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Pedigree

A Memoir

Patrick Modiano

Translated from the French

by Mark Polizzotti

Yale UNIVERSITY PRESS • NEW HAVEN AND LONDON
was born on July 30, 1945, at 11 Allée Mar-
guerite in Boulogne-Billancourt, to a Jewish
man and a Flemish woman who had met
in Paris under the Occupation. I write “Jewish”
without really knowing what the word meant to
my father, and because at the time it was what
appeared on the identity papers. Periods of great
turbulence often lead to rash encounters, with
the result that I’ve never felt like a legitimate
son, much less an heir.

My mother was born in 1918 in Antwerp.
She spent her childhood in a suburb of that city,
between Kiel and Hoboken. Her father was a
laborer, then assistant surveyor. Her maternal
grandfather, Louis Bogaerts, was a dockworker;
he posed for the statue of the longshoreman by
Constantin Meunier that stands in front of the
Antwerp city hall. I’ve kept his loonboek for the
year 1913, in which he recorded the names of all
the ships he unloaded: the Michigan, the Elisa-
bethville, the Santa Anna . . . He died on the job,
at around age sixty-five, from a fall.
As a teenager, my mother joined the Faucons Rouges youth group. She worked for the gas company. In the evenings, she took drama classes. In 1938, she was signed by the filmmaker and producer Jan Vanderheyden to act in his Flemish “comedies.” Four films between 1938 and 1941. She was a chorus girl in music hall revues in Antwerp and Brussels; there were many German refugees among the dancers and artists. In Antwerp, she shared a small house on Horenstraat with two friends: a dancer, Joppie Van Allen, and Leon Lemmens, who was more or less the secretary and shill of a rich homosexual, the baron Jean L., and who would be killed in a bombardment in Ostend in May 1940. Her best friend was a young decorator, Lon Landau, whom she’d meet again in Brussels in 1942 wearing the yellow star.

I’m trying to follow chronological order, for want of other reference points. In 1940, once Belgium was occupied, she lived in Brussels. She became engaged to a certain Georges Niels, who at age twenty managed a hotel, the Canter-
bury. The hotel restaurant was partly commandeered by officers of the Propaganda-Staffel. My mother lived in the Canterbury and met various people there. I know nothing about all those people. She worked in radio, playing in Flemish broadcasts. She was hired by a theater in Ghent. In June 1941, she was in a theatrical tour of the ports along the Atlantic and the English Channel, performing for Flemish workers of the Organisation Todt and, farther north, in Hazebrouck, for German airmen.

She was a pretty girl with an arid heart. Her fiancé had given her a chow-chow, but she didn’t take care of it and left it with various people, as she would later do with me. The chow-chow killed itself by leaping from a window. The dog appears in two or three photos, and I have to admit that he touches me deeply and that I feel a great kinship with him.

Georges Niel’s parents, rich hotel owners from Brussels, did not want their son to marry her. She decided to leave Belgium. The Germans intended to send her to film school in Ber-
lin, but a young officer from the Propaganda-Staffel whom she’d met in the Canterbury got her out of that predicament by sending her to Paris, to Continental Films, a production company, run by Alfred Greven.

She arrived in Paris in June 1942. Greven gave her a screen test at the Billancourt studios, but it wasn’t very convincing. She worked in the “dubbing” department at Continental, writing Dutch subtitles for the French films the company produced. She became the girlfriend of Aurel Bischoff, one of Greven’s assistants.

In Paris, she lived in a room at 15 Quai de Conti, in an apartment rented by an antiques dealer from Brussels and his friend Jean de B., whom I can picture as a teenager, with a mother and sisters in a chateau in the heart of Poitou, writing fervent letters to Jean Cocteau in secret. Through Jean de B., my mother met a young German, Klaus Valentiner, who had secured a cushy administrative post. He lived in a studio on the Quai Voltaire and, in his leisure time,
read the latest novels by Evelyn Waugh. He was later sent to the Russian Front and was killed.

Other visitors to the Quai de Conti apartment included a young Russian, Georges d’Ismailoff, who was tubercular but always went out into the frozen winters of the Occupation without an overcoat. A Greek, Christos Bellos: he had missed the last ship leaving for America, where he was supposed to join a friend. A girl of the same age, Geneviève Vaudoyer. All that remains of them are their names. Geneviève Vaudoyer and her father, Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, were the first French bourgeois family to invite my mother to their home. Geneviève Vaudoyer introduced my mother to Arletty, who also lived on the Quai de Conti, in the building next door to number 15. Arletty took my mother under her wing.

I hope I can be forgiven all these names, and others to follow. I’m a dog who pretends to have a pedigree. My mother and father didn’t belong to any particular milieu. So aimless were
they, so unsettled, that I’m straining to find a few markers, a few beacons in this quicksand, as one might attempt to fill in with half-smudged letters a census form or administrative questionnaire.

My father was born in 1912, in Square Pétrelle in Paris, on the border of the 9th and 10th arrondissements. His father was originally from Thessaloniki and belonged to a Jewish family from Tuscany established under the Ottoman Empire. Cousins in London, Alexandria, Milan, Budapest. Four of my father’s cousins, Carlo, Grazia, Giacomo, and his wife, Mary, would be murdered by the SS in Italy, in Arona, on Lake Maggiore, in September 1943. My grandfather left Thessaloniki when he was a child and went to Alexandria. But after several years, he left for Venezuela. I believe he had cut all ties with his family and background. He became involved in the pearl trade in Margarita Island, then ran a thrift shop in Caracas. After Venezuela, he settled in Paris in 1903. He ran an antiques shop at 5 Rue de Châteaudun, where he
sold objets d’art from China and Japan. He held a Spanish passport, and until the day he died he would be registered at the Spanish consulate in Paris, whereas his forebears, as “Tuscan subjects,” had been under the protection of the French, English, and then Austrian consulates. I’ve kept several of his passports, one of which was issued by the Spanish consulate in Alexandria. And a certificate, drawn up in Caracas in 1894, attesting that he was a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

My grandmother was born in the Pas-de-Calais. In 1916, her father lived in a suburb of Nottingham. But after her marriage, she adopted Spanish citizenship.

My father lost his father when he was four. Childhood in the 10th arrondissement, Cité d’Hauteville. Collège Chaptal, where he was a boarder—even on weekends, he told me. And from his dormitory he could hear the music of the street carnival, on the median strip along Boulevard des Batignolles. He never took his baccalaureate exam. As a teenager and young
adult, he was left to his own devices. By age sixteen, he and his friends were hanging out at the Hôtel Bohy-Lafayette, the bars of Faubourg Montmartre, the Cadet, the Luna Park. His name was Alberto, but they called him Aldo. At age eighteen, he began smuggling petroleum, sneaking drums of it into Paris undetected by the authorities. At nineteen, he asked a manager of the Saint-Phalle bank to underwrite his “financial” operations, so persuasively that the latter agreed to back him. But the affair went sour, as my father was a minor, and the law stepped in. At age twenty-four, he rented a room at 33 Avenue Montaigne and, according to certain documents I’ve preserved, he often traveled to London to help form a company called Bravisco Ltd. His mother died in 1937 in a boardinghouse on Rue Roquépine, where he had lived for a time with his brother Ralph. Then he had taken a room in the Hôtel Terminus, near the Gare Saint-Lazare, which he’d left without settling his bill. Just before the war, he took over management of a shop selling stockings and perfume at
71 Boulevard Malesherbes. It seems he was then residing on Rue Frédéric-Bastiat, in the 8th.

And war broke out at a time when he had no capital whatsoever and was already living by his wits. In 1940, he had his mail sent to the Hôtel Victor-Emmanuel III at 24 Rue de Ponthieu. In a letter of that year to his brother Ralph, sent from Angoulême where he was stationed in an artillery regiment, he mentioned a chandelier that they’d pawned. In another letter, he asked to have the Courrier des pétroles forwarded to him in Angoulême. In 1937–39, he was in “business” with a certain Enriquez, the Société Royalieu, dealing in Romanian petroleum.

The fall of France in June 1940 caught him in his barracks in Angoulême. He was not taken away in the mass of prisoners, as the Germans didn’t arrive in Angoulême until after the armistice was signed. He took refuge in Les Sables-d’Olonne, where he stayed until September. There he ran into his friend Henri Lagroua and two girls they knew, one called Suzanne and the other Gysèle Hollerich, a dancer at the Tabarin.
Back in Paris, he did not register with the authorities as a Jew. He lived with his brother Ralph, at the home of Ralph’s girlfriend, a Mauritian with a British passport. The apartment was at 5 Rue des Saussaies, right next to the Gestapo. Because of her British passport, the Mauritian had to appear at police headquarters every week; she would be detained for several months in Besançon and Vittel as an “Englishwoman.” My father had a girlfriend, Hela H., a German Jew who had been engaged to Billy Wilder back in Berlin. They were picked up during a raid one evening in February 1942, in a restaurant on Rue de Marignan, during an identity check—which were frequent that month because of the new regulations forbidding Jews from being out on the street or in public after 8 p.m. My father and his girlfriend were not carrying any papers. They were carted off in a Black Maria by police inspectors, who brought them to Rue Greffulhe for “verification,” before a certain Superintendent Schweblin. My father had to state his identity. He got separated from his girlfriend and
managed to escape as they were about to transfer him to the “Depot,” the holding tank, taking advantage of a moment when the hall light went out. Hela H. would be released from the Depot the next day, probably on a word from a friend of her father’s. Who? I’ve often wondered. After his escape, my father hid under the staircase of a building on Rue des Mathurins, trying not to attract the notice of the concierge. He spent the night there because of the curfew. In the morning, he went home to 5 Rue des Saussaies. Then he hid out with the Mauritian and his brother Ralph in a hotel, the Alcyon de Breteuil, whose manageress was the mother of a friend of theirs. Later, he lived with Hela H. in a furnished room on Square Villaret-de-Joyeuse and at the Marronniers on Rue de Chazelles.

Among the people he knew at the time, the ones I’ve managed to identify are Henri Lagroua; Sacha Gordine; Freddie McEvoy, an Australian bobsled champion and racing driver with whom he shared an “office” on the Champs-Elysées right after the war (I’ve never
been able to determine the name of the company); a certain Jean Koporindé, 189 Rue de la Pompe; Geza Pellmont; Toddie Werner (who called herself “Mme Sahuque”) and her friend Hessien (Liselotte); and a Russian girl, Kissa Kuprin, daughter of the writer Aleksandr Kuprin. She had acted in a few films and in one of Roger Vitrac’s plays, *Les Demoiselles du large*. Flory Francken, aka Nardus, whom my father called Flo, was the daughter of a Dutch painter. She had spent her childhood and adolescence in Tunisia, then had come to Paris and hung out in Montparnasse. In 1938, she’d been implicated in a minor incident that had landed her in criminal court, and in 1940 she had married the Japanese actor Sessue Hayakawa. During the Occupation, she was close to the actress Dita Parlo, who had starred in *L’Atalante*, and her lover Dr. Fuchs, one of the directors of the so-called Otto Bureau, the most important of the black market “purchasing services,” located at 6 Rue Adolphe-Yvon in the 16th arrondissement.

This was more or less the world in which my
father circulated. Demimonde? Underworld? Before she is lost in the cold night of oblivion, I’ll mention another Russian, who was his girlfriend at the time: Galina “Gay” Orloff. She had immigrated to the United States when very young. At twenty, she was dancing in a burlesque club in Florida, where she met a small, dark man, very sentimental and courteous, whose mistress she became: a certain Lucky Luciano. Back in Paris, she had worked as a model and married to obtain French citizenship. At the start of the Occupation, she lived with a Chilean “secretary of legation,” Pedro Eyzaguirre, then on her own at the Hôtel Chateaubriand on Rue du Cirque, where my father often went to see her. A few months after I was born she gave me a teddy bear that I long held onto as a talisman and my only souvenir of an absent mother. She took her life on February 12, 1948, at age thirty-four. She is buried in Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois.

The more I draw up this list of names and call the roll in an empty garrison, the more my head spins and my breath grows short. Curious
individuals. Curious times, neither fish nor fowl. And my parents came to know each other during that period, among those people who were like them. Two lost, heedless butterflies in the midst of an indifferent city. *Die Stadt ohne Blick.* But there’s nothing I can do about it: that’s the soil—or the dung—from which I emerged. Most of the scraps of their lives that I’ve been able to gather, I get from my mother. But there was much she didn’t know about the murky, clandestine world of the black market in which my father traveled by force of circumstance. She was unaware of most of it. And he took his secrets to the grave.

They met one evening in October 1942, at the home of Toddie Werner, aka Mme Sahuque, at 28 Rue Scheffer, 16th arrondissement. My father was carrying an identity card in the name of his friend Henri Lagroua. On the glass door of the concierge’s lodge at 15 Quai de Conti, the name “Henri Lagroua” had been listed among the tenants since the Occupation, next to the words “fourth floor.” When I was a child, I asked the
concierge who this “Henri Lagroua” was. He answered, “Your father.” This dual identity had impressed me at the time. Much later, I learned that during that period he’d used other names by which certain people still knew him well after the war. But names end up becoming detached from the poor mortals who bore them and they glimmer in our imaginations like distant stars. My mother introduced my father to Jean de B. and her friends. They thought there was something “weird and South American” about him and gently cautioned my mother to “be careful.” She repeated this to my father, who joked that the next time he would “look even weirder” and “scare them even worse.”

He was not South American, but having no legal existence, he lived off the black market. My mother would pick him up at one of the tiny offices reached via the multitude of elevators along the arcades of the Lido. He was always there with several others whose names I don’t know. He was mainly in touch with a “purchasing service” at 53 Avenue Hoche, the office of
two Armenian brothers he’d known before the war: Alexandre and Ivan S. Among the goods he delivered to them were entire truckloads of old ball bearings lifted from expired stock of the SKF company, which would sit uselessly in a warehouse in Saint-Ouen, gathering rust. In the course of my research, I came across the names of a few individuals who worked at 53 Avenue Hoche—Baron Wolff, Dante Vannuchi, Doctor Patt, “Alberto”—and wondered whether these weren’t just more of my father’s pseudonyms. It was in this purchasing service on Avenue Hoche that he met a certain André Gabison, the manager of the establishment, whom he often mentioned to my mother. I once got hold of a list of German Special Forces agents dating from 1945, which contained a note about this man: Gabison, André. Italian national, born 1907. Merchant. Passport no. 13755, issued in Paris on 11/18/42, listing him as a Tunisian businessman. Since 1940, associate of Richir (purchasing service, 53 Avenue Hoche). In 1942, in St. Sebastian as Richir’s contact. In April 1944, worked
under the command of a certain Rados of the SD; traveled frequently between Hendaye and Paris. In August 1944, reported as belonging to the sixth section of the Madrid SD under the command of Martin Maywald. Address: Calle Jorge Juan 17, Madrid (tel.: 50-222).

My father’s other acquaintances under the Occupation, at least the ones I know about: an Italian banker, Georges Giorgini-Schiff, and his girlfriend, Simone, who would later marry Pierre Foucret, the owner of the Moulin Rouge. Giorgini-Schiff had his offices at 4 Rue de Penthèvre. My father bought a large pink diamond from him, the “Southern Cross,” which he’d try to resell after the war, when he was destitute. Giorgini-Schiff was arrested by the Germans in September 1943, following the Italian armistice. During the Occupation, he had introduced my parents to a Doctor Carl Gerstner, economic adviser at the German embassy, whose girlfriend, Sybil, was Jewish, and who would apparently become a “major” figure in East Berlin after the war. Annet Badel: former attorney, direc-
tor of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in 1944. My father did some black marketeering with him and his son-in-law, Georges Vikar. Badel had sent my mother a typescript of Sartre’s *No Exit*, which he planned to stage at the Vieux-Colombier in May 1944, under its initial title, “Other People.” That script of “Other People” was still lying at the back of a wardrobe in my room on the fifth floor of Quai de Conti when I was fifteen. Badel thought my mother kept in touch with the Germans through the Continental Films production company, and that she could help him obtain a censorship visa for the play more quickly.

Other close associates of my father’s: André Camoin, antiques dealer, Quai Voltaire; Maria Chernichev, a daughter of Russian nobility but “déclassée,” with whom he conducted some huge black market deals; and a certain “M. Fouquet,” with whom he conducted more modest ones. This Fouquet had a shop on Rue de Rennes and lived in a small private house in the Paris suburbs.
I close my eyes and I see Lucien P. arriving, with his heavy footstep, from the deepest recesses of the past. I believe his job consisted of acting as middleman and introducing people to one another. He was very fat, and in my childhood, whenever he sat on a chair I was always afraid it would collapse under his weight. When he and my father were young, Lucien P. was the long-suffering lover of the actress Simone Simon, whom he followed around like a big poodle. And also a friend of Sylviane Quimfe, a pool shark and adventuress, who under the Occupation would become the Marquise d’Abrantes and the mistress of one of the Rue Lauriston gang. People on whom you can’t dwell at length. Shady travelers at best, passing through a train station concourse without my ever knowing their final destination, supposing they even had one. To finish with this list of phantoms, I should mention the two brothers, who might have been twins: Ivan and Alexandre S. The latter had a girlfriend, Inka, a Finnish dancer. They must have been real grands seigneurs of the black mar-
ket, because under the Occupation they celebrated their “first billion” in an apartment in the massive edifice at 1 Avenue Paul-Doumer, where Ivan S. lived. He fled to Spain at the Liberation, as did André Gabison. As for Alexandre S., I wonder what became of him. But is there really any point asking? My heart goes out to those whose faces appeared on the German wanted posters, the “Affiche Rouge.”

Jean de B. and the antiques dealer from Brussels left the apartment on the Quai de Conti in early 1943, and my parents moved in. Before I finally get sick of all this and no longer have the heart or the energy to continue, here are a few more scraps of their life at that distant time, but as they lived it in the chaos of the present.

They sometimes hid out in Ablis, at the Chateau du Bréau, with Henri Lagroua and his girlfriend Denise. The Chateau du Bréau was abandoned. It belonged to some Americans who had fled France because of the war and given them the keys. In the countryside, my mother took motorcycle rides with La-
groua on his 500 cc BSA. She spent the months of July and August 1943 with my father at an inn in Varenne-Saint-Hilaire, the Petit Ritz. Giorgini-Schiff, Simone, Gerstner, and his girlfriend, Sybil, joined them there. Swimming in the Marne. The inn was home to several outlaws and their “wives,” among whom a certain “Didi” and his companion, “Mme Didi.” The men drove away in the morning to attend to their dirty work and returned from Paris very late at night. Once, my parents overheard an argument in the room above theirs. A woman called her man a “lousy cop” and threw wads of cash out the window, berating him for bringing back all that money. Police stooges? Gestapo henchmen? Toddie Werner, aka Mme Sahuque, at whose home my parents had met, barely managed to avoid being picked up at the beginning of 1943. She injured herself jumping from a window of her apartment. There was a warrant out for the arrest of one of my father’s oldest friends, Sacha Gordine, as attested by a memo from the Legal Status Bureau in the General Commis-
sariat for Jewish Affairs to the head of an “Investigation and Verification Division”: “April 6, 1944. Per the above-referenced note, I had requested that you proceed without delay to arrest the Jew Sacha Gordine for infraction of the Law of June 2, 1941. Pursuant to this note, you indicated that this individual had abandoned his present domicile without leaving a forwarding address. However, he has lately been observed riding his bicycle in the streets of Paris. I therefore request that you kindly pay another visit to his domicile so as to follow up on my note of January 25th last.”

I remember that my father mentioned this period, once only, one evening when we were on the Champs-Elysées. He pointed out the end of Rue de Marignan, where they had taken him away in February 1942. And he told me of a second arrest, in the winter of 1943, after “someone” had denounced him. He had been brought to the Depot, from where “someone” had freed him. That evening, I felt that he wanted to unburden himself, but the words wouldn’t come.
He said only that the Black Maria had made the rounds of the police stations before reaching the lockup. At one of the stops, a young girl had got on and sat across from him. Much later I tried, in vain, to pick up her trace, not knowing whether it was the evening in 1942 or in 1943.

In the spring of 1944, my father received anonymous telephone calls at the Quai de Conti. A voice addressed him by his real name. One afternoon, when he was out, two French plainclothesmen rang at the door and asked for M. Modiano. My mother told them she was just a young Belgian working at Continental, a German company. She was subletting a room in the apartment from a man named Henri Lagroua and couldn’t help them. They promised to come back. My father, to avoid them, left the Quai de Conti. I imagine these were not members of Schweblin’s Jewish Affairs police but men from the Investigation and Verification Division—as in Sacha Gordine’s case. Or else they were sent by Superintendent Permilleux of the Prefecture. Later, I tried to put faces to all those names, but
they remained firmly ensconced in the shadows, with their odor of rotten leather.

My parents resolved to leave Paris as quickly as possible. Christos Bellos, the Greek my mother had met at B.’s, knew a girl who lived on a property near Chinon. The three of them took refuge with her. My mother brought along her winter sportswear, in case they had to flee even farther. They hid in that house in the Touraine until the Liberation and would return to Paris, on bicycles, only when the American troops arrived.

Back in Paris at the beginning of September 1944, my father was hesitant about returning right away to the Quai de Conti, fearing that the police would again be after him—this time because of his illegal activities as a black marketer. My parents lived in a hotel at the corner of Avenue de Breteuil and Avenue Duquesne, the same Alcyon de Breteuil where my father had already hid out in 1942. He sent my mother on ahead to Quai de Conti to get the lay of the land. She was summoned by the police and subjected
to a lengthy interrogation. Since she was a foreigner, they wanted to know the precise reason for her arrival in Paris in 1942 under German patronage. She explained that she was engaged to a Jew with whom she’d been living for two years. The police questioning her were no doubt colleagues of the ones who’d tried to arrest my father under his real name a few months earlier. Or the same ones. They must now have been searching for him through his aliases, unable to identify him.

They released my mother. That evening at the hotel, beneath their windows, women strolled with American GIs along the median strip running down Avenue de Breteuil, and one of them tried to make an American understand how many months they’d been waiting for them. She counts on her fingers in English: “One, two . . .” But the American doesn’t get it and instead imitates her, counting on his own fingers: One, two, three, four . . . And so on and so forth. After several weeks, my father left the Alcyon de Breteuil. Back at the Quai de Conti, he dis-
covered that his Ford, which he’d stashed in a garage in Neuilly, had been commandeered in June by the Vichy militia, the Milice, and it was in that Ford, its bullet-riddled body impounded as evidence by the investigating detectives, that Georges Mandel had been assassinated.
The Dirty Dust: Cré na Cille

MÁIRTÍN Ó CADHAIN

TRANSLATED FROM THE IRISH BY ALAN TITLEY

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Interlude 1

THE BLACK EARTH

1.

Don’t know if I am in the Pound grave, or the Fifteen Shilling grave? Fuck them anyway if they plonked me in the Ten Shilling plot after all the warnings I gave them. The morning I died I calls Patrick in from the kitchen, “I’m begging you Patrick, I’m begging you, put me in the Pound grave, the Pound grave! I know some of us are buried in the Ten Shilling grave, but all the same . . .”

I tell them to get me the best coffin down in Tim’s shop. It’s a good oak coffin anyway. I am wearing the scapulars. And the winding sheet . . . I had them ready myself. There’s a spot on this sheet! Like a smudge of soot. No, not that. A daub of finger. Who else but my daughter-in-law! ’Tis like her dribble. Oh, my God, did Nell see it? I suppose she was there. Not if I had anything to do with it . . .

Look at the mess Kitty made of my covering clothes. I always said that that one and the other one, Biddy Sarah, should never be given a drop to drink until the corpse was gone from the road outside the house. I warned Patrick not to let them near my winding sheet if they had a drop taken. All they ever wanted was a corpse here, there, or around the place. The fields could be bursting with crops, and they’d stay there, if she could cadge a few pence at a funeral . . .

I have the crucifix on my breast anyway, the one I bought myself at the mission . . . But where’s the black one that Tom’s wife, Tom the crawthumper, brought me from Knock, that last time they had to lock him up? I told them to put that one on me too. It’s far nicer than this one. Since Patrick’s kids dropped it the Saviour looks a bit
crooked. He’s beautiful on this one, though. What’s this? My head must be like a sieve. Here it is, just under my neck. ’Tis a pity they didn’t put it on my breast.

They could have wrapped the rosary beads better on my fingers. Nell, obviously, did that. She’d love it if it fell to the ground just as they were putting me in the coffin. O Lord God, she better stay miles away from me . . .

I hope to God they lit the eight candles on my coffin in the church. I left them in the corner of the press under the rent book. You know, that’s something that was never ever on any coffin in the church, eight candles! Curran had only four. Tommy the Tailor’s lad, Billy, had only six, and he has a daughter a nun in America.

I tells them to get three half-barrels of porter, and Ned the Nobber said if there was drink to be got anywhere at all, he’d get it, no bother. It had to be that way, given the price of the altar. Fourteen or fifteen pounds at least. I spent a shilling or two, I’m telling you, or sent somebody to all kinds of places where there was going to be a funeral, especially for the last five or six years when I felt myself falling. I suppose the Hillbillies came. A pity they wouldn’t. We went to theirs. That’s how a pound works in the first place. And the shower from Derry Lough, they’d follow their in-laws. Another pound well spent. And Glen Booley owed me a funeral too . . . I’d be surprised if Chalky Steven didn’t come. We were at every single one of his funerals. But he’d say he never heard about it, ’til I was buried.

And then the bullshit: “I’m telling you Patrick Lydon, if I could help it at all, I would have been at her funeral. It wouldn’t have been right if I wasn’t at Caitriona Paudeen’s funeral, even if I had to crawl on my naked knees. But I heard nothing, not a bit, until the night she was buried. Some young scut . . .” Steven is full of crap! . . .

I don’t even know if they keened me properly. Yes, I know Biddy Sarah has a nice strong voice she can go at it with if she is not too pissed drunk. I’m sure Nell was sipping and supping away there also. Nell whining and keening and not a tear to be seen, the bitch! They wouldn’t have dared come near the house when I was alive . . .

Oh, she’s happy out now. I thought I’d live for another couple
of years, and I’d bury her before me, the cunt. She’s gone down a bit since her son got injured. She was going to the doctor for a good bit before that, of course. But there’s nothing wrong with her. Rheumatism. Sure, that wouldn’t kill her for years yet. She’s very precious about herself. I was never that way. And it’s now I know it. I killed myself working and slaving away . . . I should have watched that pain before it got stuck in me. But when it hits you in the kidneys, actually, you’re fucked . . .

I was two years older than Nell anyway . . . Baba. Then me, and Nell. Last year’s St. Michael’s Day, I got the pension. But I got it before I should have. Baba’s nearly ninety-three, for God’s sake. She’ll soon die, despite her best efforts. None of us live that long. When she hears that I’m dead, she’ll know she’s done for too, and then maybe she’ll make her will . . . She’ll leave every bit to Nell. The bitch will have one up on me after all. She has Baba primed. But if I had lived another bit until Baba had made her will, she’d have given me half the money despite Nell. Baba is quick enough. She wrote to me mostly for the last three years since she abandoned Blotchy Brian’s place and took off to Boston. It’s a great start that she has shagged off from that poisonous rats’ nest anyway.

But she never forgave Patrick that he married that cow from Gort Ribbuck, and that he left Blotchy Brian’s Maggie in the lurch. She would never have gone next or near Nell’s house that time she was home from America if it wasn’t for the fact that her daughter married Blotchy Brian. And why would she? . . . A real kip of a house. A real crap kip of a house it was too. Certainly not a house for a Yank. I haven’t a clue how she put up with it having been in our house and in fancy homes all over America. She didn’t stay there long though, she soon shagged off home . . .

She’ll never come back to Ireland again. She’s finished with us. But you’d never know what kind of a fit would hit her when this war is over, if it suited her. She’d steal the honey from a bee’s hive, she is so smarmy and sweet. She’s gutsy and spirited enough to do it. Fuck her anyway, the old hag! After she buggered off from Blotchy Brian’s place in Norwood, well, she still had a lot of time for Maggie. Patrick
was the real eejit that he didn’t listen to her, and didn’t marry the ugly bitch’s daughter. “I wouldn’t marry Meg if she had all of Ireland . . .” Baba hurried off up to Nell’s place as if you had clocked her on the ear. She never came near our place again, but just about stood on the floor the day she was returning to the States.

— . . . Hitler’s my darling. He’s the boy for them . . .
— If England is beaten, the country will be in a bad way. The economy has already gone to the dogs . . .
— . . . You left me here fifty years before my time, you One Eared Tailor git! You lot were always twisted. Couldn’t trust you. Knives, stones, bottles, it didn’t matter. You wouldn’t fight like a man, but just stab me . . .
— . . . Let me talk, let me talk.
— Christ’s cross protect me! — Am I alive or dead? Are the people here alive or dead? They are all rabbiting on exactly the same way as they were above the ground! I thought that when I died that I could rest in peace, that I wouldn’t have to work, or worry about the house, or the weather, that I would be able to relax . . . But why all this racket in the dirty dust?

2.

— . . . Who are you? How long are you here? Do you hear me? Don’t be afraid. Say the same things here as you said at home. I’m Maggie Frances.
— O may God bless you. Maggie Frances from next door. This is Caitriona. Caitriona Paudeen. Do you remember me, or do you forget everything down here? I haven’t forgotten anything yet, anyway.
— And you won’t. This is much the same as the “ould country” except that we only see the grave we are in, and we can’t leave our coffin. Or you won’t hear any live person either, and you won’t have a clue what they’re up to, except when the newly buried crowd tell you. But, hey, look Caitríona, we are neighbours again. How long are you here? I never noticed you coming.
— I don’t know, Maggie, if it was St. Patrick’s Day, or the day after
that I died. I was too weak. I don’t know how long I’m here either. Not that long, anyway . . . You’ve been buried a long time now, Maggie . . . Too true. Four years this Easter. I was spreading a bit of manure for Patrick down in Garry Dyne when one of Tommy’s young ones came up to me. “Maggie Frances is dying,” she said. And what do you know, Kitty, the young one, was just going in the door when I reached the end of the haggard. You were gone. I closed your eyes. Myself and Kitty laid you out. And thanks to us, well, everyone said that you looked gorgeous on the bed. Nobody had any need to complain. Everyone who saw you, Maggie, everyone said that you were a lovely corpse. Not a bit of you, not a hair out of place. You were as clean and smooth as if they had ironed you out on the bed . . .

. . . No I didn’t hang on that long, Maggie. The kidneys had packed up a long time ago. Constipation. I got a sharp pain five or six weeks ago. And then, on top of that I got a cold. The pain went into my stomach and then on my chest. I only lasted about a week . . . I wasn’t that old either, Maggie, just seventy-one. But I had a hard life. I really had a hard life, and I looked every bit of it. When it hit me, it really hit me, left its mark on me. I had no fight left . . .

You might say that Maggie, alright. That hag from Gort Ribbuck didn’t help me a bit. Whatever possessed my Patrick to marry the likes of her in the first place? . . . God bless you, Maggie, you have a heart of gold, but you don’t know the half of it, and a word about it never passed my lips. A full three months now and she hasn’t done a stroke . . . The young one. She just about made it this time. The next one will really put her to the pin of her collar, though . . . Her brood of kids out of their minds except for Maureen, the eldest one, and she was in school every day. There I was slaving away washing them and keeping them from falling into the fire, and throwing them a bit of grub whenever I could . . . Too true, too true. Patrick’s house will be a mess now that I am gone. Of course that hag couldn’t keep a decent house any way, any woman who spends every second day in bed . . . O, now you’re talking, tell me more . . . Patrick and the kids, that’s the real tragedy . . .

It was so. I had everything ready, Maggie, the clothes, the scapu-
lars, the lot . . . ’Tis true, they lit eight candles for me in the church, not a word of a lie. I had the best coffin from Tim’s place. It cost at least fifteen pounds . . . and, wait for it, not two plates on it, but three, believe me . . . And every one of them the spitting image of the fancy mirror in the priest’s house . . .

Patrick promised he’d put a cross of Connemara marble on my grave: just like the one on Peter the Publican, and written in Irish: “Caitriona, wife of John Lydon . . .” He said it himself, not a word of a lie. You don’t think I’d ask him do you, I wouldn’t dream of it . . . And he said he’d put a rail around it just like the one on Huckster Joan’s, and that he’d decorate it with flowers—I can’t remember what he called them, now—the kind that the School Mistress wore on her black dress after the School Master died . . . “That’s the least we could do for you,” Patrick said, “after all you did for us throughout your life.” . . .

But listen to me, what kind of place is this at all, at all? . . . Too true, too true, the Fifteen Shilling plot . . . Now, come on Maggie, you know in your heart of hearts that I wouldn’t want to be stuck up in the Pound plot. Of course, if they had put me in there, I could have done nothing about it, but to think that I might want that . . .

Nell, was it . . . I nearly buried her. If I had lived just a tiny little bit more . . . That accident to her boy, that really shook her . . . A lorry hit him over near the Strand about a year or a year and a half ago, and it made bits of his hip. The hospital didn’t know whether he would live or die for about a week . . .

O, you heard about it already, did you? . . . He spent another six months on the flat of his back . . . He hasn’t done a thing since he got home, just hobbling around on two crutches. Everyone thought he was a goner . . .

He can’t do anything for the kids, Maggie, except for the eldest fucker and he’s a bollocks . . . that might be the case alright . . . Like his grandfather, same name Big Blotchy Brian, a total asshole. Who cares, but then, his grandma, Nell . . . Nell and her crowd never harvested anything for the last two years . . . That injury has really shagged
the two of them, Nell and that Brian Maggie one. I got great satis-
faction from that bitch. We had three times as many spuds as her
this year.

Ah, for God’s sake, Maggie Frances, wasn’t the road wide enough
for him just as it was for everybody else to avoid the lorry? . . . Nell’s
boy was thrown, Maggie. “I wouldn’t give you the steam of my piss,”
the judge said . . . He let the lorry driver come to court in the mean-
time, but he didn’t allow Nell’s youngfella to open his mouth. He’s
bringing it to the High Court in Dublin soon, but that won’t do him
any good either . . . Mannix the lawyer told me that Nell’s crowd
wouldn’t get a brass farthing. “And why would he,” he said, “wrong
side of the road.” . . . No truer word, Maggie. Nell won’t get a hairy
cent from the law. It’s what she deserves. I’m telling you, she won’t
be going past our house so easily from now on singing “Ellenore Mo-
rune” . . .

Ara, poor Jack isn’t that well either, Maggie. Sure, Nell never
minded him one bit, nor did Blotchy Brian’s daughter since she went
into their house . . . Isn’t Nell my own sister, Maggie, and why on earth
would I not know? She never paid a blind bit of attention to Jack, and
not a bit of it. She was wrapped up in herself. She didn’t give a flying
fuck about anyone, apart from herself . . . I’m telling you, that’s the
God’s honest truth, Jack suffered endlessly because of her, the slut . . .
Fireside Tom, Maggie. Just as he always was . . . In his hole of a hovel
all the time. But it will fall down on him someday soon . . . Ah, for
God’s sake didn’t my Patrick go and offer to put some thatch on it . . .
“Look, Pat,” I said to him, “you have absolutely no business sticking
thatch on Tom’s wreck of a house. Nell can do it if she wants. And if
she does so, then so will we” . . .

“But Nell has nobody at all now since Peter’s leg was smashed,”
said Pat.

“Everybody has enough to do for himself,” I said, “everyone has
to thatch their own place, even a kip like that prick Fireside Tom.”
“But the house will collapse on him,” he says.
“It can if it wants to,” I says, “Nell has enough on her plate with-
out filling up Tom’s mouth with shite. That’s it, Pat, my boy, keep at it. Fireside Tom is like rats being drowned in a bath. He comes crawling to us to keep out of the rain” . . .

Nora Johnny, is it? . . . It’s a queer thing to find out more about her here . . . I know far too much about her, and every single one of her breed and seed, Maggie . . . Listening to the Master every single day, is that it . . . The Old Master himself, the wretch . . . the Old Master reading to Nora Johnny! . . . Nora Johnny! . . . ah, for Christ’s sake . . . he doesn’t think much of himself, does he, the master . . . Reading stuff to Nora Johnny . . . Of course, that one has nothing between her ears. Where would she get it from? A woman that never darkened the door of a school, unless it was to vote . . . I’m telling you it’s a queer world if a schoolmaster spends his time talking to the likes of her . . . What’s that, Maggie? . . . that he fancies her . . . I don’t know who she is . . . If her daughter lived in the same house as him for the last sixteen years, as she has here, he sure as hell would know who she was then. But I’ll tell him yet . . . I’ll tell him about the sailor, and the rest of it . . .

— “Johnny Martin had a daughter
   As big as any other man . . .”

— Five-eight’s forty; five-nine’s forty-five, five ten’s . . . sorry sir, I don’t remember . . .

— “As I roved out to the market, seeking for a woman to find”

— I had twenty, and I played the ace of hearts. I took the king from your partner. Mrukeen topped me with the jack. But I had a nine, and my partner out of luck . . .

— But I had the queen, and was defending . . .

— Mrukeen was going to play the five of trumps, and he’d beat your nine. Wasn’t that what you were going to do, Mrukeen?

— But then the mine blew our house up into the air . . .

— But we’d have won the game anyway . . .

— No way. If it wasn’t for the mine . . .

— . . . A lovely white-headed mare. She was gorgeous . . .

— I can’t hear a thing, Maggie. O my God almighty and His precious mother . . . a white-headed mare . . . The five of trumps . . . I can’t listen to this . . .
— I was fighting for the Republic . . .
— Who asked you anyway . . .
— He stabbed me . . .
— Then he didn’t stab you in the tongue anyway. Bugger the lot of you. My head is totally screwed up since I came here. Oh, Maggie, if you could just slink away. In the other world, if you didn’t like someone’s company you could just leave them there, and shag off somewhere else. But unfortunately, the dead can’t budge an inch in the dirty dust . . .

3.

