

# Nikolenka's Childhood

BY LEO TOLSTOY



*Drawings by Maurice Sendak*



*An Edition for Young Readers*

*Nikolenka's Childhood*, or *Childhood*, as it was originally entitled, was the first work by Leo Tolstoy ever to appear in print. Although the events it describes are to a large extent fictional, it can also be regarded as partly autobiographical. At any rate, it offers a marvelous insight into a young boy's life in pre-Revolutionary Russia. The life on the country estate of an old patrician family, the people who are part of it, the outdoors, and the warm atmosphere of a sheltered home are vividly described. In contrast to this, after Nikolenka and his brother are sent to Moscow to complete their education, there is the formal life of the city with its social obligations and rules by which the boys are forced to abide. But *Nikolenka's Childhood* is more than this. It is a masterful portrayal of the crucial period in a boy's life when he must part with the only world he has known and is dramatically plunged into new surroundings. In Nikolenka's case the break comes suddenly and is heightened further by tragedy.

Through the descriptive genius of Leo Tolstoy the young reader will come to know the unforgettable characters in this story: Karl Ivanich, the tutor; Natalia Savishna, the faithful housekeeper; Grisha, the madman of God; lovely, irresistible Sonia; the stately grandmother; and above all, seen almost as if through the veil of memory, Nikolenka's wonderfully kind, loving mother.



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With an introduction by Ernest J. Simmons

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# Introduction

Over the door of the small village school which the famous Russian writer Leo Tolstoy built on his country estate to teach peasant children was a printed sign: "Enter and Leave Freely." It is little wonder that farm boys and girls liked to come there to learn—some came from as far as thirty miles away—for freedom ruled in the classroom, and it was fun to learn from a master who seemed able to turn every lesson into a kind of exciting game. The pupils adored Tolstoy, for he treated them as equals and understood all their needs and secrets. At the end



of the day's lessons, he would challenge his students to a race outdoors. There he would face them in the snow and the screaming, laughing children would clamber over his back, striving to pull him down. Strong as an ox, he would cart them around and then from weariness, or more often for fun, he would fall in the snow. Their delight was indescribable as they began to cover him with snow and pile themselves on top, shouting, "The heap is too small, the heap is too small!"

One day in the composition class, when Tolstoy saw that the students were bored with writing themes on tables or forests, he proposed that they try a story on peasant life to illustrate the Russian proverb: "The spoon feeds, but the handle sticks in the eye." They tried and found it difficult. Then one pupil suggested that the teacher write the story in competition with them. Tolstoy began the tale, explained the plot, and at once all took an eager interest. They criticized what he had done and offered suggestions for continuing the tale. But Fedka and Syoinka, angrily rejecting unnecessary details brought forward by the other children, soon took over and enthusiastically worked on the story for several days. Tolstoy was amazed at the performance of these two eleven-year-old peasant lads who scarcely required any instruction in the art of writing from a nationally known author. Before the boys finished the story, Tolstoy had to go away. During his absence,

a craze for making popguns out of paper swept the school, and the unfinished manuscript of Fedka and Syomka was sacrificed to this diversion. Upon his return Tolstoy expressed keen disappointment over the loss of the story, and the two boys offered to reproduce it for their beloved teacher. One evening after school they locked themselves in his study. At midnight Tolstoy knocked and was admitted. Fedka still had a few more sentences to dictate to Syomka, who busily wrote at the large table, his lines running slantingly across the page. At last Tolstoy took away the copybook, and the two boys, after a good supper, lay down on their sheepskin coats under the table. Until sleep overtook them, their childish laughter rang through the room.

Tolstoy printed their tale, with very few changes, in the educational magazine he published at this time, because he believed that the two boys, in drawing upon the experience of their own lives, had revealed a sincere feeling for truth and beauty and an artistic rightness in the selection of detail. He marveled all the more, for these were the very artistic qualities he had striven to achieve nine years before when he wrote his first published story, a short novel largely about children—*Childhood* (1852). His love of children and profound understanding of their special world of reality and make-believe, gifts which enabled him to succeed so superbly as a teacher of youngsters, also contributed to this initial memo-

rable example of his fiction, which in a few years would include the great novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

Tolstoy once remarked that fiction, in order to be successful, should come singing from the author's soul, and this can truly be said about *Childhood*. He wrote it from the heart and not from the head. "When I wrote *Childhood*," he told a friend, "it seemed that no one before me had so felt and depicted all the charm and poetry of childhood." In one sense this is an admirable description of the work, which is simply the story of a child's life up to the age of fourteen. In it he evokes childhood memories and associations that most of us have forgotten or only dimly remember, but which, when recalled with feeling, seem true and altogether delightful.

Like Fedka and Syomka in their tale, Tolstoy drew heavily upon the memory of his own childhood experiences and his family, friends, and servants for the scenes, situations, and characters in his novel. The thoughts, feelings, and actions of Nikolenka in the story resemble in many respects those of the young Tolstoy. In general, the life he transposed into art was largely his own life of recorded experience and observation, which is perhaps one reason why his novel seems so amazingly true to life. However, this is no reflection upon his originality, for there is much sheer invention in *Childhood*. To take

just one example: the exquisitely described scene of the death of Nikolenka's mother is entirely an effort of imagination; Tolstoy's own mother died before he was two years old.

How effectively Tolstoy makes the commonplace experiences of the young endlessly attractive by the magic of his art! And how real and unforgettable are many of the characterizations in *Childhood*, such as the kindly old German tutor, the wonderful madman of God, Grisha, and the lovable and loyal servant Natalya Savishna. No illuminating detail escapes the author, and no inner meditation of young or old seems beyond his grasp. In this work all the ineffable charm of childhood is recaptured with compelling authenticity, and no reader fails to identify himself with the youthful joys and sorrows, dreams and hopes, that are lived in the pages of this book.

Ernest J. Simmons



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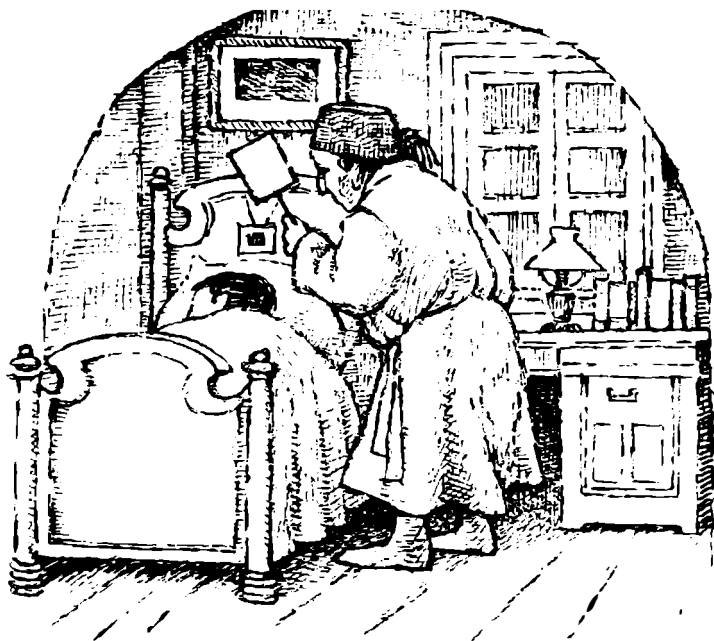
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## *Nikolenka's Childhood*





## I

### OUR TUTOR, KARL IVANICH

On the twelfth of August 18—, exactly three days after my tenth birthday, on which I had received such wonderful presents, Karl Ivanich woke me up at seven in the morning by hitting at a fly just above my head with a flap of blue sugar-bag paper fastened to a stick. He did this so awkwardly that he caught the little picture of my patron saint, which hung from the top of my oak bedstead, and the dead fly fell right on my head. I pushed my nose from under the bedclothes, put out my hand to steady the little picture which was still swinging, threw the dead fly on

the floor, and looked at Karl Ivanich with angry though sleepy eyes. He, however, in his variegated, quilted dressing gown girdled with a belt of the same material, and with a red tasseled smoking cap on his head, continued to walk around the room in his soft leather boots, aiming at and hitting the flies.

"Of course I am small," I thought, "but why should he disturb me? Why does he not kill the flies around Volodya's bed? See what a lot of them there are! No, Volodya is older than I. I am the youngest of all—that's why he torments me. He thinks of nothing all his life long but how to make things unpleasant for me," I whispered. "He sees perfectly well that he has waked me up and frightened me, but he pretends not to notice it. Disgusting fellow! His dressing gown and cap and tassel are all disgusting!"

While in my own mind I was thus expressing my vexation with Karl Ivanich, he went up to his bed, looked at his watch which hung above it in a small beaded slipper, hung the flap on a nail in the wall and, evidently in the best of spirits, turned to us.

"Up, children, up! . . . It's time! Mother is already in the dining room!" exclaimed he in his kind German voice. Then he came up to me, sat down at the foot of my bed, and took his snuffbox from his pocket. I pretended to be asleep. Karl Ivanich first took a pinch of snuff, wiped his nose, snapped his fingers, and only then turned on me. He began, laughingly, to tickle my heels.

"Now then, Nikolenka, you lazybones!" he said.

Much as I dreaded being tickled, I did not jump up or answer him, but only hid my head deeper under the pillow and kicked with all my strength to keep from laughing.

"How kind he is and how fond of us! How could I think so badly of him?"

I was vexed with myself and with Karl Ivanich and wanted to laugh and to cry: my nerves were very upset.

"Oh, leave me alone!" I shouted with tears in my eyes, thrusting my head out from under the pillow.

Karl Ivanich was surprised, left the soles of my feet in peace, and anxiously began to inquire what was the matter, and whether I had had a bad dream.

. . . His kindly German face, and the solicitude with which he tried to discover the cause of my tears, made them flow the faster. I was ashamed, and could not understand how, but a moment before, I had been able to dislike him, and consider his dressing gown, cap, and tassel disgusting. Now, on the contrary, all these things appeared extremely pleasing, and even the tassel seemed clear evidence of his goodness. I said that I was crying because of a bad dream—that Mamma had died and was being carried to her funeral. I invented all this, for I could not at all remember what I had dreamed that night; but when Karl Ivanich, touched by my words, began to console and calm me, it seemed to me that I had really had

that dreadful dream and I now shed tears for another reason.

When Karl Ivanich left me, and having sat up in bed I began drawing the stockings onto my small feet, my tears flowed more gently, but the gloomy thoughts of my invented dream did not leave me. Nicholas, our attendant, a clean little man, always serious, neat, respectful, and great friends with Karl Ivanich, came in. He brought our clothes; for Volodya a pair of boots and for me those detestable shoes with bows which I still wore. I was ashamed to let him see me cry, besides which the morning sun shone gaily into the room, and Volodya, standing at the washstand and mimicking Marya Ivanovna (our sister's governess), was laughing so merrily and so ringingly that even the serious Nicholas, with a towel over his shoulder, a piece of soap in one hand and a jug of water in the other, said with a smile:

"Have done, Vladimir Petrovich. Please wash now."

I grew quite cheerful.

"Will you soon be ready?" came Karl Ivanich's voice from the schoolroom.

His voice sounded severe and no longer had that kindly tone which had moved me to tears. In the schoolroom Karl Ivanich was quite a different man: he was the instructor. I dressed and washed quickly, and with the brush still in my hand smoothing down my wet hair, obeyed his call.

Karl Ivanich, spectacles on nose and book in hand, sat in his usual place between the door and the window. To the left of the door were two shelves, one of them ours—the children's—the other Karl Ivanich's *own*. On ours were all sorts of books—lesson books and others: some standing, others lying down. Only two volumes of *History of Travels* in red bindings stood decorously against the wall, and then came long, thick, big and little books—bindings without books and books without bindings. We used to jam and shove everything there when told, before recreation, to tidy up the “library,” as Karl Ivanich pompously called that shelf. The collection of books on his own shelf, if not so large as ours, was yet more varied. I remember three of them: an unbound German pamphlet on the manuring of cabbage plots, one volume of a *History of the Seven Years' War*, bound in parchment and burnt at one corner, and a full course of hydrostatics. Karl Ivanich spent most of his time reading, and had even injured his eyes at it, yet he never read anything but these books and the *Northern Bee*.

Among the things that lay on his shelf, the one chiefly connected in my memory with Karl Ivanich was a cardboard disk attached to a wooden stand on which it could be moved by means of pegs. A caricature of a lady and a hairdresser was pasted on the disk. Karl Ivanich, who was very clever at that sort of thing, had made the disk to protect his weak eyes

from too bright a light.

I can still see before me his long figure in the quilted dressing gown and red skullcap, beneath which one saw his thin gray hair. He sits beside a small table on which stands the disk with the hair-dresser, throwing a shadow on his face; a book is in one hand and the other rests on the arm of his chair; before him lies his watch with the figure of a hunter on its face, a checked handkerchief, a round black snuffbox, his green spectacle case, and a pair of snuffers on their tray. All this lies so precisely, so tidily in its place, that by this orderliness alone one





can feel sure that Karl Ivanich's conscience is clear and his soul at peace.

On the other wall hung maps, nearly all of them torn but skillfully repaired by Karl Ivanich. On the third wall, in the middle of which was a door leading to the stairs, hung, on one side, two rulers: one of them ours, all cut about, and the other, a new one, his *own*, used by him more for incitement than for ruling lines; on the other side was a blackboard, on which our serious misdeeds were marked with circles and our little ones with crosses. To the left was the corner, where we were put on our knees.

How well I remember that corner! I remember the door of the stove, the ventilator in that door and the noise it made when turned. One used to kneel and kneel in the corner until one's knees and back ached, and used to think, "Karl Ivanich has forgotten me; he no doubt is comfortably sitting in his soft armchair and reading his hydrostatics, but what of me?" And to remind him of oneself one would begin softly to open and shut the stove door, or to pick bits of plaster off the wall, but if too big a piece of plaster fell noisily on the floor the fright alone was, truly, worse than any punishment. One would turn to look at Karl Ivanich, and there he sat, book in hand, as if he noticed nothing.

In the middle of the room stood a table covered with torn black oilcloth under which in many places one saw the edges of the table all cut with penknives.

Around the table stood several wooden stools, unpainted, but polished by long use. The last wall was taken up by three windows. The view from those windows was this: just in front of them was a road, every hole, every stone, every rut of which had long been familiar and dear to me; beyond the road was a clipped linden-tree avenue, behind which here and there a wattle fence was visible; across the avenue one could see the meadow, on one side of which was a threshing floor, and opposite to this a wood. Deep in the wood one could see the watchman's hut. From the window to the right, part of the veranda was visible on which the grown-up people generally sat before dinner. Sometimes while Karl Ivanich was correcting a page of dictation one would glance that way and see Mamma's dark head, somebody's back, and faintly hear sounds of voices and laughter coming from there, and one would be cross that one could not be there, and would think, "When shall I be big, finish learning, and always sit, not over 'Dialogues,' but with those I love?" Vexation would turn to sadness and one would ponder so deeply, heaven only knows why and what, that one did not notice Karl Ivanich getting angry about the mistakes.

Karl Ivanich took off his dressing gown, put on his blue swallowtail coat with the padding and gathers on the shoulders, adjusted his cravat before the looking glass, and took us downstairs to say "good morning" to our mother.



## II

### MAMMA

Mamma was in the drawing room pouring out tea. In one hand she held the teapot and with the other the tap of the samovar, from which the water poured over the top of the teapot onto the tray. But though she was looking fixedly at it she did not notice this, nor did she notice our coming in.

When I try to recall my mother as she was at that time I can only picture her brown eyes, always expressing the same kindness and love, the mole on her neck just below the place where the short curls grew, her embroidered white collar, and the delicate

dry hand which so often caressed me and I so often kissed, but her general expression escapes me.

To the left of the sofa stood an old English grand piano, at which sat my dark-haired sister Lyuba, with rosy fingers just washed in cold water playing with evident effort Clementi's exercises. She was eleven. She wore a short gingham frock and white, lace-trimmed drawers, and could only take an octave as an arpeggio. Beside her, half turned toward her, sat Marya Ivanovna, wearing a cap with pink ribbons and a blue gown; her face was red and cross and became even more stern as soon as Karl Ivanich entered. She looked severely at him and, without returning his bow, tapped the floor with her foot and went on counting, "*Un, deux, trois*; one, two, three" yet louder and more imperatively than before.

Karl Ivanich, without taking the least notice of this, as usual in his German way approached my mother to kiss her hand. She roused herself, shook her head as if to drive away sad thoughts, gave Karl Ivanich her hand, and kissed him on his wrinkled temple while he kissed her hand.

"I thank you, dear Karl Ivanich." And continuing to speak German, she asked, "Did the children sleep well?"

Karl Ivanich was deaf in one ear and now from the noise of the piano heard nothing. He stooped nearer to the sofa, and leaning with one hand on the table and standing on one leg, raised his skullcap

above his head with a smile, which then appeared to me the height of refinement, and said:

“You will excuse me, Natalya Nikolavna?”

Karl Ivanich, for fear of catching cold in his bald head, always wore his red cap, but every time he entered the drawing room, he asked permission to do so.

“Put it on, Karl Ivanich. . . . I was asking you whether the children slept well,” said Mamma, moving toward him and speaking rather loudly.

But he again heard nothing, covered his bald head with the red cap, and smiled even more pleasantly.

“Wait a moment, Mimi!” Mamma said to Marya Ivanovna with a smile. “One can’t hear anything.”

When Mamma smiled, beautiful as her face was it grew incomparably more lovely, and everything around seemed brighter. If in life’s sad moments I could but have had a glimpse of that smile I should not have known what sorrow is. It seems to me that what we call beauty in a face lies in the smile. If a smile adds charm to a face, the face is beautiful, if it does not change it, the face is ordinary, and if it spoils it, the face is ugly.

When she had said good morning, Mamma took my head in both her hands and tilted it back, then looked intently at me and said:

“Have you cried this morning?”

I did not answer. She kissed my eyes and asked in German:

“What did you cry about?”

When she had a friendly talk with us she always spoke in that language, which she knew perfectly.

“I cried in my sleep, Mamma,” I said, remembering my invented dream in all its details and involuntarily shuddering at the thought.

Karl Ivanich confirmed my words, but kept silent about the dream. After speaking of the weather—a conversation in which Mimi also took part—Mamma put six lumps of sugar on a tray for certain specially esteemed servants, got up, and moved to the embroidery frame which stood by the window.

“Now go to Papa, children, and tell him to be sure to come to me before he goes to the threshing ground.”

The music, the counting, and the stern glances were resumed, and we went to Papa. Having passed through the room which still retained from Grand-papa’s time the name of “the steward’s room,” we entered the study.



### III PAPA

He stood at his writing table and pointing to some envelopes, papers, and piles of money, spoke angrily—heatedly explaining something to the steward, Jacob Mikhaylov, who stood in his usual place between the door and the barometer with his hands behind his back, rapidly moving his fingers in all directions.

The more vehement Papa became the more rapidly the fingers twitched, and when Papa paused the fingers too became still; but when Jacob himself spoke they were exceedingly restless and twitched

desperately this way and that; by their movements one could, I think, have guessed Jacob's secret thoughts, but his face was always calm—expressing consciousness of his own worth, and at the same time subservience, saying as it were, "I am right, but let it be as you decide!"

On seeing us, Papa only said, "Wait a minute," and indicated by a movement of his head that one of us should shut the door.

"Oh, gracious heavens! What is the matter with you today, Jacob?" he said to the steward, shrugging one shoulder (it was a habit of his). "This envelope with eight hundred rubles enclosed in it . . ."

Jacob drew the abacus nearer, moved the balls on it to show 800 and, fixing his eyes on an indefinite spot, awaited what would come next.

". . . is for general expenses during my absence. You understand? You must get one thousand rubles for the mill—is that right or not?—you must get back from the Treasury eight thousand rubles; for the hay, of which by your own reckoning there should be seven thousand puds for sale—reckon it at forty-five kopeks—you will get three thousand rubles; so all together you will have . . . how much? Twelve thousand . . . is that so or not?"

"Just so, sir," said Jacob.

But by the movement of his fingers I saw that he wanted to make some objection; Papa stopped him.

"Well, of this money you will send ten thousand



rubles to the Council for the Petrovsk estate. Now as to the money that is in the office"—continued Papa (Jacob pushed back the 12,000 he had shown on the abacus and cast on 21,000)—"you will bring it to me, and will show it as paid out today." (Jacob again disarranged the abacus and turned it over, no doubt to intimate that the 21,000 would also disappear.) "This envelope with the money in it you will deliver to the address on it."

I was standing near the table and glanced at the address. It was to "Karl Ivanich Mauer."

Probably noticing that I had read what I ought not to know, Papa placed his hand on my shoulder and with a slight movement turned me away from the table. I did not understand whether this was a caress or a rebuke, but in any case I kissed the large, muscular hand that lay on my shoulder.

"Yes, sir!" said Jacob. "And what are your orders about the Khabarovka money?"

Khabarovka was Mamina's estate.

"Keep it in the office and do not use it on any account without my order."

Jacob remained silent for a few seconds, then suddenly his fingers began to move with increased rapidity, and changing the look of stolid obedience with which he had listened to his master's orders to his natural expression of roguish shrewdness, he drew the abacus nearer and began to speak:

"Permit me to report to you, Peter Alexandrich,

it's just as you please, but the money can't be paid to the Council by the due date. . . . You were pleased to say," he went on with deliberation, "that the money due from the deposits, for the mill, and for the hay, must come in. . . ." (As he mentioned these items he cast them up on the abacus.) "But I am afraid we may be wrong in our reckoning," he added after a pause and with a thoughtful look at Papa.

