being unfair. Why can't I see what Kirsanov doesn't like about him?" She was annoyed at her own poor powers of observation. She thought, "Can I really be so dense?" Her pride was stung in a way that would prove very dangerous to her beloved.

When Kirsanov appeared a few days later, he perceived the opportunity of acting more forcefully. Up to this point he'd avoided all conversation with Solovtsov so as not to alarm Katerina Vasilievna by any premature interference. Now he joined the group around her and Solovtsov and began to steer the conversation in a direction that would reveal Solovtsov's true character; then he drew him into conversation. The subject was wealth; it seemed to Katerina Vasilievna that Solovtsov was too preoccupied with thoughts about wealth. The conversation turned to women; it seemed to Katya that Solovtsov talked about them too frivolously. Then the subject switched to family life; in vain Katya tried to dispel the impression that a wife might find it lonely and difficult to live with such a husband.

The crisis had arrived. Katerina Vasilievna lay awake for a long time; she wept, annoyed at herself for entertaining such an offensive view of Solovtsov. "No, he's not a cold man. He doesn't despise women. He loves me, not my fortune." If these objections had been made in reply to anyone else, they would have remained stubbornly embedded in her mind. But she was making them to herself. You can't resist for very long a truth

you discover for yourself. That truth is yours, your very own. There's no possibility of suspecting any treachery there.

The next evening Katerina Vasilievna tested Solovtsov herself, just as Kirsanov had done the day before. She told herself that she merely wanted to be convinced that she'd insulted him for no good reason, but she herself felt that she'd begun to distrust him. That night once again she couldn't fall asleep, but this time she was annoyed at him. Why did he hold forth in a way that didn't allay her doubts, but only reinforced them? She was also annoyed at herself, but in this feeling a new theme had clearly emerged: "How could I have been so blind?"

It's easy to see why within a day or two she became entirely preoccupied by the thought "Soon I'll lose any chance to correct my mistake, if I'm mistaken about him."

The next time Kirsanov arrived, he saw that he could have a word with her. "You asked earlier about my opinion of your intended," he said. "That's not nearly as important as your opinion. What do you think of him?"

Now it was she who was silent.

"I dare not continue the inquiry," he said. He began talking about something else and soon moved away.

But in half an hour she approached him.

"Give me your advice. You see that my mind is vacillating."

"Why do you need someone else's advice, when you know what you must do if it's vacillating?"

"Wait until it stops vacillating?"

"Just as you think best."

"I'll postpone the wedding."

"Why not, if that's what you think best."

"How will he take it?"

"When you see how he takes it, you can consider once again what would be best."

"I'll find it hard to tell him."

"If that's the case, ask your father to tell him."

"I don't want to hide behind anyone else. I'll tell him myself."

"If you feel strong enough to do so, then of course that would be much better."

Naturally, with other people, Vera Pavlovna for example, it wouldn't have been necessary to proceed quite so slowly. But each temperament has its own particular requirements. While an ardent person is irritated by methodical deliberation, a gentle one is perturbed by abrupt measures.

The success of Katerina Vasilievna's explanation with her intended surpassed even Kirsanov's expectations. He thought that Solovtsov would manage to keep his wits and drag out the affair by his own submissiveness and meek entreaties. But no, in spite of all his selfcontrol, Solovtsov couldn't restrain himself. When he realized that an enormous fortune might be slipping through his fingers, he let go of those few slim chances remaining to him. He launched into a bitter tirade, accusing Polozov of scheming against him. He told Katerina Vasilievna that she allowed her father to exercise too

much power over her, that she was afraid of him, and that she was merely following his orders. Meanwhile, Polozov didn't even know about his daughter's decision to postpone the wedding. Katya felt that he was allowing her complete freedom. The reproaches heaped on her father offended Katya by their unfairness and insulted her by revealing Solovtsov's view of her as a creature lacking both will and character.

"It seems that you view me as a plaything in the hands of other people?"

"Yes," he replied in irritation.

"I was prepared to die without a thought for my father. But you didn't understand that! From this moment on," she said, "everything is over between us," and she quickly left the room.

## VIII.

Afterward Katerina Vasilievna was depressed for quite some time, but although this episode intensified her grief, it wasn't the cause of it. There are some natures that manifest very little interest in particular facts; these facts serve merely to stimulate general ideas that have a much greater impact on such people. If they possess remarkably strong intellects, they become reshapers of general ideas—in olden times they used to become great philosophers. Kant, Fichte, and Hegel never developed a single specific problem—that would have been too boring.<sup>10</sup> Of course, this applies only to men. Women, it's thought nowadays, don't ever have strong intellects. You see, nature has denied them that, just as it's denied the blacksmith a tender complexion, the tailor a good posture, and the cobbler a fine sense of smell. All of that is nature's doing. That explains why there are no great minds among women. People with inferior intelligence and such a turn of character are usually phlegmatic to the point of insensitivity. People of ordinary intelligence are inclined to pensiveness, to a quiet life, and to dreaming in general. But this still doesn't mean that they're visionaries. Many of them have a very weak imagination and are very positive people—they simply prefer quiet reverie.

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<sup>10</sup> All major figures in the development of German idealist philosophy. Synthesizing rationalism and skepticism, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) argued that only objects of experience could be known, whereas things lying beyond experience were unknowable. He therefore concluded that scientific analysis could not prove the existence of such concepts as freedom and immortality, but nonetheless asserted that morality required belief in their existence. A strong exponent of liberalism and German nationalism, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) postulated an absolute or ultimate cause in the universe from which all things, including human consciousness, derive. According to Fichte, the creative activity of this absolute emerges in individual consciousness through the ego and thereby influences human action. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) devised an extremely complex philosophical system that strongly influenced Russian intellectuals in the 1840s as well as Western thinkers, including Marx, Kierkegaard, and Sartre. Hegel posited an enveloping absolute spirit that guides all reality, including human reason. This absolute spirit develops and is known through a dialectical process of change whereby one concept or phenomenon (the thesis) inevitably generates and interacts with its opposite (the antithesis) to produce a new concept (the synthesis), which in turn becomes the thesis for a new triad.

Katerina Vasilievna fell in love with Solovtsov because of his letters; she was dying of a love based solely on her dreams. From this it's perfectly clear that she was very romantically inclined at the time. The boisterous life of the vulgar society that filled Polozov's house was in no way conducive to exalted idealism. In other words, this characteristic arose from her own nature. All that boisterousness had oppressed her for some time; she preferred to read and dream. Now she began to be oppressed by wealth itself, not only the clamor surrounding it. But there's no need to consider her an unusual person on that account; it's a familiar feeling to all wealthy women of modest and gentle character. In her it merely developed sooner than usual because she received a powerful lesson very early on.

"Whom can I trust? What can I believe in?" she asked herself after the events with Solovtsov. She realized the answer: no one and nothing. Her father's wealth attracted avarice, cunning, and deceit from all over town. She was surrounded by mercenaries, liars, and flatterers. Every word said to her was calculated on the basis of her father's millions.

Her thoughts turned more and more serious. She became interested in general questions about the wealth that bothered her so much and about the poverty that tormented others. Her father provided her with a rather large amount of spending money; like any good woman, she used some of it to help the poor. But as she read and reflected, she began to notice that her kind of help produced considerably fewer results than expected. She realized that she was being taken in much too easily by the feigned poverty of the undeserving poor. She saw that the people who did deserve help, those who'd know how to put the money to good use, almost never received any lasting good from it. They'd be temporarily lifted out of their poverty, but in six months to a year these people would be back where they'd started. She began to think: Why does wealth exist when it ruins people? Why does poverty persist among the poor? Why did she see so many poor people who were just as unreasonable and wicked as the rich?

She was a dreamer, but her dreams were gentle, like her character; they contained as little brilliance as she did herself. Her favorite writer was George Sand, but she imagined herself not as Lelia, Indiana, Cavalcanti or even Consuelo; in her dreams she was either Jeanne or more often Geneviève.<sup>11</sup> Geneviève was her favorite heroine. She strolls through the meadow picking flowers to serve as models for her handiwork; and now she encounters Andre there. What sweet meetings! They realize they love each other. This was Katya's dream, and she knew it was only a dream. But she also loved to ponder the enviable fate of Miss Nightingale, that gentle, humble girl about whom no one knew very much—there was nothing to know except that she was beloved by all of England.<sup>12</sup> Was she young? Rich or poor? Happy or unhappy? No one talked about

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<sup>11</sup> These are all heroines from George Sand's novels (see n. 30 above): Lélia from *Lélia* (1833), Indiana from *Indiana* (1831), Quintilia Cavalcanti from *Le Secrétaire intime* (1834), Consuelo from *Consuelo* (1842), Jeanne from *Jeanne* (1844), and Geneviève from *André* (1834).

<sup>12</sup> The daughter of an upper-class English family, Florence Nightingale (1820–1910) helped to found modern nursing. She opened the profession to women through her organization of a female nursing unit

that; no one thought about that. Everyone simply praised this girl who was the Angel of Mercy in English hospitals in the Crimea and Scutari,<sup>13</sup> and who, at the end of the war, returned to her homeland with hundreds of men whom she'd saved and continued to take care of the infirm... These were her dreams; Katerina Vasilievna wished to see them fulfilled. Her fantasy carried her no further than these thoughts about Genevieve and Miss Nightingale. Can one say that she possessed a genuine fantasy? Can she really be called a dreamer?

Geneviève in the noisy, vulgar society of scoundrels and mediocre fops... Miss Nightingale amidst idle luxury... How could she fail to be bored and depressed? Therefore, Katerina Vasilievna was almost more glad than sad when her father lost his fortune. She was sorry to see him change from a vigorous person to an old man, and sorry that her ability to help others was significantly reduced. At first she was offended by the disdain of the crowd that once had fawned upon her and cringed before her and her father. But she was also glad that the vulgar, tedious rabble had abandoned them; they no longer would restrain her life or irritate her with their treachery and baseness. Now she felt so free. There even seemed to be some hope of happiness. "If I discover love now, it will be for me alone and not for my father's millions."

## IX.

Polozov wanted to arrange the sale of the stearine factory in which he was both a shareholder and the manager. After about half a year or so of intensive search, he finally located a buyer. On the buyer's calling card was engraved the name Charles Beaumont; it was pronounced not in the French style, as the uninitiated might suppose, but in the English manner. That was only natural, because the buyer was an agent of the London firm of Hodgson, Loter & Co., for the purchase of tallow and stearine. The factory could not go on in the poor financial and administrative condition that prevailed under its present shareholders. But in the hands of a competent firm it would yield high returns. A firm that spent some 500,000 or 600,000 to buy it could count on an annual income of about 100,000 rubles. This agent was a conscientious fellow. He examined the factory carefully and scrutinized the books before advising his firm to go through with the purchase. Then negotiations over the sale of the factory began with a group of shareholders; they dragged on for a very long time, owing to the nature of our shareholding societies—it was enough to drive to distraction even those patient Greeks who hadn't found it too tedious to besiege Troy for ten years on

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during the Crimean War (1854–1856) and her establishment of a nursing school at St. Thomas's Hospital in London in 1860.