. . . And after all that they shagged me into the Fifteen Shilling Place. After all my warnings . . . Nell had a grin on her as wide as a barn door! She’ll surely get buried in the Pound Place now. I wouldn’t be a bit surprised if it was she put Patrick up to sticking me in the Fifteen Shilling Place instead of the Pound. She wouldn’t have the neck to darken the door of my house, only that I was dead. She didn’t put a foot on my floor since the day I married . . . that is, if she didn’t sneak in unknown to me while I was dying.

But, Patrick is a bit of a simpleton. He’d give in to her crap. And his wife would agree: “To tell God’s truth, but you’re right Nell. The Fifteen Shilling Place is good enough for anybody. We’re not millionaires . . .”

The Fifteen Shilling Place is good enough for anyone. She would say that. She would say that, wouldn’t she? Nora Johnny’s One. I’ll get her yet! She’ll be here for sure at her next delivery. I’ll get her yet, I’m telling you. But I’ll get her mother first—Nora Johnny herself—in the meantime.

Nora Johnny. Over from Gort Ribbuck. Gort Ribbuck of the Puddles. It was always said they milk the ducks there. Doesn’t she just fancy herself. Now she’s learning from the Master. It was about time for her to start anyway. No schoolmaster in the world would speak to her, except in the graveyard, and even then he wouldn’t if he knew who she was . . .
It is her daughter’s fault that I’m here twenty years too soon. I was washed out for the last six months looking after her mangy children. She’s sick when she’s expecting a child, and sick when she’s not. The next one will take her away. Take her away, no doubt about it . . . She was no good for my Patrick anyway, however he would get on without her . . . You couldn’t talk to him. “It’s the only one thing I’m going to do,” he said, “I’ll feck off to America and I’ll leave the place go to hell, seeing as you don’t give a toss about it . . .”

That was when Baba was home from America. She did everything she could to get him to marry Blotchy Brian’s Maggie. She really took a fancy to that little ugly hussy of Blotchy Brian’s for some reason. “She looked after me well when I was in the States,” she said, “especially when I was very sick, and all my own people miles away. Blotchy Brian’s Maggie is an able little smarty, and she has a bit put aside herself, as well as what I could give her. I had more time for you, Caitriona,” she says, “than for any other of my sisters. I’d prefer to leave my money in your house than to anyone else belonging to me. I’d love to see your own Paddy get on in the world. You have two choices now,” she said to him, “I’m in a hurry back to America, but I won’t go until I see Blotchy Brian’s young girl fixed up here, as she is having no luck at all over there. Marry her, Paddy. Marry Brian’s Maggie and I won’t see you stuck. I have more than enough to see me out. Nell’s son has asked her already. Nell herself was talking to me about her only the other day. She’ll marry him, Nell’s son, I’m telling you, if she doesn’t marry you. Marry her, or marry who you like, but if you marry who you like yourself . . .”

“I’d sooner take to the roads,” said Patrick. “I won’t marry any other woman who ever sniffed the air other than Johnny Nora’s daughter from Gort Ribbuck.”

He did.

I had to put the clothes on her back myself. She didn’t have as much as a penny towards the wedding, not to mention a dowry. A dowry from the crowd of the Toejam trotters? A dowry in Gort Ribbuck of the Puddles where they milk the ducks? . . . He married her,
and she is like death warmed up ever since. She couldn’t raise a pig or a calf, or a hen or a goose, or even a duck, and she knew all about them from Gort Ribbuck. Her house is filthy. Her kids are filthy. She’s totally clueless whether she’s working the land or scavenging stuff on the shore . . .

There was some decent stuff in that house until she came along. I kept it as clean as a whistle. Every single Saturday night without fail I washed the stools and the chairs and the tables out in the stream. I spun and I carded. I had bags of everything. I raised pigs and calves and fowl . . . as long as I had the go in me to do it. And when I hadn’t I shamed Johnny Nora’s one enough that she didn’t sit on her arse completely . . .

But what will happen to the house now without me? . . . Nell will get great satisfaction anyway . . . She can afford to. She has a fine woman to make bread and spin yarn on the floor of her house now: Blotchy Brian’s Maggie. She can easily be jeering about my own son who only was a bit of a waster, a messer. She’ll be going up past our house every second day now saying: “Bejaysus, we got thirty pounds for the pigs . . . It was a great fair if you had some cattle. We got sixteen pounds for the two calves” . . . Even though the hens aren’t laying right now, our Maggie has always a few tricks up her sleeve. She brought eighty eggs to the Fancy City on Saturday. We had four clutches of chicks this year. The hens are laying twice as many eggs. I had another clutch yesterday. “The little speckled oat coloured clutch,” Jack called them, when he saw me handling them . . . She’ll have ants in her pants when she’s going past our house. She’ll know I’m not there. Nell! The Bitch! She might be my sister, alright, but I hope and pray that not one other corpse will come to the graveyard before her . . .!

4.

—. . . I was fighting for the Irish Republic, and you had me executed, you traitor. You fought for the English, just the same as fighting for the Free State . . . You had an English gun in your hand, English
money in your pocket, and love of England in your heart. You sold your soul and your ancient heritage for a mess of porridge, for a “soft bargain,” for a job . . .

— That’s a lie! You were a criminal, fighting against the legitimate Government . . .

— . . . I swear by the oak of this coffin, Margaret, I swear I gave her, I gave Caitriona the pound . . .

— . . . I drank forty-two pints . . .

— I remember it well, you scumbag. I bollixed my ankle that day . . .

— . . . You stuck the knife in me, straight between my gut and the top of my ribs. Through the skin of my kidneys. Then you twisted it. The foul stroke always by the Dog Eared crowd . . .

— . . . Let me speak. Free speech . . .

— Are you ready now for an hour’s reading, Nora Johnny? We’ll start a new novelette today. We finished “Two Men and the Powder Puff” the other day, don’t you remember? This one is called “The Berry Kiss.” Listen carefully now:

“Nuala was an innocent young girl until she met Charles ap Rice in the nightclub . . .” Yes, I know. There isn’t any chance to get away here, or to talk about culture . . . and just as you say, Nora, they are always talking about small stupid insignificant stuff here . . . cards, horses, booze, violence . . . we are totally pissed off about his racing mare every bloody day . . . that’s the whole truth, undoubtedly, Nora . . . Nobody has a snowball’s chance in hell of developing their intellect here . . . Right on, that’s the complete truth . . . this place is as bad-mannered, as thicko, as barbaric as whatever happens over in the dregs of the Half Guinea place . . . we are really back in the dark ages since the sansculottes started scrimping money together from the dole to be put in the Fifteen Shilling Place . . . I’ll tell you how I would divide this place up, if I had my way: those who went to university in the Pound Place, those who . . . No, no, that’s not it Nora! Yes, it’s a crying shame that some of my own past pupils are lying next to me here . . . It really depresses me to learn how ignorant they still are, after all I burst my guts for them . . . and sometimes they are pig
ignorant rude with me . . . I just don’t know what’s happening to the young crowd . . . that’s it, Nora . . . no chance whatsoever of culture . . .

“Nuala was an innocent young girl until she met Charles ap Rice in the nightclub . . .” A nightclub, Nora? . . . You were never in a nightclub? . . . Well, a nightclub isn’t that different from this place . . . Ah, no, Nora, ah no. Nightclubs aren’t the same places as sailors hang out. They are “dives” really, but cultured people go to the nightclubs . . . You’d like to go to one of them . . . Not a bad idea really to put the finishing touch, the last notch, to bring a proper cachet to your education . . . I was in a nightclub once, just that time when they had raised teachers’ salaries, just before they reduced them again, twice. I saw an African prince there . . . He was as black as the sloe and was drinking champagne . . . You’d love to go to a nightclub, Nora! Aren’t you the brazen hussy . . . oh, the “naughty girl” . . . Oh Nora, so “naughty . . .”

—You thieving bollocks! Johnny the Robin’s daughter out from Gort Ribbuck! Where did she say she wanted to go, Master . . . ? Her tricks will get her yet! Don’t take a gnat fart’s notice of her, I’m telling you. If you knew her like I do you’d keep your trap firmly shut. I’ve been dealing with herself and her daughter for the last sixteen years. You shouldn’t bother your arse wasting your time with Toejam Nora. She was hardly a day at school, and she wouldn’t know the difference between the ABC and a plague of fleas in her armpit . . .

—Who’s this? Who are you . . . ? Caitriona Paudeen. I don’t believe you’re here at last . . . Well, however long it takes, this is where you end up . . . Welcome anyway, Caitriona, you’re welcome . . . I’m afraid, Caitriona, that you are . . . How will I put it . . . You are a bit hard on Toejam No— . . . Nora Johnny . . . She has come on a bomb since you used to be . . . What’s that the way you put it . . . That’s it . . . dealing with her . . . We find it hard to measure time, but if I get you correctly, she’s three years here already under the positive influence of culture . . . But listen here Caitriona . . . Do you remember the letter I wrote for you to your sister Baba in America . . . ’Twas the last one I wrote . . . The day after that, my last sickness hit me . . . Is that will still in dispute . . . ?

—I got many letters from Baba since you were writing them for
me, Master. But she never said either “yea” or “nay” about the money. Yes, we got an answer from her about that letter, alright. That was the last time she mentioned the will: “I haven’t completed my will yet,” she said. “I hope I do not pass away suddenly or by happenstance, as you have suggested in your letter. Do not be concerned in this matter. I’ll execute my will in due course, when I know what is required of me.” I know what I told her when I caught up with her. “I’m sure the schoolmaster wrote that for you. No one of us ever spoke like that.”

The Young Master—he succeeded you—he writes the letters for us now. But I’m afraid that the priest writes for Nell. That hag can pull the wool over his eyes with her chickens and knitted socks and her twisted tricks. She is a dab hand it, Master. I thought I’d live another few years yet and see her buried, the maggot . . . !

You did your best for me anyway, Master, about the will. You could handle the pen. I often saw you writing a letter, and do you know what I thought? I thought that you could knit words together just as well as I could put a stitch in a stocking . . . “May God have mercy on the Old Master,” I’d say to myself. “He would always do you a good turn. If God allowed him to live, he’d have got the money for me . . .”

I’d say it won’t be long now until the Mistress—that is to say, your good wife, Master—it won’t be long until she gets her act together. No doubt about it. She’s a fine good-looking young thing yet . . . Oh, I’m very sorry Master! Don’t take a bit of notice of anything I say. I’m often romancing like that to myself, but sure, no one can help who they are themselves . . . I know, Master, I shouldn’t have told you at all. You’ll be worried about it. And I thought you’d be absolutely thrilled to hear that the Mistress was getting her act together . . .

Ah, come on, don’t blame me, Master . . . I’m not a gossip . . . I can’t tell you who the man is . . . Ah, please, Master, don’t push me . . . If I thought it would really make you so cranky I wouldn’t have said as much as a word . . .

She swore blind that she wouldn’t marry another man, did she, Master? Oh, come on! . . . Did you never hear it said that married women are the best . . . You were hardly cold in your grave when she
had cocked her eye at another guy. I think, honestly, that she was always a bit flighty . . .

The Young Master . . . Ah, no, not him, never, Master . . . The teacher in Derry Lough. He’s a good guy. Doesn’t touch a drop. Himself and the priest’s sister—that dark fancy slip of a thing with the pants—they are to get married soon. They say he’ll get the new school there . . .

Ah, no, certainly not the Foxy Policeman either. He has a lump of a nurse hanging out of him in the Fancy City, or so they say . . . nor the spuds guy . . . Go on, have another guess, Master. I’ll give you as many as you want . . . Paddy is gone to England. They took the lorry from him, and sold it. He never went up a road for turf without letting a string of debts behind him. Guess again, Master . . . That’s him, dead on, exactly, Billy the Postman. Well done getting it like that, just as a pure guess. Never mind what anyone else says, Master, I think you have a great head on your shoulders . . .

Careful now with Nora Johnny. I could tell you things, Master . . .

Ah, forget about that now, get over it Master, and don’t let it bother you . . . Maybe you are dead right . . . It wasn’t just letters that had him coming to the house . . . Ah, come off it, Master . . . She was always a bit flighty, your wife . . .

5.

— . . . They were sent as plenipotentiaries to make a peace treaty between Ireland and England . . .

—I’m telling you you’re a filthy liar. They were only sent over as messenger boys, they exceeded their authority, and betrayed us, and the country is buggered up ever since . . .

— A white mare. She was a beauty. No bother for her to carry a ton and a half . . .

— . . . By the oak of this coffin, I swear Nora Johnny, I swear I gave Caitriona the pound . . .

— . . . “That daughter of Big Martin John

Was just as tall as any man.
When she stood up on the hill...

— . . . Why don’t you go stuff your England and its markets. You’re just scared shitless of the few pence you have in the bank. Hitler’s the boy! . . .

— . . . Now, Coley, I’m a writer. I read fifty books for every one that you read. I’ll sue you if you think I am not a writer. Did you read my last book, “The Dream of the Jelly Fish?” . . . You didn’t Coley . . . My apologies Coley. I’m very sorry. I forgot that you couldn’t read . . . It’s a great story though . . . And I had three and a half novels, two and a half plays, and nine and a half translations with the publishers, The Goom, * and another short story and a half “The Setting Sun.” I never got over the fact that “The Setting Sun” wasn’t published before I died . . .

— If you’re going to be a writer, Coley, remember that it’s taboo for The Goom to publish anything that a girl would hide from her father . . . Apologies, Coley. I’m sorry. I thought you intended becoming a writer. But just in case you get that blessed itch . . . There isn’t an Irish speaker who doesn’t get that itch sometime in his life . . . they say it’s the stuff on the coast around here that causes it . . . Now, Coley, don’t be rude . . . It’s the duty of every Irish speaker to find out if he has the gift of writing, especially the gift of the short story, plays, poetry . . . These last two are far commoner than the gift of the short story, even. Take poetry, for example. All you have to do is to start at the bottom of the page and to work your way up to the top . . . either that, or scribble from right to left, leave a huge margin, but that isn’t half as poetic as the other way . . .

Apologies again, Coley. I’m really sorry. I didn’t remember that you can’t read or write . . . But the short story, Coley . . . I’ll put it like this . . . You’ve drunk a pint, haven’t you? . . . Yes, I understand . . .

* The Goom (An Gúm) was a state publishing house established in 1927 to publish books in Irish for the general public and for schools. Máirtín Ó Cadhain’s early stories were published by An Gúm, but he always had a fractious relationship with them. This is one of the many asides in the novel where he is poking fun at his literary adversaries.
You drank lots of pints of stout, and often . . . Don’t mind how much you drank, Coley . . .

—I drank forty-four pints one after the other . . .

—I know that . . . Just hang on a minute . . . Good man. Let me speak . . . Get an ounce of sense, Coley, and let me speak . . . You’ve seen what’s on the top of a pint of stout. The head, isn’t it? A head of useless dirty froth. And yet, the more of it that’s there on the pint, the more your tongue is hanging out for the pint itself. And if your tongue is hanging out for it you’ll drink it all the way down to the dregs, even though it tastes flat. Do you see now, Coley, the beginning, the middle and the end of the short story . . . Be careful now that you don’t forget that the end has to leave a sour taste in your mouth, the taste of the holy drink, the wish to steal the fire from the gods, to take another bite of the apple of knowledge . . . Look at the way I’d have finished that other short story—“Another Setting Sun,” the one I was working on if I hadn’t died suddenly from an attack of writer’s cramp:

“Just after the girl had uttered that fateful word, he turned on his heels, departed the claustrophobic atmosphere of the room, and went out into the fresh air. The sky was dark with threatening clouds that were coming in from the sea. A weak faceless sun was entering the earth behind the mountains of the Old Town . . .” That’s the tour de force Coley: “a weak faceless sun entering the earth”; and there should be no need for me to remind you that the last line after the last word has to be richly splattered with dots, writer’s dots as I call them . . . But maybe you’ll have the patience to listen to me reading it all to you from start to finish . . .

—Wait now, my good man. I’ll tell you a story:

“Once upon a time there were three men . . .”

—Coley! Coley! There’s no art in that story: “Once upon a time there were three men . . .” That’s a hackneyed start . . . Wait now a minute, Coley, patience one minute. Let me speak. I think that I’m a writer . . .

—Shut your mouth you old windbag. Keep going, Coley . . .

—Once upon a time there were three men, and it was a long time ago. Once upon a time there were three men . . .
—Yes, go on, Coley, go on . . .
—Once upon a time there were three men . . . ah yes, there were three men a long time ago. I don’t know what happened to them after that . . .
—“. . . I swear by the book, Jack the Lad . . .”
—. . . Five elevens fifty-five; five thirteens . . . five thirteens . . . nobody learns that . . . Now, Master, don’t I know them! Five sevens . . . was that what you asked me, Master? Five sevens, was it? . . . five sevens . . . five by seven . . . wait now a second . . . five ones is one . . .

6.

—. . . But I don’t get it, Margaret. Honest Injun, I just don’t get it. She—that’s Caitriona Paudeen, I mean—was badmouthing me to the Master. You wouldn’t mind, but I did nothing to her? You know yourself, Margaret, that I wouldn’t stick my nose into anybody else’s business, I’m too busy with culture. And there’s a big flashy cross on my grave too. Smashing, the Old Master says. She insulted me, Margaret . . .
—I think you had better start getting used to Caitriona’s tongue, Nora Johnny . . .
—But all the same, Margaret . . .
—. . . “Like an eel on a hook, by crook or by luck
Caitriona would snare Nora Johnny.”
—But she has it in for me all the time, she never stops, I just don’t get it, honest . . .
—. . . “Each morning that dawned Nora Johnny came over
To make bits of Caitriona like she would with a fish . . .”
—. . . “My beautiful daughter, she married your Paddy
Your hovel is better for all she brought in . . .”
—“Caitriona, you maggot, you were never ashamed
For disgracing yourself you were the best thing . . .”
—. . . All his lies, Margaret! Honest to God! I wonder what does she say to Dotie . . . Hey, Dotie . . . Dotie . . . What does Caitriona Paudeen say about me . . .
—God save us all. I don’t know who you are at all at all. I wish they had brought my sod of clay east of the Fancy City and laid me down on the flat surface of the Smooth Meadow in Temple Brandon with my ancestors . . .

—Dotie! I told you already that that kind of talk is only sentimental tosh. What did Caitriona say . . .

—I heard the filthiest talk you could imagine from her about her own sister Nell. “May not another corpse come to the graveyard before her,” she said. You’d never hear that kind of talk on the Smooth Meadow.

—Dotie! But just about me . . .
—About your daughter.
—. . . “Not a coat on her back, and I paid for that too,
    Nor as much as a shirt to get married in . . .”
—She said that you were of the Toejam crowd, and that you were riddled with fleas . . .
—Dotie! De grâce . . .
—That there were sailors . . .
—Parlez-vous français, Madame, Mademoiselle . . .
—Au revoir! Au revoir! . . .
—Mais c’est splendid. Je ne savais pas qu’il y avait une . . .
—Au revoir. Honest, Margaret, only that Dotie knows me well she’d believe all those lies . . . Dotie! That old sentimentality again. You are my fellow mariner on the illimitable sea of culture, Dotie. You should be able to distil every twisted prejudice and every pre-judged notion out of your head, just like Clicks did in “Two Men and the Powder Puff” . . .
—. . . The Poet did it, I’d say . . .
—Oh, was it that chancer . . .
—No certainly not. It wasn’t him. He wouldn’t be that lucky. Big Micil Connolly made it up:
    “Bonking an Old Yank was our Baba Paudeen
       And there was no one just like her in all of Maine . . .”
—Honest, Margaret, I’ve forgotten all that business about Cai-
triona Paudeen in the place above. It’s the culture, Margaret. It raises the mind up to the noble heights and exposes the magic fairy forts in which the hidden elements of sound and vision dwell, just as Nibs said in “Evening Tresses.” You don’t have any interest any more in normal inanities nor in the petty pastimes of mortal life. My mind is possessed by a glorious disorder for this last while as a result of the rushing wonders of culture . . .

— . . . “And there was no one just like her in all of Maine
She came back home dressed up to the nine
With money the old hag left to her name . . .”
— Baba Paudeen never married, but she was looking after an old crone since she went to America. What do you know, but the old one left her all of her money—well nearly all—when she was dying. Baba Paudeen could fill all the graves in this cemetery with golden guineas, at least that is what they say about her, Dotie . . .

— . . . It was Coley who made up all that rubbish. What else?
“‘Ara, Baba, my darling,’ said Caitríona’s cat
‘Don’t yield a farthing,’ said Nell’s cat back.
‘If I only got the money,’ said Caitríona’s cat
‘It’s all for me, honey,’ said Nell’s cat at that.”
— Caitriona would prefer, better than another thousand years, to scrub Nell from Baba’s will . . .

“‘I have a nice deep pocket,’ said Caitriona’s pussy.
‘I have a nice deep pocket,’ said Nell’s pussy back.”
— “‘For an old hag’s money,’ said Caitríona’s pussy.
‘Baba didn’t promise you,’ said Nell’s pussy at that.”
— She had every single teacher in the whole area totally driven out of their minds getting them to write to America for her . . .
— And Mannix the Counsellor . . .
— The Old Master told me he wrote very cultured letters for her. He picked up a lot of Americanese from the films . . .
— That time when he used to bring the young mistress to the Fancy City in his car . . .
— The thing that really pisses Caitriona off is that she died before
Nell. I often heard her going up the lane and muttering to herself: “I’ll bury her yet before me in the Cemetery Clay.”

—. . . Tell the truth, Coley. Did you write that rubbish?
—Big Micil Connolly did it. He did “The Ballad of Caitríona” too, and “The Ballad . . .”
—. . . But Nell is still alive. She’ll get what’s in Baba’s will now. There’s no other brother or sister, only herself . . .
—I’m not sure about that, Margaret. Baba was very fond of Caitríona.
—Do you know what my boss used to say about all of them, the Paudeens: “Weather cocks,” he’d say. “If one of them went to market to buy a cow, he’d come home with a donkey. Then he’d say to the next person who made some smart remark about the donkey: ‘I’m sorry now I didn’t buy a cow instead of that old bag of bones of a donkey. She’d be a lot more useful . . .’”
—. . . “Would you come along home with me, I’ll shelter you under my cloak,
And I swear young Jack the Lad, we’ll have songs until we croak . . .”
—. . . It’s a strange nickname for a man, alright, Dotie . . . Yes. Jack the Lad. He lives up there at the top of the town land where Caitríona and myself lived. I knew the original Lad himself, Jack’s father . . . The Old Lad. He was one of the Feeneys, really . . . No need to laugh, Dotie . . . Dotie! “Lad” is just as handy as “Dotie” any time. Even if you do come from the Smooth Meadow, I’m telling you, we weren’t pupped by hens no more than yourself . . .
—De grâce, Marguerita . . .
—. . . “I’ll marry Jack,” said Caitríona’s dog.
‘I’ll marry Jack,’ said Nell’s dog too . . .”
—Caitríona refused many men. One of them was Blotchy Brian. He had a good chunk of land and pots of money. Her father advised her to hook up with him. He was so worthless, according to her, she wouldn’t give him the time of day . . .
—. . . Start that song again, and sing it right this time . . .
“The Lad’s son he got up and went . . .”

. . . You’d nearly think that God gave Jack the Lad a soul so that he could go about singing. If you heard his voice just once it would haunt you for the rest of your life. I don’t know at all what exactly to call it . . .

— A musical dream.

— That’s it, Nora. Just like a strange and beautiful dream. There you are on the edge of a cliff. A drowning hole down below you. Your heart thumping with fear. Then, suddenly, you hear Jack’s voice wafting up from the depths. Your desire immediately banishes your fear. Then you seem to let yourself go . . . You feel yourself sliding down and down . . . and down . . . getting nearer all the time to that voice . . .

— Oh my, Margaret! How thrilling! Honest . . .

— . . . I never met anyone who could remember exactly any song that Jack sang. We would forget everything but the soul he put into his voice. Every young girl in the place would lick the winding path which he trod to his door. I often saw the young ones up on the bog and as soon as they caught a glimpse of Jack the Lad over at his own turf they would crawl through muck and glob just to hear him sing. I saw Caitriona Paudeen doing it. I saw her sister Nell doing it . . .

— Smashing altogether, Margaret. Cultured people call it the eternal triangle . . .

— . . . “Jack the Lad rose up and took the early morning air
And went off chasing women with the frolics at the fair . . .”

— . . . Too true. It was at the Big Pig Fair that Nell Paudeen and Jack the Lad took off together. Her people were fit to be tied, for all the good it did them. I don’t know if it’s the way you do things over on the Smooth Meadow, you know, that the eldest daughter has to get married first . . .

— . . . “She carried him off through bog-holes, swamps and mucky glob
Disturbing all the curlews whose chicks had open gobs . . .”

— Jack was up on the bog and all he had was waste scrub and some drowned moorland . . .

— Ara, Maggie Frances, I never saw a more awkward pathway
up to a house than that of Jack the Lad’s. Didn’t I twist my ankle that night coming home from the wedding at . . .

— . . . You did, because you made a pig of yourself, as usual . . .

— . . . The night of the wedding in Paudeen’s house Caitriona was holed up in a corner in the back room with a face as miserable as a wet week. There was a small gang of us there. Nell was there. She started ribbing Caitriona: “I really think you should marry Blotchy Brian, Caitriona,” she said. She knew right well that Caitriona had already refused him . . .

— I was there, Margaret. “I’ve got Jack now,” Nell said. “We’ll leave Blotchy Brian for you, Caitriona.”

— Caitriona went ape. She stormed out, and she wouldn’t go near the room again until the next morning. Nor did she go to the church either the following day . . .

— I was cutting a bunch of heather that day, Margaret, and I saw her winding her way up through the bog by Tulla Bwee even though the wedding was over the other way at the Lad’s house . . .

— She didn’t put one foot, right or left, across the threshold of Jack the Lad’s joint from that day to this. You’d think Nell was riddled with some kind of nasty pox the way she used to give her a wide berth. She never forgave her for Jack . . .

— . . . “Brian is a darling with his land and his cows

But he’ll never be right without a woman and a house . . .”

— . . . Despite all his wealth, Blotchy Brian failed utterly to get a woman. It’s a small wonder he didn’t come crawling to her again . . .

— . . . “‘By japers,’ says Triona, ‘here’s a fine pig for scalding,

Turn the kettle to the fire: he might get the warning’.”

— They’d use the handle of the pot over beyond the Fancy City. That time Pat McGrath came knocking . . .

— We refuse them that way too on this side of the city, Dotie. Honest. In my own case, for example . . .

— Did you hear what the Tailor’s sister did when an old dribbling dunderhead came over from Derry Lough looking for her? She took a long knife out of the press, and started sharpening it in the middle of the floor. “Keep it for me,” she said . . .
—Oh, she’d do that alright. The Dog Eared crowd . . .
—After all that, what do you know, Caitriona married John Thomas Lydon from our own place, and never said either “yea” or “nay” when he came for her . . .
—I swear, Margaret, John Thomas was far too good for her . . .
—He had a fine plot of the best rich soil . . .
—And the willingness to work it . . .
—A fine spacious house . . .
—She drooled for the place, certainly. To be better off and have more money than Nell. And to be close enough so that Nell could see every single day that she was better off and had more money than her to the end of her days . . .
—“‘I have a huge haggard,’ said Caitríona’s cat
   ‘I have the best fat cows, and butter as well . . .”’
—“‘I am sleek and useful and friendly and cuddly
   Quite just the opposite of that kitty of Nell’s . . .’”
—Letting Nell know that she didn’t get the worst of the bargain, and that Nell could suck on her disappointment and failure. That much came out of Caitriona’s own unforgiving mouth. It was her revenge . . .
—Oh my! But that’s very interesting. I don’t think I’ll bother with the reading session I have with the Old Master today . . . Hey there, Master . . . Let’s skip the novelette today . . . I’m doing something else intellectual. Au revoir . . .
—Caitriona was particular, thrifty and nifty in John Thomas Lydon’s house. I know that well, as I was next door to her. The sun never woke her up in bed. Her card and spinning wheel often chattered and gabbled through the night . . .
—And it looked every bit of it, Margaret. She had stuff and more . . .
—. . . I wandered into Barry’s betting shop up in the Fancy City. I had my hand in my pocket just as if I had a pile. All I had was one shilling. I made a racket chucking it on to the counter. “‘The Golden Apple,’” I said. “‘The three o’clock. A hundred to one . . . It better win,’ I muttered putting my hand in my pocket and sauntering out” . . .
— . . . It’s a pity I wasn’t there, Peter, I wouldn’t let him get away with it. You shouldn’t let a black heretic like that insult your religion. “Faith of our fathers, Holy Faith, We will be true to thee ’til death, We will be true to thee ’til death . . ."
— You’re a bloodless wimp, Peter, letting him talk like that. I wasn’t there to . . .
— Put a cork in it! Neither of the two of you have shut up going on about religion for the last five years . . .
— They say, however, Margaret, after all the savaging that Caitriona did of Nell that she would have been glad of her when her husband died. She was in a bad way that time, as Patrick was only a toddler . . .
— That I would have been glad of Nell! That I would have been glad of Nell! That I would take anything from Nell. God Almighty Father and his blessed angels, that I’d take anything from that hog face! I’m going to burst! I’m going to burst! . . .

7.
— The little pimply hillocks in your town land couldn’t even grow nettles with all the fleas on them . . .
— . . . Fell from a stack of corn . . .
— By the hokey, as you might say, myself and the guy from Menlow were writing to one another . . .
— “. . . Do you think that this war is ‘The War of the Two Foreigners’?” I says to Patchy Johnny.
— Wake up, you lout. That war’s been over since 1918 . . .
— It was going on when I was dying . . .
— Wake up, I’m telling you. Aren’t you nearly thirty years dead. The next war is on now . . .
— I’m twenty-one years here now. I can boast something that nobody else here can: I was the first corpse in this cemetery. Don’t you think that the elder in this place would have something to say. Let me speak. Let me speak, I tell you . . .
—Caitriona had stuff and plenty, no doubt about it, Margaret . . .
—She certainly had, but despite that her place was better than Nell’s, Nell didn’t let things slide either . . .
—God bless you. Margaret! Neither herself nor Jack ever did a toss except gawk into one another’s eyes and sing songs, until Peter, the son, grew up and was able to do some work on that old swamp and clear some of the cursed scrubs . . .
—Nell didn’t have a penny to her name until Blotchy Brian’s Maggie brought her dowry.
—However much you dress up her place, the truth is that what saved her was being near a river and a lake, with some wild grouse around. Of course, there’s no telling what money hunters and fishermen gave her. I myself saw the Earl slipping a pound note into the palm of her hand: a nice crisp clean pound note . . .
—. . . Over on the Smooth Meadow, you call your swamps “fens,” don’t you, Dotie? I also heard that you call the cat “a rat catcher,” and the thongs “the fire friend.” . . . No doubt about it, Dotie, that’s not the proper and correct “Old Irish” at all . . .
—God save us all! . . .
—. . . “We’ll send pigs to the market,” said Caitriona’s cat ‘You’d do better with bullocks,’ said Nell’s cat back.”
—. . . It’s not one smell of an exaggeration that Caitriona would add bits to her prayers for Nell to shrivel away. She was thrilled to bits if a calf died, or if her potatoes rotted . . .
—I won’t tell one word of a lie about her, Margaret. God forgive me if I did! That time when the lorry crocked Peter Nell’s leg, Caitriona said straight up my face: “I’m glad it hit him. The road is plenty wide enough. It serves the maggot right . . .”
—“Nell won that round anyway,” she admitted, the day her husband, John Thomas Lydon, was buried . . .
—He was buried in the eastern graveyard. I remember it well, and I had good reason to. I twisted my ankle, just where I slipped on the stone . . .
—Where you made a pig of yourself, as you usually did . . .
—. . . To have more potatoes than Nell; more pigs, hens, hay;
have a cleaner smarter house; her children to have better clothes:
’twas all part of her vengeance. It was her vengeance . . .
— . . . “She ca-me back ho-me dressed to th-e nines
As she fi-lched a sta-ck from the old grey hag”
— Baba Paudeen got laid low by some sickness in America, and it took her to death’s door. Blotchy Brian’s Maggie looked after her. She brought Maggie back home with her . . .
— . . . “Baba was holed up in Cai-triona’s house . . .”
— She rarely went near Nell. She was too out of the way and the path was too awkward after her sickness. She seemed to like Cai-triona a lot better for some reason . . .
— . . . “Nell’s house is only a rotting hovel
She needn’t bother be spouting lies
The fever was there, no use denying it
If that plague gets you, you’ll surely die . . .”
— . . . Cai-triona only had one son in the house, Padd . . .
— Two daughters of hers died . . .
— No, three did. Another one in America. Kate . . .
— I remember her well, Margaret. I twisted my ankle the day she left . . .
— Baba promised Cai-triona’s Paddy that she wouldn’t see him short for the rest of his days if he married Blotchy Brian’s Maggie. Cai-triona really hated Blotchy Brian’s guts, and she was the same way with her dog and her daughter. But she had a big dowry, and Cai-triona had a notion that Baba would more than fancy leaving money in her house as a result. Just to best Nell . . .
— . . . “Baba was holed up in Cat-ri-on-a’s house
Until Paddy rejected the Blotchy’s Maggie.
Nora Johnny has a lovely fair maiden
Without cows or gold I took her fancy . . .”
— High for Gort Ribbuck! . . .
— Nora Johnny’s daughter was a fine piece of work, I swear . . .
— . . . That’s what turned Cai-triona against your daughter in the first place, Nora Johnny. All that old guff about the dowry is only an excuse. From the day your daughter stepped into her house, married
to her son, she had it in for her like a pup with his paw on a bone and another pup trying to whip it from him. How often did you have to come over from Gort Ribbuck, Nora . . .

— . . . “Each morning that broke, Nora Johnny came over the way . . .”

— Oh my! We’re getting to the exciting part of the story now, Margaret, aren’t we? The hero is married to his sweetheart. But there’s another woman lurking away in the background. She’s been wounded by the conflict, and there will be lots of trouble ahead . . . Anonymous letters, sly gossip about the hero, maybe a murder yet, certainly a divorce . . . Oh! My! . . .

— . . . “I wouldn’t marry Blotchy Brian,’ said Caitriona’s kitty . . .”

Add a few lines to that yourself . . .

— “But you thought for to hurt him,’ said Nell’s kitty back . . .”

— “But I’d marry his daughter,’ said Caitriona’s puss to that.”

— “Said Nell’s kitty then, “That’s a chance you won’t get.””

— It pissed Caitriona off even more that Baba took off and stayed in Nell’s house more than Nell’s son got the money and the dowry that had been promised to her own Paddy . . .

— I remember well, Margaret, the day that Baba Paudeen went back to America. I was cutting hay above in the Red Meadow when I saw them coming down from Nell’s house. I ran over to say goodbye to them. As God is my witness, just as I was jumping across the furrowed dyke, I twisted my . . .

— Don’t you think, Margaret, isn’t it twenty years since Baba Paudeen went back to America? . . .

— She’s gone sixteen years. But Caitriona never took her beady eye off the will. If it wasn’t for that she’d be dead a long time ago. It added years to her life to be badmouthing her son’s wife . . .

— Yes, Margaret, and the pleasure she got in going to funerals all the time.

— And Fireside Tom’s land . . .

— . . . Listen to me now, Curran:

“A great big altar as a kind compensation . . .”
—Don’t mind that little scut, Curran. Sure, he couldn’t compose a line of poetry . . .

—The story is getting a bit boring now, Margaret. Honest. I thought they’d be a lot more hassle by now . . .

—. . . Listen, Curran. Listen to the second line:

“And to add to my pride, to be in the Pound Place . . .”

—. . . Honest, Margaret. I thought there’d be at least a murder and a divorce. But Dotie can assess every prejudice . . .

—. . . By japers, I have it now Curran. Listen:

“The cross above me will drive Nell to distraction
And in the cemetery clay I’ll have won the race . . .”

8.

—Hoora, Margaret! . . . Can you hear me, Margaret? . . . Nora Johnny has no shame talking to a schoolmaster . . . Of course, that’s true, Margaret. Of course, everyone knows she’s my inlaw. You wouldn’t mind but there is no place here you can get a bit of privacy, or get out of the way. Sweet God almighty! A bitch! A bitch! She was always a bitch. That time when she was a skivvy in the Fancy City before she got married they used to say—we don’t want to even think about it!—that she used to hang around with a sailor . . .

Sure thing, Margaret . . . I said it to him. “Patrick, my darling,” I said, just like this. “That thing from Gort Ribbuck that you are determined to marry, did you hear that her mother was hanging around with a sailor in the Fancy City?”

“So what?” he said.

“Ah, Patrick,” I said. “Sailors, you know . . .”

“Hu! Sailors,” he said. “Couldn’t a sailor be just as good as any other person? I know who this girl’s mother was hooking up with in the Fancy City, but that’s a long way from America, and I haven’t the faintest clue who Blotchy Brian’s Maggie was knocking around with over there. With a black, maybe . . .”

Sure thing, Margaret. If it wasn’t that she couldn’t warm to Nell and didn’t want to give her the money, there’s some chance that I’d
let my son bring a daughter of Blotchy Brian into my house. I swear, I could have been fond of Blotchy Brian’s daughter. The night that Nell got married, that’s what the cow threw in my face. “I have Jack,” she said, “You can have Blotchy Brian now, Caitriona.”

Do you know what, Margaret, but those few words hurt me far more than all the other wrongs she did me. What she said was like a plague of stoats buzzing back and forth through my brain spitting out venomous snots. They never left my head up to the day I died. They never did, Margaret. Every time I saw Blotchy Brian I’d think of that night in the room at home, and on the gloating grin on Nell’s puss because of Jack the Lad. Every time I’d see Brian’s son or daughter, I’d think of that night. Every time somebody even mentioned Blotchy Brian, I’d remember it . . . on the room . . . on the grin . . . on Nell in Jack the Lad’s arms! . . . in Jack the Lad’s arms . . .

