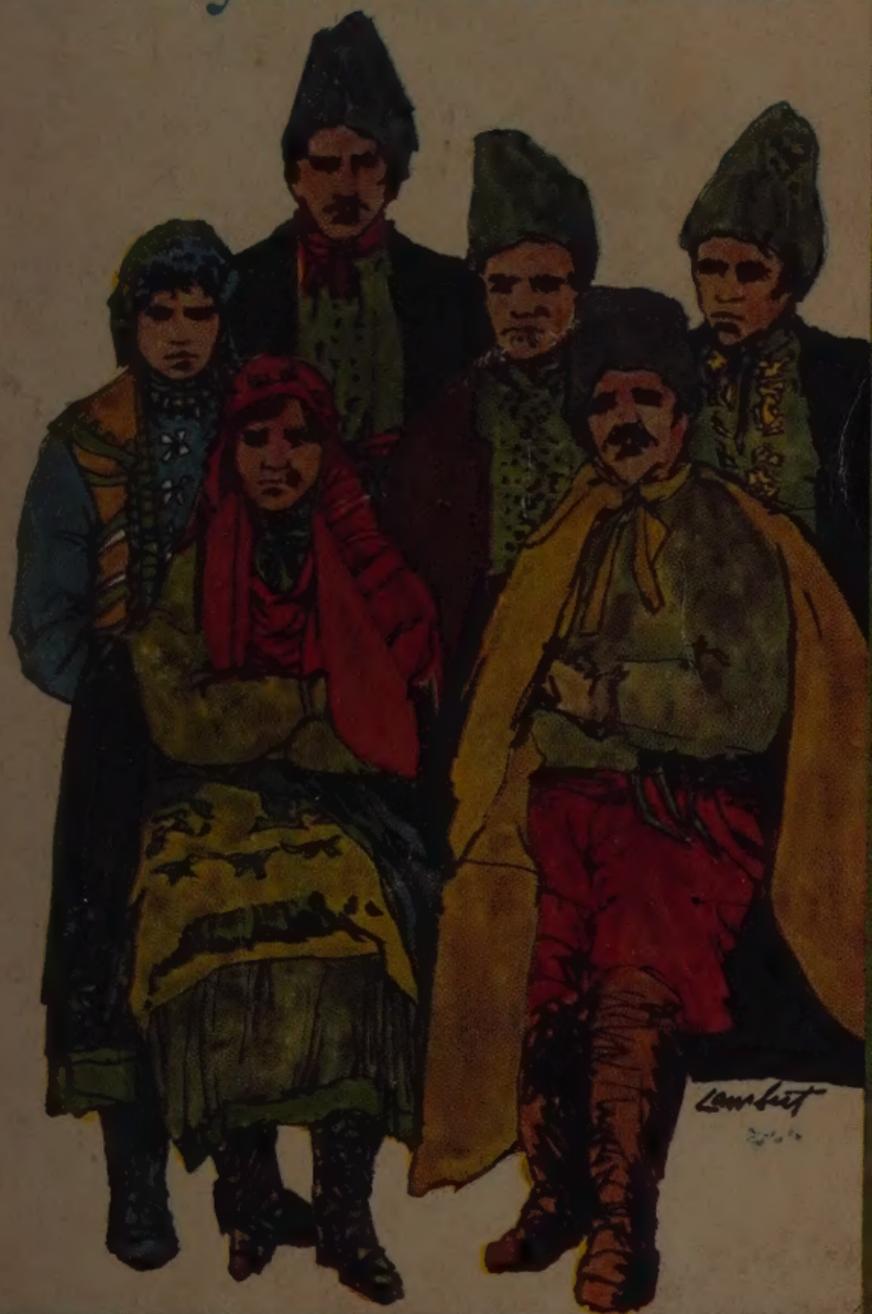


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THE GOLOVLOVS

M. Saltykov-Shchedrin



A SIGNET CLASSIC

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THE GOLOVLOVS

by

M. SALTYKOV-SHCHEDRIN

A New Translation by Andrew R. MacAndrew

With An Afterword

by

WILLIAM E. HARKINS



A SIGNET CLASSIC

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I

THE FAMILY TRIBUNAL

ANTON VASILIEV, Arina Petrovna Golovlov's estate manager, had been to Moscow to collect the quit-rent from those of her serfs who lived there. He had finished his report to his mistress and received her permission to retire. But instead of leaving he started to shuffle his feet as if he wanted to say something else but couldn't bring himself to do so.

Arina Petrovna, who knew her people so well that she understood their slightest gesture and could even guess their inmost thoughts, immediately sensed trouble.

"What now?" she asked, looking straight into his eyes.

"That was all, ma'am," Vasiliev said, trying to get out of it.

"Stop lying! There's something else, I can tell by your eyes."

Vasiliev, however, couldn't make up his mind whether or not to tell her. So he simply stood there shuffling his feet.

"Come on, out with it whatever it is!" Arina Petrovna said, raising her voice. "Don't try to wriggle out of it, Windbag!"

Arina Petrovna liked to coin nicknames for her serfs, both domestic and those employed in the administration of her estates. She called Vasiliev Windbag because he had a loose tongue—though she had never known him to betray any of her secrets deliberately.

The estate he managed included a rather large village, a local trading center in which there were several inns. Vasiliev liked to sit and drink tea and brag about the omnipotence of his mistress, and as he boasted, he blabbed without meaning to. As Arina Petrovna was eternally engaged in all sorts of lawsuits, it sometimes happened that the manager's chatter gave away his mistress's stratagems before they could be carried out.

"Well, ma'am, the fact is . . ." Vasiliev muttered at last.

"Go on, what is it?" Arina Petrovna urged nervously.

Besides being a domineering woman, she was also highly imaginative, and so she immediately visualized a whole scheme of plots and intrigues directed against her. She saw it so clearly that she turned pale and jumped up from her armchair.

"Mister Stepan sold the house in Moscow," the manager squeezed out.

"Go on!"

"He sold it, ma'am."

"Why? How did it happen? Stop mumbling, man, speak up!"

"Because of his debts, I expect. After all, when business is good, people don't start selling houses."

"It was the authorities sold it, I suppose, on a court order?"

"It seems so. They say the house went for eight thousand at the auction."

Arina Petrovna sat down heavily, staring out the window. At first she seemed stunned by the news. If she'd been told that Stepan had killed someone, that the Golovlov serfs were in revolt and refusing to work, or that serfdom had been abolished, it would have come as less of a blow. Her lips quivered, her eyes stared unseeing into the distance. She failed to notice Dunya, the servant girl, who came out of the house hiding something under her apron, started to run, then, glancing at the window and catching sight of her mistress, spun around and tiptoed slowly back. At any other time, this would have brought on a major investigation.

At last, however, Arina Petrovna pulled herself together and said:

"How very amusing!"

After which there followed several more minutes of ominous silence.

"So you say the authorities sold it for eight thousand?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And to think it was a parental gift! Talk of a good-for-nothing!"

Arina Petrovna felt the news called for an immediate decision, but she couldn't reach one. Her thoughts clashed. On the one hand, she thought, "The authorities sold it! Well, they couldn't have sold it right away, there must have been an inventory, a valuation, an announcement of the auction. They sold it for eight thousand when only two years ago I laid out twelve thousand without a qualm for it. If I'd known, I could have bought it for eight thousand at the auction myself!" On the other hand, she kept repeating to herself: "The police sold it for eight thousand! A gift from his mother! The rat! How could he dispose of my gift and blessing for eight thousand?"

"Who told you this?" she asked at last, finally deciding that since the house had been sold there was now no hope of getting it cheaply.

"Ivan Mikhailich, the innkeeper."

"And why didn't he warn me in time?"

"He must have been afraid to."

"Afraid! I'll teach him to be afraid! Summon him from Moscow, and as soon as he gets here it'll be straight off to the recruiting office—the army'll shave his head for him! Afraid indeed!"

Although serfdom was on its way out, it still existed, and Vasiliev was accustomed to quite astonishing decisions from his mistress. This decision of hers, however, was so unexpected that he felt confused. It made him think of his nickname—Windbag. Mikhailich was solid and reliable, and it seemed inconceivable that a man like him could find himself in such trouble. Moreover, he was his close friend, and now all of a sudden they were going to send him into the army, and it was his fault, Anton Vasiliev's—the Windbag who hadn't been able to hold his tongue!

"Forgive . . . that is, Ivan Mikhailich!" he pleaded.

"Get out!" Arina Petrovna shouted in a tone that made him give up Ivan Mikhailich's defense immediately.

But before following this story further, the reader should get to know Arina Petrovna and her family.

A woman in her sixties, Arina Petrovna was still quite sprightly and quite accustomed to having her own way. She was stern. She ran the vast Golovlov estate herself, brooking no interference. She lived in seclusion, frugally, almost stingily, keeping aloof from her neighbors but remaining on the best of terms with the local authorities. She expected such complete obedience from her children that before taking the smallest step they would ask themselves: "What would Mamma say?" She was independent, inflexible and rather aggressive, traits which had developed even more strongly since not a single member of the Golovlov family could stand up to her. Her husband was an irresponsible scatterbrain with a weakness for the bottle, and Arina Petrovna would describe herself as neither a widow nor a wife. Two of her children were in government service in Petersburg, two had taken after their father and, having been branded worthless, were allowed no part in family affairs. Under these circumstances, Arina Petrovna soon came to feel herself isolated and, indeed, became quite unused to family life, though the word "family" was always on her lips and ostensibly her every action was taken in the interests of family affairs.

The nominal head of the family, Vladimir Mikhailovich Golovlov, had been known since his youth as a disorderly mischiefmaker, and there was nothing about him that a serious, businesslike woman like Arina Petrovna could understand or like. His idle life was one long holiday. More often than not he would shut himself in his study where he would imitate the twittering of starlings and the crowing of cocks, or compose what he called "free verse." In exalted moments he would boast that he had been a friend of the poet Barkov and that Barkov had blessed him on his deathbed. Arina Petrovna took an immediate dislike to her husband's poems; she described them as mere foolishness and obscenity. Since Vladimir Golovlov had married especially to have some-

one around to listen to his poetry, it's no wonder that discord had rapidly set in.

Their quarrels grew increasingly bitter and finally resulted in Arina Petrovna's total, scornful indifference toward her clownish husband and in his conscious hatred of her, though this hatred was strongly mixed with fear. Golovlov called his wife a witch and a devil; she called him a windmill and a stringless balalaika. Feeling this way toward one another, they had lived together for more than forty years and it had never occurred to either that there was anything unnatural in such an existence. As time went by, Golovlov's tricks became even more troublesome and malicious. In addition to his poetic exercises, he began to drink heavily and to lie in wait for maidservants in the hall. At first Arina Petrovna was quite shocked and revolted by this new development; it upset her, though more because it undermined her authority than out of jealousy. But later she simply shrugged it off, only seeing to it that the "filthy girls" didn't take vodka to their master. At that time, she decided once and for all that her husband was no companion and concentrated all her attention on augmenting the Golovlov holdings. And indeed, in forty years of married life, she had managed to increase them tenfold. With extraordinary patience and ingenuity she lay in wait for villages near and far. She would make secret inquiries about their owners and then sweep down at auctions like a bolt from the blue. In the whirl of this pursuit of wealth, Golovlov was pushed further and further into the background and finally found himself completely left out. At the time this story begins, he was a decrepit old man who hardly ever got out of bed. On the rare occasions he did, it was usually to thrust his head in at the half-open door of his wife's room, shout "Devil" and disappear again.

Nor did Arina Petrovna have any better luck in her children. She was too independent, had too much of the bachelor in her, so to speak, to regard children as anything more than an unnecessary encumbrance. She breathed freely only when left alone with her accounts and her business affairs, with no one to bother her in her discussions with managers, bailiffs, housekeepers and the

like. She regarded children as one of the inevitable circumstances of life, against which she felt she had no right to protest, but which touched no inner chord in her, wholly taken up as she was in the endless details of business. There were four children, three sons and a daughter. She avoided any mention of her oldest son and her daughter, and she was more or less indifferent to the youngest. As to the second son, she evinced some feeling for him, but it was a certain uneasiness rather than affection.

The oldest son, Stepan, our present concern, was known in the family as Stepan-the-blockhead or Stepan-the-mischiefmaker. Very early in his life he'd been branded worthless and even as a child had been treated as something between an outcast and a clown. Unfortunately he was a bright youngster, too quickly and too willingly influenced by his environment. He had his father's inexhaustible love of mischiefmaking and his mother's ability to quickly find a person's weak side. Thank to the first of these traits, he became his father's favorite, which still further increased his mother's distaste for him. Often when Arina Petrovna was away on some business trip, the boy and his father would retire to the study adorned with Barkov's portrait, where they would read free verse and gossip, especially about the "witch"—Arina Petrovna. But the "witch" seemed to sense what they were up to: without a sound, she would drive up to the house, tiptoe to the study door, and listen to their gay chatter. After which Stepan-the-blockhead received an immediate and savage beating. But Stepan wouldn't behave; neither beatings nor admonitions helped, and half an hour later he'd be up to some mischief again. He would cut some servant girl's kerchief to ribbons or drop flies into some manservant's mouth while he slept, or steal a cake from the kitchen—out of thrift, Arina Petrovna kept the children rather underfed. Later, Stepan would always share the cake with his brothers.

"You ought to be hung!" Arina Petrovna would say over and over again. "I'd do it—and I wouldn't even be blamed. The tsar himself wouldn't condemn me for it!"

This constant humiliation landed on soft, yielding ground, and it had its effect. It brought forth neither anger

nor protest, but it formed a character that was servile, made him a habitual buffoon, a creature with no restraint or forethought. Such people fall readily under anyone's influence and may become anything: drunkards, beggars, clowns, even criminals.

At twenty, Stepan Golovlov was graduated from a Moscow high school and entered the university. But his life as a student was a miserable one, since his mother sent him just enough money to keep him from starving. Besides, he had no inclination for work, suffering rather from an artistic temperament which largely found expression in mimicking others. In addition he had a constant longing for company and could not stand to be alone with himself. So he played the easy part of a hanger-on, a sponger, and because of his readiness to accept anything, he was soon adopted by the better-off students, who, while tolerating his company, never accepted him as a peer. To them he was simply a buffoon—and thus his standing was established. Once so placed, he sank lower and lower until by the end of his fourth year he was the general laughing stock. Nevertheless, thanks to his quick grasp and good memory, he passed his exams and received his degree.

When he arrived home with his diploma, Arina Petrovna merely shrugged her shoulders and said: "Surprising!" Then, after a month at home in the country, she sent him off to Petersburg, giving him a monthly allowance of one hundred rubles. Now the young man started to wander from one government office to the next: he had no backing and absolutely no urge to make his own way. His idle mind was so unused to concentrating that even such office routines as reports and résumés were too much for him. For four years Stepan clung on in Petersburg and was finally forced to admit to himself that he had no hope of rising higher than a filing clerk. In answer to his tales of woe, Arina Petrovna wrote him an angry letter which started with the words, "I saw it coming all along," and ended with an order for him to come to Moscow. There, at a council of her favorite serfs, it was decided that Stepan-the-blockhead should be found a position in the law courts, but be put in the care of a court clerk who had dealt with the Golov-

lovs' cases for many years. How Stepan behaved and what he did in the law courts no one ever knew, but three years later he was no longer there. Then Arina Petrovna decided to take a drastic step—she threw her son a bone, which, at the same time, was to count as his “parental blessing,” giving him a start. This “bone” was the house in Moscow for which Arina Petrovna had paid twelve thousand rubles.

For the first time in his life, Stepan Golovlov took a deep, relaxed breath. The house looked as if it would bring him an income of a thousand silver rubles, and compared with his previous situation, this seemed like prosperity. He kissed his mamma's hand with real feeling—“All right, all right, blockhead,” she said as he did so, “just don't expect anything more!”—and promised to be worthy of her generosity. But alas, he was so unused to handling money, had such an absurd lack of understanding of the realities of life, that his fabulous thousand a year didn't last long. In some four or five years he was completely bankrupt and was only too glad to volunteer for a military levy that was being raised at the time. However, his regiment had hardly reached Kharkov when peace was concluded and Stepan found himself back in Moscow once again. There, he found that his house had been sold in his absence. All he had on him was a rather shabby military uniform, regulation boots and a hundred rubles. He decided to invest this capital, that is, he started to play cards, and soon he lost everything.

Then he began to make the rounds of his mother's well-to-do serfs who lived in Moscow where they carried on their trades. To some he went for a meal, from others he would scrounge a quarter pound of tobacco, from others again he would borrow small amounts of money. But in the end the time came when he found himself up against a blank wall, so to speak. He was now nearly forty and he was forced to admit he could no longer continue his homeless life. There was but one thing left to do—to return to the family estate, Golovlovo. . . .

The second of the Golovlov children was the daughter, Anna, whom Arina Petrovna also preferred not to discuss.

The trouble was, Arina Petrovna had had high hopes for Anna, and Anna had not only failed to justify them, she had caused a public scandal that had resounded all over the district. When her daughter left boarding school, Arina Petrovna settled her in the country, figuring to make an unpaid private secretary and bookkeeper out of her. But one fine night the girl eloped with a certain Second Lieutenant Ulanov and married him.

"They went off and got married without their parents' consent—like dogs!" Arina Petrovna ranted on that occasion. "Well, at least he went through with a wedding ceremony! Anybody else would have used her and then vanished! And just go and look for him after that, just whistle for him then!"

Arina Petrovna acted as firmly with her daughter as she had with her worthless son. She threw her a bone. She gave her five thousand rubles' capital, a little village with thirty serfs attached to it, and a dilapidated house in which every window was drafty and there wasn't a sound floorboard. Two years later the young couple had run through the money and the second lieutenant had disappeared, no one knew where, leaving Anna with twin daughters, Anninka and Lubinka. Then, three months later, Anna died and, willy-nilly, Arina Petrovna had to take in the chubby orphans. Which she did, installing the babies in a wing of the house in charge of a one-eyed old woman called Palashka.

"God is full of goodness," she said. "Heaven knows the poor orphans won't eat much and they'll be a comfort in my old age! God has taken one daughter and given me two!"

And at the same time she wrote to her son Porfiry:

"Your sister died as she lived—dissolutely, and left me with her whelps around my neck. . . ."

However cynical it may seem to say so, it must be admitted that the consequences of the two acts of generosity involved in tossing her children these "bones" didn't impair Arina Petrovna's finances in the slightest. On the contrary, they indirectly contributed to the rounding out of the Golovlov estate by reducing the number of claimants to its benefits. For Arina Petrovna was a woman of strict principle, and having once "tossed them a bone,"

she considered her obligations toward her "worthless" children fulfilled.

And it never entered her head that eventually she might have to give something to her orphaned granddaughters.

She simply tried to squeeze everything possible out of the little estate that had been her daughter's share, turning the money over to a trust fund and saying:

"Here, I'm putting aside money for the orphans little by little. As to what they cost me for food and other expenses, I won't charge them a thing for it. God will repay me for my hospitality."

Then there were the two younger children, Porfiry and Pavel. Both were in service in Petersburg, the first in the civil service, the second in the army. Porfiry was married; Pavel, a bachelor.

Porfiry was known in the family by three names: Little Judas, Bloodsucker, and Goodygoody, these nicknames having been given him by Stepan-the-blockhead during their childhood. Ever since infancy, he had treated his dear mamma with tender affection; he would furtively kiss her on the shoulder, and at times he would tattletale. Sometimes he would quietly open the door of his mother's room and creep into a corner where he would sit with his eyes fixed on her as if entranced, while she was writing or doing her accounts. But even then, Arina Petrovna regarded her son's ingratiating ways with a certain suspicion. Even then his gaze directed so fixedly at her seemed an enigma. She could not decide what it actually was that emanated from him: venom or filial respect.

"I don't understand myself—what sort of eyes are those?" she wondered to herself sometimes. "He looks at you—well, just as if he were trying to lure you into a trap, as if he were preparing to put a noose around your neck, and the venom seems to just ooze out of him."

And she remembered some significant details from the time when she was pregnant with Porfiry. They had had living with them a pious, clairvoyant old man called Porfiry-the-blessed, whom she often asked to foretell the future for her. But when she asked this ancient whether the baby would be born soon and whether God

would send her a boy or a girl, he didn't answer her directly but instead crowed like a cock three times, then muttered:

"A cockerel! A cockerel! A sharp-clawed cockerel! The cock's crow, then, menaces the hen. The hen clucks, chuck-chuck-chuck, but too late, she's out of luck!"

And that was all. But three days later—"There, you see, he crowed three times!"—she gave birth to a son—"You see, a cockerel, a cockerel!"—whom they called Porfiry after the old clairvoyant. . . .

The first half of the prophecy had come true; but what meaning could the other mysterious words have—"The hen clucks, chuck-chuck-chuck, but too late, she's out of luck"? It was this that Arina Petrovna pondered, glancing under her arm at Porfiry as he sat in his corner staring at her with his enigmatic look.

And Porfiry continued to sit there meekly and silently, looking at her so fixedly that his wide-open, unblinking eyes began to water. It was as if he divined the doubt stirring in his mother's mind and so acted in a way that would disarm the most carping suspicion. And his mother was forced to admit to herself that she was helpless before such meekness. At the risk of annoying her, he constantly hovered before her, as if saying: "Look at me! I'm not hiding anything! I'm all obedience and devotion, and what's more, not obedient out of fear alone, but because conscience dictates it." And however strong the conviction that Porfiry was wicked, that he was simply fawning on her, that his eyes were still setting their trap, her heart could not resist such selfless devotion. In spite of herself, her hand would pick out the best piece on the plate to give to this affectionate son, although the very sight of him produced a vague anxiety in her heart, a fear of something enigmatic, perhaps malevolent.

His brother Pavel was just the opposite of Porfiry. He was the absolute embodiment of inaction. Even as a boy he had shown not the slightest inclination for study or for games or for friends, but liked to keep to himself, away from others. He would go off in a corner and stay there dreaming. He would fancy he had eaten so much oatmeal that his legs had become so thin that he couldn't

do his lessons. Or that he was not Pavel, a landowner's son, but David the shepherd, and that he had the same wart on his forehead and was cracking a whip instead of doing his lessons. Sometimes Arina Petrovna stared and stared at him, as if her maternal heart were overflowing.

"Why do you sit there sulking, like a little mouse," she would say, her voice rising, unable to stand it. "Or is there some poison working inside you already? Not the sort to come to his mother and say, 'Mamma, Mamma dear, give me a kiss!'"

Pavel would leave his corner, and slowly, as if pushed from behind, would approach his mother.

"Mamma," he would repeat in a voice that was somehow unnaturally deep for a child, "Mamma dear, give me a kiss!"

"Out of my sight . . . You little sneak! You think just because you go off and hide that I don't understand? I see right through you, my love! I see all your little schemes as if they were spread out in the palm of my hand!"

As slowly as he'd been drawn out of it, Pavel went back to hide in his corner again.

The years went by and Pavel grew into just that sort of apathetic, oddly taciturn man who, in the end, is doomed to inaction. He may have been kind, but he never helped anyone; he may have been quite intelligent, but all his life he'd never committed a sensible act. He was hospitable, but his hospitality attracted no one. He spent money easily, but his spending never did any good nor gave pleasure to anyone. He'd never harmed anybody, yet no one had ever given him credit for it. He was honest, but no one had ever said: "How honorably Pavel Golovlov behaved on that occasion!" And to cap it all, he often snapped back at his mother, though he feared her like fire itself. And so he was a reserved, taciturn man, but behind his silent reserve there lay complete inertia—and nothing else.

In their adult years, the difference in character between the two brothers was most sharply reflected in their attitude toward their mother. Regularly each week, Judas sent his mamma a long letter in which he gave her a detailed account of the Petersburg news, always finishing

with the most refined expressions of high-minded filial devotion. Pavel wrote seldom and briefly, sometimes even enigmatically, as if he'd had to draw each word out of himself with pincers.

The brothers, for instance, would acknowledge the receipt of their allowances quite differently:

I received such-and-such an amount on such-and-such a date, Mamma, dearest friend, from your agent and serf Yerofeyev [Porfiry would inform her], for which sum, to be used for my support in accordance with your wish, dear Mamma, I hereby send my heartfelt thanks, and with sincere filial devotion, I kiss your hands. One thing grieves and worries me—are you not putting too great a strain on your priceless good health in ceaselessly concerning yourself with the satisfaction not only of our needs, but even of our whims? ! I don't know about my brother, but I . . .

and so on.

And on the same occasion, Pavel would write:

I received such-and-such a sum on such-and-such a date, dear Mother, and according to my calculations, it's six rubles, fifty kopeks short. I trust you will graciously forgive my mentioning it.

When Arina Petrovna reprimanded her sons for their extravagance, a thing that happened quite often even though there were no serious grounds for it, Porfiry always accepted her remarks with humility, and wrote:

I know, my dearest mamma, that you bear a burden that's beyond your strength for our sake, for the sake of your unworthy children. I know that often our behavior fails to justify your motherly solicitude, and that sometimes, through human weakness, we even forget our debt to you. And so I offer you my most sincere filial apologies and hope in time to rid myself of this vice and to be more careful in the spending of the money which you, Mamma, precious friend, send for my board and my

And Pavel would answer thus:

Dear Mother, Although you've never been called upon to pay my debts thus far, I humbly acknowledge your reproach that I am a spendthrift, of which fact please rest assured.

The two brothers even responded quite differently to Arina Petrovna's letter informing them of the death of their sister Anna. Porfiry wrote:

The news of the passing of my beloved sister Anna, the dear friend of my childhood, has filled my heart with sorrow, a sorrow which is all the greater for the realization that it brings you, Mamma, dearest friend, yet another cross to bear—the two orphaned babies. Isn't it enough that you, the benefactress of us all, deny yourself everything, and without sparing your health, devote all your strength to providing your family not only with the necessities but with luxuries as well? Indeed, I cannot see how, in your position, you could help being tempted to complain occasionally, sinful though that may be. The only consolation I can think of for you, dear Mamma, would be to keep reminding yourself of the suffering that Christ Himself had to bear.

Pavel wrote:

Received the news of my sister's death. I hope that the Almighty will console her in His haven, though there's no way of telling.

Arina Petrovna would read and reread her sons' letters, trying to figure out which one would be the more likely to turn against her. Reading Porfiry's, she felt that he was the one.

"Ah, look how he writes! Look how he twists his tongue around everything!" she kept exclaiming. "It's not for nothing that Stepan-the-blockhead nicknamed him Judas! There's not a single sincere word in it. It's all lies—Mamma, dearest friend, and that stuff about my burdens and my cross . . . He doesn't believe a word of it!"

Then she would take up Pavel's letter and feel that this was really her future enemy.

"He may be stupid, yet look how he gives a pinprick to his own mother. 'Please rest assured . . .' If you please! I'll show you 'please rest assured'! I'll throw you a bone

like I did Stepan-the-blockhead—then you'll see how I see through your assurances!"

In the end, a cry of sincere distress escaped from her maternal bosom:

"For whom am I saving all this, for whom storing it all up? Why do I have to sacrifice sleep, even deny myself food? For whom, for whom?!"

Such was the situation in the Golovlov family when the manager Anton Vasiliev reported to Arina Petrovna that Stepan-the-blockhead had squandered the "bone" she had thrown him. And the very fact that he had let it be sold so cheaply, thereby spurning it, made her feel even more strongly that it had been a "parental blessing."

Arina Petrovna sat in her bedroom quite unable to get a hold on herself. Something was going on inside her that she could not quite understand. Was it unexpected pity for this bad son of hers who was her son nevertheless, or was it nothing but anger at what she felt to be a challenge to her authority? The most experienced psychologist could not have answered, for her feelings and sensations were too confused and succeeded each other too rapidly. Finally, however, one idea stood out from the welter of thoughts—the fear that once again she would have her "bad" son on her neck.

"Anna has already dumped her puppies on me and now here comes the blockhead as well. . . ." she thought, weighing the consequences in her mind.

She sat there for a long time, not saying a word and gazing fixedly out the window. She was served her dinner which she hardly touched. A servant came to say, please, the master would like to have some vodka, and she flung the storeroom key at him without even looking up. After dinner she went to the chapel where she had all the lamps lit, then shut herself in, after first ordering that the bathhouse be heated for her. All these were unmistakable signs that the mistress was "fuming," and the house grew silent as the dead. The maids tiptoed around; Akulina the housekeeper ran around in circles—jam was to have been made in the afternoon and now the time had come, the berries had been prepared, and there was no order from the mistress either to go ahead or to delay;

Matthew the gardener came into the house to ask whether he should start picking the peaches, but they hushed him so in the maids' room that he beat a hasty retreat.

Having said her prayers and taken a bath, Arina Petrovna felt somewhat calmer and called for Anton Vasiliev to question him once more.

"Well, and what's the blockhead doing with himself?" she asked.

"Moscow is a big town—it would take him more than a year to go all over it."

"But he has to eat and drink, doesn't he?"

"He feeds on the serfs. He has dinner with one, asks another for a dime for tobacco."

"And who gave them permission to give it to him?"

"Oh please, ma'am! You don't imagine the serfs would grudge it him? They give to poor people they don't even know, why wouldn't they give to their masters!"

"I'll show them how to be so generous! I'll send you the blockhead to the village and you can support him among you, at your own expense, the whole village!"

"As you please, ma'am."

"What? What did you say?"

"I said, as you please, ma'am. If you order it, we'll support him."

"Oh . . . so you'll support him. Huh! You'd better be careful what you say."

A pause. But it wasn't for nothing that his mistress had nicknamed Vasiliev the Windbag. He started shuffling his feet again, unable to contain himself, bursting to report something more.

"What a spendthrift!" he exclaimed at last. "They say when he came back from that campaign, he brought a hundred rubles with him. That's not big money, a hundred rubles, but still you could live on it a while. . . ."

"Well?"

"Thought he'd get his affairs straightened out, so he decided to chance it. . . ."

"Well, don't beat around the bush, tell me!"

"So he took his money to the German club. Thought he'd find a fool and win at cards. But instead, he fell into the hands of a man smarter than himself. He tried

to get away but they caught him in the lobby, I understand. And then they took everything he had on him."

"And I suppose they gave him a licking?"

"He got a little of everything. The next day he came to Ivan Mikhailich and told him the whole story himself. And the strange thing is that he was laughing, sort of gay, as if they'd given him a pat on the head."

"He just doesn't care! Let him not show his face around here, that's all!"

"I expect he will, though."

"What are you talking about? I won't let him set foot in the house!"

"But he's bound to come, ma'am," Vasiliev repeated. "He told Ivan Mikhailich, 'I've had enough,' he said, 'I'll go to my old lady's and eat dry bread! And, to tell the truth, ma'am, he's got nowhere to go but here. He can't go on making the rounds of the serfs in Moscow forever. And then he'll need clothes too, and rest. . . .'"

Which was exactly what Arina Petrovna was afraid of. Precisely that lay at the heart of her vague forebodings. "Yes, he'll turn up here. He hasn't anywhere else to go. There's no escaping it!" He would be there, continually before her eyes, the worthless son she'd forgotten, damn him! What had she thrown him his "bone" for, then? She had thought that when he'd received "his due," he would vanish out of her life forever; but no, on the contrary—here he was turning up again. He would come and lay claims upon her; he'd be an eyesore to everyone in his tatters. So she'd have to satisfy his demands, because he'd be shameless enough to cause a scandal. You couldn't lock *him* up somewhere. *He* might show up at other people's houses looking like an outcast. Or kick up a row, or run to the neighbors' and tell all the Golovlov secrets. Perhaps she should send him off to the Suzdal Monastery? But who knew if such a place really existed at all, and if it did, whether it was really there to remove obstreperous children from the sight of exasperated parents. And then, they said, there was always the asylum . . . but how would you get a forty-year-old stallion like him into it? In fact, the very thought of the troubles which threatened to upset her normal routine with the arrival

of Stepan-the-blockhead had completely unsettled Arina Petrovna.

"I'll send him to you in the village! You feed him at your own expense!" she told her bailiff threateningly. "And not at the estate's expense, at your own."

"But why, ma'am? What have I done?"

"To teach you not to caw! Caw, caw, 'But he will come, ma'am!' Out of my sight . . . you crow!"

Vasiliev turned to leave but Arina Petrovna stopped him.

"Stop! Wait! Is it really true he's headed for Golovlovo?" she asked.

"Why should I start trying to deceive you at my age, ma'am? He said exactly what I told you—'I'll go to my old lady's and eat dry bread!'"

"I'll show him what kind of bread his old lady has for him!"

"But why, ma'am? He won't be living with you for long."

"What's that?"

"Well, he's got a terrible cough . . . always clutching at the left side of his chest. . . . He won't live long!"

"That kind live all the longer, my dear man. He'll outlive the lot of us. So he coughs—that's nothing to a long-legged stallion like him! Well, we'll see. You may go now. I have some business to attend to."

All evening Arina Petrovna thought and thought, and finally she decided to call a family council to determine the blockhead's fate. Such constitutional ways were not at all to her liking, but in this instance she considered it better to forego her traditional autocracy because a decision by the whole family would shield her from blame. She had no doubt about the outcome of the meeting and so sat down with a light heart to write to Porfiry and Pavel, telling them to come at once to Golovlovo.

While all this was going on, the cause of the commotion, Stepan-the-blockhead, was already on his way from Moscow to Golovlovo. At the Rogozhkaya coach station in Moscow, he booked a seat in one of those "diligences" in which small merchants and peasant traders used to travel in the old days and, indeed, which still run

in some places today. The coach was going to Vladimir, and the kindhearted tavern-keeper, Ivan Mikhailich, took Stepan along with him on the trip, paying his fare and buying food for him during the journey.

"Well now, sir, here's what you should do: get off at the turn there and then go on foot and appear at your mother's just as you are, in that suit," Mikhailich advised him.

"Yes, yes, yes!" Stepan agreed. "It's not far from the turn. A ten-mile walk—I'll be there in no time. And I'll arrive all covered with dust and mud."

"And then your mamma'll see you in that suit and maybe she'll be sorry for you."

"Of course she will. How could she help it! She's a kind old woman at heart, my mother!"

Stepan Golovlov was not yet forty but he looked at least fifty. Life had treated him so roughly that now no one would ever guess that this was a gentleman, that he had been to the university, that the lights of learning had once shone on him too. Extraordinarily tall, unkempt, looking unwashed, he was thin and undernourished, with a sunken chest and the long arms of an ape. His face was bloated, his hair and whiskers disheveled and already heavily streaked with gray; his voice was loud but hoarse, as though he had a cold; his eyes were bulging and inflamed, partly from an excess of vodka, partly from frequent exposure to the wind. He wore a threadbare, bedraggled, gray military tunic from which the gold braid had been ripped off and sold to be melted down; on his feet, patched, worn, regulation boots that had taken on a rusty tinge. Under the tunic showed a shirt that looked almost black, as if it had been smeared with soot, a shirt to which he himself referred, in army jargon, as a "flea-bag." He looked morosely out from under lowered brows, with a moroseness that did not reflect inner dissatisfaction but was rather the consequence of a vague fear that in another minute he would curl up and die of hunger like a worm.

He chattered unceasingly, jumping disconnectedly from one subject to another; he talked while Ivan Mikhailich listened to him and went on talking when his audience fell asleep, lulled by the unceasing rhythm of his voice.

He was terribly uncomfortable in the coach because, there being four passengers, he had to sit with his legs tucked in. After the first couple of miles, his knees ached unbearably. Nevertheless, in spite of this ache, he kept on talking. Clouds of dust poured in through the side windows every so often, the slanting rays of the sun would lance in suddenly, like a flame, lighting up the whole interior of the coach—and still he talked and talked.

“Yes, brother, I’ve had enough trouble for a whole lifetime,” he was saying. “Time to take it easy now. I’ll not eat her out of house and home, after all. But a piece of bread, a cup of tea, who can’t find that much? What d’you think, Ivan Mikhailich?”

“Your mamma’s got plenty of bread. . . .”

“But not for me—is that what you mean? Yes, friend, she’s piled her money away and yet she’d stint me a few coins. She’s always hated me, the witch! And why? But there we are, friend! There’s nothing she can get out of me and I’ve got a good hold on her now. If she imagines she can throw me out—I just won’t budge! If she won’t give me anything to eat, I’ll help myself! I’ve served my country, friend, and now everyone has to help me. There’s only one thing bothers me—she might not give me any tobacco. That’d be awful!”

“Yes, looks like you’ll have to say good-bye to your tobacco.”

“Well, I’ll put the squeeze on the bailiff. He could let his master have some, the bald old devil!”

“Certainly he’ll give you some. Why shouldn’t he? But what if your mamma forbids him?”

“Well then, that’d really be the end! Of all my former splendor, all I have left is one little luxury—tobacco! I tell you, friend, when I had money I smoked a quarter pound of Zhukov’s every day.”

“Well, and what about vodka—you’ll have to give that up as well.”

“That’d be awful too. And vodka’s good for my health y’know—it loosens my cough. On the march to Sebastopol, friend, we’d put away a bucketful each before we even reached Serpukhov!”

“You must have been half-plastered with it?”

“Don’t remember. I suppose so. I got all the way to

Kharkov and I'll be damned if I can remember a thing. I only remember that we went through villages, we went through towns, oh, yes, and in Tula, I remember, the man who ran the army supply store made us a speech. He fairly wept, the sly pig! Yes, our Holy Mother Russia downed quite a bit of vodka for solace in those hard times. Suppliers, contractors, profiteers—it's a wonder the country survived!"

"Ah, but remember, your own mamma now, she also made a tidy little profit out of it. More than half the conscripts from our village didn't return, and they say they've ordered compensation to be paid out for each of them now. And that compensation's worth more than four hundred a man."

"Yes, she's a smart one, my mother! She ought to be a minister instead of sitting making jam at Golovlovo. You know something—she was unfair to me, she wronged me, and yet I respect her! Clever as the devil, and that's what's important. If it wasn't for her, where would we be? We'd have just Golovlovo with its one hundred and one and a half serfs. And just look at what she's managed to buy up!"

"Your brothers will have plenty."

"Yes, they will. But me—I'll get nothing, that's for sure! I've been swept out like so much dust! But my brothers'll be rich, 'specially the bloodsucker. That one doesn't need soap to worm his way into a person's soul. And, you know, he'll do away with the old witch in time; he'll suck her dry of everything, the estate, the capital. I'm a sort of seer in these things. Now my brother Pavel—there's a fellow with a heart. He'll slip me tobacco, you'll see. As soon as I get to Golovlovo I'll send him a message: 'That's how things stand, dear Brother. Help me out.' Oh, oh, oh! If only I were rich!"

"What would you do then?"

"First of all, I'd load you down with money, right away. . . ."

"Why me? You better think of yourself. I'm quite content as I am, thanks to your mamma."

"Oh, no, friend, just wait! I'd put you in charge of all our estates. Yes, my friend, you've given food and shelter to an old soldier and I'll never forget it! If it

wasn't for you, I'd be trudging on foot to the home of my fathers. And I'd give you your freedom right away and open my storehouse to you—eat, drink and be merry! Why, what did you expect I'd do, man?"

"No, no, I mean, leaving me out of it, sir. What else would you do if you were rich?"

"Well, secondly, I'd get myself a pretty little thing. In Kursk I went to a service to Our Lady and I saw one there. . . . Ah, what a girl! Believe it or not, she kept wiggling, couldn't keep still a minute!"

"But maybe she wouldn't want to become your pretty little thing?"

"And what's money for? What's the filthy lucre for? If a hundred thousand's too little, take two hundred thousand! When I have money, I don't stint anything as long as I enjoy myself! Even then, I have to admit, I offered her three rubles through my corporal—five, the little robber wanted!"

"And, of course, you didn't happen to have five?"

"Well, I don't know how to put it. I tell you, it's as if the whole thing were a dream. Maybe I even had her and I've forgotten. The entire march, for the whole two months . . . I don't remember a thing! I suppose that's never happened to you?"

But Ivan Mikhailich didn't answer. Stepan looked at him and found his companion's head was nodding rhythmically, and from time to time, when his nose almost touched his knees, it jerked up absurdly somehow, and then started to nod regularly again.

"Oh, so that's the way you are," he said. "It's rocked you to sleep already. Fast asleep! You've grown fat, brother, on your tavern diet. But I can't get to sleep. Sleep doesn't come and that's all there's to it. Let's see, what can I do with myself. Play a trick on someone, maybe, unless I can lay hold of some product of the grape. . . ."

Stepan looked around, assuring himself that the other passengers were also sleeping. The head of the merchant sitting next to him banged against the side of the coach but this failed to wake him. The man's face was as shiny as if it had been lacquered, and flies were settling around his mouth.

"How about sending those flies down his gullet—that'd give him a new view of things!" the happy thought occurred to Stepan. He started to reach out toward the merchant but thought of something and stopped his hand in mid-air.

"No, no tricks—enough of that! Sleep, my friends, rest! And I meanwhile . . . now where did he stow that bottle? Ah, there it is, the lovely thing! Come on, come on up here! Sa-ave, oh Lo-ord, thy people!" he sang in a low voice, taking the bottle out of a canvas bag hung on the side of the coach and raising it to his mouth. "Ah, that's better! Warmed me up! Another one? No, that's enough. . . . There's another fifteen miles to the station, I'll have time to fill myself. . . . Another, though? Ah, the damn stuff! You barely catch sight of the bottle and it starts beckoning to you. It's awful to drink, but impossible not to—not when you can't sleep. If only it'd knock me out altogether, damn it!"

He took a few more gulps from the bottle, then replaced it and started to fill his pipe.

"Fine!" he said. "We've had our little drink and now we'll smoke a pipe. She won't give me tobacco, the old witch, I know she won't. He was right about that. And will she even feed me? Leftovers, tea—she's bound to allow me something. Ah me, there was money, but it's gone. There was a man, but he's gone. That's how things go in this world. Today you eat, drink, have fun, smoke your pipe . . . And where will you be tomorrow, my man? However, I ought to eat something. You drink and drink, like a barrel with a hole in it, but eat—you never get a bite to eat. Yet the doctors say it's good for you to drink if you have some solid stuff to go with it. That's what the Reverend Smaragd said when we were passing through Oboyan. Was it Oboyan? God knows, maybe it was Kromy! But anyway, that's not the point—the point is how to get hold of a little snack right now. I remember him putting some salami and three rolls in a little bag. Of course he wouldn't buy caviar! Whew, he's certainly fast asleep—some tunes he's whistling through his nose! I'll bet he stowed the stuff under him!"

He rummaged around on the seat beside him but found nothing.

"Hey, Ivan Mikhailich, hey!" he called.

Mikhailich woke up and for a minute was quite unable to remember how he came to be sitting face to face with his master.

"I was just beginning to doze off," he said at last.

"That's all right, sleep. I just wanted to ask where you hid the bag with our provisions?"

"You hungry? But you probably want a drink first?"

"Exactly! Where's that bottle of yours?"

After a drink, Stepan started on the salami which turned out to be hard as stone and as salty as salt itself, with a skin so tough that he had to use the sharp point of a knife to pierce through it.

"A little whitefish would go down well now," he murmured.

"I'm sorry, sir, it completely slipped my mind. I kept remembering it all morning. I even said to my wife, I said: 'Be sure and remind me about the whitefish.' And then I went and forgot it anyway!"

"Never mind, salami will do fine. When we were on campaign, we had worse than that. You know, Papa used to tell a story: One Englishman made a bet with another that he'd eat a dead cat—and he ate it!"

"Ugh . . . he ate it?"

"Yes. He was sick after and cured himself with rum. He drank two bottles in a row and that fixed him up. And then there was another Englishman bet he could live for a whole year on nothing but sugar."

"Did he win?"

"No, he made it until two days before the year was up, then he knocked off. But what about you, how about a sip of vodka?"