"Why?"

"Permit me to explain. As to the mill—the miller has twice been to see me begging for a delay, and swearing by Christ the Lord that he has no money. . . . Why, he is here even now—perhaps you would please speak to him yourself?"

"What does he say?" asked Papa, making a sign with his head that he did not wish to speak to the miller.

"Why, that's quite plain! He says there has been nothing to grind and what little money he had has all been spent on the dam. And suppose we turn him out, sir, shall we gain anything? You were pleased to mention the deposits. I think I already reported that our money is sunk there and we shan't soon get it back. I sent a load of flour to town the other day for Ivan Afanasich and with it a note about this business, and the answer is again the same: 'I should be glad to do anything I could for Peter Alexandrich but the matter does not depend on me,' and everything indicates that you will hardly get the receipts

for another two months. . . . You were pleased to mention the hay—let us say it will sell for three thousand.”

He cast 3,000 on the abacus and was silent for about a minute, looking now at the abacus and now into Papa’s eyes, as much as to say:

“You see yourself that it is too little! And the hay, again, must first be sold; if we sell it now, you know yourself . . .”

He evidently still had a large supply of arguments, and probably for that reason Papa interrupted him:

“I am not going to change my orders,” he said, “but if there should really be a delay in receiving these sums it can’t be helped, you will have to take as much from the Khabarovka money as will be necessary.”

“Yes, sir.”

One could see by Jacob’s face and fingers that this last order afforded him great satisfaction.

Jacob was a serf, a very zealous and devoted man, and like all good stewards extremely close-fisted for his master, and he had the queerest notions as to what was advantageous for his master. He was always working to increase his master’s property at the expense of his mistress’s, and tried to prove that it was absolutely necessary to use the income from her estate for Petrovsk—the estate where we lived. At that moment he was triumphant because he had quite succeeded in this.

Having wished us "good morning," Papa said we had kicked our heels in the country long enough, that we were no longer little children, and that it was time for us to learn seriously.

"I think you know that I am going to Moscow tonight, and I am taking you with me," he said. "You will live with Grandmamma, and Mamma will remain here with the girls; and you know her only pleasure will be to hear that you learn well and give satisfaction."

Though from the preparations that had been going on for the last few days we were expecting something unusual, yet this news gave us a terrible shock. Volodya grew red and in a trembling voice gave Papa our mother's message.

"So that is what my dream foreboded!" I thought. "God grant that nothing worse happens."

I felt very, very sorry for Mamma, and at the same time was very pleased at the thought that we were now really big boys.

"If we are going today, I expect there will be no lessons. That's splendid!" I thought. "However, I am sorry for Karl Ivanich. He, no doubt, will be dismissed, or otherwise they would not have prepared that envelope for him. . . . It would be better to go on learning forever than to go away, leave Mamma, and offend poor Karl Ivanich. He is very unhappy as it is!"

These thoughts flashed through my mind; I did

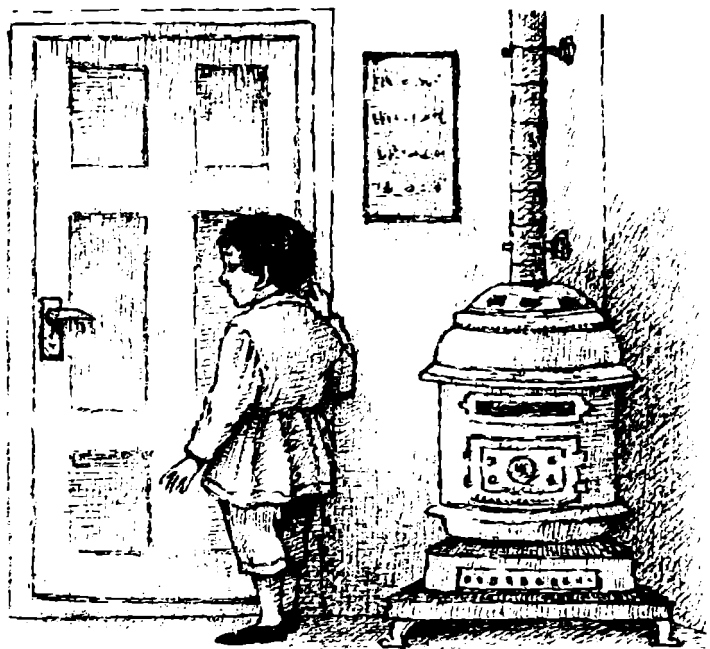
not move, but stood looking at the black bows on my shoes.

After saying a few words to Karl Ivanich about a fall in the barometer, and ordering Jacob not to feed the dogs, so that before leaving he might go out after dinner and try the young hounds, Papa, contrary to my expectations, told us to go and do our lessons, comforting us however with a promise to take us to the hunt.

On my way upstairs I ran out onto the veranda. At the door, with her eyes closed in the sun, lay my father's favorite borzoi, Milka.

"Milka dear," I said, patting her and kissing her on the muzzle, "we are going away today. Goodbye! We shall never see one another again," and I gave way to my feelings and began to cry.





#### IV

### LESSONS

Karl Ivanich was in a very bad humor. That was evident from his knitted brows and from the way he threw his coat into the drawer, angrily tied the belt of his dressing gown, and drew a strong line with his nail across the book of "Dialogues" to mark the place to which we were to learn it by heart. Volodya learned pretty well, but I was so upset that I could do absolutely nothing. For a long time I looked senselessly at the "Dialogues" but could not read because of the tears that gathered in my eyes at the thought

of the approaching parting. When the time came to repeat the dialogues to Karl Ivanich, who listened to me with half-closed eyes (that was a bad sign), I could no longer keep back my tears, and my sobs made it impossible to pronounce the words. When it came to writing my copy, the tears that fell on my paper blotted it so that it looked as if I had been writing with water on blotting paper.

Karl Ivanich grew angry, put me on my knees, and kept saying that it was obstinacy, a puppet show (a favorite expression of his), threatened me with the ruler, and demanded that I should beg pardon, though tears prevented my uttering a word. At last, probably feeling that he was unjust, he went into Nicholas's room.

From the schoolroom we could hear the conversation in the attendant's room.

"You have heard, Nicholas, that the children are going to Moscow?" said Karl Ivanich, as he entered the room.

"Indeed, sir, I have."

Probably Nicholas was about to rise, for Karl Ivanich said, "Keep your seat, Nicholas!" and then closed the door. I left the corner and went to the door to listen.

"However much good one may do people, however attached one may be to them, one must evidently not expect gratitude, Nicholas," said Karl Ivanich with feeling.

Nicholas, who was sitting by the window cobbling a boot, nodded affirmatively.

"I have lived in this house twelve years and can say before God, Nicholas," continued Karl Ivanich, raising his eyes and his snuffbox toward the ceiling, "that I have loved them and attended to them more than if they had been my own children. You remember, Nicholas, when Volodya had fever, you remember, how I sat for nine days by his bedside without closing my eyes. Yes, then I was 'kind, dear Karl Ivanich'; then I was wanted, but now," he added with an ironical smile, "*now the children have grown big, they must learn seriously!* As if they were not learning here, Nicholas!"

"How could they learn more, one would think," said Nicholas, having set down his awl and pulling the threads through with both hands.

"Yes, now I am not wanted and must be sent away; and what of the promises? What about gratitude? Natalya Nikolavna I am fond of and respect, Nicholas," he said, lifting his hand to his breast, "but what is she? . . . Her wishes are of no more account in this house than that," and with an expressive gesture he threw a scrap of leather onto the floor. "I know whose trick it is, and why I have become unnecessary. It's because I don't flatter and don't assent to everything as *certain people* do. I am accustomed to speak the truth always and to everybody," he added proudly. "God be with them! They won't



grow rich by my not being here, and I—God being merciful—shall find a piece of bread for myself. . . . Is that not so, Nicholas?”

Nicholas raised his head and looked at Karl Ivanich as if to assure himself that he really could find a piece of bread, but said nothing.

Karl Ivanich went on talking much and long in that strain. He mentioned that his services had been better appreciated at some general's where he had lived formerly (it hurt me very much to hear this), he spoke about Saxony, about his parents, and about his friend, the tailor Schonheit, and so on.

I sympathized with him in his sorrow and it hurt me that my father and Karl Ivanich, whom I loved almost equally, had not understood one another, and going back into my corner, I sat down on my heels and considered how one might get them to agree.

When Karl Ivanich returned to the schoolroom he told me to get up and prepare my exercise book for dictation. When everything was ready, he sank majestically into his chair and in a voice which seemed to come from a great depth, began dictating in German the following:

“Of all passions the most inhuman is . . . have you written it? . . .” Here he paused, slowly took a pinch of snuff, and continued with renewed strength “. . . the most inhuman is Ingratitude . . . a capital I.” Expecting him to continue, after I had written the last word I looked at him.

“Period,” he said, with a hardly perceptible smile, and made a sign for us to hand him our copybooks.

He read this sentence, which expressed his innermost thought, several times over with different intonations and with an expression of the greatest satisfaction. Then he set us a history lesson, and seated himself at the window. His face was not dismal as it had been; it expressed the satisfaction of a man who had worthily avenged an insult offered him.

It was a quarter to one, but Karl Ivanich did not seem to think of dismissing us: he kept setting us new tasks. Dullness and appetite grew in equal proportion. I watched with great impatience all the signs that indicated the nearness of dinner. Now a serf woman passed with a dishcloth to wash the plates, now the rattling of crockery in the pantry was heard and the dining-room table being pulled out and chairs moved, and now Mimi, Lyuba, and Katya (Katya was Mimi’s twelve-year-old daughter) came in from the garden, but Foka, the house steward, who always came to announce a meal, did not appear. Only then could we throw aside our books and—regardless of Karl Ivanich—run downstairs.

Steps were heard coming up the stairs but it was not Foka! I had studied his walk and always recognized the creak of his boots. The door opened and a strange figure appeared in the doorway.



## V

### THE SIMPLETON

A man of about fifty, with a pale, long, deeply pock-marked face, long gray hair, and a scanty reddish beard, entered the room. He was so tall that to come in at the door he not only had to bow his head but to bend his whole body. He was wearing a tattered garment, something between a peasant coat and a cassock, and he held an enormous staff in his hand. He struck the floor with it with all his might as he entered the room and, lifting his eyebrows and opening his mouth extremely wide, burst into a terrible and unnatural laugh. He was blind in one eye, and

the white iris of that eye moved incessantly and gave his face, already ill-favored, a still more repulsive expression.

"Aha, caught!" he shouted, and running with short steps up to Volodya seized him by the head and began carefully examining the crown of it, and then with a perfectly serious face he left Volodya, came up to the table, and began blowing under the oilcloth and making the sign of the cross over it. "O-oh, a pity! O-oh, painful! . . . the dears . . . will fly away," he then said in a voice trembling with tears, looking at Volodya with emotion and wiping on his sleeve the tears that were really falling.

His voice was rough and hoarse, his movements hasty and jerky, his speech senseless and incoherent (he never used any pronouns), but his intonation was so touching and his yellow, misshapen face sometimes took on such a frankly sorrowful expression, that when listening to him it was impossible to repress a mingled feeling of compassion, fear, and sadness.

He was the saintly fool and pilgrim, Grisha.

Where he came from, who his parents had been, what induced him to take up this wandering life, no one knew. All I know is that from the age of fifteen he had been known as a saintly fool who went barefoot summer and winter, visited monasteries, gave small icons to those he took a fancy to, and uttered enigmatic sayings which some people re-



garded as prophecies—that no one had ever known him in a different condition, that he had sometimes come to my grandmother's house and that some people said he was the unfortunate son of rich parents, and a pure soul, while others said that he was simply a lazy peasant.

At last the long-wished-for and punctual Foka appeared and we went downstairs. Grisha, sobbing and continuing to utter incoherent phrases, followed us, thumping the steps with his staff. Papa and Mamma were walking up and down the drawing room arm in arm, talking in low tones. Marya Ivanovna sat stiffly in one of the armchairs that stood symmetrically at right angles near to the sofa, and in a stern but subdued voice imparted information to the girls who sat near her. As soon as Karl Ivanich entered the room she glanced at him and turned away, and her face assumed an expression which might be interpreted to mean, "I do not notice you, Karl Ivanich." One could see by the girls' eyes that they were impatient to tell us some very important news, but to jump up and come to us would have been an infringement of Mimi's rules. We had first to approach her and say, "Bonjour, Mimi!" with a bow and a scrape, and only then might we begin a conversation.

What an unendurable person that Mimi was! One could not talk about anything in her presence: she

considered everything improper. In addition she continually nagged us, "*Parlez donc français*," just when, as ill luck would have it, one wanted to chatter in Russian and not in French. Or at dinner when one had just got the taste of some dish and did not wish to be disturbed, she would be sure to come out with her "Eat bread with it" or "How are you holding your fork?" "And what has she to do with us?" one would think. . . . "Let her teach the girls; we have Karl Ivanich for that." I fully shared his dislike for *certain people*.

"Ask Mamma to get us taken to the hunt," Katya said to me in a whisper, catching hold of my jacket, while the grown-up people went into the dining room before us.

"All right, we'll try."

Grisha ate in the dining room, but at a separate table; he did not lift his eyes from his plate, occasionally sighed, made terrible faces, and kept saying, as if to' himself, "A pity! . . . flown, the dove will fly to heaven. . . . Oh, there is a stone on the grave . . . !" and so on.

Mamma had been upset ever since the morning; Grisha's presence, words, and actions evidently intensified this.

"Oh yes, I almost forgot to ask you something," she said, handing my father a plate of soup.

"What is it?"

"Please have your dreadful dogs locked up; they nearly bit poor Grisha as he crossed the yard. They might attack the children too."

Hearing himself mentioned, Grisha turned toward the table and showed the torn skirts of his garment and, continuing to chew, he muttered:

"Wished to bite to death. . . . God did not permit. Sin to set dogs on one! A great sin! Don't beat, why beat? . . . God will forgive . . . the days are not such."

"What is he saying?" asked Papa, scrutinizing him sharply and severely. "I understand nothing of it."

"But I do," answered Mamma. "He told me how one of the hunt servants set the dogs at him on purpose, so he says, 'Wished them to bite to death, but God did not permit,' and he asks you not to have the servant punished."

"Oh, that's it!" said Papa. "How does he know that I want to punish the hunt servant? You know I am not very fond of such fellows in general," he continued in French, "but this one I particularly dislike, and no doubt . . ."

"Oh, don't say that, my dear!" said Mamma as if frightened at something. "How do you know?"

"I should think I have had opportunities to study this species of folk—such a lot of them come to see you, and they are all of one pattern. It's everlastingly the same story . . ."

It was evident that my mother was of quite a



different opinion but did not want to argue with him.

"Please give me a patty!" she said. "Are they good today?"

"But it makes me angry," continued Papa, taking up a patty but holding it at such a distance that Mamma could not reach it, "it makes me angry when I see intelligent and educated people yielding to such deception."

And he struck the table with his fork.

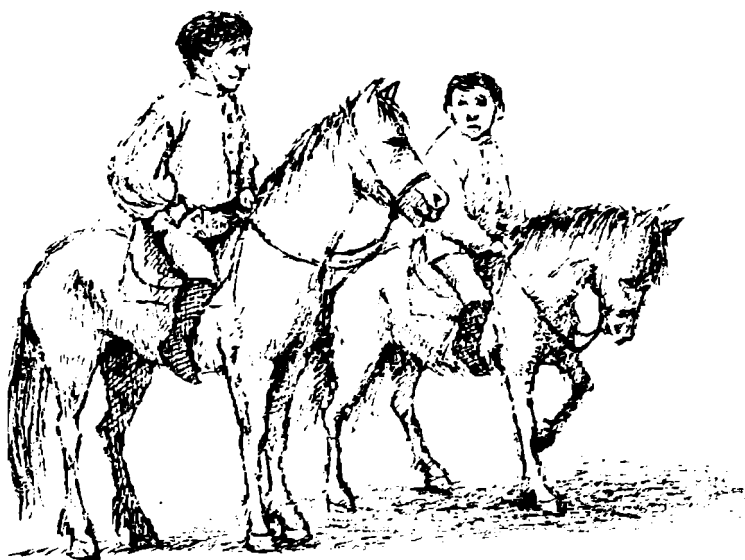
"I asked you to give me a patty," she repeated, holding out her hand.

"And they do well," Papa continued, drawing his hand back, "who put such people in prison. The only thing they can do is to upset those whose nerves are not strong as it is," he added with a smile, noticing that this conversation was very disagreeable to Mamma, and he handed her the patty.

"I will only say one thing to that: it is hard to believe that a man who, though he is sixty, goes barefoot summer and winter and always under his clothes wears chains weighing seventy pounds, and who has more than once declined a comfortable life offered him with everything provided—it is hard to believe that such a man does all this merely because he is lazy. As for predictions," she added after a pause and sighed, "I have good cause to believe in them; I think I told how Kiryushka foretold my father's death to him to the very day and very hour."

“Oh, what have you done to me?” said Papa, smiling and putting his hand up to his mouth on the side where Mimi was sitting (when he did this I always listened with keen attention, expecting something funny). “Why did you remind me of his feet? I have looked at them, and now I shan’t be able to eat anything.”

The dinner was drawing to an end. Lyuba and Katya kept winking to us, fidgeting in their chairs, and in general showing great restlessness. This winking meant, “Why don’t you ask them to take us to the hunt?” I nudged Volodya with my elbow. Volodya nudged me and finally, taking courage, explained, first timidly, then firmly and louder, that as we had to leave today we should like the girls to go with us to the hunt, in the carriage. After a little discussion among the grownups the question was decided in our favor, and what was still better, Mamma said she would herself come with us.



## VI

### *PREPARATION FOR THE HUNT*

During the dessert Jacob was sent for, and orders were given about the carriage, the dogs, and the saddle horses—all in great detail, mentioning each horse by name. Volodya's horse was lame, and Papa ordered one of the hunters to be saddled for him. The word "hunter" sounded strange to Mamma's ears: it seemed to her that a hunter must be something in the nature of a ferocious beast that would certainly bolt and kill Volodya. Despite the assurances of Papa and of Volodya, who said with wonderful pluck that it was nothing, and that he liked it very

much when a horse bolted, poor Mamma went on saying that she would be upset during the whole outing.

The dinner was over: the grownups went to the study to drink coffee, and we ran out into the garden to rustle our feet along the paths which were covered with fallen yellow leaves, and to talk. We began talking about Volodya's riding a hunter, about it being a shame that Lyuba could not run so fast as Katya, about how interesting it would be to see Grisha's chains, and so on; but about our having to part we did not say a word. Our conversation was interrupted by the clatter of the approaching carriage, at each corner of which sat a serf boy. Behind the carriage rode the hunt servants with the dogs, and behind them the coachman, Ignat, on the horse intended for Volodya, and leading my ancient Kleper by the bridle. At first we all rushed to the fence through which one could see all these interesting things, and then, squealing and stamping, we ran upstairs to dress, and to dress so as to look as much like huntsmen as possible. One of the principal ways of doing this was to tuck our trousers into our high boots. We set to work without losing a moment, hurrying to get ready, and to run to the porch to enjoy the sight of the dogs and the horses and to have a talk with the hunt servants.

It was a hot day. White, fantastic clouds had appeared on the horizon ever since morning; then

a light breeze drove them nearer and nearer together so that at times they hid the sun. But many as were the clouds that passed and darkened, they were evidently not fated to gather into a storm and spoil our parting pleasure. Toward evening they began to disperse again: some grew paler, lengthened out, and ran down toward the horizon; others, just overhead, turned into transparent white fleeciness; only one large black cloud settled in the east. Karl Ivanich always knew where any cloud would go; he declared that that cloud would go to Maslovka, that there would be no rain and the weather would be beautiful.

Foka, despite his advanced age, ran very nimbly and rapidly downstairs, called out, "Drive up!" and, with his feet apart, took his stand at the middle of the entrance between the place where the coachman would bring the carriage and the threshold, in the attitude of one whom it was not necessary to remind of his duty. The ladies came down and after a little discussion as to which side to sit and to whom each was to hold on (though I don't think there was any need to hold on), they took their seats, opened their parasols, and started. When the carriage moved off, Mamma, pointing to the hunter, asked the coachman in a trembling voice:

"Is that horse for Vladimir Petrovich?"

When the coachman said it was, she waved her hand and turned away. I felt very impatient,

mounted my horse, looked out between its ears, and made various evolutions in the yard.

"Please don't step on the dogs," said one of the men.

"Never fear, I am not out for the first time!" I replied proudly.

Volodya mounted the "hunter," but in spite of his firmness of character not without a certain tremor, and, patting it, he asked several times:

"Is she quiet?"

He looked very well on horseback, just like a man. His thighs in his tight trousers lay so well on the saddle that I felt envious, especially as, so far as I could judge by my shadow, I was far from having as fine an appearance.

And now we heard Papa's footsteps on the stairs. The dog keeper collected the hounds that were running about, the huntsmen with the borzoi dogs called them in and mounted their horses, the groom led a horse up to the porch, and the hounds of Papa's pack, which had been lying in various picturesque attitudes beside it, rushed to him. After him Milka, in her beaded collar, jingling its ring, ran out merrily. When she came out she always greeted the kennel dogs: with some she would play, at others she would sniff or growl, and on some she would hunt for fleas.