Blotchy Brian asked me twice, Margaret. I never told you that . . . What’s that Nora Johnny calls it? . . . The eternal triangle . . . the eternal triangle . . . That was her silly shite, alright . . . But, Margaret, I didn’t tell you, did I? . . . You’re mistaken. I’m not that kind of a person, Margaret. I’m not a blabbermouth. Anything that’s my own business, anything I saw or heard, I took it into the clay with me. But there’s no harm talking about it now when we are gone the way of all flesh . . .

He asked me twice, I’m telling you. The first time I was hardly more than twenty. My father was trying to get me to do it. “Blotchy Brian is a good decent man, with a nice little spot, and a decent stash of money,” he said.

“I wouldn’t marry him,” I said, “even if I had to borrow the shawl from Nell and stand out in front of everyone in the middle of the fair.”

“Why’s that?” said my father.

“Because he’s an ugly git,” I said. “Look at his ridiculous goatee beard. See his sticky out teeth. His nasal whine. His bandy leg. See the dirty dive of a hovel he lives in. See the coat of filth all around it. He’s three times as old as me. He could be my grandfather.”

And I was right. He was nearly fifty that time. He is nearly a hundred now, still alive and not a bother on him, apart from the odd bout
of rheumatism. He’d be going to collect the pension same time as me when we were up there. The ugly gom! . . .

“Every brat to her own device,” my father said, and that was all he ever said about it.

Nell wasn’t married long when he came slavering for me again. I was just getting a cup of tea in the evening as the shades of night came down. I remember it well. I had put the teapot down on the hearth trying to blow some life into the embers. This guy comes in totally unexpectedly even before I had a chance to recognise him. “Will you marry me, Caitriona,” he said, just like that. “I think I deserve you, coming like this the second time. And as it’s not doing me any good, living without a nice woman . . .”

I’m telling you straight, that’s exactly what he said.

“I wouldn’t marry you, you rotten poop, even if cobwebs grew out of me for want of a man,” I said.

I had put the thongs down and I had the boiling kettle in my hand. I didn’t blink an eye, Margaret, but went for him in the middle of the floor. But he had vanished out the door by then.

I know I am hard to please when it comes to men. I was good-looking enough and had a decent dowry . . . But marry Blotchy Brian, come on now like, Margaret, after what Nell said . . .

— . . . “It’d better win,” I said, sticking my hand in my pocket and hightailing it out the door. “When you lose, you’re screwed,” I said, taking the ticket from the wench. She smiled at me: that kind of innocent smile from a young innocent heart. “If ‘The Golden Apple’ wins,” I said, “I’ll buy you some sweeties and take you to the pictures . . . Or would you prefer a bit of a dance . . . or a few quiet drinks in the snug in the Great Southern Hotel? . . .”

— . . . Qu’est-ce que vous dites? Quelle drôle de langue! N’y a-t-il pas là quelque professeur ou étudiant qui parle français?

— Au revoir. Au revoir.
— Pardon! Pardon!
— Shut your gob, you shitehawk!
— If I could reach that gander, I’d shut his trap for him. Either
that, or he’d talk proper. Every time he mentions Hitler he starts spluttering away in a torrent of talk. Sweet jumping Jesus, but if he really knew I don’t think he’d be that happy about Hitler at all . . .

— Didn’t you notice that every time that Hitler’s name is mentioned, he calls him a “whore” immediately. Who are we to say he hasn’t picked up that much Irish . . .

— Oh, if only I could get my hands on him! High for Hitler! High for Hitler! High for Hitler . . .

— Je ne vous comprends pas, monsieur . . .

— Who is that, Margaret?

— That’s the guy who was killed in the airplane. Don’t you remember? He went down in the middle of the bay. You were alive that time.

— Sure, didn’t I see him laid out, Margaret . . . He had a fantastic funeral. They said he was some kind of a hero . . .

— He jabbers away like that. The Master says that he’s French, and that he’d understand him if his tongue wasn’t worn away by the time he spent in the sea . . .

— So, the Master doesn’t understand him, Margaret?

— Not the slightest clue, Caitriona.

— I always knew, Margaret, that the Old Master wasn’t very learned. It doesn’t matter if he doesn’t understand a Frenchy! I should have known that yonks ago . . .

— Nora Johnny understands him better than anyone else in the graveyard. Did you not hear her answering him just a while back? . . .

— Ara, would you get an ounce of sense, Maggie Frances. Do you Mean Toejam Nora with the smelly feet? . . .

— Ils m’ennuient. On espère toujours trouver la paix dans la mort, mais la tombe ne semble pas encore être la mort. On ne trouve ici en tout cas, que de l’ennui . . .


— . . . Six sixes, forty-six; six sevens fifty-two; six eights, fifty-eight . . . Now, amn’t I great, Master! I know my tables up to now. If I had gone to school as a kid, there’d be no stopping me. I’ll say all the tables from the beginning now, Master. Two ones are . . . Why don’t you
want to hear them, Master? You’ve been kind of neglecting me for the last while, since Caitriona Paudeen told you about your wife . . .

—I swear by the oak of this coffin, Curran, I gave her the pound, I gave the pound to Caitriona Paudeen. But I never got a gnat’s glimpse of it since.

—Ababoona! Holy cow! You lied, you old bat . . .

—Honest, Dotie. You wouldn’t understand: a stranger this way from the rich lands of the Fair Meadow. This is the truth, the unadulterated truth, Dotie. Honest, it is. I was going to swear “by the Holy finger,” but that is unbecoming talk. Instead of that, Dotie, I’ll say: “I’ll put the blessed crucifix on my heart.” Margaret told you about herself and Nell, but she never told you about the dowry I lavished on my daughter when she married into Caitriona’s house. You should know that story, Dotie. Everyone else here knows it. Sixty pounds, Dotie. Honest! Sixty pounds in golden guineas . . .

—For the love of God Almighty! Margaret! Hey, Margaret! Do you hear me?

I’m going to burst! I’m going to burst, Margaret! I’m going to burst, Margaret! Nora Johnny’s young one! . . . sixty . . . dowry . . . for me and us . . . I’m going to burst! I’m going to burst! O my God, I’m going to burst! . . . Goi . . . bur . . . Go . . . burs . . . G . . . bu . . . Burs . . .
All happy families resemble one another; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.¹

The Oblonsky home was all confusion. The wife had found out about her husband’s affair with the French governess formerly in their home and had informed her husband that she could not go on living in the same house with him. This had been the state of affairs for three days now, and it was keenly felt not only by the spouses themselves but by all the members of the family and the servants as well. All the members of the family and the servants felt that there was no sense in their living together and that travelers chancing to meet in any inn had more in common than did they, the Oblonsky family members and servants. The wife would not leave her rooms, and the husband had not stayed home for three days. The children raced through the house like lost souls; the English governess quarreled with the housekeeper and wrote a note to a friend asking to find her a new position; the cook had walked off the premises the day before, during the midday meal; the scullery maid and the coachman had given notice.²

Three days after the quarrel, Prince Stepan Arkadyevich Oblonsky—or Stiva, as he was called in society—awoke at his usual hour, that is, at eight o’clock in the morning, not in his wife’s bedroom but in his study, on his morocco sofa.³ He rolled his plump, pampered body over on the sofa springs, as if hoping to fall back into a long sleep, while vigorously hugging the pillow tight and pressing it to his cheek; but then he jumped up, sat on the sofa, and opened his eyes.

“Ah yes, now how did that go?” he thought, trying to recall his dream. “Ah yes, how did that go? Yes! Alabin was giving a dinner in Darmstadt; no, not Darmstadt, something American. Yes, but then Darmstadt was in America. Yes, Alabin was giving a dinner on glass tables, yes—and the tables were singing *Il mio tesoro*—no, not *Il mio tesoro*, something even better, and there were tiny decanters, and they were women, too,” he recalled.⁴

Stepan Arkadyevich’s eyes twinkled, and he lapsed into reverie, smiling. “Yes, that was fine, very fine. And there were so many more excellent things to it,
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even awake you could never put it all into words and ideas.” Noticing the strip of light coming through alongside one of the curtains, he gaily swung his legs off the sofa and felt with his feet for the slippers his wife had embroidered on gold morocco (a gift for his birthday last year), and out of old habit of nine years, still seated, he reached for where his dressing gown hung in the bedroom. Only then did he suddenly remember how and why he came to be sleeping not in his wife’s bedroom but in his study. The smile vanished from his face, and his brow furrowed.

“Oh, oh! Oh!” he groaned, recalling all that had transpired. His mind called up once again each and every detail of the quarrel with his wife, the full desperation of his position, and most agonizing of all, his own guilt.

“No, she will never—can never—forgive me. And what is even more horrible is that it is all my fault—all my fault, yet I am not to blame. That is the whole tragedy,” he thought. “Oh, oh!” he moaned in despair as he recalled the impressions from this quarrel that were the hardest to bear.

Most unpleasant of all was that first moment when, returned from the theater, cheerful and content, carrying an enormous pear for his wife, he failed to find his wife in the drawing room; to his surprise, he did not find her in her sitting room, either, but at last did see her in her bedroom holding the unlucky note, which revealed all.

She, Dolly, in his eyes a fretful, fussy, and far from bright woman, was sitting perfectly still, clutching the note, and giving him a look of horror, despair, and anger.5

“What is this? This?” she asked, pointing to the note.

And at that memory, as often happens, what pained Stepan Arkadyevich most was not so much the event itself as how he had responded to these words of his wife.

In that moment something happened to him that tends to happen to people caught out in something that is altogether too shameful. He had no time to prepare his face for the position in which he now stood before his wife upon the discovery of his guilt. Instead of taking offense, disavowing it, justifying himself, begging forgiveness, even feigning indifference—anything would have been better than what he did do!—his face, quite involuntarily (“the reflexes of the brain,” thought Stepan Arkadyevich, who was fond of physiology), suddenly, and quite involuntarily, broke into his usual good-natured, and thus foolish, smile.6

That foolish smile he could not forgive himself. When she saw this smile, Dolly shuddered, as though from physical pain, and with her characteristic temper unleashed a torrent of harsh words and ran from the room. She had refused to see her husband ever since.

Anna Karenina; By Leo Tolstoy
Translated From The Russian By Marian Schwartz

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“That foolish smile of mine is to blame for everything,” thought Stepan Arkadyevich.

“What am I to do, though? What am I to do?” he mumbled to himself in despair, but found no answer.

2

Stepan Arkadyevich was always truthful with himself. He was incapable of lying, of persuading himself that he repented of his deed. He could not now repent that he, a handsome, amorous man of thirty-four, was not in love with his wife, the mother of five living and two dead children, who was only a year younger than he. He repented only that he had not done a better job of concealing this fact from his wife. Nonetheless, he was sensible of the full gravity of his position and felt sorry for his wife, his children, and himself. Perhaps he could have done a better job of concealing his sins from his wife if he had anticipated this news affecting her in this way. Clearly he had never thought the matter through, but he had vaguely imagined that his wife had suspected long ago that he was unfaithful to her and that she was simply turning a blind eye. It had even seemed to him that she, a worn-out, aging, no longer beautiful woman who was in no way remarkable, the simple, merely good-natured mother of his family, ought to have indulged him, simply out of a sense of fairness. It had turned out just the opposite.

“Oh, it’s awful! Oh, my! Simply awful!” Stepan Arkadyevich repeated over and over to himself, but he could conceive of no remedy. “And how fine everything was before this, how well we lived! She was content and happy with the children, and I never interfered in the slightest way, I left her to manage the children and the household as she pleased. True, it was not good that she had been a governess in our own house. Not good at all! There is something common, vulgar even, about making love to one’s own governess. But what a governess! (He enthusiastically recalled Mademoiselle Roland’s mischievous black eyes, and her smile.) It is true, though, that as long as she was in our house, I never took any liberties. Worst of all, she’s already . . . You’d think it was all on purpose! Oh my, oh my! But what, what am I to do?”

There was no answer other than the general answer that life offers to all the most complicated and insoluble problems. That answer is that one must live for, that is, lose oneself in, the demands of the day. He could not lose himself in sleep now, or at least not until the night, and he could not return to the music sung by the decanter-women; consequently, he would have to lose himself in the dream of life.
“Then we shall see,” Stepan Arkadyevich told himself, and rising, he put on his gray dressing gown with the blue silk lining and tied the tassels in a knot, filling his broad chest with air. His turned-out feet bore his plump body as effortlessly and confidently as ever to the window; he raised the blind and rang loudly. At his ring, his old friend and valet Matvei entered, carrying his clothes, his boots, and a telegram. The barber followed Matvei in with his shaving kit.

“Any papers from the office?” asked Stepan Arkadyevich, picking up the telegram and seating himself at the mirror.

“On the table,” replied Matvei, looking solicitously at his master, and after a brief pause, added with a cunning smile: “They’ve come from the stable owner.”

Stepan Arkadyevich said nothing in reply, only glanced at Matvei in the mirror, but from the glance in which their eyes met in the mirror it was obvious how well they understood each other. Stepan Arkadyevich’s glance seemed to ask: “Why are you saying this? Don’t you know?”

Matvei put his hands in his jacket pockets, drew one foot to the side, and regarded his master silently and good-naturedly, barely smiling.

“I told them to come this Sunday and not to disturb you or themselves for no reason before then.” It was a statement he had evidently prepared in advance.

Stepan Arkadyevich realized that Matvei was trying to be funny and attract attention. Ripping open the telegram, he read it, trying to piece together the typically garbled words, and his face brightened.

“Matvei, my sister Anna Arkadyevna will be here tomorrow,” he said, momentarily halting the sleek, plump hand of the barber, who had cleared a pink pathway between his long, curly whiskers.

“Praise God,” said Matvei, showing by this response that, like his master, he appreciated the significance of this arrival, that is, that Anna Arkadyevna, Stepan Arkadyevich’s beloved sister, might be able to effect a reconciliation between husband and wife.

“Alone or with her husband?” inquired Matvei.

Stepan Arkadyevich could not say because the barber was working on his upper lip, so he raised one finger. Matvei nodded into the mirror.

“ Alone. Ready the room upstairs?”

“Inform Darya Alexandrovna. Wherever she instructs.”

“Darya Alexandrovna?” Matvei echoed, as if dubious.

“Yes, inform her. And here, take the telegram, give it to her, and do as she says.”

“You mean to give it a try,” Matvei thought, but he said only: “Yes, sir.”

Stepan Arkadyevich was already washed and combed and was preparing to dress when Matvei, stepping slowly in his creaky boots, returned to the room with telegram in hand. The barber had left.
“Darya Alexandrovna instructed me to inform you that she is going away. ‘He’—that is, you—‘may do whatever he pleases,’” he said, laughing only with his eyes, and putting his hands in his pockets and cocking his head to one side, he fixed his eyes on his master.

Stepan Arkadyevich did not respond immediately. Then a good-natured and rather pathetic smile appeared on his handsome face.

“Eh, Matvei?” he said, shaking his head.

“It’s all right, sir, things will shapify,” said Matvei.

“Shapify?”

“I’m certain of it, sir.”

“You think so? Who’s there?” asked Stepan Arkadyevich, hearing the rustle of a woman’s dress outside his door.

“It’s me, sir,” said a woman’s firm and pleasant voice, and from behind the door poked the stern, pockmarked face of Matryona Filimonovna, the nurse.

“Well, what is it, Matryona?” asked Stepan Arkadyevich, walking toward her.

Even though Stepan Arkadyevich was wholly to blame before his wife and was himself sensible of that fact, nearly everyone in the household, even the nurse, Darya Alexandrovna’s principal ally, was on his side.

“Well, what is it?” he said dolefully.

“You must go to her, sir, and apologize again. Perhaps God will see to it. She’s in agony, it’s a real shame to look at her, and you know very well the whole household is a shambles. You must take pity on the children, sir. Apologize, sir. What can you do! It’s time to pay the piper.”

“But she won’t see me.”

“You have to do your part. God is merciful, pray to God, sir, pray to God.”

“All right, run along then,” said Stepan Arkadyevich, suddenly blushing.

“Well, let’s get dressed, shall we?” he said to Matvei, and he flung off his dressing gown.

Matvei, puffing at an invisible speck, was already holding the readied shirt like a horse collar, and with obvious satisfaction he slipped it over his master’s pampered body.

3

Once dressed, Stepan Arkadyevich sprayed himself with eau de cologne, tugged at the sleeves of his shirt, and in an accustomed gesture deposited his cigarettes, wallet, matches, and watch with the double chain and seals into his various pockets, gave his handkerchief a quick snap, and feeling clean, fragrant, healthy, and physically cheerful, despite his misfortune, and with a slight spring
in his step, went into the dining room, where waiting for him was his coffee and, next to the coffee, the letters and papers from his office.

Stepan Arkadyevich sat down and read the letters. One was quite unpleasant—from the merchant who was buying a wood on his wife's estate. The wood had to be sold; but now, until he and his wife were reconciled, there could be no question of this. Even more unpleasant here was the fact that this interjected his financial interest in the pending transaction into the reconciliation with his wife. The thought that he might be guided by this interest, that for the sake of selling this wood he might seek a reconciliation with his wife—the very idea was offensive.

When he had finished with the letters, Stepan Arkadyevich drew the papers from his office closer, read rapidly through two files, made several comments with a large pencil, and pushing the files aside, began drinking his coffee; over his coffee he unfolded the still damp morning newspaper and began to read it.

Stepan Arkadyevich took and read a liberal newspaper, not a radical one, but one advocating the viewpoint maintained by the majority. And even though neither science nor art nor politics held any particular interest for him, he firmly maintained the same views on all these subjects that were maintained by the majority and by his paper, and he changed them only when the majority changed them, or, better put, he did not change them at all; they imperceptibly changed within him.

Stepan Arkadyevich had chosen neither his own viewpoint nor his own opinions; rather these viewpoints and opinions came to him on their own, just as he did not choose the style of his hat or coat but chose those which were being worn. For him, living as he did in a certain society, and given his need for some mental activity, such as develops ordinarily in one's mature years, possessing opinions was just as essential to him as possessing a hat. If he had any reason for preferring the liberal to the conservative viewpoint, to which many others of his circle held, then that happened not because he found the liberal viewpoint more sensible but because it was a better fit with his way of life. The liberal party said that in Russia everything was bad, and indeed, Stepan Arkadyevich did have many debts, and money was decidedly in short supply. The liberal party said that marriage was an outmoded institution in need of restructuring, and indeed, family life afforded Stepan Arkadyevich little pleasure and forced him into lies and hypocrisy, which were so repellent to his nature. The liberal party said, or, rather, implied, that religion was merely a check on the barbarous segment of the populace, and indeed, Stepan Arkadyevich could not stand through even a short service without his legs aching, and he failed to comprehend what purpose all those terrifying high-flown words about the other world served when it
could be so very cheerful to live in this one. At the same time, Stepan Arkadyevich, who loved a good joke, occasionally enjoyed confounding a humble soul by pointing out that if one was going to take pride in one’s lineage, one should not stop at Rurik and deny our very first ancestor—the ape. And so this liberal viewpoint had become habit for Stepan Arkadyevich, and he liked his newspaper, as he did his cigar after dinner, for the light haze it produced in his head. He read the lead article, which explained that in our day it was utterly pointless to raise a hue and cry about radicalism supposedly threatening to swallow up all conservative elements and the government supposedly being obliged to take measures to crush the revolutionary hydra, that quite to the contrary: “In our opinion, the danger lies not in any imaginary revolutionary hydra but in hide-bound tradition, which impedes progress,” etc. He read another article, too, a financial article that alluded to Bentham and Mill and made some insinuations about the ministry. With his characteristic quick mind, he caught the implications of each and every insinuation: by whom, at whom, and on what occasion it had been aimed, and this, as always, afforded him a certain satisfaction. Today, however, this satisfaction was poisoned by the memory of Matryona Filimonovna’s advice and by the fact that his household was in such a bad way. He also read about Count Beust, who was rumored to have traveled to Wiesbaden, and about the fact that gray hair was a thing of the past, and about the sale of a light carriage, and about a certain young person seeking a position; however this information did not afford him his usual understated, ironical satisfaction.

Having finished his newspaper, his second cup of coffee, and his buttered roll, he stood up, brushed the crumbs off his waistcoat, and squaring his broad chest, smiled radiantly, though not because he had anything particularly pleasant in his heart—his radiant smile was evoked by his excellent digestion.

This radiant smile immediately reminded him of everything, though, and he lapsed into thought.

Two children’s voices (Stepan Arkadyevich recognized the voices of Grisha, his youngest boy, and Tanya, his eldest girl) could be heard outside his doors. They had been pulling something that had tipped over.

“I told you not to put passengers on the roof!” the girl scolded him in English. “Now pick them up!”

“All confusion,” thought Stepan Arkadyevich. “There the children go racing about unsupervised.” He went to the door and called to them. They abandoned the box that had been serving as a train and went to their father.

The girl, her father’s pet, ran up boldly, threw her arms around him, and dangled from his neck, laughing, as always, and reveling in the familiar scent of cologne that came from his whiskers. Kissing him, finally, on his face, which
was flushed from his bent posture and which beamed with tenderness, the girl let go and tried to run off, but her father detained her.

“How is Mama?” he asked, passing his hand over his daughter’s soft, smooth neck. “Hello there,” he said, smiling at the little boy’s greeting.

He was conscious of loving the boy less and so always endeavored to be even-handed, but the boy sensed this and did not respond to his father’s cold smile with a smile of his own.

“Mama? She’s up,” replied the girl.

Stepan Arkadyevich sighed. “Which means she didn’t sleep again all night,” he thought.

“Well, is she cheerful?”

The little girl knew that there had been a quarrel between her father and mother, and that her mother could not be cheerful, and that her father must know this, and that he was pretending, inquiring about this so lightly. She blushed for her father. He realized this straightaway and blushed as well.

“I don’t know,” she said. “She didn’t tell us to study our lessons, but she did tell us to take a walk with Miss Hull to Grandmama’s.”

“Well then, run along, my little Tanya. Oh yes, just a moment,” he said, detaining her nonetheless and stroking her soft little hand.

He took a box of candies from the mantelpiece, where he had put it yesterday, and gave her two, selecting her favorites, a chocolate and a fondant.

“For Grisha?” said the girl, pointing to the chocolate.

“Yes, yes.” And stroking her little shoulder one more time, he kissed the roots of her hair and her nape and let her go.

“Your carriage is ready,” said Matvei. “And there is a lady petitioner,” he added.

“He has been here long?” asked Stepan Arkadyevich.

“About half an hour.”

“How many times have I instructed you to inform me at once!”

“I had to let you finish your coffee,” said Matvei in that amiably gruff tone at which it was impossible to be angry.

“Well, show her in quickly,” said Oblonsky, frowning with annoyance.

The petitioner, the widow of Staff Captain Kalinin, was asking for something not only impossible but incoherent; nonetheless, Stepan Arkadyevich, as was his custom, had her sit down and paid close attention to all she had to say, without interrupting, and then gave her detailed advice about whom she should apply to and how, and readily and coherently even dashed off a note for her in his handsome, sprawling, and precise hand to someone who might be of assistance. After dismissing the captain’s widow, Stepan Arkadyevich picked up his hat and stopped to think whether he had forgotten anything. It turned out
that he had forgotten nothing except the one thing he would have liked to forget—his wife.

“Ah, yes!” He bowed his head, and a miserable expression came over his handsome face. “Should I go or not?” he said to himself. An inner voice told him that there was no point in going, that this could only mean hypocrisy, that fixing, mending their relations was impossible because it was impossible to make her attractive and desirable once more or to make him an old man incapable of love. Other than hypocrisy and lies, nothing could come of it now; and hypocrisy and lies were repellant to his nature.

“But I have to do it sometime; after all, things cannot go on as they are,” he said, trying to bolster his courage. He squared his chest, took out a cigarette, lit it, took two puffs, dropped it into a mother-of-pearl ashtray, and with quick steps passed through the dark drawing room and opened the other door, to his wife’s bedroom.

4

Darya Alexandrovna, wearing a bed jacket and with the braids of her now thin but once thick and magnificent hair pinned to the nape of her neck, and with a pinched face so gaunt as to make her large, frightened eyes start out, was standing in front of an open chest of drawers amid items of clothing strewn about the room, from which she was trying to choose. When she heard her husband’s footsteps, she stopped, looked toward the door, and attempted in vain to give her face a stern and scornful expression. She sensed that she was afraid of him and afraid of the impending interview. She had just been attempting to do what she had attempted to do ten times these past three days: make a selection of the children’s things and her own to take to her mother’s—and once again she had not been able to bring herself to do it; even now, as on previous occasions, she kept telling herself that things could not go on this way, that she had to undertake something, punish him, put him to shame, take revenge for at least a small portion of the pain he had caused her. She was still telling herself she would leave him, but sensed that this was impossible; impossible because she could not break herself of the habit of considering him her husband and loving him. Besides, she sensed that if here, in her own home, she was barely managing to look after her five children, then it would be all the worse for them wherever she might go with them all. Just in the past three days, the youngest had taken ill after being fed spoiled broth, and the rest had almost gone without their dinner yesterday. She sensed that leaving was impossible, but in an attempt to deceive herself, she kept selecting things and pretending she would leave.
When she saw her husband, she put her hands in a dresser drawer, as if searching for something, and looked around at him only when he was standing right next to her. But her face, which she had wanted to give a stern and determined expression, expressed just how lost she felt and how she had suffered.

“Dolly!” he said in a quiet, timid voice. He drew his head into his shoulders and tried to look pathetic and meek, but he exuded freshness and health.

With a quick glance she surveyed from head to foot this figure which radiated so much freshness and health. “Yes, he is happy and content!” she thought, “while I? . . . And this repulsive good nature that makes everyone love and praise him so: I detest this good nature of his,” she thought. Her mouth pursed, and a muscle in her cheek twitched on the right side of her pale, nervous face.

“What do you want?” she said in a brisk, husky voice unlike her own.

“Dolly!” he repeated with a quiver in his voice. “Anna is arriving today.”

“So, and what is that to me? I can’t see her!” she cried.

“But you must, still, Dolly . . .”

“Get out, get out. Get out!” she cried, not looking at him, as if this cry had been provoked by physical pain.

Stepan Arkadyevich could be perfectly calm when he thought of his wife, he could hope that everything would shapify, as Matvei put it, and he could go calmly about reading his newspaper and drinking his coffee; but when he saw her agonized, exhausted face, heard this sound of her voice, resigned to fate and desperate, it took his breath away, a lump rose in his throat, and his eyes glittered with tears.

“My God, what have I done! Dolly! For the love of God! After all . . .” But he could not continue for the sobs which caught in his throat.

She slammed the drawer shut and looked at him.

“Dolly, what can I say? Just one thing: forgive me, forgive me. Think back. Can’t nine years of life redeem a moment, a moment . . .”

She lowered her eyes and listened, waiting for what he would say, as if imploring him, somehow, to dissuade her.

“A moment . . . a moment of passion . . .” he began and would have continued, but at that word, as if from physical pain, she again pursed her lips and the muscle in her right cheek again twitched.

“Get out! Get out of here!” she cried even more shrilly. “And don’t talk to me about your passions and your abominations!”

She meant to walk out, but she tottered and grabbed onto the back of a chair to steady herself. His face went slack, his lips puffed out, and his eyes filled with tears.

“Dolly!” he said, sobbing now. “For the love of God, think of the children,
they aren’t to blame. I’m to blame, so punish me, order me to redeem my guilt. Whatever I can do, I’m prepared to do anything! I’m to blame, words cannot say how much I’m to blame! But Dolly, forgive me!”

She sat down. He listened to her hard, labored breathing, and he felt inexpressibly sorry for her. Several times she attempted to speak but couldn’t. He waited.

“You think about the children when it comes time to play with them, but I think about them and know that they are done for,” she said, this being evidently one of the sentences she had repeated to herself more than once over the past three days.

She had used the familiar “you” with him, and he gave her a look of gratitude and would have taken her hand, but she shrank back in revulsion.10

“I think about the children and therefore would do anything in the world to save them; but I myself don’t know how to save them: whether by taking them away from their father or by leaving them with a depraved father—yes, a depraved father. Well, you tell me, after what . . . after what has happened, can we go on living together? Is that possible? Tell me, is that possible?” she repeated, raising her voice. “After my husband, the father of my children, has taken his own children’s governess as his mistress?”

“But what am I to do? What am I to do?” he said in a pitiful voice, not knowing what he was saying, his head dropping lower and lower.

“I find you repulsive, revolting!” she cried, now more and more heatedly. “Your tears are water! You never loved me; you have neither heart nor honor! You are vile to me, repulsive, a stranger—yes, a stranger!” It was with pain and hatred that she uttered this word which so horrified her: “stranger.”

He looked at her, and the rage expressed in her eyes frightened and shocked him. He had no idea how much his pity infuriated her. She saw sympathy for herself in him, but not love. “No, she despises me. She will never forgive me,” he thought.

“This is awful! Awful!” he said.

At that moment, in another room, a child cried out, most likely having fallen; Darya Alexandrovna listened closely, and all at once her face softened.

It evidently took her several seconds to pull herself together, as if she did not know where she was or what she was to do, but then rising quickly, she moved toward the door.

“She does love my child,” he thought, noticing the alteration in her face at the child’s cry. “My child. How then could she hate me?”

“Dolly, one more word,” he said, following her.

“If you follow me I’ll call the servants and the children! I’ll let everyone
know what a scoundrel you are! I’m going away presently, and you may live here with your mistress!”

And she walked out, slamming the door.

Stepan Arkadyevich heaved a sigh, wiped his face, and with quiet steps walked out of the room. “Matvei says everything will shapify, but how? I don’t see even a possibility. Oh, oh, what horror! And how vulgarly she shouted,” he told himself, recalling her cry and her words: “scoundrel” and “mistress.” “The maids might well have heard! Horribly vulgar. Horribly!” Stepan Arkadyevich stood there alone for several seconds, wiped his eyes, sighed, and squaring his chest, left the room.

It was Friday, and the German clockmaker was winding the clock in the dining room. Stepan Arkadyevich recalled his own joke about this punctual, bald clockmaker, that the German “had been wound up to wind clocks his whole life,” and he smiled. Stepan Arkadyevich liked a good joke. “And perhaps things will shapify! A fine turn of phrase: shapify,” he thought. “I must repeat that one.”

“Matvei!” he shouted. “You and Marya get everything ready in the sitting room for Anna Arkadyevna,” he said when Matvei appeared.

“Yes, sir.”

Stepan Arkadyevich put on his fur coat and went out on the front steps.

“You won’t be dining at home?” asked Matvei, seeing him out.

“That depends. Here, take this for housekeeping,” he said, giving him ten rubles from his wallet. “Will that suffice?”

“Whether it will or no, evidently we’ll have to make do,” said Matvei, shutting the door and climbing back up the steps.

Darya Alexandrovna meanwhile had calmed the child, and realizing from the sound of the carriage door that her husband had left, she returned to her bedroom. This was her sole refuge from the domestic cares that besieged her the moment she emerged. Even now, in the brief time she had gone out to the nursery, the English governess and Matryona Filimonovna had managed to put several questions to her that would not suffer delay and to which she alone could respond: What shall I have the children wear for their walk? Shall I give them milk? Shouldn’t I send for another cook?

“Oh, leave me. Leave me alone!” she said, and returning to her bedroom she sat back down exactly where she had spoken with her husband, and wringing her hands, so thin her rings slipped down her bony fingers, she began going over their entire conversation in her mind. “He’s gone! But has he ended it with her?” she thought. “Can he be seeing her still? Why didn’t I ask him? No, no, we cannot reconcile. And if we do remain in the same house—we will be strangers. Strangers for all time!” she repeated, with special emphasis on this word she found so terrible. “And how I loved him, my God, how I loved him! How I loved
him! And now, have I truly ceased to love him? Don’t I love him more now than ever? Most terrible of all . . .” She began but did not complete her thought because Matryona Filimonovna poked her head in at the door.

“You'll want me to send for my brother,” she said. “He can get dinner ready. Or it will be like yesterday and six o’clock before the children eat.”

“All right then, I’ll come out presently and give instructions. Have you sent for fresh milk?”

So Darya Alexandrovna plunged into the cares of the day and drowned her grief in them for a time.

5

In school, Stepan Arkadyevich had been a good student thanks to his fine abilities, but he was lazy and naughty and so had come out among the last. But in spite of his always dissolute life, though, as well as his inferior rank and his relative youth, he held an esteemed position with a good salary as an official in a Moscow office. He had obtained this position through the husband of his sister Anna, Alexei Alexandrovich Karenin, who held one of the most important positions in the ministry to which the office belonged; however, had Karenin not got his wife’s brother this position, Stiva Oblonsky, through any of a hundred other people—brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, and aunts—would have obtained this position or another just like it and the six thousand in salary he needed, since his affairs, despite his wife’s substantial property, were in disarray.

Half of Moscow and Petersburg were family or friends of Stepan Arkadyevich. He was born among those people who were and are the powerful of this world. One third of the men of state, the older men, had been friends of his father and had known him in a gown; another third were on familiar terms with him; and the third third were close acquaintances; consequently, the dispensers of earthly goods in the form of positions, rents, concessions, and the like were all his friends and could not have overlooked one of their own. Oblonsky did not have to make any special effort to obtain a lucrative post; he needed only not to refuse, envy, quarrel, or take offense, something he, due to his inherent good nature, could never have done. He would have thought it ridiculous had he been told he would not get a position with the salary he required, particularly since he had not demanded anything excessive; all he wanted was to be given what his peers had been given, and he was no less capable of filling a post of this type than anyone else.

Stepan Arkadyevich was loved by all who knew him not only for his good and cheerful temperament and unquestioned honesty but also because in him,
in his handsome, fair appearance, shining eyes, black brows and hair, in the
whiteness of his face and the pink of his cheeks, there was something that had a
friendly and cheerful physical effect on the people who came into contact with
him. “Aha! Stiva! Oblonsky! Here he is!” was what people almost always said
with a delighted smile whenever they met him. If it also happened occasionally
that after a conversation with him it turned out that nothing particularly delight-
ful had occurred, still the next day, or the day after that, everyone delighted in
precisely the same way again at meeting him.

In the more than two years since he had taken up his post as head of one
of the offices in Moscow, Stepan Arkadyevich had gained, in addition to their
love, the respect of his colleagues, subordinates, superiors, and everyone who
had business with him. The principal qualities of Stepan Arkadyevich which
had earned him this general respect in service were, first, his extraordinary in-
dulgence toward people, based on his awareness of his own shortcomings; sec-
ond, his perfect liberalism, not the kind he read about in the newspapers but the
kind that was in his blood and that made him treat all men perfectly equally and
identically, regardless of their estate or calling; and third—and this was the most
important—his perfect disinterest in the business at hand, as a consequence of
which he never got carried away or made mistakes.

Upon arriving at his place of service, Stepan Arkadyevich, escorted by the
deferential hall porter carrying his briefcase, walked into his small private office,
put on his uniform coat, and walked into the central room. The clerks and atten-
dants all rose, bowing cheerfully and deferentially. Stepan Arkadyevich walked
quickly to his seat, as always, shook his colleagues’ hands, and sat down. He
joked and chatted exactly as much as was polite, and then the work began. No
one knew better than Stepan Arkadyevich where the line ran between freedom,
simplicity, and the official tone required for the pleasant conduct of his affairs.
Cheerfully and deferentially, like everyone in Stepan Arkadyevich’s office, a
secretary approached carrying the papers and spoke in the easy liberal tone that
had been introduced by Stepan Arkadyevich.

“We have obtained information from the Penza provincial administration.
Here, would it not do well—”

“Received at last?” said Stepan Arkadyevich, placing a finger on the paper.
“Well then, gentlemen.” And so the business of the day began.

“If only they knew what a naughty boy their chairman was just half an hour
ago!” he thought, tilting his head with a significant look as he listened to the
report. His eyes laughed as the report was read. Business was supposed to con-
tinue until two o’clock without interruption, and at two o’clock there would be
a break and lunch.
It was not yet two o’clock when the large glass doors of the office’s waiting room suddenly opened and someone walked in. All the officials under the portrait and behind the looking glass, delighted at the distraction, looked around at the door; however, the attendant standing by the door immediately chased out the intruder and closed the glass door behind him.

When the case had been read through, Stepan Arkadyevich stood up, stretched, and giving the liberal tone of the day its due, took out a cigarette right there and went into his private office. Two of his colleagues, Nikitin, an old hand, and Chamberlain-Junker Grinevich, joined him.

“We should be able to finish up after lunch,” said Stepan Arkadyevich.

“Indeed we should!” said Nikitin.

“This Fomin must be a proper rogue,” said Grinevich about one of the individuals involved in the case they were examining.

Stepan Arkadyevich frowned at Grinevich’s words, in this way letting him feel that it was improper to form an opinion prematurely, and did not respond.

“Who was that who came in?” he asked the attendant.

“Someone slipped in without permission, Your Excellency, the moment I turned my back. He was asking for you. I said, ‘When the members come out, then—’”

“Where is he?”

“Maybe he went back to the front hall, but here he comes. That’s the one,” said the attendant, pointing to a strongly built, broad-shouldered man with a curly beard who was running up the worn steps of the stone staircase quickly and lightly, still wearing his sheepskin cap. One of the scrawny officials going downstairs with a portfolio stopped, looked with disapproval at the running man’s feet, and then shot a questioning glance at Oblonsky.

Stepan Arkadyevich was standing at the top of the stairs. His good-natured face, beaming above the embroidered collar of his uniform, beamed even more when he recognized who had run up.

“Well, let’s go into my office,” said Stepan Arkadyevich, who knew his friend’s prideful and resentful shyness, and taking his arm, he pulled him along as if he were steering him through hazards.

Stepan Arkadyevich used the familiar “you” with nearly everyone he knew,
from old men of sixty to boys of twenty, with actors, ministers, merchants, and adjutants general, so that very many of those who were on familiar terms with him were at the two extreme ends of the social ladder and would have been very surprised to learn they had something in common through Oblonsky. He was on familiar terms with everyone he drank Champagne with, and he drank Champagne with everyone, and therefore, in the presence of his subordinates, whenever he met up with his disreputable “familiars,” as he called many of his friends in jest, he could, with his characteristic tact, diminish the distastefulness of this impression for his subordinates. Levin was not a disreputable familiar, but Oblonsky, with his innate tact, sensed that Levin thought that in front of subordinates he might not wish to reveal their intimacy and so he swept him into his office.