"Never took a drop of liquor in my life."

"You fill yourself with nothing but tea? That's very bad. That's why you're growing such a big belly. You have to be careful with tea. Drink a cup and wash it down with a glass of vodka. Tea tightens your cough, vodka loosens it. Isn't that right?"

"I wouldn't know. You're an educated man, sir, you'd know better than me."

"Right, right. When we were on campaign, we never had any truck with tea and coffee. But vodka now—that's

sacred. Unscrew the top of the canteen, pour it out, drink it down—and there you are! At that time, they were driving us on fast, so fast that I went ten days without washing.”

“You’ve had a hard time, sir.”

“Hard? You just try tramping along that highway! And even so, going there wasn’t so bad—people came out to meet us, fed us meals, all the liquor we wanted. But coming back—oh, then they didn’t treat us any more!”

Stepan chewed hard at a piece of salami and finally managed to swallow it.

“Oof, it’s salty, your salami,” he said. “But I’m not fussy. My mother won’t feed me dainty tidbits either. A plateful of soup and a bowl of porridge and that’ll be that!”

“God’s mercy is great and He may make her give you a piece of pie on holidays.”

“But no tea, no tobacco, no vodka. You were right there. They say she likes to play cards nowadays—maybe that’ll help? Well, she’ll call me in to play a game with her and then she might give me a cup of tea. But for the rest—ah, brother!”

They stopped at a station for four hours to feed the horses. Stepan had managed to finish off the bottle of vodka and now felt quite hungry. The passengers had gone into the station house to have dinner.

Stepan wandered around the courtyard, peeped into the back yard and into the horses’ stalls, frightened some pigeons, and even tried to have a nap. Finally he decided that the best thing to do was to follow the other passengers into the house. There, a steaming pan of soup had already been served, and Mikhailich was slicing a large piece of beef on a wooden board. Stepan sat down a little apart and lit his pipe. For a long time he sat there, not knowing how to go about satisfying his hunger.

“Good appetite, gentlemen!” he said at last. “Nice meaty soup isn’t it, uh?”

“Not bad,” Mikhailich answered. “But you should try some yourself, sir.”

“No, I was just wondering. I’m not hungry.”

“Not hungry! You’ve had nothing but a piece of salami and that damn stuff only whets your appetite. Come

and eat! Here, I'll tell 'em to set you a separate table. Please help yourself. Hey, set a separate table for the gentleman. That's the way!"

The passengers started eating in silence, only exchanging knowing looks. Stepan guessed that they had seen through him, in spite of the fact that he had arrogantly played the gentleman during the whole trip, talking to Mikhailich as if he were simply holding his purse for him. He sat there frowning, a cloud of tobacco smoke pouring from his mouth. He would have liked to refuse the food, but his hunger got the better of him and he fell upon the bowl of soup placed before him and emptied it in a flash. His hunger satisfied, his arrogance returned and, as if nothing had happened, he turned to Mikhailich and said:

"Well, my friend the treasurer, take care of the bill for me. I'm going up to the loft to have a little snooze."

He ambled off to the hayloft, and this time, stuffed full, he slept the sleep of the just. By five o'clock he was up again. Seeing that the horses were standing at an empty manger, rubbing their noses against the edge, he started to wake the coachman.

"Snoring away, the lazy dog!" he cried. "Here we're in a hurry and this one's weaving sweet dreams!"

And so it went until they reached the station from which the road to Golovlovo turned off. Here Stepan quieted down. He became visibly depressed and fell silent. Mikhailich tried to cheer him up and kept urging him to get rid of his pipe.

"When you get near the house, sir, throw your pipe in the nettles there. You can pick it up again later."

Finally the horses that were to take Mikhailich further on were ready. The moment of parting had come.

"Good-bye, friend," Stepan said, a lump in his throat, embracing Mikhailich. "She'll be the death of me!"

"God is merciful. Don't let it get you down."

"She'll be the death of me," Stepan repeated, with such conviction that Mikhailich looked away.

Having said this, Stepan turned abruptly into the by-road and set off, leaning on a stick which he had previously cut himself.

Mikhailich watched him go for a while, then hurried after him.

"You know what, sir," he said, catching up with him, "when I was cleaning your tunic a little while back I found these three rubles in the side pocket. Don't go losing them now!"

Stepan, once more at a loss, hesitated. In the end, he held out his hand to Mikhailich and said, with tears in his eyes:

"I understand . . . tobacco money for a serviceman . . . thank you! As for her . . . she'll be the death of me, my dear friend. Mark my words—she'll be the death of me!"

Stepan turned firmly down the road again and five minutes later his gray uniform cap was bobbing up and down in the distance, disappearing, then reappearing again among the forest thickets. It was still very early, just after five in the morning. A golden morning mist curled over the country road, almost shutting out the rays of the sun which had just appeared over the horizon. The grass glistened. The air was redolent with the scent of pine, mushrooms, and berries. The road zigzagged through a vale teeming with innumerable flocks of birds. But Stepan noticed none of it. His lightheartedness had left him abruptly and he walked as if headed for the Last Judgment. His entire being was filled with a single thought—that he had another three or four hours and then, after that, there'd be nowhere further to go. He remembered his old life in Golovlovo and it seemed to him that the doors of a damp vault stood open before him, that once he stepped over the threshold, they would close tight behind him—and that would be the end. He kept remembering certain things which, though they didn't immediately concern him, were undoubtedly typical of the state of affairs in Golovlovo. There was his maternal uncle Mikhail, commonly known as Mike-the-troublemaker. He was another of the "worthless" members of the family. Stepan's grandfather had consigned him to the care of his sister at Golovlovo where he lived in the servants' quarters and ate out of the same bowl as Fido the dog. There was his paternal aunt Vera who'd been allowed out of kindness to live in her brother's house at

Golovlovo and had died of "renunciation," because Arina Petrovna grudged her every mouthful of food she ate and every log of firewood used to heat her room. And now something of the sort was in store for him. He imagined a stream of dawnless days, dissolving in a gray, yawning abyss—he closed his eyes at the thought. From now on he would be alone with a wicked old woman, and not even wicked but merely grown insensitive under the numbing effect of power. And she'd be the death of him, not through torture but through indifference. There'd be no one with whom to exchange a few words, nowhere to take refuge; she would be everywhere, domineering, paralyzing, scornful. The thought of this inexorable future filled him with such anguish that he stopped by a tree and beat his head against it for several seconds. He suddenly saw his whole life of clowning, loafing and buffoonery, as if a new window had opened in his mind. Now he was going to Golovlovo, knowing what to expect there, and he was nevertheless bound to go. There was no other road open to him. The lowest of mortals was able to do something, could at least find a crust of bread for himself—he alone was incapable of anything. This thought seemed to have struck him for the first time. Although he'd thought about his future before, he had always visualized a life of ease, never of work. Now he'd have to pay for the drunken haze in which his whole past had disappeared without trace. A bitter settling of accounts summed up in that one awful sentence: She'll be the death of me.

It was about nine o'clock when the white belfry of Golovlovo appeared through the trees.

Stepan turned pale. With shaking hands he took off his cap and crossed himself.

He remembered the parable of the Prodigal Son returning home, but then he realized that he was only deluding himself in thinking of it. From a distance he made out a boundary post set by the side of the road and soon he was on Golovlovo soil, that hated soil on which he'd been born hated, where he'd been brought up with hatred, that had hatefully rejected him, and was now taking him, still hated, back to its bosom. Now the sun was high, burning down pitilessly on the endless fields of

Golovlovo. But he grew more and more pale and felt chilled and shivery.

At length he came to the churchyard, and there his courage deserted him altogether. His mother's house looked out peacefully through the trees. It was hard to believe that anything out of the ordinary had ever happened there, yet it had on him the effect of a Medusa's head. It was a grave. "A grave, a grave, a grave!" he repeated without realizing it. He could not steel himself to go directly to the house and instead went to see the priest, asking him to go and inform his mother of his arrival and find out whether she would receive him.

The priest's wife was quite overcome at his appearance and fussed about making an omelet for him; the village boys crowded around him, gaping at him; passing peasants took their caps off to him in silence, giving him strange looks; one old man even ran up to kiss the master's hand. They all understood that this hated son had come back to the home he hated, had come back for good, that he'd only leave it carried out feet first. And they were all sorry for him and at the same time uneasy.

Then the priest returned to say that Stepan's mother was "willing to receive him." Ten minutes later he was *there*. Arina Petrovna met him with a stern, solemn air, examining him from head to foot with an icy glance, but did not indulge in idle admonition. She did not allow him in her room, but spoke to him on the back porch, and then, on leaving him, gave an order that the young master was to be taken to his papa through another entrance. The old man was dozing in his bed, covered with a white blanket and wearing a white nightcap, as white as a corpse. Waking up and seeing his son, he broke into an idiot's laugh.

"Well, my dear boy, so you've fallen into the witch's clutches," he cried, as Stepan kissed his hand. Then he crowed like a cock, again burst out laughing, repeating several times: "She'll eat you alive, eat you alive!"

"Eat alive," an echo resounded in Stepan's heart.

As he had expected, Stepan was assigned a room in the wing which housed the office. He was issued some homespun underwear and his father's old dressing gown, which he immediately donned. Whereupon the doors of the

vault that had opened to let him in clapped shut again.

Then a procession of dull, shapeless days fell one after the other into the yawning abyss of time. Arina Petrovna did not receive him, nor was he allowed in to see his father. After three days, the bailiff Ipatych came to inform him of his mamma's "settlement." He was to receive board, clothing and one pound of Faler's tobacco a month. Hearing his mother's decision, he only remarked:

"Ah, my mother! She's nosed out the fact that a pound of Zhukov's tobacco costs two rubles while Faler's is only one ruble ninety. So she'll scrape up ten kopeks a month out of it. Maybe she wants to donate it to some beggar at my expense!"

The indication of a moral sobering that had appeared the first day as he was walking along the country road toward Golovlovo had now vanished again. His thoughts became as empty as before, and he resigned himself to his mother's "settlement." His future that had loomed up so hopeless and inescapable, tormenting him, now receded, grew dimmer and mistier as the days went by, until, finally, it ceased to exist. The day's pressing preoccupations and vulgar needs absorbed him. Besides, what could he do about his future, since every detail of his life had already been decided by Arina Petrovna?

For days on end he would pace back and forth in his room without removing his pipe from his mouth, singing scraps of songs, switching unexpectedly from hymns to boisterous airs and back again. Whenever Yakov the clerk was on hand in the office, he would go and pay him a visit, and make calculations of Arina Petrovna's profits.

"What on earth can she do with all that cash?" he exclaimed, surprised, when he arrived at a figure in excess of eighty thousand. "I know she doesn't send much to my brothers, spends little on herself, and feeds my father salted chicken meat. . . . She must store it away in the bank! Yes, the bank, that's where she puts it."

Sometimes Ipatych himself would come into the office, bringing money he had collected from the serfs. Stepan would flush with excitement as the money was laid out in piles on the table.

"Whew, what a stack of cash!" he exclaimed. "And

she'll hold on to the lot of it. Not a chance she'll let me, her son, have one of those piles. 'There you are, my son,' she could say, 'I know how hard things are for you, here's something for liquor and tobacco.'"

Then he would start one of his endless diatribes, peppered with cynicism, about the way to melt his mother's heart so that she would be full of maternal affection for him.

"In Moscow," Stepan said, "I used to know a man who knew a magic word. When his mother refused to give him money, he'd just say that word and right away the mother would go into convulsions, arms, legs, the whole of her."

"Must have been a spell of some sort he cast on her," Yakov suggested.

"Call it what you like, what matters is that it's a fact that there is such a word. And then there was another fellow told me, 'Take,' he said, 'a live frog, and in the dead of night put it in an anthill; by morning the ants will have eaten it up, there'll be nothing but a bone left; well, you just take that bone and as long as you carry it in your pocket, no woman will refuse you anything.'"

"Why, we can go and do that right now!"

"Oh, no, it's not that simple, friend! Before you go through with it, you must accept eternal damnation. If it wasn't for that . . . well, she'd have been dancing to my tune today!"

Such conversations went on for hours, but no solution to the problem was found. There was always something—you always had to damn yourself or sell your soul to the devil. And so there was nothing to do but resign himself to "Mamma's settlement," supplementing it with a few arbitrary requisitions from the leading villagers, all of whom Stepan taxed for gifts of tobacco, tea and sugar. He was really very badly fed. Usually he received the leftovers from Arina Petrovna's dinner, and as she was abstemious to the point of stinginess, there was naturally very little left for his share. This was especially painful to him because, since liquor had been forbidden, his appetite had quickly improved. He was hungry from morning till night and thought of nothing but how to get enough to eat. He would lie in wait until it was time for his mother to take her rest, then he would sneak into the

kitchen and even poke his nose into the servants' quarters, always managing to dig up something or other. Sometimes he would sit by his open window waiting for someone to pass. And if one of the Golovlov peasants drove by, he would stop him and extort a contribution—an egg or a piece of cheesecake or something of the sort.

When he had first arrived, Arina Petrovna had tersely set out a program for his existence.

"Live here for now," she had said. "You'll have your corner by the office, food and drink from my table, and as to the rest, it's no use fretting, my dear, I've never gone in for dainty tidbits, and I'm certainly not going to start with them now for your sake. Your brothers will be here soon and they'll decide what should be done with you. I don't want to take a sin on my conscience; as your brothers decide, so it will be!"

So now he impatiently awaited his brothers' arrival. And yet, as he waited, he gave no thought to the consequences their coming might have for his future—he apparently felt it was no use thinking about it—but only wondered whether Pavel would bring him tobacco and, if so, how much.

"And maybe he'll even throw a little money my way!" he thought to himself. "Porfiry the bloodsucker—it's no use expecting anything out of him, but Pavel . . . I'll just tell him, 'Look here, brother, what about a little something for a former serviceman to buy some liquor?' He'll give. How could he refuse?"

The time passed without his noticing it. His complete idleness was no burden with him. Only the evenings were dull—the clerk went home about eight and Arina Petrovna would not give out any candles for him on the grounds that he could pace back and forth just as easily without them. But he soon got used to this too and even came to like the darkness, because then his imagination grew more vivid, carrying him far away from hated Golovlovo. One thing alone worried him: his heart beat unevenly and he felt it flutter strangely, especially when he lay down to sleep. Sometimes he would jump up in agitation and pace around the room, clutching his left side.

"Ah, if I'd only drop dead," he would think to himself. "But no, no chance of it! Yet, who knows. . . ."

But when one morning the clerk secretly informed him that his brothers had arrived during the night, he shuddered and his face changed. Something from his childhood suddenly stirred in him, making him long to rush over to the house right away, to have a look at the way they were dressed, to see which beds had been made up for them, and whether they had the same sort of suitcases as a certain captain in his regiment had had. He would have liked to hear how they'd talk to Mamma, to see what they'd be given for dinner. In fact, he would have liked to be a part again of that family life from which he had been swept so ruthlessly, to throw himself at his mother's feet and beg her forgiveness, and then, perhaps, in celebration, to feast on the fatted calf. While all was still quiet in the house, he had already managed to find out in the kitchen what had been ordered for dinner: first, a small pot of cabbage soup and the reheated soup from the day before; to be followed by cold, smoked, salt fowl with a few meatballs on the side; for the main course, roast mutton and four snipe; and for dessert, raspberry tart with cream.

"Yesterday's soup, smoked chicken and the lamb—that, friend, is what the worthless son'll get," he told the cook. "But I don't suppose I'll be given any tart."

"That'll be as the mistress decides, sir," the cook said.

"Alas! There used to be a time when I too ate snipe. Believe me! Once I made a bet with Lieutenant Goremykin that I could eat fifteen snipe at one go, and I won! But after that I couldn't look at the things for a month."

"But would you eat it again now?"

"She won't allow it! Yet why should she grudge it me? A snipe's a wild bird, doesn't have to be fed or looked after—it lives at its own expense! She doesn't pay for the snipe any more than she pays for the sheep, but there you are! The witch knows that snipe tastes better than lamb, so she won't give me any. She'd let it rot first. And what's there for lunch?"

"Liver, mushrooms in sour cream, dough cakes. . . ."

"You might send me over one little dough cake. . . . Do your best, friend!"

"I'll do my best. You know what, sir? Wait till your brothers are at lunch, then send the clerk over here. He could bring you a couple under his coat."

All morning Stepan waited, hoping his brothers would come and see him, but they didn't show up. Finally, around eleven, the clerk brought the two dough cakes he'd been promised and reported that his brothers had just finished lunch and were now closeted with their mother in her bedroom.

Arina Petrovna had met her sons solemnly, weighed down by grief. Two maids supported her by the arms; wisps of gray hair had escaped from her white housecap; her head hung down, swaying from side to side; and she dragged her feet with difficulty. For her children, she liked to appear as a devoted, aggrieved mother, and on these occasions she would have her maids support her as she moved painfully about. Stepan-the-blockhead called these solemn receptions a bishop's mass, his mother being a lady bishop and the two maids her staff-bearers. But as it was after one in the morning, her meeting with her sons this time passed with few words. In silence she gave them her hand to kiss, in silence kissed them and made the sign of the cross over them. And when Porfiry expressed his readiness to keep his dear mamma company for the rest of the night if need be, she waved her hand and said:

"Go now. You need rest after your journey. This is no time for conversation. We'll talk things over in the morning."

The next morning, both sons went to pay their respects to their papa, but he wouldn't give them his hand to kiss. He lay in bed with closed eyes, and when they entered his room, he cried:

"Have you come to judge the sinner? . . . Out of here, you pharisees . . . out of here!"

Porfiry left his father's room shaken and tearful, while Pavel, unfeeling dolt that he was, merely picked his nose.

"Oh, he's in a bad way, dear Mamma, oh, a very bad way!" Porfiry cried, embracing his mother.

"Why, is he so weak this morning?"

"Oh, very weak! Very weak! He's not long for this world!"

"Oh, there's life in him yet!"

"No, dear Mother, no! Though your life's not been a very happy one, just think of it!—so many blows at one time—indeed, it's amazing how you find the strength to endure!"

"What can we do, my dear, if such is God's will. You know, it's written in the Bible: Bear ye one another's burdens. Well, Our Lord has chosen me to bear the brunt of the family's troubles."

And Arina Petrovna even closed her eyes, pleased at the thought that they all were provided for in every way, that everything was stored up for them, while she alone strove day and night, bearing their burdens.

"Well, I must say, my dears," she went on after a brief pause, "it's hard for me in my old age. I've done my share of providing for my children, and now I feel I deserve a rest. Do you think it's a joke to run four thousand serfs? What an unwieldy load to steer at my age! And you have to look into everything, watch after it all, go here, run there. Take those managers and bailiffs now—you think they're looking you straight in the eye, but really they've got one eye on you and the other's somewhere else. They're an unreliable lot! Well, and what are you doing," she said, suddenly interrupting herself and turning to Pavel, "picking your nose!"

"What's it all got to do with me?" snapped Pavel, interrupted in the middle of his occupation.

"What do you mean? He's your father, after all—you might show a little sympathy!"

"So he's my father! He's just like he's always been, for the last ten years. You always pick on me!"

"And why should I pick on you, my dear—I'm your mother, aren't I? Look at Porfiry now. He showed his affection and his sympathy like a good son. You never even look me straight in the eye, as if I were your enemy, not your mother. I always feel you're about to snap at me."

"But what have I . . ."

"Be quiet a minute! Let your mother say something!

Don't you remember the commandment: 'Honor thy father and thy mother'? But you obviously don't care."

Pavel looked at his mother in silent bewilderment.

"You see, you're silent," Arina Petrovna went on. "You must feel the little sins nipping at your conscience like lice! Well, never mind, never mind—let's drop the subject since we've just happily come together again. God sees everything, my boy, while I . . . Ah, I've known you through and through for a long time! Ah, children, children, you'll remember your mother when she's lying in her grave, you'll remember—but it'll be too late then!"

"Dear Mamma," Porfiry put in, "away with these dark thoughts, away with them!"

"We all have to die some time, my son," Arina Petrovna said sententiously. "These are not dark thoughts but, you might say, the most pious ones. I'm weakening, children, weakening fast. I'm not my former self at all—just weakness and poor health. Even the wretched maids have noticed it, and they take advantage of it. If I say a word, they've got two in return. And if I say more, they'll have ten! There's only one threat I can make—I say I'll complain to the young masters. Well, that quiets them down sometimes."

Tea was served, then lunch, during which Arina Petrovna kept complaining, full of self-pity. After lunch she suggested that her sons come with her to her room.

Arina Petrovna locked the door and at once got down to the business for which the family council had been called.

"Well, the blockhead is here," she started out.

"So we heard, Mamma, so we heard," Porfiry said, and it was hard to tell whether it was a note of irony that sounded in his voice or simply the complacency of a man who has just eaten his fill.

"He arrived acting as if he'd achieved something, as if it was just the thing to do, coming here. Never mind how much of a mess he's got into having a good time, he can always get a bite to eat at his old mother's, he seems to think. Oh, he's always shown me so much hatred and caused me so much misery by his clowning and scheming alone! I spared no effort to get him into that civil service job! And it's all like water off a duck's back. I wor-

ried and worried and finally I thought: Good Lord, if he doesn't want to look out for himself, surely I'm not obliged to ruin my own life for the sake of the long-legged blockhead. Well, I thought, I'll throw him a bone, and maybe when he has his little something in his hands, he'll be more sensible. I went and looked over the house for him myself. With my own hands I laid out twelve thousand rubles in hard cash. And what happened? Less than three years later I've got him back on my neck again! How long must I bear such an outrage?"

Porfiry raised his eyes to the ceiling, shaking his head sadly, as if to say: "Oh dear, dear, what a business! As if there were any need to upset our dear, kind mamma like this. If we had all lived in peace and harmony, none of this would have happened and dear Mamma wouldn't be so angry. . . . Ah, what a business, what a business!" But Arina Petrovna, being a woman, could not stand to have her train of thought interrupted, and so she was displeased with Porfiry's gesture.

"Just wait a minute before you start shaking your head," she said. "Hear me out first. Imagine how I felt when I found he'd thrown his mother's gift on the dust-heap like a gnawed bone? How do you think I felt—I who, if I say so myself, had denied myself food and sleep—when I found out what he'd done. It's as if he'd gone and bought some piece of junk at the fair and then, when he didn't want it any longer, tossed it out the window! That's the way he treated his mother's gift!"

"Oh Mamma, what a thing to do, what a thing to do!" Porfiry started to say, but Arina Petrovna stopped him again.

"Hold on! You'll give your opinion when I ask for it! If he had only warned me, the wretch. He could have come to me and said: 'I'm sorry, Mamma, I've done this and that. I couldn't resist it.' Then I could've bought the house back for next to nothing. My worthless son couldn't make use of it, let my worthy sons do so! After all, that house brings in fifteen per cent interest a year easily. If he'd done that, I'd have maybe tossed him another thousand rubles, since he was broke. But not him! Here was I, unaware anything was going on, and he'd already got rid of it! Twelve thousand with my own hands

I laid out for that house, and he lets it go in an auction for eight thousand!"

"But the worst part is that he should have behaved so badly when it was his mother's gift," Porfiry interposed, speaking very quickly as if afraid his mother would interrupt him again.

"Yes, there's that too. I didn't come by my money easily, my dear; I didn't earn it by dances and musical evenings, but by sweat and toil! How did I become rich? When I married your papa he had nothing but Golovlovo with a hundred and one souls and a number of scattered villages, one with twenty, another with thirty—about a hundred and fifty souls altogether. As for me, I had absolutely nothing. And just look what I've built up from such a start. Four thousand souls, no less! And even if I wanted to, I couldn't take them to the grave with me. Do you think I got those four thousand souls easily? No, my dear friend, it was hard, so hard that I spent sleepless nights—you keep wondering how you can do a smart bit of business without anyone's getting on to it beforehand, without someone else outbidding you, without spending a kopek more than necessary. And what haven't I been through—mud, the spring slush, the winter freeze—I've had a taste of it all. It's only lately I've indulged in the luxury of a carriage. Before that they'd take a peasant cart and fix some sort of a cover on it, then harness up a pair of ponies and off I'd jog—giddyap—all the way to Moscow! I'd jog along thinking to myself all the time, what if someone outbids me for the property? And then, when you get to Moscow, you put up at an inn on Rogozhskaya Street and it's filthy and smelly—yes, my dear, I put up with it all! And sometimes I'd grudge myself ten kopeks for a cab and trudge all the way from Rogozhskaya to Solyanka Street. Even the doormen were amazed: 'Ma'am,' they'd say, 'you're so young and well-off and yet you put yourself through all these hardships!' But I kept my own counsel and bore it all. I had only thirty thousand rubles to start with—I'd sold your papa's outlying villages with about a hundred souls—and with that sum I set out to buy an estate with a thousand souls! I had a service sung before the Iversky icon and went off to Solyanka Street to try my luck.

And what do you think? It was as if Our Lady had seen my bitter tears—she interceded for me and I got the estate. It was amazing; when I bid thirty thousand over and above the Crown mortgage, it was as if I'd cut short the whole auction. Before that they'd been shouting excitedly, but then the bidding stopped and the place suddenly grew quiet. The auctioneer stood up and started congratulating me, and I didn't understand a thing. Ivan Mikhailich was there and he said to me: 'A very nice buy, ma'am!' and still I stood there like a wooden post. Ah, how great is God's mercy! Just to think, I was so excited that if someone had called out thirty-five thousand just to spite me, I'd probably have bid a whole forty thousand without thinking. And where on earth would I have found the money!"

Arina Petrovna had often recounted for her children's benefit the epic story of her first steps in the acquisition of her wealth, but it had apparently lost none of its novelty for them. Porfiry listened attentively to his dear mamma, now smiling, now sighing, rolling his eyes then lowering them according to the incident related. And Pavel sat with wide-open eyes like a child being told a familiar fairy story of which he never tires.

"And perhaps you think your mother's fortune cost her nothing!" Arina Petrovna went on. "Oh no, my friends, a pimple doesn't break out on your nose without your paying for it! After that first purchase, I was in bed with a fever for six weeks! So judge for yourselves what my thoughts are when after such, you might say, tortures, my hard-earned money is discarded without a thought!"

There was a pause. Porfiry was ready to rent his clothes in anguish, but he was afraid that out here in the country he wouldn't find anyone who could repair them for him. As to Pavel, as soon as his mother's tale of her acquisitions was over, he at once grew limp again and his face took on its former indifferent expression.

"Now, here's what I've summoned you for," Arina Petrovna went on. "You're to decide who's right in this, that wretch or me. Whatever you say goes. If you decide the fault is his—he'll be the guilty one; if you say I'm to blame—the guilt will be mine. Only you can be sure I

won't let the wretch bully me!" she added quite unexpectedly.

Porfiry, feeling that things were looking up for him, gave full rein to his tongue. But, like a bloodsucker worthy of the name, he began in a roundabout way.

"If you wish to hear my opinion, Mamma darling, I'll put it in two words: Children must obey their parents, follow their instructions to the letter, and see that they have a peaceful old age. And that's that. For what are children, dear Mother? Children are loving creatures in whom everything, from their very selves down to the last rag they wear, belongs to their parents. And so, parents are entitled to judge their children, but children may never pass judgment on their parents. A child's duty is to revere, not judge. You ask us, dearest Mamma, to judge between you and him. How wonderfully generous of you, really magnanimous! But how could we even think of judging you, we who've owed you everything from the day we were born? I know it's up to you to decide, but I feel it would be an act of iconoclasm, not a judgment on our part! It would be blasphemy, sheer blasphemy . . ."

"Wait, wait, just a minute! If you say you can't pass judgment on me, all you have to do is condemn him and decide in my favor."

Arina Petrovna had been listening carefully but still hadn't understood what Porfiry-the-bloodsucker was driving at.

"No, Mother dear, I can't do that either! Or rather, I should say I don't dare, don't feel I have the right. I can't condemn or exculpate, I can't judge at all. You're our mother. You alone know how to treat your children. If we deserve it—reward us; if we err—punish us. Our part is to obey, not criticize. Even if, in a moment of parental ire, you happened to exceed the boundaries of justice, even then we shouldn't complain, because the ways of Providence are inscrutable. Who knows, perhaps it's as it should be. And that's how it is in this case: our brother Stepan has acted badly, even ignominiously, but you're the only one who can determine the retribution his acts deserve."

"So you won't speak up? What you're saying amounts

to telling me, 'Take care of the mess as best you can, dear Mamma,' isn't that it?"

"Oh Mamma, Mamma, how can you say such a thing! All I was saying was that whatever you decided about Stepan would be the right thing, and you . . . How can you attribute such thoughts to me?"

"All right. Now, what about you?" she asked Pavel.

"Me? What can I say? As though you were going to take my advice anyway . . ." Pavel began sleepily, but then unexpectedly came to life and went on: "Of course he's guilty and ought to be torn to pieces and pounded in a mortar! It's all settled. So where do I come in?"

Pavel stopped, his mouth gaping, staring at his mother as though unable to believe that he himself had just uttered these words.

"Well, my boy, we'll settle this later!" Arina Petrovna said coldly. "It looks as if you intend to follow in Stepan's footsteps. Mind you don't make a mistake, my dear, you may regret it when it's too late."

"But what have I done?" Pavel said, trying to retreat. "I haven't said anything. . . . All I said was, do as you like. What's there disrespectful in that?"

"We'll have a talk later on, my boy—I promise you. And don't go imagining that because you're an army officer now I won't find a way of taking care of you! I'll find one, don't you worry about that! So then, you both refuse to act as judges between me and him?"

"For my part, dearest Mamma . . ."

"And me too. It's all the same to me. If you wish to carve him up into little pieces . . ."

"Oh be quiet, you, in the name of God. You're not being a good son, now are you?"

Arina Petrovna felt he deserved a stronger admonition than that, but abstained on this occasion of happy family reunion.

"Well," she went on, "if you refuse to judge him, I'll have to do so myself. So here's my decision. I'll be lenient once more and give him another chance. I'll let him have your father's village, Vologda. I'll have a small house built for him and let him go there and be, so to speak, supported by the peasants."

Although Porfiry had declined to sit in judgment over

his brother, his mother's generosity surprised him so much that he felt obliged to warn her of the possible consequences of her decision.

"Dearest Mamma!" he exclaimed. "You're more than generous! Here you are, faced with an act of perfidy . . . well, an act of the worst villainy imaginable and . . . and suddenly all is forgiven. Really admirable! But forgive me, dear—if I speak up it's because I'm worried for you. . . . Well, however you may judge me for it, I must say that it's not what I'd do in your place."

"And why not?"

"I don't know. . . . Maybe I lack your generosity, your maternal feeling, we might call it, but I can't help wondering what will happen if Stepan with his characteristic depravity treats your second gift as he treated the first?"

It so happened that this possibility had occurred to Arina Petrovna too and had secretly weighed in her decision. Now she had to explain:

"You know that the Vologda property is part of your father's family estate, and that sooner or later I'd have to give him his share of it anyhow," she said through clenched teeth.

"I understand that, dear Mother. . . ."

"Well, if you understand it, you may perhaps also understand that when he receives Vologda he'll be asked to sign a declaration acknowledging receipt of his full share of his father's estate."

"I understand that too, dear Mamma. In your kindness, you made a great mistake when you bought that house for him. That's when you should have made him sign away all claim to Papa's estate."

"Well, it can't be helped, it simply slipped my mind."

"At that time, in his joy, he'd have signed anything! But you, in your kindness . . . Ah, that was a bad mistake, a terrible mistake! . . ."

"Well, stop your ahing and ohing now. You should've spoken up at the time. Now you're trying to put all the blame on your mother's head, but when it comes to doing something, you're never there! Anyway, his signature isn't the main consideration, for I'm sure I could get it now too. I don't think your father is going to die right away and, in the meantime, our blockhead has to go on

eating and drinking. If he were to refuse to sign, I could always show him the door and tell him to wait for Papa's death. No, what I want to know is this: Do you approve of my giving him the Vologda property or don't you?"

"He'll squander everything, Mother, the house and the village."

"If he does, he'll only have himself to blame."

"Then he'll come back to you."

"Ah, but that wouldn't do him any good! I won't let him in the door. I'll refuse him bread and even water if he comes. And people won't blame me, God won't punish me for it. Ah no, he'll have squandered his house, squandered his property—what does he take me for, his serf, to keep providing for him? I have other children to think of too!"

"Still he'll come. You'll see, dear Mother, he's quite shameless."

"I tell you I won't let him over my threshold! Why do you keep repeating like a jackdaw, 'He'll come, he'll come?' I tell you I won't let him in."

Arina Petrovna fell silent, sitting there with her eyes fixed on the window. She knew herself that the tiny village of Vologda would only rid her of her worthless son for a short while, that in the end he'd throw it away too, that he'd be bound to come back to her, and she, being his mother, wouldn't very well be able to refuse him shelter. But the thought that this hated son would remain with her forever, that, even confined to the room by the office, he would keep haunting her imagination, this thought was so odious that it made her shudder again and again.

"No, never!" she cried suddenly, banging her fist on the table and jumping up from her armchair.

And Porfiry kept looking at his dear mamma, dolefully shaking his head.

"Why, Mother dear, you're angry," he said after a pause, in a tender, sentimental voice, as if he would have liked to tickle her under the chin.

"What do you expect me to do, dance with joy?"

"Yes, yes, but what does the Gospel teach us about patience? It says: Arm thy soul with patience. Patience, that's the word. Do you think God doesn't see all that happens? He sees everything, Mother darling! Perhaps

while we here, suspecting nothing, are making plans and deciding that things should be this way or that, He up there has already decided: I will try her now. And I always thought, Mamma dearest, you were such a good girl."

Arina Petrovna, however, saw immediately that Porfiry the bloodsucker was preparing his noose, and she became really angry.

"Are you trying to make a fool of me or what?" she shouted at him. "His mother is talking serious business to him and he tries to be funny! It's no use talking all that rot instead of giving me your opinion on what to do with Stepan. Do you suggest I keep him here hanging around my neck?"

"That's right, Mamma. Be generous and leave him in his present position, and at the same time, demand that he renounce all his rights of succession."

"I see. I knew that was what you'd advise me. All right, then, let's assume that I do as you say. Of course, it'll be unbearable, for I'll hate having the creature around, but then, no one is concerned about that. When I was young I had to bear my cross, and now that I'm old, of course it isn't becoming for me to refuse to bear it. That's granted, but I'd like to mention something else. As long as Papa and I are alive, well, Stepan won't starve to death in Golovlovo, but what will happen after we're gone?"

"Mother dearest, why all these gloomy thoughts?"

"Whether they're gloomy or cheerful, we have to think of these things. We aren't young any more, and one of these days we'll be gone. So I want to know, what will happen to him then?"

"But Mamma, is it possible that you have no faith in us, your children? Haven't we been brought up by your principles?" And Porfiry gave her one of his puzzling looks that always made her feel so uncomfortable.

"He's setting his trap," the thought flashed through her mind.

"As far as I'm concerned, Mother dear," Porfiry said, "I'll always help the needy with the greatest of joy. For what's a rich man to me? Let the rich man enjoy his wealth, God bless him, he doesn't need me. But the poor

man . . . Do you remember what Christ said about the poor, Mamma?"

Porfiry stood up and kissed his mother's hand.

"Mamma, please let me give my brother two pounds of tobacco."

Arina Petrovna didn't answer. She looked at him and thought: "Could he really be bloodsucker enough to kick his own brother out into the street?"

"Please yourself. All right, let him stay in Golovlovo, if that's the way it's to be. You have me all mixed up, you've made my head spin. You began by saying: whatever you decide, Mamma, but finally you've made me dance to your tune. Only, remember my warning. I loathe him. All his life he has disgraced and tormented me, and now he has insulted my maternal blessing; but be that as it may, if you ever throw him out of his parents' house or force him to become a servant, then you'll never have my blessing. No, no, no! Now, go and see him, both of you, for I expect his eyes are popping out of his head straining to get a glimpse of you."

The two sons left. Arina Petrovna went to the window and watched them as they crossed the courtyard without exchanging a word. Porfiry kept removing his cap and crossing himself, facing in turns the church, a shrine and a white wooden post to which an alms box was nailed. Pavel seemed unable to take his eyes off his shiny boots gleaming in the sun.

"For whom have I been saving it all, depriving myself of food and sleep?" the heartfelt lament escaped her suddenly.

The brothers departed. Golovlovo seemed deserted. Arina Petrovna resumed her interrupted work with redoubled ardor. The clanging of knives in the kitchen died down. But to make up for it there was increased activity in the office, in the storerooms and cellars. Summer, the time when stores are filled for the winter, was drawing to a close: Preserving, salting, pickling were going on full steam. From everywhere, provisions for the winter flowed in: Dried mushrooms, berries, eggs, vegetables and other contributions from the peasant women came in cartloads. All this was received, weighed and added

to the supplies of previous years. It was not for nothing that the mistress of Golovlovo had had many new cellars, storerooms and granaries built. Everything was full to overflowing, and much produce was so rotten it was impossible to go near it because of the stench. By the end of the summer all the stores had been sorted out and those that were pronounced a bit off were sent to the servants' kitchen.

"The pickled cucumbers are still quite good. They only look a little slimy on top and smell a little. Why not let the servants have a treat," Arina Petrovna would decide, ordering some barrel or other to be put aside.

Stepan adapted himself to his new position surprisingly well. From time to time he longed to get dead drunk and, in general, to let himself go. As we shall soon see, he even had enough money to carry out such a plan. But he stoically denied himself the pleasure, apparently feeling that it was not yet the proper moment. He felt constantly busy, taking a lively interest in the process of accumulating wealth, rejoicing and grieving disinterestedly at every success and setback in Golovlov affairs. He felt a sort of exaltation as he made his way from the office to the cellars, hatless, in his dressing gown, hiding from his mother behind trees and the buildings scattered around the courtyard. As a matter of fact, Arina Petrovna had several times caught sight of Stepan-the-blockhead, a sight that filled her maternal heart with indignation and made her want to give him a piece of her mind. Each time, however, she controlled herself and merely shrugged. And from his hiding place Stepan would watch intently the unloading of the carts, the arrival of jars, barrels and tubs from every corner of the estate, the sorting of all these things and their ultimate disappearance into the bottomless depths of the cellars and storerooms. Usually, what he saw delighted him.

"They brought in a couple of cartloads of mushrooms from Dubrovino today, and you should see what mushrooms!" he told the clerk. "You know, we were worried that we might have to go without mushrooms all winter. We must thank the Dubrovino people for that. Well done, you Dubrovino folk! You've done us a real service!"

Or:

"Today Mother had some carp caught in the pond. Ah, what magnificent fish! Some well over a foot long! I wouldn't be surprised if we had carp every day now till the end of the week."

There were times, however, when he felt grieved:

"Well, friend, I must admit today's cucumbers weren't much. They're all twisted and spotty and not one of 'em looks like a real cucumber! I suppose we'll just have to eat last year's pickles and let the servants eat up this bunch. Can't be helped!"

But, on the whole, Arina Petrovna's way of running things didn't altogether satisfy him.

"So much stuff just rots away! You should've seen what they took out of the storerooms today—salt meat, fish, cucumbers—everything to be turned over to the servants. What sort of management is that? There's plenty of fresh food but she won't touch it as long as there's any rotten stuff left."

Arina Petrovna's confidence that Stepan-the-blockhead would readily sign anything proved fully justified. He not only signed without question all the papers she sent him but even triumphantly announced the fact to the clerk that very evening:

"I spent all day signing papers, friend. You know, a renunciation of all claims to Father's estate. I'm completely cleaned out now! I haven't a spoon or a plate to my name. I've put the old woman's mind at rest!"

When his brothers left, he felt quite friendly toward them and was full of joy at receiving a whole supply of tobacco. Of course, he couldn't refrain from calling Porfiry both bloodsucker and Judas, but these names were drowned in a stream of completely disconnected chatter. At the last moment, his brothers even gave him some money. Handing him his contribution, Porfiry said:

"Here's some money—you may have to replace the oil in the icon lamp or you may want to burn a candle to Our Lady. So, Brother, be quiet and dignified and Mamma will be pleased with you and then we'll all be happy. You realize, dear Brother, what a kind woman our mother is."

"She's kind, all right," Stepan conceded, "although that doesn't stop her from feeding me rotten meat."

"And who's to blame for that? Who was it spurned Mother's blessing and squandered her gift? And remember, it was a nice little property that could have brought you a tidy little income. A lovely piece of property! So if you'd behaved quietly and modestly, you'd be eating good beef and delicious veal these days, and if you decided on some sauce to go with it, I suppose you'd have had sauce too. And you'd have plenty of everything: potatoes, cabbage, peas . . . Isn't that right, Brother?"

Had Arina Petrovna heard this speech, she'd probably have said, "There he goes again," but Stepan-the-block-head was a happy-go-lucky man precisely because other people's words made little impression on him. Judas could talk to his heart's content and rest assured that his words would produce no reaction.

So Stepan parted with his brothers on very friendly terms and, after they'd gone, showed the two twenty-five ruble notes to his friend Yakov the clerk with some satisfaction.

"That'll take care of things for a long time to come. We've plenty of tobacco and a good supply of tea and sugar. All we lacked was liquor, and now, if we feel like it, we can have that too. But I'll hold out a bit longer. I must rush off to the cellar now, for if I don't keep my eye on things, they'll make off with the stuff in no time. But you know, she saw me once, the old hag. She saw me creeping along the wall of the kitchen house. She was standing by her window and I'm sure she was thinking, 'Now I see where the missing cucumbers went. That's the answer.'"

Then October arrived and with it the rains. The roads became clogged with mud and impassable. Stepan couldn't go out because he had nothing to put on his back but his father's ragged dressing gown and only his father's battered slippers for his feet. He simply sat by his window and stared through the double panes at the peasant houses half-drowned in mud. Through the gray autumn mist he saw the black dots of the people who, having hustled and bustled throughout the summer, now continued their hustle and bustle against a different backdrop, in which the gay summer colors were replaced by the continuous autumnal dusk. Smoke rose from the barns in which the

grain was dried until well past midnight; the slapping of flails echoed all over the countryside; threshing was going full blast in the barns and Stepan heard it said in the office that it was unlikely they would finish the huge quantity of grain before Lent. Everything had a bleak, gloomy look and bore the seal of oppression. The doors of the office were no longer left wide open as in summertime, and inside a bluish steam rose from the wet sheepskins.

It is hard to say what impression the hard autumn work in the country made upon Stepan. Perhaps he didn't even give a thought to the people laboring in the squelching mud under the constant downpour. One thing only is certain: the gray, eternally tearful sky oppressed him; it seemed to be suspended just over his head, threatening to press him down into the gaping, muddy waves. He had nothing to do but sit by the window and watch the heavy masses of clouds. From the very first trickle of daylight, they hung over the entire horizon, frozen and spellbound. One hour, two hours, three hours went by and the clouds were still there, without any noticeable change in color or shape. There, that cloud, for instance, the one that's lower and darker than the rest, the one with the torn edges, looking a bit like a priest in a cassock with outstretched arms. Now at noontime, standing out from the higher, lighter clouds, it has about the same shape as in the morning. True, the priest's right arm is a bit shorter, but to make up for that the left arm has stretched out and rain is pouring from it so heavily that even against the dark sky one can see an almost black line. And that one, further on over there—this morning it hung like a shaggy lump over the neighboring village of Naglovka and seemed to be threatening to squash it—and now it's still over the same spot, still as shaggy and looking as if it were stretching out its paws about to pounce. Clouds, clouds, clouds—all day long. Around five in the afternoon, a change: the landscape gradually becomes immersed in mist and finally disappears in it altogether. The first to disappear are the clouds under a fine black film, then the forest will go, followed by the village of Naglovka. After that the church, the shrine, the nearby peasant settlement, the orchard will sink into it, and only an eye

that has been following this series of mysterious disappearances will still be able to make out the outlines of the Golovlov family house a few hundred feet away.