<sup>13</sup> Located opposite Constantinople, Scutari is the Turkish town where Florence Nightingale and her companions nursed the wounded during the Crimean War.

end.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile Polozov courted the agent, in accordance with the age-old manner of treating important people, and repeatedly invited him to dinner. The agent kept his distance from the old man and declined his invitations. But once, after a very lengthy negotiating session with the directors of the group, tired and hungry, he accepted an invitation to dine with Polozov, who lived right there on the same staircase.<sup>15</sup>

## X.

Charles Beaumont, just like any other Charles, John, James, or William, wasn't fond of dwelling on personal intimacies and effusions. But when asked, he related his own story in a few well-chosen words. His family, he said, was of Canadian origin; indeed, in Canada almost half the population consists of descendants of French colonists. His family was one of those; hence the French surname. And his features resembled those of a Frenchman more than an Englishman or a Yankee. But, he continued, his grandfather moved from the vicinity of Quebec to New York; such things happen. His father was still a child at the time. Later, of course, he grew up and became an adult. Meanwhile a certain wealthy gentleman with progressive ideas about agriculture took it into his head to establish cotton plantations instead of vineyards on the southern shores of the Crimea. He dispatched someone to find him a manager from North America. They located James Beaumont, native of Canada, resident of New York—that is, a man who'd no more seen a cotton plantation than you or I have seen Mount Ararat from our native Petersburg or Kursk.<sup>16</sup> That's always the way it happens with progressive people. The truth is that the experiment was in no way spoiled by the American manager's complete inexperience with cotton plantations, since planting cotton in the Crimea is just about the same as trying to grow grapes in Petersburg. When this became clear, the American manager was discharged from the cotton plantation; he wound up as a distiller at a factory in the Tambov region,<sup>17</sup> where he lived for almost the rest of his life. His son Charles was born there; shortly afterward he buried his wife there. At the age of sixty-five, having put aside some money for his declining years, he decided to return to America. Charles was then about twenty years old. When his father died, Charles wanted to return to Russia because, having been born there

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<sup>14</sup> As related in Homer's epic *The Iliad* (written before 700 B.C.), during the twelfth century B.C. the Greeks besieged the city of Troy in Asia Minor for ten years before finally gaining entry to the city through guile and sacking it.

<sup>15</sup> In many older houses in St. Petersburg each floor was served by a separate staircase so that the people living on a lower floor never had to commingle with those people—usually of a lower social class—who lived above them. Chemyshevsky is indicating that Polozov and Beaumont occupied similar social as well as living space, probably on the second, “bourgeois” floor.

<sup>16</sup> Mount Ararat, according to legend the place where Noah's ark landed, lies in eastern Turkey. Kursk, the chief city of Kursk province, a predominantly agricultural region, is about 300 miles south of Moscow.

<sup>17</sup> A predominantly agricultural region southeast of Moscow, between the Volga and Don rivers.

and having lived until the age of twenty in the Tambov region, he felt himself to be a Russian. He and his father had lived in New York, where he worked as a clerk in a commercial office. After his father died he moved over to the New York office of the London firm Hodgson, Loter & Co., knowing that it did business with Petersburg. After he'd established himself, he expressed a desire to obtain a position in Russia, explaining that he knew the country as if it were his homeland. Naturally it would be an advantage for the firm to have such an employee in Russia. He was transferred to the London office for a trial. He was successful, and about six months before the dinner with Polozov he'd arrived in Petersburg as an agent for the purchase of tallow and stearine at a salary of £500. In perfect accord with this story, Beaumont, who was born and lived until the age of twenty in the Tambov region, and, since his father was the only American or Englishman within a radius of twenty, fifty, or a hundred versts (and spent all his days at the factory), also in accord with this story, Charles Beaumont spoke Russian like a native. He also spoke English fairly well, though not altogether fluently, as one would expect of a grown man who'd lived for only a few years in a country where English is spoken.

## XI.

Beaumont found himself sitting at dinner with the old man and his daughter, a very nice, somewhat pensive blonde.

"Who would have thought," said Polozov during dinner, "that these shares in the factory would ever have meant so much to me? It's difficult for a man of my age to suffer such a blow. It's a good thing that Katya cared so little about the loss of her fortune; even during my lifetime it was really more hers than mine. Her mother had some capital; I had very little. Of course, I managed to turn every ruble into twenty, which goes to show, on the other hand, that the fortune resulted more from my hard work than from any inheritance. And I did work very hard. It also took considerable know-how!" The old man went on at length in this self-congratulatory vein. "It was earned by my sweat and blood, but mainly because of my intelligence," he concluded. Then he repeated what he'd said before, that it was hard to endure such a blow, and that if Katya had been distressed about it, he would have lost his mind. But not only did Katya keep from fretting, she even supported her father.

Either in accordance with the American custom of seeing nothing unusual about rapid fortune or sudden ruin, or else in accordance with his own individual character, Beaumont had no desire to go into raptures over the greatness of a mind that could earn three or four million, or to lament the kind of great loss that left one with enough money to keep a decent chef. Nevertheless, he had to register some sign of sympathy after such a long speech. He said, "Yes, it's a great relief when one's family bears up together under adversity."

“But you seem to doubt it, Karl Yakovlich.<sup>18</sup> Do you think that Katya is so pensive now because she’s pining for her lost fortune? No, Karl Yakovlich. No, indeed. You’re wrong to be so unfair. She and I share a different grief. We’ve lost our faith in people,” said Polozov in a halfjoking, half-serious tone, the sort used by experienced old men when talking about the splendid but naive ideas of children.

Katerina Vasilievna blushed. She found it disagreeable to have her father turn the conversation to a discussion of her personal feelings. But, in addition to paternal love, there was another well-known circumstance for which her father was not to blame. If there’s nothing to talk about and there’s a cat or a dog in the room, the conversation turns to it; if there’s neither a cat nor a dog, then it’s children. The weather is a clear third choice and represents an extreme lack of resourcefulness.

“No, papa, you’re wrong in attributing my pensiveness to such a sublime motive. You know that I have a melancholy nature; besides, I’m bored.”

“To be melancholy is a matter of choice,” said Beaumont. “But to be bored, in my opinion, is inexcusable. Boredom is in fashion among our English brethren; but we Americans know nothing about it. We don’t have time to be bored; we have too much to do. I guess, that is, it seems to me” (he corrected his Americanism)<sup>19</sup> “that Russians should see themselves in that same position. In my opinion they too have too much to do. But in fact, I observe the exact opposite in Russians: they’re very given to spleen.<sup>20</sup> Even the English can’t be compared with them in this respect. English society is renowned throughout Europe, including Russia, as the most tiresome in the world; yet if it’s less sociable, lively, and cheerful than the French, it’s that much more so than the Russian. Even your own travelers tell tales of the tiresomeness of English society. I don’t understand where their eyes are when they’re at home.”

“Russians are right to be melancholy,” said Katerina Vasilievna. “What work do they have? There’s nothing for them to do here. They have to sit by with their arms folded. Show me what work there is to be done, and in all probability I’ll no longer be bored.”

“You’d like to find some work to do? That shouldn’t pose any problem at all. You see such ignorance all around you. Forgive me for talking about your country like this, that is, about your homeland” (he corrected his Anglicism).<sup>21</sup> “But I was born here and grew up here myself and consider it my own, so I won’t stand on ceremony. Here

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<sup>18</sup> Polozov has Russianized Beaumont’s name by substituting Karl for Charles and then adding the appropriate patronymic.

<sup>19</sup> Beaumont is trying to find appropriate Russian equivalents for such American phrases as “I guess” and “I suppose.”

<sup>20</sup> The Russian verb here is *khandrit’*, from the noun *khandra*. It derives from the Greek (hypo)chondria and is usually rendered in English as “spleen” and in French as *ennui*. By ascribing the ineffectualness of the earlier generation of the idealist intelligentsia—the “superfluous men” of the 1840s—to this infamous nineteenth-century European malady rather than to their constraining environment, Chernyshevsky emphasizes the activism of his own generation of “new people.”

<sup>21</sup> See n. 291 above. Though normally translated as *strana*, in this context the English word “country” corresponds most closely to the Russian *rodina* (homeland, native land, or motherland).



you have both Turkish ignorance and Japanese helplessness.<sup>22</sup> I despise your homeland because I love it as my own, I say in paraphrase of your poet.<sup>23</sup> There's a great deal of work to be done."

"Yes. But all alone—and a woman at that... What can I do?"

"But you're already doing something, Katya," said Polozov. "I'll tell you her secret, Karl Yakovlich. Because she's so bored, she teaches little girls. Her pupils come every day and she spends from ten to one o'clock working with them, sometimes even longer."

Beaumont looked at Katerina Vasilievna respectfully. "Now that's our way, the American way. Of course, by American I mean only the Northern or free states. The Southern states are even worse than Mexico, and almost as despicable as Brazil." (Beaumont was a rabid abolitionist.) "Yes, that's our way! So then, why are you bored?"

"Do you consider this serious work, Mr. Beaumont? I think it's no more than recreation. Perhaps I'm mistaken. You may choose to call me a materialist..."

"Do you expect to hear that reproach from a man who comes from a country that everyone says has only one goal and one aim, namely, the dollar?"

"You're joking, but I'm really afraid to speak my mind to you. My ideas may sound like the ones preached by the obscurantists about the uselessness of enlightenment."

"So!" thought Beaumont. "Has she really come to that? This is becoming interesting."

"I'm an obscurantist myself," he said. "I stand with the illiterate blacks against their civilized owners in the Southern states. Excuse me, I was distracted by my American hatred. I find it very interesting to hear your opinion."

"It's very prosaic, Mr. Beaumont, but life has led me to it. I think the work I do is too one-sided, and that side isn't the one that most deserves the attention of those who want to serve the people. Here's what I think: give people bread and they'll learn how to read by themselves.<sup>24</sup> One must start with bread or it's a waste of time."

"So why not begin where you ought to begin?" asked Beaumont, now somewhat animated. "It's possible. I know examples, back in America," he added.

"I told you—what can I do alone? I don't know how to begin. Even if I did, what chance would I have? A girl's bound on all sides. I'm independent only in my own room. What can I do there? Put a book on the table and teach people how to read. Where can I go alone? Whom can I see alone? What work can I do alone?"