Papa mounted his horse and we set off.



## VII THE HUNT

Turka, the huntsman, with a shaggy cap on his head, a huge horn behind his shoulders, and a hunting knife in his belt, rode ahead of us all on a mouse-gray, hook-nosed horse. From that man's gloomy and fierce appearance one might have thought he was riding to mortal combat rather than to a hunt. At the hind legs of his horse ran the pack of hounds in an excited, mottled group. It was pitiful to see the fate of any unlucky dog that took it into its head to lag behind. When after great effort it succeeded in holding back the companion to which it was

leashed, one of the dog tenders riding behind would be sure to hit it with his whip, exclaiming: "Back to the pack!" When we came out of the gate Papa ordered the huntsmen and us to keep to the road, while he himself turned into the ryefield.

Harvesting was in full swing. The limitless, brilliantly yellow field was bounded only on one side by the tall, bluish forest, which then seemed to me a most distant, mysterious place beyond which either the world came to an end or uninhabited countries began. The whole field was full of sheaves and peasants. Here and there among the thick, high rye where a strip had been reaped, one saw the bent back of a woman reaping, the swing of the ears as she grasped the stalks, a woman bending over a cradle in the shade, and bundles of rye scattered over the reaped parts of the field which was all covered with cornflowers. In another place peasants in their shirts and trousers stood on the carts loading up the sheaves and raising the dust on the dry scorched field. The village elder, in boots, and with a coat thrown over his shoulders and tallysticks in his hand, took off his felt hat when he saw Papa in the distance, wiped his red-haired head and beard with a towel, and shouted at the women. The little roan Papa rode went with a light, playful step, sometimes bending his head to his chest, pulling at the reins, and brushing off with his thick tail the gadflies and gnats that settled greedily on him. Two borzois with



tense tails raised sickle-wise, and lifting their feet high, leaped gracefully over the tall stubble, behind the horse's feet. Milka ran in front, and with head lifted awaited the quarry. The peasants' voices, the tramp of horses and creaking of carts, the merry whistle of quail, the hum of insects hovering in the air in steady swarms, the odor of wormwood, straw, and horses' sweat, the thousands of different colors and shadows with which the burning sun flooded the light yellow stubble, the dark blue of the distant forest, the light lilac clouds, and the white cobwebs that floated in the air or stretched across the stubble—all this I saw, heard, and felt.

When we arrived at the Kalina wood we found the carriage already there, and surpassing our highest expectations, a one-horse cart in the middle of which sat the butler. From under the hay in it peeped a samovar, a pail with an ice-cream mold, and some other attractive bundles and boxes. There could be no mistake: it meant tea in the open air, with ices and fruit. At the sight of the cart we loudly expressed our delight, for to drink tea in the woods, on the grass, and in general somewhere where no one had ever drunk tea before, was considered a great treat.

Turka rode up to the chase, stopped, listened attentively to Papa's detailed instructions as to where to line up and where to come out (though he never conformed to such instructions but followed his own devices), unleashed the dogs, strapped the leashes

deliberately to his saddle, remounted his horse, and disappeared, whistling, behind the young birch trees. The unleashed dogs first expressed their pleasure by wagging their tails, then shook themselves, pulled themselves together, and only after that, sniffing and wagging their tails, moved off in different directions at a slow trot.

"Have you a handkerchief?" asked Papa.

I drew one out of my pocket and showed it.

"Well, tie that gray dog to it."

"Zhiran?" I said, with the air of an expert.

"Yes, and run along the road. When you come to the glade, stop. And mind, don't come back to me without a hare!"

I tied the handkerchief around Zhiran's shaggy neck and rushed headlong toward the appointed place. Papa laughed and shouted after me:

"Quick, quick, or you'll be too late!"

Zhiran kept stopping, pricking his ears, and listening to the halloing of the huntsmen. I had not the strength to drag him from the spot and began to shout "*Atóu!*" Then he would pull so hard that I could hardly hold him back and fell more than once, before reaching the appointed place. Having chosen a shady, level spot at the foot of a tall oak, I lay down in the grass, made Zhiran sit beside me, and waited. My fancy, as always happens under such circumstances, far outstripped reality: I imagined that I was hunting my third hare, when the voice of the first

hound came from the wood, from where Turka's voice reverberated even louder and with more animation. A dog gave a cry, and its voice was heard more and more frequently. Another deeper voice chimed in, and then a third, and a fourth. . . . These voices sometimes fell and sometimes overlapped one another. The sounds grew gradually louder and more continuous and were at last blended into a ringing, clamorous din. The chase was filled with sound and the hounds bayed in chorus.

When I heard this I seemed rooted to the spot. With my eyes fixed on the outskirts of the chase, I smiled inanely while perspiration poured down my face, and though the drops tickled me as they ran down my chin I did not wipe them off. It seemed to me that there could be nothing more decisive than this moment. This strained condition was too unnatural to last long. The dogs now bayed close to the outskirts of the chase, now gradually receded



from me; there was no hare. I began looking around me. It was just the same with Zhiran: at first he tugged and yelped, but then lay down, put his head on my lap, and was quiet.

Suddenly Zhiran began to whine and gave such a violent tug that I nearly fell over. I turned around. At the edge of the chase leaped a hare, with one ear flat and the other erect. The blood rushed to my head and, forgetting everything for the moment, I shouted frantically, let the dog loose, and began to run myself. Hardly had I done so when I began to regret it—the hare squatted, gave a leap, and I saw no more of it.

But what was my shame when, following the hounds who came into the open in full cry, Turka appeared from behind the bushes. He had seen my mistake (which was that I did not control myself) and, looking contemptuously at me, only said, "Eh, master!" But you should have heard how he said it! It would have been pleasanter for me had he hung me from his saddle like a hare.

I stood on that spot for a long time in despair, did not call the dog, and only kept saying as I slapped my thighs:

"Oh, God, what have I done!"

I heard the hounds run farther, a clattering at the other side of the chase, how they caught a hare, and how Turka with his huge horn called the dogs back, but still I did not budge.



## VIII GAMES

The hunt was over. A carpet was spread in the shade of some young birch trees, and the whole company sat in a circle on the carpet. Gabriel, the butler, having trodden down the sappy green grass around him, was wiping plates and taking out of the box plums and peaches wrapped in leaves. The sun shone through the branches of the young birches, and threw round, quivering spots of light on the pattern of the carpet, on my legs, and even on Gabriel's perspiring bald head. A light breeze that blew through the foliage of the trees, and over my hair

and perspiring face, felt very refreshing.

When we had had our share of ices and fruit, there was nothing more to do on the carpet, and in spite of the scorching heat of the slanting sun rays we got up and went to play.

"Well, what shall it be?" asked Lyuba, hopping about on the grass. "Let's play at Robinson."

"No . . . that's too dull," said Volodya, who had thrown himself lazily on the grass and was chewing some leaves. "Always Robinson! If you must do something, we'd better build a shade."

Volodya was obviously putting on airs: he was no doubt proud of having ridden a hunter, and pretended to be very tired. But it may also be that he had too much sense and too little imagination quite to enjoy playing at Robinson. That game consisted in performing scenes from *The Swiss Family Robinson*, which we had read not long before.

"Please do. . . . Why don't you want to play?" insisted the girls. "You can be Charles, or Ernest, or the father, whichever you like," said Katya, trying to raise him from the ground by the sleeve of his jacket.

"Really I don't want to—it's tiresome!" said Volodya, stretching himself and at the same time smiling self-complacently.

"It would have been better to sit at home if no one wants to play," Lyuba muttered through her tears.

She was an awful crybaby.

“Well then, come along; only please don’t cry. I can’t bear it!”

Volodya’s condescension gave us very little pleasure; on the contrary his lazy and bored look destroyed all the charm of the game. When we sat down on



the ground and, imagining ourselves to be going fishing, began to row with all our might, Volodya sat with folded arms in a pose that was not at all like a fisherman's attitude. I told him so; but he answered that by moving our arms more or less we should not gain or lose anything and in spite of it all should not get far. I could not help agreeing with him. When pretending to be going to shoot, I set off for the woods with a stick over my shoulder, Volodya lay down on his back with his hands behind his head and told me he would pretend to be going there too. Such actions and words had a damping effect on the game and were extremely unpleasant, especially as at the bottom of one's heart one could not help agreeing that Volodya was behaving rationally.

I knew myself that not only could one not shoot a bird with a stick, but one could not even fire at all. It was just play. But if one were to reason like that, it would not even be possible to ride on chairs; and I think Volodya himself remembers how in the long winter evenings we covered an armchair with a shawl to make a carriage of it. One of us sat in front as the coachman, another behind as the footman, the girls were in the middle, three chairs were the horses—and we started on the journey! And what different adventures happened on that journey, and how merrily and quickly those winter evenings passed! . . . If one goes by reality there can be no games. And if there are no games—what will be left?





## IX SOMETHING AKIN TO FIRST LOVE

Pretending that she was picking some kind of American fruit off a tree, Lyuba together with a leaf pulled down an enormous caterpillar, threw it on the ground in horror, raised her hands, and jumped away as if afraid something might spurt out of it. Our game stopped, and we all went down on the ground with our heads together to examine this curiosity.

I looked over Katya's shoulder as she tried to lift the caterpillar with a leaf she placed in its way.

I had noticed that many little girls were in the habit of wriggling their shoulders when trying to

adjust a low-necked frock that had slipped off their shoulders. I remember that Mimi always got angry at this movement, and said, "It's a vulgar gesture." Katya while leaning over the caterpillar made just that movement, and at the same time the wind raised the fichu on her little white shoulders. Her shoulder was, during that movement, within two inches of my lips. I no longer looked at the caterpillar, but looked and looked at and with all my might kissed Katya's shoulder. She did not turn around, but I noticed that her neck and ears grew red. Volodya, without raising his head, exclaimed contemptuously: "What tenderness!"

But in my eyes there were tears.

I did not take my eyes off Katya. I had long been used to her fresh, fair little face and had always liked it; but now I examined it more closely and liked it still better.

When we returned to the grownups, Papa, to our great delight, informed us that at Mamma's request our departure had been put off till the next morning.

We rode back beside the carriage. Volodya and I, trying to excel one another in horsemanship and daring, caracoled near it. My shadow was longer than before, and judging by it I imagined that I had the appearance of a rather handsome rider; but the feeling of self-satisfaction I experienced was soon destroyed by the following incident. Wishing finally to captivate everyone in the carriage, I lagged a little

behind and then, using my whip and feet, urged my horse on, assumed an easy and graceful attitude, and attempted to dash like a whirlwind past the side of the carriage where Katya sat. Only I did not know whether to gallop past in silence or with a shout. But my insufferable pony, when it drew level with the carriage horses, stopped in spite of all my efforts, and stopped so suddenly that I slipped from the saddle onto its neck and nearly tumbled off.





X

## WHAT WENT ON IN THE STUDY AND THE DRAWING ROOM

It was growing dark when we reached home. Mamma sat down to the piano, and we children brought paper, pencils, and paints, and arranged ourselves at the round table to draw. I had only blue paint; but for all that I took it into my head to draw the hunt. Having very vividly depicted a blue boy on a blue horse, and blue dogs, I was in doubt whether one could paint a blue hare, and ran into Papa's study to consult him. Papa was reading something, and in answer to my question whether there were blue hares, replied, "Yes, my dear, there are," with-

out raising his head. I returned to the round table and painted a blue hare, but then found it necessary to change the hare into a bush. I did not like the bush either, and made it into a tree, then the tree into a haystack, and the stack into a cloud, and finally I so smeared my whole sheet of paper with blue paint that I tore it up in vexation, and sat down to dream in the lounge chair.

Mamma was playing the second concerto of Field, her music master. I was dreaming, and there awoke in my fancy light, bright, and translucent memories. She started playing Beethoven's Sonata Pathétique, and I remembered something sad, oppressive, and gloomy. Mamma often played those two pieces, and so I well remember the feeling they aroused in me. That feeling resembled memories, but memories of what? It was as if I were recalling something that had never been.

Opposite to me was the door of the study, and I saw how Jacob and some other men, bearded and in peasant coats, entered it. The door immediately closed behind them. "Now business has begun!" I thought. It seemed to me that nothing in the world could be more important than what was being done in the study. That idea was strengthened by the fact that generally everybody who approached that door spoke in whispers and walked on tiptoe, while from it came the sound of Papa's loud voice and the smell of his cigar, which always, I don't know why, attracted me.

While half asleep I was suddenly struck by a familiar creaking of boots in the steward's room. Karl Ivanich, with some notes in his hand, approached the door on tiptoe but with a gloomy and determined look, and knocked lightly at it. He was admitted and the door again closed.

"I hope nothing horrible will happen," I thought. "Karl Ivanich is angry: he is ready for anything. . . ."

Again I dozed off.

No misfortune, however, occurred. An hour later I was again awakened by the creaking of the same boots. Karl Ivanich, wiping with his handkerchief tears which I noticed on his cheeks, came out of the study and, muttering something to himself, went upstairs. Papa followed him out and came into the drawing room.

"Do you know what I have just decided?" he said in a cheerful voice, putting his hand on Mamma's shoulder.

"What, my dear?"

"I am taking Karl Ivanich with the children. There is room in the carriage. They are used to him, he seems to be really attached to them, and seven hundred rubles a year won't make any difference to us, and then at bottom he is a very good devil."

I could not at all grasp why Papa was abusing Karl Ivanich.

"I am very glad both for the children and for

him," said Mamma. "He is an excellent old man."

"You should have seen how touched he was when I told him to keep the five hundred rubles as a gift . . . but what was most amusing was the bill he brought to me. It is worth looking at," he added with a smile, as he gave her a note in Karl Ivanich's hand. "It's lovely!"

This is what the note contained:

|                                                                             |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| For the children, two fishing rods                                          | 0 r. 70 kopeks |
| Colored paper, gold border, and<br>paste for boxes, as presents             | 6 r. 55 "      |
| Book and a bow, presents to the<br>children                                 | 8 r. 16 "      |
| Trousers for Nicholas.                                                      | 4 r. 0 "       |
| Promised by Peter Alexandrich<br>from Moscow in the year 18—a<br>gold watch | 140 r. 0 "     |
| Total to be received by Karl<br>Ivanich Mauer, besides his<br>salary        | 159 r. 41 "    |

On reading this note, in which Karl Ivanich demanded payment for all he had spent on presents, and even for a present promised to him, everyone would conclude that Karl Ivanich was merely an unfeeling and mercenary egotist, and everyone would be mistaken.

On entering the study with the note in his hand

and a speech he had prepared in his head, he intended to show Papa eloquently all the injustice he had endured in our house; but when he began to speak in the touching voice and with the pathetic intonations he used when dictating to us, his eloquence acted chiefly on himself, so that when he reached the place where he said, "Sad as it will be for me to part from the children"—he became quite confused, his voice trembled, and he had to get his checked handkerchief out of his pocket. "Yes, Peter Alexandrich," he said through his tears (there was nothing of this in his prepared speech), "I have grown so used to the children that I don't know what I shall do without them. I would rather serve you without salary," he added, wiping his eyes with one hand and handing in the bill with the other.

That Karl Ivanich was speaking sincerely at that moment I can affirm, for I know what a kind heart he had; but how to reconcile the bill with his words remains a mystery to me.

"If you are sad at leaving, I should be still sadder to part from you," said Papa, patting him on the shoulder. "I have changed my mind now."

Not long before supper Grisha came into the room. From the moment he had entered our house he had never left off sighing and weeping, which in the opinion of those who believed in his power of prophecy foreboded some calamity to our houses. He began to take leave, and said he would start on his



way next morning. I winked at Volodya and went out of the room.

“What is it?”

“If you want to see Grisha’s chains, let us go upstairs at once to the men serfs’ quarters. Grisha sleeps in the second room, and we can sit capitally in the cupboard and see everything.”

“Excellent! Wait here and I will call the girls.”

The girls came running, and we went upstairs. Having decided, not without some dispute, who should first enter the dark cupboard, we settled down and waited.





## XI GRISHA

We all felt rather scared in the dark cupboard; we pressed close to one another and did not say a word. Almost immediately after us Grisha entered the room with soft steps. In one hand he held his staff, in the other a tallow candle in a brass candlestick. We did not dare to breathe.

“Lord Jesus Christ! Most Holy Mother of God! To the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost . . .” said he, breathing heavily, and with different intonations and abbreviations natural only to one who often repeated those words.

After placing his staff in a corner of the room, with a prayer, he began to undress. Having untied his old black girdle he slowly took off his tattered nankeen coat, folded it carefully, and hung it over the back of a chair. His face now had not its usual hurried and inane expression; on the contrary he was calm, pensive, and even dignified. His movements were slow and considered.

When he was in his underclothes, he slowly let himself down onto the bed, made the sign of the cross on every side of it, and with an effort, as was evident from his frown, readjusted the chains under his shirt. After sitting still for a while and carefully examining his underclothing, which was torn in several places, he rose, and lifting the candle, with a prayer, to the level of the glass case in which were several icons, he crossed himself before them and turned the candle upside down. It crackled and went out.

Through the windows which looked out toward the forest the moon, which was almost full, shone in. The long white figure of the simpleton was lit up on one side by its pale silvery beams, and on the other its shadow, together with that of the window frames, fell on the floor, on the walls, and reached up to the ceiling. In the yard outside the watchman was striking a copper plate.

Folding his huge hands on his breast, Grisha stood with bowed head, sighing heavily and continually

before the icons, and then sank with difficulty to his knees and began to pray.

At first he softly said familiar prayers, only accentuating certain words, then he repeated them, but louder and with more animation. Then he began to pray in his own words, trying, with evident difficulty, to express himself in Church Slavonic. His words were awkward but pathetic. He prayed for all his benefactors (so he termed those who received him), among them for my mother and ourselves; he prayed for himself, asking God to forgive him his grievous sins, and he kept repeating, "Lord, forgive my enemies!" He rose groaning, and again and again repeating the same words, fell on the floor and rose again despite the weight of his chains, which gave a hard, sharp sound as they struck the floor.

Volodya pinched my leg very painfully, but I did not even turn around. I only rubbed the place with my hand, following all Grisha's movements and words with a child's surprise, pity, and emotion.

Instead of the fun and laughter I had expected when I entered the cupboard, I trembled, and felt a sinking of the heart.

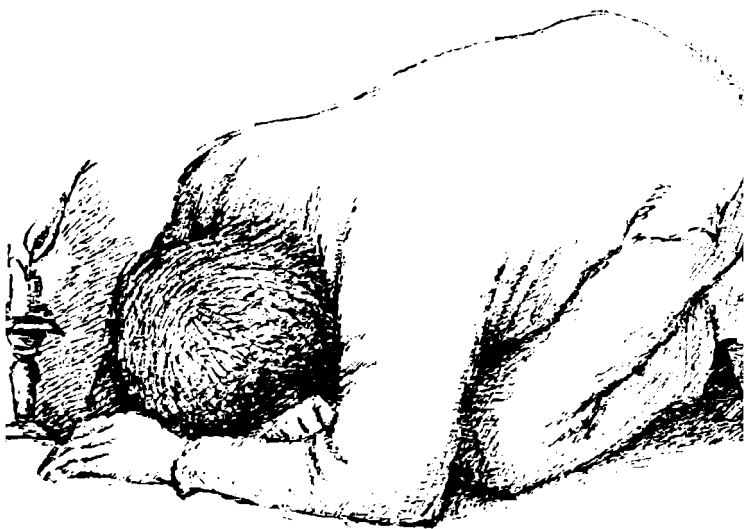
Grisha remained long in that state of religious exaltation, improvising prayers. Now he would repeat several times, "Lord, have mercy," but each time with new strength and expression; then he said, "Forgive, Lord, teach what to do . . . teach what to do, O Lord!" with an expression as if he expected

an immediate answer to his words; then piteous sobs were all one heard. . . . He raised himself to his knees, folded his hands on his breast, and grew silent.

I softly thrust my head out of the door and held my breath. Grisha did not move; deep sighs broke from his breast; a tear stood in the dim pupil of his sightless eye which was lit up by the moon.

"Thy will be done!" exclaimed he suddenly, in an inimitable tone, sank with his forehead on the ground, and sobbed like a child.

Much water has flowed by since then, many memories of the past have lost their meaning for me



and become dim recollections, even pilgrim Grisha has long since completed his last pilgrimage; but the impression he made on me and the feeling he evoked will never die in my memory.

Oh, great Christian, Grisha! Your faith was so strong that you felt the nearness of God; your love was so great that the words flowed of themselves from your lips—you did not test them by your reason. . . . And what lofty praise you gave to His Majesty when, unable to find words, you fell weeping to the ground! . . .

The emotion with which I listened to Grisha could not last long; in the first place because my curiosity was satisfied, and secondly because I had pins and needles in my legs from sitting so long in one position, and I wished to join in the general whispering and commotion I heard behind me in the dark cupboard. Someone touched my hand and whispered, "Whose hand is this?" It was quite dark in the cupboard, but I knew at once by the touch and by the voice whispering just above my ear, that it was Katya.

Quite unconsciously I took hold of her bare elbow and pressed my lips on her arm. Katya was no doubt surprised at this action and she drew away her arm; this movement of hers upset a broken chair that stood in the cupboard. Grisha lifted his head, looked slowly around, and, repeating a prayer, made the sign of the cross toward all the corners of the room. Talking in whispers we ran noisily out of the cupboard.