The room became quite dark but still they didn't light the lamp in the office. Now all he had left to do was to pace back and forth in his room. An unhealthy lassitude paralyzed his mind and, despite his inactivity, he felt tired beyond words. One oppressive thought kept flashing through his brain, gnawing at it: a coffin, a coffin, a coffin! Black human dots flitted past the village threshing-yards against the dark background of mud undisturbed by this thought; they would not perish, weighed down by lassitude and despair. Even if they were not engaged in an immediate struggle with fate, they were at least scurrying around, struggling, trying to get somewhere, to save something. Is it worthwhile to try and get somewhere, to save something, is it worthwhile to devote all one's days to this? Stephan never asked himself. He simply felt that these nameless dots were much better off than he because he wasn't even capable of scrambling, had nothing to protect, nowhere to reach.

He spent his evenings in the office because Arina Petrovna continued to forbid him any candles. Several times he requested through the manager that he be issued a pair of leather boots and a sheepskin coat, but each time he was told that these items had not been provided for him, but that as soon as the frosts came he'd be given felt boots. It looked as if his mother was determined to carry out her plan to the letter of keeping her worthless son from dying of starvation and nothing more. At first he was furious with his mother, but later he seemed to have forgotten about her. In the beginning he seemed to be trying to remember something but then he gave that up too. Even the light of the candles in the office became unbearable to him, and he shut the door of his room and remained there alone in the darkness. He had but one resource left, a resource he was afraid of but which drew him irresistibly—to get drunk and forget everything. To forget completely, irretrievably, to dive into a wave of oblivion and never rise to the surface again. Everything pulled him in this direction: his loose past life, his present forced inactivity, his sick body racked by a stifling cough,

by sudden fits of breathlessness and an increasing, stabbing pain in the heart. At last he gave in.

"Get us a bottle of vodka for tonight, friend," he asked Yakov in a voice that augured ill.

That bottle was the first of a series, and from then on he got drunk every night. Every evening at nine, when the lights went out in the office and the clerks scattered to their lairs, he placed a bottle on his table with a piece of black bread thickly sprinkled with salt. He didn't attack the liquor directly, but crept up on it like a beast of prey. Around him everyone was fast asleep; only the mice scratched behind the wallpaper where it had come unstuck, and the clock ticked insistently in the office. He would remove his dressing gown, remaining in just his shirt as he paced back and forth in the overheated room, stopping from time to time by the table, groping for the bottle in the darkness, touching it, then resuming his pacing again. The first glasses he emptied with the traditional drinkers' jokes, voluptuously soaking up the burning liquid. But, little by little, his heartbeat quickened, his head grew hot, his tongue began to mutter disconnected phrases. His blunted imagination struggled to visualize something, his dulled memory tried to break through into his past. But the images were broken and inane and the past would not yield a single memory, bright or bitter, as though once and for all a thick blank wall had been erected between it and the present. All that remained was the present in the shape of this tightly locked prison cell in which all concept of space and time had dissolved without leaving a trace. The room, the stove, the three windows, the creaky wooden bed with the thin, lumpy mattress, the table, the bottle—that was his horizon beyond which his imagination couldn't reach. But, as the bottle became emptier, as his head burned hotter and hotter, even this scrap of consciousness became unbearable to him. His muttering that had had at least some sort of coherence grew utterly formless; his pupils dilated enormously in an effort to penetrate the darkness, and then the darkness itself disappeared and was replaced by a space filled with phosphorescent light. It was a boundless emptiness, dead, without an echo of life, luminous and sinister. It followed him step by step, turning when he

turned. There were no windows any longer, no walls, nothing but this endless, luminous void. He grew terrified; he had to kill all feeling in himself so that this void should disappear too. A little more effort and his goal was reached. Stumbling, his numbed body swaying from side to side, his muttering gave way to shouts that strayed from his chest, and his very existence seemed to have been suspended. Thus he attained a strange state of torpor, giving no indication of conscious life but at the same time revealing another form of life that continues despite everything. Moans kept breaking forth from him without bringing him to. Apparently his disease continued its work of organic destruction without the victim's feeling any pain.

He woke at dawn and at the same time his anguish, disgust and hatred awoke. His hatred was not connected with any feeling of protest; it was an undefined hatred, directed at something formless, undetermined. His swollen eyes rested without expression on one object after another, gazing at them lengthily and intently. His limbs trembled. His heart would sink at first as if he were rolling down somewhere, then start beating so violently that he instinctively clutched at his chest with his hand. But there wasn't a single thought in him, no desire. With his eyes fixed on the stove, his mind became entirely filled with its image, leaving no room for other impressions. Then, when the window replaced the stove, it was window, window, window . . . He wanted nothing, he needed nothing. He fills and lights his pipe automatically, and before it is completely smoked, it falls from his hands. His tongue mutters something but only through force of habit. It is best to sit silently and keep staring at one spot. It would be nice to have a drink at such a moment, it would be nice to raise his temperature, to feel alive, if only for a moment, but it's impossible to get vodka during the day. He must wait for the night to experience again the blissful moments when the earth disappears from under his feet, and when, instead of four horrible walls, the boundless, sparkling emptiness opens before his eyes.

Arina Petrovna had not the slightest idea how the

blockhead was spending his time in the office wing. The glimmer of human concern that had appeared in her conversation with Porfiry vanished immediately, and she never even noticed. It was no longer even a matter of deliberate planning on her part—she simply forgot about Stepan. She forgot that here, near her, in the office wing, there lived a creature of her own flesh and blood, a creature who was perhaps longing for an acceptable life. Because she herself followed unthinkingly the routine she had adopted, she must have felt that others did the same. It never occurred to her that the very meaning of life could change under different circumstances, and that some, like her, could enjoy the very process of life while for others it was something loathsome, something imposed upon them. Thus, although her manager repeatedly reported to her that Stepan did not seem well, this information slipped past her ears, and if she acknowledged it at all, it was with such automatic phrases as:

“He’ll outlive us all, you mark my words! There’s nothing really wrong with the long-legged stallion. He coughs? There’re people who go on coughing for thirty years without its doing them any great harm. . . .”

However, when one morning it was reported to her that Stepan had disappeared from Golovlovo, she came to her senses. She immediately sent all her people in search of him and personally conducted the inquiry, starting from the room in which she had installed her worthless son. The first thing that struck her was the bottle on the table, a bottle in which there was still a little vodka, and which, in the panic, the servants had forgotten to hide.

“What’s this?” she asked, as if failing to understand.

“I expect, ma’am . . . Mister Stepan was entertaining himself,” the manager explained lamely.

“Who got it for him?” she asked, but then, as though remembering something, she went on with her inquiry into her son’s disappearance.

The room was so dirty, dusty and messy that even she, indifferent to comfort as she was, became quite uneasy. The ceiling was black with soot, the wallpaper was torn and in many places hung in tatters, the window sills were covered with a thick layer of ash, the pillows lay on

the grimy floor, the crumpled sheet thrown on top of the bed was gray with accumulated dirt. The double frame in one of the windows had been removed, or rather pulled out, and the outside pane was unlocked. This must have been the way he had escaped. Arina Petrovna instinctively glanced out the window and grew even more alarmed. It was now the beginning of November, but that year the frosts were late and the fields, the roads, everything was muddy, black, and impassable after the daily autumn rains. How could he have gotten away? Where had he gone? She remembered he had nothing to wear but his dressing gown and slippers—one of which was found under the window. And, to make things worse, it hadn't stopped raining since the evening before.

"It's quite obvious I haven't been around here for a long time, my fine ones," she said, inhaling, instead of air, a horrible mixture of stale vodka, cheap tobacco and damp sheepskins.

All that day, while her people were searching the forest, she remained standing by the window, staring blankly at the bleak view. What a fuss over the block-head! She felt she was caught in some preposterous dream. Hadn't she maintained he ought to be sent to Vologda, but no, that damned Judas wouldn't agree. "Leave him here, dear Mamma," he'd insisted, and now she had all this trouble. He could have lived by himself there, far away, and done whatever he wanted and she'd have done her duty by him, given him another bone after he had squandered the first, and if he'd squandered that too, well, what then? Even God couldn't provide for a bottomless pit. And everything would have been so nice and quiet. But now it was serious! Go and look for him in the forest! It'd be a lucky thing if they brought him back alive at all, for in his drunkenness it'd be no wonder if he'd strung himself up. All he had to do was take a rope, tie it to a branch, wind it round his neck and there he'd be! His mother spends sleepless nights, grudges herself every extra bite of food and he goes out, just like that, and decides to hang himself! It might be understandable if he'd been given nothing to eat, had been forced to work—but all he had to do was walk up and

down his room all day and eat and drink, eat and drink. . . . Another would be overcome with gratitude to his mother for all she'd done for him, but this one could think of nothing better than to hang himself! Well, well, how very considerate of him! What a son!

This time Arina Petrovna's apprehensions about her son's having committed suicide were unfounded. By evening a covered cart pulled by a couple of peasant horses had driven up to the office entrance, bringing back the runaway. He was half-conscious, bruised and scratched, his face bluish and swollen. It turned out that during the night he had walked all the way to Dubrovino, about fifteen miles from Golovlovo.

He slept for twenty-four hours. When he awoke he started pacing up and down the room again but never reached for his pipe, as though he'd completely forgotten about it. He didn't reply to the questions that were asked him.

For her part, Arina Petrovna was so relieved that she was on the point of ordering that Stepan be transferred from the office wing to the main house, but then she calmed down and decided to leave him in his old room. However, she gave orders for it to be scrubbed and cleaned, for his bedclothes to be changed, curtains hung in the windows, and other such details. When they reported to her that he had woken from his long sleep, she ordered him into her presence, offered him some tea and even made an effort to address him in a more affectionate tone.

"Where were you going, trying to run away from your mother?" she began. "Do you have any idea how worried I was? It's lucky your father never found out—how do you think he'd have taken it in his state of health?"

But Stepan seemed indifferent to his mother's warmth, staring glassy-eyed at the candle, watching the wax forming a rim around the wick.

"Ah, you silly, silly boy!" she went on in more and more affectionate tones. "I wish you'd given a thought to the reputation you give me, acting the way you do. I have plenty of enemies, you know, and God knows what they'll invent. They may say I didn't give you food or

clothes and I don't know what else. . . . Oh, you silly thing!"

But he remained silent, his eyes fixed senselessly on a single spot.

"But what could you possibly lack, living here at your mother's? You were warmly dressed, you had enough to eat, thank God! You were warm and comfortable! What else could you possibly wish for? If you were bored, my boy, you must excuse us, that's country life for you! Yes, we have no entertainment, no dances, we all just sit in our corners and get bored. I, too, I wouldn't mind dancing and singing songs from time to time, but when I look out the window I lose all desire to go out in this damp weather, even to go to church and worship God."

Arina Petrovna stopped, hoping the blockhead would at least moo in acknowledgment, but he seemed to have been turned into a log of wood. Impatience stirred in her but she kept it under control.

"Now if by any chance you felt dissatisfied, well, I don't know, perhaps with your food, or if you needed some underwear or something, why couldn't you come and talk frankly to your mother? You could've asked me, 'Mamma dear, tell them to fix me some liver or a cake,' as the case might be. Do you really imagine I could have refused you something to eat? Or even suppose you felt like a glass of vodka. All right, God bless you, have a drink! You don't really think I'd have grudged you one, do you? I just don't understand you: you don't seem to mind asking the servants for all sorts of things but you can't bring yourself to come and talk to your own mother!"

But her kind words fell on deaf ears. Stepan not only failed to kiss her hand as she had hoped, he was obviously completely unmoved, gave not the slightest hint of being sorry for the worry he had caused her. In fact, he seemed not to have heard.

He was never to speak again after that, anyway. For days on end he paced his room with knitted brows, his lips moving, never tiring. Occasionally he stopped, looking as though he were making an effort to express something but couldn't find the words. Apparently he hadn't

completely lost the ability to think, but his thoughts flashed wanly through his mind and he forgot them almost immediately. Because of this, his lack of success in groping for words didn't even bother him.

For her part, Arina Petrovna was afraid he might set fire to the house.

"The blockhead doesn't say a word for days on end," she reasoned. "All the time he keeps silent, he must be thinking of something! Mark my words, he's planning to set fire to the place!"

In reality the blockhead wasn't thinking of anything. He had plunged altogether into a thick darkness in which there was no room for either reality or imagination. Something was going on in his brain, but whatever it was it had no relation to the past or the future. It was as if he were wrapped from head to foot in a cloud and kept gazing intently at the black, smoky substance surrounding him, shuddering now and then, as if warding something off. His entire physical and spiritual universe had dissolved in this mysterious black cloud.

In December of that year, Porfiry received the following letter from his mother.

Yesterday morning, the Lord visited a new trial on us: my son, your brother, Stepan, has passed away. He was perfectly all right the night before, and even ate his supper. But in the morning he was found dead. Such is the fleeting nature of life! And what grieves my mother's heart most is that he left this world to depart into the unknown without any ministration.

Let this be a lesson to all of us: he who spurns his family duties will always meet with such an end. Everything—failure in life, pointless death and the uncertainties of life beyond—all is due to neglect of family ties. For, however wise and even virtuous we may be, if we fail to honor our parents, these qualities will be reduced to nought. These are the rules by which every man living must abide. The serfs, moreover, must also honor their masters.

Despite all this, the departed, being my son, was given all due honors. The pall was brought from Moscow and the service was performed by the Archimandrite, whom you know. Masses and requiem services are being said to this day in accordance with Christian custom.

I regret my son's death but I will not murmur against God's will and do not wish my children to. For, who knows? Perhaps while we pine here, his soul may be happy up there.

II

A UNITED FAMILY

A HOT JULY NOON. Everything was at a standstill on the Dubrovino estate. Not only those who usually lived in leisure but the hard-working people too scattered and lay down to relax in shady corners. The dogs sprawled in the middle of the front courtyard, and in the surrounding quiet one could hear their teeth click as, half asleep, they snapped at flies. Even the trees stood drooping and motionless, as if exhausted. All the windows, both in the manor house and in the servants' quarters, were open wide. The heat descended like scalding water. The ground, covered with short, scorched grass, was burning hot. An unbearable glare formed a sort of golden screen, making it difficult to discern objects in the surrounding countryside. The house with its faded gray paint, the little garden in front, the birch wood on the other side of the road, the pond, the peasant settlement, the rye fields beyond—all this was drowned in the luminous mist. All sorts of smells, from the fragrance of limes in flower to the stench of cattle, hung in the air in thick clouds. There was no sound, except for the continuous clatter of the cooks' knives from the kitchen, announcing the eternal chops and cold soup for dinner.

Silent tension reigned inside the manor house. The old mistress of the house and two young girls sat in the dining room. They had let fall their knitting and sat frozen in expectation. In the maids' room, two women

were preparing compresses and mustard plasters, and the steady jingling of their spoons cut through the silence like the chirping of crickets. The rustle of the maids' bare feet could be heard as they ran along the corridor, went upstairs to the maids' room and ran back. From time to time a shout came from above:

"What about the mustard plaster? You asleep or what?"

And a girl darted out of the maids' room.

At last heavy footsteps creaked on the stairs and an army doctor entered the dining room. He was tall, broad-shouldered, with firm, ruddy cheeks. He seemed to be bursting with health. He had a ringing voice, a firm step, bright, cheerful eyes, full lips and an open expression. This was a *bon vivant* who, at fifty, had yet to concede in a drinking bout, had never found any meal too much to cope with, and did not intend to for a long time to come. He wore a well-cut, snow-white uniform with shiny, embossed buttons. As he came in, he was smacking his lips and clicking his tongue.

"You know what, my dear," he said, stopping by the door, "bring us a little bottle of vodka and a bit to eat."

"Well? What happened? How is . . ."

"God's mercy is infinite, Arina Petrovna," the doctor said.

"But how is he?"

"Same thing, I suppose. He may last another two or three days, and then that will be that."

The doctor made a significant gesture and sang under his breath:

"He whirls, he spins, he turns and wheels,
And off he flies, head over heels. . . ."

"But how did this happen? The doctors have been treating him all this time and now suddenly . . ."

"What doctors?"

"Our village doctor, and then we had one come from town."

"You call them doctors? If they had administered him a good cupping he'd probably have pulled through."

"But is there nothing one can do now?"

"As I said: God's mercy is great. I can't say more."

"Still, perhaps it'll work?"

"What will work?"

"Well, these mustard plasters. . . ."

"Perhaps."

A woman in a black dress and black kerchief brought a tray with a decanter of vodka and two plates—caviar and salami. They interrupted their conversation. The doctor poured himself a glass of vodka, raised it, looked at it against the light and emptied it.

"Here's to you, dear lady," the doctor said, swallowing the vodka.

"Thank you, dear doctor."

"This is the very stuff that's killing Pavel in the prime of life," the doctor said, pleasurably screwing up his face and sticking a fork into a slice of salami.

"Yes, vodka kills many people."

"Not everyone can take it, that's why. But since I can take it, I'll have another! Your health, ma'am."

"Help yourself, help yourself, it can't do you any harm."

"Harm me? Oh no. My lungs, my kidneys, my liver, my spleen, all's in order. By the way," the doctor said, turning suddenly toward the woman in black who had brought the vodka and who had stopped by the door, apparently listening to the conversation, "what are you having for dinner today?"

"Soup, meat loaf, roast chicken," the woman said with a rather sour smile.

"Have you any salt fish?"

"We certainly do, sir—we have sturgeon, herring among others. . . ."

"Then order some sturgeon for dinner, a nice big slice, you know. . . . And what's your name, Ulita, isn't it?"

"That's right, sir."

"Well then, hurry along, Ulita."

Ulita left and for a while there was heavy silence. Arina Petrovna rose and went to look out into the corridor to check whether the woman had really left.

"Now tell me, doctor—did you speak to him about the orphans?" Arina Petrovna asked.

"I did."

"Well, what did he say?"

"Still the same thing—'As soon as I get better, I'll make my will and write out the checks.'"

An even gloomier silence followed. The girls picked up their knitting and set to work, trying to control their trembling fingers. Arina Petrovna sighed hopelessly. The doctor started to pace the room, humming ". . . off he flies, head over heels. . . ."

"Perhaps you might have put it to him more bluntly, doctor."

"I couldn't have been more direct, ma'am. 'You'd be a real scoundrel not to take care of the orphans,' I said to him. Yes, my dear lady, you haven't been very smart this time; if you'd called me a month ago, I'd have cupped him and seen to his will too. Now, as things stand, everything will go to that Judas of yours, the lawful heir, and we can do nothing about it."

"Grandmother, what's happening?" said the older of the two young ladies, almost in tears. "Why is Uncle Pavel doing this to us?"

"I don't know, dear, I don't know. . . . I don't even know about myself: I'm here today and God alone knows where I'll be tomorrow. . . . I may be looking for shelter in a barn or perhaps in a peasant's hut."

"My God, he must be stupid, Uncle Pavel!" the younger of the orphans exclaimed.

"Whatever he may be, you should curb your tongue, young lady," the doctor cut her, and then, turning to Arina Petrovna, he said: "And what about trying to have a little talk with him yourself, ma'am?"

"No, no, no—not a chance! He won't listen to me. He doesn't even wish to see me. The other day I barely stepped into his room and he looked at me and said: 'I suppose you've come to give me the final ministrations?'"

"I think it's Ulita's doing. She sets him against you, I'm sure."

"Oh yes, it's her certainly, and then she goes and repeats everything to Judas the bloodsucker! I've heard that his horses are kept harnessed day and night, ready to rush over here as soon as his brother starts to go. And can you imagine, the other day Ulita made an inventory of the furniture, the crockery, everything. 'This,' she

said, 'is in case something gets lost.' She seems to think, if you please, that it's we who are thieves."

"Well, what about handling her the way we do in the army," the doctor said. "You know what I mean, head over heels—you know?"

But before the doctor had time to elaborate, a servant girl rushed into the room. Breathless, she gasped in a frightened voice:

"The master . . . the master's calling the doctor!"

We've met the family before. We've met Arina Petrovna Golovlov; we've met her son Pavel, now the dying landlord of Dubrovino; and finally we know the two young ladies, Anninka and Lubinka, Anna's twins, the orphaned daughters to whose mother Arina Petrovna, once upon a time, had also tossed her "bone."

Although only about ten years have passed, the situation within the Golovlov family has changed radically. Nothing remains of the artificial bonds that made this family seem a formidable fortress to the outside world.

The family stronghold built by Arina Petrovna's tireless hands has collapsed, but the collapse came about so imperceptibly that she herself never saw it coming and, in fact, became an active agent in it herself. The brain behind it all was, of course, Porfiry, the bloodsucker, alias Judas.

From the autocratic and imperious mistress of the Golovlov estates, Arina Petrovna had been reduced to a humble hanger-on in the house of her youngest son Pavel, a helpless spectator without any say even in household affairs. Now, her head drooped, her back was bent, her eyes had lost their fire, her walk had become sluggish, her imperiousness of manner had vanished. No longer knowing what to do with herself, she had taken up knitting in her old age, but she'd never become proficient at it because her thoughts kept wandering. She herself would have found it hard to say where they wandered but one thing was certain, it was far away from her knitting needles. She'd sit knitting for a few minutes, then her hands would drop to her lap, she would lean her head against the back of the armchair and start thinking of the past. And she'd remember and remember until the drowsiness of

old age took possession of her. Or else she'd get up and start walking from room to room as though searching for something, looking in every corner like a woman who's kept her bunch of keys with her all her life and now suddenly finds herself without them and cannot imagine where they can possibly have been lost.

The first blow to Arina Petrovna's authority had been the preparations that preceded the abolition of serfdom, rather than the abolition itself. First came the rumors, then the petitions to the tsar by the gentry, then the provincial committees, then the administrative commissions. . . . It was all so confusing to her, so exhausting. . . . And Arina Petrovna's fertile imagination kept plaguing her with a host of trifling details.

"Will I be able to go on calling my maid Agashka after the reform? Or will I have to be more formal and call her Agafia? I can't imagine I'll have to go all the way and address her as Agafia Fedorovna?"

At other times she pictured herself walking through her deserted house while the servants sat in their quarters feeding their faces. Then she visualized them surfeited, tossing leftovers under the table. Or she imagined going down to the larder and finding her maids there gorging themselves, wanting to reprimand them but restraining herself as if something were stuck in her throat:

"They're emancipated, free now. There's no way to control them any more," she imagined herself thinking.

Trifling as such details may be, they can gradually take on a fantastic semblance of reality which can take possession of a person and paralyze him. So Arina Petrovna suddenly lost her grip on things, and for two whole years was reduced to exclaiming:

"If only they'd settle it once and for all. Then we'd at least know where we stand. This way's the worst of all—neither fish nor fowl!"

Just at that time, with the debates going full swing, her husband, Vladimir Golovlov, died. He died resigned and subdued, having given up Barkov and every other ambition. His last words were:

"I am grateful to God for calling me now so I won't have to rub shoulders with serfs when I face Him."

These words struck a deep chord in Arina Petrovna's sensitive soul, and the death of her husband, together with the fantastic picture she had of the future, communicated an overtone of despair to everyday life in Golovlovo. It was as if the old house and everything in it and around it were waiting to die.

From the few complaining letters Porfiry received from his mother he guessed with remarkable insight the torment into which she had been plunged. She no longer reprimanded or lectured in her letters but spoke largely about her reliance on God's mercy "which in these days of easy faith is bestowed even on serfs and will surely not be denied to those who, possessing wealth, have been the Church's staunchest supporters, providing it with its richest adornments." Judas at once realized that if his mamma had started to rely on God there must be a major weakness in her position. And, with characteristic cunning, he decided to exploit it.

Just before the final emancipation proclamation, he arrived at Golovlovo quite unexpectedly and found his mother profoundly depressed, almost desperate.

"Well, what's going on? What do they say about it in Petersburg?" was her first question after they had greeted one another.

Judas lowered his eyes without answering.

"No, I just want you to understand how I feel," Arina Petrovna said, interpreting her son's silence to mean that he had nothing pleasant to tell her. "You know, I have thirty of the creatures sitting in the maids' room. What am I to do with them? If I'm supposed to keep them here, what shall I feed them with? I have enough potatoes for the time being, bread and cabbage to go around, and so we're getting enough to live on. When we're a bit short on potatoes, I can tell them to boil some cabbage, and if there's not much cabbage, we can always fall back on cucumbers. But after they've emancipated the serfs, I'll have to run to the market every time I need something, buy all the food and pay good money for it! How can I possibly provide for such a horde? Tell me that!"

Judas looked into his dear mamma's eyes, smiling bitterly to convey his sympathy and understanding.

"Perhaps I ought to just let them go, the lot of 'em. Just tell 'em: 'Off with you! Just follow your noses. . . .' I don't know, I don't know what will come of it all. . . ."

Judas let out a little snort of laughter as though he considered the situation his mother described quite absurd.

"But it's really no laughing matter, my boy. It's serious, terribly serious. I don't see any way out of it, unless God sends them some wisdom. . . . Then, of course . . . Take me, for example, I'm not just a piece of rubbish to be disposed of, am I? I too must be taken care of. But how is it to be done? What sort of education have we been given? What have we been taught? How to dance, to sing, to receive guests. Well then, what do you expect me to do without these lumpish maids of mine? You realize I can't set the table or clear it, or cook. I can't do any of these things!"

"God's mercy is great, Mamma dear."

"He used to be merciful but He no longer is these days. As long as we were good, the Lord was gracious to us. But we have become bad and there it is! And you know, I often wonder whether I shouldn't give it all up while there's still time. Really! I could build myself a little cabin near your papa's grave and live out my days there."

Judas pricked up his ears at that, his mouth began to water, and he cautiously cast a line:

"And who would run the estate then, Mother dear?" he inquired.

"Well, you'll have to excuse me and run it yourselves. Thank God, I've done my duty by you. Why should it always be one person who bears the burden?"

Arina Petrovna suddenly stopped as if she had stumbled against something and raised her head. She was struck by Judas's grinning, slobbering lips, by his shining, oily face which seemed lit by some rapacious inner light.

"Why, you look as if you were preparing to bury me right now," she said dryly. "Isn't it a bit early, my boy? Mind you don't make a bad mistake."

So that time it all came to nothing. But the conversation they had had was one of those which once in the open, are resumed again and again. Within a few hours, Arina Petrovna returned to the subject.

"I'll retire to the Sergius Trinity Monastery," she said dreamily, "buy myself a little house over there and settle down once and for all, after dividing the estate."

Judas, made wary by recent experience, said nothing.

"Last year," she went on, "when Papa was still alive, I was sitting in my bedroom all by myself when all of a sudden I heard: 'Go and visit the Saint! Go and visit the Saint!' Three times, I heard it. I looked all around, you know, but there was no one in the room, so I said to myself, 'Why, I must be having a vision! Well,' I said, 'if God wishes to test my faith, I'm ready!' And no sooner had I said that than the room was filled with such a wonderful fragrance, you can't imagine. Of course I immediately ordered my things packed for the journey and that same evening I was on my way."

Tears appeared in Arina Petrovna's eyes. Judas took advantage of her emotion to kiss her hand and even pushed his boldness so far as to put an arm around her.

"That's the way, Mamma dear," he said. "There's a good girl. It's good when people live in harmony with God! A person must go to God with prayer and then God will come to him with help. That's the way it is, Mamma!"

"Wait, I haven't finished. So the next day I arrived at the monastery and went straight to the Saint's shrine. And a Vigil service was being held with singing and candles and incense and all, and I was no longer sure where I was, in Heaven or still on earth. After the service I went over to see Father Jonas, the priest-monk, and I said to him straight out: 'Father, it's unbelievably wonderful here tonight!' And he answered: 'Why, ma'am, Father Avvacum had a vision during the service tonight. Just as he raised his hands in prayer, he saw a light in the cupola overhead and a dove looking down at him!' Well, you know, after that, I promised myself to go and live out my life near that shrine."

"And who will look after us then? Who'll take care of your children, Mamma? Ah, darling, darling Mother!"

"Oh, you're not that young any more, you can fend for yourselves now. As for me, I'll take Anna's little orphans and settle down there under the wing of the Saint. It

may happen that one day one of the girls will feel a need to serve God. Well then, there's the Khotkov Convent just a stone's throw away. I'll buy myself a little house, dig myself a vegetable garden, and I'll have enough of everything, cabbage, potatoes, everything."

For several days in a row this idle talk continued. Arina Petrovna made the most daring assumptions, discarded them, made them again, until finally the whole matter reached a point of no return. Less than six months after Judas's visit, the situation was the following: Arina Petrovna had not moved to Sergius Trinity, nor had she retired to a little house near her husband's grave; however, she had divided the estate, retaining control only of the capital. In this division, Judas got the better part of the deal and Pavel the lesser.

Arina Petrovna remained in Golovlovo after one of the usual family scenes. Judas shed a few tears, beseeching his darling mamma to stay and run his estate for him without having to account to anyone for her decisions and using the income at her discretion. As for himself, he told her, "I'd be content with anything you could spare me from the profits, however little it might be." Pavel, on the contrary, thanked his mother quite coolly, sounding "as if he were about to bite me," as she put it. Whereupon, he immediately resigned his army commission—"without asking his mother's advice, he bolted from the army like a madman"—and installed himself at Dubrovino, the estate he'd received as his share.

At this time, Arina Petrovna's perceptiveness suffered a sudden deterioration. Judas's real nature, which until then she had discerned so clearly, now became veiled in a thick fog. She seemed to know only one thing: despite the division of the estate and the emancipation of the serfs, she was still living in Golovlovo, and as before, she had no one to answer to for the way she ran things.

She was also aware that her other son, Pavel, was living next door to her, but what a difference! While Porfiry, whom she had once called Judas, had entrusted himself and his family to his mother's discretion, Pavel never asked for her advice and, in fact, when they met, hardly

spoke to her at all, only mumbling a few words through his teeth.

And the more befogged her perception became, the more warmly she felt toward her affectionate son. Judas never asked her for anything; she herself went out of her way to meet all his wishes. Little by little she started finding fault with the boundaries of the Golovlovo property. In one place, someone else's land cut into the estate, and she, who owned the capital, toyed with the idea of buying it; in another, it would have been possible to organize a little farm had there been enough meadowland, and since there was a lovely meadow on the adjoining property, why shouldn't she purchase it?

Arina Petrovna was urged on both by maternal feelings and by pride in her managerial abilities, which she wanted to demonstrate in all their glory to her loving son. But Judas seemed to have retired into an impenetrable shell and whenever she offered to buy a meadow, a wood or any piece of land for him, he invariably answered:

"I'm grateful as it is, Mamma darling, for all you've done for me in your kindness."

This answer made Arina Petrovna even more anxious to do things for him. Prompted simultaneously by her managerial ambitions and by a desire to "show that scoundrel Pavel" who wanted nothing to do with her, she completely lost sight of her real position at Golovlovo. The fever of acquisition took hold of her again, and now the fact that she was acquiring wealth not for herself but for her favorite son made not the slightest difference. The Golovlov estates flourished and their territory was rounded out and expanded.

But then, when Arina Petrovna's capital had dwindled to a point where it was almost impossible for her to subsist on the interest it yielded, she received a respectful letter from Judas accompanied by a whole file of accounting forms which, she was informed, were to be used by her in the future to draw up yearly accounts. Along with the major farming and business operations, she found such items as gooseberries, raspberries and mushrooms. For each item, there was a special account along roughly the following lines:

Year 18—

No. of raspberry bushes.....	—	—
New bushes planted this year.....	—	—
Amt. of berries collected from above.....	lb.	oz.
Used by you, dear Mamma.....	lb.	oz.
Used for jam for the household of the master, Porfiry Golovlov.....	lb.	oz.
Given to such-and-such as reward for good conduct.....	1 lb.	—
Sold to peasants.....	lb.	oz.
Rotted as a result of lack of buyers or for other reasons.....	lb.	oz.
Etc., etc. . . .		

NOTE: If this year's harvest is inferior to the preceding year's, give the cause, such as drought, excessive rains, hail, etc.

Arina Petrovna simply gasped. In the first place she was struck by Judas's stinginess; she'd never suspected that gooseberries could possibly be regarded in Golovlovo as an item important enough to be included in the book-keeping. In the second place, she saw quite clearly that all these forms were nothing but constitutional limitations to her authority, or to speak plainly were designed to bind her hand and foot.

Finally, after a long argument carried on by correspondence, Arina Petrovna, insulted and indignant, moved to Dubrovino, and soon after that, Judas resigned from the civil service and settled himself in at Golovlovo.

For the old woman there followed a succession of bleak, monotonous days of enforced inactivity. For a man of his passive temperament, Pavel was quite actively irritated by his mother. He had received her quite tolerably, expressing his willingness to keep her and his orphaned nieces as long as they stayed away from his rooms upstairs and on condition that Arina Petrovna didn't try to interfere with the running of his estate. It was this latter condition that distressed her. In actual fact, Pavel's estate was largely run by his housekeeper Ulita, a perfidious woman who had been discovered to be carrying on a secret correspondence with Judas the bloodsucker, and by his father's former valet Kirushka, who knew nothing about farming but daily lectured Pavel, arrogant flunkey

that he was. Both the woman and the valet stole unashamedly from their master. Often Arina Petrovna's heart ached at the sight of the robbery that went on under the very roof! Often she was on the point of rushing to her son and opening his eyes to the pilfering of tea, sugar and butter. These items melted away in huge quantities, and Ulita, completely unabashed by the presence of the old lady, would stow whole handfuls of sugar in her pocket. Arina Petrovna saw, but was forced to remain a silent witness of this thieving, for each time she tried to say something about it to Pavel he stopped her.

"Mother," he'd say, "I believe there should be only one person to give orders in a house. I didn't invent it; it's a generally accepted idea. I suppose some of my arrangements are stupid—well, let them be. And I'm sure yours would be very clever for you're very clever yourself, which, however, didn't prevent Judas from leaving you without a corner of your own."

Then, on top of everything else, Arina Petrovna made a terrible discovery: Pavel was drinking. The passion for drink took hold of him stealthily in the isolation of country life and finally reached the stage from which it could only lead to a fatal end. When his mother first settled in his house, he still seemed somewhat ashamed of himself and would come downstairs from time to time to talk to her. Arina Petrovna noticed that his speech was quite disconnected at times but she ascribed this to his general stupidity. She didn't like these "conversations" and considered his visits a great intrusion upon her privacy. Indeed, what he had to say amounted to nothing but absurd grumbling about almost everything: sometimes because it hadn't rained for weeks on end and then had suddenly started pouring; sometimes over an invasion of beetles that were destroying all the trees in his orchard; sometimes it was the moles digging up all his meadows. All this provided him with an inexhaustible source of complaint and he would come downstairs, sit opposite his mother and begin:

"The clouds seem to be avoiding us! One would think Golovlovo was close enough! Well, the bloodsucker had a real downpour last night and not a single drop fell here. Yes, the clouds seem to be avoiding us on purpose!"

Or:

"Look at that! It just keeps coming down without let-up. The rye has just begun to flower but it keeps pouring down! As it is, half the hay is rotting, and the rain doesn't seem to ever want to stop! The bloodsucker finished his haymaking ages ago while we were sitting and waiting for something. . . . Now we'll have nothing but rotten hay to feed the cattle all winter."

As a rule Arina Petrovna listened to this aimless talk without saying anything, but occasionally, unable to control herself, she'd remark:

"Why keep looking on and doing nothing about it!"

But no sooner had she uttered a remark of this sort than Pavel would fly into a fury.

"And what would you like me to do? Go over to Golovlovo and fetch the rain, or what?"

"I didn't mean the rain, I meant in general. . . ."

"No, no, tell me what I'm supposed to have done, not 'in general' but specifically! Should I change the climate, in your opinion? Now, in Golovovo they need rain and it rains; they don't, it stops, and so everything blooms there. . . . But here, it's just the opposite! Well, I'd like to hear you talk when we have nothing to eat!"

"Well, then, I suppose it's the will of God. . . ."

"You should have said so in the first place and not given me all that 'in general' stuff!"

At times he even said the estate was a burden to him.

"And why on earth did I let myself be saddled with this Dubrovino?" he moaned. "All I get out of it is trouble. . . ."

"Why, what's wrong with Dubrovino? The soil is rich and there's plenty of everything. I don't know what you're talking about."

"What am I talking about? Well, nowadays the ownership of land is quite unnecessary. Money, of course, that's a different matter! Money, you just pick up and put in your pocket, and off you go, but land . . . no!"

"And what's so special about the time we're living in that one can no longer own land?"

"What's special about it? The trouble with you is you don't read newspapers—but I do. Nowadays, you see, there are lawyers everywhere, and when one of those

birds finds out you own a piece of land, he immediately begins buzzing around."

"But what good will it do him to buzz around if you have the proper ownership papers?"

"He'll still buzz around and keep scheming—they all do. Or suppose the bloodsucker hires a lawyer, the lawyer will start pestering you by sending you summons after summons."

"What are you talking about? The land belongs to you legally."

"Well, that's precisely why he'll send me summonses. Otherwise he could simply take it away from me without them. Take my friend Gorlotyapov, for instance. His uncle died recently, and he was stupid enough to accept the legacy straight off. And you know what happened? There turned out to be a kopek's worth of assets and a hundred thousand rubles worth of debts: plenty of IOU's and mostly forged ones at that. And so the law's been after him for three years: first they took away his uncle's estate and when they were through with that, they auctioned off his too. So that's what you get out of owning land these days!"

"Is there really a law saying that . . ."

"If there hadn't been such a law, they wouldn't have sold it. As you can see, there are all sorts of laws. A man without scruples can fit any law to his purpose; all he has to do is find the law in the books and twist it. A scrupulous person can't do that."

She was always the one to yield in these discussions, although she was often on the point of exploding and ordering him out of her sight. Instead she only mused: "Oh my God, how could I have borne such monsters? One is a bloodsucker, while the other is a sort of idiot! Was it for them that I refused myself food and sleep?"

And the more addicted Pavel became to drink, the more fantastic and unexpected his conversation became. Finally, Arina Petrovna began to suspect that there was something more to it. She noticed, for instance, that a decanter full of vodka was put into the dining room cabinet every morning and that by dinner time it was completely empty. Sometimes, sitting in the drawing room, she would hear a mysterious creaking coming from the dining room

near the cabinet, and when she called "Who is it?" she would hear rapid, cautious steps going upstairs.

"Good gracious, but he must be drinking," she once said to Ulita.

"Yes, he's having a good time," the woman said with a sarcastic smile.

Pavel, once he realized that his mother had discovered his secret, gave up all pretense. One morning the cabinet had disappeared from the dining room altogether. When Arina Petrōvna asked where it had gone, Ulita told her:

"The master ordered it moved upstairs. He feels freer to do as he pleases there."

And indeed, upstairs, decanter followed decanter at a remarkable rate. Pavel shut himself in his room. All company became unbearable to him, and he plunged into a private world of fantasy. He concocted an epic, rather silly and heroic, in which the two main protagonists were himself and Judas the bloodsucker. He himself didn't realize how deep his hatred for his brother had become. He hated him with every thought, with all his insides; he hated him every minute, without interruption. Judas's loathsome image danced vividly before his eyes, and his ears buzzed with his tear-jerking chatter with its undertone of systematic, general hatred for everything that failed to conform to his code of hypocrisy. Pavel drank and remembered. He remembered all the insults and humiliations he had suffered because Judas claimed to be the head of the family. But what he remembered most often was the division of the property, re-counting every penny, comparing each piece of land again and again—and all the time hating his brother. In his imagination, excited by alcohol, Pavel imagined scenes in which he was the aggressor instead of Judas. Sometimes he fancied himself, having somehow obtained two hundred thousand rubles, going over to Golovlovo to show them to his brother, whose features would become contorted with spite in the course of the conversation. He had repeatedly thought over every detail of this dialogue. Sometimes he imagined his grandfather leaving him a million on his deathbed and giving nothing to Judas. Here too, there was a lengthy exchange, and he didn't seem in the least deterred by the fact that he had no grandfather to leave him anything. At

other times, Pavel saw himself as the inventor of a process for making oneself invisible, which he used to play such terrifying tricks on Judas that the bloodsucker wailed with pain. And he was so inexhaustible in devising new tricks that the upper story would resound with his inane laughter, and Ulita would hurry over to Judas, gleefully informing him of what was going on.

Pavel hated Judas, and at the same time he feared him. He knew that his brother's eyes exuded a spellbinding venom, that his voice had the ability to slip snakelike into a person's soul and there paralyze his will. This is why he categorically refused to see Judas.

Sometimes Judas came to Dubrovino to kiss the hand of his dearest mamma, for although he had thrown her out of her own house, he remained as respectful as ever toward her. On these occasions, Pavel locked himself up in his room and remained there while Judas chattered to their mother.

Thus the days followed one another until finally Pavel Golovlov found himself fatally ill.

To show that everything possible was being done, the doctor spent the night in the house, driving back to town the next morning. On leaving, he said plainly that the sick man wouldn't last more than a couple of days. It was too late to think of inducing him to write a will, for even signing his own name was now beyond Pavel's strength.

"He'll sign something that makes no sense," the doctor said, "and then you'll have endless trouble with the courts. Little Judas may love his mamma, but he'll still take her to court accusing her of forgery, and if the court prescribes a short trip to some establishment where she'll be confined, he'll have a service sung to speed her on her way."

All morning, Arina Petrovna walked around as if in a daze. She tried to pray, hoping that God would give her some guidance, but she couldn't think of an appropriate prayer. Even her tongue wouldn't obey her.

"Have mercy upon my soul, O Lord in Thy heavenly mercy . . ." she prayed. Then suddenly, without knowing how, she heard herself muttering:

"Save me, save me from the devil. . . ."

While her tongue kept repeating mechanically "Cleanse me . . . cleanse me . . ." Arina Petrovna's mind wandered upstairs to Pavel's rooms, down to the cellar—"There was so much stuff there in the fall and now they've stolen most of it"—into the past, where it dug up remote, half-forgotten scenes. She felt that she was submerged in twilight with crowds of people scurrying around her, busily storing things away, preparing for the future. "Blessed is he who . . . blessed is he who . . . as the incense . . . incense . . . guide me . . . guide me. . . ." In the end her tongue became completely paralyzed, her eyes stared blankly at the icons, and she stood frozen and motionless, her hands clasped at her waist.

She remained standing there for a while, then sat down and began to cry. The tears fell from her eyes, from which the light had faded, and rolled down her withered old cheeks, lingering in the wrinkles and falling on the greasy collar of her old cotton blouse. They were tears of bitter despair, but there was helpless rage in them too. Her age, weakness, and humiliation made her feel that death was the only way out of her predicament. But there was also the past, when she had been prosperous and powerful, and the thought of it gripped her and pulled her toward life. When the thought "I wish I would die" flitted through her head it was instantly displaced by "I want to live." She didn't think of Judas or of her dying son. They ceased to exist for her. In fact, she thought of no one, was angry with no one, blamed no one. She even forgot whether or not she still had any capital left and whether it would be enough to provide for her in her old age. An unrelieved, bottomless sadness pervaded her. "I feel sick, disgusted," was the only way in which she could account for her tears. Those tears had been accumulating in her for a long time, ever since she had left Golovlovo and come to live at Dubrovino. Arina Petrovna had been prepared for what faced her now; she had foreseen it and expected it. But she had never felt so clearly that the moment had come, that her expectations were about to come true. And now the end was in sight—an end full of sadness and desperate loneliness. All her life she had been organizing something, wearing herself

out for something that she now knew had been a delusion. All her life the word "family" had been on her lips. In its name, she had punished and rewarded; in its name, she had willingly suffered hardships and privations; in its name, she had tortured herself and spoiled her life—and now, suddenly, a family was just what she did not have.