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<sup>22</sup> By comparing the idealist intellectuals of the previous generation with the allegedly tradition-bound and mentally somnolent people of the East, Chernyshevsky assigns blame to them rather than to their environment for their ineffectualness. The recent Soviet translation of the novel (see the bibliography) tries unsuccessfully to tone down Chernyshevsky's racist and nationalistic remark by rendering this passage as "Asiatic ignorance and helplessness" (p. 442).

<sup>23</sup> A possible reference to the poem "Motherland" (1841) by the romantic poet and novelist Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841), or, more likely, an allusion to one of several lyrics by Nekrasov (see n. 106 above): "Motherland" (1846), "Blissful is the gentle poet" (1852), "Be silent, muse of vengeance and grief" (1855), or "Poet and Citizen" (1855–1856).

<sup>24</sup> Chernyshevsky emphasizes the importance of personal improvement through self-education and expresses his belief that it was the impoverished material conditions of the masses more than any inherent inability which prevented their progress.

"I think you're making me look like a despot, Katya," said her father. "Since you taught me that lesson, I'm no longer guilty of that."

"Papa, I blush to think of that. I was only a child then. No, papa, you're very good and don't hold me back. It's society. Is it true, Mr. Beaumont, that in America girls aren't so hampered?"

"Yes, we can be proud of that. Of course, even there it's not everything it should be. Still there's no comparison between us and the Europeans. Everything you've heard about women's emancipation in America is true."

"Papa, let's go to America after Mr. Beaumont buys your factory," said Katerina Vasilievna in jest. "There I'll do something. How happy I'd be!"

"One can find work in Petersburg, too," said Beaumont.

"Tell me where."

Beaumont hesitated for several seconds. "Why did I come back here?" he wondered. "And how could I find out better than through her?" he thought to himself.

"You haven't heard?" he said aloud. "There's an experiment at putting into practice those principles recently developed by economic science. Do you know about them?"

"Yes, I've read something. That must be very interesting and valuable. Can I really take part in it? Where can I find it?"

"It was established by Madame Kirsanova."

"Who's she? Is her husband a doctor?"

"Do you know him? Didn't he tell you about it?"

"It was quite a while ago and he wasn't married then. I was very ill. He came several times and managed to save me. Oh, what a man! Is she like him?"

How could she make Madame Kirsanova's acquaintance? Would Beaumont introduce Katerina Vasilievna to her? No, the Kirsanovs had never even heard of him. But she didn't need any introduction. Surely Kirsanova would be very glad to find a sympathetic soul. She could find out the address at the hospital where Kirsanov was employed.

## XII.

That's how Polozova got acquainted with Vera Pavlovna. She went off to see her the very next morning. Beaumont was so interested that he came that evening to find out what Katerina Vasilievna thought of her new acquaintance and the new enterprise.

Katerina Vasilievna was very animated. There was no trace whatever of her sadness; her pensiveness had given way to rapture. She enthusiastically told Beaumont what she'd seen that morning, even though she'd just told her father the very same thing. Clearly one telling hadn't exhausted her; there seemed to be no end of things to tell. Yes, now her heart was full. She'd found her life's work. Beaumont listened carefully, but is it permissible to listen in such a fashion? And she cried almost angrily:

“Mr. Beaumont, I’m very disappointed in you. Does this all make so little impression on you that you’re merely interested in what I say, but no more?”

“Katerina Vasilievna, you forget that I’ve seen this all before in America. I find several details particularly interesting, but the enterprise itself sounds all too familiar. Only the people who’ve organized it so successfully interest me, as a novelty; whereas for you the whole enterprise is novel. For example, what can you tell me about Madame Kirsanova?”

“Oh, my God! I liked her very much, of course. She explained it all to me so lovingly.”

“So you said.”

“What else is there? What more can I tell you? Do you think I could pay attention to her with such an enterprise right before my eyes?”

“Indeed,” said Beaumont, “I understand that one forgets all about people when one’s interested in their work. Still, is there anything more you can tell me about Madame Kirsanova?”

Katerina Vasilievna began to gather her recollections of Vera Pavlovna, but all she came up with was the first impression that Vera Pavlovna had made on her. She described her appearance vividly, her manner of speaking, and everything else that leaped to the eye at the moment of meeting someone new. But further, there was really nothing more she could add about Vera Pavlovna. The workshop, the workshop, the workshop—and Vera Pavlovna’s explanations of the workshop. She’d understood all these explanations, but she remembered very little about Vera Pavlovna after the first words of their initial encounter.

“And so if I hope to learn something more from you about Madame Kirsanova, this time I’m to be disappointed. But I won’t give up. In a few days I’ll ask you about her again.”

“Why don’t you get to know her yourself if she interests you so much?”

“I’d like to. Perhaps I will at some point. But first I must learn more about her.” Beaumont paused for a moment. “I wonder whether to ask you or not... I think it best to ask. If my name should happen to come up in conversation with her, please don’t say that I asked about her or that I want to meet her.”

“This is beginning to sound mysterious, Mr. Beaumont,” said Katerina Vasilievna in a serious tone of voice. “You want to learn about them through me, but wish to conceal yourself.”

“Yes, Katerina Vasilievna. How can I explain it? I’m afraid to meet them.”

“This is all most peculiar, Mr. Beaumont.”

“That’s true. I’ll speak more frankly: I’m afraid this might be unpleasant for them. They’ve never heard my name. But it’s possible that I may have had conflicts with certain people who are close to them, or even with them. No matter... In a word, I must first make certain whether they would enjoy meeting me.”

“This is all most peculiar, Mr. Beaumont.”

"I'm an honest man, Katerina Vasilievna. I want to assure you that I have no desire to compromise you. You and I are meeting only for the second time, but I already have a deep respect for you."

"I can also see, Mr. Beaumont, that you're an honorable man, but ..."

"If that's how you think of me, then you'll let me visit you again so that when you have enough confidence in me, I can ask you more about the Kirsanovs. Or, better still, you bring up the subject when you feel you can fulfill this request I make now and I won't mention it again. Will you allow me to visit you?"

"If you please, Mr. Beaumont," said Katerina Vasilievna with a slight shrug of her shoulders. "But you'll agree that ..."

Once again she didn't want to finish what she'd started to say.

"That I must be arousing your suspicions right now? True. But I'll wait until that passes."

### **XIII.**

Beaumont began to visit the Polozovs very frequently. "Why not?" thought the old man. "He's a good match. Of course, Katya could have had a much better suitor before. But even then she was neither scheming nor ambitious. And now one couldn't hope for more."

Indeed, Beaumont was a very good match. He said that he was thinking of staying in Russia for good because he considered it his homeland. He was a man of character: although he'd begun with nothing, by the age of thirty he'd achieved a respectable position. If he'd been a Russian, Polozov would have preferred that he belong to the gentry, but that didn't apply to foreigners, especially not to the French, and even less to the Americans. In America a man can be a cobbler's apprentice or a tiller of the soil one day, a general the next, president the day after, and then an office worker or a lawyer the day after that. Americans are a peculiar breed, the only thing they ask is how much money a man has and how smart he is. "That's the way it ought to be," Polozov continued his thought. "That's the kind of man I am. I took up trade and married a merchant's daughter. Money is the main thing, followed by intelligence, because without that you can't earn any money. He'll make money: he's started down that path. He'll buy the factory and become its manager. Then the firm will make him a partner. And their firms are different from ours. Soon he'll be rolling in millions..."

It's quite possible that Polozov's dreams about his future son-in-law's becoming a millionaire through commercial transactions weren't fated to come true, any more than Marya Aleksevna's dream about her first son-in-law's career in tax farming. But even so, Beaumont was still a good match for Katerina Vasilievna.

However, could Polozov have been mistaken in envisioning Beaumont as his future son-in-law? If the old man still had any doubts in this regard, they disappeared when, about two weeks after he'd begun his visits, Beaumont told Polozov that the sale of the

factory might be postponed for several days. But there shouldn't be any delay. Even if they weren't waiting for Mr. Loter, it would probably take them at least a week to draw up the final papers, and Mr. Loter would be arriving in Petersburg in about four days.

"Before I knew you personally," said Beaumont, "I wanted to close this deal myself. Now it would be rather awkward, since we know each other so well. So that no misunderstandings will arise later, I've written home to my firm and reported that during our negotiations I made friends with the manager, and that almost all of his capital is invested in shares. I requested that the firm send someone to close the deal instead of me. As you can see, Mr. Loter is on his way."

Careful and clever. And at the same time, it clearly demonstrated Beaumont's intention to marry Katya. A simple acquaintance would not have warranted such caution.

## XIV.

Beaumont was received rather coolly by Katerina Vasilievna on his next two or three visits. She really had begun to distrust this comparative stranger who'd expressed such a mysterious desire to find out all about a family with which (in his words) he wasn't even acquainted. Yet he said that he was afraid to meet them because he wasn't sure they'd appreciate it. But even during those early visits, if Katerina Vasilievna greeted him with uncertainty, she nevertheless soon became involved in lively conversation with him. In her earlier life, up to her acquaintance with Beaumont and Kirsanov, she'd never encountered anyone like them. Beaumont felt such sympathy with everything that interested her and he understood her so well. Even with her best friends—by the way, she had only one, Polina, who some time before had married a manufacturer and moved with him to Moscow—even with Polina she couldn't speak as freely as she did with him.

And he? At first, of course, he came not to see her but to use her to find out about Madame Kirsanova. But from the very beginning of their acquaintance, from the minute they began talking about boredom and ways to avoid it, it was obvious that he both respected her and sympathized with her. At their second meeting he was attracted by her enthusiasm at finding herself an occupation. Now with each new meeting his liking for her was becoming more and more apparent. Very quickly a simple and warm bond was formed between them; a week later Katerina Vasilievna told him all about the Kirsanovs. She was sure that this man could harbor no dishonorable thoughts.

It's also true that when she began to talk about the Kirsanovs, he stopped her. "Why so soon?" he asked. "You still don't know me very well."

"No, quite well enough, Mr. Beaumont. I see that if you didn't want to explain your peculiar desire to me, then you probably had no right to speak about it. There are a great many secrets in the world."

He replied, "You can see that I no longer have such impatience to find out what I wanted to know about them."

## XV.

Katerina Vasilievna's animation continued without letup and soon became her constant, habitual state of mind—bold, lively, and radiant. And so far as she could tell, it was precisely this animation, more than anything else, that drew Beaumont closer to her. And he thought about her a great deal now—that was all too obvious. After hearing her account of the Kirsanovs two or three times, he remarked at the fourth telling: "Now I know all I need to know. Thank you."

"What is it that you know? I've told you only that they love each other very much and that they're totally happy in their relationship."

"That's all I needed to know. Besides, I knew it already."

Their conversation moved to another subject.