Levin was practically the same age as Oblonsky and was on familiar terms with him not due to Champagne alone. Levin had been his friend and companion since their early youth. They loved each other, despite the difference in their characters and tastes, as only men who have been friends since early youth sometimes do. However, despite this, as often happens between men who have chosen different sorts of occupations, although each of them, in discussion, would defend the other’s occupation, in his heart of hearts he despised it. Each felt that the life he himself was leading was the only true life and that the life his friend was leading was but a phantom. Oblonsky could not refrain from a slight smile of amusement at the sight of Levin. Countless times he had seen him newly arrived in Moscow from the country, where he did something, but what precisely Stepan Arkadyevich had never been able to understand very well, not that he took any real interest. Levin always arrived in Moscow in a state of agitation and haste, the least bit embarrassed and irritated at this embarrassment and for the most part with an absolutely new and unexpected view of things. Stepan Arkadyevich both laughed at and liked this. In exactly the same way Levin in his heart of hearts despised his friend’s city way of life and his service, which he considered trivial, and laughed at it. The difference, however, was that in doing what everyone else did, Oblonsky laughed with confidence and good nature, whereas Levin laughed without confidence and at times in anger.

“We’ve long been expecting you,” said Stepan Arkadyevich, entering his office and dropping Levin’s arm, as if to demonstrate that there were no more hazards. “I’m very very glad to see you,” he continued. “Well, what have you been up to? How have you been? When did you arrive?”

Levin said nothing as he looked at the unfamiliar faces of Oblonsky’s two colleagues and in particular at the hand of the elegant Grinevich, with its slender and very white fingers, very long yellow nails that curved under at the tip,
and very large shiny cuff links; for these hands were evidently consuming all his attention and would not allow him to think. Oblonsky noticed this at once and smiled.

“Ah yes, allow me to introduce you,” he said. “My colleagues: Filipp Ivanovich Nikitin and Mikhail Stanislavovich Grinevich”—and turning to Levin: “a member of the district council, a new zemstvo member, a gymnast who can lift five poods with one hand, a cattle breeder and a hunter, and my friend, Konstantin Dmitrievich Levin, the brother of Sergei Ivanovich Koznyshev.”

“A pleasure,” said the old man.

“I have the honor of being acquainted with your brother, Sergei Ivanovich,” said Grinevich, extending his slender hand with the long fingernails.

Levin frowned, shook the hand coldly, and turned immediately to Oblonsky. Although he had great respect for the man with whom he shared a mother, a writer known throughout Russia, he could not bear being addressed as the brother of the celebrated Koznyshev rather than as Konstantin Levin.

“No, I am no longer a district councilor. I quarreled with them all and no longer attend meetings,” he said, addressing Oblonsky.

“So quickly!” said Oblonsky with a smile. “But how did this happen? And why?”

“It’s a long story. I’ll tell you someday,” said Levin, but he began telling him immediately. “Well, to make it short, I became convinced that there cannot be any proper business for a district council,” he began, as if someone had just insulted him. “On one hand, it’s a toy, they’re playing at parliament, but I’m not young enough, or old enough, to be entertained by toys. And on the other”—he stammered—“hand, it’s a way for the district coterie to add to their gains. In the past we had trustees and courts, and now we have the district council . . . not in the form of bribes, but in the form of an undeserved salary,” he said so heatedly you would have thought someone present was disputing his opinion.

“Oho! I can see you’re in a new phase again, a conservative phase,” said Stepan Arkadyevich. “Though, later about this.”

“Yes, later. But I had to see you,” said Levin, staring with hatred at Grinevich’s hand.

Stepan Arkadyevich smiled barely perceptibly.

“What was that you said about never putting on European clothes again?” he said, surveying his friend’s new garment, obviously from a French tailor. “So! I see: a new phase.”

Levin suddenly blushed, not the way adults blush — lightly, himself unaware of it—but the way boys blush when they sense that they are ridiculous in their shyness, and as a consequence are even shyer and blush even more, nearly to the
point of tears. So strange was it to see this intelligent, manly face in this childish state that Oblonsky stopped looking at it.

“Yes, where can we meet? You see I must, simply must speak with you,” said Levin.

Oblonsky appeared to ponder:

“Here’s what we’ll do. We’ll go to Gurin’s for lunch and we can talk there. I’m free until three.”

“No,” answered Levin after considering it. “I need to go somewhere else first.”

“Fine, then, we’ll have dinner together.”

“Dinner? But you see I don’t have anything special, just a few words to say, to ask, and we can have a talk later.”

“So say your few words now, and we’ll have our conversation over dinner.”

“Here are my few words,” said Levin; “actually, it’s nothing special.”

His face suddenly took on an angry expression that stemmed from his effort to overcome his shyness.

“What are the Shcherbatskys doing? Is everything as it was?” he said.

Having known for a long time that Levin was in love with his sister-in-law, Kitty, Stepan Arkadyevich smiled barely perceptibly, and his eyes began to dance.

“You said ‘a few words,’ but I can’t answer in a few words because . . . Excuse me for a minute.”

In came his secretary; with that accustomed deference and certain modest awareness, common to all secretaries, of his superiority to the official in his knowledge of matters, he walked up to Oblonsky with the papers and began explaining, in the guise of a question, a certain complication. Without hearing him out, Stepan Arkadyevich gently put his hand on the secretary’s sleeve.

“No, do it the way I told you,” he said, softening his remark with a smile, and after briefly explaining how he understood the case, pushed the papers away and said, “So do it that way, please. Please, that way, Zakhar Nikitich.”

The flustered secretary retreated. Having recovered fully from his embarrassment during the consultation with the secretary, Levin stood with both elbows resting on the chair, and on his face was a look of bemused attention.

“I don’t understand. I don’t,” he said.

“What don’t you understand?” said Oblonsky, smiling as gaily as ever and taking out a cigarette. He was expecting some strange outburst from Levin.

“I don’t understand what it is you do,” said Levin, shrugging. “How can you take this seriously?”

“Why ever not?”

“Well, because there’s nothing to it.”

“That’s what you think, but we’re flooded with work.”

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“Paperwork. Well yes, you do have a gift for that,” added Levin.
“That is, you think I’m lacking in some way?”
“Maybe I do,” said Levin. “Still, I admire your grandeur and I’m proud to have such a great man for a friend. You haven’t answered my question, though,” he added making a desperate effort to look straight into Oblonsky’s eyes.
“Well, all right, all right. Just wait a bit and you’ll get to this, too. It’s wonderful the way you have three thousand desyatinas in Karazin District, and those muscles, and the freshness of a girl of twelve—but you’ll soon be joining us as well.14 Now, as to what you were asking about: there has been no change, but it’s a shame you’ve been away so long.”
“What’s happened?” Levin asked in fright.
“Oh, nothing,” replied Oblonsky. “We’ll talk. So why in fact have you come?”
“Oh, we can talk about that later as well,” said Levin, again blushing to his ears.
“Well, all right. I understand,” said Stepan Arkadyevich. “You see how it is: I would invite you to my house, but my wife is not entirely well. Here’s the thing, though: if you want to see them, they’re more than likely at the Zoological Garden today, from four to five. Kitty is ice skating. You go there, and I’ll drive by for you, and then we’ll go somewhere together to dine.”
“Marvelous. Good-bye then.”
“Watch out, though. You see, I know you. You’ll forget all about it and suddenly go back to the country!” Stepan Arkadyevich called out, laughing.
“No, that’s certain.”
And not remembering until he was already in the doorway that he had forgotten to bow to Oblonsky’s companions, Levin left the office.
“He must be a very energetic gentleman,” said Grinevich when Levin had gone.
“Yes, old man,” said Stepan Arkadyevich, shaking his head, “there you see a lucky man! Three thousand desyatinas in Karazin District, everything ahead of him, and so much freshness! Not like our kind.”
“Why ever should you complain, Stepan Arkadyevich?”
“Yes, things are nasty, very bad,” said Stepan Arkadyevich with a heavy sigh.

6

When Oblonsky asked Levin why in fact he had come, Levin had blushed and raged at himself for blushing because he couldn’t say to him: “I’ve come to propose marriage to your sister-in-law,” though he had come for this and this alone.
The Levin and Shcherbatsky families were old, noble Moscow families and had always had close and friendly relations. This connection had become even stronger during Levin’s student years. He had prepared for and matriculated at the university with young Prince Shcherbatsky, Dolly and Kitty’s brother. In those days Levin was often a guest in the Shcherbatsky house, and he had fallen in love with the Shcherbatsky family. Strange though it may seem, it was the family that Konstantin Levin fell in love with, particularly the feminine half of it. Levin himself could not remember his own mother, and his only sister was older than he, so it was in the Shcherbatsky house that he saw for the first time the milieu of an old, noble, cultivated, and honorable family, the family he had been cheated of by the death of his father and mother. All the members of this family, especially the feminine half, seemed to him shrouded by a mysterious, poetic veil, and not only did he see no shortcomings in them whatsoever, but he inferred under this veil covering them the loftiest emotions and every conceivable perfection. Why exactly these three young ladies needed to speak French and English on alternate days; why they took turns at certain times playing the piano, whose sounds could always be heard in their brother’s room upstairs, where the students studied; why these teachers of French literature, music, drawing, and dancing came to the house; why at certain times all three young ladies went for a drive in the carriage with Mademoiselle Linon to Tverskaya Boulevard wearing their satin pelisses—Dolly a long, Natalie a midlength, and Kitty one so short that her shapely little legs in their tightly stretched red stockings were in full view; why, accompanied by a footman with a gold cockade in his hat, they had to walk down Tverskaya Boulevard—all this and much else that was done in their mysterious world he did not understand, but he knew that everything done there was wonderful, and he was in love specifically with the mysteriousness of what transpired.

During his student years he nearly fell in love with the eldest, Dolly, but she was soon married to Oblonsky. Then he began to fall in love with the second. It was as if he sensed that he needed to fall in love with one of the sisters, he simply could not figure out precisely which one. No sooner had she appeared in society, though, than Natalie, too, was married, to the diplomat Lvov. Kitty was still a child when Levin left the university. Young Shcherbatsky joined the navy and drowned in the Baltic Sea, and Levin’s dealings with the Shcherbatskys, despite his friendship with Oblonsky, became increasingly rare. However, when this year, early in the winter, Levin had come to Moscow after a year in the country and seen the Shcherbatskys, he had realized with which of the three he was indeed destined to fall in love.

One would think nothing could be simpler than for him, a man of good family, richer rather than poorer, thirty-two years old, to propose marriage to
Princess Shcherbatskaya; there was every likelihood he would have been immediately deemed a good match. Except that Levin was in love, and therefore Kitty seemed to him perfection in every respect, a creature so far above all that was earthly—and he was just such an earthly and vile creature—that there could be no thought that others or indeed she herself might deem him worthy of her.

After spending two months in Moscow in a kind of daze, seeing Kitty nearly every day in society, where he went in order to meet her, Levin suddenly decided that this could never be and left for the country.

Levin’s conviction that this could never be was based on the fact that in his own eyes he was an undesirable, unworthy match for the lovely Kitty, and so Kitty could not possibly love him. In her family’s eyes he had no regular, definite career or position in society, whereas his companions, now that he was thirty-two years old, had already made something of themselves. One was a colonel and aide-de-camp, another a professor, yet another a respected bank and railroad director or president of a board, like Oblonsky; he, on the other hand (he knew very well what he must seem like to others) was a landowner busy with his cattle breeding, his snipe shooting, and his building projects, that is, a talentless fellow nothing ever had come of who, in society’s lights, was doing exactly what people do who never amount to anything.

The mysterious and lovely Kitty herself could not love someone as ugly as he felt himself to be and, above all, someone so ordinary, who had never distinguished himself in any way. Moreover, his previous attitude toward Kitty, the attitude of an adult toward a child, as a consequence of his friendship with her brother, seemed to him yet another barrier to love. A good but ugly man such as he considered himself to be might be loved as a friend, he thought, but to be loved with the same love he himself felt for Kitty he would have had to be a handsome and, most important, special man.

He had heard that women often do love ugly, ordinary men, but he did not believe this because he judged on his own example, since he himself could love only beautiful, mysterious, and special women.

After spending two months alone in the country, however, he was convinced that this was not one of those infatuations he had experienced as a young man; that this emotion had not given him a moment’s peace; that he could not live without resolving the issue of whether or not she would be his wife; and that his despair stemmed only from his imagination, that he had no proof whatsoever that he would be rejected. So he had come to Moscow now with the firm resolve to propose and to marry, if they would accept him. Or . . . He could not think what would become of him if he were rejected.
Levin had arrived in Moscow by the morning train and was staying with Koznyshev, his older brother on his mother’s side, and after changing clothes he went into his brother’s study, intending to tell him immediately why he had come and to ask his advice; however, his brother was not alone. Sitting in his study was a famous professor of philosophy who had come from Kharkov expressly to clarify a misunderstanding that had arisen between them on a philosophical problem of the utmost importance. The professor had been waging a heated polemic against the materialists, and Sergei Koznyshev had been following this polemic with interest, and after reading the professor’s latest article, he had written him a letter stating his own ideas; he had reproached the professor for excessive concessions to the materialists. So the professor had come immediately in order to talk this over. Under discussion was a fashionable question: is there a boundary between psychological and physiological phenomena in human action, and if so, where does it lie?

Sergei Ivanovich greeted his brother with the same kind but cool smile he had for everyone and, after introducing him to the professor, resumed the conversation.

The little yellow man with the spectacles and the narrow brow tore himself away from the discussion for a moment to exchange greetings with Levin and then resumed his speech, paying Levin no attention. Levin sat down to wait for the professor to leave, but he soon got caught up in the subject of their discussion.

Levin had encountered in journals the articles they were discussing, and he had read them, taking an interest in them as a development of the foundations of natural science with which he was familiar, having studied the natural sciences at the university, but he had never connected these scientific conclusions on the animal origins of man, on reflexes, on biology and sociology, to questions of the meaning of life and death for himself personally, questions that had been occurring to him more and more often of late.15

Listening to the discussion between his brother and the professor, he noticed that they were connecting scientific to spiritual questions, and several times they came very close to these questions, but each time, as soon as they came close to what seemed to him the crux of the matter, they retreated in haste and again delved into the sphere of subtle distinctions, qualifications, citations, allusions, and references to authorities, and he had a hard time understanding what they meant.

“I cannot allow,” said Sergei Ivanovich, with his usual clarity and precision of expression and his elegant diction, “I cannot in any case agree with Keiss that...
my entire concept of the external world derives from my sense impressions. The most fundamental concept of being has not come to me through sensation, for there is no special organ for conveying such a concept.”

“Yes, but Wurst, Knaust, and Pripasov, they would all tell you that your consciousness of being stems from the totality of your sensations, that this consciousness of being is the result of sensations. Wurst even says so outright, that if there is no sensation then there is no concept of being.”

“I would argue to the contrary,” began Sergei Ivanovich.

At this, however, Levin again thought that, having come close to the crux of the matter, they were again backing away, so he resolved to pose a question to the professor.

“If so, then, if my senses are destroyed, if my body dies, then there can be no existence of any kind, correct?” he asked.

With annoyance and apparent mental anguish at the interruption, the professor looked around at the odd inquirer, who resembled a bargeman more than a philosopher, and shifted his eyes to Sergei Ivanovich, as if to ask, “What can one say?” But Sergei Ivanovich, who was speaking with far from the same ardor and one-sidedness as the professor and who had enough breadth of mind to be able to answer the professor and at the same time understand the simple and natural point of view from which the question had been asked, smiled and said:

“We do not yet have the right to address that question.”

“We do not have the data,” confirmed the professor, and he continued with his arguments. “No,” he said, “I would point out that if, as Pripasov explicitly states, perception is based on sensation, then we must distinguish strictly between these two concepts.”

Levin did not listen anymore and waited for the professor to leave.

8

Once the professor had left, Sergei Ivanovich turned to his brother.

“I’m very pleased you’ve come. For long? How is farming?”

Levin knew farming was of little interest to his older brother and so, aware that he was only making a concession to him by inquiring, he answered only about wheat sales and money.

Levin had meant to tell his brother of his intention to marry and to ask his advice, he had even resolved firmly to do so; but when he saw his brother, listened to his discussion with the professor, and when he then caught the unintentionally patronizing tone with which his brother questioned him about farm matters (their maternal estate was undivided, and Levin had taken charge of
both shares), Levin felt for some reason that he could not begin to speak with his brother about his decision to marry. He sensed that his brother would not look on this in the way in which he would have liked.

“Well, and how’s that council of yours doing?” asked Sergei Ivanovich, who took an active interest in the district council and ascribed great significance to it.

“To be honest, I don’t know.”

“How’s that? Aren’t you a member of the board?”

“No, not anymore. I resigned,” replied Konstantin Levin, “and I don’t attend meetings anymore.”

“Pity!” Sergei Ivanovich intoned, frowning.

Levin, to justify himself, began recounting what went on at the meetings in his district.

“There, it’s always that way!” Sergei Ivanovich interrupted him. “We Russians are always that way. This may even be a good trait of ours—the ability to see our shortcomings—but we go too far, we console ourselves with irony, which is always on the tip of our tongue. All I can tell you is that if you were to give rights like our council institutions to another European nation, the Germans and English would extract their freedom from them, whereas all we can do is ridicule.”

“But what can be done?” said Levin guiltily. “This was my last effort. I gave it my best effort, but I can’t. I’m incapable of it.”

“Not incapable,” said Sergei Ivanovich, “you’re not looking at the matter properly.”

“That could be,” responded Levin dolefully.

“But you know, our brother Nikolai is here again.”

Nikolai was Konstantin Levin’s full older brother and Sergei Ivanovich’s half-brother, a ruined man who had squandered the greater part of his inheritance, who circulated in the strangest and worst society, and who had quarreled with his brothers.

“What did you say?” cried Levin in horror. “How do you know?”

“Prokofy saw him on the street.”

“Here, in Moscow? Where is he? Do you know?” Levin rose from his chair as if prepared to go immediately.

“I regret having told you this,” said Sergei Ivanovich, shaking his head at his younger brother’s agitation. “I sent to find out where he is staying and sent him his promissory note to Trubin, which I paid. Here is what he replied.”

And Sergei Ivanovich handed his brother a note that had been under a paper-weight.
Levin read what had been written in the strange but to him dear handwriting: “I humbly beg you to leave me in peace. This is the one thing I ask of my gracious brothers. Nikolai Levin.”

Levin read this and, without raising his head, holding the note, stood in front of Sergei Ivanovich.

The desire to forget his unlucky brother now and the awareness that doing so would be base contended in his heart.

“He obviously means to insult me,” Sergei Ivanovich continued, “but he can’t, and I would wish with all my heart to help him, but I know this can’t be done.”

“Yes, yes,” echoed Levin. “I understand and appreciate your attitude toward him, but I’m going to see him.”

“Go ahead, if you like, but I don’t advise it,” said Sergei Ivanovich. “That is, as far as I’m concerned, I’m not afraid of it, because he can’t set you against me; however, for your sake, I would advise you not to go. You can’t help. But do as you please.”

“Perhaps I can’t, but I have the feeling, especially at this moment—well, yes, that’s something else—I have the feeling that I could not be at peace.”

“Well, that I don’t understand,” said Sergei Ivanovich. “The one thing I do understand,” he added, “is that this is a lesson in humility. I have begun to view what is called baseness otherwise and more compassionately since our brother Nikolai has become what he is. You know what he did—”

“Oh, it’s horrible. Horrible!” echoed Levin.

After obtaining his brother’s address from Sergei Ivanovich’s footman, Levin prepared to leave immediately, but after thinking it over he decided to put off his visit until the evening. First of all, if he was to have any peace of mind, he needed to resolve the matter that had brought him to Moscow. Levin left his brother and went to Oblonsky’s office, and having received news of the Shcherbatskys, he went where he had been told he might find Kitty.

9

At four o’clock, feeling his heart pounding, Levin got down from the cab at the Zoological Garden and followed the path toward the ice hills and skating rink, knowing for certain that he would find her there because he had seen the Shcherbatskys’ carriage by the entrance.

The day was clear and frosty. Carriages, sleighs, cabbies, and policemen were lined up at the entrance. A well–turned out crowd, their hats gleaming in the bright sunshine, was teeming near the gate and along the swept paths, among
the Russian cottages with their gingerbread trim; the shaggy old birches of the
garden, all their branches bowed under snow, looked as if they had been decked
out in new holiday vestments.

He took the path to the rink and told himself over and over: “Don’t get ex-
cited, calm down. What are you doing? What’s wrong with you? Be quiet, silly,”
he addressed his heart. The more he tried to calm himself, the harder it was to
breathe. He met an acquaintance, who called out to him, but Levin didn’t even
recognize him. He approached the “Russian hill,” where the toboggans’ chains
clanked going down and up and the sleds rumbled downhill and jolly voices
rang out. He walked a few more steps and saw the rink before him, and immedi-
ately among the skaters he recognized her.

He recognized she was there by the joy and terror that gripped his heart. She
was standing, talking with a lady, at the far end of the rink. Seemingly, there was
nothing particular about her clothing or her pose; but Levin recognized her in
that crowd as easily as a rose among nettles. She lit up everything. She was a
smile shining on everything around her. “Can I really go down there, onto the
ice, and approach her?” he thought. The spot where she stood seemed to him an
unapproachable shrine, and there was a moment when he nearly left, so fright-
ened was he. He needed to master himself and to reason that all kinds of people
were walking near her, that he too could come here and skate. He walked down,
avoiding looking at her for as long as he could, as he would the sun, but he saw
her, as he would the sun, without looking.

On that day of the week and at that time of day, people of a certain set, all of
whom knew one another, gathered on the ice. There were master skaters here
showing off their art, learners holding onto chairs, making timid, clumsy move-
ments, little boys, and old people skating for health purposes; to Levin they all
seemed the happy select because they were here, close to her. All those skat-
ing seemed to chase and overtake her with perfect indifference; they even spoke
with her and amused themselves completely independently of her, enjoying the
excellent ice and fine weather.

Nikolai Shcherbatsky, Kitty’s cousin, wearing a short jacket and narrow
trousers, was sitting on a bench with his skates on, and catching sight of Levin
called out to him:

“Hey, Russia’s ace skater! Been here long? Excellent ice. Put on your skates.”

“I don’t have my skates,” replied Levin, marveling at this daring and famil-
liarity in her presence and not losing sight of her for a second, though he wasn’t
looking at her. He could feel the sun drawing closer. She was in the corner, and
after awkwardly putting down her slender feet in their high boots, clearly visibly
shy, she skated toward him. A boy wearing a Russian shirt, desperately swing-
ing his arms and bent low, overtook her. She did not skate quite steadily; taking her hands out of her small muff, which hung on a cord, she held them at the ready, and looking at Levin, whom she had recognized, she smiled at him and at her own fright. When she had made the turn, she gave herself a push with a resilient foot and skated straight toward Shcherbatsky; grabbing onto him with one hand, and smiling, she nodded at Levin. She was even more beautiful than he had pictured her.

When he had thought of her, he could vividly imagine her in her entirety and in particular the charm of her small curly blond head, with its expression of childlike clarity and goodness, set so freely on her shapely girlish shoulders. The childishness of the expression on her face in combination with the delicate beauty of her figure made up her special charm, which he well remembered; however, as always, what caught him by surprise was the expression of her eyes, timid, serene, and truthful, and in particular her smile, which always transported Levin to a magical world where he felt moved and filled with tenderness, such as he could recall himself on rare days in his early childhood.

“Have you been here long?” she said, giving him her hand. “Thank you,” she added when he picked up the handkerchief that had fallen from her muff.

“I? I only just arrived, yesterday, I . . . that is, today,” replied Levin, suddenly failing to understand her question, he was so agitated. “I wanted to see you,” he said, and immediately recalling his intention in seeking her out he grew embarrassed and blushed. “I didn’t know you skated, and you skate beautifully.”

She looked at him closely, as if wishing to penetrate the cause of his embarrassment.

“Your praise is worth a great deal. There’s a legend maintained here that you’re the very best skater,” she said, brushing off with her little hand the needles of frost that had fallen on her muff.

“Yes, there was a time when I skated with a passion; I wanted to reach perfection.”

“It seems you do everything with passion,” she said, smiling. “I would like so very much to see you skate. Put on skates and let’s skate together.”

“Skate together! Is that really possible?” thought Levin, looking at her.

“I’ll put them on at once,” he said.

And he went to put on skates.

“You haven’t been to see us in a long time, sir,” said the rink attendant, supporting Levin’s foot and screwing on the heel. “Since you, there’s not an ace among the gentlemen. Will that be all right?” he said, tightening the strap.

“Fine, fine, quickly, please,” replied Levin, barely restraining a smile of happiness from coming over his face. “Yes,” he thought, “this is life, this is happi-
ness! *Together*, she said. *Let’s skate together.* Speak to her now? But that’s exactly why I’m afraid of saying I’m happy now, happy at least with the hope. . . . But then? . . . I must, though! I must, must! Weakness begone!*

Levin got to his feet, took off his coat, and scampering across the rough ice by the changing shed, ran out onto the smooth ice and skated effortlessly, as if by will alone speeding up, slowing down, and veering. He approached her shyly, but once again her smile reassured him.

She gave him her hand, and they set off side by side, quickening their pace, and the faster they went, the harder she pressed his hand.

“I would learn faster from you because I have confidence in you,” she told him.

“And I have confidence in myself when you are leaning on me,” he said, but immediately took fright at what he had said and blushed. Indeed, no sooner had he uttered these words than suddenly, like the sun going behind the clouds, her face lost all its kindness, and Levin recognized the familiar play of her face that signified an effort at thought: a tiny wrinkle furrowed her smooth brow.

“Nothing unpleasant has happened to you, has it? Not that I have the right to ask,” he said quickly.

“Why do you ask? No, nothing unpleasant has happened,” she replied coolly and added immediately, “You haven’t seen Mademoiselle Linon, have you?”

“Not yet.”

“Go over to her, she loves you so.”

“What’s this? I must have grieved her. Lord, help me!” thought Levin, and he raced toward the old Frenchwoman with the gray ringlets, who was sitting on a bench. Smiling and showing her false teeth, she greeted him as an old friend.

“Yes, you see we are growing up,” she told him, indicating Kitty with her eyes, “and growing old. *Tiny Bear* is big now!” continued the Frenchwoman, laughing, and she reminded him of the joke about the three young ladies, whom he used to call the three bears, from the English fairy tale. “Do you remember how you sometimes used to say that?”

He definitely did not remember this, but she had been laughing at that joke for ten years and liked it.

“Well go on, go skate. Our Kitty skates well now, doesn’t she?”

When Levin raced back to Kitty, her face was no longer stern, and her eyes watched him just as truthfully and tenderly, but it seemed to Levin that her tenderness had a special, purposely serene tone about it. And that made him sad. After talking about her old governess and her quirks, Kitty asked him about his life.

“You really aren’t bored in the country in winter?” she said.

“No, I’m not bored, I’m very busy,” he said, feeling her subduing him with
her serene tone, which he was powerless to fight, just as he had been early in
the winter.

“Have you come for long?” Kitty asked him.

“I don’t know,” he replied, not thinking about what he was saying. The
thought occurred to him that if he submitted to this tone of calm friendship
of hers then he would go away again without having decided anything, and he
resolved to rebel.

“What do you mean you don’t know?”

“I don’t know. It depends on you,” he said, and was immediately horrified at
his own words.

Whether she had not heard his words, or had not wanted to hear them, she
stumbled a little, tapped her foot twice, and quickly skated away from him.
She skated up to Mademoiselle Linon, told her something, and headed for the
changing shed, where the ladies were taking off their skates.

“My God, what have I done! Lord God of mine! Help me, teach me!” said
Levin, praying and, at the same time, feeling a need for vigorous movement,
racing off and tracing inner and outer circles.

At that moment one of the young men, the best of the new skaters, a cigarette
in his mouth, skates on, came out of the coffeehouse and raced down the steps,
picking up speed as he went, clattering and leaping. He flew down and skated
across the ice without even altering the relaxed position of his hands.

“Ah, that’s a new trick!” said Levin, and he immediately ran up the stairs to
try this new trick.

“Don’t kill yourself. It takes practice!” Nikolai Shcherbatsky shouted to him.

Levin went up the steps, took a running start, and raced down, maintaining
his balance in this unaccustomed movement with his arms. On the last step he
tripped and grazed the ice with his hand before giving a vigorous push, straight-
ening up, and skating off, laughing.

“So wonderful and dear,” thought Kitty at that moment, as she emerged from
the changing shed with Mademoiselle Linon, and she gazed at him with a smile
of quiet tenderness, as she would at a favorite brother. “Am I really to blame?
Have I really done anything so awful? They say it’s flirting. I know it’s not him I
love, but I still have such fun with him, and he’s so wonderful. Only why did he
say that?” she thought.

Catching sight of Kitty leaving, and her mother, who had met her on the
steps, Levin, flushed after the rapid movement, stopped and thought. He re-
moved his skates and caught up with mother and daughter at the garden en-
trance.

“I’m very happy to see you,” said the princess. “Thursdays, as always, we are
at home.”
“Today then?”
“We shall be very happy to see you,” said the princess dryly.

This dryness distressed Kitty, and she could not resist the desire to smooth over her mother’s coldness. She turned her head and said with a smile:

“Until we meet again.”

At that moment, Stepan Arkadyevich, his hat cocked and his face and eyes shining, entered the garden like a cheerful conqueror. Approaching his mother-in-law, however, he answered her questions about Dolly’s health with a mournful, guilty face. After speaking softly and sadly with his mother-in-law, he threw back his shoulders and took Levin by the arm.

“Well then, shall we go?” he asked. “I’ve been thinking about you the entire time, and I’m very glad you’ve come,” he said, giving him a significant look.

“We shall, we shall,” responded a happy Levin, who had not ceased to hear the sound of the voice that had said, “Until we meet again,” or to see the smile with which it had been said.

“To the Anglia or the Hermitage?”
“It’s all the same to me.”

“Well, how about the Anglia,” said Stepan Arkadyevich, who chose the Anglia because he owed more there, at the Anglia, than at the Hermitage. Which was why he felt it improper to avoid this hotel. “Do you have a cab? Well, that’s fine, since I let my carriage go.”

The friends were silent all the way there. Levin was thinking about what the change of expression on Kitty’s face meant and vacillated between reassuring himself that there was hope to despairing and clearly seeing that his hope was insane, but meanwhile he felt like a completely different man, unlike the man he had been before her smile and her “until we meet again.”

Stepan Arkadyevich spent the ride composing their menu.

“You are fond of turbot, aren’t you?” he asked Levin as they drew up.


When Levin walked into the hotel with Oblonsky, he could not help but notice the certain peculiarity of expression, like a restrained glow, on the face and entire figure of Stepan Arkadyevich. Oblonsky removed his overcoat and proceeded to the dining room with his hat tilted to one side, giving orders to the attentive Tatars with their tailcoats and napkins over their arms. Bowing to the right and left at familiar faces who here, as everywhere, greeted him with delight, he walked up to the buffet, took a sip of vodka and a bite of fish, and said
something to the painted Frenchwoman, all ribbons, lace, and ringlets, who was sitting behind the counter that made even this Frenchwoman laugh sincerely. Levin refused the vodka only because he found this Frenchwoman—all composed, it seemed to him, of false hair, poudre de riz, and vinaigre de toilette—loathsome. He hurried to get away from her as he would from somewhere dirty. His heart was overflowing with the memory of Kitty, and a smile of triumph and happiness shone in his eyes.

“This way, Your Excellency, if you please. You will not be disturbed here, Your Excellency,” said a white-haired old Tatar who was especially attentive and whose very broad hips made his coat tails gap. “If you please, your hat, Your Excellency,” he said to Levin, as a sign of respect for Stepan Arkadyevich, looking after his guest as well. Whipping a fresh tablecloth over the tablecloth that already covered the round table under the bronze sconce, he pushed in their velvet chairs and stood in front of Stepan Arkadyevich with a napkin over his arm and a menu in his hands, awaiting instructions.

“If you so instruct, Your Excellency, a private room will be free very soon. Prince Golitsyn and a lady. Fresh oysters have come in.”

“Ah! Oysters.”

Stepan Arkadyevich pondered:

“Shouldn’t we change our plan, Levin?” he said, resting his finger on the menu. His face expressed serious perplexity. “Are the oysters good? Take care!”

“Flensburg oysters, Your Excellency. None from Ostend.”

“Flensburg it will have to be then, but are they fresh?”

“They came in yesterday, sir.”

“What do you think, how about we begin with oysters and then we’ll change our entire plan? Eh?”

“It’s all the same to me. I’d prefer cabbage soup and kasha, but I can’t have that here, of course.”

“Kasha à la russe for you, sir?” said the Tatar, like a nanny to a child, leaning over Levin.

“No, joking aside, whatever you choose, that will be fine. I had a good run on my skates, and I’m hungry. And don’t think,” he added, noticing the dissatisfied expression on Oblonsky’s face, “that I don’t appreciate your selection. It would be a pleasure to eat well.”

“But of course! I don’t care what anyone says, it is one of life’s pleasures,” said Stepan Arkadyevich. “Well then, my good man, give us a couple — no wait, that’s not enough — make that three dozen oysters, then a soup with vegetables — ”

“Printanière?” the Tatar chimed in. But Stepan Arkadyevich clearly did not want to give him the satisfaction of calling the dishes by their French names.
“With root vegetables, you know? Then turbot with a thick sauce, and then . . . roast beef, and make sure it’s good. And then capon perhaps and fruit compote.”

Recalling Stepan Arkadyevich’s way of not naming dishes from the French menu, and rather than repeating after him, the Tatar gave himself the satisfaction of repeating the entire order according to the menu: “Soupe printanière, turbot sauce Beaumarchais, poulard à l’estragon, macédoine de fruits . . .” And then instantly, as if on springs, he put down one bound menu and picked up another, the wine list, and offered it to Stepan Arkadyevich.

“What shall we drink?”

“Whatever you like, only just a little, Champagne,” said Levin.

“What? To start? Though actually, you’re probably right. Do you like the white seal?”

“Cachet blanc,” the Tatar chimed in.

“Well, then give us that brand with the oysters, and then we’ll see.”

“Yes, sir. What table wine will you take?”

“Give us the Nuits. No, better the classic Chablis.”

“Yes, sir. Will you have your cheese?”

“Oh yes, Parmesan. Or do you prefer something else?”

“No, it’s all the same to me,” said Levin, no longer able to suppress a smile.

And with his tails flapping over his broad hips, the Tatar ran off and five minutes later flew back with a platter of opened oysters in their mother-of-pearl shells and a bottle between his fingers.

Stepan Arkadyevich rumpled his starched napkin, tucked it into his waistcoat, and resting his hands calmly on the table, set to the oysters.

“Not bad,” he said as he stripped the slippery oysters from their mother-of-pearl shells with a tiny silver fork and swallowed one after the other. “Not bad,” he repeated, casting his moist and shining eyes first at Levin and then at the Tatar.

Levin ate the oysters as well, though he would have found white bread and cheese more to his liking. Nonetheless, he admired Oblonsky. Even the Tatar, after he had removed the cork and poured the sparkling wine into the delicate shallow glasses, and with a perceptible smile of pleasure straightening his white tie, looked at Stepan Arkadyevich.

“Aren’t you very fond of oysters?” said Stepan Arkadyevich, draining from his glass. “Or are you worried? Eh?”

He wanted Levin to be cheerful, and it wasn’t that Levin wasn’t cheerful, rather he was ill at ease. With what he had in his heart, he found it painful and awkward to be in a restaurant, amid private rooms where men were dining with ladies, in the midst of this rushing about and fuss; this setting of bronzes, mir-
rors, gaslight, and Tatars—he found all of it offensive. He was afraid of sullying that which had filled his heart to overflowing.

“You’re worried, but besides, all this makes me ill at ease,” he said. “You can’t imagine how it is for me, a country dweller, all this is as savage as the fingernails of the gentlemen I saw in your office.”

“Yes, I saw how intrigued you were by poor Grinevich’s nails,” said Stepan Arkadyevich, laughing.

“I can’t help it,” replied Levin. “You should try, just imagine you’re me and take a country dweller’s point of view. In the country, we try to keep our hands in a state that makes them handy to work with; so we trim our nails and sometimes roll up our sleeves. But here people let their fingernails grow as long as they can stand it on purpose, and they wear cuff links like saucers so that they can’t do anything with their hands.”

Stepan Arkadyevich smiled gaily.

“Yes, it’s a sign that he doesn’t need to do rough labor. His mind does the work.”

“Perhaps. But I still find it savage, just as I find it savage now that we country dwellers try to eat our fill as quickly as we can so that we can go about our business, while you and I try to take as long as we can to eat our fill, and for that reason we eat oysters.”

“Well, naturally,” chimed in Stepan Arkadyevich. “That’s the whole point of cultivation, though: to make everything a pleasure.”

“Well, if that is the point, then I prefer to be savage.”

“And savage you are. All you Levins are savages.”

Levin sighed. He thought of his brother Nikolai, and he felt guilty and pained, and he frowned; but Oblonsky started talking about a subject that distracted him immediately.

“Well then, will you be coming this evening to see us, the Shcherbatskys, that is?” he said, pushing away the rough empty shells and bringing the cheese closer, his eyes flashing significantly.

“Yes, I shall go, certainly,” replied Levin. “Though the princess seemed reluctant to invite me.”

“What are you talking about! Such nonsense! That’s just her manner. . . . Well, let’s have at it, my friend, the soup! It’s just her manner, the grande dame,” said Stepan Arkadyevich. “I’d come, too, except that I must go to Countess Banina’s for a rehearsal. Don’t you see what a savage you are? How do you explain the fact that you vanished so suddenly from Moscow? The Shcherbatskys kept asking me about you, as if I should know. But I only know one thing: that you always do what no one else does.”