"Good God, is it like this for everyone?" she asked herself over and over.

She sat with her head leaning on her hand. Her face, wet with tears, was tilted toward the rising sun, as though telling it: "Look at me!"

She didn't moan or protest. She sobbed quietly, as though drowning in her tears, feeling at the same time a terrible fire burning inside her.

"There's no one . . . no one . . . no, there's no one. . . ."

After a while there weren't even any tears left. She washed her face and wandered aimlessly into the dining room. Her two granddaughters assailed her with questions that, coming at that moment, were painfully irritating.

"So what will happen, Grandma, will we really be left with nothing?" Anninka protested.

"Uncle Pavel is really very stupid!" her sister Lubinka chimed in.

Around noon, Arina Petrovna decided to go and see her dying son. Stealthily she climbed the stairs and found the door leading to her son's rooms in the darkness. The whole floor was in semi-darkness; the light hardly filtered through the green curtains covering the windows. The windows hadn't been opened for a long time, and the stagnant air reeked of a sickly mixture of berries, mustard plasters, lamp oil, and the special smells of sickness and death. There were two adjoining rooms, in the first of which sat Ulita. She was cleaning gooseberries, furiously chasing away the flies that swarmed over the fruit and around her nose and lips. Through the half-open door to the next room came a continual dry, brief coughing interspersed with painful expectoration. Arina Petrovna stopped and looked hesitatingly into the shadows. She wondered what Ulita would do. But the woman didn't budge,

probably feeling that there was no danger that the mother might influence her dying son. Only her lips twisted angrily, in a hardly perceptible movement, and Arina Petrovna thought she heard her whisper: "The devil!"

"Why don't you run along downstairs, my good woman?" Arina Petrovna said.

"Anything else?" Ulita snapped back.

"I wish to talk to the master. Go!"

"But ma'am, what if something happens? I can't leave him. What if he needs something?"

"What's going on out there?" a hollow voice cried from the bedroom.

"Tell Ulita to run along, my dear. I must talk to you."

This time Arina Petrovna was so determined that she carried the point.

She crossed herself and entered the room. The sick man's bed stood next to the inside wall, as far as possible from the windows. Pavel lay on his back under a white blanket. Although he puffed at a cigarette almost ceaselessly, the flies attacked him with strange ferocity. He had to chase them away from his face with both hands. His arms were bare, and she could see how weak and thin they were: there was no muscles on them, and the bone was clearly outlined from wrist to shoulder. There was something hopeless in the way his head lay on the pillow. His face and his whole body were dry and burning hot. His large, round eyes were sunken and darted pointlessly around the room, as though searching for something. His nose seemed longer and sharper than before. His breathing was so labored that all his vital energy seemed centered in his chest.

"Well, how do you feel today?" Arina Petrovna asked him, easing herself into the armchair at the foot of his bed.

"So, so . . . all right. . . . Tomorrow . . . or is it today? When was it the doctor was here?"

"He was here today."

"Well, so it's for tomorrow."

The sick man became agitated, trying to remember something.

"Did he say you'd be allowed to get up tomorrow?"

Arina Petrovna prompted him. "Well, let's hope, let's hope, my dear."

Both fell silent. She had something to tell him, but to do so she would have to talk, and the trouble was that when she was alone with her son Pavel she could never find words to say to him.

"Judas—is he still alive?" Pavel asked.

"Why, yes, there's nothing troubling him. He's alive and doing fine."

"I bet he's thinking now: 'That brother of mine's about to die and, by the grace of God, that'll bring me yet another piece of land.'"

"Well, we all have to die some day, and everyone's estate will go to his rightful heirs."

"Just so long as the bloodsucker doesn't get it! I'd rather throw it to the dogs than let him lay hands on it."

Excellent opportunity: Pavel himself had broached the subject. Arina Petrovna immediately took advantage of it.

"You ought to think about it, my dear," she said casually. She lifted her hands and examined them against the light, as though at that moment they were the main object of her attention.

"About what, exactly?"

"Why, if you don't want the estate to go to your brother. . . ."

Pavel didn't say anything, but his eyes dilated unnaturally and his face grew even more flushed.

"You ought to remember too, my dear, that you have two orphaned nieces, who, as you well know, have practically nothing to their names. And then there's your mother. . . ."

"You let Judas get hold of everything, didn't you?"

"I know I was wrong but that can't be helped now. . . . And then, it's not such a terrible sin—isn't he my son, after all? I don't think you should bring that up against your own mother now."

He said nothing.

"Well? Say something!"

"How soon do you intend to bury me?"

"It's not a question of burying anyone, but still . . ."

We're all Christians. . . . Not now but, in general, we're all going to die some day. . . ."

"I see. It's a matter of 'general concern' to you! It's always 'in general' with you! Do you think I'm blind, that I can't see?"

"Well then, tell me what you can see, my dear boy."

"I see that you take me for a fool. All right, let's assume I'm a fool. Why bother to come and see me then? Don't come and don't bother me any more."

"It's no bother. . . . It's just in general. . . . Every human life must come to an end one day. . . ."

"Well, wait for that day!"

Arina Petrovna lowered her head in thought. She realized that her position was a bad one. However, the outlook for the future was so frightening that the obvious futility of her efforts did not deter her.

"I don't understand why you hate me so much," she said finally.

"No . . . not in the least . . . I don't . . . I even . . . Why, you've always been so fair! You've always treated us all so fairly and impartially!"

His words came in gasps and he was breathing with difficulty. His voice was a strange combination of sobs and triumphant laughter, his eyes sparkled, his legs and arms twitched nervously.

"Well, perhaps I've really wronged you in some way. Then forgive me in the name of Christ!"

Arina Petrovna stood up and bowed deeply, touching the floor with her hand. Pavel closed his eyes without answering.

"I realize that you're in no condition now to make arrangements concerning the land. . . . Porfiry is the legitimate heir, so let him have it. But what about the movable property, the capital, the money?" Arina Petrovna said, having finally decided upon a direct attack.

Pavel twitched but remained silent. When his mother mentioned the word capital, he didn't even think of her insinuations but rather remembered that it was September, the time when he received the interest—"Sixty-seven thousand, six hundred . . . I must multiply that by five and then divide by two. . . . How much does that make?"

"Perhaps you imagine that I wish your death? Then be reassured, my friend. Just go on living and I'll be a happy old woman. I'm all right here in your house. I'm warm, I have enough to eat, and if I fancy something special, I can have that too. I was trying to remind you of the Christian tradition by which, in preparing for the after-life, we . . ."

She stopped as if searching for the appropriate word.

" . . . We see to it that our close relatives are provided for," she concluded, looking out of the window.

Pavel lay motionless, coughing quietly, and there was no way of telling whether he had heard what she had said or not. He was probably bored by his mother's lecturing.

"Capital can be transmitted directly from hand to hand during one's lifetime," Arina Petrovna suggested casually, and proceeded once more to examine her hands against the light.

The sick man twitched very slightly, but this time she failed to notice it.

"Capital, my dear boy," she said, "can be legally transferred like that. That's because it comes and goes; it may be here today and gone tomorrow. And so no one can demand an account of it; you can dispose of it in any way you wish and give it to anyone you choose."

Pavel suddenly burst into sardonic laughter.

"I suppose," he hissed, "you're inspired by the story of the husband who transferred his capital to his wife, from *hand to hand*, just as you say, and then the lady ran off with her lover!"

"I don't happen to have any lovers, my dear boy."

"Well, you could run away without a lover, just with the capital."

"It's amazing how little you understand me!"

"I don't understand you at all, obviously. You've always told everyone that I'm an idiot. Well, so I am. And I don't at all mind being an idiot. But look at all the complicated things you've thought up. Just hand over your capital from *hand to hand*! And what am I supposed to do with myself after that? Retire to a monastery and watch how you spend my money for me?"

He said all this in one breath, agitated and full of rage.

When he had finished, he was completely exhausted. For a whole quarter of an hour, violent coughing fits followed one another almost without interruption. It was incredible that this miserable remnant of a human being should still have so much strength left. Finally, he recovered his breath and closed his eyes.

Arina Petrovna looked helplessly around her. Until now she had refused to believe that any attempt to persuade her dying son would only bring the day of Judas's triumph closer. She visualized Judas following his brother's coffin, Judas kissing his dead brother's brow while two revolting little tears dripped from his eyes. She saw the coffin being lowered into the ground, heard Judas exclaim: "Farewell, my brother," twitching his lips, rolling his eyes, trying to make his voice sound sorrowful, and then, turning toward Ulita, instructing her: "Don't forget to prepare the funeral repast. And when you serve it, put a clean cloth on the table. We must honor my brother's memory once more at home." Now Arina Petrovna imagined that the funeral meal was over. All during the meal, Judas has entertained the priest with the virtues of the deceased and the priest has fully agreed with him. "Oh Brother, Brother," Judas exclaims as he leaves the table, "you wouldn't stay on this earth with us!" and he extends his hand toward the priest with the palm turned up, asking him for his blessing. Finally, when everybody has had enough to eat and even managed to take a little nap, Judas walks around the house as its master, inspecting everything, checking the inventory, and glancing suspiciously at his mother each time his doubt is aroused.

These visions of the inevitable future kept flashing before Arina Petrovna's eyes. Judas's piercing, oily voice, addressing her, kept ringing in her ears:

"But you must remember, Mamma dear, my brother used to have those gold cuff links . . . very pretty they were. You know, he used to wear them on holidays. . . . Where on earth could they have vanished? I can't even begin to think. . . ."

Before Arina Petrovna even had time to get downstairs, a carriage drawn by four horses appeared on the hill by the Dubrovino church. In the back seat Porfiry Golovlov

sat solemnly, taking off his cap and crossing himself as they passed the church. Facing him on the folding seats sat his two sons, Peter and Vladimir. Arina Petrovna's heart sank. "The fox has caught the smell of death," she thought.

Her two granddaughters were frightened too and clung helplessly to her. The house, so quiet a few moments before, was suddenly filled with commotion. Doors banged, people ran in all directions shouting: "The master is coming, the master is coming!" and the entire population of the estate rushed out at once. Some crossed themselves, others simply stood there with an expectant look, but they all obviously knew that Dubrovino had been under interim rule, that now their fate would be settled for good under the real master. Many of the former serfs who were now too old to work were paid a monthly allowance by their "former" master; others fed the "former" master's hay to their own cows, had their own vegetable gardens, and in general led an easy life—so obviously they were anxious to know whether their "new" master would leave things as they stood or would introduce the practices prevailing on his Golovlovo estate.

Meantime, Judas drove up to the house, and judging by the reception he got, concluded that things were coming to a close at Dubrovino. Slowly, solemnly, he left the carriage, waved off the servants who hurried forward to kiss his hand, then, with his hands folded, proceeded into the house, whispering a prayer. His face expressed both sorrow and unquestioning resignation. As a man, he was grief-stricken; as a Christian, he didn't dare complain. He was praying for recovery but, above all, he accepted the will of God and was anxious to submit to it. His two sons, walking side by side, followed him. Vladimir imitated his father: he folded his hands in the same pious manner, moved his lips and rolled his eyes. Peter enjoyed his brother's performance. The silent crowd of servants followed behind them.

Judas kissed his dear mother's hand, then he kissed her cheek, then her hand again. Finally he put his arm around her, sadly shaking his head, and said:

"Oh Mother, you ought not to worry like this! It's very, very bad to worry the way you do! Just ask yourself:

'What would God say to it?' Well, He would say: 'I do everything for the best in My infinite wisdom and she's fretting!' Ah, Mamma, Mamma!"

Then, with the same warm family feeling, he kissed his nieces, saying sweetly:

"And you, my dears, come, dry your tears! I don't want to see you cry! Come on, give us a smile and there's an end to it!"

And he stamped his foot at them in pretended anger.

"Look at me," Judas said. "Being his brother, I'm grieved, naturally. Perhaps I've even let myself go a few times and wept. I'm sorry for my brother, terribly sorry, sorry to the point of tears. But whenever I feel like weeping I remember God. Who would dare claim that we know better than God how things should be? Reasoning this way makes me feel better at once. Everyone should think like this, and that includes you, Mamma darling, and you, my dear little nieces, and everyone in general!" he said, turning toward the servants. "Look how well I'm bearing up!"

And he tried to demonstrate how well he was bearing up: he straightened his shoulders, put one foot forward, thrust out his chest, threw back his head. Everyone smiled, but rather sourly, as though they were thinking: "There he goes again, the old spider!"

After this performance, Judas went into the drawing room where he kissed his mamma's hand once more.

"Well, so it goes, Mother darling," he said, installing himself on the sofa, "and now Pavel's turn has come. . . ."

"Yes, Pavel too," Arina Petrovna echoed quietly.

"Yes . . . yes. . . . It has come to him rather early. . . . You know, Mamma, I'm trying to keep control of myself, but I feel quite desolate about Pavel! Yes, I know my brother didn't like me. I should say he disliked me very much, and I knew it. Indeed, perhaps that's why God is punishing him now!"

"You don't have to bring it up at such a time. All the old grudges should be forgotten now."

"I've forgotten it all long ago, Mamma. I only mention it in passing. It's true that my brother disliked me, though I have no idea why. You know, I tried hard to be nice to him. I called him 'dear little brother' and 'my

very dear Pavel' and what not, but all in vain. He would have nothing to do with me. So God took things into His own hands and decided to shorten his life."

"I told you—there's no need to talk about that now! He's breathing his last."

"Yes, darling Mamma, death is a great mystery. One never knows the day or the hour. A man may have great plans and fancy he holds a very exalted, powerful position, but God can shatter all his aspirations in less than a second. Then he'd be only too glad to cover up all his sins, but it's too late; they have been entered in the Book of Life. And what has been entered there cannot be erased so easily."

"But surely, repentance leads to forgiveness."

"I'm sorry for my brother. I'm sorry from the bottom of my heart, although I know he didn't like me! I wish everyone well! Those who hate me, who have wronged me, everyone! He was unfair to me, and God sent him this disease, but it was God and not me who did it. Tell me, Mother dear, is he suffering much?"

"It's bad but not too bad. . . . The doctor even said there was still some hope," she lied.

"That's wonderful! So cheer up, Mamma, let's hope he'll recover yet! And perhaps while we're killing ourselves with grief and murmuring against our Creator, Pavel is sitting up quietly and thanking the Lord for his recovery."

Judas liked this idea so much that he gave a shrill giggle of joy.

"And you know what, Mamma dear? I've come to stay with you for a few days," he said in a tone which suggested he was giving her a pleasant surprise. "I must, my dear! One is a family man or one isn't! Anything can still happen, and I feel I ought to be here to give you comfort and advice and to make the necessary arrangements. You'll allow me to stay of course, won't you, Mother dear?"

"How can I allow or not allow? I'm only a guest here myself."

"Then you know what, dear, since it's Friday, I wonder if you'd be kind enough to order a meatless dinner for me. Perhaps some salt fish, mushrooms, and cabbage—you know, I'm not demanding. In the meantime, I'll go

up and see my brother. Who knows, perhaps I'll be in time; and even if I can't help his body, I may be able to do something for his soul. I dare say, in his position, that's the more important of the two. The body, Mother, we can keep going with all sorts of drugs and potions, but much more radical medicines are needed for the soul."

Arina Petrovna didn't object. A feeling of the inevitability of the "end" had taken hold of her completely, and she watched what was happening around her in a daze. She watched Judas get up from the sofa, groan, and stand there for a moment, hunched and shuffling his feet. He liked to occasionally play the role of an invalid, because he believed that it lent him dignity. She knew that the bloodsucker's sudden appearance in his room might upset the sick man and even hasten his end, but after all the emotions of the day, she was so utterly exhausted that she felt as if she were in a dream.

Meanwhile, Pavel was in a state of deadly anxiety. Lying all alone in his room upstairs he could hear that something unusual was going on in the house. There was something sinister about every banging door, every footstep in the passage. At first he called, shouting as loudly as he could. Then, realizing it was futile, he mustered all his strength, sat up in bed and listened closely. After a while the running around and the loud conversation gave way to a dead silence. Something unknown and frightening pressed against Pavel on all sides. The daylight just trickled through the drawn curtains, and the sanctuary lamp burning before the icon in the corner made the depths of the room look even darker. He stared at the mysterious corner as if for the first time he had been struck by something in its dark depths. The icon in its gilded frame reflected the light of the lamp with uncanny brightness; it shone in the darkness like a thing alive. A luminous circle flickered on the ceiling, growing brighter, then paler, then brighter again as the flame of the lamp flared or burned low. Below it, shadows danced in the semidarkness. Near the lighted corner a dressing gown hung on the wall, and the undulating light and fringes of shadow on it created the impression that it too was moving. As Pavel stared into the corner, every-

thing seemed to move there. Loneliness, helplessness, dead silence, and in the middle of it all, these shadows, a whole multitude of shadows. He thought they were coming, coming, coming toward him. . . . With incommunicable horror, his mouth and eyes wide open, he stared into the mysterious corner. He didn't cry out, but he moaned. His moans, repressed and spasmodic, sounded like the distant barking of a dog. He didn't hear the stairs creak nor the stealthy footsteps in the adjoining room. Suddenly Judas's loathed figure sprang up by his bed. Pavel thought it had come out of the shadows that had been moving so mysteriously before his eyes, that there were more, many more shadows there, shadows without end, and they were coming, coming. . . .

"Why? Where from? Who let him in?" Pavel cried, instinctively letting his head fall back limply on the pillow.

Judas stood by the bed looking at the sick man, sorrowfully shaking his head.

"Does it hurt?" he asked, in his sweetest possible voice.

Pavel fixed his mad eyes on him as if trying desperately to understand something. Suddenly Judas turned, went over to the icon, knelt by it, bowed three times to the ground, got up and returned to the bed.

"All right, Brother, you can get up. God has been merciful!" he said cheerfully, installing himself in the armchair with such an air of satisfaction that one might really have thought he had an assurance of God's "mercy" in his pocket.

Finally Pavel understood that this was not a phantom but his brother Judas in the flesh. He started shivering, feeling suddenly shrunken. Judas's eyes were looking at him with a warm, brotherly expression, but the sick man saw the noose that was hidden in them, a noose that at any moment would come flying through the air and tighten around his neck.

"Ah, Brother, Brother, what a sight you've become!" Judas went on, switching to a friendly, teasing tone. "Why, cheer up, get up on your feet and run down to see Mamma, show her what a fine fellow you've become! Come on, up you go!"

"Get out of here, Bloodsucker!" the sick man shouted in exasperation.

"Oh, my dear, dear brother! I come in all friendship to comfort you and you . . . what a terrible word to use! It's a terrible sin, you know, to say such things! How could you call your own brother that? You should be ashamed of yourself, my boy! Wait, let me plump up your pillow!"

Judas rose from the armchair and poked the pillow with his finger.

"That's better now! Now you'll be nice and comfortable! Have a good rest, you'll be comfortable now till tomorrow."

"You get out!"

"My, I must say sickness has spoiled you quite a bit. It has even changed your character—you've become so querulous! You keep sending me away, but think for yourself. How can I go away and leave you? Suppose you want a drink? I'll go and get you some water. Suppose the lamp runs out of oil? Well, I'll fill it again. Just lie quietly, and I'll sit by you, and we'll never even notice how the time goes by."

"Go away, Bloodsucker!"

"You see, you insult me while I'm praying to God for you. I know very well that it's your sickness that makes you say these things. But I'm accustomed to forgiving people and I forgive you everything. Today, for instance, driving here to see you, we came across a peasant on the road who said something. . . . Well, what of it? I only hope God will forgive him! He defiled his own tongue. But I didn't lose my temper at all. On the contrary, I made the sign of the cross over him—that's the truth!"

"I suppose you robbed him too . . . that peasant."

"Who, me? No, Brother, you're wrong. Highwaymen rob people, not me. I act strictly according to the law. I caught his horse in my meadow. All right, friend, go and complain to the judge! Now, if the judge says it's all right to graze your animals in other people's meadows, then God bless him, he can have his horse back. But if the judge says it isn't all right, well then, let him pay for it. I obey the law, my dear brother. I always obey the law!"

"You're Judas-the-Betrayer, you've robbed your mother of everything!"

"Again, think what you like, but I must repeat that what you say doesn't make much sense. And, if I weren't a good Christian, I might strongly resent that statement."

"Yes, yes, yes, you robbed her, made a beggar out of her."

"Wait a minute, wait a minute, calm yourself! I'll say a prayer—perhaps that'll make you feel a bit better. . . ."

Judas's control over himself was very strong, but the dying man's insults stung him so sharply that his lips twisted and paled. However, his hypocrisy was so deeply ingrained that he couldn't break off the comedy he was playing. He actually got down on his knees and remained there for a quarter of an hour, whispering and raising his arms to heaven. When he had gone through this and returned to the dying man's bed, his face was again relaxed, almost serene.

"As a matter of fact, Brother dear, I came here to talk business with you," he said.

He sat down in the armchair again. "While you go on insulting me," he continued, "I keep thinking of the salvation of your soul. Now tell me, how long is it since you last confessed?"

"What is this? Hey, Ulita! Agashka! Someone! Take him away from here!" Pavel groaned.

"Come, come, don't get so excited, my boy. I know you don't like to talk about these things. You've always been a very poor Christian and I suppose you always will be. Still, it might be a good thing if, in a moment like this, you gave some thought to your soul. You see, the soul is a delicate thing and must be handled carefully. Now, what does the Church teach us? Bring me, it tells us, thanksgiving and supplication. . . . And then too, we pray for a dignified, painless, Christian end to our existence. Remember that, my friend! I think you really ought to send for a priest and make a sincere repentance. . . . All right, all right, I won't! But really, it would be the right thing to do at this point."

Pavel's face was purple and he was almost choking. If he

could have smashed his own head, he would certainly have done so.

"Then I wanted to talk to you about the estate; have you made any arrangements yet?" Judas added. "It's a nice little estate you've got here, no doubt about that! The soil is even richer than in Golovlovo; there's more loam in it. And then there's the capital, of course. As you can imagine, I know nothing about your affairs, except that the government must have paid you for the land you made over to the peasants. I've never poked my nose into your affairs, but today, while driving over here, it occurred to me: 'Why, my brother Pavel must have some capital, and if he does, he must have made some arrangements already.'"

Pavel turned away, breathing deeply.

"You haven't made any arrangements? Oh, so much the better, my dear friend! It's much fairer if it passes to the rightful successor. That way the property won't go to a stranger, it'll remain in the family. Now take me, for instance. My health is very poor—you might even say I have one foot in the grave. Nevertheless, I don't bother with making a will. Why should I when I know that the law will take care of it for me? And think of the advantages, of doing things that way—no quarrels, no envy, no intrigues. Just leave the law to do the job!"

This was sinister. Pavel had the nightmarish sensation that he had been placed in his coffin while he was still alive, that he was lying fettered by lethargy, that he couldn't make the smallest movement, and that Judas the bloodsucker was jeering at his motionless body.

"Go away, in the name of Christ, go away!" he managed to gasp at his tormenter.

"All right, all right, take it easy, I'm going! I know you don't like me. . . . It's shameful, though, not to love your own brother! As for me, I love you. And I always tell my children that although my brother Pavel has wronged me, I still love him. So, my dear brother, I gather you haven't made any arrangements, and I think you're absolutely right there! Of course, sometimes people get robbed of their capital while they're still alive, especially if they have no family. . . . But don't worry, I'll look out for it now. And now, I bet you've had just about as

much of me as you can stand, right? All right, all right, have it your own way; I'll be off. First just let me say a prayer, then I'll be going."

He got up, folded his hands and whispered something.

"Farewell, my dear friend, have a good rest now, and who knows, perhaps, God willing, you'll be up again. In the meantime, Mamma and I will talk things over and perhaps we'll think of something! But I must tell you—I've asked for a meatless dinner. You know, some salt fish, some mushrooms and cabbage—so I hope you'll excuse me! What, I'm boring you again? Oh Brother, Brother! . . . Yes, yes, I'm going now! The main thing, my dear fellow, is not to worry, not to upset yourself. Just rest and sleep peacefully like this . . . zzz . . . zzz." He playfully pretended to snore, deciding finally that he could really leave now.

"Bloodsucker!" he heard behind his back.

The cry was so piercing that he almost felt that it had burned him.

While Judas was having his little chat with his brother upstairs, Arina Petrovna gathered her grandchildren around her and engaged them in a conversation from which she hoped to learn various things that interested her.

"Well, how are you getting along, Petya?" she asked Judas's elder son.

"Fine, Grandma, I hope to get my army commission next year."

"But will you get it? I heard you say that last year too. Perhaps the exams are too hard for you. . . . I don't know!"

"You know, Grandma, he flunked his catechism last time. The examining priest asked him 'What is God?' and he answered: 'God's a spirit, a spirit, and by the Holy Ghost!'"

"Ah, my poor, poor boy! Why, even my little orphans know better than that!"

"Oh, of course," Anninka hurried to display her erudition, "God is an invisible spirit . . ."

". . . Whom none has ever beheld," added Lubinka.

"Omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, infinitely merciful . . ." Anninka took over again.

"Whither can I hide from Thy Spirit and whither can I flee from Thy presence? Should I rise to Heaven, Thou wilt be there; should I descend into Hell there wouldst Thou be. . . ."

"See? That's how you should have answered and you'd be wearing your officer's epaulets by now. And you, Volodya," she said, addressing Vladimir, "what do you think of doing with yourself?"

Volodya turned beet red and remained silent.

"It looks as if you're likely to answer with something like 'and by the Holy Ghost' too. Oh, children, children, you look so sharp, yet learning seems to be too much for you. I would understand if your father spoiled you, but . . . How does he treat you now, by the way?"

"The same, Grandma."

"Does he still give you the stick? I understand he's given that up."

"Not so much, Grandma, but he's absolutely unbearable."

"I can't understand that at all! How can one say that one's father is unbearable?"

"Oh, but he is unbearable, Grandma. We can't go out without his permission, we can't take anything in the house—it's a real disgrace!"

"But why not ask for his permission? Your tongue won't fall out."

"Oh no! It's better not to start with him or it'll never end. 'Slow but sure,' he'll say and 'a stitch in time saves nine,' and more proverbs. No, Grandma, he's too much of a bore!"

"He listens behind doors, Grandma. The other day Petya caught him."

"You bad boys! Well, what did he say?"

"I told him: 'That's not right, Papa, listening behind doors like that. You could get your nose smashed that way.' But he said: 'It's nothing, boy, I'm like the Bible's thief in the night.'"

"And once, Grandma, he picked up an apple in the garden and put it in his cupboard. So I took it and ate

it, and after that he kept looking for it all over the place and cross-examined all the servants."

"What's come over him? Has he become that stingy?"

"Well, no, it's not really stinginess. It's that he's always concerned with the pettiest things. He picks up all sorts of scraps of paper and fruit that falls from the trees, and hides them away."

"Yes, and every morning he says morning prayers in his study and then gives us a bit of communion bread . . . stale as can be! So one day we played a trick on him. We discovered where he kept his communion bread, made a hole in the bottom, dug out the inside and filled it with butter."

"Well, I must say, you two are a real pair of bandits."

"No, but you should've seen how surprised he was the next day when he found the communion bread had butter inside it!"

"I bet he made it hot for you that time!"

"Not too bad. . . . Only all that day he was furious and kept muttering 'the pigs, the pigs . . .' Well, of course, we pretended we had no idea what it was all about. . . . But you know, Grandma, he's afraid of you."

"Afraid of me? Why, I'm no scarecrow, am I?"

"He's afraid, though. He's scared you might lay your curse on him. He's terribly scared of those curses, you know."

This made Arina Petrovna stop and ponder. At first, she thought: "What if I really did curse him—just like that? Decided to lay my curse on him then and there: 'I curse you!'"

But then she remembered a more pressing matter: "What can Judas be doing upstairs all this time? What tricks is he up to now? He must be surpassing himself."

Finally, she stumbled on a bright idea.

"Volodya," she said, "you're light on your feet, my boy. What about running quietly upstairs and seeing if you can hear what's going on?"

"It'd be a pleasure, Grandma."

Volodya tiptoed to the door and disappeared.

"What made you decide to come over here today?" Arina Petrovna asked Petya.

"We've been meaning to come over for a long time,

Grandma, and Ulita sent a messenger to tell Papa that Uncle was sure to die either today or tomorrow."

"And did your father say anything about the legacy?"

"Grandma, we spend our days talking about legacies. He keeps telling us about how it was even before Grandpa's time. He still keeps on about Gorushkino, Grandma. 'Wouldn't it have been nice,' he says, 'if Aunt Barbara had had no children, then Gorushkino would have belonged to us! And those children,' he says, 'God knows with whom she had them. But,' he says, 'never cast the first stone, seek not to remove the mote from your brother's eye. . . .'"

"You don't say! So that's the way he is. Aunt Barbara was legally married, and even if there were some irregularities, her husband covered them all up."

"But you know, Grandma, every time we drive past Gorushkino, he comes back to his claims: 'My grandmother, Natalia Vladimirovna, she came from Gorushkino, and according to every custom, it should belong to the Golovlov family now. But my late papa gave it to his sister as her dowry. And the melons,' he keeps telling us, 'you should've seen the Gorushkino melons, twenty pounds a piece! Incredible melons!'"

"'Twenty pounds,' he says. Well, I never heard of any twenty-pound melons! What ideas does he have about Dubrovino?"

"The same. Melons and cantaloupes, all sorts of trifles like that. Although lately he's been asking us: 'How large would you say Uncle Pavel's capital is, children?' He's been calculating it for a long time now, Grandma. How much money came in from the government for the land turned over to the peasants, how much has been paid on the mortgage, everything. . . . We saw the scrap of paper he was making his computations on, Grandma, and we took it and moved it. I think we almost drove him out of his mind with that piece of paper! He found it and put it in his desk, then we found it and put it in a bureau drawer. Then he discovered it there and locked the bureau with a key. But we had a key too and we took the list and stuck it in the communion bread. . . . Once he went to the bath house and that famous scrap of paper was on the shelf!"

"I can see you're having a gay time in Golovlovo!"

Volodya came back. All eyes turned toward him.

"I didn't hear much," he reported in a whisper, "except Father saying something about a painless, dignified, peaceful end and Uncle Pavel telling him 'Get out of here, Bloodsucker!'"

"And did you hear anything about the will?"

"I think something was said about it but I couldn't make it out. Father had closed the door too tightly. All I could hear was him buzzing and buzzing and then Uncle shouting suddenly: 'go-o-o awa-ay!' Then I got out of there quickly and came down here."

"If only he'd left something to the orphans . . ." Arina Petrovna mused dejectedly.

"Ah, Grandma, if my papa gets his hands on it, no one else will see any of it," Petya assured her. "I suspect he might even disinherit Volodya and me."

"But he can't take it to his grave with him."

"That no, but he's sure to find some way. I bet he was thinking of that the other day when I heard him asking the priest: 'What do you say, Father, would it take much money to build a new Tower of Babel?'"

"Oh, I'm sure he was just asking out of curiosity."

"No, no, Grandma, he really has some such scheme. If it's not a Tower of Babel, he'll leave his money to a monastery—anything rather than to us."

"Tell me, Grandma, will Father get much when Uncle dies?" Volodya asked.

"God alone knows who'll die first."

"Oh no, Grandma, Father's very good at working these things out. On our way here, as we passed the Dubrovino boundary, he took off his cap and said: 'God be praised, soon this will be our land again!'"

"Yes, Grandma, he has everything planned already. When he saw the wood, he said: 'It'll be a nice little wood when it's properly tended.' Then when we came to the meadow he said: 'Look, look at all those haystacks! There used to be a stud farm here once.'"

"Yes, yes, my dear boys, the wood and the meadow and everything will be yours soon," Arina Petrovna sighed. "Goodness! What's that? I think I heard the stairs creaking."

"Sh! Hush, Grandma! It's Papa listening behind the door, like a thief in the night."

They fell silent. But it was a false alarm. Arina Petrovna sighed and whispered under her breath: "Ah, children, children. . . ."

The two boys turned their attention to their cousins, staring at the girls as if preparing to feast on them. The girls remained silent. They were filled with envy of the boys.

"Tell me, Cousin, have you seen Mademoiselle Lotar?" Petya said, trying to start a conversation.

The girls looked at each other as if wondering whether the question was one about history or geography.

"You know, she plays the role of Helen in *La Belle Hélène*."

"Ah yes, yes, Helen! And then there's Paris, isn't there? You know, 'So young, so handsome—he set the goddesses' hearts aflame. . . .' Yes, yes, we know!" Lubinka rattled off happily.

"That's right, that's it! And the way she goes: '*Cas-ca-der, cas-ca-der*,' what a wonderful voice!"

"And here, yesterday, the doctor kept singing 'Head over Heels.'"

"'Head over Heels'? Oh, I heard that sung by the late Lyadova. *There* was a wonderful soprano for you, Cousin! When she died, a couple of thousand people followed her bier. . . . They were afraid there'd be a riot."

"So, you're chattering about theaters, my boy!" Arina Petrovna interrupted. "Theaters aren't for these girls, my friends. They belong in a convent."

"You always want to bury us in a convent, Grandma!" Anninka complained.

"Why, instead of going to the convent, Cousins, you just take off for Petersburg! We'll show you around!"

"They're not after pleasure, my boy, they're after godliness," Arina Petrovna insisted pointedly.

"All right, Grandma, we'll take them for a drive in a troika to the Sergius Monastery—that will take care of the godliness."

The girls' eyes sparkled and even the tips of their noses reddened at these words.

"They say the singing is fantastic at the monastery!" Anninka exclaimed.

"You may be sure of that, Cousin. You should hear them going through 'Let's put away all earthly care'. . . . It's a bit different from Papa's singing. And then we'll drive you to——"

"We'll show you everything, Cousins!" Volodya broke in. "We'll teach you everything!"

"There are plenty of nice girls like you in Petersburg," added Petya. "They walk around and their heels go bing-bing-bing on the streets."

"Yes, you'll probably show them that!" Arina Petrovna interrupted. "Just leave them alone, in the name of Jesus! What sort of things would you teach them? Some learning! After Pavel dies, I'll leave for Khotkov with them. We'll live there, and very nicely too."

"So you're using bad language, as usual!" came a voice from the door.

As they were talking, Judas had stolen up on them, like a thief in the night. His pale face was wet with tears, his head was bowed, his hands were folded on his chest, his lips moved. For a few seconds his eyes searched the room for the icon, and as soon as he'd located it, he raised his soul to heaven for a minute.

"He's in a terrible state, terrible!" he said when he had finished praying, putting an arm around his dearest mamma.

"Is he really that bad?"

"Very, very bad, Mother dear. . . . And to think what a fine-looking fellow he used to be!"

"When was that? I don't remember Pavel ever being fine-looking."

"How can you say that, Mother? He was always very handsome. I remember when he was graduated from military school, he was so tall and broad-shouldered, the picture of health. . . . Yes, I assure you, Mamma dear, it's the same with all of us. We all walk under God! Today we feel full of health, strong, longing to enjoy life, to eat something nice and . . . tomorrow. . . ."

He waved his hand in despair and a tear rolled down his cheek.

"Did he at least say something?"

"Not much, Mother dear, not much. He just said: 'Farewell, Brother!' But I know, Mother, I know he feels it's hopeless."

"Anyone with his chest being torn apart by coughing would realize that."

"No, no, that's not what I had in mind, Mamma. I was thinking of insight. When a man is dying, he always feels it coming. But sinners are refused this comfort."

"All right, all right, and did you talk to him about the will?"

"No, Mamma, I didn't. I think he was going to say something about it, but I stopped him. 'Stop, Brother,' I said to him, 'no need to talk about these things. Whatever you leave me in your kindness I'll greatly appreciate, and if you leave me nothing, I'll pray for you just the same.' And you should see, Mother, how much he wants to live! Oh, he wants to live so much!"

"Everyone wants to live."

"That's not quite true, Mother. If God, for instance, wished to call me this minute, why, I'd be happy to go!"

"You'd be lucky if God was the one to call you. And what would you say if you found yourself in the Devil's place? . . ."

The conversation continued in this vein until dinner time, during dinner, and after dinner. Arina Petrovna could hardly keep her seat, she was so impatient. And while Judas kept talking, the thought came back to her more and more insistently: "What if I really laid my curse on him?"

Judas never suspected that a storm was raging in his mother's heart. Looking perfectly composed and serene, he continued to exasperate his dear mamma with his inane chatter.

"I'll curse him, I'll curse him, I'll curse him!" Arina Petrovna repeated to herself with greater and greater determination.

The smell of incense. Mournful singing. The doors stood open: those wishing to pay their last respects to the deceased came and went. While he was alive, no one had paid much attention to Pavel Golovlov. Now that he was gone, everyone was sorry for him. Now they remembered

that "he had never harmed anyone," "never offended anyone," "never given anyone a nasty look." All these points, that had been viewed as purely negative, now appeared as something positive, and from the vague bits of funeral oration the picture of a "kindly landowner" began to emerge. Many repented having occasionally taken advantage of the deceased's simplicity—but then, how could they have suspected that the end of this simple man was so close? While things were going well, they had never thought that they might end, and then, suddenly. . . . But had the simple man remained alive, they'd have been fleecing him to this day. "Fleece him, lads. Whose fault is it if he's a fool?"

A peasant handed three rubles to Judas, saying:

"I owed this to the late master. There was no record of it, but here it is."

Judas took the money, praised the peasant, and told him he would use it to buy oil for the eternal light before the icon.

"And you, my friend," he added, "will see it. Everyone will see it, and the soul of the deceased will be happy. Who knows, perhaps he'll manage to do something for you up there? You may not be expecting anything and, all of a sudden, God will send you luck."

Comparison may have been a factor in people's evaluation of the dead man's virtues. They didn't like Judas. Not that it was impossible to get around him, but he was too preoccupied with petty matters and kept boring and pestering people. Few peasants wanted to rent his land because he demanded extra payment if they used one more square inch than they were entitled to. He also dragged a peasant to court if he was even a day overdue in his payments. This was often a waste of time because his mania for suing was well-known and the judges would dismiss the case outright. The importance of a good neighbor is emphasized in the proverb which advises the property buyer that a good neighbor is more important than a good house—and people knew what sort of a neighbor the master of Golovlovo was. What good was it if the court decided in your favor when Judas would keep pestering you to death? And since spite—or in this case, moral atrophy—overlaid with hypocrisy usually inspires

a sort of superstitious fear in people, Judas's new neighbors, to whom he referred as "my dear neighbors," bowed abjectly as they passed the bloodsucker, who, dressed in black, stood with his hands folded by his brother's coffin.

As long as the dead man was in the house, the members of the family walked on tiptoe and spoke in whispers, peeping into the dining room where the body was laid out in the coffin on the table.

Judas pretended to be at the end of his tether. He dragged his feet pathetically along the corridor, kept going up to the "dear departed" to straighten the pall, and whispered to the police inspector who was taking the inventory and sealing the chests and cupboards. Petya and Volodya were busy around the coffin, putting the candles in place, lighting them, holding the censer, and so on. Anninka and Lubinka shed tears and, through their tears, joined, in their high-pitched little voices, with the choir singing the requiem. Women servants in black calico dresses wiped their noses, which were red from crying, on their aprons.

After Pavel's death Arina Petrovna immediately retired to her room and locked herself in. She didn't have time to cry because she had to decide quickly what she was going to do next. Staying in Dubrovino was out of the question—"I'd not stay here for anything!"—so her only choice was to go to Pogorelka, the estate which now belonged to the orphans, the bone she had once tossed to their disobedient mother, her daughter Anna. Having made this decision, she felt considerably relieved, as though Judas had finally lost all power to harm her. She slowly counted out her five per cent bonds and found she had fifteen thousand rubles of her own and another fifteen thousand that she had saved for her granddaughters. Then she made a careful estimate of how much of this she would have to spend to put the Pogorelka estate in order. She immediately sent for the Pogorelka bailiff, gave him the necessary directions about hiring carpenters, and ordered him to have carts sent to Dubrovino to fetch the girls' luggage and her own. Her own carriage, which she kept at Dubrovino—she could *prove* it belonged to her personally—was made ready, and she began to pack.

She felt nothing about Judas, neither interest nor hatred. She simply did not want to have anything to do with him. She even ate reluctantly because what she was eating no longer belonged to Pavel, but to Judas. Judas knew that his mother wanted to leave but pretended not to notice anything. He made several attempts to go and have a chat with his dear mamma, but she wouldn't let him into her room.

"On your way, my boy, I haven't got the time!" she told him.

Three days later, she was ready to leave. They held the church service and buried Pavel. During the funeral, everything took place exactly as Arina Petrovna had visualized it on the morning that Judas had arrived. Just as she had imagined, he shouted: "Farewell, Brother!" as they were lowering the coffin into the grave, and just as she had foreseen, he turned to Ulita and told her to prepare a funeral repast and put on a clean tablecloth, "for we must honor the memory of my dear brother at the house."

The meal, in accordance with custom, was served as soon as they returned from the burial. The archdeacon, the deacon, and two other priests were present. A table was set apart in the hall for the sextons. Arina Petrovna and the girls came to the meal wearing their traveling clothes, but Judas pretended not to notice this. He approached a side table set with vodka and hors d'oeuvres and asked the archdeacon to bless the food and drink. Then he poured a glass of vodka for each member of the clergy and for himself and said in a voice trembling with emotion:

"Eternal memory to the deceased! Ah, Brother, Brother, why have you left us? Who would've seemed better fitted for life than you? But no, you've cruelly left us! How could you? How hard-hearted!"

Having said this, he tossed down his vodka and crossed himself. Then he crossed himself again, swallowed some caviar, crossed himself once more and sampled the smoked salmon.

"Help yourself, Father! This all comes from the larders of my departed brother! Pavel liked good food. He liked

to eat himself and enjoyed treating others even more. Ah, Brother, my dear brother! Why have you forsaken us like this? Oh, unkind, unkind Brother!”

He was so carried away by his own babble that he completely forgot about his mother. He suddenly remembered her just as he was lifting a spoonful of mushrooms to his mouth.

“Mother darling!” he cried, realizing his *faux pas*, “please forgive me, fool that I am! Here I’m gorging myself—Mother, please, have some of these mushrooms. Please help yourself. These are the famous Dubrovino mushrooms!”

But Arina Petrovna only nodded silently. She seemed to be listening to something with curiosity, to be seeing things in a new light. This comedy, which had repeated itself again and again ever since she was a child, this comedy, in which she herself had always taken part, suddenly appeared as something completely new, something she had never seen before.

The actual dinner was preceded by a family argument. Judas insisted that his dearest mamma should take her place at the head of the table, but she would not hear of it.

“You’re the head of the house here now, so you pick your place,” she said dryly.

“No, no, you’re the mistress, Mother dear. You’re always the mistress! You’re the mistress in Golovlovo and in Dubrovino—everywhere!”

“Come on, sit down! When God grants me a house to be mistress over, then I’ll sit where I please at the table without waiting for an invitation from you. But here you’re the master, so go on, take your place.”

“Here’s what we’ll do,” Judas said with feeling. “We’ll leave the master’s place empty as if Pavel were sharing our repast unseen. . . . And so, he’ll be the host and we his guests!”

And that was what they did. While soup was being served, Judas chose an appropriate topic and engaged the clergy in conversation, mostly, however, addressing the archdeacon alone.

“Nowadays,” he said, “one comes across many who

no longer believe in the immortality of the soul. But I do!"

"Hardened, hopeless characters perhaps . . ." the archdeacon said.

"No, not necessarily hardened even. . . . But there's a certain science, you know. It seems a man is all on his own—he lives and lives like that and then, all of a sudden, he's dead!"