Of course, the first thought that occurred to Katerina Vasilievna at his initial question about Madame Kirsanova was that he was infatuated with Vera Pavlovna. But now it was all too clear that this wasn't the case. As well as Katerina Vasilievna now knew him, she even thought him incapable of being infatuated. However, he could be in love. That was a fact. And if he is in love with anyone now, it must be me, thought Katerina Vasilievna.

## XVI.

But did they really love each other? Let's start with her. There was one instance when she showed some solicitude for Beaumont, but how did that end? Not at all as one might have expected from its beginning. Beaumont had begun to sit the Polozovs every day without fail. Sometimes he stayed a long time, sometimes not, but he came every day. On this fact alone Polozov based his conviction that Beaumont planned to propose to Katerina Vasilievna. There was no other basis for this belief. But then an evening passed and Beaumont didn't come.

"Papa, do you know if there's something the matter with him?"

"I haven't heard. Probably it's nothing. He's busy, that's all."

Another evening passed and Beaumont still didn't come. On the third morning Katerina Vasilievna prepared to go out.

"Where are you going, Katya?"

"I've a few things to attend to, papa."

She went to see Beaumont. He was sitting in a dressing gown with wide sleeves and was reading. When the door opened, he raised his eyes from the book.

"Is that you, Katerina Vasilievna? I'm very glad and most grateful to you," he said in the same tone of voice he used to greet her father. No, in fact his tone was much, much warmer.

"Is anything the matter, Mr. Beaumont? You haven't come to visit us in some time. You worry me; besides, I've missed you."

"Nothing special, Katerina Vasilievna. You see I'm in good health. Would you care for a cup of tea? You see I'm having some."

"Gladly. But why haven't you visited us in so long?"

"Pyotr, bring in another glass. You see I'm in good health, so it was a mere trifle. Here's what happened. I was at the factory with Mr. Loter and was explaining something to him. Without paying any attention, I put my hand down on a gear; it turned and scratched my hand right through the sleeve. I haven't been able to put on my frock coat for the last few days."

"Show me, or I'll worry that it's not just a scratch, but a larger wound."

"How could that be" (Pyotr entered with a glass for Katerina Vasilievna) "when I'm using my two hands? Pyotr, clean out this ashtray and fetch me my cigar case; it's on the table in the study. There, you see, it's nothing. An English plaster is all that's needed."<sup>25</sup>

"Yes, but there's still some redness and swelling."

"Yesterday it was worse than this and by tomorrow it will be fine." (Pyotr emptied the ashes, brought the cigar case, and left.) "I didn't want to come before you as a wounded hero."

"You could have written me a note."

"I thought I'd be able to get my coat on the following day—three days ago, that is. Then I thought it would be yesterday; then yesterday, I thought today. I didn't want to alarm you."

"Well, you've alarmed me even more. It wasn't very nice of you, Mr. Beaumont. When will you finish work on the sale of the factory?"

"Probably in a few days. You know, the delay doesn't depend on Mr. Loter and me, but on the group of shareholders."

"What were you reading just now?"

"A new novel by Thackeray. To have such talent, yet to have written himself out! It's all because his scope of ideas is so limited."<sup>26</sup>

"I've read it. You're quite right," and so on.

They lamented over Thackeray's decline and chatted for another half hour about other matters of that sort.

"Well, it's time for me to see Vera Pavlovna. When would you like to meet them? They're such fine people."

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<sup>25</sup> A medicinal paste made of various substances and spread on muslin or similar fabric for application to the body.

<sup>26</sup> See n. 189 above.

“Someday soon... I’ll get to it... I’ll ask you to arrange it. I’m very grateful to you for visiting me. Is that your horse?”

“Yes, it is.”

“That’s why your father never uses it. It’s a fine horse.”

“It seems so. I don’t know much about them.”

“It’s a good horse, sir. Worth three hundred and fifty rubles, even more,” said the coachman.

“How old is it?”

“Six years old, sir.”

“Let’s go, Zakhar. I’m ready. Good-bye, Mr. Beaumont. Will you come to see us today?”

“I doubt that. But tomorrow for sure.”

## XVII.

Does this really happen? Do young girls in love make such visits? Not to mention the fact that no well-brought-up young lady would ever allow herself to do anything of the sort, or, if she did, the results would be very different. If Katerina Vasilievna’s action flies in the face of all morality, then even more opposed to generally accepted ideas about relations between men and nubile young women is the substance, so to speak, of her immoral action. Isn’t it clear that Katerina Vasilievna and Beaumont were not people but fish; or, if they were people, they had fish blood in their veins? And more to the point—the way she treated him during this interview was altogether the same as the way she’d always treated him at home.

“I’m tired of talking, Mr. Beaumont,” she would say when he stayed late. “Stay here and talk with papa. I’m going to my room.” And she would leave. He’d sometimes reply, “Stay another quarter of an hour, Katerina Vasilievna.”

“All right,” she’d answer in such cases. But more often he’d reply, “Good night then, Katerina Vasilievna.”

What sort of people are these, I’d like to know. I’d also like to know, might they not be simply good people, whom no one prevents from seeing each other whenever they want and as much as they like, whom no one keeps from marrying if they so decide, and therefore they have no reason to rant and rave? Still I’m troubled by their cold treatment of each other. I’m ashamed not so much for them as for myself. Can it be that my fate as a novelist consists in compromising all my heroes and heroines in the eyes of well-bred people? Some of them eat and drink; others don’t go wild without cause. What uninteresting people!



## XVIII.

Meanwhile, according to old man Polozov's conviction, the whole affair was heading toward marriage. Marriage? How could that possibly be, given the odd behavior of the prospective bride and groom? Hadn't Polozov heard their conversations? Of course, his daughter and her prospective suitor weren't always within earshot; instead of sitting in the same room with him, more often than not they sat in another room or strolled through several rooms. But this made no difference whatever in their conversations. These were enough to convince even the subtlest expert on the human heart (a heart that, in reality people don't possess) that there was absolutely no possibility of seeing Katerina Vasilievna and Beaumont married. It's not that they didn't talk about feelings. No, they did, just as they talked about everything else under the sun; but they talked about feelings very little. That fact in and of itself meant little; the main thing was what they said and how they said it. Their tone was scandalous in its serenity, the content of their conversation terrible in its extreme incompatibility with anything on earth. Take, for example, this exchange about a week after the visit for which Beaumont had been "so grateful" to Katerina Vasilievna, or about two months after they'd met. The sale of the factory was already completed and Mr. Loter was planning to leave the next day. (And he did. Don't expect him to bring about some catastrophe. As a skilled negotiator, he completed the commercial transaction and announced that the firm had appointed Beaumont manager of the factory at a salary of £1000, exactly as expected, and that was all. Judge for yourself whether he should get involved in anything other than business matters.) The shareholders, including Polozov, were supposed to receive half the money in cash, the other half in notes payable in three months. (And they did. Don't expect any catastrophe here, either. The firm of Hodgson, Loter & Co. was very reliable.) Polozov, perfectly satisfied, sat at a table in his living room counting his banknotes; he overheard a conversation between his daughter and Beaumont as they passed through the room. They were strolling through all four of the apartment's rooms that faced the street.

"If a woman or a girl is burdened by prejudices," said Beaumont (this time without any Anglicisms or Americanisms), "then a man (I'm talking about an honorable man) is subjected to great inconvenience as a result. Tell me, how can a man marry a girl who has no experience of simple everyday relations, the kind that will arise as a result of her agreeing to his proposal? She can't possibly judge whether she'll like her future life with the man who's to become her husband."

"But it Mr. Beaumont, her relations to this person before the proposal had an everyday character, wouldn't that give both of them a certain guarantee that they'd remain content with each other?"

"Yes, a certain guarantee. But it would be much surer if the trial were longer and more thorough. She still wouldn't know from experience the nature of the relations she was embarking on. As a result, the marriage would be a terrible risk for her. So much for her. It's the same for the honorable man she marries. In general, he can

judge better whether he'll be satisfied; he's known women of different sorts and has determined which suits him best. She hasn't done that."

"But she could observe life and human nature in her own family and in her friends' families. And she could reflect."

"That's fine, but it's not enough. Nothing can take the place of personal experience."

"Would you prefer, then, that only widows marry?" asked Katerina Vasilievna, laughing.

"You've got it. Only widows. Girls should be forbidden to marry."

"That's true," said Katerina Vasilievna seriously.

At first Polozov found the conversations or snatches of dialogue he heard very odd. But by now he'd already gotten used to it and thought, "What of it? I'm a person without prejudices myself. I was in trade and I married a merchant's daughter."

The next day this part of the conversation—it was only a brief episode in a conversation that wasn't really about that, but about all sorts of other subjects—this part of yesterday's conversation continued as follows:

"You've told me the story of your love for Solovtsov. But what was it really? It was ..."

"Let's sit down, if it's all the same to you. I'm tired of walking."

"Fine... It was a childish feeling that provided no guarantee. It may be all right to laugh about it now, in hindsight, perhaps even to grieve if you want to, because there's something very sad about it. You were saved only by a very unusual circumstance, only because the matter fell into the hands of a man like Alexander."

"Who?"

"Matveich Kirsanov," he added as if he hadn't stopped after saying the name Alexander. "Without Kirsanov you would have died of either consumption or marriage to that wretch. One could deduce from all this some fundamental ideas about the harmful position you occupied in society. You've deduced them yourself. All that is wonderful but it's only made you more reasonable, a better person. It still didn't provide you with the experience you need to determine what sort of character in a husband would best suit you. Not a wretch, but an honest man—that's all you found out. Splendid. But can any honorable woman be satisfied, no matter what the man's character, as long as he's merely honest? She needs more precise knowledge of characters and relations, that is, she needs a different kind of experience. Yesterday we concluded, as you expressed it, that only widows should marry. What kind of widow are you?"

Beaumont said all of this with some dissatisfaction, but his last words contained genuine irritation.

"That's true," said Katerina Vasilievna somewhat gloomily. "Still, I couldn't be deceitful, could I?"

"You wouldn't know how because it's impossible to feign experience if you don't have any."

"You talk all the time about how we girls lack ways to make a sound choice. In general, that's entirely true. But there are exceptional cases when experience isn't

required to make a wise choice. If a girl isn't that young, she may know her own character. For example, I know my character; it's clear that it won't change. I'm twenty-two years old. I know what it takes to make me happy: to live in tranquillity so that no one disturbs my peace and quiet—nothing more."

"That's true. It is clear."

"Is it so hard to know whether or not those essential traits exist in the character of any given man? It becomes obvious from a few conversations."

"That's true. But you yourself said that this is an exception, not the rule."