## XII

### NATALYA SAVISHNA

In the middle of the last century in the homesteads of the village of Khabarovka, there used to run about in a coarse linen dress a barefooted, plump, and red-cheeked girl, Natasha. As a reward for the faithful services of her father, the clarinet player Savva, and at his request, my grandfather took her "upstairs" and gave her a place among my grandmother's female servants. As a housemaid Natasha distinguished herself by her meekness and zeal. When my mother was born and a nursemaid was needed, this duty was put upon Natasha. In that new post she earned

praise and rewards for her activity, fidelity, and attachment to her young mistress. However, the powdered head and the stockings and buckles of the brisk young footman Foka, who came much across her in the course of his work, captivated her rude but loving heart. She even braced herself to go and ask my grandfather's permission to marry Foka. Grandpapa regarded her wish as a sign of ingratitude. He was angry with her, and as a punishment sent poor Natasha to a cattle farm on a property of his in the steppes. Six months later, however, as no one could be found to replace her, Natasha was brought back to the estate and restored to her former position. Having returned from her exile in her coarse linen dress, she went to Grandpapa, fell at his feet, and begged him to restore her to his favor and kindness and to forget the folly that had possessed her and which, she swore, would never return. And she really kept her word.

After that she was no longer called Natasha, but by the more respectful name of Natalya Savishna, and wore a cap like a married woman; the whole store of her love she transferred to her young lady.

When a governess took her place with my mother she was given the keys of the storeroom and all the household linen and provisions were placed under her charge. She fulfilled these new duties with the same zeal and love. She put her whole life into care for her master's belongings; saw waste, damage, and



pilfering everywhere, and tried by all means to counteract them.

When Mamma married, anxious to show her gratitude in some way to Natalya Savishna for her twenty years' work and devotion, she called her in and, having expressed her gratitude and affection in most flattering terms, handed her a paper with a government stamp, granting her her freedom, and said that whether she remained in our service or not, she should always have a pension of three hundred rubles a year. Natalya Savishna heard all this in silence, then took the document, looked at it, angrily muttered something, and ran out of the room slamming the door behind her. Not understanding such strange behavior, Mamma went a little later into Natalya Savishna's room. She was sitting on her trunk with tear-stained eyes, fingering her handkerchief and looking fixedly at the torn bits of the deed of emancipation which lay on the floor before her.

"What is the matter, my dear Natalya Savishna?" Mamma asked, taking her by the hand.

"Nothing, ma'am," Natalya Savishna answered. "Evidently I have displeased you in some way, that you are turning me out of the house. . . . Well, I shall go."

She pulled away her hand and, hardly able to restrain her tears, was going out of the room. Mamma held her back, embraced her, and they both began to cry.

Ever since I can remember myself, I remember Natalya Savishna, her love and her caresses; but it is only now that I know how to value them; it never then entered my head to realize what a rare, wonderful being that old woman was. She not only never spoke, but it seems that she never even thought, of herself; her whole life consisted of love and self-sacrifice. I was so accustomed to her disinterested and tender affection for us that I did not imagine it could have been otherwise. I was not in the least grateful to her, and never asked myself whether she were happy or satisfied.

Sometimes on the plea of necessity I would escape from lessons to her room, would sit down and begin to daydream aloud, quite unabashed by her presence. She was always busy, either knitting a stocking, rummaging in the chests which filled her room, or making a list of the linen, while she listened to all the nonsense I was talking.—“So when I am a general I will marry a wonderful beauty, will buy myself a roan horse, build a glass house, and send for Karl Ivanich’s relatives from Saxony—” and so on and she kept saying, “Yes, my dear, yes.” Generally when I got up to go she would open a blue chest, inside the lid of which—I remember as if I had seen it yesterday—were pasted a colored picture of a hussar, a picture off a pomade jar, and a drawing of Volodya’s; would take out a tablet of incense, light it, and, waving it about, would say:

"This, my dear, is still some of the Ochakov incense. When your sainted grandfather—may the Kingdom of Heaven be his—went against the Turk, he brought it back from there. This is the last piece left," she would add with a sigh.

The chests that filled her room contained absolutely everything. No matter what was wanted, it was usually said, "We must ask Natalya Savishna for it," and really, after rummaging awhile, she would find the thing that was wanted and would remark: "It's lucky I put it away." In those chests there were thousands of articles about which no one in the house, but she, either knew or cared.

Once I got angry with her. This is what happened. One day at dinner when pouring myself a drink, I dropped the decanter and spilled the liquid over the tablecloth.

"Call Natalya Savishna to admire what her darling has done!" said Mamma.

Natalya Savishna came in, saw the puddle I had made, and shook her head. Then Mamma said something in her ear, and shaking her finger at me she left the room.

After dinner when in the highest spirits I went bounding into the dancing room, Natalya Savishna suddenly jumped from behind the door with the tablecloth in her hands, caught me, and despite my desperate resistance began rubbing my face with the wet cloth, saying, "Don't soil tablecloths, don't soil

tablecloths!" I was so offended that I howled with anger.

"What!" said I to myself, pacing up and down the room and choking with tears, "Natalya Savishna—no, simply Natalya—speaks so rudely to me and even strikes me in the face with a wet cloth as if I were a serf boy. No, this is awful!"

When Natalya Savishna saw me sobbing she ran away at once, and I continued to walk up and down, considering how I could pay out the impertinent Natalya for the insult she had offered me.

In a few minutes she returned, came timidly up to me, and began to console me:

"Don't, my dear, don't cry . . . forgive me, old fool that I am . . . I have done wrong . . . but forgive me, my pet . . . here you are. . . ."

She took from under her shawl a twist of red paper in which there were two caramels and a fig, and with trembling hand gave it to me. I could not look the kind old woman in the face, but accepting her present I turned away and my tears flowed still faster, no longer from anger but from love and shame.



### XIII PARTING

Toward noon on the day after the events I have described, two carriages, a calash and a britska, stood at the front door. Nicholas was dressed for the journey: that is to say, his trousers were tucked into his boots and a girdle was tied as tightly as possible over his old coat. He stood in the britska packing coats and pillows for a seat. When it seemed to him too high, he sat down on the pillows, and jumping on them, pressed them down.

"For heaven's sake, Nicholas Dmitrich, do let me pack master's chest with your things!" pleaded

Papa's valet, panting, and thrusting his head out of the calash. "It is a small . . ."

"You should have spoken before, Mikhey Ivanich," answered Nicholas, speaking rapidly and crossly and flinging a bundle to the bottom of the britska with all his might. "By heaven, my head's in a whirl as it is, and then you come with your chests!" he added, raising his cap and wiping large drops of perspiration from his sunburnt forehead.

Domestic serfs, bareheaded, in peasant coats, overcoats, or shirt sleeves, women in coarse linen dresses with striped kerchiefs on their heads and babies in their arms, and barefooted children stood around the porch looking at the vehicles and talking among themselves. One of the drivers, a bent-backed old man wearing a winter cap and a sleeveless coat, held the pole of the calash and, touching it here and there, looked thoughtfully at the understructure of the vehicle. The other, a good-looking young fellow in a white shirt with turkey-red gussets under the arms, pushed his conical black felt hat now on one ear and now on the other as he scratched his fair curly hair, and having put his coat and thrown the reins on the box, cracked his little plaited whip and looked now at his boots and now at the coachmen who were greasing the britska. One of them was straining to hold the jack, the other, bending over the wheel, was carefully greasing the axle and the hub, and not to waste the remainder of the grease

with which he lubricated them, smearing it on the rim below. The different-colored, weak-kneed post-horses stood by the paling and whisked the flies away with their tails. Some of them stretched out their shaggy swollen legs, blinked their eyes, and dozed; others, for very dullness, rubbed one another or chewed the leaves and stalks of the rough, dark green ferns that grew beside the porch. There were several borzoi dogs, some of whom lay panting in the sun, while others went into the shade under the calash and the britska and licked the grease from around the axles. The air was full of a dusty mist and the horizon was purplish-gray, but there was not a single cloud in the sky. A strong west wind raised columns of dust from the roads and the fields, bent the tops of the tall linden and birch trees in the garden, and carried the falling yellow leaves far away. I sat by the window impatiently awaiting the completion of all these preparations.

When everybody had assembled in the drawing room, beside the round table, to spend a few minutes together for the last time, it did not enter my head what a sad moment awaited us. The emptiest thoughts crossed my mind. I asked myself which driver would go with the britska and which with the calash? Who would travel with Papa, and who with Karl Ivanich? And why do they insist on coddling me up in a scarf and padded jacket?

“As if I were a weakling; no fear of my freezing.

If only it would all get finished and we could be seated and go!"

"To whom am I to give the list of the children's clothing?" asked Natalya Savishna—who had entered with tear-stained eyes and a note in her hand—addressing Mamma.

"Give it to Nicholas and then come say goodbye to the children."

The old woman wanted to say something, but suddenly stopped, covered her face with her handkerchief, and with a wave of her arm left the room. I felt a twinge in my heart when I saw that movement, but my impatience to start was stronger than my sympathy, and I continued to listen quite indifferently to my father's conversation with my mother.

They were talking about things that evidently did not interest either of them: what must be bought for the house, what to say to Princess Sophie and to Madame Julie, and whether the roads would be good.

Foka entered, stopped at the door, and in just the tone he used to say, "Dinner is served," said, "The horses are ready." I noticed that Mamma started and grew pale at this announcement, as if she had not expected it.

Foka was told to close all the doors of the room. This amused me very much—"It's as if we were all hiding from somebody!"

When all had sat down, Foka too sat down on the



edge of a chair, but hardly had he done so when the door creaked and everybody turned around. Natalya Savishna entered hurriedly, and without raising her eyes seated herself at the door, on the same chair as Foka. I can still see Foka's bald head, his wrinkled, immovable face, and the bent figure of the kind old woman with her cap, from under which her gray hair showed. They sat close together on one chair and were both of them ill at ease.

I continued to feel careless and impatient. The ten seconds we sat with closed doors seemed to me a whole hour. At last all got up, crossed themselves, and began to take leave. Papa embraced Mamma and kissed her several times.

"That will do, my love!" he said. "We are not parting forever."

"All the same, it is sad!" said Mamma, her voice choking with tears.

When I heard that voice and saw her quivering lips and eyes filled with tears, I forgot everything and felt so sad, pained, and frightened that I wanted to run away rather than take leave of her. I understood at that moment that, embracing Papa, she was already bidding us farewell.

She began kissing Volodya and making the sign of the cross over him so many times that I pressed forward, thinking she would now turn to me, but she blessed him again and again and pressed him to her breast. At last I embraced her and, clinging to

her, began to cry and cry, thinking of nothing but my grief.

When we went to take our seats in the vehicles, the tiresome domestics waylaid us in the hall. Their "let me kiss your hand," their resounding kisses on my shoulder, and the odor of tallow with which their heads were greased, aroused in me a feeling much like the repulsion irritable people feel. Under the influence of that feeling I kissed Natalya Savishna very coldly on her cap when she, all in tears, took leave of me.

It is strange that I can see the faces of all the domestic serfs as if it had happened today, and could draw them in minutest detail; but Mamma's face and attitude completely escape my imagination, perhaps because all the time I could not once muster up courage to look at her. It seemed to me that if I did so her grief and mine would reach impossible limits.

I threw myself into the calash before anyone else, and sat down on the back seat. The raised hood of the calash prevented my seeing anything, but my instinct told me that Mamma was still there.

"Shall I look at her again or not? . . . Yes, for the last time!" I said to myself, and I leaned out of the calash toward the porch. Just then Mamma, with the same thought, came up to the opposite side of the calash and called me by name. Hearing the voice behind me, I turned to her so quickly that we



knocked our heads together. She smiled sadly, and kissed me very, very closely for the last time.

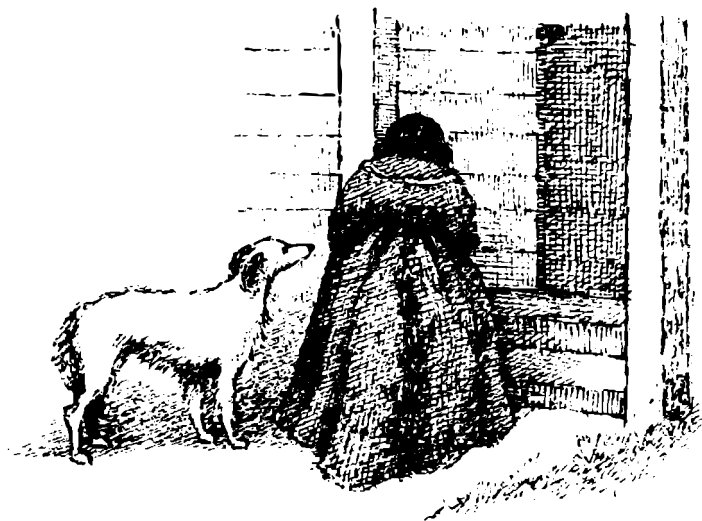
When we had gone a few yards I made up my mind to look at her again. The wind lifted the small blue kerchief which was tied around her head; with drooping head, and face covered by her hands, she was slowly ascending the steps of the porch. Foka was supporting her.

Papa sat beside me and did not say anything. Tears were choking me and something so pressed my throat that I was afraid of being suffocated. . . . When we had come out onto the highway we saw a white handkerchief someone was waving from the balcony. I began to wave mine, and this action calmed me a little. I continued to cry, and the thought that these tears were a proof of my sensitiveness pleased and consoled me.

When we had gone about half a mile, I settled down more comfortably, and began gazing with fixed attention at the object nearest before me—the flanks of the side horse which ran in front of me. I watched how that piebald horse flicked its tail, how it struck one foot against the other, and how the driver's plaited whip reached it and its legs began to move in unison. I watched how the harness and the rings on it jerked, and I continued to gaze at it till the harness near the tail became covered with lather. I began to look around: at the ripe waving ryefields, at the dark fallow ground on which here and there a plow, a

peasant, and a mare with its foal were seen, at the mileposts, and even at the coachman's box, to see which driver we had with us; and before the tears had dried on my face my thoughts were already far from my mother, from whom I had perhaps parted forever. But every memory led my thoughts to her. I remembered the mushroom I had found in the birch avenue the day before, and how Lyuba and Katya quarreled as to who was to pick it, and I remembered how they cried when taking leave of us.

"I am sorry to be parted from them, and from Natalya Savishna, and from the birch avenue, and from Foka! And ill-natured Mimi—I am even sorry to be parted from her. I regret them all, all! And poor Mamma!" And again tears filled my eyes, but it was not for long.





## XIV THE VERSES

Nearly a month after we moved to Moscow, I was sitting writing at a large table upstairs in my grandmother's house. Opposite me sat our drawing master, putting the final corrections to a black chalk drawing of the turbaned head of a Turk. Volodya, craning his neck, stood behind the teacher and looked over his shoulder. This head was Volodya's first drawing in black chalk, and was that very day to be presented to Grandmamma, as it was her name day.

"And won't you shade it a little more here?" asked

Volodya, rising on tiptoe and pointing to the Turk's neck.

"No, that's unnecessary," said the master, putting the chalk and holder into a box with a sliding lid. "It's all right now: don't touch it any more. Well, and you, Nicholas, won't you tell us your secret at last?" he added, rising and still looking out of the corner of his eyes at the Turk. "What will you give your grandmother? I really think it would have been best if you too had drawn a head. Well, goodbye, young gentlemen!" he said, took his hat, and went out.

At that moment I myself thought it would have been better to have drawn a head instead of doing what I was working at. When we had been told that it would soon be our Grandmamma's name day and that we ought to prepare presents to give her, the idea came into my head of writing some verses for the occasion, and I immediately made two rhymed verses, hoping to do the rest as easily. I don't at all remember how an idea so strange for a child entered my head, but I remember that I was very pleased with it, and in reply to questions about it, replied that I would certainly give Grandmamma a present, but would tell nobody what it was to be.

Contrary to my expectations it turned out that except the two verses I had made up on the spur of the moment, despite all my efforts I could compose nothing more. I began reading the verses there were

in our books; but neither Dmitriev nor Derzhavin helped me at all. On the contrary they only convinced me of my incapacity. Knowing that Karl Ivanich was fond of copying verses, I began surreptitiously to hunt among his papers, and among some German verses I found one in Russian, which he no doubt had written:

To Madame L. . . . Petrovskoy, June 3, 1828.

Think of me near.

Think of me far,

Oh, think of me.

From today till always

Think of me still to my grave,

How faithfully loved I have.

This poem, written in a fine round hand on a good sheet of notepaper, pleased me by the touching feeling with which it was imbued; and I immediately learned it by heart, and decided to take it as a model. Things then went much more easily. By the name day my congratulations, in twelve lines, were ready, and sitting at the schoolroom table I was copying them out on vellum paper.

I had already spoiled two sheets . . . not that I thought of changing anything—the verses seemed to me excellent—but after the third line the last words turned upward more and more, so that even from a distance one could see that they were written crookedly and were fit for nothing.

The lines on the third sheet were just as crooked



as the other two, but I decided that I could not copy them again. In my poem I congratulated Grandmamma, wished her many happy returns of the day, and finished with the words:

We'll try to comfort you and cheer,  
And love as our own mother dear.

It seemed not at all bad, but the last verse strangely offended my ear.

"And love as our own mother dear," I repeated to myself. "What other word would rhyme with cheer? Beer? Spear? . . . Oh, it will do! It's better than Karl Ivanich's anyhow."

And I wrote down the last line. Then in our bedroom I read the whole composition aloud with expression and gestures. There were some lines that did not scan at all, but I did not dwell on them; only the last line struck me still more unpleasantly. I sat on my bed and pondered:

"Why did I write, *as our own mother*? She is not here, so there was no need even to mention her. It is true that I love and respect Grandmamma, still it's not the same. . . . Why did I write that? Why have I told a lie? Of course it's only poetry, still I ought not to have done it."

At that moment the tailor entered bringing us our new suits.

"Well, it can't be helped!" I thought, in great impatience, thrust my verses under my pillow, and ran to try on my Moscow clothes.

These proved splendid; the brown jackets with their bronze buttons fitted closely—not like those they made for us in the country, allowing for growth. The black trousers, also fitting tightly, showed up our muscles and came down over our boots wonderfully well.

“At last I too have real strap trousers!” I reflected, beside myself with pleasure as I examined my legs from every side. Although the new clothes felt very tight and uncomfortable I hid this fact from everybody, and said, on the contrary, that they were quite easy, and if there were any fault, it was only that they were a little loose. After that I stood a long time before the looking glass, combing my generously pomaded hair; but try as I would I could not smooth down the tufts on the top of my head. As soon as, to test their obedience, I stopped pressing them down with the brush, they rose and stuck out in all directions, giving my face a most comical expression.

Karl Ivanich was dressing in another room, and a blue coat and some white things were taken to him through the schoolroom. The voice of one of Grandmamma’s maids was heard at the door leading to the stairs and I went out to see what she wanted. She was carrying a highly starched shirt-front, and told me she had brought it for Karl Ivanich, and had not slept that night so as to get it washed in time. I undertook to deliver the shirt-front, and asked whether Grandmamma was up yet.

“Oh yes! She’s had coffee and the priest has come. . . . What a fine fellow you look!” she added with a smile, surveying my new clothes.

This remark made me blush. I turned around on one foot, snapped my fingers, and gave a jump, to let her feel that she did not quite know what a fine fellow I really was.

When I took Karl Ivanich his shirt-front he no longer needed it: he had put on another and, stooping before a small looking glass that stood on a table, was holding the full bow of his cravat in both hands and trying whether his clean-shaven chin went easily in and out of it. After pulling our clothes straight all around and asking Nicholas to do the same for him, he took us down to Grandmamma. It amuses me to remember how strongly we all three smelled of pomade as we descended the stairs.

Karl Ivanich carried a box he had made himself; Volodya had his drawing, and I my verses: each had ready on his tongue the words with which he would present his gift. Just when Karl Ivanich opened the door of the music room the priest was putting on his vestments, and the first sounds of the service were heard.

Grandmamma was already in the music room: she stood stooping, leaning on the back of a chair, and prayed piously; Papa stood beside her. He turned toward us and smiled, noticing how we hurriedly hid our presents behind our backs and stopped just

at the door trying to remain unnoticed. The whole effect of surprise, on which we had counted, was lost.

When everybody went up to kiss the crucifix, I suddenly felt that I was suffering from an insurmountable fit of shyness, and aware that I should never have the courage to offer my present, I hid behind the back of Karl Ivanich who, having expressed his good wishes in the choicest words, passed the little box from his right to his left hand, presented it to Grandmamma, and stepped a few paces aside to let Volodya come forward. Grandmamma seemed delighted with the box, which was bordered in gold, and expressed her thanks with the kindest of smiles. One noticed however that she did not know where to put the box, and probably for that reason asked Papa to see how wonderfully cleverly it was made.

After satisfying his curiosity, Papa handed it to the priest, whom the little article seemed to please extremely: he shook his head, looking now at the box and now at the master who had been able to make such a beautiful thing. Volodya presented his Turk, and also earned the most flattering appreciation from all sides. My turn had come, and Grandmamma looked toward me with a smile of encouragement.

Those who have experience of shyness know that this feeling increases in direct proportion to its duration, and that one's resolution diminishes in the same ratio: that is to say, the longer that condition lasts



the more insuperable it becomes and the less resolution remains.