"Too many of these sciences are spreading nowadays—we could easily do without some of them. People believe in sciences and then they don't believe in God. Even the peasants fancy themselves men of learning today."

"Yes, Father, yes, that's right. They all go in for learning these days. Take my Naglovo peasants, for instance. They've nothing to eat, but they've decided that they must have a village school . . . some learning!"

"There are sciences for everything today. There's a science for rain and a science to bring you fine weather. In the old days, it was quite simple. People would gather, have a service sung, and leave it to God. If it's sunshine that's needed, God'll send them sunshine, if it's rain, He'll give 'em rain, for he has rain to spare. God has plenty of everything. But since people have taken to science, everything's turned topsy-turvy. When you sow there's a drought, but when you reap it never stops pouring."

"That's right, Father, that's the holy truth! In the old days, when people prayed to God more often, even the soil was more fertile. The harvests today are not what they were. In the past, one reaped a hundredfold of what one sowed; nowadays it's four, maybe fivefold at the most. I bet my mother can remember that time, can't you, Mamma dear?" Judas said, trying to draw Arina Petrovna into the conversation.

"I can't remember even hearing about anything like that around here. But maybe you had the Land of Canaan in mind—they say it really happened there," she said coldly.

"Yes, yes," Judas continued, disregarding his mother's remark, "they don't recognize God, don't believe in the immortality of the soul, but they want to fill their bellies!"

"You've hit the nail on the head! All they're interested in is eating and drinking," the archdeacon concurred, roll-

ing up the sleeves of his cassock and helping himself to a piece of commemorative meat pie.

Then the soup monopolized their attention, and for a while the only sounds were the jingling of spoons and the priests' puffing as they blew on the hot liquid.

"Now, take the Roman Catholics," Judas said, putting his spoon down. "Although they don't actually reject the immortality of the soul, they claim it doesn't go directly to Hell or to Paradise, as the case may be, but to some place they call Purgatory."

"And that too is unfounded."

"Well, Father, how shall I put it?" Judas said thoughtfully. "If we speak from the viewpoint of——"

"No need to go into that nonsense. What does the Holy Church say? It says 'in a cool, green place without sorrows or sighs.' So where does that Purgatory come in?"

Judas, who couldn't quite go along with that, started to say something in reply, but his mother, irritated by the conversation, cut him short.

"Come on, eat, you theologian! Your soup must be getting cold." To change the subject, she asked the archdeacon: "Have you harvested your rye, Father?"

"Yes, ma'am, I have, and the rye is very good this year. But the spring crop doesn't look too promising. The oats began to wither before the grain had formed properly, so we can expect neither grain nor straw."

"Yes, everyone's complaining about the oats this year," Arina Petrovna sighed, watching Judas scooping up the last of the soup in his plate.

While the next course—ham and green peas—was being served, Judas took the opportunity to resume the interrupted conversation.

"Now, the Jews don't eat ham," he said.

"The Jews are no good, that's why people tease them with pigs' ears," the archdeacon explained.

"But Tartars don't eat ham either . . . so there must be some reason. . . ."

"The Tartars are no good either—that's the reason."

"Well, we don't eat horsemeat and the Tartars are disgusted by pork. And they say that during the siege of Paris, the French ate rats."

"Well, they're French, aren't they?"

So the conversation continued for a while. When carp in sour cream was brought in, Judas said:

"Do have some, Father, these are special carp! My late brother used to love them so. . . ."

When asparagus was served, he said:

"What do you think of this asparagus? In Petersburg you'd pay a ruble for it! My late brother looked after it personally. Look how fat it is, God bless it!"

Arina Petrovna was seething. After an hour, they were only halfway through dinner. Judas seemed to be delaying on purpose. He would eat a few mouthfuls, put down his knife and fork, chatter some, eat a few more mouthfuls, and chatter again. In the old days she had often shouted at him: "Come on, get on with your dinner, you devil. God forgive me!" But he must have forgotten his mother's impatience, unless he was doing it deliberately to annoy and punish her. Or maybe he wasn't doing it consciously, but was prompted by his spiteful nature. At last the main course arrived. But just when they had all risen and the archdeacon was intoning the prayer for the departed, there was scuffling and shouting in the corridor. It completely destroyed the solemn effect of the prayer.

"What's that noise?" Judas shouted. "Do they imagine this is a tavern?"

"Do me a favor, stop shouting. They're only bringing down my suitcases," Arina Petrovna said, adding with a touch of sarcasm: "Would you like to inspect them?"

Suddenly there was complete silence. At first, even Judas turned pale and seemed at a loss. But he recovered soon enough, realizing that he must remove the unpleasant impression left by his mother's remark. He turned toward the archdeacon and said:

"Take woodcocks, for instance. There are so many of them in Russia, while in other countries——"

"Get on with your dinner, for God's sake! Don't you realize we have twenty miles to drive and we'd like to get there before dark? Petya, my boy, tell them to hurry up and bring the dessert!"

A silence that lasted for quite a while followed. Judas quickly ate his helping of woodcock and sat looking pale, his lips twitching, his foot tapping nervously against the floor.

"You like to offend me, my dear, dear mamma. Oh, how you like to offend me!" he said at last, without looking at her.

"How can anyone offend you! And tell me, how have I offended you so badly?"

"I'm terribly offended and hurt. Terribly! Why do you have to leave, especially at such a moment? You've lived here all this time and now, suddenly . . . all these suitcases . . . and that remark about my inspecting them. . . . Yes, you've offended me terribly!"

"All right, if you want to know the truth, I'll tell you. I lived here as long as my son Pavel was alive; now that he's dead, I'm leaving. As for the suitcases, Ulita has been watching me for a long time on your orders. In my opinion, it would've been much better if you'd told your mother that you didn't trust her, instead of hissing at her like a snake from behind another's back."

"Mamma darling! How can you?" Judas groaned. "I always——"

"That's enough!" Arina Petrovna cut him short. "I've said what I had to say."

"But, my dear, how could I . . ."

"I told you, I've said what I had to say, so leave it at that. Let me go in peace, for God's sake. I hear my carriage."

A jingling of bells and rattling of wheels came from the yard. Arina Petrovna was the first to rise from the table. The others followed her example.

"Now, let's go and sit down for a minute, then we'll be on our way," she said, moving into the drawing room.

They all sat down in silence. This gave Judas time to recover himself.

"But you know, Mamma, you could stay here in Dubrovino. It's so nice here!" he said, looking into his mother's eyes with the affection of a dog that's been naughty.

"No, my boy, that's enough now. Don't make me say unpleasant things to you just as I'm leaving. There's no reason for me to stay here. Let's have a prayer, Father."

They all rose and said a prayer. Arina Petrovna kissed and blessed everyone, as the head of a family would. Then, treading heavily, she walked toward the

door. Judas, as the head of the household, saw her off to the front steps. All went well until suddenly cupidity tempted him at the sight of the carriage. "Why, that carriage must've belonged to Pavel!" he said to himself.

"So, see you very soon, dearest Mamma," he said aloud, helping her into the carriage and, at the same time, examining it out of the corner of his eye.

"If God so decides, we'll meet all right."

"Oh, Mamma, Mamma, aren't you a naughty girl! Order them to unharness the horses, come back to your old nest, and God bless you. Really, Mamma!" Judas kept prattling.

Arina Petrovna didn't even answer him. She had settled into her place and had even crossed herself for the journey, but the girls were somehow taking a long time.

Meanwhile, Judas kept throwing sidelong glances at the carriage.

"And what about the carriage, Mamma? Will you send it back yourself or would you like me to send someone to fetch it?"

Arina Petrovna began to shake with indignation.

"It's my carriage!" she shouted in a voice that had such a hysterical edge that everyone who heard it felt uncomfortable and embarrassed. "It's mine! It's mine! It's my own carriage! I got it . . . I have proofs . . . witnesses! And you! . . . I'll show you . . . well, I'll wait and see what becomes of you. . . . Come on, children, how long'll you take? Hurry! . . ."

"But, Mother, I didn't say a thing. Even if the carriage had belonged to the Dubrovino estate—"

"It's my carriage! Can't you hear? It doesn't belong to the estate, it's mine! Don't you dare say that again! Do you hear me?"

"I hear, Mother, I hear. All right. Fine. Don't forget us, dear. Please drop in on us, simply, you know, without ceremony. We'll come and visit you and you'll come and visit us. We're all one family, you know."

"Everyone in? All right, go!" Arina Petrovna shouted, hardly able to control herself.

The carriage stirred and the horses trotted slowly along the driveway. Judas stood by the doorstep, waving his

handkerchief and calling, as long as the carriage was in sight:

“Like one united family—we’ll call on you, and you on us!”

III

FAMILY ACCOUNTS

ARINA PETROVNA had never imagined that the day would come when she'd be considered just another mouth to feed. And now that day had crept up on her. And it had happened at a point when for the first time in her life she realized that her physical and mental faculties had deteriorated. Such realization always comes suddenly; the deterioration may have set in long before, but one steels oneself and keeps on one's feet until suddenly a final blow hits one from the side. It is hard to see this blow coming and ward it off. And, afterward, one can only resign oneself, because such a blow instantly turns an active person into a hopeless ruin.

Arina Petrovna's position had been difficult enough when she broke with Judas and went to live in Dubrovino. But she knew that her son Pavel could well afford to support her even if he wasn't overjoyed at her company. Now things were quite different. She found herself the head of a household in which every slice of bread counted. She herself understood the value of each piece of bread, for having spent all her life in contact with peasants, she had acquired their attitude that one more mouth to feed presents a real burden to a household which is already hard up.

Still, when she first arrived in Pogorelka, she kept up her courage and put her new home into shape, displaying her old sharp judgment and efficiency. But the running of

the small Pogorelka estate involved many petty chores and demanded constant personal supervision. In her first enthusiasm, Arina Petrovna thought that farming would be simple where the accounting was done in coppers. But soon enough she found she was wrong. Perhaps there was nothing much to it, but she did not have her previous energy or her old strength. Moreover, it was autumn, when the supplies had to be gathered in but when Arina Petrovna's zeal was limited by the bad weather. The infirmities of old age prevented her from leaving the house. Long, dismal evenings condemned her to idleness. The old woman worried, became restless and impatient, but there was nothing she could do about it.

In addition, she couldn't help noticing that something was wrong with the orphans. They had become bored and depressed. They were agitated by hazy visions of a future of work and pleasure—quite innocent, of course. These visions were built on memories of boarding school, odds and ends they had read about men of duty, and some faint hope of using their school connections to find their way into a brighter world. But these vague notions were dominated by one open, insistent desire—to get away from odious Pogorelka. And indeed, one morning, Anninka and Lubinka announced to their grandmother that they could no longer bear to remain there, nor would they. They declared that it was no life, that they never saw anyone at Pogorelka but the priest, and every time he came, he mentioned virgins who had put out their lamps. "This can't go on," the girls said. They spoke sharply because they were afraid of their grandmother, especially since they expected a violent reaction from her. But to their surprise, Arina Petrovna heard out their grievances without anger and even without the admonitions to which old people are so prone. She was no longer the strong-willed woman who used to say with such authority: "I'll leave for Khotkovo Convent and take the girls along with me!"

But it was not only the weakness of old age that had changed Arina Petrovna. It was also a newly acquired understanding of something better, something truer. The latest blows had done more than leave her resigned; they had illuminated certain recesses of her mind into

which her thought had never penetrated before. She understood now that there are longings buried deeply in man which may remain dormant, but which, once awakened, pull him irresistibly toward the glimmering ray of light which his eyes have long sought in the surrounding darkness. Having once understood man's right to this longing, she could never again oppose it. True, she tried to dissuade her granddaughters from their project, but her efforts were without conviction. She was worried about what was in store for them, since she herself had no connections in so-called society, but at the same time she felt that parting with the girls was inevitable. What was to become of them? This question haunted her every moment. But neither this nor more formidable questions have ever held back those who long for freedom, and the girls had only one thought in their heads—to get away from Pogorelka. Finally, after some hesitation and a few postponements made to please their grandmother, they left.

With the girls gone, Pogorelka was plunged into gloomy quiet. Although Arina Petrovna was by nature very self-sufficient, she too appreciated the warming effect of a human presence. Now, with her granddaughters gone, she felt, perhaps for the first time, that something had been torn from her; having suddenly been given unlimited freedom of action, she found she could see nothing ahead but empty space. She ordered the drawing room and the girls' bedroom closed up so she would not feel this emptiness so acutely.

"That," she said to herself, "will also save firewood."

For herself, she retained only two rooms. In one, she had a large icon stand placed; in the other, she slept and ate, and did her accounts. To make further savings, she dismissed all the servants, except the housekeeper, Afmya, who was very old and could hardly walk, and the one-eyed Markovna, a soldier's wife who prepared the meals and washed the clothes.

But the feeling of emptiness managed to creep into the two rooms from which she had hoped to exclude it. Hopeless loneliness and oppressive inactivity were enemies with whom she was doomed to spend her old age. And in their wake came disintegration, both physical and mental,

particularly cruel since her idle life contained nothing to combat it.

The days followed one another with the depressing monotony typical of life in the country when it is not particularly comfortable and isn't filled with the absorbing business of running an estate or any special intellectual pursuits. Besides the external reasons that prevented her from participating directly in the work, she felt a revulsion for the petty scale of the concern that had fallen to her lot so late in life. She might have overcome this disgust if she had had some goal. But the whole world seemed sick and tired of her and she felt sick and tired of the world. Her former sustained activity gave way to drowsy idleness, and this idleness corrupted her will little by little, bringing to the surface inclinations that, a few months earlier, she herself would never have suspected. The strong, self-controlled woman, whom no one had dared to call old, became a wreck for whom there was no past or future but only the present moment that had to be endured.

During the day she dozed mostly. She sat in her armchair and dozed, a pack of greasy cards spread in front of her on the table. Sometimes she would wake up with a start and look out of the window. Then, without a thought in her head, she would keep gazing at the open countryside stretched out before her. Pogorelka was a sad estate. There was no garden, not a single shade tree, nothing to make it look inviting. There weren't even any flowerbeds in front of the house, which had only one story and seemed crushed under a weight. It was weather-beaten and blackened with age and the barns and sheds behind it were also old and ramshackle. The buildings were surrounded by unbroken fields, even on the horizon there were no woods to be seen. However, Arina Petrovna had spent all her life in the country, and this bleak landscape, instead of depressing her, stirred up the remnants of feeling smoldering inside her. The best part of her lived in these bare, boundless fields and, instinctively, her eyes always sought them. She gazed intently at the rain-soaked villages dotting the horizon, at the white country churches, at the splotches that the clouds, roving through the rays of the sun, cast on the flat land below, at a peasant trudg-

ing between the furrows, who seemed, from that distance, frozen in his tracks. She thought of nothing, or rather, her thoughts were so fragmentary that they never dwelled on anything for any length of time. She simply looked and looked until the buzz of senile sleepiness filled her ears and a veil of fog spread over the fields, the churches, the villages and the trudging peasant in the distance.

Sometimes she remembered. But the past came to her in fragments. She couldn't concentrate her attention on any one of them, and kept wandering from one recollection to another. However, now and then she would be struck by something, usually a painful rather than a happy memory—there had been few joys in her past—some bitter, unrelieved injury. Then the smoldering sadness inside her flared up and tears came to her eyes. She cried bitterly, painfully; the senile tears rolled out of her old eyes as if squeezed out under the weight of a nightmare. But as the tears flowed, the unconscious train of her thoughts led her away from the source of sadness, and a few minutes later the old woman would be wondering what had been the matter with her.

Arina Petrovna seemed to live without actually taking part in life. It was as if the old ruin went on functioning because there were still some loose ends in it that had to be tied up. As long as these ends were there, life went on, forcing the ruin to go through the outward motions in its half-conscious existence that prevented it from disintegrating.

The days passed in semi-conscious drowsiness, but the nights were really racking. At night, she was *afraid*. She was afraid of thieves, of ghosts, of evil spirits—of everything that her life and upbringing had taught her to dread. And she didn't have much protection to reassure her, for apart from the two old women servants she had kept, there was only the night watchman, a lame peasant called Fedosey who, for two rubles a month, came up from the village in the evenings and mostly dozed in the entry, getting up at regular intervals to strike his "all's well" on a sheet of iron. There were some peasant men and women living around the cattleyard, but they were almost out of range of a call from the house.

There is something oppressive, sinister about a sleep-

less night in the country. After nine, or at the latest ten, life stops and an awe-inspiring silence envelops everything. There's nothing to do with oneself and, besides, it's a shame to waste candles. So one goes to bed.

Once the samovar was removed from the table, Afimya the housekeeper, following a habit acquired under serfdom, spread her mat by the door of her mistress's room, scratched herself, yawned a few times, and dropped into a dead sleep. The maid Markovna fussed in the servants' room a while longer, grumbled, cursed someone, then settled down. Within a minute she could be heard snoring, muttering something in her sleep, snoring again. The night watchman struck his sheet of iron a few times to make his presence known, then dozed off again.

Arina Petrovna sat in front of a guttering candle trying to combat her drowsiness with a game of patience. But as soon as the cards were laid out, sleepiness overcame her.

"I'd better watch out, I might set the place afire if I fell asleep," she said to herself, and decided to go to bed. But she had no sooner sunk into the featherbed than sleep, which had been tormenting her throughout the evening, suddenly vanished. Warm air pouring in from the stove overheated the room. She felt unbearably hot in the featherbed. She tossed from side to side, felt like calling out but knew that no one would come to her call. All around her reigned a mysterious silence from which her straining ear plucked various strange sounds. A door slammed somewhere, there was a sudden howl, there seemed to be someone walking along the corridor, a breath of air passed through the room—she felt it on her face. The dim light of the icon lamp made objects look like mere outlines of themselves. Another light fell through the open door from the adjoining room where four or five small lamps were lit before the icon stand. This light lay on the floor in a yellow oblong, cutting into the half-darkness of the bedroom. And everywhere the swaying, noiseless shadows. A mouse scratched behind the wallpaper; Arina Petrovna hushed it: "Sh . . . you dirty thing!" And everything became quiet once more. Again the shadows, again a whisper coming from nowhere. Thus most nights passed in painful, restless

dozing; deep sleep came only with the approach of dawn. And at six in the morning, she was on her feet, exhausted by her sleepless night.

To all these things, enough in themselves to make her existence miserable, was added the discomfort of the house and a sparse diet.

She ate little and poorly, hoping perhaps to make up for her failure to manage the estate properly. As to the house, it was old and damp; the room in which Arina Petrovna spent all her time wasn't cleaned for weeks at a stretch and was never aired. In this helpless situation, without comfort or care, Arina Petrovna was slowly decaying.

But the more decrepit she became, the stronger grew her appetite for life. Actually it would be more accurate to say that it was her desire to enjoy life that increased, for she never gave a thought to death. Before, she had feared it but now she seemed to have completely forgotten that such a thing existed. And since her ideals in life differed very little from those of any peasant, her concept of enjoyment was down to earth. Everything she had refused herself in the past—a tasty morsel, a good rest, a talk with interesting people—all these became the objects of constant longing. And with this, all the traits of a "dependent person"—idle talk, greed, anxiety to please in order to obtain something—developed in her with surprising speed.

She lived mostly on cabbage soup made with meat that was none too fresh, which she shared with the servants, while she dreamed of the Golovlovo stores, of the carp in the Dubrovino ponds, of the chickens being fattened in the poultry yards that had been hers.

"Wish I could have a little soup with goose giblets now, or some mushrooms in sour cream." The thought would flash through her head so vividly that even the corners of her mouth would droop.

And at night as she tossed in her bed, freezing with terror at every creak, she would say to herself:

"Now, in Golovlovo, the bolts are fast and the watchmen are trustworthy—they bang on their gongs throughout the night, and one can sleep as safely as in God's heaven."

During the day she went for hours without exchanging a word with anyone and in this enforced silence she couldn't help thinking:

"In Golovlovo there are plenty of people to have a heart-to-heart talk with!"

So a minute seldom went by without her remembering Golovlovo, and as time passed it became the focus of light and the good life.

The more her imagination became obsessed with Golovlovo, the more she longed for it and the farther wrongs done her receded into the background. A Russian woman's upbringing and life dispose her to easily accept the role of a dependent. Arina Petrovna was unable to avoid this fate, although all her past life should have warned her of its unpleasantness and helped her to avoid it. If she had not made the mistake of dividing the property between her sons, if she hadn't trusted Judas, she would now have been an aggressive and demanding old matriarch making them all eat out of her hand. But since the mistake was an irrevocable one, the transition from whimsical aggressiveness to dependent submissiveness had been only a question of time.

As long as she had had a remnant of her former strength left, her breakdown had not become apparent. But as soon as she realized fully that she was helpless and doomed to loneliness, all sorts of cowardly impulses crept into her heart and, little by little, undermined her already crumbling will.

Judas, who had previously been received so coolly in Pogorelka, suddenly ceased to be repulsive to Arina Petrovna. She somehow forgot the old grudges and made a gesture of reconciliation toward her son.

It started with begging. Messengers were dispatched to Judas, first at rare intervals, then more and more frequently. She informed him that the mushroom crop in Pogorelka was very poor; also the rain had turned the cucumbers spotty; then there were those turkeys dying in "these days of emancipation, you know"; and once she requested Judas to have some carp sent her from the Dubrovino pond, for her "late son, Pavel, never refused them to his old mother."

Judas screwed up his nose but didn't dare voice his

displeasure. He hated to part with his carp but he feared his mother's curse even more. He remembered her threatening him once:

"I'll come to Golovlovo, order the church opened, summon the priest, and shout: 'I lay my curse on him!'"

This memory stopped him from doing many of the mean, underhanded things at which he was so skilled.

But even as he fulfilled her wishes, he hinted to those around him that everyone had to bear the cross of God, that that cross was there for a good purpose, for without it a person lets himself go and slips into debauchery. However, he wrote to her:

I'm sending you, my dearest mamma, all the cucumbers I can spare. With respect to the turkeys, however, I must inform you that, except for those that are kept for stock, we have nothing but turkey cocks, which because of their huge size and your limited household, are quite useless. But wouldn't you like to come to Golovlovo and share my modest dinner? We would kill one of these hangers on (I call them that with reason, because my cook Matveich is very good at turning them into capons) and roast it, and then, my dearest mother, we'd feast to our hearts' content.

After that Arina Petrovna went often to Golovlovo. In Judas's company, she ate turkey and duck, slept well at night, and after dinner had long, heart-to-heart chats with him about trifling matters. In this Judas was an expert by nature, and she had become one as a result of old age.

Even when the news reached her that Judas, bored with his long widowhood, had engaged a priest's daughter called Eupraxia as housekeeper, she didn't cease her visits to Golovlovo. On the contrary, as soon as she found out about it, she drove over there, and before she was even out of her carriage, called out to her son with a sort of childish impatience:

"Come on, you old sinner, let's have a look at your beauty!"

She had a marvelous day, enjoying every moment. Eupraxia waited on her at dinner and prepared her bed

for her, and in the evening, the three of them played cards together—she, Judas and his beauty.

Judas was also delighted with the turn things had taken, and when his mother left for Pogorelka, he ordered a pound of caviar to be put into her carriage. This, of course, was a mark of the highest consideration, for caviar was not homemade but bought. The old woman was so touched that she couldn't help exclaiming:

"Well, for that . . . thank you, very, very much! God will love you, my boy, for looking after your mother and spoiling her in her old age. Now it won't be so bad when I'm back in Pogorelka! I've always loved caviar, and now, thanks to you, I'll have a real treat!"

Five years had passed since Arina Petrovna had moved to Pogorelka. In all that time Judas had never budged from Golovlovo. He had aged considerably, faded, grown gray, but he cheated people, lied and chattered worse than ever. And now he had the ear of his dear mamma, who for the sake of a tasty tidbit became the constant receptacle of his drivel.

Judas was not a hypocrite of the Tartuffe type, nor was he like any contemporary French bourgeois who sings like a nightingale on the subject of social justice. No, if he was a hypocrite, he was one of a purely Russian brand, that is, a man deprived of any moral scale of values, a man without any idea of the truth beyond what's found in copybook adages. He was boundlessly ignorant, petty, false, an inveterate babbler; on top of all this, he was terrified of the devil. These are negative traits that offer no solid ground for positive hypocrisy.

In France, hypocrisy is a result of upbringing. It is, we may say, a part of good manners, and almost always has a clearly political or social coloring. There are hypocrites in religion, social morality, property, family, patriotism, and what not. Recently, there have even appeared hypocrites preaching stability.

This type of hypocrisy doesn't qualify as conviction, but it is still a banner around which rally people who find it rewarding to advocate hypocritically one particular set of ideas rather than another. And they are consciously hypocritical about their banner; they even know that

others know that they are hypocritical. A French bourgeois visualizes the world as a huge stage on which one hypocrite gives his cue to another. Hypocrisy is an inducement to decency, to decorum, to elegant appearances; most important, it is a bridle restraining people. It isn't, of course, supposed to restrain those who practice it at the top of the social cauldron but only those crawling around at the bottom of it. Hypocrisy keeps passions under control, making their indulgence the privilege of a tiny minority. As long as the release of passion is confined to a small, tightly knit group, it is not dangerous. In fact, it is even useful in supporting and nourishing the traditions of graceful living. Graceful living would have perished without the *cabinets particuliers* where it can be practiced at moments free from the hypocritically proclaimed official cult.

But such license becomes a real threat as soon as it comes within general reach and is combined with the granting of freedom to everyone to put forward his claims and to establish their legality and natural foundation. Then new social layers spring up, which, if they don't completely push out the old, at least considerably limit their freedom. The demand for *cabinets particuliers* becomes so great that the question is bound to arise: wouldn't it be much simpler to do away with them altogether? It is precisely to avoid such a state of affairs that the ruling classes of French society sponsor and protect systematic hypocrisy, which, not content to trust to custom, tries to make a social habit into a compulsory law.

With few exceptions, the contemporary French theater is based on just such a respect for hypocrisy. The heroes of the best French dramatic works, that is, of those works which are most successful in their strikingly realistic depiction of the sordid aspects of life, always find a few moments toward the end of the play in which to put straight their dirty tricks with a few loud phrases proclaiming the sacredness and sweetness of virtue. Adèle may go on defiling her marriage bed throughout four acts, but in the fifth, she's sure to declare for all the world to hear that home and family are the only haven in which a Frenchwoman can find happiness. You may

wonder what would happen to Adèle if the author had decided to add another five acts to the play. Well, you may be sure that for the four ensuing acts she would have resumed her infidelities, and in the final act would have addressed the audience once more with a similar declaration about the sanctity of the family.

In fact, there is no need to be hypothetical about it. Just take the trouble to visit the *Théâtre Français*, go from there to *Gymnase* and then to either *Vaudeville* or *Variétés*, and you'll find everywhere Adèle defiles her husband's bed for four acts, and in the fifth proclaims that family is the only altar at which an honest French woman can worship.

This has so permeated mores that no one notices that the most foolish contradiction is hidden in it. The truth of life and the truth of hypocrisy walk hand in hand and have so intermingled that it has become hard to say which of the two is the more entitled to recognition.

We Russians have no strongly biased methods of education. We are not drilled. Nobody tries to make us future champions or advocates of various social principles. We are simply left alone, and we grow like nettles under a fence. That's why there are so few hypocrites among us and so many liars, bigots, and babblers. We don't find it necessary to be hypocritical about social principles, for we don't know of any and don't use them to justify our behavior. We exist quite independently, that is, we vegetate, lie, and chatter according to our own imagination, without any principles being involved.

Whether we should congratulate ourselves on this or deplore it is none of my concern. I believe, however, that while hypocrisy can provoke indignation and fear, aimless lying produces only boredom and disgust. So it seems best to set aside the debate on whether conscious or unconscious hypocrisy is the better and lock out both hypocrites and liars.

So, Judas was not so much a hypocrite as a liar, a nasty person, and a babbler. Once settled in the country, he felt released from all restraints, for there was nowhere else where his inclinations could develop so freely. In Golovlovo he never met direct resistance, nor

was he even restrained by any indirect consideration, such as: "My, it would be nice to play that dirty trick but it'd be awkward with all these people around."

No one's opinion bothered him; there were no embarrassing glances to disturb him—so he had no reason to control himself. A limitless slovenliness took hold of him. For a long time he had been fascinated by this boundless freedom from all moral considerations, and he had not moved to the country sooner only because he was afraid of idleness. Having spent thirty years in the dull environment of a government office, he had acquired all the habits and inclinations of a hardened bureaucrat who cannot stand for a minute to be free from pretending to himself that he is busy. However, having soberly appraised the situation, he came to the conclusion that the world of official, active idleness was transferable and could easily be moved to another sphere. Indeed, as soon as he settled in Golovlovo, he created for himself a mass of trifles and little details which he could go on turning over without danger of ever running out of an occupation.

Every morning he sat down at his desk and went to work. He checked the accounts of the manager, the dairymaid and the housekeeper, first by one method, then by another. Then he devised a very complicated system of bookkeeping both for money and for goods: each kopek, each item had to be entered in twenty books. When he drew up the balances, he sometimes found himself short by half a kopek; at other times, he discovered a kopek too much. Finally, he would take his quill and write complaints to the justice of the peace or to the court of arbitration. All these activities left him without a free moment and even created the impression that he was doing the work of several men. So Judas, instead of complaining of idleness, complained that he couldn't cope with everything he had to do; he spent his days at his desk without even changing from his dressing gown. Heaps of detailed but still unchecked accounts piled up on his desk, including the yearly accounts of the dairymaid, Fekla. Her activities had struck him as suspicious from the beginning, but he had never yet found a spare moment to go into the matter.

All contact with the outside world was definitely broken off. He received no books, no newspapers, not even letters. His son Volodya had committed suicide, and he only wrote to his surviving son, Petya, on the rare occasions when he sent him money. A thick atmosphere of ignorance, superstition and pointless fuss pervaded the whole place, but he never felt the slightest desire to clear it.

He didn't find out that Napoleon III was no longer the ruler of France until the local police inspector told him a year after the emperor's death. And even then, it didn't seem to make any special impression upon him. He crossed himself and muttered: "May he rest in peace," and added:

"And to think how proud he used to be! This wasn't right for him and that wouldn't do! Kings used to go and pay him their respects and princes waited in his anteroom to be received. But God just decided and, in less than one minute, destroyed all his hopes."

Actually, Judas had no idea what was happening on his estate, although he sat juggling his figures from morning till night. In this respect he was a true, hardened civil servant. Imagine an official being told by his superior:

"Look here, my friend, I need to know how many potatoes Russia can produce in a year. I would like you to make a detailed estimate."

Do you think the official would be dismayed by such a request, or give so much as a thought to the methods he might use to compute the figure? Oh, no! He'd proceed quite simply. He'd draw a map of Russia, divide it into perfectly equal squares, calculate the area of each square, then walk over to the nearest grocery store and inquire how many seed potatoes are planted per acre and how many are harvested on the average from each acre. Finally, with the help of God and of the four basic operations of arithmetic, he'd calculate that, under favorable conditions, Russia could produce so many potatoes and under unfavorable conditions, so many. And the chances are that this labor would not only satisfy his superior but would also find its way into Volume 102 of some *Economic Papers*.

Even the housekeeper he had chosen fitted into the

atmosphere Judas had created. Eupraxia was the daughter of the sexton of the Church of St. Nicholas and was a real treasure any way you looked at it. She was not quick-witted, nor clever, nor even efficient, but to make up for all that, she was willing, meek, and altogether undemanding. After Judas had become intimate with her, she asked him only whether now she might pour herself a glass of kvass when thirsty without first asking his permission. Judas was so moved by her discretion that, in addition to the kvass he immediately put at her disposal a couple of barrels of pickled apples, freeing her from all accounting for these items.

Her looks would not have appealed to a connoisseur, but for a man who wasn't too fussy and who knew what he was after, she was quite adequate. Her broad face was pale, her forehead narrow, framed by thin, straw-colored hair, her eyes big and dull, her nose perfectly straight, her mouth inconspicuous and twisted into an enigmatic, fleeting half-smile such as one finds sometimes on portraits painted by self-taught painters. All in all, there was nothing remarkable about her except perhaps her back, which was so wide and so strong that Judas, who should have been least likely to do such a thing, would lift his hand and give the girl a resounding smack between her shoulder blades. She was aware of this and wasn't offended by it. So, the first time Judas patted her on her big neck, she merely wriggled her shoulders.

In those dull surroundings the days followed one another without change or any hope of something's happening which would be like a breath of air freshening the atmosphere. Only Arina Petrovna's visits livened things up a little. Although Judas at first frowned when, far down the road, he saw his mother's carriage approaching his house, he soon grew accustomed to her visits and then actually came to enjoy them. She satisfied his need for chatter and pretense, for if he could manage to chatter and pretend when he was all alone with his accounts, it was much easier to do so in the presence of his dearest mamma. When they were together, they chatted from morning to evening and could never get their fill. They spoke of everything, of past and current harvests, of the way

landowners used to live and how they lived now, of the pickled cucumbers which, whether because the salt was not what it used to be or for some other reason, nowadays didn't taste nearly as good as they used to. . . .

These conversations had the advantage of running like water and being forgotten immediately afterward. They could be taken up at any time and always with unabated interest as if they were being opened for the first time. Eupraxia, who was present during these colloquies, became so dear to Arina Petrovna that she wouldn't let her out of her sight. Sometimes, tired of chattering, the three sat down to play cards and kept at it until late at night. (Arina Petrovna had tried to teach Eupraxia to play dummy-whist, but it proved to be beyond her.) The huge Golovlovo house seemed to come to life on such evenings. Lights shone from the windows and shadows flitted to and fro, so that a passer-by might have imagined that life was very gay inside. Samovars, pots of coffee, and snacks remained on the table all day, and Arina Petrovna became cheerful and happy; instead of one day, she would stay two, three, and even four. And when she finally left for home, she was already inventing a pretext to return as soon as possible to the temptations of Golovlovo's good life.

It was the end of November, and as far as the eye could see a white shroud covered the earth. A snowstorm raged in the night. A cold, stinging wind furrowed the snow; it swept up white drifts, picked up everything that came in its path and filled the whole countryside with its howling. Village, church, and the neighboring wood vanished in the snowy mist spinning in the air. A mighty roar came from Golovlovo's ancient garden.

But inside the manor house it was light, warm, and snug. A samovar was hissing in the dining room and around it sat Arina Petrovna, Judas and Eupraxia. Nearby was a card table with an abandoned pack of battered playing cards scattered on it. Two doors opened off the dining room. One led to the icon room which was brightly lit by sanctuary lamps; the other, to the master's study where a lamp also burned before an icon. The overheated rooms were stuffy and smelled of lamp oil and

charcoal fumes from the samovar, near which sat Eupraxia, rinsing the cups with the boiling water and drying them with a towel. The samovar gave off a variety of noises: it roared, then bubbled quietly, then snorted shrilly. Billows of steam escaped from under the lid, and the teapot that had been standing on top of it for over fifteen minutes was shrouded in vapor. A conversation was in progress.

"Well, how many times have you been the booby at cards?" Arina Petrovna asked Eupraxia.

"I wouldn't have been the booby if I hadn't let you win. I just wanted to please you," Eupraxia said.

"Go and tell that to someone else! I saw how pleased you were when I kept playing threes and fives to you. I'm not the master, remember. He keeps playing single cards, but I have no reason to spare you, my girl!"

"Besides, you cheated," added the girl.

"Whatever else I may do, that's a sin I'm free of."

"And who was it I caught the other day trying to pass off the seven of clubs as a pair with the eight? I caught you red-handed that time, didn't I?"

Saying this, Eupraxia stood up to remove the teapot from the samovar, turning her back on Arina Petrovna.

"Look at that back!" Arina Petrovna couldn't help exclaiming. "God bless it!"

"Yes, she's got some back," Judas said.

"It's always my back, my back. . . . What has my back done to you, you shameless people?"

Eupraxia looked right and left, smiling. Her back was her trump. The other day, even the old cook, Savelich, had been unable to take his eyes off it. "That back's as wide as a stove," he had muttered, but she hadn't repeated it to Judas.

As the cups were filled, the samovar gradually subsided.

The snowstorm outside grew worse: a white avalanche beat against the windows, and the wind howled indescribably in the chimney.

"That snowstorm seems to be in earnest," Arina Petrovna remarked. "Listen to it scream and howl!"

"Well, let it howl. While it blows outside we sip our tea. Isn't that right, Mamma dear?"

"Ah, it must be dreadful to be caught in the fields now!"

"Well, that's someone else's bad luck; it doesn't concern us. Some are out in the cold and the dark, but it's light here and we're warm. We have nothing to worry about but sipping our tea. And we can have it with sugar and with cream or with lemon and, if we decided, we can have some rum in it too."

"Yes, what about——"

"Wait a minute, Mamma, I was saying that right now, it would be very unpleasant to be out in the fields. No road, not a trail in sight—everything covered with snow. And then there are the wolves. Now here, we have light and warmth and nothing to fear. We sit here, all of us, in peace and quiet, and if we decide to enjoy a little game of cards, there's nothing to stop us, and if we fancy a nice cup of tea, we can have it. And why? Because God's grace has never left us. If it weren't for Him, the King of Heaven, we too might be wandering in the fields now, through cold and darkness, wearing some tattered old coat fastened with a shabby belt, with bast shoes——"

"Bast shoes? Aren't you going a bit far? We're gentry, after all, aren't we, and we wear leather shoes, such as they are."

"And do you know, Mamma, how we happened to be born gentry? Well, it's because God was good to us. If it hadn't been for Him, we'd be sitting in a peasant's hut now, and instead of candles, there'd be a glowing pine splinter before us; and as for tea or coffee, well, we wouldn't even dream of it! We'd be sitting here and I'd be mending our bast shoes while you'd be warming up some meatless cabbage soup and Eupraxia would be weaving. . . . And maybe someone would even come for me and tell me to turn out immediately with my cart. . . ."

"Ah, what're you talking about? Who'd need a cart in such weather?"

"Who can tell, Mamma? Now suppose, for a moment, regiments are on the march. Maybe war, maybe unrest, but those regiments have to be somewhere, and at a given time. You know, for instance, this morning the police inspector told me that Napoleon III had died. Well, the chances are that the French will be looking for trouble

now. Naturally, our army will rush to meet them, so come on, brother peasant, bring us your horse and cart right away! They won't care whether there's a snowstorm or ice or mud—"Get going, peasant, when you're told!"—But they won't demand that *we* rush out into the cold and harness the cart for them!"

"No argument there. God has been very good to us."

"Well, isn't that just what I was saying, Mamma darling? God is everything. It is He who provides us with firewood to keep us warm and with produce to feed us. We may imagine that we're acquiring these things ourselves, buying them with our own money, but if we look closer at these matters and think a bit, we see that actually it all comes from God. And if he decides differently, we'll have nothing. For instance, I wouldn't mind having an orange now. I would eat one myself and offer you one, dear Mamma, and give everyone an orange. You know, I have the money to buy oranges, and you would think that all I have to do is get it out and buy some. But God says: Whoa there! And here I am sitting like a philosopher with nothing."

The three of them laughed.

"Tell me another!" Eupraxia said. "I had an uncle who was sexton at Uspenye Church in Pesochnoye. And believe me, he tried hard to please God and you would think He could've done something for 'im. But he got caught in a snowstorm in the fields and was frozen anyway."

"Well, as I said, if God so decides, a man will freeze, and if He decides he shouldn't, he won't. And concerning prayer, there are prayers that please God and others that don't. The prayers He likes reach Him, those He doesn't like don't. Perhaps your uncle's prayers didn't please God, so they didn't reach Him."

"I can remember driving to Moscow back in December twenty-four—I was carrying Pavel then—so, I was on my way to Moscow when——"

"Just a minute, Mother, let me finish what I was saying about prayers. A man prays for everything because he needs everything. He needs butter and cucumbers and cabbage—in one word, everything. Sometimes, being human, he also asks for things he doesn't really need. From where He is, God sees better what you need, so

you can ask him for butter, but He'll send you onions and cabbage, you may ask him for warm weather and sunshine and He'll send you rain and hail. And you'd better appreciate it and not start grumbling. Last September, we kept praying to God to send frosts so our winter crops wouldn't rot, but He gave us no frosts and, sure enough, our winter crops rotted."

"Yes, they certainly did!" Arina Petrovna chimed in. "In Noviki the whole of the peasants' crop was lost. I suppose they'll have to plow the field again to sow it in the spring."

"So you see! While we sit here and reason and plan and decide to try this way or that, God can turn all our schemes to dust in a second. Now, Mother, I believe you wanted to tell us about something that happened to you in eighteen twenty-four?"

"Ah, what was it? I seem to have forgotten already. Must have been something to do with God's grace. Can't remember, my boy, it's slipped my mind."

"Well, God willing, you'll remember it some other time. And in the meantime while it's blowing and snowing outside, you ought to help yourself to some jam, Mamma dear. It's made with our Golovlovo cherries; Eupraxia made it herself."

"I think I will take some. I must admit I haven't eaten many cherries recently. In the old days I often treated myself to them, but it's different now. These Golovlovo cherries are really wonderful; they're so big and juicy. In Dubrovino I could never manage to get really sweet ones. Tell me, Eupraxia, did you put some vodka into the jam?"

"I certainly did! Just the way you taught me. Ah, yes, that's what I wanted to ask you. When you pickle cucumbers, do you put cardamom in?"

Arina Petrovna thought hard for some moments, gesturing with her hands.

"Can't remember, my girl. I believe I used to put it in before, but I haven't recently. I don't do much pickling nowadays. . . . But I used to put it in, yes, I remember well! When I'm back home, I'll see whether I can't find the recipe. When I was younger and stronger I used to jot everything down and keep the notes. When I liked

something somewhere, I'd inquire how it was made, note it down, then try and make it at home. Once I found out a secret that my hostess wouldn't have sold me for a thousand rubles. I slipped a quarter to the housekeeper and she told me everything, down to the smallest detail."

"Yes, Mamma, I must say, in your day you were . . . a real statesman!"

"I don't know whether I was a statesman or not but I daresay, with God's help, I didn't lose anything we had; in fact, I added to it. Now, for instance, I'm eating the fruit of my labor, for it was I who planted the cherries at Golovlovo!"

"And we're grateful to you for it, Mamma. We thank you. Thank you for myself and thank you for my descendants, that's how I feel!"

Judas got up and kissed his mamma's hand.

"And I thank you for looking after your mother, and I think you have fine produce here."

"What's our produce compared to what you used to have! How many storerooms you had, and there wasn't an empty corner in them!"

"Yes, I had some stores. I must admit I liked to have a well-stocked house. As for the number of storerooms, the household was on a much larger scale then. There were ten times as many mouths to feed! Only think of all the serfs we had to feed and provide for! One would take a cucumber, another'd help himself to a glass of kvass, and little by little, bit by bit, it amounted to quite a lot."

"Yes, those were the good times. There was plenty of everything, bread, fruit——"

"We manured the ground better and it yielded more."

"No. Mother, that's not the reason why. It was because God wanted it that way and gave us His blessing. I remember Papa bringing an apple from the garden that was too big to fit on a plate, and everybody marveling at it."

"That I don't remember. I remember the apples were good, but I can't recall any that were the size of a plate. However, I remember a twenty-pound carp being caught in the Dubrovino pond at the time of the last coronation but one—and that's the truth."

"The carp, the fruit, everything was large those days.

I remember the watermelons the gardener, Ivan, used to grow . . . big as that!"

Judas first spread out his arms, then brought them slightly forward in a circle to show that the watermelon was too large for him to encompass.