"Of course it's not the rule. But, Mr. Beaumont, given the conditions of our life, our ideas and our customs, you can't expect a girl to have the kind of knowledge of everyday relations we were talking about, and without which, in most instances, the girl would risk making an unsound choice. Given present conditions, her situation is desperate. Let her enter into any kind of relations she pleases; it will hardly ever provide her with experience. No good can come of it and the danger is enormous. A girl can easily humiliate herself and learn to be deceptive. She'd have to fool both her relatives and society, and hide from them. From there it's not far to falsehood, which would truly debase her character. It's highly probable that she'd begin to take life too frivolously. If not, if she does remain good, then her heart will be broken. Meanwhile, she'll gain almost no everyday experience because these relations, so dangerous to her character or so painful to her heart, are nevertheless flashy, extraordinary, and not at all everyday. You see that under present conditions, this cannot possibly be advocated."

"Of course, Katerina Vasilievna. But that's precisely why our life is so bad."

"Naturally we're in agreement about that."

What's all this? I'm not just saying that this is a hellish situation in terms of general concepts—but what does it mean in terms of their personal relations? The man is saying, "I doubt that you'd make me a good wife." And the girl is replying, "No, please make me a proposal." What astonishing impudence! Perhaps that's not really it? Perhaps the man is saying, "I have no need to wonder whether I'll be happy with you; but you must be careful in choosing even me. You have chosen. But I beg of you, think; think carefully. It's a matter of utmost importance. Even though I love you very much, you musn't trust anyone, even me, without rigorous and careful scrutiny." Perhaps the girl is replying, "My friend, I see that you're thinking more about me than about yourself. You're right: women are pitiful creatures. Men deceive us, lead us blindfolded so that we deceive ourselves. But don't be afraid for my sake: you're not deceiving me. My happiness is assured. I feel as calm on my account as you feel on yours."

"I'm surprised by one thing," said Beaumont the following day (again they were strolling through various rooms, in one of which sat Polozov). "I'm surprised that in such circumstances there are any happy marriages at all."

"You're speaking almost as if you were annoyed that there were any," replied Katerina Vasilievna, laughing. She now laughed, as one can plainly see, quite often in a very gentle, cheerful way.

“Indeed, it may lead to gloomy thoughts. It when they have such poor means for making judgments about their own needs and the character of men, young women are still able to make successful choices rather frequently, then think what this reveals about the brilliance and resiliency of the female mind. Women are endowed by nature with such clear, strong, insightful intelligence. And this capacity remains useless to society, which rejects it, suppresses it, and stifles it. The history of humanity would have progressed ten times faster if this intelligence hadn’t been so rejected and destroyed, but instead had been allowed to function.”

“You’re a panegyrist for women, Mr. Beaumont. Couldn’t all this be explained more simply? By chance, perhaps?”

“Chance? Explain away as many instances as you want by chance. But when there are so very many instances, you know, besides chance (which produces a number of them), there must also be another general cause that’s responsible for the rest. Here it’s impossible to assume any other cause except for my explanation: soundness of choice resulting from strong and insightful intelligence.”

“You’re decidedly the Harriet Beecher Stowe of the woman’s question, Mr. Beaumont. She argues that Negroes are the most talented of all races and are superior to whites in intellectual abilities.”

“You’re joking, but I’m not.”

“You seem to be angry with me because I don’t bow down before women. Accept as my excuse the difficulty of getting down on one’s knees before oneself.”

“You’re joking, but now I’m seriously annoyed.”

“Not at me, I hope. I’m in no way to blame that women and girls can’t do what you think they should. Meanwhile, if you like, I’ll give you my earnest opinion—not about the woman question, since I don’t want to be a judge in my own case, but about you, Mr. Beaumont. You’re a man of great restraint, but you get excited when you talk about this subject. What follows from this? That you must have some personal stake in the question. You’ve probably suffered as a result of an error in selection made by an inexperienced girl as you would say.”

“Perhaps I did, or perhaps it was someone close to me. But think about it, Katerina Vasilievna. I’ll tell you when I get your answer. In three days I’ll ask for your reply.”

“To a question that hasn’t yet been asked? Surely I know you well enough not to need three days to think about it.” Katerina Vasilievna stopped, placed her hand on Beaumont’s neck, drew his head toward her, and kissed him on the forehead.

According to all precedents and demands of common courtesy, Beaumont should then have embraced her and kissed her on the lips. But he didn’t; he merely pressed the hand that she had dropped from his head.

“Indeed, Katerina Vasilievna. But stilt think it over.”

They began walking again.

“But who told you, Charlie, that I haven’t been thinking it over much longer than three days?” she asked, not letting go of his hand.

“Yes, of course, I realized that. Well, then I’ll tell you now. But this is a secret. Let’s go into the other room and sit down there so he won’t hear us.”

The end of this beginning occurred as they walked past the old man. He saw that they were walking arm in arm, which had never happened before, and he thought, “He’s asked for her hand and she’s accepted him. Good.”

“Tell me your secret, Charlie. Papa won’t be able to hear us from here.”

“It seems ridiculous, Katerina Vasilievna, that I’m afraid on your account. Of course, there’s nothing to fear. But you’ll understand why I’m warning you when I tell you that I have an example. No doubt you’ll realize that we can live together. But I felt so sorry for her. She suffered so much and was deprived for so many years of the life she needed. It was a pity. I saw it with my own eyes. Where it took place makes no difference—let’s say New York, Boston, or Philadelphia—it’s all the same, you know. She was a very fine woman and considered her husband to be a very fine man. They were extremely devoted to each other. Still, she had to suffer a great deal. He was prepared to sacrifice his life to add to her happiness in even the slightest way. Nevertheless, she couldn’t be happy with him. It’s good that it ended as it did. But it was painful for her. You didn’t know this; therefore I’ve yet to receive your answer.”

“Could I possibly have heard this story from someone else?”

“Perhaps.”

“From her, perhaps?”

“Yes.”

“Have I still not given you my answer?”

“No.”

“Do you know it?”

“I do,” said Beaumont. Thereupon followed the usual scene that occurs between the prospective bride and groom, complete with embraces.

## XIX.

The next day around three o’clock, Katerina Vasilievna called on Vera Pavlovna.

“I’m getting married the day after tomorrow, Vera Pavlovna,” she said upon entering. “Tonight I shall bring my intended to meet you.”

“Of course, it must be Beaumont, whom you’ve been mad about for so long.”

“Me? Mad about him? But it all happened so quietly and sensibly.”

“I’m sure you behaved very quietly and sensibly with him, but not with me.”

“Really? That’s odd. But this is even more curious: he’s very fond of you, both of you, but especially you, Vera Pavlovna, much more than Alexander Matveich.”

“What’s so curious about that? If you spoke to him about me with even one one-thousandth of the rapture with which you spoke to me about him, then of course ...”

“So you think he knows you through me? That’s just it—it’s not through me, but on his own—and he knows you even better than I do.”

“That’s news! How’s that?”

“How? I’ll explain at once. From the first day he arrived in Petersburg he was very eager to meet you. He thought it would be better if he postponed that meeting until he could visit you with a fiancée or a wife rather than alone. He thought it would be nicer for you to see him that way. You see, our marriage has come out of his desire to make your acquaintance.”

“Marry you to make my acquaintance?”

“Me? Who said he was marrying me for your sake? Oh, no, we’re not getting married out of love for you. But when he arrived in Petersburg, did either of us know each other or even know that the other existed? If he’d never come here, how would we ever have become acquainted? And he came to Petersburg because of you. How funny you are!”

“Did you say that he speaks Russian better than English?” asked Vera Pavlovna in considerable agitation.

“He speaks Russian as well as I do, and it’s the same with his English.”

“Katenka, my friend, how happy I am!” Vera Pavlovna ran to embrace her guest. “Sasha, come here! Quickly. Hurry!”

“What is it, Verochka. Hello, Katerina Vasil ...”

He couldn’t finish saying her name; Katya was kissing him.

“Today is Easter, Sasha. Say to Katenka, ‘Verily He is risen.’”<sup>27</sup>

“What’s this all about?”

“Sit down and she’ll explain. I still haven’t heard the whole story from beginning to end. Enough kissing—and in front of me, no less! Tell us everything, Katenka.”

## XX.

That evening there was even more excitement. When order was restored, Beaumont, acceding to a request from his new acquaintances, related his life story beginning with his arrival in the United States. “As soon as I got there,” he said, “I applied to become a naturalized citizen. To do that I had to join some party or other.<sup>28</sup> But which one? Naturally, the Abolitionists. I wrote several articles in the Tribune about the impact of serfdom on the social order in Russia.<sup>29</sup> This proved to be a rather useful new

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<sup>27</sup> The return of Lopukhov as Beaumont recalls the resurrection of Christ, an analogy emphasized by Vera Pavlovna’s use of phrases borrowed from the Orthodox Easter liturgy to announce the joyous news (see also n. 1 above).

<sup>28</sup> Probably an allusion to the corruption and graft that characterized American “machine” politics at this time.

<sup>29</sup> Founded by the idealistic editor Horace Greeley (1811–1872) in 1841, the New-York Tribune crusaded vigorously for the abolition of slavery. The newspaper merged with its rival the Herald in 1924 and appeared as the New York Herald Tribune until its demise in 1966. The International Herald Tribune, an offshoot published in Paris, still survives.

argument for the abolitionists to use against slavery in the Southern states. I became a citizen of the state of Massachusetts.<sup>30</sup> Soon after my arrival I secured a position in an office of one of the few large trading firms associated with their party in New York.” What followed was the same story we know already. Therefore, this part of Beaumont’s biography, at least, is beyond dispute.

## XXI.

That very evening the two families agreed to look for adjoining apartments. In the expectation of locating and arranging suitable quarters, the Beaumonts lived at the factory, where, according to his firm’s directive, an apartment had been set aside for the manager. This departure from town could be compared with the trip that newly-weds take in accordance with a splendid English custom, one that is now spreading throughout all of Europe.

About a month and a half later, when suitable adjoining apartments had been located, the Kirsanovs moved into one and the Beaumonts into the other. Old Polozov preferred to remain in the factory apartment, the spaciousness of which reminded him, albeit vaguely, of his former grandeur. He also found it pleasant to remain there inasmuch as there he was the most revered personage for some three or four versts around. There was no limit to the signs of respect offered him by his own clerks and commissioners, by those of the neighborhood, and by the rest of the suburban fraternity of both lower and somewhat higher stations in society. And there was almost no end to the pleasure with which this patriarch accepted the signs of general acknowledgment that he was the most important person in the district. His son-in-law came to the factory almost every morning; his daughter came with him almost every day. During the summer they both came (and still come) to live at the factory, instead of renting a dacha. During the rest of the year, in addition to receiving daily visits from his daughter and son-in-law (who remains a North American),<sup>31</sup> once a week or more the old man had the pleasure of receiving guests who’d come to spend an evening with Katerina Vasilievna and her husband. Sometimes it was only the Kirsanovs and a few young people, sometimes a larger group. The factory served as the usual destination for all country outings organized by the Kirsanovs’ and Beaumonts’ circle. Polozov was delighted by these invasions of guests. How could it be otherwise? He assumed the role of host, not entirely devoid of a certain old-time patriarchal flavor.