“Yes,” said Levin slowly and with emotion. “You’re right, I am a savage. Only
what makes me savage is not the fact that I left but that I’ve come now. I’ve come now . . .”

“Oh, and what a lucky man you are!” Stepan Arkadyevich chimed in, looking Levin in the eye.

“Why is that?”

“A spirited steed I can tell by its brand, and a young man in love by his eyes,” declaimed Stepan Arkadyevich. “You have everything before you.”

“And do you really have everything behind?”

“No, perhaps not behind, but you have a future, whereas I have a present, and the present is, well, spotty.”

“What is it?”

“Oh, things could be better. But I don’t want to talk about myself, and anyway I can’t explain it all,” said Stepan Arkadyevich. “So, why did you come to Moscow? . . . Hey, take this!” he called to the Tatar.

“Can you guess?” replied Levin, not taking his eyes, which glowed from deep within, off Stepan Arkadyevich.

“I can, but I can’t be the one to bring it up, and for just this reason you can see whether or not I have guessed correctly,” said Stepan Arkadyevich, looking at Levin with a faint smile.

“Well, then what would you tell me?” said Levin in a trembling voice, and feeling all the muscles on his face trembling. “What’s your view of it?”

Stepan Arkadyevich slowly drained his glass of Chablis, not taking his eyes off Levin.


“But mightn’t you be mistaken? Do you know what we’re talking about?” said Levin, drilling his eyes into his companion. “Do you think it’s possible?”

“I do. Why wouldn’t it be?”

“No, do you really think it’s possible? No, tell me everything you’re thinking! Well, and what if, what if a refusal awaits me? I’m even certain—”

“Why would you think that?” said Stepan Arkadyevich, smiling at his emotion.

“That’s how it seems to me sometimes. After all, that would be horrible for me and for her.”

“Well, in any case, there’s nothing horrible in it for a young woman. Any young woman takes pride in a proposal.”

“Yes, any young woman, but not she.”

Stepan Arkadyevich smiled. He well knew this feeling of Levin’s, he knew that for him all the young women in the world were divided up into two sorts: one sort was all the young women in the world save her, and these young women
had every human weakness and were very ordinary; the other sort was she alone, who had no weaknesses of any kind and was superior to everything human.

“Stop, take some sauce,” he said, restraining Levin’s hand, which was pushing the sauce away.

Levin obediently took some sauce but would not let Stepan Arkadyevich eat.

“No, stop. Stop,” he said. “You must understand that for me this is a matter of life and death. I’ve never spoken to anyone about this. Nor could I ever speak to anyone about it the way I do with you. You see, you and I are different in every possible way: different tastes, opinions, everything; but I know you love me and understand me, and for that reason I love you very much. But for God’s sake, be perfectly frank.”

“I’m telling you what I think,” said Stepan Arkadyevich, smiling. “But I’ll tell you something else: my wife is the most amazing woman.” Stepan Arkadyevich sighed when he recalled his relations with his wife, and after a moment’s pause he continued. “She has the gift of prophecy. She can see straight through people; but that’s not all, she knows what’s going to happen, especially when it comes to marriages. For instance, she predicted that Shakhovskaya would marry Brenteln. No one would believe it, but that is what happened. And she is on your side.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that not only does she love you, she says that Kitty is certain to be your wife.”

At these words Levin’s face beamed with a smile that was close to tears of emotion.

“She says that!” exclaimed Levin. “I’ve always said she was lovely, your wife. Well, but that’s enough, enough talk of this,” he said, rising from his chair.

“Fine, but sit down. Here is the soup.”

Levin could not sit, though. He trod firmly around the cage of a room twice, blinking to hide his tears, and only then sat back down at the table.

“You must understand,” he said, “that this isn’t love. I’ve been in love, but that’s not what this is. This isn’t my emotion but an outside force of some kind that has taken hold of me. I did go away, you see, because I’d decided this could never be, you understand, this is a happiness the likes of which does not happen on earth, but I’ve struggled with myself and can see that without this there is no life. So it must be decided.”

“Then why did you ever leave?”

“Oh, stop! I have so many thoughts! So much I need to ask! Listen to me. You know, you can’t imagine what you’ve done for me by what you said. I’m so happy I’m even disgusting; I’ve forgotten everything . . . I only just learned that my brother Nikolai . . . he’s here, you know . . . I’d even forgotten about him. I
think he too is happy. It’s like a madness. One thing is horrible, though. . . . Here, you’re married, you know this feeling. . . . What’s horrible is that we are old and already have a past . . . not of love, but of sins . . . and all of a sudden we come so close to a pure, innocent creature; it’s loathsome, and this is why I can’t help but feel myself unworthy."

“Well, your sins are very few.”

“Ah, but still,” said Levin, “still, ‘reading with disgust the life I’ve led, I tremble and I curse, and I bitterly complain.’ Yes.”

“What can you do? That is how the world is made,” said Stepan Arkadyevich.

“My one consolation is like that prayer I’ve always loved, asking forgiveness ‘not according to my deserts but according to Thy loving-kindness.’ That is the only way she can ever forgive me.”

11

Levin drained his glass and they sat in silence.

“There is one more thing I ought to tell you. Do you know Vronsky?” Stepan Arkadyevich asked Levin.

“No, I don’t. Why do you ask?”

“Give us another,” Stepan Arkadyevich instructed the Tatar, who had refilled their glasses and was circling around them at exactly the moment he was not needed.

“Well, he showed up here soon after you left, and as I understand it, he’s head over heels in love with Kitty, and you realize that her mother . . .”

“Excuse me, but I don’t understand any of this,” said Levin, frowning grimly. Then he remembered his brother Nikolai and how vile he, Levin, was for forgetting him.
“Wait, wait,” said Stepan Arkadyevich, smiling and touching his arm. “I’ve told you what I know and I repeat that, as far as I can tell, in this delicate and tender matter, I think the odds are in your favor.”

Levin leaned back in his chair; his face was pale.

“I would advise you, however, to decide the matter as soon as possible,” continued Oblonsky, topping off his glass.

“No, thank you very much, I can’t drink any more,” said Levin, pushing away his glass. “I’ll be drunk. . . . So, how are you getting on?” he continued, evidently wishing to change the topic.

“One more word: no matter what, I advise you to decide the matter as quickly as possible. I don’t advise you to speak today,” said Stepan Arkadyevich. “Go there tomorrow morning, in the classic manner, and make your proposal, and may God bless you.”

“Haven’t you been wanting to visit me and go hunting? Why don’t you come this spring?” said Levin.

Now he regretted with all his heart that he had ever broached this topic with Stepan Arkadyevich. His special feeling had been sullied by this discussion of the rivalry of some Petersburg officer and Stepan Arkadyevich’s assumptions and advice.

Stepan Arkadyevich smiled. He understood what was going on in Levin’s heart.

“I’ll come one day,” he said. “Yes, my friend, women are the pivot upon which everything turns. My case, too, is bad, you see, very bad. And all because of women. You must tell me frankly,” he continued, taking out a cigar and keeping one hand on his glass. “You must give me your advice.”

“But what is the matter?”

“Just this. Suppose you’re married, and you love your wife, but you’re attracted to another woman.”

“Excuse me, but I definitely do not understand this, it’s as if . . . I don’t understand this any more than how now, after eating my fill, I could walk by a bread shop and steal a bun.”

Stepan Arkadyevich’s eyes glittered more than usual.

“Why not? Sometimes a bun smells so good, you can’t help yourself.”

Himmlisch ist’s, wenn ich bezwungen
Meine irdische Begier;
Aber noch wenn’s nicht gelungen,
Hatt’ich auch recht hubsch Plaisir!23

Saying this, Stepan Arkadyevich smiled faintly. Levin could not help smiling, either.
“Yes, but joking aside,” Oblonsky continued. “You must understand that the woman is a dear, meek, loving creature, poor and lonely, and she has sacrificed everything. Now that the deed is done—you understand me—how can I abandon her? Let’s say we do part for the sake of my family life. How can I not take pity on her, see that she is properly settled and her situation eased?”

“Well, you must excuse me. You know, for me all women are divided up into two sorts . . . I mean, no . . . rather: there are women and there are . . . I have never seen lovely fallen creatures, nor shall I, and those like the painted Frenchwoman at the counter, with the ringlets—to me, they are vipers, and all fallen women are exactly the same.”

“What about the one in the Gospels?”

“Oh, stop it! Christ would never have spoken those words had he known how people would abuse them. Out of all the Gospels, all anyone remembers are these words. Actually, I’m saying what I feel, not what I think. I have a loathing for fallen women. You’re afraid of spiders, and I of those vipers. You see, you’ve probably never studied spiders and don’t know their ways. It’s the same with me.”

“It’s fine for you to talk this way: it’s just like that gentleman in Dickens who tosses all the difficult questions over his right shoulder with his left hand. But denying a fact is not an answer. What am I to do, tell me that. What am I to do? Your wife is aging, but you are full of life. Before you can even look around you feel you cannot love your wife with that kind of love, no matter how much you respect her. And then, suddenly, love comes your way and you’re lost. Lost!” Stepan Arkadyevich said with melancholy despair.

Levin grinned.

“Yes, I’m lost,” Oblonsky continued. “But what am I to do?”

“Don’t steal buns.”

Stepan Arkadyevich burst out laughing.

“Oh, you moralist! But you must understand, there are two women; one is merely insisting on her rights, and these rights are your love, which you can’t give her; whereas the other is sacrificing everything for you and asking for nothing in return. What should you do? How should you act? There is a terrible tragedy in this.”

“If you want my confession about this, then I’ll tell you that I don’t believe there is any tragedy here, and here’s why. In my opinion, love . . . both loves—which Plato defined, as you remember, in his Symposium—both loves serve as a touchstone for men. Some men understand only one, others the other, and those who understand only non-Platonic love speak of tragedy in vain. That kind of love admits of no tragedy. ‘I humbly thank you for the pleasure, my
respects’—there’s the whole tragedy. But with Platonic love there can be no tragedy because in that kind of love everything is clear and pure, because . . .”

At that moment Levin recalled his own sins and the inner struggle he had endured, and out of the blue he added, “Actually, though, you may be right. You may well be right. But I don’t know, I just don’t know.”

“There, you see,” said Stepan Arkadyevich. “You’re all of a piece. That is your strength and your shortcoming. Your nature is all of a piece, and you want all of life to be composed of phenomena that are of a piece, too, but that doesn’t happen. Here you go looking with contempt on a career in public service because you would like the deed to correspond consistently to the goal, but that doesn’t happen. You also want a man’s career always to have a purpose, for love and family life always to be one. But that doesn’t happen. All the variety, all the charm, all the beauty of life is composed of shadow and light.”

Levin sighed and said nothing in reply. He was thinking his own thoughts and not listening to Oblonsky.

And suddenly both men felt that, though they were friends, and though they had dined together and drunk wine, which ought to have brought them even closer, each was thinking only of himself and neither had a thought for the other. Oblonsky had experienced this extreme divergence occurring, rather than a greater closeness, after a meal before, and he knew what needed to be done in these instances.

“The bill!” he exclaimed, and he went into the next room, where he immediately ran into an aide-de-camp he knew and fell into conversation with him about an actress and her protector. This conversation with the aide-de-camp immediately gave Oblonsky a sense of relief and relaxation after his conversation with Levin, who always roused him to excessive mental and emotional tension.

When the Tatar appeared with a bill for twenty-six rubles and change and with an added tip, Levin, who at any other time, as a country dweller, would have been horrified by his share of the bill of fourteen rubles, now paid no attention to this, settled, and went home in order to change his clothes and go to the Shcherbatskys’, where his fate would be decided.

12

Princess Kitty Shcherbatskaya was eighteen years old. She had come out this winter. Her successes in society had been greater than both her older sisters’ and greater than even her mother the princess had anticipated. Not only were nearly all the young men dancing at Moscow’s balls in love with Kitty, but that
first winter two serious matches had presented themselves: Levin and, immediately after his departure, Count Vronsky.

Levin’s appearance at the beginning of the winter, his frequent visits and obvious love for Kitty, led to the first serious conversation between Kitty’s parents about her future and to arguments between the prince and princess. The prince was on Levin’s side; he said that he could wish nothing better for Kitty. The princess, however, with her feminine habit of skirting an issue, said that Kitty was too young, that Levin had done nothing to demonstrate his serious intentions, that Kitty felt no attachment to him, and other points; but she did not say what was uppermost in her mind, that she was anticipating a better match for her daughter, she did not find Levin likable, and she did not understand him. When Levin had left precipitously, the princess was pleased and told her husband in triumph: “You see, I was right.” When Vronsky appeared, she was even more pleased, confirmed in her opinion that Kitty should make not simply a good but a brilliant match.

For the mother there could be no comparison between Vronsky and Levin. The mother did not like in Levin either his strange and harsh judgments or his social awkwardness, which was founded, as she believed, on pride, or what she took to be his rather savage life in the country, where he dealt with his livestock and peasants; nor did she have much of a liking for the fact that he, while being in love with her daughter, called at their home for six weeks as if he were waiting for something, scrutinizing them, as if he were afraid he would be doing them too great an honor by making a proposal of marriage and did not understand that by calling at the home of an eligible young girl he was under an obligation to clarify his intentions, and then, suddenly, he left, without clarifying anything. “It’s a good thing he is so unattractive that Kitty never fell in love with him,” thought the mother.

Vronsky satisfied the mother’s every desire. He was wealthy, clever, and high-born, a charming man on his way to a brilliant career in the military and at court. She could have wished for nothing better.

At balls, Vronsky openly courted Kitty, danced with her, and called on her at home, and there appeared to be no reason to doubt the seriousness of his intentions. Despite this, however, the mother had spent the entire winter in a state of terrible unease and agitation.

The princess herself had married thirty years before, through the matchmaking efforts of an aunt. Her suitor, about whom everything was known in advance, arrived, got a look at his future bride, and they at him; her matchmaking aunt ascertained and conveyed their mutual impressions; their impressions were good; then on the appointed day the anticipated proposal of marriage was made to her parents and received the anticipated acceptance. Everything
had come about quite easily and simply. At least so it had seemed to the princess. With her own daughters, however, she had felt just how far from easy and simple this seemingly ordinary matter of marrying off daughters could be. So many frights suffered and thoughts weighed, so much money spent, so many clashes with her husband over marrying off their two older daughters, Darya and Natalia! Now, as she brought out her youngest, she had suffered the very same frights, the very same doubts, and even more quarrels with her husband than over the older girls. Like all fathers, the old prince was especially scrupulous when it came to the honor and purity of his daughters; he was unreasonably jealous over his daughters, and especially Kitty, who was his favorite, and he made a scene with the princess at every step for compromising his daughter. The princess was used to this from their first two daughters, but now she had the feeling that the prince’s scrupulousness had more grounds. She saw that much had changed of late in the ways of society and that a mother’s obligations had become even more difficult. She saw that Kitty’s contemporaries formed certain clubs, attended certain courses, spoke freely with men, rode unescorted through the streets, many did not curtsey and, above all, they were all firmly convinced that the choice of a husband was their business, and not their parents’.28 “Nowadays they don’t give you away like they used to,” all these young women thought and said, as did all their elders. But how people did marry their daughters off, the princess could not learn from anyone. The French custom—when the parents decide their children’s fate—was no longer accepted, it was condemned. The English custom—complete freedom for the young girl—was also not accepted and impossible in Russian society. The Russian custom of matchmaking was considered disgraceful in some way, and everyone mocked it, including the princess herself. But how a girl was to come out and be married, no one knew. Everyone the princess had occasion to discuss this with told her the same thing: “For goodness’ sake! In our day it’s time to leave that old world behind. It’s the young people who are entering into marriage, after all, not their parents; so we should leave the young people to arrange their lives as they see fit.” It was fine for those who had no daughters to talk like that; but the princess realized that given close enough contact her daughter could fall in love, and, what’s more, fall in love with someone who would not want to marry her, or someone who would not make a good husband. No matter how they reassured the princess that in our day the young people ought to arrange their own fate, she could not bring herself to believe this, just as she could not bring herself to believe that loaded pistols were ever the best toys for children five years old, no matter what the era. And so the princess was more anxious over Kitty than she had been over her older daughters.

Now she was afraid that Vronsky would confine himself simply to flirting
with her daughter. She could see that her daughter was already in love with him, but she consoled herself with the fact that he was an honorable man and so would not do this. At the same time, though, she knew how easy it was, given the freedom of manners of the day, to turn a girl’s head and how lightly men regarded this crime in general. The week before, Kitty had related to her mother her conversation with Vronsky during the mazurka. This conversation had reassured the princess in part, but she could not be completely reassured. Vronsky had told Kitty that they, both brothers, were so accustomed to obeying their mother in everything that they would never undertake anything important without consulting her. “And now, as a special happiness, I’m awaiting my dear mother’s arrival from Petersburg,” he had said.

Kitty related this without attaching any significance to these words. But her mother understood them otherwise. She knew the old lady was expected any day, and she knew that the old lady would be pleased by her son’s choice, and it was strange that he, fearful of offending his mother, had not made a proposal; however, she so wanted not only the marriage itself but, more than anything, reassurance for her anxieties, that she believed this. However bitter it was for the princess to see the unhappiness of her eldest daughter Dolly, who was about to leave her husband, the princess’s agitation over her youngest daughter’s as yet undecided fate had consumed all her emotions. This day, with Levin’s appearance, had only added new anxiety. She was afraid that her daughter, who seemed to have harbored feelings for Levin at one time, out of excessive honesty, might refuse Vronsky, and in general that Levin’s arrival would spoil everything—delay the matter so near to its conclusion.

“Did he arrive long ago?” said the princess about Levin when they had returned home.

“Today, Maman.”

“I want to say one thing,” the princess began, and from her grave and animated face Kitty guessed what it would be.

“Mama,” she said blushing and turning quickly toward her, “please, please, don’t say anything about that. I know, I know everything.”

She wanted exactly what her mother wanted, but the motives behind her mother’s desire hurt her.

“I only want to say that, having given one man hope—”

“Mama, darling, for the love of God, don’t say anything. It frightens me so to talk about that.”

“I won’t, I won’t,” said her mother, seeing the tears in her daughter’s eyes. “Just one thing, my precious: you promised you would have no secrets from me. You won’t, will you?”
“Never, Mama, none,” answered Kitty, who turned red and looked directly into her mother’s face. “But I don’t have anything to say now. I... I... if I wanted to, I don’t know what to say or how... I don’t know.”

“No, she could never tell me a falsehood with those eyes,” thought the mother, smiling at her agitation and happiness. The princess was smiling at how tremendous and significant what was going on in her soul now seemed to the poor girl.

13

Between dinner and dusk, Kitty experienced an emotion similar to what a young man experiences before battle. Her heart was beating hard, and her thoughts could not fix on anything.

She sensed that this evening, when the two met for the first time, must decide her fate. She kept picturing them over and over, first each separately, then both together. When she thought about the past, she dwelt with pleasure and tenderness on the memory of her relations with Levin. Memories of her childhood and memories of Levin’s friendship with her dead brother lent a special poetic charm to her relations with him. His love for her, of which she was sure, was both flattering and delightful. It was easy for her to think of Levin. Her memory of Vronsky, on the contrary, was mixed with something awkward, though he was sophisticated and poised to the highest degree; as if whatever was false lay—no, not in him, he was very simple and nice—but in her, while with Levin she felt perfectly simple and clear. On the other hand, as soon as she thought about a future with Vronsky, a brilliant and happy prospect rose up before her; with Levin her future seemed cloudy.

As she went upstairs to dress for the evening and looked in the mirror, she noted with pleasure that she was having one of her good days and was in full possession of her powers, and this was what she needed so for what was to come: she had a sense of her composure and the free grace of her movements.

At half past seven, just as she came down to the drawing room, the footman announced: “Konstantin Dmitrievich Levin.” The princess was still in her room, and the prince had not yet emerged. “So this is it,” thought Kitty, and all the blood rushed to her heart. She was horrified at her pallor when she looked in the mirror.

Now she knew for certain that he had come early in order to find her alone and to make his proposal of marriage. Only now, for the first time, did she see the entire matter from a completely different and new perspective. Only now did she realize that the matter affected not her alone—whom she would be
Happy with and whom she loved—but that this very minute she was going to
have to hurt a man she loved. And hurt him cruelly. And why? Because he, the
dear man, loved her, was in love with her. There was nothing to be done for it,
though, it was what she needed and had to do.

“My God, is it really I who must tell him?” she thought. “And what am I
going to tell him? Am I really going to say I don’t love him? That would be un-
true. What shall I tell him? Shall I tell him I love another? No, that is impossible.
I’m leaving, leaving.”

When she reached the doors she heard his steps. “No! That is dishonest.
What am I afraid of? I’ve done nothing wrong. What will be, will be! I shall tell
the truth. For nothing could be awkward with him. Here he is,” she told herself
when she saw his entire powerful and shy figure and his shining eyes aimed di-
rectly at her. She looked him straight in the face, as if imploring him for mercy,
and gave him her hand.

“This isn’t the right time, I guess, I’m early,” he said, looking around the
empty drawing room. When he saw that his hopes had come to pass, that noth-
ing was preventing him from speaking up, his face became grim.

“Oh no,” said Kitty, and she sat down at the table.

“But this is exactly what I wanted, to find you alone,” he began, not sitting
down and not looking at her, so as not to lose his nerve.

“Mama will be out in a moment. She was very tired yesterday. Yesterday . . .”
She was talking, herself not knowing what her lips were saying and not taking
her imploring and caressing gaze off him.

He looked at her; she blushed and fell silent.

“I told you I didn’t know whether I’d come for long . . . that this depended
on you.”

She bowed her head lower and lower, not knowing herself what she would
reply to what was at hand.

“That this depended on you,” he repeated. “I meant to say . . . I meant to say
. . . I came for this . . . for . . . Be my wife!” he blurted out, not knowing what
he was saying, but feeling that the most terrifying thing had been said, and he
stopped and looked at her.

She was breathing hard but not looking at him. She was ecstatic. Her heart
was overflowing with happiness. She had never anticipated that his declared
love would make such a strong impression on her. This lasted only a moment,
though. She remembered Vronsky. She raised her light, truthful eyes to Levin,
and when she saw his desperate face, she quickly replied:

“It cannot be . . . forgive me.”

How close she had been to him a moment before, how important for his life!
And how alien and distant she was to him now!
“It could not have been otherwise,” he said without looking at her. He bowed and started to leave.

14

At that very moment, though, the princess came out. Her face expressed horror when she saw them alone and their distraught faces. Levin bowed to her and said nothing. Kitty was silent and would not raise her eyes. “Thank God, she refused him,” thought the mother, and her face beamed with the usual smile she used to greet her guests on her Thursdays. She sat down and began to question Levin about his life in the country. He sat down again, awaiting the arrival of the guests in order to slip away.

Five minutes later Kitty’s friend, who had married the previous winter, the Countess Nordston, walked in.

She was a sallow, plain woman with flashing black eyes, sickly and nervous. She loved Kitty, and her love for her, as always with married women’s love for unmarried girls, was expressed in her desire to marry Kitty off according to her own ideal of happiness, and so she wished to marry her off to Vronsky. Levin, whom she had met here often early that winter, she had always found distasteful. Her constant and favorite occupation when she met him consisted in making fun of him.

“I love it when he looks down on me from the height of his magnificence. Either he ends his intelligent conversation with me because I am stupid or else he condescends. I’m very fond of that: he condescends to me! I’m very glad he can’t stand me,” she said about him.

She was correct, for indeed Levin could not stand her and despised her for what she took pride in and counted as her merit—her nerves and her refined contempt and indifference for everything coarse and earthy.

Between Nordston and Levin there came to be a relationship encountered not infrequently in society, when two people, while remaining outwardly on friendly terms, despise each other to such a degree that they cannot even treat each other seriously or even insult each other.

Countess Nordston pounced upon Levin immediately.

“Ah! Konstantin Dmitrievich! You’ve returned to our degenerate Babylon,” she said, extending her tiny, sallow hand and recalling his words, uttered sometime in early winter, about Moscow being Babylon. “What, has Babylon turned over a new leaf, or have you turned rotten?” she added, looking around at Kitty with a grin.

“I’m very flattered, Countess, that you remember my words so well,” replied
Levin, who managed to recover and entered straightaway, out of habit, into his hostile joking attitude toward Countess Nordston. “They must have a powerful effect on you.”

“Oh, they do! I write it all down. Well then, Kitty, have you been skating again?”

And she began talking with Kitty. Awkward though it was for Levin to leave now, it was easier than staying for the entire evening and seeing Kitty, who glanced at him from time to time and avoided his gaze. He was about to get up when the princess, noticing his silence, turned to him.

“Have you come to Moscow for long? You’re involved with the district council, I thought, so you can’t be away for very long.”

“No, Princess, I’m not involved with the council any longer,” he said. “I’ve come for a few days.”

“There’s something odd about him,” thought Countess Nordston, searching his stern, grave face. “He’s not getting drawn into his usual arguments. I’ll bring him out, though. It’s such fun making a fool of him in front of Kitty, and I will.”

“Konstantin Dmitrievich,” she said to him, “explain to me, if you would, what this means—you know all this—in our Kaluga countryside all our peasants and all their women have drunk up everything they had and now they aren’t paying us. What does this mean? You are always praising the peasants so.”

At that moment another lady entered the room and Levin stood up.

“Forgive me, Countess, but truly, I know nothing and have nothing to tell you,” he said, and he looked around at the officer entering behind the lady.

“This must be Vronsky,” thought Levin, and to convince himself of this, he glanced at Kitty. She managed to look at Vronsky and looked around at Levin. From just this look in her eyes, which could not keep from shining, Levin realized that she loved this man, realized it as surely as if she had told him in so many words. But what sort of man was he?

Now, for good or ill, Levin had no choice but to stay; he had to find out what the man she loved was like.

There are people who, upon meeting their lucky rival in whatever it is, are ready to turn their back immediately on everything good in him and see only the bad; there are people who, on the contrary, want nothing more than to find in this lucky rival the qualities he used to conquer and so find in him, with an ache in their heart, only the good. Levin was one of these people. Not that it was hard for him to find what was good and attractive in Vronsky. It struck him right away. Vronsky was a sturdily built, dark-haired man, not very tall, with a good-natured and handsome, extremely calm and resolute face. Everything about his
face and figure, from his close-cropped black hair and freshly shaven chin to his loosely fitting, brand-new uniform, was simple but elegant. Allowing the lady entering to pass, Vronsky went over to the princess and then to Kitty.

As he walked toward her, his handsome eyes sparkled with a special tenderness, and bowing to her with a barely noticeable, happy, and modestly triumphant smile (or so it seemed to Levin), respectfully and cautiously, he held out his own small but broad hand.

Having greeted and said a few words to everyone, he sat down without once looking at Levin, who did not take his eyes off him.

“Allow me to introduce you,” said the princess, indicating Levin. “Konstantin Dmitrievich Levin. Count Alexei Kirillovich Vronsky.”

Vronsky rose and, looking Levin amiably in the eye, shook his hand. “I was supposed to have dined with you this winter, I believe,” he said, smiling his simple and open smile, “but you left unexpectedly for the country.”

“Konstantin Dmitrievich despises and detests the city and us, its inhabitants,” said Countess Nordston.

“My words must have a powerful effect on you for you to remember them so well,” said Levin, and recalling that he had said this before, he blushed.

Vronsky looked at Levin and Countess Nordston and smiled. “And are you always in the country?” he asked. “I should think it’s boring in winter?”

“It’s not boring if you have something to do, and it’s never boring being by yourself,” replied Levin brusquely.

“I love the country,” said Vronsky, noticing and pretending not to notice Levin’s tone of voice. “I do hope, however, Count, that you would never agree to live in the country all the time,” said Countess Nordston.

“I don’t know, I’ve never tried it for very long. I did experience a strange feeling,” he continued. “I’ve never longed for the countryside, the Russian countryside, complete with bast sandals and peasants, anywhere the way I did when I spent a winter in Nice with my dear mother. Nice itself is quite boring, you know. And Naples and Sorrento, they’re only good for a short time. It’s there that one recalls Russia especially vividly, and the countryside in particular. They are just like—”

He spoke, addressing both Kitty and Levin and shifting his calm and amiable gaze from one to the other. He obviously was saying whatever came to mind.

Noticing that Countess Nordston was about to say something, he stopped without completing what he had begun and listened attentively to her.

The conversation did not subside for a minute, so that the old princess, who
always had two big guns—classical versus modern education and universal military service—in reserve in the event of a want of topic, had no occasion to bring them out, and Countess Nordston had no occasion to taunt Levin.

Levin wanted to enter into the general conversation but could not; he kept telling himself, “Leave now,” but he didn’t, as though he were waiting for something.

The conversation turned to table rapping and spirits, and Countess Nordston, who believed in spiritualism, began recounting the miracles she had seen.29

“Oh, Countess, you simply must take me, for goodness’ sake, take me to see them! I’ve never seen anything extraordinary, though I’ve searched everywhere,” said Vronsky, smiling.


“Why do you ask me? You know what I’ll say.”

“But I want to hear your opinion.”

“My opinion,” Levin replied, “is just that this table rapping proves that so-called educated society is not superior to the peasants. They believe in the evil eye, and the wasting disease, and love spells, whereas we—”

“You mean you don’t believe in it?”

“I cannot believe in it, Countess.”

“But what if I’ve seen it myself?”

“The peasant women talk about seeing house spirits themselves, too.”

“So you think I’m telling an untruth?”

And she gave a mirthless laugh.

“Oh no, Masha, Konstantin Dmitrievich is saying he can’t believe in it,” said Kitty, blushing for Levin, and Levin saw this and, even more irritated, was about to reply, but Vronsky with his open and cheerful smile rushed to the aid of the conversation, which was threatening to become unpleasant.

“Do you rule out the possibility entirely?” he asked. “Why is it we allow for the existence of electricity, which we don’t know? Why can’t there be a new force as yet unknown to us that—”

“When electricity was discovered,” Levin quickly interrupted, “it was only the phenomenon that was discovered, and what we didn’t know was where it came from or what it produced, and centuries passed before people devised an application for it. The spiritualists, on the other hand, started with tables writing to them and spirits coming to them and only then did people start saying this was an unknown force.”

Vronsky was listening attentively to Levin, as he always listened, obviously interested in what he was saying.
“Yes, but the spiritualists say that now we don’t know what kind of force this is but there is a force, and here are the conditions under which it operates. Let the scientists sort out what the force consists of. No, I don’t see why this can’t be a new force if it—”

“It can’t,” Levin interrupted again, “because with electricity, every time you rub resin on wool, a known phenomenon occurs, but here it does not happen every time, so it’s not a natural phenomenon.”

Sensing, probably, that the conversation was taking an excessively serious turn for a drawing room, Vronsky did not object, but trying to change the subject, he smiled cheerfully and turned to the ladies.

“Let us try it out now, Countess,” he began, but Levin wanted to finish saying what he was thinking.

“I think,” he continued, “that this attempt by spiritualists to explain their miracles by some new force could not be more futile. They speak directly about the power of spirits and want to subject it to material experiment.”

Everyone was waiting for him to finish, and he could sense this.

“And I think that you would be an excellent medium,” said Countess Nordston. “There is something ecstatic about you.”

Levin opened his mouth and was about to say something, but he turned red and did not.

“Please, let’s try out the tables now,” said Vronsky. “Princess, with your permission?”

Vronsky rose, looking around for a small table.

Kitty rose from her table, and as she walked by, her eyes met Levin’s. She pitied him with all her heart, especially since she pitied him an unhappiness of which she herself was the cause. “If you can forgive me, then do,” her look said. “I am so happy.”

“I hate everyone, and you, and myself,” his look replied, and he picked up his hat. But it was not his fate to leave. No sooner had they decided to arrange themselves around the table, and Levin to leave, than the old prince walked in, and after greeting the ladies, turned to Levin.

“Ahh!” he began delightedly. “Been here long? I didn’t know you were here. I’m very glad to see you.”

With Levin, the old prince went back and forth between the familiar and the formal “you.” He embraced Levin, and speaking with him failed to notice Vronsky, who had stood up and was calmly waiting for the prince to address him.

Kitty sensed how, after what had happened, her father’s kindness was hard on Levin. She noticed as well how coldly her father responded, at last, to Vronsky’s bow and how Vronsky with amiable perplexity looked at her father, trying
to understand, but not understanding, how and why he might be ill disposed toward him, and she turned red.

“Prince, let us have Konstantin Dmitrievich,” said Countess Nordston. “We want to perform an experiment.”

“What kind of an experiment? Table rapping? Well, you’ll excuse me, ladies and gentlemen, but in my opinion it’s more fun to play the ring game,” said the old prince, looking at Vronsky and guessing that he was behind this. “At least the ring game makes sense.”

Vronsky’s resolute eyes looked at the prince with astonishment. Smiling faintly, Vronsky immediately began talking with Countess Nordston about the grand ball coming up the next week.

“I hope you will be there?” he turned to Kitty.

As soon as the old prince turned away, Levin slipped out, and the final impression he took away from this evening was the smiling, happy face of Kitty answering Vronsky’s question about the ball.

15

When the evening had ended, Kitty recounted for her mother her conversation with Levin, and despite all the pity she felt for Levin, she rejoiced in the thought that she had received a proposal. She had no doubt that she had acted properly. In bed, though, she could not fall asleep for a long time. One impression pursued her relentlessly. This was Levin’s face, with his furrowed brow and his kind eyes looking at her in grim dejection, and how he stood listening to her father while looking at her and Vronsky. She felt so sorry for him that tears welled up in her eyes. But immediately she thought about the man she had chosen instead. She vividly recalled that courageous, resolute face, the noble calm and the goodness toward everyone that illuminated everything; she recalled the love for her of the man she loved, and once again she felt joy in her heart, and with a smile of happiness she lay her head upon her pillow. “It’s too bad, it is, but what can I do? I’m not to blame,” she told herself, but an inner voice told her otherwise. Whether she regretted having misled Levin or having refused him she didn’t know. But her happiness was poisoned by doubts. “Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy!” she repeated to herself until she fell asleep.

Meanwhile, downstairs, in the prince’s small study, the parents were playing out one of those oft-repeated scenes over their beloved daughter.

“What? Here’s what!” shouted the prince, waving his arms about and then rewrapping his squirrel-lined robe. “The fact that you have no pride, no dig-
nity, that you are sullying, ruining our daughter with your vulgar, idiotic matchmaking!"

"Have mercy, for the love of God himself, Prince. What have I done?" said the princess, nearly in tears.

Happy and content after her conversation with her daughter, she had gone to the prince to say good night as usual, and although she had not intended to speak to him of Levin’s proposal and Kitty’s refusal, nonetheless she did hint to her husband that she thought the matter with Vronsky quite settled and that it would be decided as soon as his mother arrived. At that, at these words, the prince exploded and started shouting abuse.

"What have you done? Here’s what. First of all, you’ve been trying to lure a suitor, and all Moscow is going to be talking, and for good reason. If you’re going to have parties, then invite everyone, not just select suitors. Invite all those young pups (which is what the prince called Moscow’s young men), engage a piano player, and let them dance. Don’t do it the way you are now, with the suitors and the matching up. I find it vile, vile to watch, and you’ve succeeded, you’ve turned the girl’s head. Levin is a thousand times the better man. And that Petersburg dandy, they’re made by machine, all from the same pattern, and they’re all good for nothing. A prince of the blood he may be, but my daughter doesn’t need anyone!"

"But what have I done?"

"Why you’ve . . . " the prince shouted angrily.

"I do know that if I listen to you," the princess interrupted, "we will never marry off our daughter. If that is the case, then we should leave for the country."

"Better we do."

"Wait just a minute. Have I really been trying to ingratiate myself? Not one bit. But a young man, and a very fine young man at that, has fallen in love, and I think she—"

"Yes, you do think! But what if she has in fact fallen in love and he has as much a need to marry as I do? Oh! I wish I’d never seen it! ‘Ah, spiritualism. Ah, Nice. Ah, the ball . . . ’" And the prince, imagining himself to be imitating his wife, curtseyed at each word. "But what we’re going to do is bring misery upon our Katya, and she is in fact going to get ideas."

"And what makes you think so?"

"I don’t think, I know; we have eyes in our head for that and women don’t. I see a man who has serious intentions, that’s Levin; and I see a peacock, like this featherhead who is only out to entertain himself."

"Well, now it’s you who’s getting ideas."

"You just remember this when it’s too late, like with our Dasha."
“Fine then, fine. We won’t talk about it,” the princess stopped him, recalling her unfortunate Dolly.

“That’s just marvelous. Good night!”

Making the sign of the cross over one another and exchanging a kiss, but sensing that each had been unmoved, the spouses parted.

The princess had at first been firmly convinced that this evening had decided Kitty’s fate and that there could be no doubt of Vronsky’s intentions, but her husband’s words had disturbed her. Returning to her room, facing the unknown of the future with dread, she, like Kitty, repeated several times in her soul: “Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy!”

Vronsky had never known family life. His mother, in her youth, had been a brilliant society lady who, during her marriage, and particularly afterward, had had many affairs well known to all society. He scarcely remembered his father and had been educated in the Corps of Pages.32

Leaving school as a very young and brilliant officer, he immediately fell in with wealthy Petersburg officers. Although he did make sorties into Petersburg society from time to time, all his love interests had been outside society.

In Moscow, for the first time since his luxurious and crude life in Petersburg, he had experienced the charm of intimacy with a sweet and innocent young woman of society who was fond of him. It never occurred to him that there could be anything untoward in his relations with Kitty. At balls he danced primarily with her; he visited them in their home. He said to her what people in society usually say, all kinds of nonsense, but it was nonsense to which he unintentionally lent special meaning for her. In spite of the fact that he said nothing to her that he could not have said in front of everyone, he felt that she was becoming more and more dependent on him, and the more he felt this, the more he liked it, and the more tender his feeling for her became. He did not know that his manner of action with regard to Kitty had a specific name, that this was the enticing of young ladies without intention to marry, and that this enticing was one of those bad deeds quite common among brilliant young men such as he was. He thought he was the first to discover this pleasure, and he was enjoying his discovery.