"Yes, we used to have watermelons. Watermelons, though, I must tell you, my boy, change from year to year. One year, there may be plenty of them, and they'll be good; the next, they may be scarce and tasteless; and the third year there may be none to speak of. And, I must add, it depends on the place. You know at Grigory Alexandrych's in Khlebnikovo, nothing would grow—no berries, no fruit, nothing but cantaloupes. But then you should've seen those cantaloupes!"

"That shows that God's blessing was reserved for melons there."

"Why, of course, nothing can be done without God's blessing; there's no getting away from that."

Arina Petrovna had already had two cups of tea; now she started casting glances at the card table. Eupraxia, too, was burning for a game of cards, but the old woman suddenly remembered something.

"Oh, by the way," she announced, "I have some news for you. I received a letter from the girls yesterday."

"They haven't written all this time and now suddenly. . . . They must be having a rough time. I'll bet they're asking for money."

"No, they aren't. Here, take a look at that!"

Arina Petrovna took the letter from her pocket and handed it to Judas, who read it aloud:

Grandma, don't bother to send any more chickens or turkeys. Don't send any money either, but invest it and let the interest accumulate. We're not in Moscow but in Kharkov. We've gone on the stage, and during the summer we'll be making a tour of the fairs. I made my debut in *Perichole* and Lubinka in *Pansies*. I got several curtain calls, especially after the scene when *Perichole* is supposed to be slightly tight and sings *I am ready, rea-ea-eady, rea-ea-ea-dy!* Lubinka had a good reception too. The manager decided to pay me a hundred rubles a month plus all the receipts from one Kharkov performance, and Lubinka gets seventy-five plus the receipts of

a performance at a fair. On top of that, we get presents from lawyers and officers. However, the lawyers often try to slip us counterfeit money, so we have to be very careful. So, dear Grandma, please use everything in Pogorelka, for we'll never return there and can't even understand how it's possible to live there. Yesterday we had the first snow and went out for a drive in a troika with some lawyers. One of them looks just like Plevako, an incredibly handsome fellow! He balanced a glass of champagne on his head and danced a Cossack dance. It was so funny! The other lawyer was not so good-looking, a bit like Yazykov from Petersburg. Can you imagine, reading the *Collection of Best Russian Ballads and Folksongs* upset him so much that now he keeps fainting from weakness in court. And so we spend almost every day either with officers or with lawyers. We go for drives, dine in the best restaurants and never have to pay for anything. And you, Grandma, don't save anything that grows in Pogorelka—corn, chickens, mushrooms—eat everything up. Besides, if you need money, we'd be delighted. . . .

Good-bye now. Our friends have just arrived and we must go for a drive. Good-bye, dear, you're a divine old thing; farewell!

Love, Anninka
And me too, Lubinka

"Phoo . . ." Judas said, pretending to spit and returning the letter.

Arina Petrovna sat pondering for a few moments without saying anything.

"Have you answered them, Mamma?"

"Not yet. I only received the letter yesterday. My main reason for coming over here was to show it to you—and then I almost forgot all about it."

"Don't bother answering them, Mother. It'd be much better."

"How can I not answer? I'm answerable to them. You forget that Pogorelka is theirs."

Judas became pensive too. Some wicked scheme was growing in his head.

"What worries me," Arina Petrovna said in the meantime, "is how they can manage to behave themselves in that cesspool. In that business, you know, you just take

one wrong step and you never get your respectability back, though you go and whistle for it!"

"Much they care about respectability," Judas snapped.

"Whatever you say, for a young girl it's, so to speak, the most precious treasure in the world. Who do you think will marry them after they lose it?"

"Nowadays, Mother, unmarried people live together just like married couples. Nowadays they laugh at the teaching of religion. All they have to do is find a bush, and under the bush they get married, and the trick's done. That's what they call a civil marriage."

Suddenly realizing that he was living in sin himself, and with the daughter of a servant of the Church, Judas mumbled:

"Of course, sometimes it can't be helped, especially if the man is strong and healthy and a widower. . . . Necessity can change a law sometimes!"

"No arguing with that! When it has to, a snipe will sing like a nightingale. Sometimes, when hard put to it, even saints sin, and we're only mortal, after all!"

"So you see yourself. Now, do you know what I'd do if I were you?"

"Tell me, my boy; give me your advice."

"I'd try to obtain full power of attorney for Pogorelka from them."

Arina Petrovna gave him a frightened look.

"Well, I have full power to run the place as it is," she said.

"What I mean is, you should have a power of attorney not just to run it but to do anything you decide with it; to sell it, mortgage it, whatever you think fit. . . ."

Arina Petrovna looked down at the floor and said nothing.

"I realize it's a decision you have to think about," Judas said. "Think it over, Mamma dear."

But Arina Petrovna still said nothing. Although old age had blunted her grasp of things, Judas's insinuation still made her feel ill at ease. She was afraid of him, for she would have hated to lose the warmth and comforts of Golovlovo and to be deprived of the delicacies she was given there. At the same time, she knew that he had not broached the subject of the power of attorney for noth-

ing; he was setting a new snare. The atmosphere grew so charged that she became furious with herself for having shown him the letter. Luckily, Eupraxia came to the rescue.

"Well, are we going to have a game of cards or aren't we?"

"Let's, let's," Arina Petrovna said hurriedly, quickly getting up from the big table. As she was walking over to the card table, a new idea struck her.

"Do you know what day it is today?" she asked Judas.

"November twenty-third, Mamma dear," Judas answered, a little surprised.

"The twenty-third, the twenty-third . . . don't you remember what happened on November twenty-third? I see you've forgotten all about the requiem."

Judas turned pale and crossed himself.

"My God, how dreadful! But is that the date? Let me check the calendar first."

A few minutes later he returned with the calendar, finding inserted in it a sheet of paper on which was written:

November 23. The anniversary of my beloved son Vladimir's death. Rest in peace, dear ashes, till the joyous morn! And pray to God for your papa, who on this day, each year, will unfliningly say a requiem service and a mass for you.

"What do you say to that!" Judas said. "Ah, Volodya, Volodya, my cruel son! I see you aren't praying to God for your papa and He has deprived me of memory! What shall I do about it, Mamma?"

"Nothing so terrible has happened, you know. You can have the service tomorrow just as well. We'll have the mass and the requiem just as we're supposed to. It's my fault, you know. I came here to remind you of it, but forgot about it on the way. I'm getting old, Son."

"Oh, what a thing to forget! It's lucky the lamps are lit in the icon room! It was an inspiration from above. It's no holiday today, nothing special; I simply left them burning after Our Lady's Day, and just this morning Eupraxia came to me and asked: 'Should I put out the lamps?' and I thought about it for a minute and told her:

'No, leave 'em! God bless 'em, let 'em go on burning.' So this is what made me say that!"

"Let's be thankful the lamps remained burning. They do make it easier for the soul. Now, where are you sitting? This way you'll have to play to me again, over there you'll have to attack your beauty."

"I'm no longer sure, really, Mamma, whether I ought to. . . ."

"What do you mean? Come, sit down. God will forgive you. You didn't omit the requiem intentionally. You simply forgot. It happens even to the most devout! Tomorrow we'll get up early in the morning and have the mass and the requiem and everything as it should be. And his soul will be happy because his kind family have thought of him, and we'll feel good for having done our duty. So that's the way it is, my boy. And there's really no reason for you to grieve, for as I always say, grieving won't bring your son back and is nothing but a sin before God."

These words reassured Judas and he kissed his mother's hand.

"Ah, Mamma darling! You're worth your weight in gold! What would I do without you? I wouldn't know what to do, I'd be lost!"

Judas made arrangements for tomorrow's ceremony, and they sat down to the card table. They played one hand, then another. Arina Petrovna was indignant with her son, thinking that he favored Eupraxia in his play. Between hands, Judas kept reminiscing about his dead son.

"He was such a gentle boy," he said. "He never helped himself to anything without permission. If he needed a scrap of paper he'd say 'May I take a piece of paper, Papa?' and I'd say, 'Help yourself, my boy, help yourself.' Or 'Would you be so kind, Papa, and order carp in sour cream for lunch today?' and I'd say, 'Certainly, certainly!' Ah, Volodya, Volodya, you were such a good boy in every respect, except when you left your papa."

They played a few more hands, then Judas continued with his reminiscences:

"What came over him all of a sudden? To this day I can't understand it. He had a nice, quiet life; he was happy and made me happy. What more could one ask

for? And then, suddenly—bang! What a terrible sin! Just think, Mother dear, what he threw away! His very life! The gift of our Heavenly Father! What made him do it? Why? What did he lack? Money? I never stopped his allowance. Even my worst enemies can't say that. Well, if he thought it was a bit too little, then, please forgive me, my friend, and remember your papa doesn't grow money on trees. If the allowance was small, he should have learned to restrict himself. Life isn't always sweet. At times we have to accept the bitter too. That's the way it is! This morning, for instance, your papa hoped to receive some money, but the Terpenka manager announced that the peasants there hadn't paid the rent. Well, what could I do? I wrote a complaint to the district court. Ah, Volodya, Volodya, it wasn't at all nice of you to leave your old father like that, you naughty boy, you!"

As the game became more animated, Judas's reminiscences became more wordy and sentimental.

"How intelligent Volodya was! I remember when he was in bed with the measles—he must have been seven at the most. My dear departed Alexandra leaned over him and he asked her: 'Mummy, Mummy, is it true that only angels have wings?' 'Yes,' she said to him, 'that's right.' 'So why,' he said, 'when Papa came in here just now, did he have wings too?'"

Finally an epic rubber was played in which Judas was left the booby with eight cards in his hand, including the ace, the king, and the queen of trumps. The women teased him and laughed at him; Judas himself joined in quite benevolently.

Suddenly, amidst the general merriment, Arina Petrovna stiffened, as if she were listening for something.

"Be quiet! Listen! Someone's driving up here!" she said.

Judas and Eupraxia listened too, but could hear nothing.

"I tell you someone's coming! There now! The wind has shifted this way. . . . Listen! It's quite close now!"

They listened. Soon a remote jingling carried by the wind was audible; five minutes or so later, the jingling bell could be heard clearly; and shortly after that, voices reached them from the courtyard.

Servants' voices came from the anteroom: "The young master's here!"

Judas got up and stood frozen, pale as a sheet.

Peter Golovlov, Petya, walked in rather listlessly, kissed his father's hand, then his grandmother's, bowed to Eupraxia, and sat down. He was a man of about twenty-five, rather handsome, wearing an officer's traveling uniform. That's about all that can be said about him, and it is doubtful whether Judas himself knew more. Relations between father and son could not be described as strained—in fact, there were no relations to speak of. Judas knew that, according to the documents, this man was his son to whom he sent an allowance, the amount of which he had determined himself, and who, in exchange, owed him respect and obedience. Petya knew that he had a father who at any moment could make things difficult for him. He rather liked coming to Golovlovo, especially since he had received his commission, but this was not because he enjoyed talking to his father but because a person who hasn't chosen any special goal in life is automatically attracted to his own corner. This time, however, he appeared to have been forced by circumstances to come, for he showed no sign of that joyful bewilderment that usually marks the return of the prodigal son to his father's home.

Peter wasn't talkative. To all his father's exclamations—"What a surprise! Well, well, well, I must say I'm glad to see you! I was wondering who it was that God was bringing this way in the middle of the night! And who was it, but you!" and so on and so forth—he either made no response at all or just forced himself to smile. And to the question "What made you think of coming over?" he answered, "Just like that, it occurred to me, and I came."

"Well, thank you for thinking of your father! I'm very glad to see you! Maybe you thought of your old grandma too."

"I thought of Grandma too."

"Wait a minute! Maybe you remembered that today was the anniversary of your brother Volodya's death."

"Yes, I remembered that too."

Thus the conversation continued for half an hour. It was impossible to tell whether Peter was answering seriously or just making small talk. Finally Judas, although unruffled by his son's indifference to him, couldn't help remarking:

"Well, I must say you're not too warm, my boy! You really can't be accused of being an over-affectionate son!"

If Peter had said nothing to that, or even better, if he had kissed his papa's hand and said: "Forgive me, Papa dear, I'm rather tired after my journey," everything would have been glossed over. But instead he behaved ungratefully.

"I am what I am," he said cuttingly, as if he meant "For Christ's sake, let go of me!"

Judas was so hurt that he couldn't prevent himself from starting bitterly:

"And to think of all the trouble I've given myself for your sake! Even as I sat here I worried about how to make things better and easier for all of you, how to save you from need and hardship and help you to keep warm and cozy. . . . And you all shun me, keep me away. . . ."

"Who's this 'all of you'?"

"You to start with and, I must say, your late brother, may he rest in peace; he was just the same——"

"Why, I'm very grateful to you."

"I see neither gratitude nor affection in you, nothing!"

"It's a fault of my nature. I'm just naturally not very affectionate, that's all. But why do you keep addressing me in the plural? One of us is dead already."

"Yes, he died. It was God's punishment. God punishes disobedient children. But despite that, I still think of him. Tomorrow we'll hold a mass and a requiem for him. He wronged me, but I don't forget my duties toward him. But good Lord, the things that go on nowadays! A son comes to see his father and, first thing, he starts snorting at him! That wasn't the way we were in my time! I used to come to Golovlovo, and when I was still twenty miles away, I would start repeating 'O Lord, make me recall King David and how meek he was!' Here, you can ask your grandmother, she's a living witness, she can tell you. But nowadays—I don't understand! I certainly don't understand!"

"Neither do I. I came here quietly, greeted everybody politely, kissed your hand, and now I'm sitting here, not doing anything to you, drinking my tea—and I'll eat supper if you offer me some. I've no idea why you've started all this business."

Arina Petrovna sat in her armchair, listening intently. It seemed to her she had heard all this before, that it had started long, long ago, she couldn't even remember when. It was like a book that she had thought was closed but which kept opening again and again at the same page. In any case, she knew that such a meeting between father and son boded no good and felt it her duty to intervene with a conciliatory word.

"Come now, come now, you turkey cocks!" she said, trying to impart a jocular tone to her voice. "They've hardly set eyes on each other and they're ready to fight. See how they jump on each other! Watch out, any moment the feathers will start flying! Come on now, lads, calm down and have a peaceful chat, and I'll sit here and admire you. You, Petya, you'd better give in. One must always give in to one's father. Even if you sometimes feel bitter about what your father says, you must accept it readily, with obedience and respect, just because you're his son. And maybe, some day, what you thought bitter will turn out to be sweet, and then you'll be the richer for it."

"Now you, Porfiry, try to be understanding too. Your son is still young and sensitive and he's just had a sixty-mile drive over snowdrifts and holes—he's cold, tired, and dying for a rest. Well, we're through with tea now, so let's have supper and then go to our rooms, say our prayers, and go to bed. God will disperse all our angry thoughts while we sleep, and tomorrow we'll get up early in the morning and pray for our departed one. We'll hold the mass and the requiem, and when we come home, we'll talk it all over; with a well-rested head, each of you will say quietly what he has to say—you, Petya, about Petersburg and you, Porfiry, about life in the country. And now, let's have our supper and go to bed."

This sermon was effective not because it was convincing but because Judas felt he had blundered and it would be to his advantage to make peace for the moment. So

he got up, kissed his mother's hand, thanked her for her guidance, and ordered supper to be served. It was a silent, gloomy meal.

The dining room was empty. Everyone had retired to his room. Gradually the house became quiet. Dead silence crept from room to room, until it finally filled the last recess in which the daytime noise took refuge—the study of the master of the house. At last Judas finished the bows which he counted off carefully before the icons and went into his bedroom.

He lay for a long time unable to sleep. He felt that there was something unusual in his son's arrival and he was already preparing trite, empty admonitions in his head. The admonitions he repeated applied to practically anything, so his thoughts didn't have to follow one another logically. Nor did they follow the rules of grammar or syntax. They flashed through his head in the form of fragmentary aphorisms, making their appearance in God's world haphazardly as they slipped off his tongue. Whenever something extraordinary happened, his head buzzed with a swarm of these aphorisms, and not even sleep could overcome their turmoil.

A mass of trifles surrounded Judas, closed in on him, and wouldn't let him sleep. Actually, he was not really worried over Peter's sudden arrival, for whatever happened, he was ready for it. He knew that *nothing* would catch him off balance, *nothing* would force him to crawl out of the net of empty, musty aphorisms which he had wrapped around himself from head to foot. For him there was no grief, no joy, no hatred, no love. In his eyes, the world was a coffin that could be used as a pretext for his endless empty phrases. He had even weathered the hardest blow of all, the suicide of his son, Volodya. It had been a very sad affair that had gone on for over two years. For two years Volodya had tried to stand up to his father. First, he was proud and determined to live without his father's support. Then he weakened, began to beg, argue, threaten . . . and he was always answered by a handy aphorism presented to him like a stone handed to a hungry man. Whether Judas realized that it was a stone and not bread is debatable. What is

important is that he had nothing else to offer and so gave a stone. When Volodya shot himself, Judas had a requiem said for him, noted the day of his death in his calendar, and promised that in the future he'd hold a requiem every November twenty-third. And when, from time to time, a faint inner voice reminded him that suicide was, to say the least, a suspect way of settling a family quarrel, he immediately produced an array of convenient aphorisms such as "God punishes disobedient children" or "God does not love the proud", and this calmed him.

So it was now. Something unpleasant had obviously happened to Peter, but whatever it was, he, Porfiry Golovlov, must be ready for all contingencies. If Peter had got into trouble, let him get out of it; as you sow, so shall you reap; you've made your bed, lie in it. That was what he'd say tomorrow when his son told him. . . . But what if Peter, like his brother, refused to accept a stone instead of bread? What if he too . . . Judas rejected this thought, ascribing it to the inspiration of the Devil. He turned from side to side, unable to sleep. As soon as he grew drowsy he'd suddenly find himself saying: "I'd be happy to reach for the moon to help you, but my arms are too short." Or: "You must cut your coat according to your cloth. . . . Now, take me and take yourself. . . . You know the saying: 'Hurry is only good for catching lice!'" Empty phrases surrounded him, pressed in on him, and prevented him from sleeping. But tomorrow he would use them to his heart's content and hide behind them.

Peter couldn't sleep either, although he was tired after his journey. He had a problem that could only be solved in Golovlovo, but it was a difficult one and he didn't know how to go about it. Actually Peter realized very well that it was a hopeless matter, that he would find nothing here but more trouble. But there is an obscure instinct of self-preservation in man that overrules reason and keeps nagging him: You must, you must try everything! So now he had come. But instead of controlling himself and taking anything that came, he had immediately quarreled with his father. What would come of this trip? Would there be a miracle, would the stone turn to bread, or wouldn't there be one?

Wouldn't it have been much simpler to have taken a gun, put it to his temple and announced to them:

"Gentlemen! I am unworthy of this uniform. I've gambled away the regimental funds entrusted to me. This is the stern but fair sentence!"?

Bang! And that would be that. The *deceased* Lieutenant Golovlov would be removed from the rolls. Yes, that would've been the decent, elegant way out. His brother officers would have said: "He was unlucky; he was carried away, but he was an *honorable* man." But instead of acting that way, he had allowed his misdeed to become publicly known and they had given him a deadline to make good the sum embezzled. After that he would, of course, resign his commission. So he had come to Golovlovo to achieve this goal, even though it still meant disgrace in the end, and he was certain he would be given a stone instead of bread.

But after all, perhaps something might come of it? What if the old Golovlovo suddenly vanished and instead there was a new Golovlovo . . . a Golovlovo in which he. . . . Oh, no, his father wouldn't have to die! Why should he? There would simply be a change. . . . And perhaps Grandmother . . . she must have some money. If she realized what trouble lay ahead, who knew, she might give it to him. "Here," she might say, "go back, hurry up, so you'll be in time." And there he is on his way back, hurrying the drivers and arriving just two hours before the deadline. "Good boy, Golovlov!" his brother officers congratulate him. "Here, shake hands and let's let bygones be bygones!" And he not only remains in the army but gets promoted, first to senior lieutenant, then to captain; he becomes regimental chief of staff (he has been treasurer already) and finally, on the day of the regimental jubilee . . .

Ah, if only this night would be over! Tomorrow . . . All right, tomorrow, come what may! But all the lecturing he would have to listen to! Well, why must it be tomorrow? He had still another day ahead of him. He had managed to get two days to have more time to convince and move his father. Touch him, indeed! What chance did he really have of touching him? No, he'd much rather . . .

At this point, his thoughts scattered and one after another faded into the mist of sleep. A quarter of an hour later the whole Golovlovo house was plunged into deep slumber.

Next morning everyone was up early. They all drove off to church except Peter, who stayed home, saying that he still felt tired after his trip. They attended the requiem and the mass and returned. Peter, as usual, took his father's hand to kiss, but Judas held it out to him sideways, and everyone noticed that he didn't even make the sign of the cross over his son. They had tea and ate the traditional repast. Judas, shuffling his feet, gloomily paced the room. He kept sighing, folding his hands in silent prayer, never once looking at his son. Peter had shrunk into himself and kept lighting one cigarette after another.

The tension of the night before had not relaxed; indeed, it had increased to such a point that Arina Petrovna became seriously worried and decided to find out from Eupraxia whether anything special had happened since.

"What's the matter?" she said. "Why are they behaving like enemies this morning?"

"And how should I know? I just mind my own business."

"Doesn't it have something to do with you? Maybe my grandson's after you?"

"Why should he be after me? He was simply waiting in the corridor for me to pass and the master saw him."

"So that's what it is!"

And, indeed, despite the desperate straits Peter was in, he had behaved with characteristic irresponsibility. Like everyone else, he had been fascinated by Eupraxia's powerful back and felt he had to inform her of the fact. That, actually, was what had kept him from going to church. He reasoned that Eupraxia, as housekeeper, would have to stay home too. So when everything grew quiet in the house, he threw his officer's overcoat over his shoulders and went to hide in the corridor. After a short while, the door of the maids' room banged and Eupraxia appeared at the end of the passage. She held a tray with a freshly baked bread-ring for the morning tea on it. But before Peter had time to give her a good pat between

the shoulder blades, before he could even say "My, what a back!" the dining room door opened and his father appeared.

"If you've come here to carry on with your filthy ways, I'll have you kicked downstairs, you good-for-nothing swine!" he shouted.

Peter immediately took himself out of the way.

Of course, he realized that this incident would prejudice his chances, so he decided to postpone his explanation until the following day. However, he made no attempt to alleviate his father's irritation; on the contrary, he behaved in the most thoughtless, stupid way. He smoked cigarette after cigarette without paying any attention to his father who kept demonstratively fanning away the clouds of smoke that filled the room. Then he kept casting stupid, tender glances at Eupraxia who, under their influence, responded with a faint, twisted smile that Judas noticed too.

The day dragged on. Arina Petrovna tried to play a game of cards with Eupraxia but nothing came of it. They couldn't play, they couldn't talk, they couldn't even exchange the usual meaningless clichés, despite the fact that they had so many in store. They could hardly wait until it was dinnertime, and even during dinner they remained silent. Arina Petrovna decided to go home to Pogorelka, but Judas seemed frightened at the idea of his dearest mamma leaving him.

"God forbid, Mother darling!" he cried. "Why, how can you leave me alone face to face with this . . . with this bad son? No, no, it's out of the question, I simply won't hear of it!"

"Why, what happened between the two of you? Why don't you tell me?"

"No, nothing has happened yet. . . . but you'll see. No, no, you can't leave me now. Let him do it with you here. He hasn't come here for nothing. I want you to be a witness if something happens!"

Arina Petrovna shook her head and decided to stay.

After dinner, Judas went to lie down, having first sent Eupraxia to visit the village priest. Arina Petrovna went to her room, sat down in her armchair, and dozed off.

Peter decided that this was the best moment to see whether he'd have any luck with her.

"Why, have you really come to have a game of cards with your old grandma?" Arina Petrovna asked him when he came in.

"No, Grandma, I have a business matter to discuss."

"Well, tell me, what's it all about?"

Peter hesitated for a moment and then blurted out:

"I've gambled away army money, Grandma."

"Much?" she asked, her stare fixed on him.

"Three thousand."

A moment of silence followed during which Arina Petrovna worriedly glanced from side to side, as if expecting help from somewhere.

"Do you realize that this could easily land you in Siberia?" she said finally.

"I do."

"Ah, you poor, poor boy!"

"I wondered, Grandma, whether I couldn't borrow that much from you. I'd pay good interest on it."

Arina Petrovna was utterly horrified.

"What are you talking about, boy!" she said in agitation. "Why, I have just enough money left for my coffin and for a requiem! I only make ends meet thanks to my grand-daughters; and my only pleasures are my visits to my son here. No, no, no, you'd better leave me out of it! Please don't involve me at all! But, you know what? You ought to ask your father to let you have the money." "One might just as well try to get milk from a bull . . . No, Grandma, you're my only hope."

"But how can you! How can you think of it! I'd be glad to . . . but where would I get the money from? I haven't got any! If I were you, I'd go to your papa respectfully and nicely. You might tell him: 'Here's how it is, Papa. I've been wrong, I've erred, but I'm still young. . . .' Smile a bit, kiss his hand, get down on your knees, cry a while—you know, he likes that sort of thing—maybe your papa will untie the purse-strings for his dear son."

"Oh, that's an idea. Perhaps that's really the thing to do. But wait, Grandma. Why don't you say to him straight

out: 'If you don't give him the money, I'll lay my curse on you!' He's afraid of your curse, remember?"

"No, why should I curse him? Just ask him, that's all. Ask him, my boy, and remember, if you bow one extra time to your papa, that head of yours won't fall off! He's your father, after all. And he will . . . well—do it anyway, I tell you!"

Peter, arms akimbo, paced up and down the room as if devising a plan of action. Finally he came to a stop and said:

"No, nothing doing. He won't give me anything anyway. Even if I were to break my forehead open beating it against the ground, he still wouldn't let me have the money. It would be different if you, Grandma, threatened him with that curse of yours. So what shall I do, Grandma?"

"I really don't know, my boy. Try. Perhaps you'll soften him. But how could you have allowed yourself to do such a thing in the first place? Losing government funds that have been entrusted to you is no small matter. Did someone else suggest it to you?"

"I just took the money and lost it. Now, if you have no money of your own, Grandma, lend me some of what belongs to the girls."

"Are you serious? How can you ask such a thing! How can I give you money belonging to the girls? Oh, no, for heaven's sake, don't ever mention that to me again!"

"So it's no? What a shame, for I'd have given you a good interest rate on it. What about five per cent per month? No? All right, then, what would you say to my paying you double the sum in one year?"

"Don't try to talk me into it!" Arina Petrovna said, waving him off. "Leave me alone, for the love of God! If your papa heard about it, he might think I was the one who put you up to it. Oh, dear me! I'm an old woman, I wanted to have a little rest here, and along you come with this business!"

"All right, all right, I'm going. If it's no, it's no. What a nice, close family we are! So your grandson may have to go to Siberia for some three thousand rubles! Above all, don't forget the church service to speed me on my way!"

Peter left, slamming the door. One of his flimsy hopes had collapsed; what was his next move? He had no choice but to go to his father and tell him everything. And who knew? Perhaps. . . .

"I'll go and settle it one way or the other!" he said to himself, but then he thought: "No, why today? Perhaps something will turn up. . . . But what could? . . . Still, better wait till tomorrow. I'll tell him everything, then leave."

And that's what he finally decided—he'd tell his father tomorrow.

After his conversation with his grandmother, time dragged on even more sluggishly. Arina Petrovna had become very quiet since she had found out the true reason for Peter's visit. Judas made a few attempts to be playful with his dear mamma, but realizing she was preoccupied with something, gave up. Peter did nothing but smoke. During supper his father asked him:

"Well, won't you tell me, finally, the reason for your visit?"

"I'll tell you tomorrow," Peter said sullenly.

Peter got up early after an almost sleepless night. The same double-edged thought tortured him: the hope—maybe he'll give it to me—which was invariably followed by the question—what was the point of my coming here? Perhaps he didn't understand his father. In any case, he didn't know of any feeling, any weakness in Judas which he could exploit and turn to his advantage. In his father's presence, Peter felt only that he was facing something slippery and obscure. Not knowing how to approach his father made him feel ill at ease, if not afraid. It had been like this ever since he could remember. It had always been better to give something up altogether than to rely on a paternal decision. He felt just like that now. How would he broach the matter? What would he say? Why on earth had he come?

He felt deeply depressed. However, since he now had only a few hours left, he had to act. He braced himself, trying to look determined, buttoned his coat, and whispering something as he went, set off for his father's study, walking fairly firmly.

Judas stood praying. He was a pious man who devoted several hours a day to prayer. He prayed so often not because he loved God so much and tried to commune with Him but rather because he was afraid of the Devil and hoped God would keep him away. He knew a great many prayers and, above all, he had thoroughly mastered the technique of praying. That is, he knew when to move his lips and roll his eyes toward heaven, when to fold his hands, when to raise them above his head, the right moment to display emotion or to stand looking dignified and cross himself with proper restraint. Both his eyes and nose turned red and damp at the moments indicated by long devotional practice. But prayer never regenerated him, never lightened his feelings, never cast a ray of light into his bleak existence. He could pray, going through all the required motions, while looking out of the window to make sure that no one was slipping into the cellar. Prayer was for him an independent part of his life; it had no connection with the rest of his existence.

When Peter entered the study his father was kneeling with uplifted arms. He didn't alter his position, but made a jerky movement with his hand to indicate that he wasn't to be disturbed. Peter went into the dining room where the table was already set for breakfast, and waited. The half hour that followed seemed an eternity to him, especially since he was sure his father was keeping him waiting on purpose. His affected resolution gradually turned into vexation. First he sat quietly, then he started pacing up and down the room, and finally he started whistling. The door of the study opened.

"If you wish to whistle," Judas's irritated voice reached him, "you'd better go off to the stables."

Judas appeared a little later. He was dressed in black, wearing a freshly laundered white shirt, as if for some solemn occasion. His face was serene and gentle with an expression of happy humility, as if he had just that minute become beatified. He went up to his son, made the sign of the cross over him, and kissed him.

"Good morning, my dear boy."

"Good morning."

"How did you sleep? Was your bed comfortable? I trust you weren't disturbed by bedbugs or fleas?"

"Thank you, I slept all right."

"So you slept well. Thank God. Children should sleep well in their parents' houses. I know from my own experience—however comfortably I may have been installed in Petersburg, I never slept as sweetly as in Golovlovo. It's like being rocked in your cradle. So what do you say? Shall we have our tea now, or have you something you want to say first?"

"If you don't mind, I'd rather we had a talk right away. I have to leave in six hours or so and maybe we'll need some time to think things over afterward."

"As you wish. But let me tell you this, my friend, I talk straight from the shoulder; I never weigh my words beforehand. If you're asking for something you're entitled to, all right, I won't grudge it to you—I wouldn't know how to refuse! That's the way I am and I can't help it. But if you aren't entitled to it—then you'll have to forgive me, for even if it breaks my heart, I'll still refuse! All right, then, let's go into my study. You'll tell me what you have to say and I'll hear you out. We'll see what it's all about!"

When they entered the study, Judas left the door open slightly. He didn't sit down himself or invite his son to sit. Instead he started pacing the room. It looked as if he felt the matter was a delicate one and had decided it would be easier for him to cope with it while on the move. That way he could conceal his facial expression and stop the conversation if it took too unpleasant a turn. And the half-open door would provide him with witnesses, for he knew that his mother and Eupraxia would be down for breakfast any minute now.

"Papa, I've gambled away army money," Peter said without preliminaries, in a rather stupid tone.

Judas didn't answer, but his lips twitched perceptibly. Then, as he often did, he began to whisper something.

"I lost three thousand," Peter explained, "and if I don't refund the sum by the day after tomorrow, the consequences may be very unpleasant for me."

"Well, refund it," Judas said amiably.

Father and son paced the room a few times in silence, each following his own path. Peter wanted to explain further but something blocked his throat.

"But where can I get the money?" he managed to say at last.

"I have no idea what your sources of income are, my boy. But use the money you were counting on when you gambled with official funds to pay them back now."

"You know very well that in such circumstances, people lose sight of these things."

"I know nothing of the sort, my dear boy! I've never played cards in my life, except perhaps a friendly game now and then with Mamma, just to amuse the old lady. And please, please, don't involve me in this sordid business. Let's forget it all and go and have our breakfast. We'll have our tea and maybe we'll find something to talk about, but please, in the name of Christ, no more of this."

Judas walked toward the door, intending to slip away to the dining room, but Peter stopped him.

"But just a minute, please," he said. "You must realize that I have to get out of this situation somehow. . . ."

Judas snorted, looking his son straight in the eye.

"Of course, you have to, my boy!" he agreed.

"Well, help me then!"

"Ah, that . . . that's another matter. You're quite right when you say you have to get out of it, but how you manage it is no concern of mine. You got yourself into the mess, now get yourself out of it. You made your bed, now lie in it. That's the way it is, my friend. As I said in the first place: if your request is justified——"

"I know, I know, I've heard all that before. You never run out of words. . . ."

"Just wait before you start being impertinent. Let me finish what I have to say. . . . So, as I said in the first place, if you ask me for something you're entitled to, you can have it! I'll always be glad to help you! But if you come to me with an absurd request—I'm sorry! When it comes to sordid deals, I have no money and never will have! It's no, no, and no! And you remember that! And don't you dare come here and tell me that I never run out of words! You'd better understand quickly that my words mean business!"

"But think what will happen to me!"

"That's up to God. The way He decides, so it will

happen," Judas said, raising his hands slightly and glancing at the icon out of the corner of his eye.

Again, father and son paced the room several times, each on his own course. Judas seemed to walk reluctantly, as if giving notice that he was being detained here against his will. Peter, arms akimbo, walked behind him. He was chewing at his mustache and smiling nervously.

"I'm your only surviving son," he said. "Don't forget that."

"God, my boy, took everything from Job. But Job didn't murmur against the Lord; he only said: 'God gave and God hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!' That's the way it is, my son."

"That was God who took away; but in your case you're doing the taking away yourself. Remember Volodya. . . ."

"I'm afraid you're starting on your vulgar nonsense again."

"No, it isn't vulgar nonsense. It's the truth. Everyone knows that Volodya——"

"No, no, no! I don't wish to listen to your rot! And anyway, I've had enough of this! You've had your say and I've given you my answer. Now let's go and have our breakfast. We'll have our tea and talk a little, then we'll have lunch and a drink to send you off. And God be with you, good luck to you on your journey! See how kind God is to you—the weather has cleared up and the road will be easier. You'll ride smoothly, jiggedy-jig, jiggedy-jig, and before you know it, you'll be at the railroad station."

"But listen, I beg you—listen! If you have a drop of human feeling left in you——"

"No, no, no! Let's not talk about this any more. Let's go to the dining room—Mamma must be getting impatient for her tea and it's not nice to keep an old lady waiting!"

Judas turned sharply and almost ran to the door.

"Whether in this room or in any other, this conversation can't end like this!" Peter shouted after him. "And it'll be worse for you if we resume it in front of witnesses!"

Judas came back and stood facing his son.

"What do you want of me, you worthless wretch—out with it!" he said in a quivering voice.

"I want you to pay the sum I lost."

"Never!"

"Is that your last word?"

"Look!" Judas said, pointing dramatically at the icon in the corner of his study. "You see that? It came to me from my father. Well, before it, I tell you—never!"

And he walked resolutely out of the study.

"Murderer!" his son hurled after him.

Arina Petrovna sat at the table while Eupraxia made tea. The old woman seemed quiet and preoccupied, as if her grandson's presence constrained her. Judas went mechanically through the usual gesture of kissing her hand, and she as mechanically made the sign of the cross over him. Then came the usual questions about how everyone had slept and how they felt, followed by the usual monosyllabic answers.

Last night she had felt depressed. Since Peter had asked her for the money and reminded her of the curse she had once considered laying upon Judas, a mysterious agitation had possessed her, and the incongruous thought kept recurring: "And what if I did?"

When she learned that an explanation was in progress in the study, she said to Eupraxia:

"Why don't you go quietly over to the door, my dear, and see if you can't hear what they're saying."

But Eupraxia, although she complied, was too stupid to understand what was going on.

"They're just talking," she reported when she came back. "They aren't even shouting much."

In the meantime the samovar was brought in and Arina Petrovna could no longer restrain herself. She crossed over to the study door herself. But by that time the explanation was coming to an end; she could just hear Peter raising his voice and Judas buzzing in reply.

"Buzzing! That's just the word, he's buzzing!" she thought. "And that's how he buzzed the other time! But how could I have failed to understand it then?"

Finally, both father and son appeared in the dining room. Peter was very red and breathing heavily. His eyes were wide open, his hair disheveled, and beads of sweat stood on his forehead. Judas was pale and angry. He tried to compose himself, but despite all his efforts, his lower lip kept twitching. He had great difficulty in giving his dear mamma his usual morning greeting.

They all took their places round the table. Peter pushed his chair back a little, leaned back, crossed his legs, and lit a cigarette, all the time looking sarcastically at his father.

"You see, Mamma dear, the weather has cleared up quite a bit," Judas began. "Remember what a mess it was last night? All God had to do was wish, and now everything is still and quiet like God's own garden. Isn't that so, Mamma dear?"

"I don't know, I haven't been out."

"It's a good thing, for we're seeing our dear guest off today," Judas went on. "Early this morning when I got up, I looked out of the window, and it was so quiet and serene outside, as though an angel had flown by and in one minute had swept all that mess away."

No one reacted to Judas's friendly overtures. Eupraxia was noisily drinking her tea out of her saucer, blowing and snorting; Arina Petrovna looked into her cup in silence; Peter rocked on his chair, looking at his father with an expression that suggested he was doing all he could to prevent himself from bursting out laughing.

"If Peter leaves soon, he won't even have to drive fast to reach the station before dark," Judas said. "It's different driving with our own horses—they're in good shape, and with a couple of hours' rest in Muravyevo, they'll get him there in no time. And after that, leave it to the puffer train—choo-choo-choo, the rest of the way! Ah, Petya, Petya! It's not nice of you to rush off like this! I wish you could've stayed longer, then we would really have had a good time together! And you'd see what a good week's rest would do for you!"

Peter went on rocking in his chair, looking at him sarcastically.

"Why are you staring at me like that?" Judas said

finally, starting to seethe. "Do you see pretty patterns on me?"

"I'm waiting to see what's coming next."

"Nothing's coming next, my friend. It'll be just as I said. I won't go back on my word."

There followed a brief silence, in the middle of which a word was whispered quite clearly:

"Judas!"

Porfiry Golovlov could not have failed to hear that insult. He grew even paler, but he acted as if nothing had happened.

"Ah, children, children!" he said. "I'm so sorry for you and I'd have liked to be nice to you, to befriend you, but it looks as if it just wasn't written in the books that way. You're running away from your father's house; you've found friends and acquaintances for yourselves who've become closer to you than your own parents. Well, what can I do? I've thought a lot about it and finally I've resigned myself. You're still young men, and it's quite natural for young people to prefer the company of other young people to that of an old grumbler like me. So I've resigned myself and won't murmur against fate. My only prayer to our Heavenly Father is: 'Work Thy will, oh Lord!'"

"Murderer!" Peter said, again in a whisper, but this time so distinctly that Arina Petrovna looked at him in terror. A shadow suddenly flitted before her eyes—Stepan-the-blockhead.

"To whom are you referring?" Judas asked, shaking.

"Someone I know."

"So that's it! Well, you'd better say so! Who can guess what's going through your head and that you're not calling someone here names!"

A silence followed. The cups remained untouched. Judas too leaned back, rocking nervously on his chair. Peter, seeing there was no hope left, was filled with a deadly despair and would now easily go to any extreme. Father and son looked into one another's eyes now with queer, distorted smiles. Despite all his self-control, Judas felt that the moment would soon come when he'd be unable to restrain himself any longer.

"You'd better leave before something happens!" he said at last. "That's what I say."

"I'll go soon enough."

"What are you waiting for then? I can see you're spoiling for a fight, but I don't want to quarrel with anyone. We live here quietly and peacefully without fights and quarrels! Look at your old grandmother here—you might have restrained yourself, if only for her sake. Why, may I ask, did you really come here?"

"I've already told you why."

"Well, if it was for that, you've gone to a lot of trouble for nothing. You'd better leave, my friend! Hey there! Tell 'em to harness the horses for the young master! And pack him a roast chicken, some caviar, and what else? . . . say, a few eggs. You can eat them at Muravyevo while the horses are being rested and fed. Well, good-bye and good luck to you!"

"No, I'm not going yet. I'll go to church first and have a requiem sung for my brother—the murdered servant of God, Vladimir."

"You mean for the suicide."

"No, I mean what I said—murdered."

Wide-eyed, they stared at each other. They looked as if they would leap at each other's throats. But Judas, in a supreme effort, turned his chair toward the table.

"Extraordinary," he said in a choking voice, "really extraordinary. . . ."

"Yes, I meant 'murdered,'" Peter insisted rudely.

"And who was it murdered him then?" Judas said, still hoping his son would come to his senses.

But Peter, not in the least abashed, fired point blank:

"You!"

"I did?"

Porfiry Golovlov couldn't believe his ears. He got up from his chair, turned toward the icon and began to pray.

"You! you! you!" Peter repeated.

"There now, God be praised. I feel so much better when I've said a prayer!" Judas said, sitting down at the table again. "Now you wait a minute. Although as your father, I owe you no explanations . . . still, never mind! So, in your opinion, it was I who killed Volodya?"

"That's right."

"And in my opinion that's wrong. In my opinion, he shot himself. At the time I happened to be here, in Golovlovo, and he was in Petersburg. So where did I come in? How could I kill him from a distance of five hundred miles?"

"Do you really not understand?"

"No, I don't, God's my witness!"

"And who left Volodya without a penny? Who stopped his allowance? Tell me—who?"

"What are you talking about? Why did he insist on marrying against his father's wishes?"

"But you gave your consent!"

"Who, me? What next? I never gave it to him, never!"

"Of course, you acted the way you always do. Every word you say could mean ten different things. How on earth is one to know what you mean?"

"I never gave my consent! He wrote to me at the time: 'Papa, I want to marry Lida.' You hear? He wrote 'I want' and not 'will you give your consent?' So 'if you want to,' I wrote to him, 'go ahead. I can't stop you.' And that's all there was to it."

"All there was to it!" Peter mimicked him. "And you don't call that giving your consent?"

"That's just it—I didn't give my consent! I just said that I couldn't stop him, that's all. But consenting—that's a different matter. He never asked me, anyway. He just wrote that he *wanted* to marry that Lida, without even mentioning my consent. All right, you *want* to marry some Lida, go ahead, my friend, marry Lida or Ida or Shmida. Marry anyone you wish, I can't prevent you!"

"You wouldn't prevent him, you said. You only left him to starve. Why didn't you warn him? You could've written: 'Look here, I don't approve of your marriage, so although I won't try to prevent you from marrying, you must no longer expect any financial support from me.' Then, at least, he'd have known where he stood with you."

"Oh, no! That's something I'd never allow myself to do. I'd never be caught using threats to influence a grown-up son's behavior, never! As to the consequences that

behavior may have, well, I'm sorry, you must weigh them yourself—that's what God gave you a brain for. Me, I never interfere in other people's affairs. But I won't tolerate anyone interfering in my business either. No, I won't allow it, I won't allow it and . . . and I even forbid it! You hear me, you bad, disrespectful son—I forbid it!"

"Go ahead, forbid it. You can't gag everyone!"

"And then, he could at least have said he was sorry; he might have realized that he'd offended his father! All right, he'd done a wicked thing, so repent and ask for forgiveness: 'I'm sorry, dear Papa, that I hurt you that way. . . .' But not he! He just went and——"

"But he wrote to you explaining that he had nothing to live on and that he couldn't go on like that any longer."

"One doesn't explain things to one's father, one asks for his forgiveness. That's all."

"He did that too. He was so desperate that he even asked for your forgiveness. In fact he did everything!"