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<sup>30</sup> Massachusetts was a strong center of abolitionist sentiment and agitation in the years before the American Civil War.

<sup>31</sup> To avoid criminal prosecution, Beaumont-Lopukhov had to retain his new identity. Chemyshevsky may also be alluding to this character’s republican ~~news~~ and his desire to create a “new world” in Russia.

## XXII.

The two families live in their own fashion, each in the style that best pleases it. On ordinary days there's more noise in one apartment and more tranquillity in the other. They visit each other like relatives, sometimes as many as ten times a day, but for only one or two minutes at a time. Sometimes for almost an entire day one of the two apartments is empty because its inhabitants are in the other one. It varies according to circumstances. When guests come, there's no set rule: sometimes the doors between the apartments remain closed. (The doors joining the parlor of one with the living room of the other are generally closed, while those between Vera Pavlovna's and Katerina Vasilievna's rooms are constantly open.) And so sometimes the doors that connect the two receiving rooms remain closed. That's when the group of guests isn't too large. But when the party is big, these doors are opened and then even the guests don't know whose guests they are—Vera Pavlovna's or Katerina Vasilievna's. Sometimes the hostesses can't tell themselves. One distinction can be made: when the young people are seated, they tend to be in Katerina Vasilievna's apartment; but when they're not seated, they tend to be in Vera Pavlovna's apartment. But these young people can't really be considered guests. They're intimate friends; without standing on ceremony Vera Pavlovna will chase them away to Katerina Vasilievna's, saying, "I've had enough of you people! Go and see Katenka now. She never gets tired of you. And why are you better-behaved with her than with me? I'm even older than she is."

"Don't worry. It's because we love her more than you."

"Katenka, why do they love you more?"

"I cold them less."

"Yes, Katerina Vasilievna treats us like solid citizens, so we behave with her as if we were."

A particular scheme, conceived and repeated fairly frequently last winter within this domestic circle, when only the young people and some of their most intimate friends had gathered, produced a pleasant result. Pianos from both apartments were moved together. The young people would cast lots and divide into two choruses, each compelling its patroness to sit at one of the two pianos facing the other. Then each chorus stood behind its prima donna while they sang simultaneously: Vera Pavlovna and her chorus sang "La donna è mobile,"<sup>32</sup> while Katerina Vasilievna and her group sang "Long Abandoned by You,"<sup>33</sup> or else Vera Pavlovna's chorus performed Lisette's song from Béranger,<sup>34</sup> and Katerina Vasilievna's sang "Yeremushka's Song."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See above, p. 96 and n. 28.

<sup>33</sup> A poem by Nekrasov (see n. 106 above) written in 1854 and first set to music in 1865.

<sup>34</sup> A passage from the poem "No, you are not Lisette" (Rus. trans., 1857), by the French poet and writer of popular songs Pierre-Jean de Béranger (1780–1857), who was known for his liberal and humanitarian views.

<sup>35</sup> A quotation from Nekrasov's poem "Song to Yeremushka" (1859), which was very popular in radical circles (see n. 106 above).



This winter a new scheme had become popular. The erstwhile prima donnas had refashioned to their own taste the “Discourse between Two Greek Philosophers about Beauty.”<sup>36</sup> It began with Katerina Vasilievna’s raising her eyes to heaven, sighing heavily, and declaring, “Oh, divine Schiller, rapture of my soul!” Vera Pavlovna would reply with greatest dignity, “But prunella shoes from Korolyov’s shop are just as nice,”<sup>37</sup> and she’d stick out her foot. When one of the young people would laugh at this exchange, he or she would be made to stand in the corner. By the end of the game, of the ten or twelve contestants, only two or three remained unrelegated to the corner. Inordinate rapture would result if they were ever able to inveigle Beaumont to enter the room and then managed send him off to the corner.

What else? The sewing establishments are still in existence and operate in close cooperation. There are now three of them. Katerina Vasilievna began her own a while back. She also substitutes a great deal for Vera Pavlovna in her workshop, and will soon replace her altogether because later this year—please forgive her—she will actually take her medical examinations; then she’ll have no time at all to devote to the workshop.

“What a pity we can’t expand these establishments; how they’d have developed,” says Vera Pavlovna on occasion. Katerina Vasilievna never replies, but her eyes flash maliciously. “What a temper you have, Katya. You’re worse than I am,” says Vera Pavlovna. “It’s a good thing your father has something left, a very good thing.”

“Yes, Verochka, it is. I feel much better about my son.” (Obviously she has a son.)

“By the way, Katya, you’ve got me thinking about all sorts of things. We’ll continue to live in peace and quiet, won’t we?”

Katerina Vasilievna was silent.

“Yes, Katya, come on, at least for my sake, say yes.”

Katerina Vasilievna laughed. “It doesn’t depend on my yes or no, but to please you I’ll say it: Yes, we will.”

Indeed, they do live in peace. They live harmoniously and amicably, quietly and boisterously, playfully and industriously. But it doesn’t follow that my story is at an end. No. They’re all still young and active people, and if their life is organized harmoniously and amicably, beautifully and soundly, it still hasn’t ceased to be interesting. Far from it. I’ve much more to tell about them and I guarantee that the continuation of my story will be even more engrossing than what I’ve told you thus far.

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<sup>36</sup> A parody by “Kozma Prutkov” of a poem by Nikolai Shcherbina (1821–1869), a minor poet who admired Hellenistic culture and criticized the use of art for social and political purposes. A very popular satirist among the intelligentsia in the 1860s, Prutkov was in fact the literary creation of the poets Count Aleksei Tolstoy (1817–1875) and Aleksei (1821–1908) and Vladimir Zhemchuzhnikov (1830–1884).

<sup>37</sup> Prunella is a strong silk or worsted material used in making the uppers of women’s shoes. Vera Pavlovna’s ability to buy shoes at Korolyov’s shop indicates the material advantages she has gained from her cooperative sewing enterprise, self-education, and personal emancipation (see above, p. 54 and n. 10).

## XXIII.

They live cheerfully and amicably. Working and resting, they enjoy life and contemplate the future, if not without concern, then with the firm and absolutely well-founded confidence that the further they advance, the better it will be. Thus passed the last two years, and thus this year was passing also. Winter was almost over, and the snow was beginning to melt. Vera Pavlovna kept asking: “Won’t there be even one more frosty day so we can have another winter picnic?” Nobody could answer her question. Days passed by and the thaw continued; with each new day the chance for a winter picnic diminished. But then, finally! Just when all hope had been abandoned, there was a genuine winter snowfall. It was followed not by a thaw, but by a nice, light frost. The sky was bright; the evening would be splended—a picnic, a picnic! On the spur of the moment, no time to round up the others—a small picnic, without invitations.

In the evening two sleighs set off. One rushed along amidst chatter and jokes; but the other was an absolute disgrace. As soon as it had left town, its group began singing at the top of its lungs, and what a song!

A young maiden went forth  
From the new gate,  
From the new maplewood  
Latticed gate:  
“My own father is stern  
and harsh to me:  
He won’t let me stay out late  
Or stroll with the boys,  
But I won’t listen to my father,  
I’ll give the lads a good time.”<sup>38</sup>

Quite a song they chose to sing, say what you like! But was that all? Sometimes they’d be going along at a walk, dropping behind about a quarter of a verst or so, and then suddenly they’d break into a gallop, overtake the other sleigh with shouting and whooping, and as they drew level with it, would hurl snowballs at the other high-spirited but not rowdy party. The restrained sleigh, after two or three such insults, decided to defend itself. Allowing the rowdy sleigh to get ahead, they themselves picked up handfuls of fresh snow, carefully, so that the rowdy sleigh wouldn’t notice. And now the rowdy sleigh was once again proceeding at a walk, dropping behind, while the restrained one went stealthily on and, in overtaking it, didn’t reveal in any way that they’d laid in a stock of ammunition. Then the rowdy sleigh came at them once again with an uproar and whooping, while the restrained sleigh prepared to repulse them valiantly by surprise. But what’s this? The rowdy sleigh turns to the right, across a ditch—they don’t care what they do—and whizzes by at a distance of thirty feet.

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<sup>38</sup> Two stanzas from the popular folksong “Oh, you vestibule [seni], my new vestibule.” Variants of this song were included in collections published during the 1790s. The maiden’s disregard for her father’s admonition corresponds to Olga Sokratovna’s courtship with Chernyshevsky.

“Yes, it was she who caught on. She took the reins and is now on her feet, driving,” say those in the restrained sleigh. “Oh, no, we’ll catch up to them! We’ll get our revenge!” A desperate chase! Will they catch up or won’t they? “We will!” the restrained sleigh ecstatically cries. “No,” the others say in despair. “We will,” with new ecstasy. “They will,” cries the rowdy sleigh in despair. “They won’t,” ecstatically. Will they or won’t they?

The Kirsanovs and Beaumonts are sitting in the restrained sleigh; in the rowdy one sit four young men and one lady, and all the rowdiness of the rowdy sleigh is instigated by her.

“Greetings, mesdames and messieurs, we’re very, very glad to see you again,” she says, perched on the landing of the factory entrance. “Gentlemen, help the ladies out of the sleigh,” she adds, addressing her companions.

Hurry, hurry into the rooms! The frost has turned all their cheeks red!

“Greetings, little old man! But he isn’t an old man at all! Katerina Vasilievna, why did you describe him to me as an old man? He’ll be chasing after me yet! You will, won’t you, my dear little old man?” says the lady from the rowdy sleigh. “I will,” says Polozov, already quite charmed by the fact that she’d affectionately stroked his gray whiskers.

“Children, will you allow him to chase after me?”

“We will,” says one of the young men.

“No, no,” reply the three others.

But why is the lady from the rowdy sleigh dressed all in black? Is she in mourning, or is it just a whim?

“I’m tired, though,” she says, and throws herself onto the Turkish divan that lines one entire side of the hall. “Children, more cushions! Not just for me! I think the other ladies are tired too.”

“Yes, you’ve exhausted us, too,” says Katerina Vasilievna.

“Racing you over those ruts has done me in!” says Vera Pavlovna.

“It’s a good thing we were only about a verst from the factory!” says Katerina Vasilievna.

Both sink down on the cushions in a state of exhaustion.

“You were so foolish! You probably haven’t done much galloping before! You should have stood up as I did; then the ruts wouldn’t have mattered.”