If he could have heard what her parents were saying that evening, if he could have looked on matters from her family’s point of view and learned that Kitty would be unhappy if he did not marry her, he would have been astonished and refused to believe it. He could not believe that something which afforded him
and, above all, her, such great and fine satisfaction, could be bad. Even less could he have believed that he should marry.

Marriage had never seemed a possibility to him. Not only did he have no fondness for family life, but in a family, and in particular in a husband, according to the view commonly held in the bachelor world in which he lived, he imagined something alien, hostile, and most of all—ridiculous. However, although Vronsky did not suspect what her parents were saying, as he left the Shcherbatskys’ that evening he felt that the secret, spiritual connection that existed between himself and Kitty had been affirmed so strongly that evening that he must undertake something. What he could and should undertake, though, he could not conceive.

“It is charming,” he thought as he returned from the Shcherbatskys’, taking away from them, as always, both a pleasant sense of purity and freshness, which stemmed in part, too, from the fact that he had not smoked all evening, and at the same time a new feeling of tenderness at her love for him. “It is charming that neither she nor I said a word, but we understood one another so well in this unseen conversation of looks and intonations that now it is clearer than ever it was that she’s told me she loves me. How dear, simple, and, most important, trusting! I myself feel better, purer. I feel that I have a heart and that there’s much that is fine inside me. Those dear, enamored eyes! When she said, ‘Very much . . .’

“Well, and what of it? Nothing. I’m enjoying myself and so is she.” And he pondered where he would finish the evening.

He reviewed in his mind’s eye the places he could go. “The club? A game of bezique and Champagne with Ignatov? No, I’m not going there. The Château des Fleurs? I’ll find Oblonsky there, songs, the cancan. No, that bores me. This is precisely why I love the Shcherbatskys, because I myself become a better person. I’ll go home.” He proceeded directly to his room at Dussault’s, ordered supper served in his room, and later, after undressing, the moment his head touched the pillow, fell into a sound sleep, as serene as always.

17

The next day, at eleven o’clock in the morning, Vronsky went to the Petersburg Railway station to meet his mother, and the first person he came across on the central staircase was Oblonsky, who was expecting his sister by the same train.

“Ah! Your Excellency!” exclaimed Oblonsky. “Who are you here for?”

“I’m here for my dear mother,” replied Vronsky, smiling as did everyone who
met Oblonsky, shaking his hand and ascending the stairs with him. “She should be arriving shortly from Petersburg.”

“I waited for you until two o’clock. Where did you go after the Shcherbatskys’?”

“Home,” answered Vronsky. “I must confess, I felt so good yesterday after the Shcherbatskys’ that I didn’t feel like going anywhere.”

“A spirited steed I can tell by its brand, and a young man in love by his eyes,” declaimed Stepan Arkadyevich, just as he had previously to Levin.

Vronsky smiled with a look which said he was not denying this, but he immediately changed the subject.

“And whom are you meeting?” he asked.

“I? I’m meeting a very pretty woman,” said Oblonsky.

“You don’t say!”

“Honi soit qui mal y pense!34 My sister Anna.”

“Ah, Madame Karenina, you mean?” said Vronsky.

“Surely you know her?”

“I think I do. Or no . . . To be honest, I don’t remember,” replied Vronsky absentmindedly, at the name Karenina vaguely calling to mind something stiff and tedious.

“But surely you know Alexei Alexandrovich, my illustrious brother-in-law. The whole world knows him.”

“That is, I know him by reputation and by sight. I know that he’s clever, learned, and spiritual in some way. But you know, it’s not . . . not in my line,” said Vronsky.

“Yes, he’s quite a remarkable man, rather conservative, but a splendid man,” noted Stepan Arkadyevich, “a splendid man.”

“Well, all the better for him,” said Vronsky, smiling. “Ah, you’re here,” he turned to his mother’s tall old footman, who was standing at the door. “Come here.” Lately Vronsky, apart from the usual pleasure Stepan Arkadyevich afforded everyone, had felt attached to him as well by the fact that he was linked in his imagination to Kitty.

“What do you say, shall we have supper on Sunday for the diva?” he said, smiling and taking him by the arm.

“Definitely. I’ll take up a collection. Ah, did you make the acquaintance of my friend Levin yesterday?” asked Stepan Arkadyevich.

“Of course. But he left quickly for some reason.”

“He’s a splendid fellow,” Oblonsky continued. “Don’t you think?”

“I don’t know why,” replied Vronsky, “all Muscovites—present company excepted, naturally,” he interjected jokingly, “have something brusque about

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them. For some reason they get on their high horses, they get angry, as if they only wanted to make you feel something.”

“There is that, true, there is,” said Stepan Arkadyevich, laughing cheerfully.

“What, is it soon?” Vronsky turned to the attendant.

“The train has signaled,” replied the attendant.

The train’s approach had been marked by the increasing bustle of preparations at the station, the running of porters, the appearance of policemen and attendants, and those meeting the train. Through the frosty steam one could see workers in sheepskin jackets and soft felt boots crossing the rails of the curving tracks. One could hear the steam engine’s whistle on the distant rails and the movement of something heavy.

“No,” said Stepan Arkadyevich, who very much wanted to tell Vronsky of Levin’s intentions toward Kitty. “No, you’ve misjudged my Levin. He is a high-strung man and can be unpleasant, it’s true, but on the other hand sometimes he can be very dear. His is such an honest, truthful nature, and a heart of gold. But yesterday there were special reasons,” Stepan Arkadyevich continued with a significant smile, utterly forgetting the sincere sympathy he had felt just yesterday for his friend and now experiencing the same feeling, only now for Vronsky. “Yes, there was a reason why he might have been either particularly happy or particularly unhappy.”

Vronsky halted and asked outright:

“What are you saying? Or did he propose to your belle-soeur yesterday?”

“Perhaps,” said Stepan Arkadyevich. “Or so I thought yesterday. Yes, if he left early and was out of sorts, then that’s it. He’s been in love for so long, and I feel very sorry for him.”

“You don’t say! I think, actually, that she could count on a better match,” said Vronsky, and squaring his chest, he began walking again. “Actually, I don’t know him,” he added. “Yes, it’s a tough situation! That’s exactly why most men prefer associating with Claras. There a failure only proves you don’t have enough money, whereas here, your dignity is in the balance. Here’s the train, though.”

Indeed, a locomotive whistled in the distance. A few minutes later the platform began to shake, and gushing with steam being churned up below from the frost, the locomotive rolled in with the lever of the middle wheel being raised and lowered slowly and evenly and with the waving, muffled up, frost-covered engineer, and behind the tender, slower and slower, shaking the platform more and more, the baggage car, a yelping dog inside, came passing by; and finally, shuddering before it came to a halt, the passenger cars rolled up.

The dashing conductor, giving a whistle while still moving, jumped down,
and behind him impatient passengers began getting off one by one: a Guards officer holding himself erect and looking around sternly; a restless merchant carrying a valise and smiling cheerfully; a peasant with a sack over his shoulder.

Standing next to Oblonsky, Vronsky surveyed the cars and the arrivals and forgot all about his mother. What he had just learned about Kitty excited and delighted him. He squared his chest without knowing it, and his eyes flashed. He felt like a conqueror.

“Countess Vronskaya is in this compartment,” said the dashing conductor, approaching Vronsky.

The conductor’s words roused him and forced him to remember his mother and the impending meeting with her. In his heart he did not respect his mother, and without admitting as much to himself, he did not love her, although according to the notions of the set in which he lived, and in line with his upbringing, he could not imagine behavior toward his mother of any kind other than supremely obedient and respectful, and the more obedient and respectful he was outwardly, the less he truly respected and loved her.

Vronsky followed the conductor to the car and stopped at the compartment door in order to let a lady who was getting out pass. From one glance at the appearance of this lady, Vronsky, who had the instinct of a man of the world, determined that she belonged to the highest society. He begged her pardon and was about to go into the car, but he felt a need to look at her one more time—not because she was so very beautiful, and not because of the elegance and modest grace that were evident in all her figure, but because there was something especially kind and gentle in the expression on that endearing face when she passed by him. When he looked around, she too turned her head. Her shining gray eyes, which seemed dark because of her thick eyelashes, rested amiably and attentively on his face, as if she were acknowledging him, and immediately shifted to the approaching crowd, as if searching for someone. In this brief glance, Vronsky had time to remark the checked vivacity that played on her face and flitted between her flashing eyes and the faint smile that curved her rosy lips. It was as if an excess of something had so overfilled her being that against her will it was expressed first in the flash of her glance and then in her smile. She deliberately extinguished the light in her eyes, but it shone against her will in her barely perceptible smile.

Vronsky entered the car. His mother, a withered old lady with black eyes and ringlets, squinted as she looked at her son and smiled slightly with thin lips.
Rising from the bench and handing her bag to her maid, she gave her son her small, withered hand, and raising his head from her hand, kissed his face.

“Did you receive my telegram? Are you well? Thank God.”

“Did you have a pleasant journey?” said the son, sitting beside her and listening, without intending to, to the woman’s voice outside the door. He knew it was the voice of the lady he had met coming in.

“All the same, I can’t agree with you,” the lady’s voice was saying.

“It is the Petersburg view, madam.”

“Not the Petersburg view, simply the woman’s,” she replied.

“Well then, allow me to kiss your hand.”

“Good-bye, Ivan Petrovich. Would you please see whether my brother is here and send him to me?” the lady said at the door and returned to the compartment.

“Well, have you found your brother?” said Vronskaya, addressing the lady. Vronsky remembered now that this was Madame Karenina.

“Your brother is here,” he said, standing up. “Forgive me, I didn’t recognize you, and in any case our acquaintance was so very brief,” said Vronsky, bowing, “that you doubtless do not remember me.”

“Oh no,” she said, “I would have recognized you because your dear mother and I seem to have spoken of nothing but you the entire journey,” she said, allowing, at last, the animation that was begging to come out to be expressed in her smile. “But my brother is still not here.”

“Call him, Alyosha,” said the old countess.

Vronsky went out onto the platform and shouted:

“Oblonsky! Here!”

But Madame Karenina did not wait for her brother. Catching sight of him, she stepped out of the car with a light but firm step, and as soon as her brother walked up to her, she made a movement that astonished Vronsky for its decisiveness and grace, throwing her left arm around her brother’s neck, quickly pulling him toward her, and kissing him soundly. Not taking his eyes off her, Vronsky observed and smiled without himself knowing why. Remembering that his mother was waiting for him, though, he went back into the car.

“Isn’t it true, she’s very charming?” the countess said, referring to Madame Karenina. “Her husband seated her with me, and I was very pleased. She and I talked the entire journey. Well, and you, they say . . . vous filez le parfait amour. Tant mieux, mon cher, tant mieux.”

“I don’t know what you are hinting at, Maman,” the son replied coldly. “So, Maman, shall we go?”

Madame Karenina came back into the car to say good-bye to the countess.
“There, you see, Countess? You have met your son and I my brother,” she said gaily. “And we’ve run out of stories; there would have been nothing more to tell.”

“Oh no, my dear,” said the countess, taking her hand. “I could go around the world with you and not get bored. You are one of those dear women with whom it is a pleasure both to speak and to sit in silence. And please, don’t give your son a thought. It is not possible never to be apart from him.”

Madame Karenina stood very still, holding herself extremely erect, and her eyes smiled.

“Anna Arkadyevna,” said the countess, explaining to her son, “has a little boy eight years old, I believe, and she has never been apart from him, and she is in agony over having left him.”

“Yes, the countess and I talked the entire time, I of my son and she of hers,” said Madame Karenina, and again a smile lit up her face, a gentle smile meant for him.

“You must have found that very boring,” he said, immediately catching the ball of flirtation she had tossed him. She evidently did not want to continue the conversation in this vein, however, and turned to the old countess.

“I’m very grateful to you. I barely noticed the day pass yesterday. Good-bye, Countess.”

“Good-bye, my friend,” answered the countess. “Let me kiss your pretty little face. I’m telling you frankly because I’m an old lady that I’ve become very fond of you.”

As formulaic as this phrase was, Madame Karenina evidently sincerely believed and delighted in it. She blushed, leaned over slightly, presented her face to the countess’s lips, straightened up again, and with the same smile rippling between her lips and eyes, gave Vronsky her hand. He pressed the proffered little hand and rejoiced as at something special at the energetic squeeze with which she firmly and boldly shook his hand. She went out with a quick step that bore her rather full body with a strange lightness.

“How charming,” said the old lady.

Her son was thinking the very same thing. He followed her with his eyes until her graceful figure was out of sight, and the smile remained on his face. Through the window he saw her walk up to her brother, link arms with him, and start telling him something in a lively fashion, evidently about something that had nothing to do with him, Vronsky, and this he found annoying.

“Well, then, Maman, are you quite well?” he repeated, turning to his mother.

“Everything is fine, marvelous. Alexandre has been very sweet. And Marie has grown very pretty. She’s quite interesting.”

And she began once again to tell him about what interested her most, the
christening of her grandson, for which she had made the trip to Petersburg, and the sovereign's special favor toward her elder son.

"Here is Lavrenty," said Vronsky, looking out the window. "We can go now, if you like."

The old butler who had traveled with the countess appeared in the car to report that all was ready, and the countess rose to leave.

"We can go, there are very few people now," said Vronsky.

The maid took a bag and the lap dog, the butler and porter the other bags. Vronsky gave his mother his arm; but as they were coming out of the car several men suddenly ran by with frightened faces. The stationmaster ran by as well, wearing a service cap of an unusual color. Something untoward had happened, evidently. The crowd from the train was running back.

"What? . . . What? . . . Where? . . . Jumped! . . . Crushed!" These words were heard among those passing. Stepan Arkadyevich with his sister on his arm, also looking frightened, had gone back, and paused by the door to the car to avoid the crowd.

The ladies went into the car, while Vronsky and Stepan Arkadyevich followed the crowd to learn the details of the accident.

A guard, whether drunk or too muffled against the bitter frost, had failed to hear the train backing out and had been crushed.

Before Vronsky and Oblonsky could return, the ladies had learned these details from the butler.

Oblonsky and Vronsky had both seen the mangled corpse. Oblonsky was obviously suffering. He frowned and looked as if he were about to cry.

"Oh, how horrible! Oh, Anna, if you had seen it! Oh, how horrible!" he kept repeating.

Vronsky said nothing; his handsome face was grave but utterly calm.

"Oh, if you had seen it, Countess," said Stepan Arkadyevich. "And his wife is here. . . . It was horrible to see her. . . . She threw herself on the body. They say he was the sole provider for a large family. What a horror!"

"Can't something be done for her?" said Madame Karenina in an agitated whisper.

Vronsky took one look at her and left the car.

"I'll be right back, Maman," he added, turning around in the doorway.

When he returned a few minutes later, Stepan Arkadyevich was already chatting with the countess about a new singer and the countess was glancing impatiently over her shoulder at the door, waiting for her son.

"Now we can go," said Vronsky, entering.

They went out together. Vronsky walked in front with his mother. Behind
walked Madame Karenina and her brother. At the exit the stationmaster caught up with Vronsky.

“You gave my assistant two hundred rubles. Would you kindly indicate who it is meant for?”

“The widow,” said Vronsky, shrugging his shoulders. “I don’t see what there is to ask.”

“You gave that?” Oblonsky exclaimed from behind, and squeezing his sister’s arm, he added: “Very kind, very kind! A splendid fellow, isn’t he? My respects, Countess.”

He and his sister stopped, looking for her maid.

When they emerged, the Vronsky carriage had already left. The people leaving were still discussing what had happened.

“There’s a horrible death for you!” said one gentlemen passing by. “Cut in two, they say.”

“On the contrary, I think it’s the easiest of all. Instantaneous,” noted another.

“How is it they don’t take measures?” said a third.

Madame Karenina got into the carriage, and Stepan Arkadyevich was amazed to see that her lips were quivering and she could barely hold back her tears.

“What’s wrong, Anna?” he asked when they had driven a few hundred sazhens.40

“It’s a bad omen,” she said.

“What nonsense!” said Stepan Arkadyevich. “You’ve come, that’s the main thing. You can’t imagine how I’m counting on you.”

“Have you known Vronsky long?” she asked.

“Yes. You know, we are hoping he will marry Kitty.”

“Yes?” said Anna quietly. “Well, let’s talk about you now,” she added, giving her head a good shake, as if she wanted physically to drive out something that was superfluous and bothering her. “Let’s talk of your affairs. I received your letter and here I am.”

“Yes, all my hopes are on you,” said Stepan Arkadyevich.

“Well, tell me everything.”

And Stepan Arkadyevich began to tell his story.

When they drove up to the house, Oblonsky helped his sister out, sighed, squeezed her hand, and headed for his office.
When Anna entered, Dolly was sitting in the small drawing room with a chubby little towhead, who already resembled his father, listening to his French reading lesson. As the boy read he kept twirling and trying to tear off a jacket button that was hanging by a thread. His mother moved his hand away several times, but the chubby little hand found its way back to the button. His mother tore the button off and put it in her pocket.

“Keep your hands still, Grisha,” she said, and she picked up her blanket again, a project of long standing that she always picked up in difficult moments. She knitted nervously, winding the yarn around with her finger and counting the stitches. Although she had sent word yesterday to tell her husband that it was none of her concern whether his sister did or didn’t come, she had been preparing for and nervously awaiting her sister-in-law’s arrival.

Grief was killing Dolly, swallowing her whole. Nonetheless, she remembered that Anna, her sister-in-law, was the wife of one of the most important figures in Petersburg and a Petersburg grande dame. Thanks to this circumstance, she did not do what she had assured her husband she would, that is, she did not forget that her sister-in-law was coming. “Yes, in the end, Anna is not to blame for anything,” thought Dolly. “I know nothing but the very best about her, and I have seen nothing but kindness and friendship from her.” True, as far as she could recall her impression from Petersburg with the Karenins, she had not liked their house; there was something false about the whole makeup of their family life. “But why should I not receive her? Just so she doesn’t try to console me!” thought Dolly. “All the consolations, and admonitions, and Christian prayers—I’ve thought through all that a thousand times, and it’s all useless.”

All these past days Dolly had been alone with the children. She did not want to talk about her grief, and with this grief in her heart she could not talk about anything else. She knew that one way or another she would tell Anna everything, and she was both gladdened by the thought that she would tell her everything and infuriated at the necessity of speaking of her humiliation with her, his sister, and hearing from her stock phrases of admonition and consolation.

As often happens, while looking at the clock, awaiting her at any moment, she missed the exact moment when her guest did arrive and did not even hear the bell.

When she did hear the sound of a dress and light steps already in the doorway, she looked around, and her anguished face unwittingly expressed not delight but amazement. She stood up and embraced her sister-in-law.

“What, you’re already here?” she said, kissing her.

“Dolly, how glad I am to see you!”
“I am, too,” said Dolly, smiling weakly and trying from the expression on
Anna’s face to find out whether or not she knew. “I suppose she does,” she
thought, noting the sympathy on Anna’s face. “Well, let’s go, I’ll see you to your
room,” she went on, trying to stave off the moment of explanation as long as
possible.

“Is this Grisha? Heavens, how he’s grown!” said Anna, and kissing him but
not taking her eyes off Dolly, she stopped and blushed. “No, please, let’s not go
anywhere.”

She removed her scarf and hat, and catching it on a lock of her black hair,
which curled every which way, she shook her head and freed her hair.

“And you radiate happiness and health!” said Dolly, almost with envy.

“I do? Yes,” said Anna. “Heavens, Tanya! The same age as my Seryozha,” she
added, turning to the little girl who had run in. She took her in her arms and
kissed her. “A delightful little girl, a delight! Show me all of them.”

She named all the children and recalled not only their names but how many
years and months old they were, and all their personalities and illnesses, and
Dolly could not but appreciate this.

“Well, then let’s go to their room,” she said. “It’s a pity Vasya is sleeping now.”

After seeing the children, they sat down, alone now, in the drawing room,
over coffee. Anna reached for the tray and then pushed it back.

“Dolly,” she said, “he’s told me.”

Dolly looked coldly at Anna. She waited for the saccharine words of sympa-
thy now, but Anna said nothing of the kind.

“Dolly, dear!” she said. “I’m not going to try to speak for him or console you,
that’s impossible. No, dear heart, I’m simply so sorry, sorry for you with all my
heart!”

Tears suddenly appeared behind the thick eyelashes of her shining eyes. She
moved closer to her sister-in-law and took her hand with her own small, ener-
geetic hand. Dolly did not pull away, but her face did not change its dry expres-
sion.

She said, “You can’t console me. All is lost after what’s happened. It’s a dis-
aster!”

The moment she said this, the expression on her face suddenly softened.
Anna lifted Dolly’s thin, withered hand, kissed it, and said, “But Dolly, what is
to be done, what is to be done? What is the best way to act in this horrible situa-
tion? That’s what must be considered.”

“It’s all over, and there’s nothing else,” said Dolly. “And worst of all, you must
understand, is that I can’t leave him. There are the children, and I’m tied. But I
can’t live with him, either. Seeing him is torture for me.”
“Dolly, darling, he told me, but I want to hear it from you. Tell me everything.”

Dolly looked at her inquiringly.

Unfeigned concern and love were visible on Anna’s face.

“If you insist,” she said suddenly. “But I will start at the beginning. You know how I married. The way Maman brought me up, I was not only innocent, I was stupid. I knew nothing. I know people say that husbands tell their wives about their past life, but Stiva”—she corrected herself—“Stepan Arkadyevich told me nothing. You won’t believe it, but up until now I thought I was the only woman he had ever known. That is how I lived for eight years. You must understand that not only did I not suspect him of infidelity, I considered it impossible, and here, imagine, with notions like that, to learn suddenly the full horror, the full vileness . . . You must understand me. To be wholly assured of one’s happiness, and suddenly”—Dolly continued, holding back her sobs—“getting a letter . . . his letter to his lover, my governess. No, it’s too horrible!” She hastily pulled out her handkerchief and hid her face in it. “I can understand an infatuation,” she continued after a brief silence, “but to deceive me deliberately, sneakily . . . and with whom? To continue being my husband as well as her . . . it’s horrible! You can’t understand.”

“Oh yes, I do understand! I do, dear Dolly, I do,” said Anna, pressing her hand.

“And do you think he understands the full horror of my position?” Dolly continued. “Not a bit! He’s happy and content.”

“Oh no!” Anna quickly broke in. “He is wretched, remorse is killing him—”

“Is he capable of remorse?” Dolly broke in, carefully examining her sister-in-law’s face.

“Yes, I know him. I could not look at him without pity. We both know him. He is good but he is proud, and now he is so humiliated. What touched me most”—and here Anna divined the main thing that could touch Dolly—“he’s tormented by two things: he’s ashamed for the children’s sake, and while loving you . . . yes, yes, while loving you more than anything in the world”—she hastily cut off Dolly, who was about to object—“he hurt you, destroyed you. ‘No, no, she cannot forgive me,’ he keeps saying.”

Dolly looked past her sister-in-law thoughtfully, listening to her words.

“Yes, I understand that his position is horrible; it’s always worse for the guilty than the innocent,” she said, “if he feels that all his unhappiness is his fault. But how can I forgive him? How can I be his wife again after her? Living with him now will be agony, and precisely because I loved him as I did, I loved my past love for him—”
Sobs cut her words short.

But as if intentionally, each time she softened she began once again to talk about what had vexed her.

“She is young, you see, and pretty,” she continued. “Do you understand, Anna, that my youth and beauty have been taken, and by whom? By him and his children. I have served him well, and all I had went into this service, and now, naturally, he prefers a fresh, vulgar creature. They’ve probably talked about me together or, even worse, said nothing. Do you understand?” Once again, hatred was kindled in her eyes. “And after this he is going to tell me . . . Do you think I’m going to believe him? Never. No, it’s all over, all that was once my consolation, the reward for my labor and agonies. . . . Would you believe it? I was just teaching Grisha. This used to be a joy, and now it’s torture. What am I trying, working so hard for? What are the children for? What is horrible is that all of a sudden my soul has been turned inside out and instead of love and tenderness, all I feel for him is malice, yes, malice. I could kill him and—”

“Dearest Dolly, I do understand, but don’t torture yourself. You have been so insulted, so provoked, that you are seeing many things the wrong way.”

Dolly quieted down, and for a couple of minutes the pair were both silent.

“What can I do? Think, Anna, help me. I’ve thought it all through and I see nothing.”

Anna could think of nothing, but her heart responded directly to every word, every expression on her sister-in-law’s face.

“I’ll say one thing,” Anna began. “I’m his sister, and I know his nature, this capacity for forgetting everything, everything”—she made a gesture in front of her brow—“this capacity for getting completely carried away, but then for complete remorse as well. He cannot believe, cannot understand now how he could have done what he did.”

“No, he does understand, and he did before!” Dolly interrupted. “But I . . . you’re forgetting me. Does this make it any easier for me?”

“Just wait. When he was talking to me, I admit, I still didn’t realize the full horror of your position. All I saw was him and the fact that the family was in disarray. I felt sorry for him, but now that I’ve spoken with you, I, as a woman, see something different. I see your sufferings, and I can’t tell you how sorry I am for you! But Dolly, dearest, I fully understand your sufferings, only there’s one thing I don’t know. I don’t know . . . I don’t know how much love you still have in your heart for him. This only you know—whether there is enough of it for you to be able to forgive. If there is, then forgive him!”

“There isn’t,” began Dolly, but Anna interrupted her, kissing her hand once more.

“I know society better than you,” she said. “I know these men, like Stiva, how
they look on this. You say he talked about you with her. That did not happen. These men commit indiscretions, but their hearth and wife—these are sacred for them. Somehow they hold these women in contempt and don’t let them interfere with their families. They draw an inviolate line between their family and this. I don’t understand it, but that’s the way it is.”

“Yes, but he kissed her.”

“Dolly, dear Dolly, please stop. I saw Stiva when he fell in love with you. I remember the time he came to see me and cried, talking about you, and what poetry and what a paragon you were for him, and I know that the longer he has lived with you, the higher you have risen in his eyes. There were times, you know, when we laughed at him for adding to every word he said: ‘Dolly is an amazing woman.’ You have always been a goddess for him, and this infatuation does not come from his heart.”

“But what if this infatuation is repeated?”

“It can’t be, as I understand it.”

“Yes, but could you forgive him?”

“I don’t know, I can’t judge. . . . Yes, I can,” said Anna, and after giving it some thought and grasping the situation with her mind and weighing it on her internal scales, added: “Yes, I can, I can, I can. Yes, I could forgive him. I couldn’t be the same, no, but I could forgive him, and forgive him in such a way as if it had never happened, never happened at all.”

“Well, of course,” Dolly interjected quickly, as if she were saying what she had thought many times, “otherwise it would not be forgiveness. If you are to forgive someone, then it must be completely, completely. Let’s go, I’ll take you to your room,” she said, standing, and as they went Dolly gave Anna a hug. “My dear, I’m so happy you’ve come. I feel better, much better.”

Anna spent that entire day at the house, that is, at the Oblonskys’, and received no one, although several of her acquaintances had already learned of her arrival and had come that same day. Anna spent the entire morning with Dolly and the children. She merely sent a note to her brother telling him he must dine at home. “Come, God is merciful,” she wrote.

Oblonsky did dine at home. The conversation was general, and the wife addressed him using the familiar “you,” which had not happened previously. There was the same alienation between husband and wife, but there was no more talk of separation, and Stepan Arkadyevich could see the possibility of explanation and reconciliation.
Immediately after dinner Kitty arrived. She knew Anna Arkadyevna, but very slightly, and she was now coming to see her sister not without some trepidation at how this Petersburg society lady whom everyone so praised would receive her. But Anna Arkadyevna took a liking to her—that she could see right away. Anna obviously admired her beauty and youth, and before Kitty knew it, she felt herself not only under Anna’s influence but a little in love with her, the way young women can fall in love with married and older ladies. Anna did not resemble a society lady or the mother of an eight-year-old son, but rather resembled a girl of twenty in the agility of her movements and the freshness and vivacity of her face, which came out either in her smile or her look, and the, if not grave, then sometimes mournful expression of her eyes, which struck and drew Kitty to her. Kitty felt that Anna was perfectly simple and was hiding nothing, but that she had some other higher world of complicated and poetic interests inaccessible to her.

After dinner, when Dolly went to her room, Anna quickly rose and walked over to her brother, who was lighting a cigar.

“Stiva,” she said to him, winking gaily, making the sign of the cross over him, and indicating the door with her eyes. “Go, and may God help you.”

Understanding her meaning, he threw down the cigar and disappeared through the door.

When Stepan Arkadyevich left, she returned to the sofa, where she sat surrounded by the children. Whether it was because the children saw that their mother loved this aunt, or because they themselves sensed the special charm in her, the older two, and the younger ones in their wake, as often happens with children, had latched onto their new aunt before dinner and would not be separated from her, and between them something like a game was invented that consisted in sitting as close to their aunt as possible, touching her, holding her little hand, kissing it, and playing with her ring, or at least touching the flounce on her dress.

“Come, come, as we were sitting before,” said Anna Arkadyevna, sitting in her place.

And once again Grisha slipped his head under her arm and leaned his head on her dress and beamed with pride and happiness.

“Now when is the ball?” she turned to Kitty.

“Next week, and it’s a lovely ball. One of those balls where you always have a good time.”

“You mean there are some where you always have a good time?” said Anna with a gentle scoffing.

“It’s strange, but there are. I always have a good time at the Bobrishchevs’,
and the Nikitins’, too, but it’s always boring at the Mezhkovs’. Haven’t you ever noticed?”

“No, my dear, for me there is no such thing as a good time at a ball,” said Anna, and in her eyes Kitty glimpsed a special world that was not open to her. “For me there are only the kind that are less trying and boring.”

“How could you be bored at a ball?”

“Why would I not be bored at a ball?” asked Anna.

Kitty saw that Anna knew what answer would follow.

“Because you’re always prettier than everyone else.”

Anna had the ability to blush, which she did, and said, “First of all, I never am, and second of all, even if that were so, what do I care about that?”

“Will you go to this ball?” asked Kitty.

“I don’t think I can avoid it. Here, take this,” she told Tanya, who was pulling the loose-fitting ring off her white, tapered finger.

“It would please me very much if you would go. I would so like to see you at a ball.”

“At the very least, if I must go, I will be consoled by the thought that it gives you pleasure. . . . Grisha, don’t pull, please, it’s all undone as it is,” she said, tucking back the loose lock of hair Grisha had been playing with.

“I imagine you at the ball in lilac.”

“Why lilac necessarily?” asked Anna, smiling. “Now, children, go on, go on. Do you hear? Miss Hull is calling you to tea,” she said, plucking the children off and sending them to the dining room.

“And I know why you’re asking me to go to the ball. You’re expecting a great deal of this ball, and you want everyone to be there to have a part in it.”

“How do you know? Yes.”

“Oh! How fine it is to be your age,” Anna continued. “I remember and know that light blue haze, like what you see in the mountains in Switzerland. The haze that blankets everything in this blissful time when childhood is just ending and out of this enormous circle, happy and cheerful, the path grows steadily narrower, and it’s cheerful and awful to enter this suite of rooms, although it seems both bright and beautiful. Who hasn’t experienced this?”

Kitty smiled silently. “But how did she experience this? How I wish I could know her entire romance,” thought Kitty, recalling the unpoetic appearance of Alexei Alexandrovich, her husband.

“I know a thing or two. Stiva told me, and I congratulate you, I like him very much,” continued Anna. “I met Vronsky at the train station.”

“Oh, was he there?” asked Kitty, blushing. “What did Stiva tell you?”

“Stiva gave it all away. And I would be very glad. I traveled yesterday with
Vronsky’s mother,” she continued, “and his mother talked about him incessantly; he’s her favorite; I know how partial mothers are, but—”

“What did his mother tell you?”

“Oh, many things! And I know he’s her favorite, but still it was obvious, he’s a knight. . . . Well, for instance, she told me that he had wanted to give his entire legacy to his brother, that as a child he had done something else extraordinary, he’d rescued a woman from the water. In short, a hero,” said Anna, smiling and recalling the two hundred rubles he had given at the station.

She did not tell the story of those two hundred rubles, however. For some reason she did not like thinking about that. She sensed that it had something to do with her, something that should not be.

“She urged me to visit her,” continued Anna, “and I’m happy to go see the old lady and tomorrow I shall pay her a visit. Thank goodness, though, Stiva has been with Dolly in her room for a long time,” Anna added, diverting the conversation and standing up, displeased with something, as it seemed to Kitty.

“No, me first! No, me!” shouted the children, who had finished their tea and were running to their Aunt Anna.

“Everyone all together!” said Anna, and laughing, she ran toward them, put her arms around them, and brought the whole heap of swarming children tumbling down, shrieking with delight.

21

Dolly emerged from her room for tea with the adults. Stepan Arkadyevich did not. He must have left his wife’s room by the back door.

“I’m afraid you will be cold upstairs,” remarked Dolly, turning to Anna. “I want to move you downstairs, and we’ll be closer.”

“Oh, please, don’t worry about me,” replied Anna, looking into Dolly’s face trying to determine whether there had or had not been a reconciliation.

“It will be lighter for you here,” replied her sister-in-law.

“I’m telling you, I can sleep anywhere and anytime, like a baby.”

“What’s this about?” asked Stepan Arkadyevich, emerging from his study and addressing his wife.

From his tone, both Kitty and Anna realized immediately that there had been a reconciliation.

“I want to move Anna downstairs, but I have to rehang the curtains. No one else can do it, I shall see to it myself,” replied Dolly, addressing him.

“God knows whether they reconciled completely,” thought Anna, hearing Dolly’s tone, cold and calm.
“Oh, enough, Dolly, always making things difficult,” said the husband. “If you like, I’ll do it all.”

“Yes, they must have reconciled,” thought Anna.

“I know how you’ll do it all,” Dolly replied. “You’ll tell Matvei to do what can’t be done and you yourself will leave and he’ll get it all mixed up.” And her habitual teasing smile furrowed the corners of Dolly’s lips as she said this.

“Complete, complete reconciliation, complete,” thought Anna, “thank God!” And rejoicing in the fact that she had been the cause of this, she went up to Dolly and kissed her.

“Not at all. Why do you despise Matvei and me so?” said Stepan Arkadyevich, smiling barely perceptibly and addressing his wife.

All evening, as usual, Dolly was slightly mocking toward her husband, and Stepan Arkadyevich was content and cheerful, but only enough to show that he, while having been forgiven, had not forgotten his crime.

At half past nine, an especially joyous and pleasant family conversation at the Oblonskys’ tea table was disturbed by what was evidently the simplest of events, but this simple event for some reason struck everyone as odd. Having begun talking about mutual Petersburg acquaintances, Anna quickly rose.

“I have her in my album,” she said, “and, oh yes, I’ll show you my Seryozha,” she added with a proud maternal smile.

Just before ten o’clock, the time when she ordinarily said good night to her son and often tucked him in herself before going out to a ball, she felt sad at being so far away from him; and no matter what they spoke of, she couldn’t keep her thoughts from returning to her curly-headed Seryozha. She wanted to look at his picture and talk about him. Seizing the first pretext, she stood up and with her light, firm step went to get the album. The stairs to her room let out onto the landing of the large, heated, central staircase.

As she was leaving the drawing room, the bell rang in the front hall.

“Who could that be?” said Dolly.

“It’s too early to come for me, and too late for anyone else,” Kitty remarked.

“Someone with papers, probably,” added Stepan Arkadyevich, and as Anna walked past the staircase, a servant ran up to announce the visitor, and the visitor himself stood by a lamp; glancing down, Anna immediately recognized Vronsky, and a strange feeling of satisfaction and at the same time dread suddenly stirred inexplicably in her heart. He was standing there still in his coat, taking something out of his pocket. In that moment when she came even with the middle of the staircase, he looked up and saw her, and something shameful and frightened passed across his face. Tilting her head slightly, she walked on and behind her heard Stepan Arkadyevich’s loud voice inviting him up, and Vronsky’s quiet, low, and calm voice refusing.
By the time Anna returned with the album he was gone, and Stepan Arkadyevich told her that he had stopped by to inquire about the dinner they were giving tomorrow for a visiting celebrity.

“He would not come up for anything. He is rather strange,” added Stepan Arkadyevich.

Kitty blushed. She thought she alone realized why he had stopped by and why he had not come up. “He went to our house,” she thought, “and didn’t find me there, so he thought I’d be here. But he didn’t come up because he thought it was late and Anna was here.”

Everyone exchanged glances, not saying anything, and started looking at Anna’s album.

There was nothing unusual or strange in the fact that a man had dropped by to see a friend at half past nine to learn the details of an upcoming dinner and refused to come in; nonetheless, it did seem strange to everyone. It seemed strange and untoward to Anna most of all.

22

The ball had only just begun when Kitty and her mother stepped onto the grand staircase, which was flooded with light, flowers, and footmen in powdered wigs and long red tunics. From the ballroom came a hum of movement as steady as a beehive’s, and while they fixed their hair and dresses in front of the mirror on the landing between the trees, from the ballroom they heard the cautious but distinct sounds of the orchestra’s violins, which had begun the first waltz. A little old man in civilian dress who had just straightened his gray curls in front of the other mirror and who smelled strongly of perfume, bumped into them on the staircase and stepped aside, obviously admiring Kitty, whom he did not know. A beardless youth, one of those society youths whom the old Prince Shcherbatsky called pups, wearing an extremely open waistcoat and straightening his white tie as he walked, bowed to them and, after running past, returned to ask Kitty for the quadrille. The first quadrille had already been given to Vronsky, so she had to give this youth the second. An officer, buttoning a glove, stepped aside at the door and smoothing his mustache, admired the rosy Kitty.

Although her gown and hair and all her preparations for the ball had cost Kitty much effort and thought, now, in her elaborate tulle dress over a pink slip, Kitty made her entrance to the ball so freely and simply it was as if all those rosettes and lace, all the details of her gown had not cost her or her maids a moment’s attention, as if she had been born in this tulle and lace, with her hair piled high and a rose with two leaves on top of it all.
When before entering the ballroom the old princess had wanted to straighten the twisted ribbon of her sash, Kitty had gently declined. She sensed that everything ought to be fine and graceful on her as it was and that nothing needed fixing.