"Even so, he was still in the wrong. Having once asked for forgiveness and seeing that his father didn't forgive him, he could ask again."

"Oh, you!"

Peter suddenly stopped rocking on his chair and turning, leaned his elbows on the table.

"And now me too. . . ." he said, hardly audibly.

His face gradually fell.

"Now me too. . . ." he said, breaking into hysterical sobs.

"And who's to blame when. . . ."

But Judas never got a chance to finish that particular admonition. Something completely unexpected happened. Up to that point, the two men seemed to have completely forgotten Arina Petrovna's presence. She, however, was no indifferent spectator to this family scene. On the contrary, from the very first moment there were indications that something quite unusual was going on inside her. Perhaps she saw in a blinding flash the barren results of her own life. Her face came to life, her eyes opened wide and shone intensely, her lips moved as though they were trying to form some word but couldn't. And, at the very moment when Peter's sobs filled the dining

room, she rose heavily from her chair, stretching her arm out in front of her, and a howl wrenched itself from her breast:

“My curse upon you!”

IV

THE LITTLE NIECE

JUDAS still didn't give Peter the money, although, doting father that he was, he ordered a roast chicken to be put into the sleigh, as well as some veal and even a pie. After that, despite the cold wind, he came to see his son off personally, inquired whether he was comfortable, whether the rug was keeping his feet warm. When he went back into the house, he made repeated signs of the cross through the window, blessing the sleigh that was carrying his son away. In short, he went through every detail of ritual, as a good father should.

"Ah, Petya, Petya," he said, "you're a bad boy and a bad son! Oh, what a mess you're in! Ai-ai-ai! And to think you could've lived so carefree and happy with your papa and your old grandma. But no! Ah, you, you! 'I'm my own master,' you said to yourself, 'I'll live as I choose.' Well, so you chose and look at the trouble you've gotten yourself into!"

But as he said it, not a muscle stirred in his wooden face, not a note of appeal sounded in his voice. Anyway, no one heard his words, for there was no one in the room except Arina Petrovna from whom all life seemed to have been drained by the shock of what she had just been through. She sat by the samovar, her mouth open, staring blankly in front of her.

Afterward, life again ran its old course, full of pointless repetition of the same gestures and endless chatter.

Judas had taken his mother's curse unexpectedly calmly and hadn't retreated an inch from his unyielding position. True, he had paled somewhat and rushed toward his mother, crying:

"Mamma! Darling! God bless you, my sweet! Calm yourself! God will help us and everything will turn out all right!"

But he was more concerned for her than for himself. Arina Petrovna's outburst had been so sudden that Judas didn't even have time to be terrified. Only the night before his mamma had been so nice to him; she had joked, played cards with Eupraxia. . . . So obviously she had cursed him on the spur of the moment and there was nothing intentional, nothing real about it. Actually, although he had always been afraid of his mother's curse, this simply was not the way he had visualized it. His idle brain had created a proper setting for it: icons, lighted candles, his mother standing in the center of the room with darkened face, laying her curse upon him; then a clap of thunder, the candles blow out, the veil of heaven splits asunder, darkness spreads over the earth, the wrathful face of Jehovah appears in the flashes of lightning. . . . But since nothing of the sort had happened, his mamma's curse had been a whimsical gesture and nothing more. And this was so much the more likely since lately they hadn't even had any reason for dissension. Since Judas had expressed his scepticism about his mother's right to the carriage (he secretly conceded that he had been wrong that time and would have merited her curse), a lot of water had flowed under the bridge. Arina Petrovna had become resigned and Judas had tried to give his mother joy and comfort.

"She's getting old, she's really getting old, the poor dear thing," Judas would think, trying to cheer himself up. "She sits down to a game of cards and the next moment she's dozing off."

In all fairness to him, it must be said that her aging had worried him somewhat. He had not yet prepared himself for bereavement, had not yet calculated how much capital Arina Petrovna must have had when she left Dubrovino, how much annual income it could have brought her, how much of that she must have spent,

and how much she could have saved. In brief, he had still a lot of futile computations to do, without which he felt he might be taken by surprise.

"She's a healthy old thing," he had consoled himself, "but still she won't go through *all* her money. How could she! At the time she shared out the estate, she kept quite a sum in her hands. . . . Unless she handed some of it over to the orphans? No, she'd never give them much. She must have some money all right!"

However, these musings had not been too serious and they had evaporated rapidly from his brain. The mass of trifles that kept him busy all day was so immense that he had no need to find any new occupation. So Judas had kept postponing the matter, and only after the sudden episode of the curse did he decide that it was time to begin.

Catastrophe, however, came faster than he had expected. The day after Peter's departure, Arina Petrovna left for Pogorelka, never to return to Golovlovo. She spent a month entirely alone in her room, seldom even exchanging a word with her servants. When she got up in the morning, out of sheer habit she sat at her desk and started to play patience. But she almost never finished the game. She seemed to freeze in her seat, her eyes fixed on the window. Even the most perceptive observer could not have told what she thought about, or if she thought about anything at all. It looked as if she were trying to remember something—perhaps only how she happened to find herself between these particular four walls—but couldn't. Afimya, worried by her silence, peeked into her room, arranged the cushions in her armchair, tried to start a conversation, but received only impatient monosyllables in reply. During that time, Judas came to Pogorelka twice, inviting his mamma to come and visit him in Golovlovo and trying to lure her with mushrooms, carp and other temptations. But she merely smiled enigmatically and refused.

One morning, she started to get out of bed but found she couldn't. She felt no special pain but she just couldn't get up. It didn't even worry her particularly, as if it were quite natural. Yesterday she had still been able to sit by her desk and amble around the rooms, but today

she felt weak and couldn't get out of her bed. It even seemed to her more restful. Nevertheless, Afimya, without informing her, sent a messenger to Golovlovo.

Judas came over early next morning. Arina Petrovna was much worse. He questioned the servants minutely about what his mother might have eaten and whether perhaps she had had too much; he learned that for a month she had hardly eaten anything, and since yesterday, nothing at all. Judas, duly grieved, as a loving son should be, warmed himself a bit by the stove in the maids' room so as not to bring cold air into his sick mamma's room. And while he was there, he started to make various arrangements, for he had an uncanny scent for death. He sent someone to find out whether the priest was at home so that he might stand by in case of emergency; he inquired where his mother kept the chest with her papers in it and whether it was locked. Then, having taken care of these essentials, he summoned the cook and ordered dinner for himself.

"I don't need much," he told her. "I suppose you have a chicken and perhaps some salt meat. So would you prepare a piece? And, say, some roast . . . oh, any sort . . . and that will be plenty!"

Arina Petrovna lay on her back, breathing painfully through her gaping mouth. Her eyes were wide open; one arm had slipped from under the blanket and hung limply alongside the bed. She seemed to have been listening to her son's footsteps as he entered her room. Possibly even the things he had been asking and telling her servants had reached her ear. The curtains were drawn and the room was plunged into semi-darkness. The wicks of the sanctuary lamps were almost burned down and they hissed each time they came in contact with the oil. The air was thick and heavy with heat from the stove, smoke from the burning oil of the lamps, and the smells of a sick body. Judas, wearing felt shoes, slipped over to his mother's bed noiselessly as a snake. Arina Petrovna's half-surprised, half-worried gaze followed his long, thin figure that seemed to sway so eerily in the semi-darkness. She instinctively huddled closer under the blanket.

"It's me, Mamma," Judas said. "I see you're a bit under the weather today! Ai, ai, ai! So that's why I couldn't sleep

all night—something seemed to be pushing me; I just had to go and see how my Pogorelka friends were getting along. So I got up early, ordered the horses harnessed, and here I am!”

Judas let out an amiable giggle. Arina Petrovna didn't answer. She huddled even closer under her covers.

“Believe me, God is merciful and you'll get better soon. The main thing is to keep your spirits up! Forget about the aches and pains, get out of bed and take a little walk in your room, like this.”

Judas got up and demonstrated to his mother how he thought she ought to walk.

“Wait a moment,” he went on. “I'll lift this curtain a bit and have a good look at you. But you look fine, my sweet mamma! All you have to do is cheer up, say a prayer, and put on a nice dress, and we'll be ready for a ball! Here, I've brought you some holy water, you'd better drink some.”

Judas pulled a flask out of his pocket, found a wine glass, poured water into it, and handed it to his mother.

“I wish the girls were here. . . .” Arina Petrovna moaned.

“What next? What do we need them for? Ah, Mamma, Mamma, why do you let yourself go like this? You just feel a little strange and you're all discouraged. Don't worry, though, you'll have everything you wish, and when the time comes, we'll send a message to the girls too. But what's the hurry? We still have a long time to go, you and I, a very long time! Wait, next summer we'll go to the forest together to pick mushrooms, and raspberries and blackberries, and black currants too! Or if you prefer we'll go to Dubrovino and fish for those carp. We'll harness the old piebald and jiggety-jog, we'll drive there slowly and easily.”

“The girls . . .” Arina Petrovna repeated in anguish.

“The girls'll be here. Give us time and we'll call everybody; we'll get everyone over here! We'll all come and surround you and you'll be like a mother hen with her chicks—cluck-cluck-cluck! You can have anything you wish, as long as you're a good girl. But now you're being a bad girl! What's the idea of being sick? What are you up to, you naughty thing? You should be setting an

example to others, and instead . . . It's very naughty, Mamma darling, very naughty!"

Despite all Judas's chatting and joking to cheer up his dearest mamma, her strength kept ebbing. A messenger was sent to town for the doctor, and since the old woman kept demanding her granddaughters, Judas himself wrote them a letter in which he contrasted their behavior with his own: they were ungrateful, whereas he was a true Christian.

The doctor came that evening, but it was already too late. Arina Petrovna would be, as he put it, "done for within twenty-four hours."

About four in the morning she went into a coma; around six Judas was kneeling by her bed, crying:

"Mamma! My dear mamma! Give me your blessing!"

But Arina Petrovna couldn't hear him. Her wide-open eyes gazed dully into the distance, as if she had been trying to understand something but had failed to do so.

Judas couldn't understand either. He didn't understand that the grave that was soon to be opened would swallow his last link with the world of the living. The last person who could serve as a receptacle for the dust with which he was filled to overflowing was lost, and now he was doomed to be choked by that dust.

With his usual fussiness he plunged into the details of the funeral rites. He had requiem services held, ordered masses to be said for forty days, made the arrangements with the priest, walked from room to room shuffling his feet and peeped into the dining room where the dead woman had been laid out, continually crossed himself, rolling his eyes to heaven, and jumped up at night to creep noiselessly to the door and listen to the monotonous reading of the psalms.

He was pleasantly surprised to find that his expenses weren't worth mentioning, for Arina Petrovna had put aside a special sum for her funeral with detailed instructions on how it was to be spent.

After burying his mother, Judas proceeded immediately to study her financial situation. Going through her papers, he found ten different wills, one of which branded him as "disrespectful." But all these wills had been written when Arina Petrovna Golovlov was still an authoritarian

lady and were nothing but preliminary drafts without any legal weight. This pleased Judas. There was no need for him to lie. He was really his mother's only legitimate heir. The estate consisted of fifteen thousand rubles in capital and a few possessions, including the carriage about which they had almost quarreled.

Arina Petrovna had been very careful to keep her own accounts separate from those of her granddaughters so that one could see at one glance what was hers and what was theirs. Judas immediately claimed his rights of succession, had the guardianship papers sealed, and distributed his mother's scanty wardrobe among the servants. The carriage and two cows that were listed in her inventory under the heading "mine" were immediately dispatched to Golovlovo; then, after holding a last requiem, Judas left for home.

"Wait for the owners," he told the servants who had gathered to see him off. "If they come—they're welcome to it; if they don't—it's their affair! I've done everything I could. The young ladies' accounts are in order—I've done everything aboveboard, for everyone to see. The liquid capital left by my mother is mine by law; the carriage and the two cows that I sent to Golovlovo also belong to me now. There may even be something of mine left here—but never mind! God himself orders us to be good to orphans. Poor Mamma! What a nice old woman she was! She was so thoughtful! She even thought of you and left you her clothes! Ah, my poor, poor mother! It was not at all nice of you to leave us behind, poor orphans as we now are! But since such is God's will, there's nothing to do but resign ourselves to it. Ah, Mamma, I only hope your soul is happy now! As for us . . . well, what's the use of talking about us? . . ."

Arina Petrovna's death was closely followed by another.

It was hard to tell how Judas reacted to the fate of his son. He received no newspapers and didn't correspond with anyone; therefore, he could not have heard about the trial of Peter Golovlov. Furthermore, it isn't likely that he would have been eager to find out even if he could have. In general, he was a man who, above all, wanted to avoid trouble; a man up to his ears in petty

worries and squabbles, who thought only of self-preservation and whose existence, consequently, left no trace of itself anywhere. There are many such people in the world and they all live in loneliness, unable and unwilling to attach themselves to anything; people who have no idea what to expect in the next minute and who vanish like drops of rain falling into a pond. They cannot form friendships, for friendship requires a community of interests. They cannot even maintain proper business relations, because even in the lifeless bureaucratic process they display a deadness that is too much for others. Judas had worked in a government office for about thirty years, after which, one fine morning, he had vanished without anybody particularly noticing his absence.

This is why he was the last to know his son's fate—the news had spread even among the servants before he found out about it. And even then, he pretended that he had heard nothing. When Eupraxia started to say something about Peter, Judas waved both hands at her.

"No!" he shouted. "No, no, no! I know nothing! I've heard nothing! And I don't want to hear anything! I want to have nothing to do with sordid affairs!"

But finally he couldn't help knowing. He received a letter in which Peter informed him that he was about to be sent to Siberia and asking whether, under these circumstances, his papa would send him an allowance.

Judas showed signs of great agitation all day, kept wandering from room to room, peeked into the icon room, crossed himself, and moaned. In the evening, however, he pulled himself together and wrote an answer:

Peter, my criminal son,
Being a loyal, law-abiding citizen, I shouldn't even answer your letter. But since I am a father who is not immune to human weaknesses, compassion makes it impossible for me to deny my advice to my own flesh and blood, who, through his own fault, has hurled himself into the abyss of evil. And so, here, in brief, is my opinion on the subject.

The punishment you will be subjected to is severe but fully deserved—this should be the guiding idea which you should never lose sight of in your new life.

As to your former ways, your self-indulgence, you'd better eradicate them from your memory, for in your new situation, they can only cause you to murmur against your fate. Since you have already tasted the fruit of presumption you should now try the fruit of humility, especially since, in your present situation, you cannot aspire to anything else. Do not complain against your punishment, for the authorities are not really concerned with chastising you but only with offering you a means of redeeming yourself. You must be grateful for this opportunity and try to make amends for the evil you have committed—this is what you should be thinking of constantly, not dreaming of luxury, in which I myself, although I have never been condemned, have never indulged.

Take my advice, then; try to become a new man and be content with whatever the authorities, in their kindness, allow you. I, for my part, will pray to the Lord, from whom all blessings come, to arm you with strength and humility. Thus, today, I have already been to church and prayed ardently for you. I bless you as you engage on this new path and remain,

Your angry but still loving father,
Porfiry Golovlov

It is not known whether this letter ever reached Peter. Not more than a month after it was sent, Judas received official notice that his son had been taken ill and died in a hospital on the way to Siberia.

Now Judas was really alone in the world. In the heat of the moment, however, he again failed to realize that, after this latest death, he was definitely cut off and had absolutely nothing left but his empty babble. The notification of his son's death came a short time after the death of his mother while he was altogether absorbed in all sorts of computations and suppositions. He read and re-read his mother's papers, counted and recounted every kopek, trying to find some entanglement of his mother's money with that of her charges. For, as he said, he didn't wish to lose what was his and even less to appropriate what didn't belong to him. While he was busy with all this, he never stopped to wonder what all the fuss was for and who would profit by it in the end. From early morning till late at night, he sat at his desk writing,

criticizing his mother's arrangements, and indulging in flights of fancy. He got so involved in all this that he even neglected the accounts of his own estate.

Everything was quiet in the house. The servants, who had always preferred to remain in their quarters, now deserted the rooms occupied by the master almost entirely. When they had to go there, they instinctively walked on tiptoe and only spoke in whispers. A strange doom seemed to hang over Golovlovo and Judas, something that instilled superstitious fear in people. And the semi-darkness that already surrounded Judas was destined to grow thicker and thicker.

At the beginning of Lent, Anninka arrived in Golovlovo. She explained that Lubinka couldn't come because she had signed a contract for the whole of that period and was to perform at Romny, Izyum, Kremenchug and other places where she was to sing her entire repertoire.

During her brief stage career Anninka had matured considerably. She was no longer the naïve, ænemic, somewhat listless girl who in Dubrovino and Pogorelka used to wander from room to room, swaying rather awkwardly, humming a tune, apparently not sure of what to do with herself. Now her character was formed, her manner was deliberate, and if anything, too free and easy. One could tell immediately that she would never be at a loss for a word. Physically she had changed too, and Judas was pleasantly struck by this. He saw before him a tall, stately woman with a handsome, rosy face, a high, well-developed bosom, slightly prominent, gray eyes, and a magnificent head of thick, ash-blond hair. Anninka appeared to be permeated with the consciousness that she was an embodiment of the beautiful Helen of Troy, *La Belle Hélène*, over whom officers were fated to sigh.

She arrived at Golovlovo early in the morning and immediately isolated herself in a room whence she emerged for tea wearing a gorgeous silk dress with a rustling train which she gracefully steered among the dining room chairs.

Judas, although he loved his God more than anything on earth, had a taste for beautiful women, especial-

ly if they were tall. So he immediately made the sign of the cross over Anninka, then kissed her lingeringly on both cheeks, at the same time squinting so strangely at her bosom that Anninka could not suppress an amused smile.

They sat down to the table. Anninka raised her arms and stretched.

"Oh Uncle, it's so incredibly boring around here," she said, suppressing a yawn.

"Look at that! Before you've even had time to have a look around you're bored. When you've stayed with us for a bit, we'll see if you don't find it interesting."

Judas's eyes suddenly glimmered with an oily shine.

"No, it's decidedly uninteresting here! What have you got? Snow all over the place, no neighbors. . . . I heard you have a regiment stationed somewhere not too far away, is that right?"

"We have a regiment and neighbors too, although to tell you the truth, I'm not too interested in them myself. But if . . ."

Judas looked at Anninka and instead of finishing, cleared his throat. Perhaps he did so intentionally to arouse her curiosity, but whatever his reason, the same vague smile appeared on her face. She leaned on the table and stared straight at Eupraxia, who, flushed in the face, was wiping a glass and glancing sideways at Anninka from time to time with her big, lusterless eyes.

"This is my new housekeeper," Judas said, "a very hard-working woman."

Anninka nodded ever so slightly and started to hum:

"Ah-ah! Que j'aime . . . que j'aime . . . que j'aime les mili-mili-militaires!"

As she sang she wiggled her hips, apparently without realizing it herself.

During the silence that followed, Judas modestly cast down his eyes, taking little sips of tea.

"Ah, what a bore!" Anninka yawned.

"What a bore, what a bore . . . that's all you have to say! Stay around for a while, give yourself a chance to see. . . . We'll have the sleigh harnessed and go driving as much as you wish."

"Uncle, why didn't you join the army and go into the hussars?"

"Because, my dear, every man must follow the path assigned him by God. One man is destined to be a hussar, another to be a civil servant, yet another to become a merchant, a fourth——"

"Oh yes, I see, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth . . . I had forgotten about that. And it's God who arranges all that, is it?"

"That's right, God does it and there's nothing funny about it, my dear! Do you know, I believe it says in the scriptures that without God's will——"

"Something about a hair? Yes, I know that too. But the trouble is that today practically everyone is wearing chignons and I don't believe any provision was made for that. By the way, Uncle, look what lovely hair I have! Don't you think so?"

Judas got up, walked toward her around the table, on tiptoe for some reason, and took hold of a handful of her hair. Eupraxia also leaned forward to look at Anninka's hair, and without putting down her saucer of tea, said:

"That one of them 'shillions'?"

"No, that's no chignon. It's my own hair. Some day I'll let it down to show you, Uncle."

"Yes, beautiful hair!" Judas said approvingly, smacking his lips repulsively.

But then it struck him suddenly that he had to beware of that sort of temptation and he added:

"Ah, you scatterbrain, you scatterbrain! All you have on your mind is hair and dresses, and you never even thought of asking me about the most important thing!"

"Ah yes, Grandma! I know she's dead."

"Yes, she passed away, my dear, peacefully and quietly; nobody even heard her go. She was granted a dignified end to her earthly life. She remembered everyone, blessed us all, called for the priest, confessed. It all happened so suddenly, so quietly! Even the dear departed herself said so and then she sighed. She sighed once, twice, a third time, and when we looked again, she was no longer with us."

Judas got up again, turned his face toward the icon,

folded his hands and prayed for a moment. Tears had appeared in his eyes, so touched was he by the story he had just invented. But Anninka obviously was not the oversensitive type. Even though she became pensive for a moment, it was about something else.

"I wonder whether you remember, Uncle, how she used to feed curds and whey to Lubinka and me? Not toward the end, but earlier. Toward the end she was terribly nice, but I mean when she was still rich. . . ."

"Come, come, why go back to the old grudges! Look what a fine strong girl you've grown on those curds and whey! Won't you visit her grave?"

"I suppose so."

"Only maybe you ought to purify yourself first?"

"What do you mean, purify myself?"

"Well, after all, you're an actress and . . . do you think your grandma approved? So before going to her tomb, you'd better confess and go to mass. Tomorrow morning, I'll have mass said very early and then we'll drive over to her grave."

Despite the absurdity of Judas's suggestion, Anninka was embarrassed at first; then she frowned and said sharply:

"No, I'm going just as I am. Now!"

"Well, it's up to you, but if you want my advice, let's go to mass in the morning, have our breakfast, have the horses harnessed, and drive over there together. Then you'll be purified and Grandma's soul will rejoice."

"Good gracious, Uncle, how stupid can you be? You talk the most awful rubbish and keep coming back to it too!"

"You don't like what I say? Well, you'll just have to forgive me! I'm a straightforward man who says what he means. I hate deceit. I always tell the truth myself and I'm always prepared to face it when it comes from others. Even if it goes against my grain, even if it hurts, I'll always listen to it! That's the way it is, my dear! You stay with us a while and live the way we do and you'll see that it's a better life than wandering around from place to place with a guitar."

"What on earth are you talking about, Uncle? With a guitar indeed!"

"Well, if not a guitar, it's just the same. Why is a tambourine better? Anyway, it was you who started by calling me stupid. And as your old uncle, I'm entitled to tell you the truth to your face."

"All right, all right, call it the truth if it makes you happy. Let's forget about it for the moment. Now, tell me, did Grandma leave anything?"

"Of course she left something, and the legitimate heir was there."

"In other words, you. . . So much the better. Was she buried here in Golovlovo?"

"No, in her parish, near Pogorelka. That's the way she wanted it."

"So I'll go there. Can I hire some horses here?"

"Why hire? We have our own horses, and you aren't a stranger, you know. Remember, you're my niece, after all, my dear little niece!" Judas said, impelled by his idea of what family feeling should be. "I'll have a sleigh and a couple of horses prepared, for thank God, I'm not short of anything! Now, what about my coming along with you? Then we could do everything in one trip—visit the grave, stop over at Pogorelka, have a look at one thing and another, talk things over, decide . . . for you have a nice little property with some quite useful land around it."

"No, I don't think there's any point in your coming. I'll manage by myself. And I'm sorry, by the way, about Petya dying too."

"Yes, my dear, Petya's also dead. On the one hand, I'm heartbroken about him, but on the other, it was all his own fault. He always lacked respect for his father, and God punished him for that. And what God decides to do in His supreme wisdom, we cannot undo, can we?"

"Of course we can't undo it. But I wonder, Uncle—how is it you aren't afraid to live?"

"And why should I be afraid? Look at all the protection I have surrounded myself with!" Judas made a circular gesture with his hand, pointing at the icon. "See, there's protection here, and in my study—and the icon room is a real Paradise! You see how many saints I have to intercede for me!"

"But even so . . . you're always alone. . . . It must be frightening!"

"All right, so if I'm frightened all I do is get down on my knees and pray a little, and all fear is washed away. And really there's nothing much to fear. During the day it's light and at night all these sanctuary lamps burn so that from outside it looks as though a ball were being held in the house! But it's no ball, really, just the saints and God's holy servants, that's all the company I have!"

"Do you know that Petya wrote to us before his death?"

"Why shouldn't he? He was your cousin, wasn't he? Thank God he had some family feeling at least."

"Yes, he wrote to us after the trial, after he'd been sentenced. He wrote that he'd lost three thousand rubles and that you'd refused to give him the money. But you're a rich man, Uncle, aren't you?"

"It's always easy, my dear, to count the money in someone else's pocket. Sometimes it may look as if a man has mountains of gold, but if one looks closer, one realizes that he has just enough to keep himself in oil for his sanctuary lamps and in candles, and even that's not his own but God's."

"Well, then we're better off than you! Between ourselves and our boy friends we raised about six hundred rubles and sent them to him."

"What do you mean by 'boy-friends'?"

"Remember, we're actresses, Uncle. Didn't you insist just a moment ago that I 'purify' myself?"

"I don't like you talking like that!"

"Well, whether you like it or not, it can't be helped. What's done can't be undone. God's hand must be in it too."

"At least don't blaspheme! Say whatever else you wish but don't blaspheme; that I won't allow! So where did you send the six hundred?"

"I don't remember, some little town. He wrote to us where to send the money."

"I don't understand. Any money sent to him should have been turned over to me after he died! But I never received anything. He surely couldn't have spent it all

in one fling. The escort or the prison guards must have got their hands on it."

"But I'm not asking you to account for it. I merely mentioned it in passing. Still, it's shameful, Uncle. How could you let a man perish for some three thousand rubles!"

"Don't you understand that it wasn't because of the three thousand! It looks as though that was the reason and we go on repeating like imbeciles: 'Three thousand, three thousand, three thousand . . .' but God. . . ."

Judas was about to give her a detailed interpretation of God's ways, of Providence achieving things by devious means, and all that sort of thing, but Anninka yawned unashamedly and said:

"Ah, what an unbearable bore."

This time Judas was offended and fell silent. For a long time they paced the dining room. Every minute or so, Anninka yawned and Judas crossed himself. Finally, a servant announced that the horses were ready. Then the usual comedy of family parting began. Judas put on his overcoat, came out to the sleigh to see off his niece, kissed her noisily, and shouted to the servants to wrap her feet up warmly and not to forget the funeral meats, all the time making the sign of the cross in the air.

Anninka visited her grandmother's grave, asked the local priest to hold a requiem service, and when the choristers mournfully intoned "eternal memory," she had a little cry. The ceremony took place in a very sad setting. The church near which Arina Petrovna was buried was a poor one. The plaster was peeling off in patches, revealing the bricks, the bell had a dull, weak ring, and the priest's cassock was worn through at the elbow. The churchyard was covered with deep snow that had to be shoveled away before one could see Arina Petrovna's grave. There was no tombstone yet—only a plain white cross without even her name on it. The church stood by itself, with only the blackened huts of the priest and the sextons near it. Apart from them, there was nothing but the snowy plain all around with a piece of dry wood sticking out of the whiteness here and there. A strong March wind blew over the churchyard, making the priest's cassock flap and carrying away the singing of

the choir. When the ceremony was over the priest said to Anninka:

“Who would’ve thought, Miss, that under this modest cross, near our modest church, would lie the richest landowner in the district.”

That made Anninka cry a little more, and the words of a song flashed through her mind:

No longer laden with festive fare
Was the table; standing there,
There was a coffin bleak and bare. . . .

There were tears on her cheeks as she entered the priest’s little house. She had tea, chatted a bit with his wife, and remembered again:

There was a coffin bleak and bare
And death’s pale and frozen stare. . . .

She cried again, this time long and unrestrainedly. At Pogorelka no one had warned them of the arrival of the young mistress and the rooms weren’t even heated. Without taking off her coat, Anninka walked through them, stopping only in her grandmother’s bedroom and the room with the icon stand. The bed was still in its old place with a pile of dirty comforters and pillows without pillowcases on top of it. Scraps of paper were scattered over the desk; the floor hadn’t been swept and a thick layer of dust covered everything. Anninka lowered herself into the armchair in which her grandmother used to sit and sank into thought. Memories of the past flitted through her head until the present crowded them out. The past reappeared in the form of fragmentary recollections that flared up, then vanished; the images of the present lingered longer. Was it so long ago that she had longed to escape from the loathed Pogorelka house? And now she felt a sort of sickly desire to spend some time here. The place was so silent, so uncomfortable, so uninviting, and the silence was so complete, as if everything around it were dead. But then there was so much air and space. That field over there—she’d like so much to run across it, not running anywhere, but without turning

her head, just to run, to breathe hard, to feel her breast on fire. . . .

And in town, in the Bohemian surroundings from which she had just emerged and to which she *had* to return—what was in store for her there? What had she brought with her from there?

She visualized the smelly hotels, the eternal racket from lounges and dining rooms, unkempt and unwashed waiters, rehearsals on a dimly lit stage amidst props and painted backdrops too disgustingly dirty to touch, the icy draft, the damp . . . and that was it. And then the officers, the lawyers, their crude talk, empty bottles on wine-stained tablecloths, clouds of smoke, and the eternal, inescapable noise! And the way they talked to her! The crudeness with which they laid their hands on her, especially that one with the mustache, his voice hoarse from drink, with inflamed eyes, and always with a smell of the stables about him . . . ah, the things he said! The thought made her shudder and shut her eyes.

After a while, however, Anninka shook herself out of it, got up and walked into her grandmother's icon room. Only a few icons had been left there, those that *beyond a shadow of doubt* had belonged to her mother. The rest, those that had belonged to her grandmother, had been removed by Judas as Golovlov property to which, as heir, he was entitled. The bare places on the icon stand looked like empty eye sockets. And there were no sanctuary lamps. Judas had taken everything; only the stump of a yellow wax candle huddled like a forgotten orphan in its small tin candlestick.

"He wanted to take the icon stand too," Afimya informed Anninka. "He kept asking over and over whether it was really part of your mamma's dowry."

"Oh well, he can have it if he wants it. But tell me, Afimya, did Grandma suffer much before she died?"

"I can't say that the mistress suffered too much. She was only in bed two days. She wasn't even properly sick. Just seemed to pine away by herself. She hardly spoke at all, except to mention you and your sister twice."

"So it was my uncle who took the icons?"

"Yes, Miss. 'They're my mamma's personal icons,' he said. He also took the carriage and drove away two cows.

And then he went through your grandmother's papers and took everything except what belonged to you and your sister, Miss. He even tried to get hold of a horse, but Fedulich wouldn't let him. 'It's ours,' he said to him. 'That horse has always belonged to Pogorelka!' So he didn't dare take it."

Anninka walked about the yard, glanced into the barns, the threshing yard, and the cattle shed. There, on a layer of manure, was her working capital: twenty skinny cows and three horses. She ordered some bread brought to her, saying: "I'll pay for it," and gave a bit to each cow. The dairymaid invited the young lady into her hut where a jug of milk stood on the table and a newborn calf was nestled behind a plank partition in a corner by the stove. Anninka drank some milk, went behind the partition, took the calf in her arms, impulsively kissed it on its lips, but immediately afterward wiped her mouth in disgust, declaring that the calf had a horrid face, sort of slimy. . . . Finally, she took her purse, pulled three bills out of it, and gave them to the old Pogorelka servants; then she prepared to leave.

"What will you do?" she asked the old man, Fedulich, who, as the oldest peasant and the bailiff of the estate, escorted his young mistress, his arms folded on his chest.

"What can we do, Miss? We'll just go on living," he said simply.

Anninka felt sad again, and it seemed to her that there was irony in Fedulich's words. She stood for a while as if undecided. Then she said:

"Well, good-bye!"

"We thought, Miss, you'd come back and stay with us a while," Fedulich said.

"Ah no, what's the difference. . . . You get along fine by yourselves."

Tears poured from her eyes, and the assembled peasants wept too. How strange it was, she thought. There was nothing here that she was sorry to leave, nothing that she could even think of with affection, yet she was crying. And the peasants too; nothing had been said beyond the most ordinary questions and answers, yet they were sorry too.

They installed her in the sleigh, wrapped her in the rugs, and suddenly all sighed deeply.

"Good luck to you, Miss!" Anninka heard behind her as the sleigh moved off.

Passing the churchyard, she told the driver to stop and walked toward the grave by the path that had been cleared earlier. It was getting dark now, and lights shone in the windows of the church cottages. She stood there holding onto the white cross with one hand. She didn't cry, only swayed to and fro slightly. She wasn't thinking of anything in particular. At least, she couldn't have explained what she was thinking, but she felt sad, miserable, infinitely sorry, and not so much for her grandmother as for herself. Without realizing how long it was, she stood swaying like that for about fifteen minutes, when suddenly she pictured Lubinka, who was perhaps at that very moment singing away in Kremenchug or some other place before a tipsy audience:

*Ah! ah! que j'aime, que j'aime!
Que j'aime les mili-mili-mili-taires!*

She felt faint. She hurried to the sleigh, climbed in, and ordered the coachman to drive to Golovlovo as fast as possible.

Anninka returned to her uncle quiet and subdued. This, however, didn't prevent her from feeling hungry. In the rush Judas had forgotten to order the usual roast chicken placed in the sleigh for the journey, and she was very pleased when she found that the table was already set for tea. Judas, of course, immediately opened the conversation.

"Well, have you been there?"

"I have."

"Did you pray at the grave? Did you have a requiem held?"

"Yes, there was a requiem."

"So I assume the priest was at home?"

"Of course he was. How else could I have had a requiem?"

"Yes, of course. . . . And the two deacons were there too and they sang 'the eternal memory'?"

"They did."

"Yes, eternal memory to her! She was a great old lady, a wonderful mother!"

Judas stood up, faced the icon and prayed.

"And how are things in Pogorelka otherwise? Everything all right?"

"I really don't know. Everything seems in place."

"That's just the snag; 'it seems.' It always 'seems' so to us, and the next thing we know, something's wrong and something else is rotten . . . and that's the way we get all sorts of notions about the affairs of other people; it 'seems,' it 'seems' they've got plenty of money! Though I must say you've got a very nice estate there. Mamma arranged things very comfortably for you two and spent a lot of her own money on it. But after all, it's only proper to help two little orphan girls!"

Hearing this praise of her property, Anninka couldn't resist teasing her generous uncle.

"Why did you have two cows driven away from Pogorelka, Uncle?"

"Cows? What cows? You don't mean Blackie and Ginger, by any chance? But you know very well they belonged to Mamma."

"And you, as her legitimate heir . . . Well, all right, enjoy them! If you wish I'll have a calf sent to you too."

"Come, come, now you're getting all excited! Wait a minute, now. You tell me yourself, whose cows are they in your opinion?"

"How should I know? They were at Pogorelka, that's all."

"But I know, I have proof that the cows belonged to my mother. I found an inventory in her own writing and those cows were distinctly marked 'mine.'"

"All right, let's forget about the cows."

"Now you take that horse. You know, the one whose coat is sort of bald in places. Well, I believe it was Mother's too. But I'm not sure, so I won't insist on it."

"Enough of that, Uncle."

"No, why enough? I'm a straightforward man and I like to have everything clear and aboveboard! So why

shouldn't we clear the matter up? Everyone is loath to lose what belongs to him. That goes for me and it goes for you too. So let's clear it up. And since we're discussing the matter openly, let me tell you, I don't want anything that doesn't belong to me, but I won't let go of anything that does. You and your sister are no strangers to me, but nevertheless——"

"You even took the icons too!" Anninka interrupted, again unable to resist.

"Yes, the icons too, everything that belonged to me as the rightful heir."

"Now the icon stand looks full of holes."

"That can't be helped. It's good enough to pray in front of. You know very well that what God cares about is not the icon stand but the prayer. If you're sincere, your prayer will reach him even if it's said before any old icon. But if you just go through the motions, just that bla-bla-bla and some curtsies to go with it, then even the most costly icons won't get it through."

Nevertheless, Judas stood up and thanked God for the nice icons he possessed.

"Of course," Judas added, driving home his argument, "if you don't like the way the old stand looks, you can order a new one. Or else get some new icons to replace the missing ones. The others my late mamma acquired and installed there, and now you'll have to get some yourself."

Judas smirked, his own line of thought seemed to him so straightforward and convincing.

"Tell me, what am I supposed to do now?" Anninka asked.

"Well, why don't you wait a bit? First have a little rest, relax a bit, sleep. Then we'll talk things over, try this, try that, and perhaps between the two of us, we'll devise something."

"We're of age, aren't we?"

"Yes, ma'am, that you are. You're free to do as you think fit both with yourselves and with your property."

"Thank God for that at least!"

"My congratulations!"

Judas got up, insisting he must kiss her on this occasion.

"Aren't you odd, Uncle. Why do you insist on kissing all the time?"

"And why shouldn't I want to kiss you? You're no stranger to me. You're my little niece, aren't you? So, my dear, what's wrong with being full of family feeling? I love every member of the family, even second and third cousins. I'm always ready——"

"You'd better advise me what to do. Do you think I ought to go to town to try and settle things?"

"All in good time, dear. We'll drive to town and do what's necessary. But first—have a rest, relax! Thank God you're not in an inn here. You're a guest at your own uncle's, remember! There's plenty to eat and drink, and if you've a sweet tooth, there's plenty of jam too. And if you fancy something special for dinner, just order it! If you're tired of cabbage soup, ask for some broth instead, ask for cutlets, duckling, suckling pig, anything! You tell Eupraxia what you want—ah, Eupraxia, tell me, while we're on the subject, I was just boasting about suckling pigs, but I'm not really sure whether we have any. Do we?"

Eupraxia, who was holding a saucer of hot tea in front of her mouth, sniffled affirmatively.

"There, you see? We've got suckling pigs too. So whatever your heart desires, just ask for it! That's the way it is here!"

Judas again stretched his hand out toward Anninka and patted her on the knee to convey his warm family feeling. His hand lingered a bit too long there, and she instinctively moved away.

"But I still feel I must go," she said.

"Well, what did I say? I said we'd talk about it and then we'll drive over. We'll do everything properly. 'Without hurry or tear, having said a little prayer,' we'll get God's blessing and go, not just a hop, skip, and a jump, and we're off! More haste, less speed, remember? There's no fire, is there? Lubinka has to hurry to her fair, but what's your hurry? Now, let me ask you, have you decided to settle down in Pogorelka now?"

"No, there's nothing for me to do there."

"That's what I was going to say. So why don't you stay here with me? We'd get along very nicely. You'll be surprised what a wonderful time we'll have here!"

When he said this, Judas's eyes glimmered with such an oily shine that she felt ill at ease.

"No, Uncle, I couldn't stay. It's too dull here."

"Ah, you silly, silly girl! There you go again about its being dull and boring. . . . But why should it be? I bet you can't tell me yourself? If you have something to do and if you know how to control yourself, you'll never be bored. Take me, for instance; I'm simply flabbergasted at the way time flies. On weekdays there's the estate to run. I have to see to this and that, go here, decide one matter, talk over another, and before I realize it, the days over. And on holidays, there's church, of course. It would be the same for you. Live here and you'll find plenty to do with yourself. And, if you don't, you can always play a game of cards with Eupraxia or have the horses' harnessed and go driving to your heart's content. And in the summer we could go to the woods for mushrooms and have picnics on the grass——"

"No, Uncle, it's no use insisting."

"I really think you ought to stay."

"No. And now I'm tired after the ride to Pogorelka and I'd like to go to bed, if it's all right with you."

"Ah, of course, go and have your little rest, my dear girl. We've a nice bed waiting for you and everything to make you comfortable. If you wish to go to sleep, you go to sleep, and God bless you. But I still say you'd be wiser to stay here with us."

Anninka spent a restless night. The nervous state that had taken hold of her in Pogorelka persisted. There are moments at which a person who until then has only existed begins not only to live but also to become aware that there's a canker in his life, although he can't tell where it came from or when it formed. But the important fact is that the canker is there. Such a discovery is painful for anyone, but the results differ according to each person's character. Some are regenerated by it; they become determined to start a different life. Others feel

a passing pain which disturbs their complacency and unsettles them, since they have no feeling that something is being done to achieve a better prospect, but it does not change their outlook for the future.

Anninka was not one to be regenerated by the realization of the presence of such a canker. Nevertheless, she was intelligent enough to understand the gap between her vague dreams of earning her own living, which had prompted her to leave Pogorelka, and the existence of a little provincial actress. Instead of a quiet life of absorbing work, she had found an agitated existence full of noisy parties, crudities, promiscuity and bustle that led nowhere. Instead of the privation and austerity which she had at one time been willing to accept, she had found relative comfort and luxury, the thought of which now made her shudder in disgust. And this transition had taken place imperceptibly, as if she'd been going to a nice place and had blundered in at the wrong door. Her aspirations were actually very humble. Often, back in Pogorelka, she had visualized herself as a serious girl, working hard to educate herself and ready to devote herself to the good, although the word "good" had no clear meaning for her. But no sooner had she become independent than she had found herself in circumstances that at once shattered her dream.

Serious work is not had for the asking. It is the fruit of persistent search and training, which if not necessarily perfect, should at least be adequate. But neither Anninka's temperament nor her background met these demands. Hers was not a passionate nature, but she was easily carried away. And the education she had received was too scanty a foundation on which to build any professional career. The best way to describe her educational background would be perhaps to call it half and half—half finishing school and half musical comedy, with a probable emphasis on the latter. She had retained a pastiche that included arithmetic problems about geese flying from town A to town B, the *pas de châte*, Pierre de Picardy's *Sermons*, the adventures in love of Helen of Troy, Derzhavin's *Ode to Felicia* and a feeling of gratitude toward the educators and trustees of the institution for young ladies she had attended. This was

a quite useless hodge-podge and she had good reason to describe herself as a *tabula rasa*. So it was not toward work that her unbringing had directed her but toward a noisy life of parties, flirtations, din and sparkle.

Had she been more discerning, she would have realized that even during those minutes in Pogorelka when she had thought that she could find an escape from her degradation in the hard work of country life, she was dreaming not so much of labor as of congenial people who would be with her in her new surroundings, with whom she'd kill time in endless conversation. And although these imaginary people were honorable and serious, it nevertheless was not the working aspect of life that was in the foreground. Anninka's poverty had been neat and clean and she had lacked nothing but luxuries. So when in actual life she was offered an engagement as a singer with a provincial company, she hadn't hesitated long, although it didn't fit in with her dreams. She hastily refreshed her school-day recollections of Helen's relations with Menelaus, looked up some biographical details on the magnificent Prince Potemkin-Tavrichesky, and decided that this was enough to enable her to perform in *La Belle Hélène* and the *Grand Duchess of Herolstein* at fairs and in small towns. Also, to quiet her conscience, she remembered a student she had met in Moscow once who had kept repeating the words "sacred art." These words became her motto, lending some dignity to a job she was really anxious to take.

The life of an actress threw her completely off balance. Without friends, without proper training, without a clear purpose in life beyond the need for excitement, glamour, and compliments, she soon found herself spinning in a whirlpool among a mass of changing, disconnected faces. These people formed such a motley lot that her reason for making friends with any of them couldn't possibly have been the same. And yet, since they all formed her circle, there may not actually have been any reasons to speak of. Her life had become some kind of an inn at the door of which anyone was free to knock as long as he was young, cheerful, and reasonably well off. It was not a matter of choosing congenial company for oneself but rather of latching oneself on to any company

so as not to die of loneliness. In fact, her "sacred art" had landed her straight into a garbage dump, but dizzy as she was, she could not see where she was. Neither the unwashed faces of inn servants, nor the grim backstage, nor the noise and stench of small hotels, nor the slimy crudities of her admirers, sobered her. She didn't even notice that she had created an impassable barrier between herself and "respectable" ladies by being constantly in male company.