The last of my courage and resolution deserted me while Karl Ivanich and Volodya were presenting their gifts, and my shyness reached its utmost limits: I felt the blood continually rushing from my heart to my head, one blush following another on my face, and large drops of perspiration appearing on my forehead and nose. My ears were burning, I felt my whole body shiver and grow damp with perspiration, and I shifted from one foot to the other but did not move a step.

“Well, Nicholas, let’s see what you have got! Is it a box or a drawing?” said Papa to me. There was no help for it; with trembling hand I gave the crumpled, fatal roll to my grandmother, but my voice quite refused to serve me and I stood silent in front of her. I could not recover myself at the thought that, instead of the expected drawing, they would read out to everybody my worthless verses, and the words: *as our own mother dear*, would seem clearly to show that I had never loved her and had forgotten her.

How can I describe what I suffered when Grand-mamma began to read my verses aloud, when, not making it out, she stopped in the middle of a line to glance at Papa with a smile which then seemed to me ironical, when she did not pronounce the words as I wished them to be said, and when, on account of her weak eyesight, without reading to the end, she

gave the sheet to Papa and asked him to reread it from the beginning? I thought she did it because she was tired of reading such bad and crookedly written verses, and in order that Papa might himself read the last verse which so clearly proved my want of feeling. I expected him to smack me on the nose with those verses, and to say, "Horrid boy, don't forget your mother . . . take that for it!" But nothing of the kind occurred; on the contrary, when it had all been read, Grandmamma said, "*Charmant!*" and kissed me on the forehead.

The box, the drawing, and the verses were laid beside two cambric handkerchiefs and a snuffbox with Mamma's portrait on its lid, on the adjustable flap of the invalid chair in which Grandmamma generally sat.

"Princess Varvara Ilinichna!" announced one of the two huge footmen who used to stand behind Grandmamma's carriage.

Grandmamma was deep in thought over the portrait on the tortoise-shell snuffbox and did not answer.

"Shall I ask her in, your excellency?" the footman asked.





## XV

### PRINCESS KORNAKOVA

"Ask her in," Grandmamma replied, settling deeper into her chair.

The princess was a woman of about forty-five, small, fragile, lean, and sallow, with disagreeable, greenish-gray little eyes, the expression of which clearly contradicted the unnaturally sweet curves of her small mouth. Under her velvet bonnet with its ostrich feather one saw her pale reddish hair, her eyebrows and eyelashes seeming still paler and redder against the unhealthy color of her face. In spite of all this, owing to her easy movements, her tiny hands,



and the peculiar leanness of all her features, her general appearance had something fine and energetic about it.

The princess talked a great deal, and in her loquacity belonged to that class of people who always speak as if they were being contradicted though no one else has said a word. She sometimes raised her voice and then gradually lowering it suddenly began to speak with fresh vivacity, and looked around at those who were taking no part in the conversation as if trying to strengthen herself by so looking.

Though the princess had kissed Grandmamma's hand and kept calling her in French *my kind aunt*, I noticed that Grandmamma was displeased with her: she raised her eyebrows in a peculiar way while she listened to the explanation of why Prince Michael had been quite unable to come in person to congratulate her despite his great desire to do so, and, answering in Russian to the princess's French, said in a special, drawling tone:

"I am very grateful to you, my dear, for your attention; but as to Prince Michael's not having come, why mention it? . . . He always has a mass of things on hand; and after all what pleasure could he find in sitting with an old woman?"

And not giving the princess time to rejoin, she continued:

"And how are your children, my dear?"

"Quite well, I am thankful to say, *ma tante*; they

grow, learn, and get into mischief, especially Étienne, the eldest. He is becoming such a scapegrace—quite unmanageable; but then he is intelligent, a promising lad. Just fancy, *mon cousin*,” she continued, addressing herself exclusively to Papa because Grandmamma, not at all interested in the princess's children but wishing to brag a little about her own grandchildren, was carefully taking my verses from under the box and beginning to unfold them. “Just fancy, *mon cousin*, what he did the other day . . .”

And the princess, leaning over to Papa, began to tell him something with great animation. Having finished her tale, which I did not hear, she burst out laughing and, looking inquiringly into Papa's face, said:

“What a boy, *mon cousin*! He deserved a whipping, but the prank was so clever and amusing that I forgave him, *mon cousin*.”

And, fixing her eyes on Grandmamma, the princess continued to smile without saying anything more.

“Do you really *beat* your children, my dear?” asked Grandmamma, significantly raising her eyebrows and particularly emphasizing the word *beat*.

“Oh, *ma bonne tante*,” the princess answered in a kind voice, after a rapid glance at Papa, “I know your opinion on that matter, but allow me to disagree with you on that one point. Much as I have thought, read, and listened to advice on that subject, experience has, all the same, brought me to the conviction

that it is necessary to act on children through fear. To make anything of a child, fear is necessary. . . . Is it not so, *mon cousin*? And what, I just ask you, do children fear more than the rod?"

Saying this she glanced interrogatively at us, and I confess that at that moment I felt uncomfortable.

"Say what you like, but a boy up to twelve, and even up to fourteen, is still a child. Now with a girl it is a different matter."

"How fortunate that I am not her son!" thought I.

"Yes, that's very fine, my dear," said Grandmamma, folding up my verses and putting them away under the box as if after that she did not consider the princess worthy of hearing such a production, "that is all very well, but tell me, please, what delicacy of feeling, after that, can you expect in your children?"

And considering this argument incontrovertible, Grandmamma added to break off the conversation:

"However, everyone can have his own opinion on that subject!"

The princess did not reply but only smiled condescendingly, as though to show that she forgave these strange prejudices in one whom she respected so much.

"Oh, but let me make your young people's acquaintance," she said, looking at us with an affable smile.

We rose, and having fixed our eyes on the prin-

cess's face, did not at all know what to do to show that we had become acquainted.

"Well, kiss the princess's hand," said Papa.

"I beg you to love your old auntie," she said, kissing Volodya on his hair. "Though I am but distantly related to you, I go by our friendship and not by degrees of relationship," she added, addressing herself principally to Grandmamma; but Grandmamma was still displeased with her, and said:

"Eh, my dear, just as if kinship of that kind counted nowadays!"

"This one will be a society man," said Papa, pointing to Volodya, "and this one a poet," he added, just when I was kissing the princess's dry little hand and very distinctly imagining a rod in that hand, a bench beneath the rod, and so on and so on.

"Which one?" asked the princess, holding me back by my hand.

"This little one, with the tuft of hair sticking up," answered Papa, with a merry smile.

"What has my tuft done to him? Is there nothing else to talk about?" thought I, and went away into a corner.

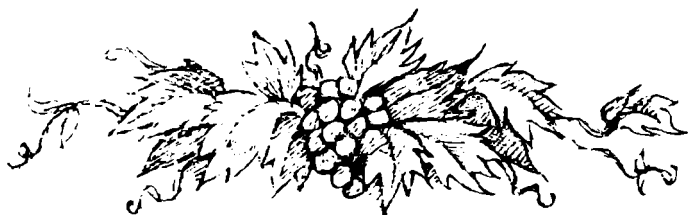
I had the strangest ideas about beauty, and even thought Karl Ivanich one of the handsomest people in the world, but I knew very well that I was not good looking, and I was not at all mistaken, so that every reference to my appearance offended me painfully.

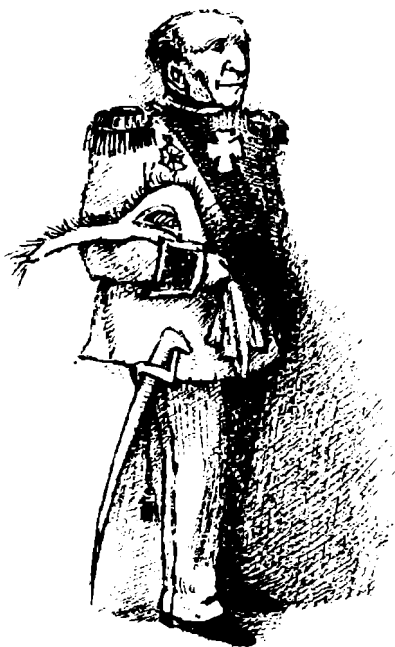
I very well remember how once at dinner—I was six years old then—they were speaking about my appearance, and Mamma, trying to find something good in my face, said that I had clever eyes and a pleasant smile, and then, yielding to Papa's proofs and to what was obvious, had to admit that I was plain; and afterward, when I was thanking her for the dinner, she patted my cheek and said:

“Remember, Nikolenka, that no one will love you for your face, so you must try to be a clever and good boy.”

Those words not only convinced me that I was no beauty, but also that I should certainly be a good and clever boy.

In spite of that there were moments when I was overcome by despair: I imagined that there could be no happiness on earth for one with such a broad nose, such thick lips, and such small, gray eyes as mine; and I asked God to perform a miracle and make me handsome, and all I then had and everything I might have in future I would have given for a handsome face.





## XVI

### PRINCE IVAN IVANOVICH

When the princess had listened to the verses and showered praises on their author, Grandmamma softened, talked to her in French, and invited her to come with all her children that evening. The princess accepted the invitation and after staying a little while went away.

So many visitors came that day to congratulate Grandmamma that in the courtyard near the entrance there were several carriages the whole morning.

*"Bonjour, chère cousine!"* said one of the guests,

entering the room and kissing her hand.

He was a man of about seventy, tall, in military uniform with large epaulets, a large white cross showing beneath his collar, and with a calm, open countenance. I was struck by the freedom and simplicity of his movements. Though there remained but a sparse semicircle of hair on the back of his head, and though the shape of his upper lip gave clear evidence of a scarcity of teeth, his face was still remarkably handsome.

At the end of the last century, while still very young, Prince Ivan Ivanovich had made a brilliant career, thanks to his honorable character, good looks, remarkable courage, distinguished and powerful connections, and especially his good fortune. He continued in the service, and very soon his ambition was so well satisfied that there was nothing more for him to wish for in that respect.

There were few people left to the prince who, like Grandmamma, belonged to the same set as he, had been brought up in the same way, had the same outlook on things, and were of the same age; so he particularly valued his old friendship with her and always showed her great respect.

I could not take my eyes off the prince: the respect everybody paid him, his large epaulets, the particular pleasure Grandmamma showed on seeing him, and the fact that apparently he alone was not afraid of her, was quite at his ease with her, and even had the

courage to call her *ma cousine*, inspired me with the same—if not with greater—respect for him that I had for her. When my verses were shown him, he called me to him and said:

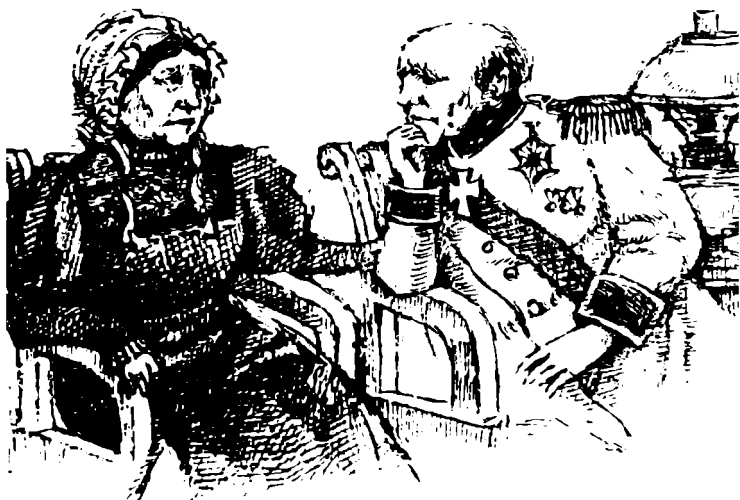
“Who knows, *ma cousine*, perhaps he will be a great poet some day.”

Saying this he pinched my cheek so painfully that if I did not scream it was only because I guessed it was meant as a caress.

The callers had gone away. Papa and Volodya left the room: only the prince, Grandmamma, and I remained in the drawing room.

“But why has our dear Natalya Nikolavna not come?” Prince Ivan Ivanovich suddenly asked, after a momentary pause.

“Ah, *mon cher*,” answered Grandmamma lowering her voice and putting her hand on the sleeve of his uniform, “she would certainly have come had she





been free to do as she pleases. She writes as if Peter had proposed her coming but that she herself declined because, as she says, they had no income at all this year; and she adds: 'Besides, there is no reason why I should come with the whole household to Moscow this year. Lyuba is still too young, and as for the boys who will be living with you, I shall feel even more secure about them than if they were with me.' All this is very nice!" continued Grandmamma in a tone that clearly showed she did not think it nice at all. "It was high time to send the boys here so that they might learn something and get used to the world, for what kind of education could they get in the country . . . ? Why, the eldest is nearly thirteen, and the other eleven. You have noticed, *mon cousin*, that they are quite like savages here . . . they don't even know how to enter a room."

"But I don't understand these continual complaints about the derangement of their affairs," remarked the prince. "*He* has a very good property, and I know Natalya's Khabarovka (where in days gone by you and I used to act in private theatricals) like my own five fingers: it is a wonderful estate, and must always bring in a splendid income. . . ."

"I will tell you as a true friend," Grandmamma interrupted him with a sad expression on her face, "that it seems to me that these are only excuses for *him* to live here alone, to frequent clubs and dinners and do heaven knows what, and she does not suspect

anything. You know her angelic goodness—she trusts *him* in everything. He has assured her that the children ought to be taken to Moscow and that she ought to remain alone in the country with the stupid governess—and she believes it. If he were to tell her that the children should be whipped as Princess Kornakova whips her children, I think she would agree even to that,” said Grandmamma, turning in her armchair with an expression of utter contempt. “Yes, my dear friend,” she continued after a moment’s pause, and taking one of her two handkerchiefs to wipe away a tear that had showed itself, “I often think that *he* can neither appreciate nor understand her, and that in spite of all her goodness, her love for him, and her desire to hide her sorrows—I know that very well—she cannot be happy with him. Mark my words, if he doesn’t . . .”

Grandmamma covered her face with her handkerchief.

“Ah, my good friend!” said the prince, reproachfully, “I see you have not grown a bit more reasonable—you are always distressing yourself and weeping over imaginary ills. Aren’t you ashamed? I have known *him* a long time, and know him to be an attentive, kindly, and excellent husband, and above all a most honorable man, a perfect gentleman!”

Having involuntarily overheard a conversation I was not meant to hear, I slipped out of the room on tiptoe, in great agitation.



## XVII

### THE IVINS

“Volodya! Volodya! The Ivins!” I cried, when I saw through the window three boys in blue overcoats with beaver collars, who, following a smart young tutor, were crossing from the opposite pavement to our house.

The Ivins were relations of ours and almost of the same age as we, and soon after our arrival in Moscow we had made their acquaintance and become friends.

The second Ivin, Seryozha, was a dark curly-haired boy with a firm, turned-up little nose, very fresh red

lips that seldom entirely closed over his rather prominent white upper teeth, beautiful dark blue eyes, and an unusually lively face. He never smiled, but either looked perfectly serious or laughed wholeheartedly, a ringing, resonant, and very captivating laugh. His original beauty struck me at first sight. I felt irresistibly attracted to him. To see him was sufficient to make me happy, and at one time the whole strength of my soul was concentrated on that desire. When I did not see him for three or four days I began to fret, and felt sad enough to cry. All my dreams, waking or sleeping, were of him: when I went to bed I wished to dream of him; when I closed my eyes I saw him before me, and cherished that vision as my greatest happiness. I could not have confided that feeling to anyone, so precious was it to me. Perhaps because he was tired of feeling my eyes continually fixed upon him, or simply because he did not feel at all drawn toward me, he evidently preferred to play and talk with Volodya rather than with me, but for all that I was quite content, wished for nothing, demanded nothing, and was ready to sacrifice everything for him. Besides the fascination he had for me, his presence aroused another feeling in me not less strongly—the fear of grieving him, offending, or displeasing him in any way. Perhaps because his face had a haughty expression, or because despising my own looks, I attached too great a value to beauty in others, or still more probably, because it is a certain

characteristic of love, I feared him as much as I loved him. The first time Seryozha spoke to me I was so confused by such unexpected happiness that I turned pale, blushed, and could not reply. He had the bad habit, when thinking of something, of fixing his eyes on one spot and continually blinking while twitching his nose and eyebrows. Everybody thought that this habit greatly spoiled his looks, but I thought it so charming that I involuntarily began to do the same thing, and a few days after we got to know him, Grandmamma asked me whether my eyes ached, as I was blinking like a tawny owl. No word of affection ever passed between us, but he felt his power over me and used it unconsciously but tyrannically; while I, much as I wanted to tell him all that was in my soul, was too much afraid of him to venture to be frank, tried to seem indifferent, and uncomplainingly submitted to him. At times his influence seemed hard and unbearable to me, but to escape it was beyond my power.

I met the Ivins in the hall, greeted them, and rushed headlong to Grandmamma, and informed her that the Ivins had come, in a tone suggesting that this announcement must make her perfectly happy. Then I followed Seryozha into the drawing room without taking my eyes off him, and watched his every movement. When Grandmamma said that he had grown a great deal, and fixed her penetrating eyes on him, I experienced the same sense of fear and hope as an

artist must feel when awaiting the verdict of a revered judge on his work.

The Ivins' young tutor, Herr Frost, with Grand-mamma's permission went out into the garden with us, seated himself on a green bench, gracefully crossed his legs and, placing his bronze-headed stick between them, lit a cigar with the air of one highly satisfied with what he is doing.

Herr Frost was a German, but a German of quite a different type from our good Karl Ivanich. In the first place he spoke Russian correctly and French with a bad accent, and, especially among the ladies, generally enjoyed the reputation of being a very learned man. Secondly, he had red mustaches, wore a large ruby pin in his black satin cravat the ends of which were tucked under his suspenders, and trousers of light blue shot material, with straps. Thirdly, he was young, had a handsome self-satisfied appearance, and unusually fine muscular legs. It was evident that he particularly prized this last advantage, considered its effect on the female sex irresistible, and no doubt with this in view tried to place his legs in the most noticeable position, and whether standing or sitting always made his calves twitch. He was a typical young Russo-German who wants to be a dashing fellow and a lady-killer.

We had great fun in the garden. The game of robbers was going on in the best possible way; but an incident occurred that nearly stopped it altogether. Seryozha was a robber: rushing after the travelers he

stumbled and struck his knee full tilt against a tree with such force that I thought he had splintered it. Though I was a constable and it was my duty to catch him, I went up to him and asked, with concern, if he was hurt. Seryozha got angry with me; he clenched his fists, stamped his foot, and in a voice clearly showing he was in great pain, shouted:

“What are you doing? How can one play like that! Why don’t you catch me?” he repeated several times, with a side glance at Volodya and the eldest Ivin, who represented the travelers and ran skipping along the path; then with a sudden yell, he rushed after them with a loud laugh.

I cannot express how impressed and enthralled I was by his heroic behavior: in spite of terrible pain he not only did not cry, but did not even show that he was hurt, and did not for a moment forget the game.

Soon after that, when Ilinka Grap joined us and we went upstairs before dinner, Seryozha had occasion still further to captivate and impress me by his remarkable courage and firmness of character.

Ilinka Grap was the son of a poor foreigner who had once lived at my grandfather’s and was under some obligation to him, and now considered it his duty to send his son to us as often as possible. If he thought his son could derive any honor or pleasure from intercourse with us he was quite mistaken, for not merely were we not friendly with Ilinka, but we only noticed him when we wanted to make fun of

him. Ilinka Grap was a boy of about thirteen, thin, tall, and pale, with a birdlike face and a good-natured, submissive expression. He was very poorly dressed, but his hair was so thickly pomaded that we maintained that on sunny days the hair dressing melted on his head and trickled down under his jacket. When I now remember him, I find that he was a very obliging, quiet, and kind lad, but then he seemed to me such a contemptible creature that he was not worth pitying or even thinking about.

When we had finished playing robbers, we went upstairs and began to romp and show off our gymnastic feats to one another. Ilinka watched us with a timid smile of wonder and, when invited to do the same, made excuses, saying that he had no strength at all. Seryozha was wonderfully charming: he took off his jacket, his face and eyes shone, he laughed and continually devised new tricks: he jumped over three chairs placed side by side, turned somersaults the whole length of the room, stood on his head on Tatishchev's dictionaries which he had placed in the middle of the room for a pedestal, and did such funny things with his feet that it was impossible to keep from laughing. After this last trick he thought for a bit, winked, and with a perfectly serious air suddenly went up to Ilinka and said, "Try that, it really is not difficult." Grap, seeing everybody's attention fixed on him, blushed, and in a scarcely audible voice said that he could not possibly do it.



"Now, really, why doesn't he want to show us anything? He's not a girl. . . . He must certainly stand on his head!"

Seryozha took him by the hand.

"Yes, certainly, certainly, on his head!" we all cried, surrounding Ilinka, who at that moment evidently became frightened and grew pale, seizing him by the arms, and dragging him toward the dictionaries.

"Let me go, I'll do it myself! You'll tear my jacket!" cried the unfortunate victim. But those cries of despair increased our animation. We were dying with laughter: his green jacket was bursting at all its seams.

Volodya and the eldest Ivin bent his head down and placed it on the dictionaries, and Seryozha and I seized the poor boy by his thin legs, which he was kicking in all directions, turned up his trousers to the knees, and with loud laughter jerked them upward, while the youngest Ivin kept the whole body balanced.