“Even we are quite tired,” Kirsanov says for himself and Beaumont. They sit down next to their wives. Kirsanov embraces Vera Pavlovna; Beaumont takes Katerina Vasilievna by the hand. An idyllic scene. It’s pleasant to see such happily married couples. But a shadow flits across the face of the lady in mourning, only for a moment, and no one notices except for one of her young companions.<sup>39</sup> He goes over to the

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<sup>39</sup> A sign of grief when the lady in mourning sees the two happily united young couples. Although some scholars have argued that the lady in mourning is the woman saved by Rakhmetov in Pargolovo (see pp. 289–90 above), it is more likely that she represents Chernyshevsky’s wife, Olga Sokratovna, who is portrayed as pining for her own beloved, imprisoned husband.

window and begins to examine the light arabesques that the frost has traced on the panes.

“Mesdames, your stories are very interesting, but I didn’t hear anything beguiling. I only know they’re touching, amusing, and end happily. I like that. But where’s that impossible little old man?”

“He’s fussing in the kitchen, preparing some refreshments for us. That always keeps him amused,” says Katerina Vasilievna.

“Well, in that case, good for him. Tell me your story, please, but be brief. I like stories kept short.”

“I’ll tell you very briefly,” says Vera Pavlovna. “The story begins with me. Later, when it concerns the others, I’ll let them tell their own parts. But I warn you, there are secrets at the end of my story.”<sup>40</sup>

“So what! Then we’ll drive these gentlemen away. Or should we drive them away now?”

“No, now they may listen.”

So Vera Pavlovna began her story.

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“Ha, ha, ha! It’s that darling Julie!<sup>41</sup> I like her so much! Throwing herself on her knees, insulting everybody, and behaving without any propriety at all! That darling girl!”

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“Bravo, Vera Pavlovna! ‘I’ll throw myself out the window!’<sup>42</sup> Bravo, ladies and gentlemen!” and the lady in mourning claps her hands. At this command the young people begin to applaud deafeningly, shouting “Bravo” and “Hurrah.”

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“What’s the matter? What’s the matter with you?” cries Katerina Vasilievna with alarm a few minutes later.

“Oh, nothing, it’s all right; give me some water. Don’t worry, Mosolov<sup>43</sup> is already bringing me some. Thank you, Mosolov.” She takes the water brought by her young companion, the one who’d earlier walked over to the window. “You see how I’ve trained him? He knows everything in advance. Now I’m completely over it. Please go on, I’m listening.”

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<sup>40</sup> Probably an allusion to the imminent revolution, with the winter picnic representing the gathering of revolutionary forces for the final assault on the old regime.

<sup>41</sup> See above, p. 60.

<sup>42</sup> A reference to Vera Pavlovna’s earlier threat when she defied her mother (see p. 78 above).

<sup>43</sup> A character based on Yury Mikhailovich Mosolov (1838–1915?), one of Chernyshevsky’s students at the Saratov gymnasium and an active member of the revolutionary underground from the 1850s through the 1870s. Mosolov helped to organize the conspiratorial “Library of Kazan Students” in Moscow before his arrest in 1863; during the 1870s he participated in the underground populist revolutionary party “Land and Liberty.”

“No, I’m tired,” she says some five minutes later, quietly getting up from the divan. “I must have a rest. I must nap for an hour or so. You see, I leave without ceremony. Mosolov, let’s go and look for the little old man; he’ll put us to bed.”

“Excuse me, why not let me attend to this?” asks Katerina Vasilievna.

“Is it worth the trouble?”

“Are you leaving us?” asks one of the young men, assuming a tragic pose. “If we’d foreseen this, we would have brought our daggers. But now we have no way to stab ourselves.”

“When they serve the food, we can stab ourselves with the forks!” pronounces another with the rapture of an unexpected reprieve.

“Oh, no, I wouldn’t want the future Hope of the Fatherland to perish before its time,” says the lady in mourning with the same solemnity. “Console yourselves, my children. Mosolov, put the smaller cushion on the table!”

Mosolov puts the cushion on the table. The lady in mourning stands near the table in a majestic pose and slowly lowers her hand onto the cushion.

The young men reverently kiss her hand.

Katerina Vasilievna goes to see about a bed for their tired guest.

As they leave the room, the three remaining occupants from the restrained sleigh say in unison, “Poor woman!”

“What a woman!” say the three young men.

“I’ll say!” echoes Mosolov smugly.

“Have you known her long?”

“About three years.”

“And him, do you know him well?”<sup>44</sup>

“Oh, yes. Please, don’t be upset,” he adds, turning to those who’d been in the restrained sleigh. “It was only because she was exhausted.”

Vera Pavlovna exchanges quizzical looks with her husband and Beaumont and then shakes her head.

“Don’t tell me! Exhausted!” says Kirsanov.

“I assure you. Only exhausted. She’ll have a nap and everything will pass,” Mosolov repeats in an indifferent, soothing tone.

In about ten minutes Katerina Vasilievna returns.

“Well?” ask six voices. Mosolov says nothing.

“She lay down and started to doze off. She’s probably asleep by now.”

“I told you so,” says Mosolov. “It’s really nothing.”

“Still, poor woman!” says Katerina Vasilievna. “We’ll keep apart in her presence. You and I, Verochka, and Charlie and Sasha.”

“This shouldn’t cramp our style, though,” says Mosolov. “We can still sing and dance and shout. She sleeps very soundly.”

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<sup>44</sup> A reference to the imprisoned author. Mosolov claims to have known him for three years, the length of time that the actual Mosolov was Chemyshevsky’s student at Saratov.

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If she is asleep, if it's "nothing," then what of it, really? The distressing impression produced by the lady in mourning during the last quarter of an hour passed, disappeared, and was forgotten—not entirely, but almost. Without her the party gradually got under way. It followed the course of all previous parties of this sort. Then it really got going and the fun started.

Fun—but not entirely. The ladies, at least, exchanged quite anxious private glances five or six times. Twice Vera Pavlovna whispered furtively to her husband, "Sasha, what if this happens to me?" The first time Kirsanov couldn't think of anything to say; the second time he did and answered, "No, Verochka, this can't happen to you." "It can't? Are you sure?" "Yes." And twice Katerina Vasilievna whispered furtively to her husband, "This can't happen to me, can it Charlie?" The first time Beaumont only smiled, neither cheerfully nor soothingly; the second time he too answered, "In all likelihood, it can't—in all likelihood."<sup>45</sup>

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But these were only passing echoes and they were heard only at first. In general the party was cheerful; in half an hour it was all merriment. They chatted, played, and sang. She was sound asleep, Mosolov assured them, and he set the example for gaiety. In fact, they couldn't possibly disturb her. The room in which she lay was very far from the hall, in quite a different section of the apartment, with three rooms in between as well as the stairs, the corridor, and still another room.

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And so the party recovered completely.

The young men, as usual, either joined the rest or were off by themselves, either all of them or only some of them. Twice Beaumont joined them; twice Vera Pavlovna drove them all away from him and their serious conversation.

They chatted a great deal, a very great deal, and the whole company discussed things all together, but not very much.

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They're all sitting together.

"Well, then, summing it up: is it good or bad?" asks the young man who had assumed the tragic pose.

"Bad rather than good," says Vera Pavlovna.

"Why, Verochka?" asks Katerina Vasilievna.

"In any case, life can't go on without it," says Beaumont.

"There's no getting out of it," confirms Kirsanov.

"Outstandingly bad, therefore, outstanding," decides the one who'd asked.

The three remaining comrades nod their heads and say, "Bravo, Nikitin."

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<sup>45</sup> An allusion to Chemyshevsky's imprisonment and expression of the women's anxiety that their own husbands may suffer a similar fate.

The young men are sitting off to one side.

"I didn't know him,<sup>46</sup> Nikitin; but it seems that you did?" asks Mosolov.

"I was just a lad then. I saw him."

"And how does it strike you now, in recollection? Do they speak the truth? Or do they exaggerate out of friendship?"

"No."

"And no one saw him after that?"

"No. Besides, Beaumont was in America then."

"You're right! Karl Yakovlich, excuse me... Didn't you meet that Russian they were talking about in America?"

"No."

"High time he came back."

"Yes."

"What a mad idea I just had!" says Nikitin. "He'd make a good match for her."<sup>47</sup>

"Ladies and gentlemen, will someone come and sing with me?" asks Vera Pavlovna. "Two volunteers? So much the better."

Mosolov and Nikitin remain behind.

"I'll show you something interesting, Nikitin," said Mosolov. "Do you think she's asleep?"

"No."

"But don't say anything. You can tell her later, when you get to know her better. But nobody else. She wouldn't like it."

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The windows of the apartment are low.

"This, of course, is her window, where the light is," Mosolov looks in. "That's right. What did I tell you?"

The lady in mourning is seated in an armchair drawn up to the table. Her left elbow is resting on the edge; her wrist supports her slightly bowed head, covering her temple and part of her hair. Her right hand is lying on the table, her fingers moving up and down mechanically, as if playing some tune. The lady's face has a fixed expression of thoughtfulness, stern rather than sad. A slight frown comes and goes over her forehead, again and again.

"And is she like this all the time, Mosolov?"

"As you see. But we'd better go, or we'll catch cold. We've been standing here for a quarter of an hour already."

"How unfeeling you are!" says Nikitin, looking intently into his comrade's eyes as they pass the light in the hallway.

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<sup>46</sup> A reference to Rakhmetov, who was in America at this time. Alluding to the Christian belief in the Second Coming, Chernyshevsky has his young revolutionaries predict that Rakhmetov's return will coincide with the forthcoming revolution.

<sup>47</sup> In the rough draft of the novel, the young revolutionaries conclude that Rakhmetov and the lady in mourning would not make a "good pair" because both are strongwilled leaders.

“This really got to you, my friend. It’s your first time.”

The refreshments are being served.

“This vodka is really something,” says Nikitin. “And how strong it is! It takes your breath away!”

“Why, you sissie! And your eyes are red, too!” says Mosolov.

Everyone began to make fun of Nikitin. “It’s just that I choked on it. Otherwise I can hold my drink,” he says defensively. They begin to inquire what time it is. It’s still only eleven; they can chat on for another half hour or so, there’s still plenty of time.

Half an hour later Katerina Vasilievna goes in to wake the lady in mourning. The woman meets her on the threshold, stretching after her nap.

“Did you sleep well?”

“Beautifully.”

“And how do you feel?”

“Splendid. I kept telling you it was nothing. Just fatigue . . . from too much frolicking. Now I’ll be more reserved.”

But no, she doesn’t succeed in becoming reserved. Within five minutes she’s charming Polozov, ordering the young men around, and drumming out a march or something on the table with the handles of two forks. But she’s in a hurry to leave, while the others, who by now are enormously cheered to see her so boisterous once again I aren’t in such a hurry.

“Are the horses ready?” she asks, rising from the meal.

“Not yet, we’ve only just ordered them harnessed.”

“You’re insufferable! But if that’s so Vera Pavlovna then sing something for me. I’ve been told you have a good voice.”