Kitty was having one of her happy days. The dress was not tight anywhere, the lace *berthe* did not droop anywhere, and the rosettes were not crushed or torn; the pink slippers on high curved heels did not pinch but gladdened the foot. The thick rolls of blond hair hugged her petite head as if they were her own. All three buttons had closed without tearing off on her long glove, which encased her arm without altering its shape. Her locket’s black velvet ribbon encircled her neck especially softly. This velvet was lovely, and at home, looking at her neck in the mirror, Kitty had sensed what this velvet said. There might still be some doubt about everything else, but the black velvet ribbon was lovely. Kitty smiled here, too, at the ball, when she looked at it in the mirror. Kitty’s bared shoulders and arms felt like cold marble, a feeling she especially liked. Her eyes sparkled, and her rosy lips could not help but smile at the awareness of how attractive she was.

Before she could enter the ballroom and reach the crowd of ladies, all tulle, ribbon, lace, and flowers, who were awaiting invitations to dance (Kitty never lingered in that crowd), she had been asked to waltz, and asked by the best partner, the premier partner in the ball hierarchy, the famous ball director and master of ceremonies, a married, handsome, and stately man, Egorushka Korsunsky. Having just left Countess Banina, with whom he had danced the first round of the waltz, surveying his realm, that is, the few pairs who had joined the dancing, he caught sight of Kitty entering and hurried up to her with that special, loose-jointed amble characteristic only of ball directors, bowed, and without even asking whether or not she wanted to, raised his arm in order to place it around her slender waist. She looked around for someone to whom she could hand her fan, and the hostess, smiling at her, took it.

“How wonderful that you came on time,” he told her, embracing her waist.

“What kind of manners is it to be late?”

She placed her bent left hand on his shoulder, and her tiny feet in their pink slippers moved quickly, lightly, and rhythmically over the slippery parquet in time with the music.

“One is refreshed, waltzing with you,” he told her, plunging into the first slow steps of the waltz. “Splendid, so light on your feet, such précision,” he told her, as he told nearly all the pretty women he knew.

She smiled at his praise and over his shoulder continued to survey the ballroom. She was not someone newly out for whom all the faces at a ball blur into one magical impression; nor was she a young woman who had been dragged
from ball to ball and for whom all the faces at the ball were so familiar as to be boring; rather, she was in between those two. She was excited but at the same time sufficiently self-possessed that she could observe. In the left corner of the ballroom she saw the cream of society had gathered. There was the beauty Lydie, Korsunsky’s wife, impossibly bared; there was the hostess; there was Krivin with the shiny bald spot who was always to be found wherever the cream of society was; this was where young men looked without daring to approach; and there her eyes found Stiva and then caught sight of the lovely figure and head of Anna, who was wearing a black velvet dress. And he was there. Kitty had not seen him since the evening she had refused Levin. With her farsighted eyes, Kitty immediately recognized him and even noticed that he was looking at her.

“What do you think, another turn? You’re not tired?” said Korsunsky, who was a little out of breath.

“No, thank you.”

“Where shall I take you?”

“Madame Karenina is here, I think. Take me to her.”

“Wherever you say.”

Korsunsky waltzed her directly toward the crowd in the left corner of the ballroom, steadily moderating his step, and repeating, “Pardon, mesdames, pardon, pardon, mesdames,” and navigating through the sea of lace, tulle, and ribbon, without snagging a single feather, he turned his lady sharply, exposing her slim legs in their openwork stockings, and so that her train fanned out, covering Krivin’s knees. Korsunsky bowed, straightened his broad shirtfront, and gave her his arm to escort her to Anna Arkadyevna. Kitty blushed, removed her train from Krivin’s knees, and her head spinning a little, looked around in search of Anna. Anna was surrounded by ladies and gentleman, conversing. Anna was not wearing lilac, as Kitty had urged, but a black, low-cut velvet dress that exposed her full, finely molded shoulders and bosom, which looked like they had been chiseled of old ivory, and her rounded arms and slender, tiny wrists. The entire dress was trimmed in Venetian lace. On her head, in her dark hair, which was all her own, was a small garland of pansies and the same garland on the black ribbon threaded through the white lace at her waist. Her hair did not attract attention. The only thing that did attract attention, adorning her, were those short, willful tendrils of curly hair that kept escaping at her nape and temples. Around her finely molded, strong neck was a string of pearls.

Kitty saw Anna every day and was in love with her and invariably pictured her in lilac. But now, seeing her in black, she felt she had not understood the full extent of her charm. She now saw her as quite new and surprising. She now realized that Anna could not wear lilac and that her charm lay specifically in the
fact that she always transcended her gown, that her gown could never be conspicuous on her. The black dress with the luxurious lace was not conspicuous; it was merely a frame, and she was all one saw—simple, natural, elegant, and at the same time animated and cheerful.

She was standing, as always, extremely erect, and when Kitty approached this cluster, Anna was talking with their host, her head turned slightly toward him.

“No, I am not casting stones,” she replied to something he had said, “although I don’t understand it,” she continued, shrugging her shoulders, and immediately, with a tender, protective smile, she turned to Kitty. Glancing quickly at Kitty’s gown, Anna made a slight movement of her head, but one Kitty understood, approving of her gown and her beauty. “You even entered the ballroom dancing,” she added.

“This is one of my most faithful helpers,” said Korsunsky, bowing to Anna Arkadyevna, whom he had not yet seen. “The princess helps make the ball cheerful and beautiful. Anna Arkadyevna, a waltz?” he said, bowing.

“But are you acquainted?” asked the host.

“With whom are we not acquainted? My wife and I are like white wolves. Everyone knows us,” replied Korsunsky. “A waltz, Anna Arkadyevna?”

“I don’t dance whenever it’s possible not to,” she said.

“But tonight it isn’t,” replied Korsunsky.

At that moment Vronsky walked up.

“Well, if it is impossible not to dance tonight, then we shall,” she said, ignoring Vronsky’s bow, and she quickly raised her hand to Korsunsky’s shoulder.

“Why is she displeased with him?” thought Kitty, noting that Anna had intentionally not responded to Vronsky’s bow. Vronsky went up to Kitty, reminded her of the first quadrille and expressed his regret that he had not had the pleasure of seeing her all this time. Kitty watched and admired the waltzing Anna and listened to him. She was waiting for him to ask her to waltz, but he didn’t, and she looked at him in astonishment. He blushed and hastily asked her to waltz, but as soon as he had put his arm around her slender waist and taken the first step, the music suddenly ended. Kitty looked into his face, which was at such a short distance from her, and for a long time afterward, years later, this love-filled look she had given him then and to which he had not responded, cut her heart with agonizing shame.

“Pardon, pardon! A waltz, a waltz!” exclaimed Korsunsky from the other end of the ballroom, and grabbing the first young lady he encountered, he himself began to dance.
23

Vronsky and Kitty took several turns of the waltz. After the waltz, Kitty went over to her mother and had barely exchanged a few words with Nordston when Vronsky came for her for the first quadrille. During the quadrille nothing significant was said. They carried on an intermittent conversation first about the Korsunskys, husband and wife, whom Vronsky described in very amusing detail as sweet children of forty, then about the proposed public theater, and only once did their conversation touch her to the quick, when he asked about Levin, whether he was there, and added that he had liked him very much. But Kitty had not expected more from the quadrille. She was waiting with a sinking heart for the mazurka. For her, the mazurka would decide all. The fact that during the quadrille he did not ask her for the mazurka did not worry her. She was certain she would dance the mazurka with him, as she had at previous balls, and she turned down five others for the mazurka, saying she was already dancing. For Kitty the entire ball, up until the last quadrille, was an enchanted dream of joy-filled colors, sounds, and movements. She did not dance only when she felt too tired and asked for a respite. But dancing the last quadrille with one of the boring young men whom she could not refuse, she happened to be vis-à-vis with Vronsky and Anna. She had not been near Anna since her arrival, and now suddenly she saw her again as quite new and surprising. She saw in her a trait so very familiar to her: elation over her success. She saw that Anna was intoxicated with the wine of the admiration she excited. Kitty knew this feeling and knew its signs, and she saw them in Anna—she saw the trembling, flashing gleam of her eyes and the smile of happiness and elation that unconsciously curved her lips and the distinct grace, assuredness, and ease of her movements.

“Who is it?” she asked herself. “Everyone or one man?” And without trying to help the young man with whom she was dancing and who was in agony in the conversation, whose thread he had dropped and could not pick up, outwardly obeying the cheerfully loud and imperious cries of Korsunsky sending everyone into a grand rond, and then a chaîne, she watched and her heart sank more and more. “No, it isn’t the approval of the crowd that’s intoxicated her, it’s the admiration of one man. Is it this one man? Could it really be he?” Each time he spoke to Anna, a delighted gleam flashed in her eyes, and a smile of happiness curved her rosy lips. It was as if she were making an effort not to let these signs of her delight show, but they appeared on her face of their own accord. “But what of him?” Kitty looked at him and was horrified. What Kitty had clearly seen in the mirror of Anna’s face, she saw in him. What had become of his ever calm, firm manner and the carefree, calm expression of his face? No, now each time he turned toward her, he ducked his head as if wishing he could drop down be-
fore her, and in his gaze the only expression was of submission and fear. “I do not mean to offend you,” his gaze seemed to be saying each time, “but I do want to save myself, and I don’t know how.” On his face was an expression such as Kitty had never seen before.

They were speaking of mutual acquaintances, conducting the most trifling of conversations, but it seemed to Kitty that each word they uttered was deciding her fate and theirs. What was strange was that although they were indeed talking about how ridiculous Ivan Ivanovich was with his French, and about how a better match could be found for the Eletskaya girl, at the same time these words held significance for them, and they felt it just as much as Kitty did. The entire ball, all the world, everything in Kitty’s soul became shrouded in fog. Only the strict school of upbringing through which she had passed supported her and forced her to do what was required of her, that is, dance, answer questions, speak, even smile. Before the mazurka began, however, when they had already begun rearranging chairs and some couples had moved from the small rooms to the large ballroom, a moment of despair and horror descended upon Kitty. She had refused five and now was not dancing the mazurka. She had no hope of being asked precisely because she had had too great a success in society, and it could not have occurred to anyone that she had not yet been asked. She needed to tell her mother that she was ill and go home, but she lacked the strength even for that. She felt beaten.

She went to the far end of the small drawing room and sank into an armchair. The gossamer skirt of her gown billowed around her slender torso; one bared, skinny, soft and maidenly arm dropped feebly and drowned in the folds of her pink tunic; the other held a fan and was fanning her flushed face with short, quick movements. Despite looking like a butterfly that had just alit on a blade of grass and was about to take flight and spread its rainbow wings, a terrible despair was crushing her heart.

“But might I have been mistaken, might this not have happened?”
And once again she recalled all that she had seen.
“Kitty, whatever is this?” said Countess Nordston, approaching her noiselessly over the carpet. “I don’t understand this.”
Kitty’s lower lip trembled and she quickly rose.
“Kitty, you’re not dancing the mazurka?”
“No, no,” said Kitty in a voice trembling with tears.
“He asked her to dance the mazurka right in front of me,” said Nordston, knowing that Kitty would understand who “he” and “she” were. “She said, ‘But aren’t you dancing with Princess Shcherbatskaya?’”
“Oh, I don’t care!” replied Kitty.
No one other than she herself understood her position; no one knew that she had yesterday refused a man whom she may have loved and refused him because she had trusted another.

Countess Nordston found Korsunsky, with whom she had danced the mazurka, and told him to ask Kitty.

Kitty danced in the first pair and fortunately for her she did not have to speak because Korsunsky was constantly rushing about issuing instructions to his realm. Vronsky and Anna were sitting nearly opposite her. She saw them with her farsighted eyes, saw them close up as well when they met in the pairs, and the more she saw them, the more she was convinced that her misfortune had come to pass. She saw that they felt alone in this crowded ballroom, and on Vronsky’s face, always so resolute and independent, she saw that lost and submissive expression that had stunned her before, like the expression of a clever dog when it has done something wrong.

Anna smiled, and her smile was conveyed to him. She paused to think, and he became grave. Some supernatural power drew Kitty’s eyes to Anna’s face. She was splendid in her simple black dress, splendid were her full arms with the bracelets, splendid was her firm neck with its string of pearls, splendid were her curls, which had wreaked havoc on her coiffed hair, splendid were the light, graceful movements of her small feet and hands, splendid this handsome face in its animation; but there was something terrible and cruel about her charm.

Kitty admired her more than ever, and suffered more and more. Kitty felt crushed, and her face expressed this. When Vronsky saw her, meeting her in the mazurka, at first he didn’t recognize her, so much had she changed.

“Marvelous ball!” he said to her, in order to say something.

“Yes,” she replied.

In the middle of the mazurka, while repeating a complicated figure newly invented by Korsunsky, Anna stepped into the middle of the circle, chose two partners and called out to one lady and to Kitty. Kitty looked at her in fright as she approached. Narrowing her eyes, Anna looked at her and smiled, pressing her hand. But noticing that Kitty’s face responded to her smile with only a look of despair and astonishment, she turned away and began talking gaily with the other lady.

“Yes, there is something alien, demonic, and charming about her,” Kitty told herself.

Anna did not want to stay for supper, but her host implored her.

“That’s enough, Anna Arkadyevna,” Korsunsky began, gathering her bared arm under the sleeve of his evening coat. “What an idea I have for a cotillion! Un bijou!”
And he moved along a little, trying to draw her with him. Their host smiled approvingly.

“No, I’m not going to stay,” replied Anna, smiling, but despite her smile, both Korsunsky and her host realized from the decisive tone of her reply that she would not stay.

“No, as it is I’ve danced more at your one ball in Moscow than in an entire winter in Petersburg,” said Anna, looking around at Vronsky, who was standing by her side. “I must rest before I travel.”

“Are you determined to go tomorrow?” asked Vronsky.

“Yes, I think so,” Anna replied, as if wondering at the daring of his question; however, the irrepressible, trembling gleam in her eyes and her smile scorched him as she said this.

Anna Arkadyevna did not stay for supper and left.

24

“Yes, there is something offensive, repulsive, about me,” thought Levin upon leaving the Shcherbatskys’ and setting out on foot to his brother’s. “I am unfit for other people. It’s pride, they say. No, I have no pride. If I had any pride, I wouldn’t have put myself in this position.” And he pictured Vronsky, happy, good-natured, clever, and calm, who had probably never found himself in the horrible position in which Levin did this evening. “Yes, she had to choose him. That is how it had to be, and I have no one and nothing to complain of. It’s my own fault. What right did I have to think she would want to join her life to mine? Who am I? What am I? A nobody no one needs for anything.” He recalled his brother Nikolai and dwelt with joy on this memory. “Isn’t he right that everything in the world is bad and vile? We’ve scarcely judged our brother Nikolai fairly. Naturally, from the point of view of Prokofy, who saw him in a tattered coat and drunk, he is a contemptible man; but I know him otherwise. I know his soul and know that he and I are alike. But instead of going to seek him out, I came here to dine.” Levin walked up to a street lamp, read his brother’s address, which he had kept in his wallet, and hailed a cab. All the long way to his brother’s, Levin vividly recalled all the events he knew from his brother Nikolai’s life. He recalled how his brother at the university and a year after the university, despite the ridicule of his classmates, had lived like a monk, strictly performing all the religious rites, services, and fasts and shunning pleasures of every kind, especially women; and then how he had suddenly broken loose, consorted with the vilest of men, and descended into the most dissolute debauchery. He recalled then the story of the boy he had taken from the countryside to raise
and had beaten in a fit of rage so that he was charged with assault. He recalled then the story of the cardsharp to whom he had lost money, given a promissory note, and against whom he himself had lodged a complaint, trying to prove that he had been tricked. (This was the money Sergei Ivanovich had paid.) Then he recalled how he had spent the night in jail for disorderly conduct. He recalled the shameful proceedings Nikolai had initiated against his brother Sergei Ivanovich for not paying him his share from their mother’s estate; and the last matter, when he had gone to the Western District to serve and there had been taken to court for beatings inflicted on a village elder. All of this had been terribly vile, but it did not seem quite as vile to Levin as it must have to those who did not know Nikolai Levin, did not know his entire story, did not know his heart.

Levin recalled how, while Nikolai was in his period of piety, fasts, monks, and church services, when he was searching in religion for assistance, for a check on his passionate nature, not only did no one support him, but everyone, including he himself, had laughed at him. They had teased him, called him Noah, a monk; and when he broke loose, no one had helped him, rather everyone turned away in horror and disgust.

Levin sensed that, in his soul, at the very base of his soul, and despite all the chaos of his life, his brother was no more wrong than the people who despised him. He was not to blame for being born with his uncontrollable nature and somehow constrained mind. But he had always wanted to be good. “I’ll tell him everything, I’ll make him tell me everything and show him that I love him and so understand him,” Levin decided privately, as after ten o’clock he approached the hotel indicated in the address.

“Up top, twelve and thirteen,” the porter answered Levin’s question.

“Is he in?”

“Must be.”

The door to room 12 was ajar, and from it, in the strip of light, issued the thick smoke of bad and weak tobacco and a voice Levin did not know; but Levin immediately knew that his brother was there; he heard his coughing.

When he went in the door, the unfamiliar voice was talking.

“It all depends on how sensibly and consciously the matter is conducted.”

Konstantin Levin glanced in the doorway and saw that the speaker was a young man with a huge shock of hair, wearing a jerkin, and that a young pockmarked woman wearing a woolen dress without cuffs or collar was sitting on the sofa. He could not see his brother. Konstantin’s heart sank painfully at the thought of his brother living among strangers. No one had heard him, and Konstantin, removing his galoshes, was listening to what the gentleman in the jerkin was saying. He was talking about some enterprise.
“Oh, to hell with the privileged classes,” said his brother’s voice, coughing.

“Masha! Get us something to eat and give us some wine, if there’s any left, or else go get some.”

The woman stood up, walked around the screen, and saw Konstantin.

“There’s some gentleman, Nikolai Dmitrievich,” she said.

“Who does he want?” Nikolai Levin’s voice said angrily.

“It’s me,” replied Konstantin Levin, stepping into the light.

“Who’s me?” Nikolai’s voice repeated even more angrily. He could be heard standing up, stumbling over something, and before him Levin saw in the doorway his brother’s enormous, thin, stooped figure, so familiar and nonetheless astonishingly savage and sickly, with his large startled eyes.

He was even thinner than three years before, the last time Konstantin Levin had seen him. He was wearing a short coat. Both his arms and his broad hands seemed even larger. His hair was thinner, he had the same straight mustache over his lips, and the same eyes looking strangely and naïvely at the person who had walked in.

“Ah, Kostya!” he said suddenly, when he had recognized his brother, and his eyes lit up with delight. At the very same instant, though, he looked over his shoulder at the young man and made a convulsive movement of his head and neck so familiar to Konstantin, as if his cravat were choking him; and a very different, savage expression full of suffering and cruelty was left on his haggard face.

“I wrote you and Sergei Ivanovich that I don’t know you and don’t want to know you. What do you want? What do you need?”

He was not at all the way Konstantin had imagined him. What was worst and most difficult in his character, what made it so hard to be with him, Konstantin Levin had forgotten when he thought of him; but now, seeing his face, in particular the convulsive turning of his head, he remembered all that.

“I’m not here to see you because I need anything,” he replied shyly. “I just came to see you.”

His brother’s shyness evidently softened Nikolai. His lips twitched.

“That’s it?” he said. “Well, come in, sit down. Do you want supper? Masha, bring three portions. No, wait. Do you know who this is?” he asked his brother while indicating the gentleman in the jerkin. “This is Mr. Kritsky, my friend from back in Kiev, quite a remarkable man. Naturally, the police are looking for him because he’s not a scoundrel.”

As was his habit he looked around at everyone present in the room. When he saw the woman standing in the doorway make a move to go, he shouted to her.

“Wait, I said.” And with the same conversational ineptitude and incoherence
Konstantin knew so well, looking around at everyone once again, he began telling his brother Kritsky’s story: how he had been drummed out of the university for founding a relief society for poor students and Sunday schools, and how then he had joined a peasant school as a teacher, and how he was drummed out of there as well, and how later he was tried for something.44

“You were at Kiev University?” Konstantin Levin said to Kritsky, in order to break the awkward silence that ensued.

“Yes, I was,” Kritsky said angrily, glowering.

“And this woman,” Nikolai Levin interrupted him, pointing to her, “is my life’s companion, Marya Nikolaevna. I took her out of a brothel”—and he jerked his neck as he said this. “But I love and respect her and I ask everyone who wants to know me,” he added, raising his voice and scowling, “to love and respect her. She’s no different from my wife, no different at all. So now you know with whom you’re dealing. And if you think you’re demeaning yourself, then good-bye and good riddance.”

Again his eyes scanned everyone defiantly.

“Why would I be demeaning myself? I don’t understand.”

“All right, Masha, tell them to bring supper: three portions, some vodka and wine. . . . No, wait. Never mind. Go.”

25

“So you see,” Nikolai Levin continued, frowning with the effort and twitching. He was obviously having a hard time figuring out what to say and do. “There, do you see”—he pointed to some iron bars tied up with string in the corner—“do you see that? It’s the start of a new business we’re going into. The business is a production cooperative . . .”

Konstantin was barely listening. He was staring into his brother’s sickly, consumptive face and feeling more and more sorry for him, and he could not make himself listen to what his brother was saying about the cooperative. He could see that this cooperative was only an anchor to save him from self-contempt. Nikolai Levin continued talking.

“You know that capital oppresses the worker. Our workers, the peasants, bear the entire burden of labor and are so placed that no matter how hard they work, they can’t escape their cruel situation. All the profits from the wages they might use to improve their situation, to afford themselves some leisure and, as a consequence of that, education, all the surplus value is taken away from them by the capitalists. Society is arranged so that the more they work, the more the merchants and landowners profit, whereas they are always going to be beasts of
burden. This order has to be changed,” he concluded and looked at his brother questioningly.

“Yes, naturally,” said Konstantin, looking at the flush that had emerged under his brother’s prominent cheekbones.

“So we are setting up a locksmiths’ cooperative, where all the production, and the profits, and most important, the means of production, everything will be in common.”

“Where will the cooperative be?” Konstantin Levin asked.

“In the village of Vozdrem, in Kazan Province.”

“But why in a village? It seems to me there’s plenty to do in villages as it is. Why a locksmiths’ cooperative in a village?”

“Because now the peasants are just as much slaves as they were before, and that’s why you and Sergei Ivanovich find it so unpleasant that people want to deliver them from this slavery,” said Nikolai Levin, irritated by the objection.

Konstantin Levin sighed, looking around during this time at the room, which was dark and dirty. This sigh seemed to irritate Nikolai even more.

“I know the aristocratic outlooks you and Sergei Ivanovich have. I know he uses all the powers of his mind to justify the existing evil.”

“But why are you saying this about Sergei Ivanovich?” said Levin, smiling.

“Sergei Ivanovich? Here’s why!” Nikolai Levin shouted suddenly at Sergei Ivanovich’s name. “Here’s why . . . But what’s the point? There’s just one thing . . . Why did you come to see me? You despise this, and that’s just fine with me! Get out and good luck to you. Get out!” he shouted, rising from his chair. “Get out, get out!”

“I don’t despise it one bit,” said Konstantin Levin shyly. “I’m not even arguing.”

At this moment Marya Nikolaevna returned. Nikolai Levin looked at her angrily. She walked over to him quickly and whispered something.

“I’m unwell. I’ve grown irritable,” Nikolai Levin said, calming down and breathing hard. “Later you can tell me about Sergei Ivanovich and his article. It’s such drivel, such lies, such self-deception. What can someone write about justice who doesn’t know anything about it? Have you read his article?” he addressed Kritsky, sitting back down at the table and sweeping away the half-scattered cigarettes in order to make room.

“No, I haven’t,” said Kritsky gloomily, obviously not wanting to join the discussion.

“Why not?” Nikolai Levin now addressed Kritsky with irritation.

“Because I don’t feel I need to waste my time on it.”

“That is, permit me, but why do you know you’d be wasting your time? The article is over many people’s heads, that is, above them. But for me it’s different, I see right through his ideas and know why it’s weak.”
Everyone fell silent. Kritsky slowly rose and reached for his cap.
“You don’t want supper? Well, good-bye. Bring the locksmith by tomorrow.”
As soon as Kritsky had gone out, Nikolai Levin smiled and winked.
“He’s bad, too,” he said. “I do see, after all.”
But at that moment Kritsky called to him from the doorway.
“What else do you need?” he said, and he joined him in the hall. Left alone
with Marya Nikolaevna, Levin turned to her.
“Have you lived with my brother long?” he asked her.
“It’s been over a year now. His health’s got very bad. He drinks a lot,” she said.
“What do you mean he drinks?”
“He drinks vodka, and that hurts him.”
“Is it really so much?” whispered Levin.
“Yes,” she said, looking shyly at the door, where Nikolai Levin appeared.
“What were you talking about?” he said, scowling and shifting his startled
eyes from one to the other. “What?”
“Nothing,” replied Konstantin, embarrassed.
“If you don’t want to say, then don’t. Only you and she have nothing to talk
about. She’s a wench and you’re a gentleman,” he said, jerking his neck.
“I can see you’ve figured everything out and judged it and pity me my errors,”
he began again, raising his voice.
“Nikolai Dmitrievich, Nikolai Dmitrievich,” Marya Nikolaevna whispered
again, stepping closer to him.
“Fine, then, fine! So what about our supper? Ah, here it is,” he said, seeing
the waiter with the tray. “Here, put it here,” he said angrily and immediately
picked up the vodka, poured a glass, and drank it down greedily. “Like a drink?”
he turned to his brother, having cheered up at once. “Well, enough about Sergei
Ivanovich. I’m glad to see you nonetheless. No matter what, we aren’t strangers.
Have a drink. Tell me, what have you been doing?” he continued, greedily chew-
ing a piece of bread and pouring another glass. “How are you getting on?”
“I live alone in the country, as I did before. I’m farming,” Konstantin replied,
staring with horror at the greed with which his brother ate and drank and trying
to hide his notice.
“Why don’t you get married?”
“It hasn’t come up,” Konstantin replied, turning red.
“Why not? It’s all over for me! I’ve ruined my life. I said it and I’ll say it again,
that if they’d given me my share then, when I needed it, my whole life would
have been different.”
Konstantin Dmitrievich hastened to divert the conversation.
“Did you know your Vanyushka is a clerk with me at Pokrovskoye?” he said.
Nikolai jerked his neck and became thoughtful.

“Come, tell me, what’s happening at Pokrovskoye? Is the house still standing, and the birches, and our schoolroom? What about Filipp the gardener, is he really alive? How I remember the gazebo and sofa! Now, watch you don’t change anything in the house. Get married as quickly as you can and set things up the way they used to be. Then I’ll come visit you, if your wife’s nice.”

“Why don’t you come see me now?” said Levin. “What a fine time we’d have!”

“I would if I knew I wouldn’t find Sergei Ivanovich there.”

“You won’t. I live quite independently of him.”

“Yes, no matter what you say, though, you have to choose between him and me,” he said, looking shyly into his brother’s eyes. This shyness touched Konstantin.

“If you want to know my full confession in that respect, I’ll tell you that I don’t take one side or the other in your quarrel with Sergei Ivanovich. You’re both wrong. You’re wrong in a more outward way, and he more inwardly.”

“Ah, ah! You see that? You see?” Nikolai cried out joyfully.

“But personally, if you want to know, I treasure your friendship more because—”

“Why, why?”

Konstantin couldn’t say he treasured it more because Nikolai was unfortunate and in need of friendship. But Nikolai saw that this was precisely what he was about to say, and frowning, he reached for the vodka again.

“Enough, Nikolai Dmitrievich!” said Marya Nikolaevna, extending her chubby bare arm toward the decanter.

“Let me go! Don’t interfere! I’ll beat you!” he shouted.

Marya Nikolaevna smiled a meek and good-natured smile that was conveyed to Nikolai as well and took the vodka.

“Do you think she doesn’t understand anything?” said Nikolai. “She understands all this better than any of us. Isn’t it true there’s something fine and sweet about her?”

“Have you never been in Moscow before, Marya Nikolaevna?” Konstantin said to her in order to say something.

“Don’t speak so formally to her. It frightens her. No one except the magistrates when they were trying her for attempting to leave the brothel, no one has ever addressed her that way. My God, what idiocy there is in the world!” he suddenly exclaimed. “These new institutions, these magistrates, the district council, what an outrage!”

He began recounting his clashes with the new institutions.
Konstantin Levin listened to him, and he found the denial of there being any sense in all the public institutions, a denial he shared and often expressed, unpleasant now coming from his brother’s mouth.

“In the next world we’ll understand all this,” he said, joking.

“The next world? Oh, I don’t like that world! I don’t,” he said, fixing his wild, frightened eyes on his brother’s face. “And you’d think it would be good to get away from all the vileness and confusion—other people’s and my own—but I’m afraid of death, I’m terribly afraid of death.” He shuddered. “Come on, drink something. Would you like some Champagne? Or we could go somewhere. Let’s go see the Gypsies! You know, I’ve taken a great liking to Gypsies and Russian songs.”

His tongue was starting to get tied up, and he started jumping from subject to subject. With Masha’s help, Konstantin talked him out of going anywhere and put him to bed quite drunk.

Masha promised to write Konstantin in case of need and to try to talk Nikolai Levin into coming to stay with his brother.

26

In the morning Konstantin Levin left Moscow, and by evening he was home. En route, in the train car, he discussed politics and the new railways with his neighbors, and just as in Moscow, he was overcome by a welter of notions, displeasure with himself, and shame at something. When he disembarked at his station, though, and saw his one-eyed coachman Ignat with his caftan collar turned up, when he saw in the dim light falling from the station windows his carpeted sleigh and his horses with their braided tails, in a harness trimmed with rings and tassels, and when his driver Ignat, while stowing his luggage, told him the village news—the contractor had arrived, and Pava had calved—he felt that welter dissipate little by little and his shame and displeasure with himself pass. He felt this at just the sight of Ignat and the horses, but when he put on the sheepskin coat brought for him, sat in the sleigh all muffled up, and set out, contemplating his next instructions in the village and admiring his outrunner, saddled in its day, an overtaxed but spirited Don horse, he began to see what had happened to him in a completely different way. He felt like himself and had no desire to be anyone else. He now wanted only to be better than he had been before. First of all, he decided from that day on not to hope again for unusual happiness, such as marriage should have brought him, and consequently not to disdain the present so. Second, he would never again allow himself to get carried away by base passion, the memory of which tormented him so when he
was preparing to propose. Then, recalling his brother Nikolai, he resolved that he would never allow himself to forget him again but would keep track of him and not let him out of his sight, so as to be ready to help when things went badly for him. This would be soon, he sensed that. Then, even his brother’s talk of communism, which he had treated so lightly at the time, now gave him pause. He considered the refashioning of economic conditions nonsense; however, he had always felt the injustice of his abundance in comparison with the poverty of the people and now decided privately that, in order to feel fully in the right, although prior to this he had worked very hard and had not lived luxuriously, he would now work even harder and allow himself even less luxury.47 All this seemed so easy to do that he spent the entire journey in the pleasantest of dreams. With invigorated hope for a new and better life, he pulled up to his house sometime after eight o’clock.

From the windows in the room of Agafya Mikhailovna, his old nanny, who had taken on the role of housekeeper, light fell on the snow on the patch of ground in front of the house. She was not yet asleep. Kuzma, whom she had awakened, ran out onto the front steps, sleepy and barefoot. Laska, a setter bitch, nearly knocked Kuzma off his feet when she leaped out and started whining, rubbing up against Levin’s knees, standing up, and wanting but not daring to put her forepaws on his chest.

“You’re back early, sir,” said Agafya Mikhailovna.

“I missed this, Agafya Mikhailovna. It’s fine being a guest, but being home is better,” he replied, and he went to his study.

The study was gradually lit up by the candle that was brought in. Familiar details were brought out: the stag horns, the shelves of books, the surface of the stove with the vent, which should have been repaired long ago, his father’s sofa, the big table, and on the table an open book, a broken ashtray, and a notebook with his handwriting. When he saw all this, he was assailed for a moment by doubt as to the possibility of starting the new life he had dreamed of en route. All these traces of his life seemed to grab hold of him and say, “No, you won’t leave us and you won’t be any different. You’ll be just the same as you were before, with your doubts, your perpetual dissatisfaction with yourself, your vain attempts to improve, and your failings and perpetual anticipation of happiness, which has not come to you and never will.”

This is what his things were saying; however, another voice inside him was saying that he did not have to submit to that past and that he could make anything of himself. Listening to this voice, he walked over to the corner, where he kept two dumbbells, a pood each, and started lifting them gymnastically, trying to raise his spirits. Steps creaked outside the door. He hurriedly put down the dumbbells.
In walked his steward, who said that all, thank God, was well, but reported that the buckwheat had been a little scorched in the new drying kiln. This news irritated Levin. The new kiln had been built and invented in part by Levin. The steward had always been opposed to this kiln and now with concealed triumph announced that the buckwheat had been scorched. Levin was firmly convinced that if it was scorched, then that was only because the measures that he had ordered hundreds of times had not been taken. He was annoyed, and he gave the steward a dressing-down. There was one important and joyous event, though: Pava, his best and most valuable cow, bought at exhibition, had calved.

“Kuzma, get me my sheepskin. And tell them to bring a lantern. I’m going to have a look,” he told the steward.

The barn for the most valuable cows was right behind the house. Walking across the yard past the snowdrift by the lilac, he approached the barn. It smelled of warm steam rising from dung when he opened the frozen door, and the cows, surprised at the unaccustomed light of the lantern, stirred on their fresh straw. He caught a glimpse of the smooth, broad, black-and-white back of a Dutch cow. Berkut the bull was lying with a ring through his nose and was about to stand up but thought better of it and only snorted a couple of times when they walked by. Pava, a red beauty big as a hippopotamus, her back turned, was blocking the visitors’ view of the calf and sniffing it.

Levin went into the stall, looked Pava over, and lifted the red-and-white calf onto its long, spindly legs. Uneasy, Pava would have lowed, but she calmed down when Levin moved the calf closer to her, and with a heavy sigh, she began licking her with her rough tongue. The calf, searching, poked her nose under her mother’s groin and swished her tail.

“We need light here, Fyodor, bring the lantern here,” said Levin, examining the calf. “Just like her mother! Too bad the color is like the father. Very fine. Long and broad in the haunch. Vasily Fyodorovich, isn’t she fine?” he addressed the steward, forgiving him entirely for the buckwheat under the influence of his joy over the calf.

“Who could it take after and look bad? But Semyon the contractor came the day after you left. You have to reach a deal with him, Konstantin Dmitrievich,” said the steward. “I reported to you before about the machine.”

This one matter led Levin back into all the details of the farm, which was large and complex. He went straight from the barn to his office, and after speaking with his steward and with Semyon the contractor, he went home and straight upstairs to the drawing room.
The house was large and old-fashioned, and although Levin lived alone, he heated and occupied the entire house. He knew that this was foolish, knew that this was even bad and contrary to his new plans, but this house was an entire world for Levin. It was the world in which his father and mother had lived and died. They had lived a life that for Levin seemed the ideal of any perfection and that he dreamed of resuming with a wife and a family of his own.

Levin could scarcely remember his mother. The idea of her was a sacred memory for him, and in his imagination his future wife had to be an echo of that magnificent, holy ideal of woman such as his mother had been for him.

Not only could he not imagine love for a woman outside marriage, but he had pictured to himself first a family and only afterward the woman who would give him that family. His notions of marriage, therefore, did not resemble the notions of most of the men he knew, for whom marriage was one of life's many ordinary matters; for Levin it was the main business of life, on which his entire happiness depended, and now he had to give this up!

When he entered the small drawing room, where he always had his tea, and sat down in his armchair with a book, and Agafya Mikhailovna brought him his tea and with her usual, “I’ll just sit, sir,” sat down on the chair by the window, he felt, strange as it may seem, that he had not parted with his dreams and that without them he could not live. Whether with her or with another, they would come true. He read his book and thought about what he was reading, stopping now and again to listen to Agafya Mikhailovna, who chattered on relentlessly; and at the same time various pictures of the farm and his future family life arose disjointedly in his mind. He felt that deep down in his soul something had begun to establish itself, subsided, and been stored away.

He listened to Agafya Mikhailovna’s talk about how Prokhor had forgotten God and used the money Levin had given him to buy a horse to drink nonstop and had beaten his wife almost to death; he listened and read his book and recalled the entire progression of thoughts aroused by his reading. It was Tyndall’s book on heat. He recalled his own condemnations of Tyndall for his smugness at the cleverness of his experiments and for the fact that he lacked a philosophical view. Suddenly he had a joyous thought: “In two years I’ll have two Dutch cows in the herd, Pava herself may still be alive, there will be twelve Berkut daughters, and adding on these three—it’s a miracle!” He went back to his book.

“Fine, then, electricity and heat are the same thing, but in an equation to solve a problem can you substitute one quantity for the other? No. So what is this? Your instinct tells you there is a connection between these forces of nature anyway. . . . It’s especially nice that Pava’s daughter is going to be a red-and-
white cow, and the entire herd to which these three get added . . . Excellent! My wife and guests and I will go out to meet the herd. My wife will say, ‘Kostya and I looked after this calf like a child.’ ‘How can all this interest you so?’ a guest will say. ‘Everything that interests him interests me.’ But who is she?” And he recalled what had happened in Moscow. . . . “So, what am I to do? It’s not my fault. Now everything is going to start anew, though. It’s nonsense that life won’t allow what the past won’t allow. I must endeavor to live better, much better.”

He raised his head and lapsed into thought. Old Laska, who had still not completely digested the joy of his arrival and who had run out to bark in the yard, returned, wagging her tail and bringing with her the smell of the air, came up to him and thrust her head under his hand, whining plaintively and demanding that he pet her.