It so happened that after our boisterous laughter we all suddenly became silent, and it was so quiet in the room that the only sound heard was the heavy breathing of the unfortunate Grap. At that moment I did not feel quite convinced that all this was funny and amusing.

"Well, now you're a good sport!" said Volodya, giving him a slap.

Ilinka remained silent and, trying to free himself, kicked his legs in all directions. In one of these desperate movements his heel struck Seryozha in the eye so severely that he immediately let go of the legs, put one hand to his eye which was shedding involuntary tears, and pushed Ilinka with all his might. No longer supported by us, Ilinka fell on the floor like a lifeless mass, and could only mutter through his tears:

“Why do you torment me?”

We were struck by the pitiful figure of poor Ilinka with his tear-stained face, tangled hair, and turned-up trousers, below which one saw the unblackened tops of his boots. We were all silent and tried to force a smile.

The first to recover was Seryozha.

“There’s an old woman! Crybaby!” he said, lightly touching Ilinka with his foot. “One can’t have a joke with him. . . . Enough now, get up!”

“I told you, you are a good-for-nothing boy!” said Ilinka angrily and, turning away, he sobbed aloud.

“Ah, ah! He kicks one with his heels and then calls names!” cried Seryozha, seizing one of the dictionaries and flourishing it over the unfortunate boy, who did not even try to defend himself but only covered his head with his arms.

“Take that and that! . . . Let’s leave him alone if he does not understand a joke. . . . Come downstairs,” said Seryozha, laughing unnaturally.



I looked with pity at the poor boy, who lay on the floor and, hiding his face among the dictionaries, wept so that it seemed as if it needed but little more for him to die of the sobs that convulsed his whole body.

"Eh, Sergey!" I said, "why did you do that?"

"That's good . . . ! I did not cry, I hope, when I cut my leg nearly to the bone today."

"Yes, that's true," thought I, "Ilinka is nothing but a crybaby, and Seryozha is a good sport . . . what a sport he is . . . !"

I did not consider that the poor boy was probably not crying so much from physical pain, as at the thought that five boys whom perhaps he liked had without any reason conspired to hate and torment him.

I am quite unable to explain the cruelty of my behavior. Why did I not go up to him, protect, or console him? Where was the feeling of compassion which made me sob at sight of a young jackdaw thrown from its nest, or of the puppy being taken to be thrown over the fence, or of a chicken the scullion was taking to make soup of?

Can it be that this good feeling was stifled by my love of Seryozha and my desire to appear in his eyes as dashing a fellow as he was himself? Unenviable then was that love, and that wish to appear dashing, for they throw the only dark spots on the pages of my childhood's recollections.



## XVIII

### VISITORS ARRIVE

Judging by the unusual bustle noticeable in the butler's pantry, by the bright illumination which gave a novel and festive appearance to the old familiar objects in the drawing room and ballroom, and especially by the fact that Prince Ivan Ivanovich would not have sent his orchestra without some reason, it seemed that we were to have many guests that evening.

At the sound of each vehicle that passed, I ran to the window, put my hands to my temples and to the windowpane, and peered into the street with im-

patient curiosity. From the darkness, which at first hid all the objects outside the window, there gradually emerged, just opposite, the familiar little shop over the way with its lamp; diagonally across, the large house with two windows lit up downstairs; and in the middle of the street an open cab with two passengers, or an empty carriage returning at a foot-pace: but at last a carriage drove up to our front door, and feeling sure that it was the Ivins, who had promised to come early, I ran to meet them in the hall. Instead of the Ivins, behind the arm of a livery servant who opened the door appeared two female persons, one of them tall, in a blue coat with a sable collar, the other small, wrapped up in a green shawl from beneath which one saw only her little feet in fur boots. Without noticing my presence in the hall—though I had thought it my duty to bow to these persons when they came in—the little one went up to the tall one and stopped in front of her. The tall one unwound the shawl that completely covered the little one's head, unfastened her cloak, and when the liveried footman had received these things into his care and had drawn off her fur boots, the bundled-up person had become a charming, twelve-year-old girl in a short, low-necked muslin frock, white drawers, and tiny black shoes. Around her neck was a black velvet ribbon; her little head was covered with brown curls which suited her beautiful little face so well in front and went so well with her bare shoulders be-

hind, that I should not have believed Karl Ivanich himself had he told me that they curled like that because since morning they had been twisted up in bits of the *Moscow News*, and had been pressed with hot iron pincers. It seemed as if she must have been born with that curly head.

The most striking feature of her face was the unusual size of her prominent, half-closed eyes, which formed a strange but pleasing contrast to her tiny mouth. Her lips were closed and the look of her eyes so serious that the general expression of her face was such as caused one not to expect a smile from it, and her smile was therefore all the more enchanting.

Trying not to be noticed, I slipped through the door into the ballroom, and thought it necessary to pace up and down pretending to be wrapped in thought and quite unaware that guests had arrived. When they were halfway through the room I, as it were, came to myself, bowed, brought my feet together, and informed them that Grandmamma was in the drawing room. Madame Valakhina, whose face I liked very much, especially as I found in it a great resemblance to that of her daughter Sonya, nodded to me graciously.

Grandmamma seemed very pleased to see Sonya, made her come up closer, arranged a curl that fell over her forehead, and looking intently into her face, said, "What a charming child." Sonya smiled, blushed, and seemed so charming that, looking at

her, I too blushed.

"I hope you won't find it dull in my house, my dear," said Grandmamma, raising Sonya's face by the chin. "Please amuse yourself and dance as much as possible. We have one lady and two gentlemen already," she added, turning to Madame Valakhina and touching me with her hand.

This association so pleased me that I blushed again.

Feeling my shyness increasing and hearing another carriage drive up, I thought it best to retire. In the hall I found Princess Kornakova with her son and an incredible number of daughters, who all looked alike, resembled their mother, and were all plain, so that not one of them drew my attention. As they took off their coats and scarves they all talked together in thin voices, bustled about, and laughed at something—probably at there being so many of them. Étienne was a boy of about fifteen, tall, fleshy, with a washed-out face, sunken eyes with blue shadows under them, and, for his age, enormous hands and feet; he was awkward, had an unpleasant, breaking voice, but seemed very well satisfied with himself and was exactly what, to my ideas, a boy who was beaten with rods would be.

We stood for some time facing and scrutinizing each other without saying a word; then we drew nearer and, I think, meant to kiss, but after looking in one another's eyes, we somehow changed our



minds. When the dresses of all his sisters had rustled past us, in order to start a conversation I asked whether they had not been crowded in their carriage.

"I don't know," he answered carelessly. "You see I never go in the carriage, because as soon as I get in I become sick, and Mamma knows that. When we go anywhere in the evening I always sit on the box—it is much more amusing, one sees everything. Philip lets me drive, and sometimes I take the whip. And sometimes those that drive by get a taste of it"—he made an expressive gesture. "It's fine!"

"Your excellency!" said a footman, coming into the hall, "Philip wants to know where you have put the whip."

"Put the whip? Why, I gave it back to him."

"He says you didn't."

"Well then, I hung it on the lamp."

"Philip says it is not on the lamp either. . . . You'd better admit that you took it and lost it, and Philip will have to pay out of his own money for your pranks," continued the angry footman, becoming more and more animated.

The footman, who looked a respectable and stern man, seemed to take Philip's part very warmly and to be determined to clear the matter up. From an instinctive feeling of delicacy I stepped aside as if I had not noticed anything, but the footmen present acted quite differently: they came nearer and looked approvingly at the old servant.

"Well, if it's lost, it's lost!" said Étienne, trying to avoid further explanations. "What the whip costs I'll pay. Isn't it ridiculous?" he added, coming up to me and taking me toward the drawing room.

"No, allow me, sir . . . how will you pay? I know how you pay. For seven months you have been going to pay Marya Vasilyevna her twenty kopeks, and me, for over a year I think, and Petrushka . . ."

"Will you hold your tongue?" shouted the young prince, growing pale with anger. "See if I don't tell it all."

"Tell it all, tell it all!" muttered the footman. "It's not right, your excellency!" he added with particular significance as we entered the ballroom, and he went to put the cloaks on the settee.

"That's right, that's right!" came an approving voice from the hall.

Grandmamma had a peculiar gift for expressing her opinion of people by addressing them, either in the second person singular or the second person plural, in a special tone and in special circumstances. Though she often used the pronouns "thou" and "you" inversely to the way usually accepted, these distinctions assumed quite a special significance on her lips. When the young prince approached her she said a few words to him, calling him "you," and glanced at him with such a look of contempt that I in his place should have been quite confused, but Étienne was evidently not a boy of that make: he not

only did not take any notice of Grandmamma's reception of him, but even took none of her, and bowed to the whole company, if not gracefully at least with complete ease.

Sonya absorbed my whole attention: I remembered that when Volodya, Étienne, and I were talking in a part of the ballroom from which I could see Sonya and she could see and hear us, I spoke with pleasure; and when I happened to say anything that seemed to me smart or amusing, I said it in a louder tone and looked toward the drawing-room door, but when we moved to a place where we could not be heard or seen from the drawing room, I was silent and took no further pleasure in the conversation.

The drawing room and ballroom gradually filled with guests; among them, as always happens at children's parties, were some grown-up children who did not wish to miss an occasion for amusing themselves and dancing, while pretending to do so only to please the hostess.

When the Ivins arrived, instead of the pleasure it generally gave me to meet Seryozha I felt strangely vexed with him, because he would see Sonya and be seen by her.





## XIX

### THE QUADRILLE

"Ah, you are having some dancing, I see," said Seryozha, as he came out of the drawing room and drew a pair of new kid gloves from his pocket. "I must put on my gloves."

"What is to be done? We have no gloves," thought I. "I must go upstairs and have a search."

However, though I rummaged through all the drawers, I only found our green traveling mittens in one, and in another a kid glove which could not be of use to me—in the first place because it was ex-

ceedingly old and dirty, secondly because it was too large for me, and above all because the middle finger was lacking, having no doubt long ago been cut off by Karl Ivanich for a sore finger. I put on the remains of that glove, however, and attentively examined that part of my middle finger which was always ink-stained.

"Now if Natalya Savishna were here she would probably find some gloves. I can't go downstairs like this, because if they ask me why I don't dance, what can I say? Nor can I stay here, for they are sure to miss me. What am I to do?" said I, waving my arms.

"What are you doing here?" asked Volodya. "Go and engage a lady; they are just going to begin."

"Volodya," I said, showing him my hand with two fingers sticking out of the dirty glove, and speaking in a voice that expressed a state bordering on despair, "Volodya, you have not thought of this!"

"Of what?" he asked impatiently. "Oh, about gloves!" he added, quite indifferently, when he noticed my hand. "Quite true, we have not. We must ask Grandmamma and see what she says," and without further consideration he ran downstairs.

The coolness with which he treated a matter that had seemed to me so vital calmed me, and I hurried to the drawing room quite forgetting the horrid glove I had on my left hand.

Having come softly up to Grandmamma's chair and lightly touched her mantilla, I whispered:

"Grandmamma, what are we to do? We have no gloves!"

"What, my dear?"

"We have no gloves," I repeated, coming closer and closer and putting both my hands on the arm of her chair.

"And what is that?" she said, suddenly seizing my left hand. "Look, my dear," she went on, turning to Madame Valakhina, "see how elegant this young man has made himself to dance with your daughter."

Grandmamma held my hand firmly and looked seriously but inquiringly at everybody present until the curiosity of all the visitors was satisfied and the laughter had become general.

I should have been much mortified had Seryozha seen me as, shrinking with shame, I vainly tried to pull away my hand, but I did not feel at all confused before Sonya, who laughed so that her eyes filled with tears and all the ringlets shook around her flushed face. I understood that her laughter was too loud and too natural to be ironical; on the contrary, the fact that we laughed together and looked at one another seemed to draw us nearer together. The episode with the glove, though it might have ended badly, brought me this advantage, that it put me on an easy footing in the circle which always seemed to me most terrible—the drawing-room circle. In the ballroom I no longer felt at all shy.

The sufferings of shy people arise from their un-

certainty as to what opinion has been formed about them. As soon as that opinion is clearly expressed (be it what it may) the suffering ceases.

What made Sonya so charming when she danced the French quadrille opposite me with the clumsy young prince? How sweetly she smiled when she gave me her hand in the *chaîne*! How charmingly the brown curls on her head jerked in time with the music! In the fifth figure, when my lady ran from me to the opposite side, and I, waiting for the beat, was preparing to do my solo, Sonya compressed her lips seriously and looked the other way. But she need not have been afraid on my account: as I approached her, I playfully showed her the glove with the fingers sticking out. She burst into a loud laugh and tripped still more charmingly over the parquet. Another thing I remember, when we all took hands to form a ring, is her bending her head and without letting go of my hand rubbing her little nose with her glove. I can see it all now and can still hear the music of the quadrille from "The Maid of the Danube" to the sounds of which all this took place.

Then came a second quadrille, which I danced with Sonya. On sitting down by her side I felt extremely ill at ease and did not at all know what to talk to her about. When my silence was becoming too prolonged I began to chatter, for fear she should take me for a fool, and I determined at any cost to prevent her making such a mistake about me. "Are

you an inhabitant of Moscow?" I asked in French, and having received an affirmative reply continued: "And I have never before frequented the capital," relying particularly on the effect of the word *frequented*. I felt however that though this beginning was very brilliant and fully proved my thorough knowledge of French, I could not keep up a conversation in that strain. It would be some time before it would be our turn to dance, and the silence was renewed. I looked at her uneasily, anxious to know what impression I had made on her and expecting her to help me. "Where did you find such a comical glove?" she suddenly asked: that question gave me great pleasure and I explained that the glove belonged to Karl Ivanich, and dilated, even rather ironically, on his personality—how funny he looked when he lifted his red cap, and how, in his green overcoat, he once fell off a horse straight into a puddle, and so on. I did not know how the quadrille passed. This was all very well—but why did I speak ironically of Karl Ivanich? Should I really have forfeited Sonya's good opinion had I described him to her with the affection and respect I really felt for him?

When the quadrille was over, Sonya said *merci* to me with as sweet an expression as though I had really deserved her gratitude. I was in ecstasy—beside myself with joy—and could not recognize myself: from whence had I gained this courage, self-assurance,



and even audacity? "Nothing can abash me!" I thought, striding carelessly about the ballroom. "I am ready for anything."

Seryozha asked me to be his opposite. "All right," I said, "though I have no partner, I will find one." Glancing around the room with a determined look, I saw that all the ladies were engaged except one grown-up girl who was standing at the drawing-room door. A tall young man was just approaching her with the intention, I concluded, of inviting her to dance; he was only a couple of steps from her, and I at the other end of the room. In a twinkling I flew across the distance between us, gliding gracefully over the parquet, and clicking my feet together asked her in a firm voice for the next quadrille. The grown-up girl, smiling condescendingly, gave me her hand and the young man was left without a partner.

I felt such a consciousness of my strength that I did not even take any notice of the young man's annoyance; but I heard afterward that he had asked who was that rough-headed boy who had darted past him and snatched away his lady from under his nose.





XX

## THE MAZURKA

The young man whom I had deprived of his partner was leading, in the first pair of the mazurka. He jumped up from his seat and holding his partner's hand, instead of doing the *pas de Basques* which Mimi had taught us, simply ran across the room and on reaching the corner stopped, spread his legs, struck the floor with his heel, turned, and ran on again with a spring.

As I had no partner for the mazurka, I sat behind Grandmamma's high-backed chair and watched.

"Whatever is he doing?" I asked myself. "That's

not at all what Mimi taught us: she always assured us that everybody danced the mazurka on their toes, moving their feet smoothly in a semicircle; and it turns out it's not danced that way at all. There are the Ivins and Étienne all dancing, and not doing the *pas de Basques*, and our Volodya has also picked up this new way. It's not bad . . . ! And Sonya—what a darling! There she goes . . .” I felt extremely happy.

The mazurka was nearing its end: some of the older men and women came up to say goodbye to Grandmamma and went away. Footmen, carefully avoiding the dancers, were carrying the supper things into the back rooms. Grandmamma was evidently tired and spoke as if reluctantly, in a very drawling tone; the band began lazily playing the same tune for the thirtieth time. The grown-up girl with whom I had danced noticed me as she was dancing one of the figures, and with a treacherous smile—probably wishing thereby to please Grandmamma—led Sonya and one of the innumerable princesses up to me. “Rose or nettle?” she asked.

“Oh, you are here!” said Grandmamma, turning around in her chair. “Well, go on, my dear, go on.”

Although I felt at that moment more like hiding my head under Grandmamma's chair than coming out from behind it, how could I refuse? I got up, said “Rose,” and glanced timidly at Sonya. Before I could recover myself someone's white-gloved hand

was in mine, and the princess darted forward with the pleasantest smile, not in the least suspecting that I did not at all know what to do with my feet.

I knew that the *pas de Basques* was out of place, unsuitable, and might even put me completely to shame, but the familiar sounds of the mazurka, acting on my hearing, communicated a familiar movement to my acoustic nerves which in turn passed it on to my feet; and these, quite involuntarily, and to the surprise of the beholders, began to evolve the fatal, circular, and gliding steps on the toes. As long as we went straight ahead things were not too bad, but at the turn I noticed that unless I took care I should certainly get in front of my partner. To avoid such an unpleasantness I stopped, intending to make the same kind of figure that the young man in the first couple had executed so beautifully. But just at the moment when I separated my feet and was about to spring, the princess, circling quickly around me, looked at my feet with an expression of blank surprise and curiosity. This look did for me! I was so confused that, instead of dancing, I began stamping my feet on one spot in the strangest way, neither in time nor in accord with anything, and at last stopped altogether. Everybody looked at me, some with surprise, some with curiosity, some with derision, and others with commiseration; only Grandmamma looked on with complete indifference.

“You should not dance if you do not know how,”

said Papa's angry voice just above my ear, and slightly pushing me aside, he took my partner's hand and danced a turn with her in the old-fashioned way and to the loud applause of the onlookers led her back to her seat. The mazurka at once came to an end.

"Oh Lord! Why dost Thou punish me so dreadfully . . . ?"

"Everybody despises and always will despise me. . . . Every road is closed to me—the road to friendship, to love, to honor . . . all is lost! Why did Volodya make signs to me, which everybody saw and which could not be of use? Why did that disgusting princess look so at my feet? Why did Sonya . . . she is a darling . . . but why did she smile just then? Why did Papa blush and seize my arm? Can even he have been ashamed of me? Oh, it is terrible! Now if Mamma had been here, she would not have blushed for her Nikolenka . . ." And my imagination carried me far away after that dear vision. I recalled the meadow in front of the house, the tall linden trees in the garden, the clear pond over which the swallows circled, the azure sky with motionless transparent clouds, the fragrant heaps of new-mown hay, and many other peaceful and bright memories floated through my distracted imagination.



## XXI

### AFTER THE MAZURKA

At supper the young man who had danced in the first couple in the mazurka seated himself at our children's table and directed his attention particularly to me, which would have flattered my self-esteem had I been able to feel anything after the misfortune that had befallen me. But the young man seemed anxious to cheer me up at any cost; he joked with me, called me a fine fellow, and when none of the grownups were looking poured wine into my glass from different bottles, and insisted that I should drink it. Toward the end of supper, when the butler had only

filled my glass a quarter full from the bottle wrapped in a table napkin, the young man insisted on its being filled right up, and made me empty it at a draught; I felt a pleasant warmth through my whole body, a particular friendliness for my merry protector, and for some reason I burst into loud laughter.

Suddenly the music resounded from the ballroom and everybody rose from the table. My friendship with the young man came to a sudden end: he joined the grown-up people and I, not daring to follow him, went up and listened with curiosity to what Madame Valakhina and her daughter were saying.

"Just half an hour longer!" Sonya was saying persuasively.

"We really mustn't, my angel."

"Do, for my sake, please," Sonya went on caressingly.

"And will you be pleased if I am ill tomorrow?" said Madame Valakhina and had the imprudence to smile.

"Ah, you agree! We shall stay?" cried Sonya, jumping with joy.

"What is one to do with you? Well, go and dance, and here is a cavalier for you," said her mother, pointing to me.

Sonya gave me her hand and we ran into the ballroom.

The wine I had drunk, and Sonya's presence and

high spirits, made me quite forget the unfortunate incident of the mazurka. I did most amusing things with my feet: now imitating a horse I ran at a trot proudly lifting my feet; then I stood stamping on one spot like a ram angry with a dog, and laughed heartily, not at all concerned about the impression I was creating on those who saw me. Sonya also laughed incessantly; she laughed at our holding each other's hands and circling around and around; she laughed at an elderly gentleman who slowly lifted his feet to step over a handkerchief, pretending that this was very hard for him to do; and she nearly died with laughter when I almost jumped to the ceiling to show my agility.

Passing through Grandmamma's boudoir I looked at myself in the mirror. My face was all in perspiration, my hair untidy, the tufts sticking up more than ever, but the general expression of my face was so happy, good-natured, and healthy that I was pleased with myself.

"If I were always as I am now," I thought, "I might yet please others!"

But when I again looked at my partner's lovely face I saw in it, besides the brightness, health, and freedom from care that pleased me in my own, so much refined and delicate beauty that I was vexed with myself and saw how foolish it was of me to hope to engage the attention of so wonderful a being.