Vera Pavlovna sings something.

“I’ll ask you to sing very often,” says the lady in mourning.

“Now it’s your turn, your turn!” they all begin to prod her.

But they hardly have time to speak before she sits down at the piano.

“Well, all right. I don’t know how to sing, but that won’t stop me. Nothing can stop me. But, mesdames and messieurs, I won’t be singing for you at all. I’ll be singing only for the children. My children, don’t laugh at your mother!” and all the while she’s striking chords, searching for the accompaniment. “Children, don’t you dare laugh, because I’ll sing with feeling.” And trying to make the notes sound as shrill as possible, she sings out:

“Moans the blue-gray ...”

The young people giggle at this unexpected turn. And the rest of the company also starts to laugh I while the singer herself can’t keep from bursting into laughter. But managing to stifle it, she continues with redoubled shrillness:

“... dove,

He moans both day and night:



His beloved sweethea ...<sup>48</sup>

But on this word her voice really quavered and broke off. “It’s no good—and it’s all right that it isn’t any good. It shouldn’t be. Let’s try one that will work, a better one. Listen, my children, to your mother’s admonitions. ‘Don’t fall in love; understand that you don’t have to get married.’” She sings out in a strong, full contralto:

“There are many beautiful women in our mountain village,  
The stars shine in the darkness of their eyes.  
It’s sweet to love them—an enviable fate!  
But ...

This ‘but’ is stupid, children,  
But a young lad’s freedom is jollier,<sup>49</sup>  
that’s not what the trouble is. It’s a stupid objection, but do you know why?  
Don’t marry, young man!  
Listen to me!<sup>50</sup>

Further on, children, it’s all nonsense; perhaps this is nonsense too. Children, you may fall in love, you may marry—but only with good judgment, without illusions, without illusions, children. I’ll sing to you about myself, how I got married. It’s an old love song, but then I’m an old woman. I’m sitting on the balcony of our Castle Dalton, for I’m Scottish—so fair-skinned and fair-haired. Nearby are the forest and the river Bringal. My betrothed approaches my balcony, in secret, of course. He’s poor, but I’m rich, the daughter of a baron, a lord. But I love him very much and I sing to him:

‘The steep bank of the Bringal is beautiful,  
And the forest is green all around;  
There my heart’s friend and I find shelter by day,’  
because I know that by day he’s hiding and every day he changes his shelter,  
‘Dearer than my father’s house.’

Actually, my father’s house was really not all that dear. Thus I sing to him: ‘I’ll go with you.’ How do you think he answers me?

‘Maiden, you want to be mine,  
To forget your kin and rank,’  
because I’m of high birth,  
‘But first you must guess what fate awaits me.

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<sup>48</sup> Three lines from the first stanza of a sentimental song by I. I. Dmitriev (1760–1837), “The blue-gray dove” (1792). The stanza concludes: “He flew away for a long time.” The dove’s anxiety over the fate of his “sweetheart” corresponds to that of the lady in mourning, who is grieving for her imprisoned spouse.

<sup>49</sup> The first four lines of Kazbich’s song in “Bela,” from Lermontov’s novel *A Hero of Our Time* (1840). The song initiates a discussion of marriage and its impact on revolutionary ardor (see n. 198 above).

<sup>50</sup> The first two lines of the refrain from the Circassian song in pt. 2, stanza 9, of Lermontov’s *Eastern tale*, “Izmail-bei” (1832). The lady in mourning admonishes the young men to avoid her own sad fate.

‘Are you a hunter?’ I ask. ‘No.’ ‘Are you a poacher?’ ‘You’ve almost guessed it,’ he replies.

‘When we will gather, children of darkness,’  
because you and I, children, mesdames and messieurs, are wicked people, you know,  
‘Then, believe me, we’ll need  
To forget who we were before,  
To forget who we are now,’

he sings. ‘I guessed it long ago,’ I say. ‘You’re a brigand.’ Well, it’s true; he is a brigand, isn’t he? He’s a brigand. How does he answer, ladies and gentlemen? ‘You see,’ he says, ‘I’m a bad match for you:

Oh, maiden, I’m not a good friend:  
I’m a dweller of forests deep’;  
that’s absolutely true, of deep forests; ‘therefore,’ he says, ‘don’t come with me.  
My life will be dangerous,’  
because there are wild beasts in the deep forest,  
‘My end will be sad,’

this isn’t true, children; it won’t be sad, but I thought so then, and he thought so too. Nevertheless, I answer in my own way:

‘The steep bank of the Bringal is beautiful,  
And the forest is green all around;  
There my heart’s friend and I find shelter by day,  
Dearer than my father’s house.’<sup>51</sup>

‘And so it was in fact. Well then, I can’t have any regrets. I was told what to expect. In just such a way may you marry and love, children—without illusions. And know how to choose.

The moon rises  
Both quiet and still;  
And the young warrior  
Goes into battle.  
The Caucasian horseman loads his gun;  
The maiden says to him:  
‘My dear one, entrust  
Yourself boldly to fate!’<sup>52</sup>

You may fall in love with such girls and you may marry such girls.”

(“Forget what I told you, Sash a, listen to her!” whispers one of them and squeezes his hand. “Why didn’t I tell you that? Now I’ll say it,” whispers the other.)

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<sup>51</sup> From Edmund’s Song in canto 3, stanzas 16–18, of the ballad “Rokeby” (1813), by the Scottish romantic poet and novelist Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832). In several places Chernyshevsky altered the translation by Karolina Pavlova which appeared in *Otechestvennye zapiski* in 1840, no. 5:

<sup>52</sup> The first stanza and part of the second from Selima’s song in pt. 3, stanza 15, of Lermontov’s “Izmail-bey.” It summons young men to continue the revolutionary struggle and urges young women to remain faithful to them.

“I allow you to love such girls, and I bless you, children:  
 My dear one, entrust  
 Yourself boldly to fate!  
 You’ve cheered me up a great deal, and where there’s good cheer, there must be  
 drink:  
 Hey, my tavern maid,  
 Pour some mead and wine,  
 mead only because you can’t exclude that word from the song. Is there any cham-  
 pagne left? Yes! Excellent! Open it!  
 Hey, my tavern maid,  
 Pour some mead and wine,  
 So that my head  
 Will be gay!  
 Who’s the tavern maid? I’m the tavern maid:  
 The tavern maid has black brows  
 And hammered heel-rings.”<sup>53</sup>  
 She jumps up, passes her hand over her brows, and stamps her heels.  
 “I’ve poured it out. There it is! Mesdames and messieurs, and you, little old man,  
 and children, help yourselves. So that our heads will be gay!”  
 “To the tavern maid! To the tavern maid!”  
 “Thank you! I drink to my own health,” and she sits down at the piano again and  
 sings:  
 “Let sorrow vanish into dust!  
 and it will vanish,  
 And into our hearts, grown young again,  
 Let unending joy descend,<sup>54</sup>  
 so it will be—that’s clear:  
 Black fear will flee like a shadow  
 From the rays of daylight;  
 Light, warmth and aroma  
 Swiftly drive away darkness and cold;  
 The odor of decay gets weaker.  
 The fragrance of roses grows stronger.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> A partial misquotation from the concluding stanza of a Ukrainian ballad (*duma*) concerning the campaign against the Poles in 1637 (II. 17–20, 11–12). Published in a collection edited by I. I. Sreznevsky, *Zaporozhskaya starina* (Kharkov, 1833), I, 1, pp. 108–9, the song celebrates the success of the forthcoming revolution.

<sup>54</sup> From Nekrasov’s poem “New Year” (1852), II. 27, 29–30, first published in *Sovremennik* in 1852, no. 1. The omitted line reads: “Let malice perish.” The passage reflects the optimism of the lady in mourning, who foresees the success of the revolution and the establishment of a new social order.

<sup>55</sup> From “Stanzas” (1845; Rus. trans., 1862), by the English poet Thomas Hood (1799–1845), who was noted for his compassion for the poor and unfortunate expressed in many of his poems. It is a joyful

The song provides an allegorical account of the courtship between Olga Sokratovna and Chernyshevsky. The words and events correspond to the details provided in the author's own diary. Although advocating single life as the best possible preparation for a career as a revolutionary (see also n. 198 above), the lady in mourning willingly outlines the burdens and responsibilities of a progressive marriage.

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song of anticipated victory. The motif of "roses" recurs in the next section, after the lady in mourning has shed her black apparel.

## 6. Change of Scene

“To the Arcade!” cried the lady in mourning. Only now she was no longer in mourning: she was wearing a bright rose-pink dress, a rosepink hat, and a white mantilla, and she was holding a bouquet of flowers in her hand. She wasn’t riding alone with Mosolov. He and Nikitin were sitting on the front seat of the carriage, while a third youth was sticking out like a sore thumb on the coachman’s box. Next to the lady sat a man of about thirty.<sup>1</sup> How old was the lady? Was she really twenty-five, as she said, and not twenty? Well if she adds to her age, let her square it with her own conscience.

“Yes, my dear, I’ve waited two years for this day, more than two years. When I met him” (she indicated Nikitin with a glance), “I still had only a presentiment. You couldn’t say that I expected it. At that time there was still only a hope, but soon there came certainty.”

“Excuse me, excuse me!” says the reader, not just the perspicacious reader, but every reader, growing more stupefied the more he understands. “Slightly more than two years after she met Nikitin?”

“Yes,” I reply.

“But she met Nikitin at the same time she met Kirsanov and Beaumont, at that picnic at the end of last winter?”

“Absolutely true,” I answer.

“What does it all mean? Are you starting to describe events of 1865?”

“Yes.”

“But, for pity’s sake, is that possible?”

“Why is it impossible, if I have the knowledge?”

“Come on, then! Who will listen to you!”

“Do you really object?”

“What do you take me for? Of course not.”

“If you don’t want to listen now, then of course I must postpone the sequel until you’re in a mood to listen.<sup>2</sup> I hope we won’t have to wait too long for that day.”

4 April 1863

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<sup>1</sup> The husband of the lady in mourning. Although some scholars have argued that this figure is Rakhmetov, Chernyshevsky is most likely alluding to his own liberation from prison and his joyous reunion with his wife after the successful revolution.

<sup>2</sup> That is, when the reader and society in general are ready for revolution, which, according to Chernyshevsky’s prophecy, should occur in 1865 (see n. 163 above).

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Nikolai Chernyshevsky  
What Is to Be Done?  
1863

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This is an 1863 novel written by Russian philosopher, journalist, and literary critic Nikolai Chernyshevsky, written in response to *Fathers and Sons* (1862) by Ivan Turgenev. The chief character is Vera Pavlovna, a woman who adopts nihilism, escapes from her awful family and organises a co-op. The book was also influential in Emma Goldmans political awakening.

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