“She all but speaks,” said Agafya Mikhailovna. “A dog . . . she does understand, though, that her master’s come and is in low spirits.”

“Why low spirits?”

“You think I don’t see, sir? I should know gentlemen by now. I grew up among gentlemen from a small child. Don’t worry, sir. As long as you have your health and your conscience is clear.”

Levin stared at her, amazed at how she understood his thoughts.

“Shall I bring you some more tea?” she said, and taking the cup, she went out.

Laska was still trying to thrust her head under his hand. He petted her, and she curled up right at his feet, resting her head on one hind paw. To signify that all was well and good now, she opened her mouth a little, smacked her lips, and rearranging her sticky lips around her old teeth, settled into a blissful serenity. Levin attentively followed this last movement of hers.

“Exactly like me!” he told himself. “Exactly like me! It’s all right. All’s well.”

After the ball, early in the morning, Anna Arkadyevna sent her husband a telegram informing him of her departure from Moscow that same day.

“No, I must go. I must,” she explained her change of plans to her sister-in-law in such a tone as if she had just remembered more matters to attend than you could count. “No, it’s really better I go today!”

Stepan Arkadyevich was not dining at home, but he promised to come see his sister off at seven o’clock.

Kitty did not come either, sending a note that she had a headache. Dolly and Anna dined alone with the children and the English governess. Whether
it was because children are inconstant or very sensitive and sensed that Anna
that day was not quite the same as she had been the other day, when they had
been so fond of her, and that she was no longer so interested in them, in any
case, they suddenly ended their game with their aunt and their love for her, and
they did not care at all that she was leaving. Anna was busy all morning prepar-
ing for her departure. She wrote notes to her Moscow acquaintances, recorded
her accounts, and packed. All in all it seemed to Dolly that she was not in calm
spirits but rather in that spirit of concern which Dolly well knew from herself
and which, not without reason, finds, and for the most part conceals, a displea-
sure with oneself. After dinner Anna went to her room to dress and Dolly fol-
lowed her.

“How strange you are today!” Dolly said to her.

“I? Do you think so? I’m not strange, but I am bad. Oh, this happens with me.
I feel like crying all the time. It’s very foolish, but it will pass,” Anna said quickly,
and she leaned her flushed face over the tiny bag in which she was packing her
nightcap and her batiste handkerchiefs. Her eyes glittered in an odd way and
she was constantly blinking back tears. “How reluctant I was to leave Petersburg,
and now I don’t feel like leaving here.”

“You came here and did a good deed,” said Dolly, examining her closely.
Anna looked at her with tear-stained eyes.

“Don’t say that, Dolly. I didn’t do anything, I couldn’t do anything. I often
wonder why people conspire to spoil me. What have I done and what could I
do? You found enough love in your heart to forgive.”

“Without you, God knows what would have happened! What a lucky woman
you are, Anna!” said Dolly. “Everything in your heart is clear and fine.”

“Everyone has their own skeletons, as the English say.”49

“What kind of skeletons could you have? Everything is so clear with you.”

“I have them!” Anna blurted, and surprisingly after her tears, a sly, mocking
smile puckered her lips.

“Well, then they’re very funny ones, your skeletons, not gloomy at all,” said
Dolly, smiling.

“No, they’re gloomy. Do you know why I’m leaving today rather than tomor-
row? It’s a confession that has been weighing on me, and I want to make it to
you,” said Anna, decisively leaning back in her chair and looking Dolly straight
in the eye.

To her amazement, Dolly saw Anna blush to her ears, to the curling black
rings of hair on her neck.

“Yes,” Anna continued. “Do you know why Kitty didn’t come for dinner? She
is jealous of me. I spoiled . . . I was the reason this ball was an agony for her
rather than a joy. But truly, truly, I’m not to blame, or only a little to blame,” she said, her delicate voice stretching out the word “little.”

“Oh, how like Stiva you said that!” said Dolly, laughing.

Anna was offended.

“Oh no, oh no! I’m not Stiva,” she said, frowning. “I’m telling you this because I won’t allow myself a moment of self-doubt,” said Anna.

But the moment she spoke those words she felt that they were wrong; not only did she doubt herself, she was disturbed at the thought of Vronsky and was leaving sooner than she had intended only so that she would not see him again.

“Yes, Stiva told me that you and he danced the mazurka and that he—”

“You can’t imagine how silly it was. I had only been thinking of matchmaking, and suddenly everything changed. Perhaps against my will I—”

She blushed and stopped short.

“Oh, they sense that immediately!” said Dolly.

“But I would be in despair if there had been anything serious in this on his part,” Anna interrupted her. “And I’m certain that it will all be forgotten and Kitty will stop hating me.”

“Nonetheless, Anna, if truth be told, I’m not very happy about this marriage for Kitty. Better that they part if he, Vronsky, could fall in love with you in a single day.”

“Oh, heavens, that would be so foolish!” said Anna, and again a deep flush of satisfaction appeared on her face when she heard the thought that occupied her put into words. “So you see, I am leaving, having made an enemy of Kitty, of whom I had become so fond. Oh, how dear she is! But you’ll fix this, Dolly? Right?”

Dolly could barely restrain a smile. She was fond of Anna, but she enjoyed seeing that she had her weaknesses.

“An enemy? That cannot be.”

“I would so wish for you all to love me as I love you, but now I love you even more,” she said with tears in her eyes. “Oh, how foolish I am today!”

She wiped her handkerchief across her face and began dressing.

Immediately before her departure, a delayed Stepan Arkadyevich arrived, his face red and cheerful, and smelling of wine and cigar.

Anna’s deep feeling had been communicated to Dolly as well, and when she embraced her sister-in-law for the last time, she whispered:

“Remember, Anna, I’ll never forget what you’ve done for me. And remember that I have always loved you and I always will, as my best friend!”

“I don’t see why,” said Anna, kissing her and hiding her tears.

“You have always understood me. Farewell, my lovely!”
“Well, that’s all over, and thank God!” was the first thought that occurred to Anna Arkadyevna when she had said good-bye for the last time to her brother, who blocked the way into the car until the third bell. She took her seat next to Annushka and looked around in the half-dark of the sleeping car. “Thank God, tomorrow I shall see Seryozha and Alexei Alexandrovich, and my life, my good and ordinary life, will go back to the way it was.”

Still in the same spirit of anxiety in which she had been all that day, Anna prepared herself with pleasure and care for her journey; with her small deft hands she unlocked and locked her red bag, took out her pillow, placed it on her lap, and neatly wrapping a rug around her legs, calmly got settled. An invalid lady had already tucked herself in to sleep. Two other ladies began a conversation with her, and a fat old woman wrapped her legs up and made a comment about the heating. Anna replied to the ladies in a few words, but not anticipating any interest from the conversation, asked Annushka to get her a lamp, attached it to the arm of her seat, and out of her handbag took a paper knife and an English novel. At first she didn’t feel like reading. The comings and goings disturbed her; then, once the train got moving, she couldn’t help listening to its sounds; then the snow that beat against the window on her left and stuck to the glass, and the sight of the conductor walking by, muffled up and covered in snow on one side, and the conversations about what a terrible snowstorm it was outside, distracted her attention. Everything continued without change; the same shaking and knocking, the same snow out the window, the same quick alternations from steam heat to cold and back again to heat, the same glimpses of the same faces in the half-dark and the same voices, and Anna began reading and understanding what she was reading. Annushka was already dozing, her broad hands, in gloves, one of which was torn, holding the red bag on her knees. Anna Arkadyevna read and understood, but she found it unpleasant to read, that is, to follow the reflection of other people’s lives. She herself wanted too much to live. If she read about the novel’s heroine tending to a patient, she wished she could take silent steps around the patient’s room; if she read about a member of Parliament giving a speech, she longed to be giving that speech; if she read about Lady Mary riding to the hounds and taunting her sister-in-law and amazing everyone with her daring, she longed to do this herself. But there was nothing she could do, and running her small hands over the smooth little knife, she forced herself to read.

The novel’s hero had nearly achieved his English happiness, a baronetcy and an estate, and Anna was wishing she could ride with him to this estate, when suddenly she felt he should be ashamed and that she was ashamed of this very
thing. But what did he have to be ashamed of? “What have I to be ashamed of?” she asked herself in indignant surprise. She put down the book and leaned back in her seat, firmly grasping the paper knife in both hands. There was nothing to be ashamed of. She sorted through all her Moscow memories. They were all good, pleasant. She recalled the ball, she recalled Vronsky and his submissive, infatuated face, she recalled all her relations with him: there was nothing to be ashamed of. Yet her sense of shame intensified at these memories, as if some inner voice right now, as she was thinking of Vronsky, was telling her: “Warm, very warm, hot.” “What is this, then?” she said to herself decisively, shifting in her seat. “What does this mean? Can I truly be afraid to look this straight in the eye? What is it then? Could any other relations exist between me and this boy officer than those one has with everyone one meets?” She grinned disdainfully and again picked up her book but now definitely could not understand what she was reading. She ran the paper knife across the glass, then pressed its smooth cold surface to her cheek and nearly laughed out loud from the joy that came over her for no reason at all. Her nerves felt like strings, stretching tauter and tauter on screw pegs. She felt her eyes opening wider and wider, her fingers and toes twitching nervously, and inside something pressing on her breathing, and all these images and sounds in this shifting half-dark stunned her with their extraordinary vividness. She was constantly beset by moments of doubt as to whether the car was going forward or back or standing still altogether. Was it Annushka beside her or a stranger? “What is this on my arm, a fur or a beast? And is this me here? Am I myself or someone else?” She was terrified of surrendering to this oblivion. But something was drawing her into it, and she could surrender or resist at will. She stood up to clear her head, threw off the lap robe, and detached the pelerine from her warm dress. For a moment her head cleared and she realized that the skinny peasant who had entered and who was wearing a long nankeen coat missing some buttons was the stoker, that he was looking at the thermometer, and that wind and snow had burst in through the door behind him; but later all was confusion. This peasant with the long waist began to gnaw on something in the wall, the old woman began stretching her legs the full length of the compartment, filling it like a black cloud, then something strange started creaking and banging as if someone were being torn to pieces; then a red light blinded her eyes, and then everything was blocked by a wall. Anna felt herself being swallowed up. But she found it not frightening but cheerful. The voice of a well-muffled, snow-covered man was shouting something into her ear. She stood up and her head cleared; she realized they had arrived at the station and that this was the conductor. She asked Annushka to hand her the pelerine she had removed and her shawl, put them on, and headed for the door.

“Will you be going out?” asked Annushka.
“Yes, I feel like a breath of air. It’s very hot here.”

She opened the door. The storm and wind rushed at her and wrestled with her over the door, and she found this cheerful, too. She opened the door and went out. The wind seemed to have only been waiting for her; it gave a joyous whistle and tried to pick her up and whisk her away, but she grabbed onto the cold handrail, and holding her skirts, descended to the platform and walked behind the car. The wind had been strong on the steps, but on the platform, behind the cars, it was calm. With relish, she took a deep breath of the snowy, frosty air, and standing alongside the car, surveyed the platform and the illuminated station.

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The terrible storm came tearing and whistling from around the corner of the station between the wheels of the cars and from post to post. The cars, posts, and people, everything she could see, were being covered more and more with snow to one side. For a moment the storm would subside, but then again swoop down in such bursts that it seemed impossible to withstand. Meanwhile, some people were running, chatting gaily, creaking across the boards of the platform and constantly opening and closing the big doors. The stooped shadow of a man slipped underfoot, and she heard the sound of a hammer on iron. “Give me the dispatch!” an angry voice broke through the stormy gloom from the other side. “This way, please! No. 28!” other voices shouted, and muffled men covered with snow ran by. Two gentlemen with lit cigarettes in their mouths walked past her. She took one more deep breath, to get her fill of air, and was already taking her hand out of her muff to grab on to the handrail and enter the car when another man in a military overcoat alongside her blocked out the flickering light of the lamp. She looked around and instantly recognized Vronsky’s face. Touching his visor, he bowed to her and asked whether she needed anything, whether he could be of service to her. Making no reply, she stared at him for rather a long time, and despite the shadow in which he was standing, she saw, or thought she saw, the expression of his face and eyes as well. It was once again that expression of respectful admiration that had so affected her the day before. She had told herself more than once these past few days and just now that for her Vronsky was one of the hundreds of young men one meets everywhere, who are always the same, and that she would never allow herself to think of him, but now, at the first instant of her meeting with him, she was gripped by a joyous pride. She did not need to ask why he was there. She knew it as surely as if he had told her that he was here in order to be where she was.
“I didn’t know you were traveling. Why are you traveling?” she said, dropping her hand, which had been about to grab the handrail. Irrepressible joy and animation shone on her face.

“Why am I traveling?” he echoed, looking straight into her eyes. “You know I am traveling in order to be where you are,” he said. “I cannot do otherwise.”

At that very moment, as if having overcome some obstacle, the wind showered snow down from the roof of the car, rattling a loose sheet of metal, and up ahead the engine’s thick whistle howled mournfully and gloomily. The full horror of the storm now seemed to her even more wonderful than before. He had said exactly what her soul had wished but her reason had feared. She said nothing in reply, and on her face he saw a struggle.

“Forgive me if you find what I said distasteful,” he began humbly.

He spoke so courteously and respectfully, yet so firmly and doggedly, that for a long time she could say nothing in reply.

“This is wrong, what you’re saying, and I beg of you, if you are a good man, forget what you’ve said, as I will forget, too,” she said at last.

“I shall never forget a single word of yours, a single movement of yours, nor could I.”

“Enough, enough!” she cried, vainly trying to lend a stern expression to her face, which he was looking into so greedily. Taking hold of the cold handrail, she went up the steps and quickly entered the train corridor. She stopped, however, in this corridor, mulling over in her imagination what had just happened. Without recalling either her own words or his, she realized instinctively that this moment’s conversation had brought them terribly close; and she was both terrified and happy at this. She stood there a few seconds, walked into their compartment, and took her seat. That magical, intense state that had tormented her at first not only revived but intensified, until it reached the point that she was afraid something pulled too tight would break at any moment. She did not sleep all night. However, there was nothing unpleasant or dark in the tension and dreams that filled her imagination; on the contrary, there was something joyous, glowing, and exhilarating. Toward morning, Anna dozed off sitting up, and when she awoke it was already white and light, and the train was approaching Petersburg. Immediately thoughts of home, her husband, her son, and her concerns for the coming day and those to follow clustered around her.

In Petersburg, no sooner did the train stop and she get out than the first face that caught her eye was her husband’s. “Oh, my God, where did he get those ears?” she thought, looking at his cold and imposing figure and especially at the cartilage of his ears, which now amazed her and which propped up the brim of his round hat. Seeing her, he moved toward her, arranging his lips in his usual
amused smile and looking straight at her with his large, weary eyes. An unpleasant feeling pinched her heart when she met his dogged and weary gaze, as if she were expecting to see him different. In particular she was amazed by the displeasure with herself that she experienced upon meeting him. This was a long-standing feeling, a familiar feeling similar to the state of pretense she experienced in her relations with her husband; but she had not noticed this feeling before, and now she was clearly and painfully cognizant of it.

“Yes, as you see, your tender husband, as tender as in his first year of marriage, was burning with desire to see you,” he said in his slow, reedy voice, the same tone he almost always used with her, a tone of bemusement at anyone who would in fact speak that way.

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“Is Seryozha well?” she asked.

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“And this is all the reward I get,” he said, “for my ardor? He’s well, he’s well.”

Vronsky did not even attempt to sleep that night. He sat up, either looking straight ahead or glancing at the people coming in and out, and if before he had amazed and upset people who did not know him with his look of unshakable calm, then now he seemed even prouder and more self-possessed. He looked at people as if they were things. A nervous young man, a clerk in a district court who was sitting across from him, hated him for this look. The young man even kept asking him for a light, and trying to start up a conversation with him, and even pushing him to make him feel he was a person, not an object, but Vronsky kept looking at him as he would a street lamp, and the young man grimaced, sensing he was losing his composure under the pressure of this refusal to recognize him as a man, and because of this he was unable to fall asleep.

Vronsky saw nothing and no one. He felt like a tsar, not because he believed he had made an impression on Anna—he did not yet believe that—but because the impression she had made on him had filled him with happiness and pride.

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What would come of all this he did not know and was not even thinking. He felt that all his previously dissipated, scattered powers had been concentrated and aimed with terrible energy at one blissful goal, and this made him happy. He knew only that he had told her the truth, that he was going wherever she was, that all life’s happiness, the sole meaning in life, he now found in seeing and hearing her. When he got out of the car at Bologoye in order to have a glass of seltzer water and caught sight of Anna, involuntarily the first word he said to her was precisely what he had been thinking. He was glad he had told her this, that she now knew and was thinking about this. He did not sleep all night. Back
in his car, he kept running through all the positions in which he had seen her, her every word, and pictures of a possible future raced through his imagination, making his heart stand still.

When in Petersburg he emerged from the car, he felt invigorated and fresh after his sleepless night, as after a cold bath. He stopped by his car, awaiting her exit. “I’ll see her once more,” he told himself, and could not help but smile, “I’ll see her walk, her face; she’ll say something, turn her head, look, smile perhaps.” But before he saw her, he saw her husband, whom the stationmaster was deferentially escorting through the crowd. “Ah, yes! The husband!” Only now for the first time did Vronsky clearly realize that her husband was someone connected to her. He had known she had a husband, but he had not believed in his existence, and believed in him fully only when he saw him, with his head and shoulders, and legs in black trousers, and especially when he saw this husband calmly take her by the arm with a proprietary air.

Seeing Alexei Alexandrovich with his Petersburg-fresh face and sternly self-assured figure, wearing his round hat, and with his slightly hunched back, Vronsky did believe in him and experienced an unpleasant emotion similar to that which a man would experience who was tormented by thirst and had reached a spring but had found in this spring a dog, sheep, or pig that had drunk and muddied the water. Alexei Alexandrovich’s gait, the way he swung his entire pelvis, and his flat feet especially offended Vronsky. He recognized only his own undoubtedly right to love her. She, however, was just the same, and her look, physically invigorating, stirring his soul, filling it with happiness, acted upon him in just the same way as ever. He told his German valet, who had run to him from second class, to take his things, and he himself approached her. He saw this first meeting between husband and wife and noted with the perspicacity of a man in love the mark of slight constraint with which she spoke to her husband. “No, she does not, cannot love him,” he decided to himself.

As he approached Anna Arkadyevna from behind, he was thrilled to note that she sensed his approach and looked around, and when she recognized him she turned back to her husband.

“Did you pass the night well?” he said, bowing to her and her husband together and calling upon Alexei Alexandrovich to take this bow as referring to him and to recognize him or not, as he saw fit.

“Quite well, thank you,” she replied.

Her face seemed tired, and it did not have that play of animation that came out in a smile or in her eyes; but for one instant, in her glance at him, something flickered in her eyes, and even though this fire had now gone out, in that instant he was happy. She glanced at her husband to find out whether he knew Vronsky.
Alexei Alexandrovich looked at Vronsky with displeasure, faintly recalling who this was. Vronsky’s calm and self-assurance here had met their match in the cold self-assurance of Alexei Alexandrovich.

“Count Vronsky,” said Anna.

“Ah! We are acquainted, I believe,” said Alexei Alexandrovich casually, extending his hand. “You rode there with the mother and back with the son,” he said, enunciating clearly, doling out each word like a ruble. “You are doubtless back from leave?” he said, and without waiting for an answer turned to his wife in his joking tone. “So, were very many tears shed in Moscow at your parting?”

By addressing his wife, he was letting Vronsky sense that he wished to be alone, and turning back toward him, he touched his hat; but Vronsky addressed Anna Arkadyevna:

“I hope to have the honor of calling on you,” he said.

Alexei Alexandrovich looked at Vronsky with weary eyes.

“I would be delighted,” he said coldly. “We are at home on Mondays.” Then, dropping Vronsky altogether, he said to his wife, “And how good it is that I had just half an hour to meet you and could demonstrate to you my fondness,” he continued in the same joking tone.

“You put too much emphasis on your fondness for me to value it highly,” she said in the same joking tone, involuntarily listening to the sounds of Vronsky’s steps, who was walking behind them. “But what does this matter to me?” she thought, and she began asking her husband how Seryozha had spent the time without her.

“Oh, marvelously! Mariette says that he was very sweet and . . . I must disappoint you . . . he did not miss you, not as much as your husband did. But once again, merci, my friend, for giving me a day. Our dear Samovar will be delighted. (‘Samovar’ was what he called the celebrated Countess Lydia Ivanovna, because she was always bubbly and excited about everything.) She has been asking about you. And you know, if I dare advise, you should go see her today. She knows all her other cares, she is anxious about the Oblonskys’ reconciliation.”

Countess Lydia Ivanovna was a friend of her husband’s and the center of a certain circle of Petersburg society with which Anna was very closely connected through her husband.

“But you know I wrote her.”

“But she needs to hear all the details. Pay her a visit, if you’re not too tired, my friend. Well, Kondraty is bringing your carriage around, and I’m on my way to my committee. Once again, I will not be dining alone,” Alexei Alexandrovich continued, no longer in his joking tone. “You cannot imagine how I’ve grown...
used to . . .” Pressing her hand for a long time, he seated her in the carriage with a special smile.

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The first person to greet Anna at home was her son. He leaped down the stairs to her, despite the cry of his governess, and shouted with desperate joy, “Mama, Mama!” He ran to her and hung on her neck.

“I told you it was Mama!” he shouted to the governess. “I knew it!”

And her son, just like her husband, produced in Anna a feeling resembling disappointment. She had imagined him better than he was in reality. She had to descend to reality in order to take pleasure in him the way he was. And the way he was, was splendid with his blond curls, blue eyes, and plump, graceful little legs in their tight-fitting stockings. Anna experienced an almost physical pleasure at his proximity and caress and a moral serenity when she met his simple-hearted, trusting, and loving glance and heard his naïve questions. Anna took out the gifts Dolly’s children had sent and told her son about how there was a little girl Tanya in Moscow and how this Tanya knew how to read and even taught the other children.

“You mean she’s nicer than me?” asked Seryozha.

“I think you’re the nicest in the world.”

“I know that,” said Seryozha, smiling.

Anna had not yet finished her coffee when Countess Lydia Ivanovna was announced. Countess Lydia Ivanovna was a tall, stout woman with an unhealthily sallow face and marvelous pensive black eyes. Anna was fond of her, but right now she seemed to be seeing all her shortcomings for the first time.

“Well then, my friend, did you bring them the olive branch?” asked Countess Lydia Ivanovna as soon as she walked into the room.

“Yes, all that’s over, but it never was as serious as we’d thought,” replied Anna. “Generally speaking, my belle-soeur is too resolute.”

But Countess Lydia Ivanovna, who took an interest in everything that had nothing to do with her, had the habit of never listening to what did interest her; she interrupted Anna.

“Yes, there is a great deal of grief and evil in the world, and I am so weary today.”

“What is it?” asked Anna, trying to suppress a smile.

“I’m beginning to tire of this breaking lances and sometimes I am completely undone. The matter of the Little Sisters (this was a religious, patriotic, philanthropic institution) would have gone beautifully, but one can do nothing
with these gentlemen,” added Countess Lydia Ivanovna with mocking submission to fate. “They have taken hold of the idea, distorted it, and are now discussing it quite pettily and inconsequentially. Two or three people, your husband included, do understand the full significance of this matter, but the others are only discrediting it. Yesterday, Pravdin wrote me.”

Pravdin was a well-known Pan-Slavist abroad, and Countess Lydia Ivanovna recounted the contents of his letter.

Then the countess recounted other vexations and intrigues against the cause of unifying the churches and left in haste, since that day she also had to be at a meeting of one society and at the Slavic Committee.51

“There was all this before, after all, but why didn’t I notice it before?” Anna told herself. “Or am I just very irritated today? But in fact, it is funny: her goal is virtue and she is a Christian, but she is constantly furious, she always has enemies, and they’re all enemies in the name of Christianity and virtue.”

After Countess Lydia Ivanovna, a friend stopped by, a chief secretary’s wife, and told her all the news of the city. At three o’clock she too left, promising to return for dinner. Alexei Alexandrovich was at the ministry. Left alone, Anna used the time before dinner to be present at her son’s dinner (he dined separately), to put her things in order, and to read and respond to the notes and letters that had piled up on her desk.

The sense of unwarranted shame that she had felt on her journey, as well as her agitation, had vanished completely. In the familiar circumstances of her life, she once again felt firm and irreproachable.

She recalled her state yesterday with amazement. “What was that? Nothing. Vronsky said something foolish to which I can easily put a stop, and I responded just as I should have. I neither need to nor can tell my husband about this. Telling him about this would mean ascribing to it an importance it does not have.” She recalled how she had related what amounted to a declaration made to her in Petersburg by a young subordinate of his husband and how Alexei Alexandrovich had replied that, living in the world, any woman may be subjected to this, but that he had complete confidence in her tact and would never allow himself to demean her and himself to the point of jealousy. “Does this mean there’s no point in telling him? Yes, thank God, there is nothing to tell,” she told herself.

Alexei Alexandrovich returned from the ministry at four o’clock; however, as often happened, he did not have time to go in to see her. He proceeded to his study to receive waiting petitioners and to sign several papers that had been
brought over by his chief secretary. Coming for dinner (a few people always joined the Karenins for dinner) was Alexei Alexandrovich’s old cousin, the chief secretary of his department and his wife, and one young man who had been recommended to Alexei Alexandrovich for the ministry. Anna went out to the drawing room to receive them. At precisely five o’clock, before the bronze Peter I clock had struck five times, Alexei Alexandrovich came out wearing a white tie and an evening coat with two stars, as he had to leave immediately after dinner. Each minute of Alexei Alexandrovich’s life was taken and accounted for. In order to accomplish all that each day brought him, he held himself to the strictest precision. “Without haste and without rest” was his motto. He entered the dining room wiping his brow, bowed to everyone, and quickly sat down, smiling at his wife.

“Yes, my solitude is over. You cannot believe how awkward it is”—he stressed the word “awkward”—“to dine alone.”

At dinner he spoke with his wife about Moscow matters and with an amused smile inquired about Stepan Arkadyevich; however, the conversation was general for the most part, about official and public Petersburg affairs. After dinner he spent half an hour with his guests, and again, with a smile, pressed his wife’s hand, went out, and left for the council. This time Anna did not go to see Princess Betsy Tverskaya, who, upon learning of her arrival, had invited her that evening, nor did she go to the theater, where she now had a box. She did not go primarily because the dress she had been counting on was not ready. On the whole, turning to her wardrobe after her guests’ departure, Anna was quite vexed. Before leaving for Moscow, she, who was generally a master at dressing well but not too expensively, had given her seamstress three dresses to alter. The dresses had to be altered in such a way that they could not be recognized, and they were supposed to have been ready three days before. Two dresses were not ready at all, and one had been altered but not in the way Anna had wanted. The dressmaker herself came to explain, asserting that this way would be better, and Anna had gone into such a towering rage that afterward she felt ashamed recalling it. In order to calm herself completely, she went to the nursery and spent the entire evening with her son, put him to bed herself, made the sign of the cross over him, and tucked him in. She was glad she had not gone anywhere and had spent this evening so well. She felt so easy and calm, she saw so clearly that everything that had seemed so significant to her on her rail journey was merely one of those common, insignificant instances in society life and that she had nothing to be ashamed of before anyone else or herself. Anna sat down by the fire with her English novel and waited for her husband. At precisely half past nine, she heard his ring and he came into the room.
"You're here at last!" she said, holding her hand out to him. 
He kissed her hand and sat beside her.
"I see that your trip was a success on the whole," he said to her.
"Yes, quite," she replied, and she began telling him all about it from the beginning: her journey with Madame Vronskaya, her arrival, the accident on the rails. Then she recounted her impression of compassion, first for her brother, then for Dolly.
"I do not suppose one can excuse such a man, even if he is your brother," said Alexei Alexandrovich sternly.
Anna smiled. She realized he had said that precisely in order to show that family considerations could not prevent him from stating his sincere opinion. She knew and liked this trait in her husband.
"I am glad that it all turned out for the best and that you have come home," he continued. "Well, and what are they saying there about the new statute I got approved by the board?"
Anna had heard nothing about this statute, and she felt guilty that she could have forgotten so easily about something so important to him.
"Here, on the contrary, it made quite a sensation," he said with a self-satisfied smile.
She could see that Alexei Alexandrovich wanted to tell her something he found pleasant, about this matter, and she led him by her questions to his story. With the same self-satisfied smile he told her about the ovations there had been for him as a result of this successful provision.
"I was very, very glad. This proves that we are finally beginning to establish a sensible and firm view of this matter."
Finishing his second cup of tea with cream and his bread, Alexei Alexandrovich rose and started for his study.
"But you did not go anywhere. You must have been bored, am I right?" he said.
"Oh no!" she replied, standing up after him and seeing him through the dining room to his study. "What are you reading now?" she asked.
"I'm now reading the Duc de Lille, Poésie des enfers," he replied.53 "Quite a remarkable book."
Anna smiled as people smile at their loved ones' weaknesses, and putting her arm in his, saw him to the door of his study. She knew his habit, which had become a necessity, of reading in the evening. She knew that despite the official duties that swallowed up nearly all his time, he considered it his duty to keep up with everything noteworthy that appeared in the intellectual sphere. She knew also that he was truly interested in political, philosophical, and theologi-
But that art was utterly alien to his nature, but that despite this, or rather because of this, Alexei Alexandrovich never missed anything that made a sensation in this sphere and considered it his duty to read everything. She knew that in politics, philosophy, and theology, Alexei Alexandrovich had his doubts and questions, but in matters of art and poetry, and especially music, of which he had absolutely no understanding, he had the most definite and firm opinions. He liked to talk about Shakespeare, Raphael, and Beethoven and about the meaning of the new schools of poetry and music, all of which he had categorized with a very clear logic.

“God bless you,” she said at the door of his study, where his candle lamp had been made ready for him and there was a carafe of water by his chair. “I shall write to Moscow.”

He pressed her hand and kissed it again.

“He really is a fine man, truthful, good, and remarkable in his own sphere,” Anna told herself when she had returned to her room, as if defending him to someone who had accused him and said that he could not be loved. “But why do his ears stick out so oddly? Or did he have his hair cut?”

At exactly twelve, when Anna was still sitting at her desk finishing her letter to Dolly, she heard even steps in slippers, and Alexei Alexandrovich, washed and combed, with a book under his arm, came in to see her.

“It’s time, it’s time,” he said, smiling in a special way, and he went into the bedroom.

“What right did he have to look at him in that way?” thought Anna, recalling Vronsky’s glance at Alexei Alexandrovich.

She undressed and went into the bedroom, but on her face not only was there none of that animation that had splashed so from her eyes and smile in Moscow; on the contrary, the fire now seemed extinguished in her, or hidden somewhere far away.

Departing Petersburg, Vronsky had left his large apartment on Morskaya to his friend and favorite comrade Petritsky.

Petritsky was a young lieutenant, not especially aristocratic, and not only not wealthy but swamped with debts; by evening he was always drunk and often landed in the guardhouse over diverse and ridiculous scandals, but he was loved by his comrades and superiors alike. Driving up to his apartment from the train after eleven, Vronsky saw a familiar carriage at his front door. Inside, at his ring, he heard a man’s laugh and the French babble of a woman’s voice and Petrit-
sky’s shout: “If it’s one of those scoundrels, don’t let him in!” Vronsky would not allow the orderly to announce him, and he stole into the first room. Baroness Shilton, Petritsky’s lady friend, shimmering in a lilac satin dress and her peaches-and-cream complexion, and like a canary filling the room with her Parisian chatter, was sitting at a round table brewing coffee. Petritsky in his coat and Captain Kamerovsky in full uniform, probably straight from duty, were sitting on either side of her.

“Bravo! Vronsky!” cried Petritsky, jumping up and scraping his chair. “The master himself! Baroness, coffee for him from the new coffee pot. We weren’t expecting you! I hope you’re satisfied with the adornment of your study,” he said, indicating the baroness. “You have been introduced, am I right?”

“I should say so!” said Vronsky, smiling merrily and shaking the baroness’s small hand. “Of course! An old friend.”

“You’re home from a journey,” said the baroness, “so I shall be on my way. Oh, I’ll leave this minute if I’m in the way.”

“You are at home right where you are, baroness,” said Vronsky. “How do you do, Kamerovsky,” he added, coldly shaking Kamerovsky’s hand.

“See, you never know how to say such pretty things,” the baroness turned to Petritsky.

“Why not? After dinner I’ll tell you something at least as good.”

“But there’s no merit in it after dinner! Come, I’ll give you your coffee, you go get washed and off with you,” said the baroness, sitting back down and carefully turning the screw on the new coffee pot. “Pierre, give me the coffee,” she turned to Petritsky, whom she called Pierre, from his surname, Petritsky, making no effort to conceal her relationship with him. “I shall add some.”

“You’ll spoil it.”

“No, I won’t! Well, and your wife?” the baroness said suddenly, interrupting the conversation between Vronsky and his comrade. “We married you off here. Did you bring your wife?”

“No, baroness. I was born a Gypsy and a Gypsy I shall die.”

“All the better, all the better. Give me your hand.”

And the baroness, refusing to let Vronsky go, began telling him, interspersed with jokes, her latest plans for her life and asking his advice.

“He still doesn’t want to give me a divorce! So what am I to do?” “He” was her husband. “I want to begin proceedings now. What would you advise me? Kamerovsky, keep an eye on the coffee—it’s boiling away. You see, I’m very busy! I want a lawsuit because I need my fortune. Do you understand this foolishness, that because I have been unfaithful to him,” she said with contempt, “he wishes to profit from my estate.”
Vronsky listened with pleasure to the cheerful babble of this pretty woman, he kept telling her yes and giving her half-joking advice, and in general immediately adopted his usual tone in addressing this type of woman. In his Petersburg world, all people were divided into two directly opposite sorts. The first, baser sort consisted of vulgar, stupid, and, above all, ridiculous people who believed that one man was supposed to live with the one wife he had married, that a young woman was supposed to be innocent, a woman modest and a man courageous, restrained, and firm, that children were to be raised, money earned, and debts paid—and various similar idiotic notions. This was the old-fashioned and ridiculous sort. There was another sort of people, though, the real sort to whom they all belonged, in which one was supposed to be, above all, elegant, handsome, generous, bold, and cheerful, to surrender to any passion without blushing, and to laugh at all the rest.

Vronsky had been overwhelmed only in the first minute from the impressions of a completely different world that he had brought back from Moscow, but the instant he slipped his feet into his old slippers, he entered his former cheerful and pleasant world.

The coffee never was brewed, it simply splashed all over everyone and boiled away and produced precisely what was needed, that is, a pretext for noise and laughter, and spilling on an expensive carpet and the baroness’s dress.

“Well, good-bye now, or else you will never wash, and the worst crime of a decent man will be on my conscience—slovenliness. So do you advise a knife to his throat?”

“Without fail, and make sure the handle is closer to his lips. He shall kiss your hand and all will end well,” replied Vronsky.

“Today at the Français, then!” And with a rustle of her dress, she vanished.

Kamerovsky rose as well, and Vronsky, not waiting for him to leave, shook his hand and went to his dressing room. While Vronsky was washing, Petritsky described to him in brief his situation, so much had it changed since Vronsky’s departure. His money was gone, all of it. His father had said he would not give him any or pay his debts. The tailor wanted to put him in jail, and someone else was also threatening to have him jailed for certain. The colonel of his regiment had announced that if these scandals did not cease, he would be forced to resign. He was sick and tired of the baroness, especially the fact that she kept wanting to give him money, but there was one girl, he’d show her to Vronsky, a wonder, a charm, in the strict Oriental style, “the genre of the slave girl Rebecca, you see.” He had quarreled with Berkoshev yesterday, and he wanted to send seconds, but nothing would come of it, naturally. All in all, everything was splendid and extremely cheerful. Without letting his comrade go into the details of
his situation, Petritsky plunged into telling him all the news he found interesting. Listening to these all too familiar stories of Petritsky’s in the all too familiar surroundings of his apartment of three years, Vronsky experienced the pleasant sensation of returning to his usual carefree Petersburg life.

“That can’t be!” he exclaimed, stepping on the pedal of the washstand where he had been washing his ruddy neck. “That can’t be!” he exclaimed at the news that Laura had made up with Mileyev and thrown over Fertingof. “Is he still just as stupid and smug? Well, and what about Buzulukov?”

“Ah, there was a whole story with Buzulukov—splendid!” exclaimed Petritsky. “You know his passion is balls, and he never misses a single ball at court. He was on his way to a great ball wearing his new helmet. Have you seen the new helmets? Very fine, lighter. Only he’s standing there . . . No, you have to listen to this.”

“I am listening,” Vronsky replied, drying himself with a Turkish towel.

“A grand duchess is passing with some ambassador, and to his misfortune their conversation had turned to the new helmets. The grand duchess wanted to show him the new helmet. . . . They saw our dear boy standing there. (Petritsky showed him standing there with his helmet.) The grand duchess asked him to give her his helmet—but he wouldn’t. What’s this? Everyone was winking, nodding, and frowning at him. Hand it over. He wouldn’t. He was absolutely silent. You can imagine. . . . Only this one . . . he wanted to take his helmet away from him . . . he wouldn’t give it to them! The other snatched it away and handed it to the grand duchess. “Here is the new helmet,” said the grand duchess. She turns the helmet over, and you can imagine what came out. Crash! Pears, candies, two pounds of candies! He’d been collecting them, the dear boy!”

Vronsky shook with laughter. For a long time afterward, while talking of other things, he would shake with hearty laughter, showing his strong, close-set teeth, when he recalled the helmet.

When he had learned all the news, Vronsky, with his valet’s help, put on his uniform and went to report. After reporting, he intended to stop by to see his brother and Betsy and to make several calls in order to begin traveling in that society where he might encounter Madame Karenina. As always in Petersburg, he left home with no thought of returning until late that night.