I could not hope that my feelings would be recip-





roated, and did not even think of it; my soul overflowed with happiness even without that. I did not think that for the love that filled my soul with satisfaction I could demand a yet greater happiness, or desire anything more than that this feeling should never come to an end. I felt happy as it was. My heart fluttered like a dove, the blood rushed to it continually, and I felt ready to weep.

When we were going through the passage past the dark lumber room under the stairs, I glanced at it and thought what bliss it would be to live in that dark lumber room with her, nobody knowing that we lived there!

"Don't you think it is very gay tonight?" I asked in a low, trembling voice and walked faster, frightened not so much at what I had said as at what I meant to say.

"Yes . . . very!" she replied, turning her head toward me with such a frankly kind expression that I ceased to fear.

"Especially after supper . . . But if you knew how sorry"—I wished to say "grieved" but did not dare to—"I am that you are soon going away and that we shall not see one another again!"

"But why should we not see one another?" she said, gazing intently at the tips of her little shoes, and running her fingers along the trellis screen by which we were passing. "Every Tuesday and Friday

Mamma and I drive on the Tverskoy Boulevard. Don't you go for walks?"

"We will certainly ask to go on Tuesday, and if they won't let me I will run away alone—without a cap. I know the way."

"Do you know what?" Sonya said suddenly, "I and some boys who visit us always say *thou* to one another; let us say *thou* to one another too! Dost thou want to?" she added, tossing her head and glancing straight into my eyes.

Just then we were entering the ballroom, and another, livelier, part of the dance was beginning.

"Let me . . . with you!" I said while the music and noise were loud enough to drown my voice.

"With *thee*, not with *you*," Sonya corrected me and burst out laughing.

The dance was over, and I had not succeeded in saying a single sentence with "thou" in it, although I had been trying to compose some in which it would be repeated several times. I lacked courage to do it. "Dost thou want?" "With *thee*, not with *you*"—these words resounded in my ears and seemed to intoxicate me: I saw nothing and nobody but Sonya. I saw how they lifted her curls and pushed them behind her ears, exposing parts of her forehead and temples which I had not yet seen; I saw how they wrapped her up in the green shawl so closely that the tip of her nose was all one could see, and I noticed

that if she had not made a little opening in front of her mouth with her rosy fingers she would certainly have been suffocated; and I saw her follow her mother downstairs, turn around quickly, nod to us, and vanish through the door.

Volodya, the Ivins, the young prince, and I were all in love with Sonya, and standing at the top of the stairs followed her with our eyes. To whom in particular she nodded I do not know, but at that moment I was firmly convinced that it was to me.

When saying goodbye to the Ivins, I spoke to Seryozha in a free and easy and even rather cold manner and shook hands with him. If he understood that from that day he had lost my affection and his power over me, he was probably sorry, but he tried to appear perfectly indifferent.

For the first time in my life I had been faithless in love, and for the first time I felt the sweetness of that sensation. I was glad to exchange the worn-out feeling of habitual devotion, for the fresh sentiment of love full of mystery and uncertainty. Besides, to cease to love and to begin to love anew at the same time is to begin to love twice as much as before.



## XXII THE LETTER

On the sixteenth of April, nearly six months after the day I have just described, Papa came upstairs while we were having lessons, and told us that we were going to the country with him that night. Something caused my heart to sink at this news, and my thoughts at once turned to Mamma.

The cause of such an unexpected departure was the following letter:

Petrovskoy. April 12.

"Only now, at ten o'clock in the evening, have I

received your kind letter of April 3 and as usual I answer it at once. Fyodor brought it from town yesterday, but as it was late he did not give it to Mimi till this morning. Mimi however did not give it to me all day on the pretext that I was not well and upset. It is true I have been a little feverish, and to confess the truth this is the fourth day I have not been very well and have not got up.

“Please don’t be frightened, dearest: I am feeling pretty well and, if Ivan Vasilich allows, I hope to get up tomorrow.

“Last Friday I went for a drive with the children, but just at the turning onto the high road, near that little bridge which always terrified me, the horses stuck in the mud. It was a lovely day and I thought I would walk to the high road while the carriage was being extricated. On reaching the chapel I felt very tired and sat down to rest, and as it was half an hour before people came to pull out the carriage, I began to feel cold, especially my feet, as my boots were thin and I had got them wet through. After dinner I felt a chill and was hot, but went about as usual and after tea sat down to play duets with Lyuba. (You would hardly know her, she has made such progress!) But fancy my surprise when I found that I could not count the beats. Several times I began to count, but everything in my head was quite confused and there were strange noises in my ears. I counted one, two,

three, and then suddenly: eight, fifteen, and above all I was conscious of talking nonsense and could not correct myself. At last Mimi came to my aid and put me to bed almost by force. There, my dear one, you have a full account of how I fell ill and how it was my own fault. Next day my temperature was rather high and our dear old Ivan Vasilich came and has stayed with us ever since, but promises soon to let me out into God's fresh air. A splendid old man Ivan Vasilich is! When I was feverish and delirious he sat all night by my bedside not closing his eyes; and now, as he knows I am writing, he is in the sitting room with the little girls, and I can hear from my bedroom how he tells them German fairy tales, and how they almost die with laughter listening to him.

“*La belle Flamande*, as you call her, is staying with us since last week because her mother has gone away somewhere on a visit, and by her care of me she shows her sincere attachment. She confides all her secrets to me. With her beautiful face, her kind heart, and her youth, she might become in all respects a fine young woman were she in good hands; but in the society in which she lives, judging by her own accounts, she will be completely ruined. It came into my head that, if I had not so many children of my own, I should do a good deed by adopting her.

“Lyuba meant to write to you herself, but has torn up three sheets of paper already. She says, ‘I know

what a tease Papa is: if I make a single little mistake he will show it to everybody.' Katya is as sweet as ever, and Mimi as kind and as tiresome.

"Now let us talk seriously: you write that your affairs are not going well this winter and that you will have to take the Khabarovka money. It seems strange to me even that you should ask my consent to that. Does not what belongs to me belong equally to you?

"You are so kind, my dear one, that for fear of pain<sup>g</sup> me you hide the actual state of your affairs, but I can guess: no doubt you have lost a great deal at cards, and I assure you I am not at all grieved about it. So that if the matter can be put right, please don't think much about it and don't worry yourself needlessly. I am accustomed not to count on your winnings for the children, nor, forgive me, even on any of your property. Your winnings give me as little pleasure as your losses grieve me. I am only grieved by your unfortunate passion for gaming which deprives me of a part of your tender attachment, and forces me to tell you such bitter truths as this; and God knows how it hurts me to do so! I never cease praying to Him that He will preserve us—not from poverty (what does poverty matter?) but from that terrible position in which the children's interests, which I should have to defend, would clash with our own. Till now God has heard my prayer: you have not crossed the line beyond which we should have



either to sacrifice the property, which no longer belongs to us but to our children, or . . . it is too dreadful even to think of it, yet that terrible misfortune is always threatening us. Yes, it is a heavy cross the Lord has laid on us both.

“You also write about the children and return to our discussion of long ago: you ask me to consent to their being sent to school. You know my prejudice against such an education. . . .

“I do not know, dear friend, if you will agree, but in any case I implore you for the sake of our love to promise as long as I live, and after my death if it is God’s will to part us, that this shall never happen.

“You write that it is necessary for you to go to Petersburg to see about our affairs. Go, my dearest, may Christ be with you, and return soon. We all feel so dull without you! The spring is wonderfully lovely; the double door of the balcony has already been taken out, the path to the hothouse was already dry four days ago, the peaches are in full blossom; only here and there patches of snow remain; the swallows have returned; and today Lyuba has brought me the first spring flowers. The doctor says that in two or three days’ time I shall be quite well again and able to breathe the fresh air and bask a little in the April sun. Goodbye then, my dearest, and please do not worry either about my illness or about your losses; finish your affairs quickly, and come back to us with the children for the whole

summer. I am making delightful plans as to how we shall spend it, and only your presence is needed for their realization."

The following part of the letter was written in French, in an illegible and irregular hand on another scrap of paper. I translate it word for word:

"Don't believe what I have written you about my illness: no one suspects how serious it is. I alone know that I shall never again leave my bed. Do not lose a moment, but come at once and bring the children. Perhaps I may be able to embrace and bless them once more; that is my one last wish. I know what a terrible blow I am inflicting on you, but in any case sooner or later, from me or from others, you would receive it: let us try then to bear this misfortune firmly and with reliance on God's mercy. Let us submit to His will.

"Don't imagine that what I am writing is the delirium of a diseased imagination; on the contrary my thoughts are extremely clear at this moment and I am perfectly calm. Don't comfort yourself with the vain hope that these are the mistaken and vague forebodings of a timid spirit. No, I feel, I know—and I know because it has pleased God to reveal it to me—that I have very little time left to live.

"Will my love for you and the children cease with my life? I have come to understand that this is impossible. I feel too intensely at this moment to imagine that the feeling without which I cannot

understand existence, can ever be annihilated. My soul cannot exist without love for you, and I know that it will exist forever if only for the reason that such a feeling as my love could not have arisen had it ever to cease.

"I shall not be with you but I am firmly convinced that my love will never leave you, and this thought is so comforting to my heart that I am at peace and await the approach of death without fear.

"I am at peace, and God knows that I always regarded and still regard death as the passage to a better life; but why do tears choke me? Why must children be deprived of a beloved mother? Why should such a heavy and unexpected blow be dealt to you? Why must I die, when your love made my life so boundlessly happy?

"Let His holy will be done!

"I cannot write more for tears. Maybe I shall not see you again. Thank you, my dear love, for all the happiness with which you have surrounded me in this life; I will pray to God there that He should reward you. Goodbye, dearest friend! Remember that I shall not be, but my love will never leave you anywhere. Goodbye, Volodya, goodbye, my angel! Goodbye, my Benjamin, my Nikolenka!

"Can it be that they will ever forget me?"

In this letter was enclosed a note in French from Mimi, the contents of which were as follows:

"The sad presentiments of which she wrote you

have been only too fully confirmed by the doctor. Last night she ordered this letter to be taken to the post at once. Thinking she was delirious when she said it, I waited till this morning and decided to open it. I had hardly broken the seal when Natalya Nikolavna asked me what I had done with the letter, and told me to burn it if it had not yet been posted. She speaks of it continually and assures us that it will kill you. Don't put off your departure if you wish to see that angel before she leaves us. Excuse this scribble. I have not slept for three nights. You know how I love her!"

Natalya Savishna, who had spent the whole night of the eleventh of April in our mother's bedroom, told me that when she had written the first part of the letter, Mamma put it near her on the table and fell asleep.

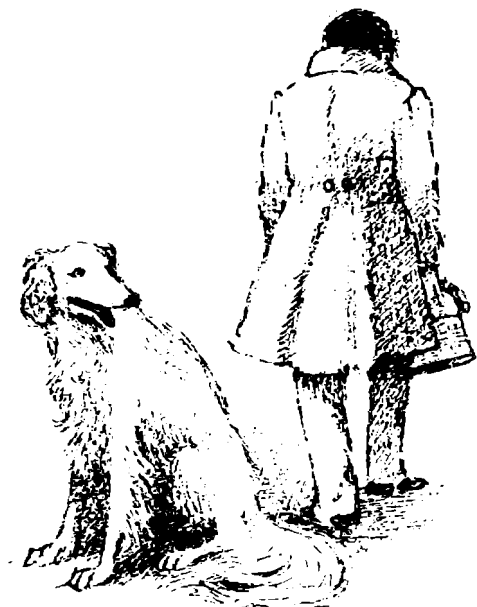
"I must confess," said Natalya Savishna, "that I myself dozed in my chair and my knitting dropped out of my hands. Then—it was sometime after midnight—in my sleep I heard a sound as if she were talking. I opened my eyes and looked, and there she was sitting up in bed, my darling, with her hands folded like this, and the tears pouring down in three streams. 'So all is finished,' was all she said, and she covered her face with her hands.

"I jumped up and asked, 'What is the matter?'

" 'Oh, Natalya Savishna, if you only knew whom I have just seen!'

“However much I asked, she told me nothing more. She only told me to move the little table nearer, then wrote again for a while, told me to seal the letter in her presence and to send it off at once. After that, everything went worse and worse.”





### XXIII

## WHAT AWAITED US IN THE COUNTRY

On the twenty-fifth of April we got out of the carriage at the porch of our Petrovsk house. When we were leaving Moscow Papa was preoccupied, and when Volodya asked him whether Mamma was ill, Papa looked at him sadly and nodded without speaking. During the journey he grew noticeably calmer, but as we drew nearer home his face became more and more mournful, and when getting out of the carriage he asked Foka, who had run out panting, "Where is Natalya Nikolavna?" his voice was unsteady and there were tears in his eyes. The good old

Foka glanced stealthily at us, dropping his eyes, and opening the front door, answered with his face turned away:

“This is the sixth day she has not left her bedroom.”

Milka, who as I learned later had whined piteously since the day Mamma fell ill, rushed joyfully to Papa, jumped up on him, and licked his hands with an occasional yelp; but he pushed her aside and passed on to the drawing room and from there to the sitting room, the door from which led straight into the bedroom. The nearer he approached that room the more apparent his anxiety became in every movement of his body: on entering the sitting room he walked on tiptoe, hardly drew breath, and made the sign of the cross before he could bring himself to turn the handle of the door. At that moment Mimi, unkempt and with tearstained face, rushed in from the passage. “Ah, Peter Alexandrich!” she whispered with an expression of real despair, and then, noticing that Papa was turning the door handle, she added almost inaudibly, “You can’t get in here—the way is through the other door.”

Oh, how heavily all this weighed on my imagination, attuned to sorrow by terrible forebodings!

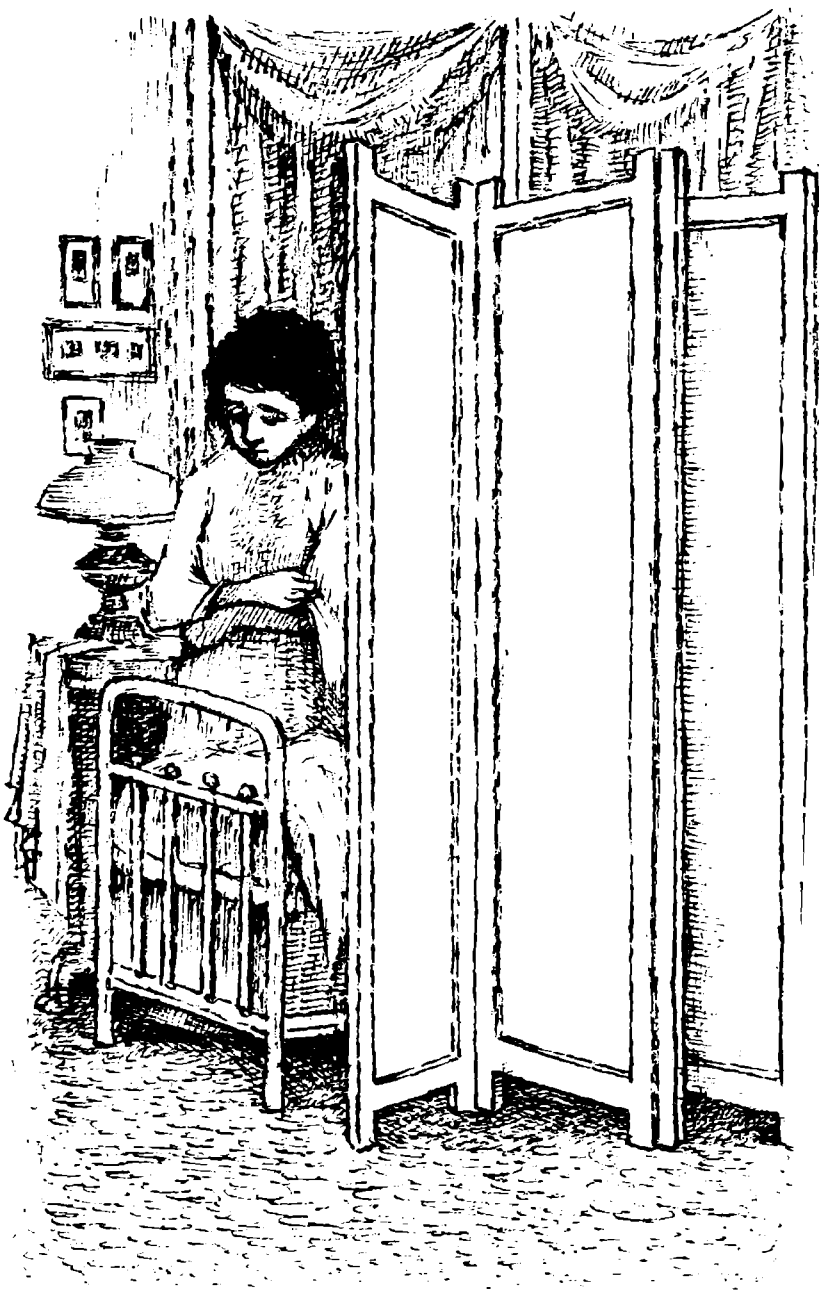
We went into the maids’ room. In the passage we met the fool Akim, who always amused us by his grimaces; but at this moment he not only did not seem funny to me, but nothing struck me so painfully

as the look on his senselessly indifferent face. In the maids' room two servants sitting at work rose to greet us with such sad faces that I felt frightened. Passing through Mimi's room, Papa opened the bedroom door and we entered. To the right of the door were two windows and they were screened by shawls: at one of these Natalya Savishna, with her spectacles on her nose, sat knitting a stocking. She did not kiss us as was her wont, but only rose and looked at us through her spectacles, and her tears fell in streams. I did not at all like the way in which on seeing us everybody immediately began to cry, though they had been calm before.

To the left of the door stood a screen, and behind the screen a bed, a small table, a small medicine chest, and a large armchair in which the doctor was dozing. Beside the bed stood a very fair, young, and remarkably handsome girl in a white morning gown who, having turned up her sleeves a little, was applying ice to Mamma's head. I was unable to see Mamma at that moment. This girl was *la belle Flamande* of whom Mamma had written, and who later on played so important a part in the life of our whole family. As soon as we entered she drew one hand from Mamma's head and arranged the folds of her dress over her bosom, and then said in a whisper, "Unconscious."

I was in great distress at that moment but involuntarily noticed every detail. The room was nearly





dark, hot, and filled with a mingled odor of mint, eau de Cologne, camomile, and Hoffmann's drops. That smell struck me so that not only when I happen to smell it, but when I even think of it, my imagination immediately carries me back to that dismal and close room and reproduces every minute detail of that terrible moment.

Mamma's eyes were open but she saw nothing. . . . Oh, I shall never forget that awful look! It expressed so much suffering.

We were led away.

When I afterward asked Natalya Savishna about my mother's last moments, this is what she told me:

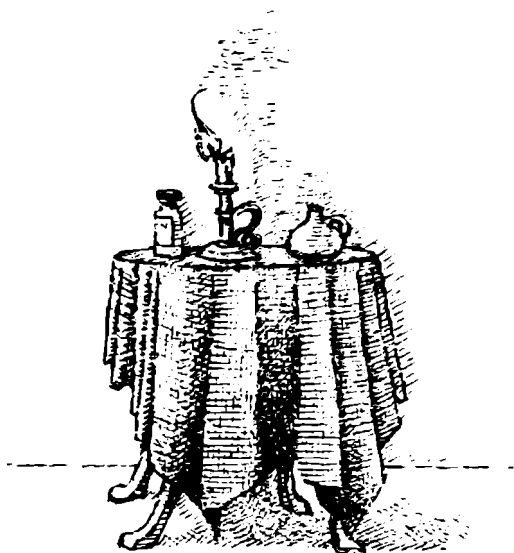
"When they led you away, she, poor birdie, tossed about for a long time as if something were choking her here; then her head slipped off the pillow and she fell asleep as quietly and peacefully as if she were a heavenly angel. I had just gone out to see why they had not brought her drink—and when I returned she, my sweetheart, had thrown her bed-clothes all about, and kept beckoning to your papa. He bent over her but she evidently had not the strength to say what she wanted; as soon as she opened her lips she began moaning: 'Oh, God! Oh, Lord . . . ! The children, the children!' I wanted to run for you, but Ivan Vasilich stopped me. He said, 'It will only upset her more, better not.' After that she would just raise her hand and drop it again. What she meant by it, God only knows! I think she was

blessing you in your absence, but it seems God would not let her see her children before the end. Then she, my dear one, sat up, moved her hands like this, and suddenly spoke, in such a voice that I dare not think of it: 'Mother of God, do not desert them . . . !' Just then the pain reached her heart; one could see by her eyes that she suffered dreadfully, poor thing. She fell back on her pillow, seized the sheet with her teeth, and her tears just poured down."

"And then?" I asked.

Natalya could not say any more; she turned away and wept bitterly.

Mamma had died in great agony.





## XXIV GRIEF

Late in the evening of the following day I felt a wish to look at her again. Having mastered an involuntary feeling of dread, I softly opened the door and entered the music room on tiptoe.

On a table in the middle of the room stood the coffin; around it were candles that had burned low in their tall silver candlesticks; in the far corner of the room sat the chanter reading the Psalter in a soft monotonous voice.

I stopped at the door and looked, but my eyes were so swollen from weeping and my nerves so unstrung

that I could not distinguish anything. Everything seemed to run strangely together: the light, the gold brocade, the velvet, the tall candlesticks, the pink, lace-trimmed pillow, a frontlet, her ribbon-trimmed cap, and something else of a translucent wax color. I got up on a chair to look at her face, but in its place I again saw the same pale yellow, translucent object. I could not believe that it was her face. I gazed at it more intently and little by little began to recognize in it her dear, familiar features. I shuddered with terror when I realized that this was she. But why were the closed eyes so sunken? Why that dreadful pallor and that dark spot under the transparent skin on one of the cheeks? Why was the expression of her whole face so cold and severe? Why were the lips so pale and their shape so beautiful, so majestic, and expressive of such unearthly calm, that a cold shudder ran over my spine and scalp when I looked at them?

I gazed, and felt that an incomprehensible, irresistible power drew my eyes to that lifeless face. I did not take my eyes off it, yet my fancy drew pictures of blooming life and happiness. I kept forgetting that the dead body which lay before me, and at which I gazed unreasoningly as at an object that had nothing in common with my memories, was *she*. I imagined her now in one situation and now in another: alive, gay, and smiling; then I was suddenly struck by some feature of the pale face on which my

eyes were resting: I recalled the terrible reality and shuddered, but continued to look. And again dreams replaced the reality, and again a consciousness of the reality destroyed the dreams. At last my imagination was tired out, it ceased to deceive me. My awareness of the reality also vanished and I became quite unconscious. I do not know how long I remained in that condition, nor what it was; I only know that for a time I ceased to be aware of my existence and experienced a lofty, inexpressibly delightful and sad enjoyment.

Maybe as she flew toward a better world her lovely spirit turned sadly to look at the one in which she had left us; she saw my sorrow, pitied it, and with a heavenly smile of compassion came down to earth on the wings of love to console and bless me.

The door creaked and another chanter entered the room to relieve the first one. The noise roused me, and the first thought that came to me was that, as I was not crying but stood on a chair in an attitude not at all touching, the chanter might take me for a heartless boy who had climbed onto the chair out of pity or curiosity; and I made the sign of the cross, bowed, and began to cry.

Recalling my impression of that time I find that only that momentary self-forgetfulness was true grief. Before and after the funeral I did not cease crying and felt sad, but I am ashamed to remember that sadness, for it was always mingled with some selfish

feeling: now a desire to show that I grieved more than anyone else, now anxiety as to the effect I was producing on others, now an aimless curiosity, which made me observe Mimi's cap or the faces of those present. I despised myself because I did not experience exclusively a feeling of sorrow, and I tried to conceal all other feelings: this made my grief insincere and unnatural. Besides this I felt a kind of enjoyment at knowing myself to be unhappy, and tried to stimulate my consciousness of unhappiness, and this egotistic feeling, more than any other, stifled real sorrow in me.

Having slept soundly and calmly that night, as is always the case after great distress, I awoke with my eyes dry and my nerves soothed. At ten o'clock we were called to the service, which was held before the coffin was carried out. The room was filled with domestic and peasant serfs, who all came with tears in their eyes to take leave of their mistress. During the service I wept, crossed myself, and bowed to the ground in the proper way, but did not pray with my soul and was rather indifferent. I was concerned about the fact that the new jacket they had put on me was very tight under the arms; I was thinking how to keep my trousers clean when I knelt down, and stealthily observed all who were present. My father stood at the head of the coffin, was as pale as a handkerchief, and restrained his tears with evident difficulty. His tall figure in a black dress coat, his

pale expressive face, and his movements, graceful and confident as ever when he crossed himself and bowed touching the ground with his fingers, took a candle from the priest's hand, or went up to the coffin, were extremely effective; but, I don't know why, I did not like his being able to be so effective at that moment. Mimi stood leaning against the wall and seemed hardly able to stand on her feet; her dress was crumpled and had bits of down sticking to it, her cap was on one side, her swollen eyes were red, her head shook, she did not cease sobbing in a heart-rending manner, and she kept covering her face with her handkerchief and her hands. It seemed to me that she did this to hide her face from the spectators and to rest a moment from feigned sobbing. I remembered that the day before, she told Papa that Mamma's death was such a terrible blow for her that she could never hope to recover from it, that it had deprived her of everything, that this angel (as she called Mamma) had not forgotten her at the last and had expressed her wish to secure her and Katya's future. She shed bitter tears while saying this and perhaps her sorrow was sincere, but it was not pure and exclusive. Lyuba in a black frock trimmed with white bands, all wet with tears, hung her head and occasionally glanced at the coffin. Her face expressed nothing but childish fear. Katya stood beside her mother and, despite her long-drawn face, looked as rosy as ever. Volodya's frank nature was frank in



its sorrow: now he stood deep in thought, his eyes fixed on some object; now his lips suddenly quivered and he hurriedly crossed himself and bowed down. All the outsiders who attended the funeral seemed insufferable to me. The words of condolence they addressed to my father about her being happier there and not having been for this world, evoked a kind of vexation in me.

What right had they to talk about her and to weep for her? Some of them spoke of us as *orphans*. Just as if we did not know ourselves that children who have no mother are called so! They seemed to like being the first to call us by that name, just as people generally are in a hurry to call a newly married girl *Mrs.* for the first time.

In a far corner of the room, almost hidden by the open door of the butler's pantry, knelt a bent, gray-haired old woman. With folded hands raised to heaven, she did not weep but prayed. Her soul went out to God and she asked Him to unite her with the one she had loved more than anything on earth, and she firmly believed that this would happen soon.

"There is one who loved her truly!" I thought, and I felt ashamed of myself.

The service was over; the face of the deceased was uncovered, and all present, excepting ourselves, went up to the coffin one after another to kiss her.

One of the last to walk up and take leave of her was a peasant woman with a pretty five-year-old

girl in her arms, whom she had brought there heaven knows why. At that moment I dropped my wet handkerchief and was on the point of picking it up; but just as I stooped, I was struck by a piercing cry of such horror that I shall never forget it were I to live to be a hundred; whenever I think of it, a cold shudder runs down my body. I raised my head: on a stool by the coffin stood that peasant woman, with difficulty holding in her arms the little girl who was pushing with her little hands, throwing back her frightened face, fixing her staring eyes on the dead face, and screaming in a dreadful, frenzied voice. I cried out in a voice that, I think, was even more dreadful than the one that had so staggered me, and ran out of the room.

It was only then that I understood what the strong, oppressive smell was that mingling with the incense filled the whole room; and the thought that the face that but a few days before had been so full of beauty and tenderness, the face of her I loved more than anything on earth, could evoke horror, seemed to reveal the bitter truth to me for the first time, and filled my soul with despair.



## XXV

### LAST SAD MEMORIES

Mamma was no more, yet our life continued on the old lines: we went to bed and got up at the same hours and in the same rooms; morning and evening tea, dinner, supper—all took place at the usual time; tables and chairs stood in the same places, nothing had changed in the house or in our way of life—only she was not there.

It seemed to me that after such a misfortune everything ought to be changed; our ordinary course of life seemed to me an affront to her memory, and too vividly reminded me of her absence.

On the day before the funeral, after dinner, I felt sleepy and went to Natalya Savishna's room, meaning to lie down on her soft feather bed under her warm quilt. When I entered, Natalya Savishna was lying on her bed, probably asleep. Hearing the sound of my footsteps she sat up, threw back the woolen shawl with which she had protected her head from the flies, straightened her cap, and seated herself on the side of her bed.

As I had often before happened to come to have an after-dinner nap in her room, she guessed why I had come, and rising from the bed, said:

"I suppose you have come to have a rest, my pet? Lie down!"

"Oh no, Natalya Savishna!" said I, holding her back by her arm, "I did not come at all for that . . . I've come just to . . . and you are tired yourself, you'd better lie down."

"No, my dear, I am quite rested," she said (I knew she had not slept for three days). "Besides, this is no time for sleeping," she added with a deep sigh.

I wanted to speak of our misfortune with Natalya Savishna: I knew her sincerity and love, and so it would be a consolation for me to weep with her.

"Natalya Savishna," I asked after a pause, as I sat down on her bed, "did you expect it?"

The old woman gave me a perplexed and surprised look, probably not understanding why I put that question to her.

“Who could have expected it?” I said.

“Oh, my dear,” she replied, giving me a look of the tenderest sympathy, “not only did I not expect it but I can’t even think of it now. Now for an old woman like me it has long been time to lay my old bones to rest—but see what I have had to survive. My old master, your grandfather—blessed be his memory! Prince Nicholas Mikhaylovich, two brothers, sister Anna: I have followed them all to the grave, and they were all younger than I, my dear, and now—for my sins no doubt—I have had to outlive her too. It’s His holy will! He has taken her because she was worthy, and He needs the good there, too.”

This simple thought struck me as comforting, and I moved closer to Natalya Savishna. She folded her hands on her bosom and looked upward; her sunken and moist eyes expressed a great but tranquil sorrow. She firmly trusted that God had not parted her for long from the one on whom all her power of love had been centered for so many years.

“Yes, my dear, it does not seem long since I dandled her and cared for her, and since she called me ‘Nasha.’ She would come running to me, put her tiny arms around me and kiss me, saying, ‘Nasha mine, beauty mine, you my little turkey hen!’ and I would say in fun, ‘Not at all, madam, you don’t love me; only wait a little, when you grow up and get married you’ll forget your Nasha!’ And she would become thoughtful and say, ‘No, I’d rather

not marry if I can't take Nasha with me; I shall never leave Nasha.' And now she has left me and did not wait for me. And how she did love me! But, to tell the truth, whom did she not love? Yes, my dear, you must not forget your mother; she was not human, but an angel from heaven. When her soul is in the kingdom of heaven she will still love you there and still rejoice in you."

"Why do you say, '*When* she is in the kingdom of heaven,' Natalya Savishna?" I asked. "I should think she is there now."

"No, my dear," said Natalya Savishna, lowering her voice and settling closer to me in the bed, "her soul is here now."

She pointed upward. She spoke almost in a whisper, and with such feeling and conviction that I involuntarily raised my eyes and looked at the cornice, searching for something there.

"Before a righteous soul goes to paradise it must pass through forty trials, my dear, for forty days, and may remain in its own home. . . ."

She continued to speak for a long time in this way, and so simply and with such conviction—as if telling about quite ordinary things she had seen herself, and about which it could never enter anyone's head to have the least doubt—that I listened to her, holding my breath and, though without quite understanding what she said, fully believing her.

"Yes, my dear, she is here now looking at us, and



perhaps hearing what we are saying," concluded Natalya Savishna, and lowering her head she became silent.

She wanted a handkerchief to dry her falling tears; she rose, looked me straight in the face, and in a voice trembling with emotion said:

"The Lord has drawn me many steps closer to Himself through this. What is there left for me here? Whom have I to live for? Whom to love?"

"But don't you love us?" I said reproachfully and hardly refraining from tears.

"God knows how I love you, my darlings, but I have never loved, nor can love, anyone as I loved her."

She could not say any more, turned away from me, and sobbed aloud.

I no longer thought of sleep, and we sat silently opposite one another and wept.

Foka entered the room and seeing our condition, and probably unwilling to disturb us, silently and timidly stopped at the door, looking around.

"What do you want, Foka dear?" asked Natalya Savishna, drying her face.

"A pound and a half of raisins, four pounds of sugar, and three pounds of rice for the *kutyá*." <sup>1</sup>

"Directly, directly, Foka," said Natalya Savishna, hurriedly taking a pinch of snuff and going with rapid steps to the provision bin. The last traces of

<sup>1</sup> *Kutyá* is a dish made of rice, sugar, raisins, and such things, placed on a table in church at services for the dead.



sorrow occasioned by our conversation vanished when she set about her duty, which she considered most important.

“Why four pounds?” she said in a grumbling tone, getting out the sugar and weighing it on the balance. “Three and a half will be sufficient,” and she took a few lumps from the balance.

“And what do they mean by asking for more rice, when I let them have eight pounds yesterday? You may do as you please, Foka Demidich, but I won’t let them have any more rice. That Vanka is glad of the turmoil in the house: perhaps he thinks things will pass unnoticed. No, I won’t overlook anything concerning the master’s property. Now who ever saw such a thing? Eight pounds!”

“What’s to be done? He says it’s all used up.”

“Oh well, here it is, take it. Let him have it!”

I was at the time surprised by this change from the touching emotion with which she had been speaking to me, to querulousness and petty economy. When considering it later I understood that in spite of what was passing in her soul, she had sufficient presence of mind to carry on her work, and that force of habit drew her to her usual occupations. Sorrow had acted on her so powerfully that she did not find it necessary to disguise the fact that she could attend to other things; she would not even have understood how such an idea could occur to anyone.

When she had let Foka have the provisions asked for, and had reminded him about the pie which had

to be made to set before the clergy, she let him go, took up her knitting, and once more sat down beside me.

We again began talking about the same things, we wept again, and again dried our tears.

My talks with Natalya Savishna were repeated every day; her quiet tears and calm, pious words gave me comfort and relief.

But we were soon separated: three days after the funeral we all moved to Moscow, and I was not destined ever to see her again.

Grandmamma received the terrible news only on our arrival, and her grief was extreme. We were not admitted to her, because for a whole week she was not in her right mind; the doctors feared for her life, the more so as she not only would not take any medicine, but did not speak to anybody, did not sleep, and took no food. Sometimes, sitting alone in the room in her easy chair, she suddenly began to laugh, then to sob without any tears, had convulsions, and in a frenzied voice shouted meaningless or terrible words. It was the first great sorrow she had experienced and it brought her to despair. She wanted to blame someone for her misfortune, and she uttered dreadful words, threatened someone, jumped up from the chair with extraordinary violence, paced the room with large, rapid strides, and then fell down unconscious.

Once I went to her room; she was sitting as usual

in her armchair and appeared calm, but I was struck by her expression. Her eyes were wide open but her look seemed vague and dull: she gazed straight at me but probably did not see me. Her lips stretched slowly into a smile and she began to speak in a pathetic and tender tone: "Come here, my pet; come, my angel!"

I thought she was addressing me, and I drew nearer, but she was not looking at me. "Oh, if you knew, my treasure, how I have suffered and how glad I am now that you have come. . . ." I understood that she imagined that she saw Mamma, and I stopped. "And I was told you were no more," she continued, with a frown. "What nonsense! As if you could die before me!" and she burst into terrible hysterical laughter.

Only people capable of loving deeply can experience deep grief; but that same necessity of loving acts as an antidote to grief and cures them.

After a week Grandmamma was able to weep, and she got better. Her first thoughts after she came to herself were of us, and her love for us increased. We kept near her chair; she wept softly, spoke of Mamma, and caressed us tenderly.

No one who saw her grief could think that she exaggerated it, and the expressions of that grief were vehement and touching; but I, without knowing why, sympathized more with Natalya Savishna, and am still convinced that no one loved Mamma so

sincerely and purely and mourned her loss so deeply as that simple-hearted and loving creature.

With my mother's death the happy period of childhood ended for me and a new period began—that of boyhood; but since my recollections of Natalya Savishna, whom I never saw again and who had such a powerful and good influence on my disposition and the development of my sensibility, belong to the first period, I will say a few more words about her and her death.

After we had left, as I was afterward told by persons who had remained in the country, she fretted very much for want of occupation. Though all the chests were still in her charge and she kept rummaging in them, arranging, airing, and unfolding their contents, she missed the noise and bustle of a country residence inhabited by the family, to which she had from childhood been accustomed. Grief, the changed manner of life, and the absence of household cares soon developed in her a senile ailment to which she had a tendency. Just a year after my mother's death she became affected with dropsy and took to her bed.

It must have been hard for Natalya Savishna to live alone, and still harder to die alone, in the great, empty house at Petrovskoy, without relatives or friends. Everyone in the house was fond of Natalya Savishna and respected her, but she was not intimate with any of them, and prided herself on this. She considered that in her position of housekeeper, en-

joying her master's confidence and in charge of so many chests full of all sorts of goods, intimacy with anyone would inevitably involve her in partiality and guilty connivance; for this reason, or perhaps because she had nothing in common with the other servants, she kept aloof from them all and used to say that she had neither friends nor connections in the house and that no one would have her connivance in matters concerning the master's property.

She sought and found consolation in the confession of her feelings to God in ardent prayers; but sometimes in the moments of weakness to which everyone is subject, when man finds the best consolation in the love and sympathy of a living being, she would take onto her bed her little pug dog (which fixed its yellow eyes on her and licked her hands), speak to it, and weep gently as she caressed it. When the dog began to whimper piteously she would try to quiet it, and say, "Don't I know, without that, that I shall die soon?"

A month before her death she took some white calico, white muslin, and pink ribbons out of her trunk, and with her maid's help made herself a white gown and cap, and arranged all that would be needed for her funeral to the last detail. She also sorted out everything in her master's chests and with the greatest exactitude gave it over, with a written inventory, into the care of the steward's wife. Then she got out two silk gowns and an ancient shawl that had

once been given her by my grandmother, and my grandfather's gold-embroidered military uniform, which had also been given her to dispose of as she liked. Thanks to her care, the gold embroidery and lace on the uniform had remained quite fresh and the cloth untouched by moths. Before her death she expressed her wish that one of these gowns, a pink one, should be given to Volodya for a dressing gown and the other, a brown checked one, to me for the same purpose, and the shawl to Lyuba. She bequeathed the uniform to whichever of us should first become an officer. All the rest of her goods and money, except forty rubles which she set aside for her funeral and for prayers for her soul, she left to her brother. Her brother, who had been granted his freedom long before, was living in some distant province and led a most dissolute life, so she had had no intercourse with him during her lifetime.

When this brother came to receive his legacy, and her whole property proved to be worth only twenty-five rubles, he did not wish to believe it, and declared that it was impossible that an old woman who had lived with a wealthy family for sixty years and had charge of everything in it, and who was penurious all her life and trembled over every rag, should have left nothing. But it really was so.

Natalya Savishna's illness lasted two months, and she bore her sufferings with truly Christian patience; she did not grumble or complain, but only kept call-

ing on God, as was her wont. An hour before her death she confessed with peaceful joy and received the sacrament and extreme unction.

She begged forgiveness of everyone in the household for any wrong she might have done them, asked Father Basil, her confessor, to tell us all that she did not know how to thank us for our kindness, and that she asked us to forgive her if, through her stupidity, she had offended anyone—"but I have never been a thief, and I can say that I never filched so much as a thread from my master!" That was the one virtue she valued herself upon.

Having put on the dress and cap she had prepared, and leaning her elbows on her pillow, she talked with the priest to the very last, remembered that she had left nothing for the poor, got out ten rubles, and asked him to distribute them in the parish; then she crossed herself, lay down, sighed deeply for the last time, and uttered the name of God with a joyous smile.

She left this life without regret, did not fear death, and accepted it as a boon. This is often said, but how seldom it really is so! Natalya Savishna was able not to fear death because she died in steadfast faith, and having fulfilled the gospel commandments. Her whole life had been pure unselfish love and self-sacrifice.

What if her beliefs might have been more lofty and her life devoted to higher aims—was that pure

soul therefore less worthy of love and admiration?

She accomplished the best and greatest thing in life—she died without regrets or fear.

She was buried, according to her own wish, not far from the chapel that stands over our mother's grave. The little mound overgrown with nettles and thistles, under which she lies, is surrounded by a black railing, and I never forget to go from the chapel to that fence and bow down to the ground.

Sometimes I stop in silence between the chapel and the black railing. Painful memories suddenly awaken in my soul. The question occurs to my mind: "Can Providence have united me with those two beings, only that I should eternally regret them?"









## About the Author

Born in 1828 at Yasnaya Polyana, a country estate in the Russian province of Tula, Leo Tolstoy was the fourth of five sons. His mother died when he was three and his father when he was nine. He was brought up by elderly female relatives and his early education was in the hands of French tutors. In 1844 he went to Kazan University, but he was a poor student and learned little. Three years later he returned to Yasnaya Polyana with the intention of farming and looking after his serfs. But after a while he decided to move to Moscow where he lived until 1851,

when he enlisted in the army and joined an artillery unit. He was stationed in the Caucasus and there he lived a quiet garrison life among Cossack villagers. In 1852 he completed his first story, *Childhood*, which was immediately published. Later on as an officer he saw action against the Turks and took part in the siege of Sevastopol. From there he was transferred to St. Petersburg and in 1857 retired from the army. After a period of traveling abroad he once again settled at Yasnaya Polyana. There he administered his lands, took great interest in the social welfare of his serfs, and established a school for peasant children based on a new and original method of teaching. In 1862 he married Sophie Behrs, a young girl sixteen years his junior, and in the course of their marriage they had nine children. In 1864 Tolstoy began working on the first of his major novels, *War and Peace*, which he completed in 1866. In 1870 he began his *Anna Karenina*, which was subsequently published in installments. These are his two masterpieces. At about this time Tolstoy began to feel uneasy about the prosperous life he was leading and went through a religious crisis that brought about a profound change in his mode of life. He dressed like a peasant, did much manual work, learned bootmaking, and became a vegetarian. During this period he wrote several important works which reflected his new beliefs. For the last twenty years of his life Tolstoy was perhaps the most vener-

ated man in the world. His teachings and writings reached into China and India as well as Europe and America. But his family life had become increasingly difficult and his last years were marred by estrangement from his wife. He died on November 20, 1910, at Astapovo, where he had made a stop after he decided to secretly leave his home at Yasnaya Polyana with his daughter Alexandra.