For a moment, though, Golovlovo had sobered her.

Something had troubled her almost from the very moment she had arrived. Sensitive as she was, she rapidly assimilated new impressions and no less rapidly adapted herself to new surroundings. So, upon stepping out of her sleigh at Golovlovo, she suddenly felt herself to be "the young lady." She remembered that there existed something that belonged to her, that she had her house, the family graves; she wanted to see her former surroundings again, to breathe the atmosphere from which she had escaped in such a hurry not so long ago. But this first impression was shattered on her first contact with the reality she found in Golovlovo. In that sense, she was perhaps like a man imbued with friendly feelings who enters a room full of people whom he hasn't seen for a long time and suddenly notices that their reaction to his friendliness is somewhat strange. Judas's oily, sidelong glances at her bosom reminded her right away that it wouldn't be easy for her to live down her reputation. When she was left alone with herself after the naïve questions of the Pogorelka servants, after the meaningful sighs of the priest and his wife, after a new flood of admonitions from her uncle, she knew definitely that the "young lady" she had been was dead, that from now on, she was nothing but an actress, which was regarded as being hardly much higher than a streetwalker.

Up till now she had lived in a sort of dream. She had appeared half-naked in *La Belle Hélène*, played the drunken Perichole, sung obscenities in the *Grand Duchess of Herolstein*, and even regretted that *l'amour* and *la chose* couldn't be presented on the stage, for she was sure she could wiggle her hips very attractively and give a fascinating rotation to her tail. But she never bothered

to ask herself what it was actually all about. She was only concerned that whatever she did should be graceful and chic, and should be appreciated by the officers who happened to be billeted in town. She never even wondered what sort of sensations her wiggings and rotations produced in them. They were the most important section of the audience and she knew that her success depended on their appreciation. They would appear backstage, bang unceremoniously on the door of her dressing room, come in while she was still half-dressed, and call her by all sorts of pet names; she accepted it all as part of her trade, anxious only to behave suitably for these surroundings.

However, until now she had never felt that either her body or her soul were public property, so when, for a moment, she experienced the feeling that she was again the "young lady," a wave of nausea swept over her. It was as though she had been stripped completely naked and chased out in front of a crowd, feeling their vile, drunken breath on her, the contact of their sweaty hands and slobbering mouths, and seeing their lustful eyes sliding searchingly along her curves, as if demanding an answer to the question: "What's *la chose* really all about?"

Where was she to go? How could she discard the load that was now so revolting to her? This question kept buzzing in her head without her finding an answer or even looking for one. Why, this too was a sort of dream. Her life as an actress had been a dream, and now this apparent awakening was also a dream. She was depressed and overwrought, and that was all there was to it. It would pass. There were good moments and bad moments; it had always been like that. But good or bad, they slid past without in the least changing the course of life. To change its course would take a great deal of effort and courage—not only moral courage, but sheer physical courage too. Almost as much as to commit suicide. Although a man who has decided to kill himself loathes life, although he believes that death will be a liberation for him, the instrument of death trembles in his hand nevertheless. The knife slips from his throat; the pistol, aimed straight at the temple, wavers, and the

bullet, instead of killing, maims. The same problem existed for her, but it was even more delicate. One must kill one's previous life, but having done so, one must still go on living. The obliteration that in suicide is obtained instantly by pulling a trigger can only be had in the special form of suicide that is regeneration through strenuous effort and an almost ascetic self-abnegation. For a person whose will has been undermined by a soft life, the very idea of such a regeneration seems impossible; it makes his head spin. Instinctively looking the other way, his eyes half-closed, cursing himself for his weakness and cowardice, he will return to his old path despite his shame.

Ah, what a great thing is a life of work! But only the strong and those who are sentenced to it in expiation of some inherent guilt can stand up under it. Only these are unafraid of it. The strong, because conscious of the meaning and advantages of work, they know how to find joy in it; the guilty, because for them work is an innate obligation that becomes a habit.

It had never occurred to Anninka to settle down in Pogorelka or Golovlovo, so her business obligations made things easier for her. She was on a leave of absence, had planned her time beforehand, and fixed the day of her departure exactly. Weak people often erect fences in their lives which make things easier for them. When hard pressed, they instinctively hide behind these fences, finding in them a justification for avoiding change. That is exactly what Anninka did. She decided that she would get out of Golovlovo as quickly as possible, and if her uncle insisted on her staying, she would tell him that she had to be back by a certain date.

When she got up the next morning she walked through all the rooms of the huge Golovlovo house. They seemed so empty and desolate and smelled of death and mustiness. The mere idea of settling here horrified her.

"Never!" she muttered to herself with strange emotion. "Not for anything!"

Judas greeted her with his usual graciousness, making it hard to tell whether he simply wanted to be nice or had some sinister scheme in hand.

"Well, how did you sleep, you restless thing? I wonder where you'll be rushing off to today?" he inquired playfully.

"You're right there, Uncle. I must hurry off. I'm on a leave of absence, remember? I must get back in time."

"What? You mean back to those cabarets and things? I won't let you!"

"Whether you let me or not, I'm going."

Judas shook his head sadly.

"What would your late grandmother have said?" he murmured in a tone of gentle reproach.

"Grandma knew all about it when she was alive. And anyway, Uncle, what sort of talk is that? Now it's 'cabarets,' yesterday it was 'touring fairs with a guitar.' Now you listen to me; I don't want you to talk like that, do you hear?"

"Ha! So the truth hurts, does it? But I tell you, I love truth, and I believe if one tells the truth——"

"No, no, no! I don't care what you think is truth or deceit, I just don't want you to talk like that!"

"All right, all right, don't get excited, you restless butterfly. Instead, let's go and have our breakfast; the samovar has been snorting and hissing in the dining room for a long time now."

With smiles and jokes Judas tried hard to wipe out the effect of his implications about his niece's acting. As a token of reconciliation, he even tried to put his arm around her waist, but this struck Anninka as even more inane and repulsive than before, and she avoided his sudden gesture with disgust.

"I'm serious, Uncle, I must hurry off."

"All right, but let's have our breakfast and talk about it afterward."

"Why must we always talk after having tea? Why can't we ever settle anything straight away?"

"Because that's the way things are done. There's a time and a place for everything. So first we'll have our breakfast, then we'll chat about this and that, then we'll talk about business, all in good time."

There was nothing left for her to do but yield to this relentless babble. They drank their morning tea, with Judas slowing down the operation outrageously, taking

tiny sips from his glass, crossing himself, slapping his thigh, chatting about his late mamma, and so on.

"All right, now let's talk it over," he said at last. "How long do you intend to stay here with me?"

"I can't make it more than a week, Uncle. I have to stop over in Moscow on my way back."

"A week, my dear, can be a long time. Sometimes a lot can be accomplished in it, sometimes practically nothing, according to how one goes about it."

"We'd better see to it that we accomplish plenty."

"That's just what I had in mind. We can do a lot or very little. At times one tries to do a lot and succeeds in doing very little, and sometimes one gets the impression that very little is being accomplished and then, lo and behold, with God's help, you've done everything you planned. Now, take yourself. You say you have to stop over in Moscow, but if I asked you why, you yourself couldn't very well explain. Now I think, instead of going to Moscow, you'd be using the time more productively——"

"I must stop over in Moscow because I'd like to see if I can get a part in a play there. As for spending time productively, why, you just said yourself that one can do plenty in a week!"

"I said it depends how one goes about it, my dear. If you handle it well, everything will go smoothly, but if you handle it the wrong way, there'll be snags and delays all the way."

"Then give me some good advice, Uncle."

"So that's the way it is! When you need me it's always 'advise me, Uncle,' but when you don't need me it's 'so boring here!' and 'I'm in a hurry to get away from here.' Isn't that right?"

"All right, but why don't you tell me what I should do?"

"Now, wait a minute. It's just as I was saying. When you need your uncle, he becomes a dear and a sweetie, but when you don't need him, you just turn your back on him. There's no chance of you asking him: 'Uncle darling, do you really think I ought to go to Moscow?'"

"How queer you are, Uncle! I simply must go to Moscow, so what would I do if you said I shouldn't?"

"If I say you shouldn't go, then just stay around

here! I'm not a stranger, I'm your uncle, and you should listen to your uncle, really! You should consider yourself lucky to have an uncle—at least there's someone to care about you and restrain you when need be! And think, there are others who have no one! No one to care about them, no one to advise them; so they grow up alone, and things happen to them, believe me, my dear!"

Anninka was on the point of replying but thought better of it, realizing that it would only be throwing oil onto the blaze. She sat looking silently at Judas as he prattled away.

"I've been wanting to tell you for a long time," Judas continued, "I don't like to think that you two keep traveling all around to those . . . fairs. You may not have liked what I said about guitars, but——"

"But it's not enough to repeat that you don't like it, show me some way out."

"Just live here—there's a way out for you."

"Oh no, not that! Never!"

"And what's wrong with it?"

"I wouldn't know what to do with myself here. What is there except getting up in the morning, having breakfast while you wonder what there'll be for lunch, then after lunch, waiting for dinner, and in between drinking tea, and then having supper. . . . No, I'd die of boredom here!"

"Why, everyone does that, my dear. First, people get up and have their breakfast. Then, those who're in the habit of having lunch, have it. But I, for one, am not in the habit of having lunch, so I don't have it. Then everyone eats his dinner, people usually have their evening tea and go to bed. Well, there doesn't seem to be anything ridiculous or wicked about that. Of course if I——"

"I agree there's nothing wrong in it, but it's not for me."

"Now, if I had wronged someone or libeled them, you may rest assured I'd condemn myself for it, but what are you accusing me of? Having tea, having breakfast, eating my dinner every day? Bless you, my girl, even you, clever as you are, can't go without food."

"Well, I told you there was nothing wrong with the way you live. It just isn't for me."

"You shouldn't measure everything by your own yardstick. That's not for me, this is not for me. . . . Is that

any way to talk? What you should worry about is whether a thing is godly or ungodly. That's the right way to judge things. If we acted in an ungodly way here in Golovlovo, if you found us offending God by sinning, or fretting, or envying, or doing other such wicked things, then we'd really be guilty and should be condemned. Only, in that case, you'd have to establish that we really were acting in an ungodly way. You see, that's different from just coming and declaring: 'This is no good' and 'That's not to my liking!' Shall I tell you something? I often say to myself: 'I don't like it, but that doesn't mean a thing.' Do you think I like the way you talk to me, the way you spurn my hospitality? But I just sit here, saying nothing. I think to myself: 'I'll keep quiet and perhaps she'll come to her senses.' Perhaps while I smile and parry your thrusts, your guardian angel will set you on the right path. Understand, I'm not offended, I'm only thinking of you. No, my dear, it's not nice, not nice at all. If I'd said something unfriendly or offended you in any way, perhaps it would be different, although God commands us to listen to advice from our elders. Still, if I'd offended you, I'd say you were right to be cross and God bless you! But I was so nice and so discreet, simply thinking of the best way to make everyone happy and comfortable, and I find you turning up your nose at all my kindness. So before you talk, you'd better think a bit and pray to God and ask him for wisdom, and if after that. . . ."

Judas went on and on. Words dribbled from his mouth like a thick stream of saliva, and Anninka looked at him with a sort of awe, asking herself how he managed not to choke on it. And, with all that, her uncle never told her what she ought to do now that her grandmother was dead.

She tried to get him to answer this question during tea and again at dinner, but each time Judas went off at a tangent with such a deluge of words that Anninka was sorry she'd started him off and kept wondering how long he would go on.

After dinner Judas went to have a nap and Anninka was left alone with Eupraxia. Suddenly she felt an irresistible desire to have a chat with her uncle's house-

keeper. She wanted to find out why this woman wasn't afraid of living in Golovlovo, and what gave her the strength to stand the torrents of meaningless rubbish that poured out of Judas's mouth all day long.

"Tell me, Eupraxia, are you bored here in Golovlovo?"

"Why should I be bored? I'm no lady."

"Still, you're always by yourself. There's nothing here, no entertainment, no distractions, nothing!"

"I don't need no distractions. If I'm bored, I look out the window. I didn't have much more fun when I lived at my father's over near St. Nicholas's Church."

"Still, wasn't it better at home? You must have had some friends who came to see you and you must have gone to see them. . . ."

"Sure."

"But my uncle . . . he talks so much and it's such boring stuff. . . . Is he always like that?"

"Always, all day long."

"And doesn't it bore you?"

"It don't bother me. You don't think I listen, do you?"

"But how can you not listen at all? He might notice and be offended."

"And how would he find out, when I keep looking at him? He talks away, and I keep my eyes on him and think my own thoughts."

"And what is it you think about?"

"About everything. When it's pickling time, about cucumbers, and if I have to send someone to get something in town, I think about that. Whatever needs doing about the house, that's what I think about."

"So, although you live together here, it's as though you were alone, isn't it?"

"Yes, I'm on my own mostly. In the evenings sometimes he takes it into his head to play a game of cards, so we play. Even so, right in the middle of the game, he'll stop, put aside his cards, and start talking. And I just look at him. When the late Arina Petrovna was with us, it was much nicer. In front of her he was afraid to go too far off the deep end. The old woman would stop him now and then. But nowadays it's like nothing on earth—God alone knows what he allows himself."

"So I see! But, Eupraxia, it's terrible that a man

should talk without knowing why he talks or what he's saying or even whether he'll ever stop. It's terrible. And it's awkward, isn't it?"

Eupraxia gazed at Anninka as if a new thought had struck her for the first time.

"You're not the only one," she said. "Many of us around here don't like him just because of that."

"So that's the way it is."

"Yes. Take the valets—not one of them can stick it out here for long. Almost every month we have to get a new one. The same goes for the office clerks. And all because of that."

"It's too much for them, eh?"

"He drives them mad. Drunkards—now they can put up with it, because drunkards don't hear nothing anyway. You can blow a trumpet right in their ears and it don't bother them. It's as if they had a pot over their heads anyway. But there's trouble there too—he don't like drunks."

"Oh Eupraxia, Eupraxia, and to think he keeps trying to talk me into staying here at Golovlovo with him."

"And why not, Miss? Perhaps it'd be a good thing if you stayed with us. Maybe he'd restrain himself a bit with you here."

"Oh no, thank you very much. I wouldn't have the patience to keep looking him in the eye while he rattled on."

"What can I say? You're a lady and you'll do as you please. But, although you can do as you please, sometimes you have to dance to another's tune."

"And more often than you imagine."

"That's just what I was thinking. And by the way, Miss, I meant to ask you—is it nice to serve as an actress?"

"Well, I earn my own living at least, and that's good."

"And is it true what the master told me, that strange gentlemen can just go and put their arms around actresses' waists?"

Anninka flared up.

"The master doesn't understand a thing," she said, irritated, "and that's why he talks such rot. He doesn't even know the difference between what's acted on the stage and reality."

"You don't say! So that's why the master started gush-

ing, dear niece here and dear niece there, as soon as he saw you, with his shameless eyes darting all over you."

"Eupraxia, what nonsense!"

"Me, talking nonsense? What is it to me? Live here a while and you'll see for yourself. If he don't need my services no more, I'll go back to my father. It's boring here, you were right there."

"It's no use even imagining I'll stay here. And Golovlovo is boring, that's a fact. The longer one stays here, the more boring it gets."

Eupraxia grew thoughtful, then said with a yawn:

"When I lived at home, I was as skinny as anything. And now look at me, I've grown round like a stove. Boredom must be good for you."

"You won't stand it for long, nevertheless. Mark my words."

That was the end of the conversation. Luckily Judas didn't overhear it, for it would have given him a fertile new subject on which to loose his endless store of babble.

For two whole days Judas pestered his niece, repeating endlessly: Wait and see, slow but sure, pray first then act, and so on. He completely exhausted her. Finally, on the fifth day of her stay, he decided to drive to town, but even in this he managed to exasperate his niece. While she waited in the hall already dressed in her fur coat, he dawdled around for an hour as if to annoy her. He dressed, washed, slapped himself on the thigh, crossed himself, walked through the rooms, sat down, gave out instructions, such as: "You see, fellow, that's the way to do it," or, "You'd better look out lest something happen." In general, he acted as if he were leaving Golovlovo not for a few hours but forever. Having exhausted everyone, the servants, the horses which stood in front of the door for an hour and a half, he finally felt his throat dry from so much drivel and decided it was time to go.

In town the estate was settled while the horses ate their oats in the courtyard of the inn. Judas presented an account showing that the girls' capital on the day of Arina Petrovna's death amounted to twenty thousand rubles in five per cent bonds. The petition that everything belonging

to the girls be handed over to them was granted when presented along with proof that they were of age. That same evening Anninka signed all the documents and inventories prepared by Judas and heaved a sigh of relief.

Anninka spent the remaining days of her stay in the greatest agitation. She felt like leaving Golovlovo immediately, but whenever she brought the matter up her uncle put her off with joking remarks, which behind their friendly tone revealed a stupid obstinacy that it was beyond human power to break.

"You said yourself that you'd stay for a week, so stay," he'd say. "What's the matter with you? One would think we were charging you for your board and lodging. Don't worry, we're happy to have you for nothing! If you want tea, you can have it, or food—whatever you want."

"But, Uncle, I really have to go."

"So you can't sit quietly. And what if I don't let you have horses?" Judas said, half jokingly. "Without horses, you'll just have to remain my prisoner. But when the week's up, I won't say another word. 'Without hurry or tear, we'll say a little prayer,' have a bite to eat, a cup of tea, chat a little, have a last good look at each other, and then, Godspeed. Or wait a minute, wouldn't it be a good idea if you went to your grandmother's grave once more, to take leave of her? Maybe the dear departed will send you down some good advice."

"Might be a good idea," Anninka said.

"So here's what we'll do. Early Wednesday morning, we'll have our little service, have a bite for the road, then my horses will take you as far as Pogorelka, and from there you can drive to the railroad station with the Pogorelka horses. You're a landowner yourself now—you can use your own."

She had to resign herself to his will. Sheer triviality is very effective. It catches an outsider unawares, and while he stares around him in surprise, it entangles him and pins him down. Anyone passing an open sewer holds his nose and tries not to breathe; the same should be done by anyone entering the domain of triviality and drivel. He must blunt his sight, his hearing, his sense of

smell and taste; he must stifle his senses, turn to wood. Only then will he be able to withstand the choking stench of triviality.

Anninka finally realized this, but it was already too late. She decided to leave her deliverance from Golovlovo to the normal course of events. Judas had so subdued her with his impenetrable drivel that she could no longer even bring herself to push him away when he took advantage of his avuncular rights to put his arm around her and stroke her back, saying:

"There's a good girl, now."

She couldn't help shuddering each time she felt his bony, slightly trembling hand creeping across her back, but any further expression of disgust was restrained by the thought:

"My God, as long as I can be rid of him by next week!"

Luckily for her, Judas was fairly thick-skinned, and though he may have noticed her impatient movement, he said nothing. Apparently the sentiment, "Love me or love me not, as long as you put up with it," expressed his views on relations between the sexes.

At last the impatiently awaited day came. It was just after six when Anninka got up; nevertheless, Judas was ahead of her. He had completed his usual morning prayers, and while waiting for the church bell to start ringing, he walked through the rooms in his slippers and dressing gown, peeking into everything and listening at the doors. He was obviously agitated, and when Anninka appeared, cast a strange, sidelong glance at her.

It was already quite light outside, but the weather was bad. The sky was entirely overcast and a spring sleet was falling. The village road was black and its shining puddles foreshadowed the thaw. A strong wind was blowing from the south, shaking the snow from the trees and swaying their bare tops from side to side. The out-buildings were black and glistening, as if coated with slime.

Judas called Anninka to the window, and showing her this scene of renascent spring, said:

"You really think you ought to go? Won't you stay?"

"Oh no, no," she cried, alarmed. "It'll clear up."

"Not likely. If you leave at one, I bet you won't get to

Pogorelka before seven. And surely you don't think you can travel at night during this thaw? So you'll have to spend the night at Pogorelka anyway."

"Oh no. I would go even if it were the middle of the night. I'm brave enough, you know. Anyway, why on earth should I wait till one? Uncle dear, why can't I go right away?"

"And what will your grandmother in her heaven say? You know what she'll say? 'My own grandchild! She came, skipped around the place, and left without even asking for my blessing!'"

Judas cut himself off. He stood there for a while shuffling his feet, looking down at the floor, then at Anninka, then down again, apparently wishing to say something, but not daring to.

"Wait! I've something to show you," he said finally. And taking a folded sheet of notepaper out of his pocket, he handed it to Anninka, saying:

"Here, read it."

Anninka read: "This morning at my prayers, I asked gentle Jesus to leave me my dear, dear Anninka. And gentle Jesus said: Take your Anninka by her lovely waist and clasp her to your heart."

"So . . . what do you say?" he asked her, turning slightly pale.

"Oh Uncle, how disgusting!" she said, looking at him in bewilderment.

Judas grew paler still and muttered: "So it seems we have to have hussars." He crossed himself, and shuffling in his slippers, went out of the room.

However, a quarter of an hour later, he was back talking with Anninka as though nothing had happened.

"So," he asked her, "are you going to stop by at your grandmother's grave on your way, to say good-bye to her? That's right, you say good-bye to her; that's a good girl. One must never forget one's near and dear, especially those who'd give their whole heart for you."

They attended the requiem mass, ate the funeral meats at the church, drove home where they ate funeral meats again, then sat down to a cup of tea. Judas sipped his tea more slowly than ever, as though on purpose, and between swallows talked on and on, painfully dragging

out his words. By ten, however, they had finished their tea and Anninka beseeched him:

"Please, Uncle dear, may I go now?"

"And how about eating something? You ought to have a proper meal before your journey. How can you even imagine that your uncle would let you leave like that? No, no, don't even think of it. In the history of Golovlovo such a thing has never happened. My dear departed mamma would never forgive me if she thought I'd let my own niece leave on a long trip without a meal. So just forget it."

Again she resigned herself to a delay. An hour and a half later, however, they hadn't even started setting the table. Everyone went about his business: Eupraxia, her keys rattling, flitted through the courtyard between cellar and storeroom; Judas, slapping his thigh, talked to one of the clerks, confusing him with meaningless directions, and generally tried to while away the time. Alone in the dining room, Anninka paced up and down, impatiently glancing at her watch, counting her steps and then the seconds, one, two, three. . . . Now and then, she glanced out of the window and saw that the puddles were growing larger and larger.

At last, she heard the clatter of dishes and cutlery, and the footman Stepan came in and spread the cloth on the table. But it looked as if some of Judas's fussiness had passed to the servant. He steered every plate into its place at a snail's pace and blew on the glasses and held them up to the light. It was exactly one o'clock when they sat down to eat.

"So you're off on your journey," Judas said, opening an appropriate conversation.

There was a plate of soup in front of him but he didn't touch it. He looked at Anninka with such tenderness that even the tip of his nose turned pink. Anninka hurriedly swallowed one spoonful after another. He took hold of his spoon and seemed on the point of dipping it into his soup, but then he laid it down again.

"You'll just have to forgive an old man," he buzzed on. "You go through your soup like an express, but I'm an old puffing billy. I just can't be casual with God's good gifts. He has given us bread to sustain us, and we just

squander it. Look at all the crumbs you've made! In general, I like to do things well and carefully—they last longer that way. Perhaps while I eat, you'd like me to start jumping through a hoop or whatever you people call the thing. Well, I can't help it, you'll just have to forgive me. You won't always be young either, you can't go skipping through hoops all your life. One day you'll learn, and then you'll say: 'Well, well, my old uncle was right after all.' That's the way it is, my dear. Now perhaps you're thinking: 'Oh pooh! Uncle's an old grumbler.' But when you're my age, you'll say: 'Good old Uncle, he was right all along.'”

Judas crossed himself and swallowed a couple of spoonfuls of soup, after which he laid his spoon on his plate and leaned back in his chair, indicating that he had something to say.

The word “Bloodsucker” was on the tip of Anninka's tongue, but she controlled herself, poured a glass of water, and gulped it down. Judas seemed to sense what was going on inside her.

“You don't like it. Well, never mind, you listen to your old uncle anyway. I've wanted to have a word with you about your eternal hurry for a long time, but we've never got around to it. I don't like this trait of yours. It's a sign of frivolity and a lack of responsibility. For instance, when you and your sister left your grandmother like that, you didn't care if you broke the old lady's heart. And what was it all for?”

“Oh Uncle, why on earth dig that up now? It's really not nice of you. That's over and done with long ago.”

“Wait a minute. I'm not talking about whether it was nice or not; although it may be over and done with, I still say it can be undone. Not only we sinners but God himself undoes what he has done. 'Today he sends us a little rain, tomorrow the sun will shine again.' What do you say? It's not all that wonderful, your theater, is it? So why not leave it, huh?”

“Oh Uncle, drop the subject, for heaven's sake.”

• “And I'll tell you something else. I don't approve of your frivolity—but your attitude toward the words of your elders is even worse. Your uncle is concerned for your good, and you say: 'Drop the subject!' Your uncle

comes to you in all warmth and affection, and you snort at him. And, by the way, who gave you your uncle, do you think? Come on, you tell me who gave him to you."

Anninka looked at him in complete bewilderment.

"God sent him to you. If it wasn't for God, you'd be all alone now. And you wouldn't have known what to do, what petition to present, where to present it, what to expect from it. You'd be like a babe in the woods. The first person you met would have cheated you, another offended you, and a third would have just laughed in your face. But thanks to God, you have an uncle, and we settled the whole estate with a snap of the fingers in one day. We did everything—we drove to town, we went to the Trustees' Office, we handed in our petition, and we obtained their decision. So you see, my dear, how useful it is to have an uncle."

"But I'm very grateful to you, Uncle."

"If you're grateful to your uncle, why do you snort at him instead of listening to his advice? He only wants your good, although at times you may think . . ."

Anninka was at the end of her tether. There was still one way left to escape her uncle's admonitions—by pretending that, in principle at least, she was willing to consider his invitation to remain at Golovlovo.

"All right, Uncle," she said, "I'll think about it. I know it's not so pleasant to live all by oneself far from one's family. . . . But I can't decide anything just now; I must think it over."

"So you see? Now you understand. But what is there to think about? We'll tell the servants to unharness the horses and take your luggage out of the sleigh; that's all the thinking that's needed!"

"But, Uncle, you forget, I have a sister."

It's hard to say whether this argument really convinced Judas or whether he had simply been putting on an act all along because it seemed the appropriate thing to do. Indeed, he hardly knew himself whether he really wanted Anninka to stay in Golovlovo or whether it was only a whim that had crossed his mind. But when she mentioned Lubinka, the meal went along a little faster. Anninka agreed to everything and gave answers that allowed him no opportunity to start off on one of his

lecturing sprees. However, it was already half-past two by the time they were through with their meal. Anninka, jumping up from the table as if she'd been sitting in a steambath all that time, hurried over to her uncle to say good-bye to him.

Ten minutes later, Judas, in a fur coat and bearskin boots, came out of the house and personally supervised the installation of the young lady in the sleigh.

"Go slow on the hills, you hear me?" he instructed the driver. "Mind you don't upset yourselves on Senkino slope."

At last Anninka was seated in the sleigh, wrapped up warmly, and the leather covers were fastened.

"You're sure you won't stay?" Judas cried once more, to show the servants gathered outside the house that everything was as it should be in a happy family. "Tell me you'll be back soon, at least."

But Anninka felt suddenly free and was filled with a childish desire to tease him. She leaned out of the sleigh, and forming each syllable clearly and distinctly, said:

"No, no, Uncle, I won't be back! It's terrible here with you!"

Judas pretended he hadn't heard, but his lips turned white.

Anninka was so happy to escape from the prison of Golovlovo that it never occurred to her that she was leaving behind her a man serving a life sentence there, for whom her departure broke the last link with the world of the living. She was thinking only of herself, that she had escaped, that now she was safe. This feeling of freedom was so strong that when she again found herself at her grandmother's grave, she was no longer in the nervous state she had been in the last time. She went calmly through the requiem service, knelt dry-eyed by the grave, and eagerly accepted the priest's invitation to come in for a cup of tea.

The priest lived very humbly. The room in which he received her was clean, but bleak and bare. Against the walls there were a dozen painted chairs with worn horse-hair seats, bald in spots, and a divan with a swelling back like the chest of some old-fashioned general. There was

a plain desk covered with stained baize on which lay the parish registers with an inkpot with a pen sticking in it peeking out from behind them. In the east corner there hung an icon which had come down to him from his family. A sanctuary lamp burned in front of it. Under the icon stood two trunks that had contained the priest's wife's dowry; they were covered with a washed-out gray cloth. The walls were unpapered, and in the middle of one of them hung several faded portraits of clergymen. The room had a strange smell about it, as if it had served for a long time as a graveyard for cockroaches and flies. The priest himself, although still young, seemed to be as broken down as his surroundings. His wispy blond hair hung in hanks like the branches of a weeping willow; his once-blue eyes had a defeated look; his voice trembled, his beard was bedraggled; his cotton cassock did not fit properly in front and hung on him like on a peg. His wife, who was also young, was even more emaciated than her husband from yearly childbearing.

In spite of all this, Anninka realized that this poor, defeated, exhausted couple did not regard her as an ordinary parishioner but rather with pity, as a stray sheep.

"You've been staying with your uncle?" the priest asked, carefully taking a cup of tea from the tray his wife held.

"Yes, I stayed almost a week with him."

"By now your uncle's become the most important landowner in our parts—there's no one more powerful. But he doesn't seem to be very fortunate in this life. First he lost one son, then the other, and finally his mother. I'm surprised he didn't ask you to settle down at Golovlovo."

"Uncle did ask me to stay; it was I who didn't want to."

"Why?"

"I suppose I'd rather be independent."

"Of course independence isn't a bad thing, Miss, but it can be dangerous at times. Besides, considering you're Mr. Golovlov's nearest relative and therefore the direct heiress to his estate, it might have been worth your while to give up a bit of that independence of yours."

"No, Father, I prefer to pay for my own meals. I find it easier to live when I know I don't owe anything to anybody."

The priest looked at her dully as if he felt like saying: "What are you talking about! As if you knew what *earning* one's own living meant!" But he simply pulled his cassock around him shyly.

"And do you earn much as an actress?" the priest's wife asked.

The priest was very embarrassed and even signaled his wife with his eyes to hush. He thought Anninka would take offense, but she didn't and answered simply:

"Now I'm getting a hundred and fifty rubles a month and my sister gets a hundred. We're also entitled to all the receipts from certain performances. Between the two of us, it amounts to about six thousand a year."

"And why does your sister get less than you? Isn't she as good at acting?" the priest's wife wanted to know.

"Oh no, she's just a different type of performer. You see, I sing, and that attracts the public. My sister's voice is weaker, so she acts in vaudeville, see?"

"Oh, it's just like in the church—some are priests, others deacons, and others sextons!" the wife said.

"Anyway, we share everything we make. That's been our agreement from the very start."

"That's very nice and sisterly. Now, tell me," she said to her husband, "how much does that make a month, six thousand a year?"

"Five hundred between the two, two-fifty a month each."

"Good money! We don't spend that much in a year! Ah, and I wanted to ask you, is it true that they treat actresses like they weren't real women?"

The priest, really agitated, let go of the skirts of his cassock. He saw, however, that Anninka again took the question in stride. "Nothing seems to upset her," he decided, and calmed down.

"What do you mean, not 'real women'?" Anninka asked.

"Well, you know, men kiss 'em, put their arms around them . . . that sort of thing. . . . I even heard that actresses

have to go through with it whether they want to or not. . . .”

“They don’t really kiss on the stage; they only pretend. As for liking it or not, that doesn’t even enter into it, for everything happens according to the script. Whatever the script says, we have to do.”

“Script or no script, still . . . Some men thrust their slobbering mugs at you so, it makes you sick to look at ’em, and here you’re expected to offer them your lips.”

Anninka couldn’t help blushing as she thought of the slobbery mug of the gallant Captain Papkov, which he certainly did “thrust” at her, and that even without a script.

“You have an altogether distorted idea of what happens on the stage,” she said dryly.

“Yes, of course, we’ve never been to a theater. But still, all sorts of things must happen there. We often talk about you, Miss, and we’re very sad for you, very sad.”

Anninka was silent. The priest kept plucking at his whiskers, evidently trying to scrape up enough courage to say a word himself.

“Yes, Miss,” he said finally, “there’s a pleasant and an unpleasant side to every vocation. But in his weakness, man takes delight in the first and tries to forget the second. And why does he try to forget? Because he doesn’t wish to be reminded of his duty to try and lead a virtuous life.”

He stopped, sighed, then added:

“But the main thing, Miss, is to preserve one’s treasure.”

He looked admonishingly at Anninka. But his wife shook her head with a sad expression which suggested: “Ah, it’s too late now.”

“And preserving the treasure I’m thinking of is quite difficult in the acting trade,” the priest said.

Anninka didn’t quite know how to answer that. She began to feel that the talk of these simple people about “the treasure” was on the same level as the officers’ speculations about *la chose*. She realized that here, as in her uncle’s house, she was considered a peculiar object which one might approach charitably, but which it was prefer-

able to keep at a distance for fear of getting soiled.

"Why is your church so poor, Father?" she asked, to change the subject.

"There's no reason for it to be rich, that's why. All the landowners around have left for town; they work there, and the peasants haven't got much to contribute. Anyway, there are only a couple of hundred of them in this parish."

"Yes, our bell is pretty bad," the priest's wife sighed.

"The bell and everything else. Our bell, Miss, weighs only five hundred pounds, and now it's cracked too. It doesn't even ring any more, just sort of croaks—most unsuitable. The late Mrs. Golovlov promised to get us a new one, and had she still been among us, we'd have had a decent bell now."

"You ought to tell my uncle that she promised you a bell."

"I told him, Miss, and to do him justice, he heard me out very graciously. However, he couldn't give me a very satisfactory answer. 'I never heard anything about this from my mamma,' he said, 'but if I had, I would have carried out her wishes without fail.'"

"How could he not hear?" the priest's wife added. "The whole district knew about it, and he says he never heard a thing."

"But we get along somehow. Once we used to hope things would get better, but we don't expect that any more. Sometimes we've nothing even to say mass with—no communion wine or bread. And it's better not to even talk about the way we live ourselves."

Anninka was about to say good-bye to them and leave when two plates appeared on the table, one of mushrooms and the other of caviar. There was a bottle of Madeira to go with it.

"Please stay a little longer. Don't offend us by leaving without having something to eat!"

Anninka accepted, hastily nibbling at a couple of mushrooms but declining the Madeira.

"Here's what I meant to ask you," the priest's wife said. "We have a girl here who used to be in service with an actress in Petersburg. She said the life of an

actress is fine, but every month they have to have special cards renewed by the authorities. Is that right?" *

Anninka looked at the woman wide-eyed, without understanding what she was talking about.

"Maybe it entitles them to move around with greater freedom," the priest offered in explanation. "But then, perhaps the whole story is untrue. On the contrary, I heard that some actresses get a pension from the government. So you never know."

Anninka realized that the longer she stayed, the more hopelessly entangled things would become, and decided to take her leave.

"But we still hoped that you'd give up the theater," the priest's wife kept insisting.

"Why should I?"

"Well, you're a lady, after all. And now you've come of age and have your own estate. What could be better?"

"And you're the direct heiress to your uncle's estate," the priest added.

"No, I won't live here."

"And we did so hope you'd stay! We always said that the two young ladies were bound to come and live in Pogorelka in the end. It's nice here in the summer, you know. There are plenty of mushrooms in the woods," the priest's wife said, trying to tempt her.

"We've plenty of mushrooms even in a dry summer," the priest chimed in.

Finally, Anninka managed to get away from them. As soon as she was back in Pogorelka, she shouted:

"Get the horses ready please, quickly!"

But Fedulich only shrugged and grumbled:

"The horses? They haven't even been fed yet."

"But why? What's going on here? Is everyone trying to prevent me from leaving?"

"Of course we're trying to stop you. Anyone can see it's impossible to go in the middle of the night with the thaw. You'd be better off in your own house, Miss, instead of spending the night in the middle of a flooded field."

* Here, as in the earlier part of the conversation, the priest's wife is confusing actresses with prostitutes, who were registered in Russia and had to renew their cards regularly. (Tr.)

Her grandmother's rooms had been nicely heated this time. The bed in the bedroom was made up and the samovar was hissing on the table. Afimya had scraped up the last of the tea from Arina Petrovna's ancient tea caddy. While the tea was brewing, Fedulich, his arms crossed, stood in the doorway facing his young mistress. Flanking him stood old Markovna and the dairymaid, looking as if they might flee from her sight at her slightest gesture.

"That tea," Fedulich started, "belonged to the late mistress. Your uncle, Miss, tried to get hold of the tea caddy, but I wouldn't let him. Maybe, I said to him, the two young ladies will want some tea when they come here. Leave 'em this so they'll have some to tide them over. He took it quite well and even laughed. 'I know,' he said to me, 'you're an old crook and you'll drink it yourself! Only remember, I want that caddy delivered to me when it's empty!' So he may come here and claim it any time, maybe even tomorrow."

"I wish you had let him have it then."

"Why? He has plenty of tea of his own. As it is, we can have some tea after you're through with it. And I'd like to ask you, Miss: Do you intend to hand us over to Mr. Golovlov?"

"Certainly not."

"That's good. Because we wouldn't have agreed to it anyway. If she's going to hand us over to Mr. Golovlov, we'll give notice, we decided."

"But why? Why are you so afraid of my uncle?"

"It's not that we're so afraid of him, Miss; it's that he kills people with his talk. All those words spread rot around."

Anninka could not suppress a smile. She herself felt there was something putrid in Judas's speeches. It wasn't just empty drivel; it was like a festering sore oozing pus all the time.

"And what've you decided to do yourself, Miss?" Fedulich asked her.

"What do you mean?" Anninka said, a bit nonplused, fearing she was going to have to face more expostulations about her "treasure."

"Is it possible you've decided to stay in them actresses?"

"No . . . that is, I haven't decided yet. . . . Anyway, what's wrong with my earning my living as best I can?"

"There's nothing good about going around fairs and cheering up drunks. You're a lady, after all."

Hearing this, Anninka merely frowned. One thought kept throbbing in her head: "Good God, when will I ever get away from here?"

"Of course, you're the best judge, Miss, of what's good for you. We only hoped you'd come back to live with us. The house here is warm and big—there's room enough to play hide-and-seek. Your late grandmother had it all arranged real nice for you to live in. And if you found that time dragged, you could order the sleigh harnessed and go for a ride, and in the summer, you could go to the woods for mushrooms."

"Yes, Miss, we've all sorts of mushrooms, and so many of them. . . ." Afimya lisped toothlessly.

Anninka leaned her elbows on the table, holding her head between her hands and trying not to listen.

"There was a girl living around here," Fedulich insisted mercilessly, "who used to work as a maid in Petersburg. Well, she was telling us that all them actresses must have that special police card that they have to have stamped at the station every month. . . ."

Anninka felt scalded. She had had enough of this stuff for one day.

"Fedulich," she shouted, "what have I done to everybody? What sort of pleasure do you get from pestering me like this?"

She couldn't take any more. There was a lump in her throat, and she felt that with one more word she would be unable to control herself. . . .

V

FORBIDDEN FAMILY
PLEASURES

NOT TOO LONG before Peter's catastrophe Arina Petrovna had noticed, on one of her visits to Golovlovo, that Eupraxia looked rather bigger. Arina Petrovna had been brought up during serfdom, when the pregnancy of a servant girl was regarded as a capital gain and was a pretext for a series of quite entertaining investigations; she had an unerring eye for that sort of thing. She had no sooner fixed her gaze on Eupraxia's body than the girl turned crimson and look down in embarrassment.

"Ai-ai-ai, my girl! No, don't turn away, look at me! You pregnant?" the old woman questioned the stray sheep. But there was no reproach in her voice. On the contrary, she sounded gay, as if she suddenly felt herself back in the good old times.

Eupraxia didn't answer, looking at once embarrassed and self-satisfied, her cheeks turning even redder under the old lady's inquiring glance.

"So that's why you kept trying to hold your belly in yesterday! I watched you walking around wiggling your tail, but I wasn't born yesterday and you can't deceive me that easily. I know all your feminine tricks, I can tell what's going on a mile off. Or do you expect me to believe that you got blown up like that by the wind? Well, when? Come on, tell me, speak up!"

There ensued a lengthy interrogation, followed by equal-lengthy explanations. When had she detected the first

signs? Did the master know of the joy in store for him? Had she picked a midwife yet? Was she being careful? Did she avoid lifting heavy things? And so on.

It turned out that the pregnancy was already in the fifth month, and thus far Eupraxia had no midwife. The master, although he had been duly informed, had made no comment but instead had folded his hands in prayer, whispered something through hardly moving lips, and glanced at the icon, thus indicating that God's hand was in all things and the Almighty would take care of everything. Finally, Eupraxia remembered once picking up a samovar, and at that very second feeling something snap inside her.

"Well, what a pair!" Arina Petrovna said reprovingly. "It looks as if I'll have to take things in hand myself. She's in her fifth month and she still hasn't bothered to see a midwife! You should at least have gone to see Ulita, you fool!"

"I was going to, but the master doesn't think much of her."

"Nonsense, my girl, nonsense! What Ulita did to meet with the master's disapproval has nothing to do with this. You got yourself into this state, so you go and see her. Nobody's asking him to go and kiss her! No, I see I'll definitely have to take this business in hand!"

At this point, Arina Petrovna was inclined to start moaning that even now, at her advanced age, she had to carry all the burden, but she was enjoying herself so much that she merely smacked her lips and went on:

"Well, my girl, now you'll have to pay for it! You've enjoyed coasting down the hill, now you must climb back up dragging your sled behind you. You'll see! I brought up three sons and a daughter and buried another five children in infancy. I can tell you a thing or two about childbearing! Ah, we get nothing but trouble from these good-for-nothing men!"

Suddenly something struck her.

"Good heavens! No doubt about it—it must've happened on a fast day! Wait, let me work it out!"

They both counted on their fingers. They counted once, twice, three times, and sure enough, it must have been a fast day. There was no possible doubt.

“So that’s how he is, our holy man! Just wait, you praying hermit, I’ll tease you to death for this! Ah, he’s in real trouble now. I wouldn’t be myself if I let him get away with it,” the old woman said, chuckling with delight.

And indeed, while they were having their tea that evening, she started taking digs at Judas in Eupraxia’s presence.

“Look at our pious one! A nice little trick you’ve pulled off! Unless perhaps it was really the wind that puffed your beauty up like that! I’m surprised at you, my boy!”

At first Judas shrank from his mother’s teasing with great distaste, but realizing that she really saw nothing wrong in the situation, he grew cheerful about it himself.

“Ah, Mamma, you’re really very naughty!” he said in a playful tone, although, as usual, he avoided saying anything directly on the matter in question.

“What do you mean ‘naughty’? We must talk it over seriously. After all, it’s supposed to be a secret even if it isn’t really. Still . . . you must decide intelligently. Do you want her to be confined here at home or shall we take her to town?”

“I don’t know, Mamma, I really know nothing about the whole thing. . . . Oh, you really are a naughty girl, Mamma dear.”

“All right then, you and I, my girl, will settle it all between us. We’ll decide what to do next. For you know, these good-for-nothing men only think of satisfying their lust, then we women have to manage as best we can.”

Arina Petrovna felt back in her element again. She spent the whole evening talking to Eupraxia about this matter. She never seemed to tire of it. Even her cheeks grew rosy and her eyes regained some of their youthful fire.

“Have you ever thought what it means, my girl?” she said. “There’s something . . . divine in it . . . and although this wasn’t the proper way to go about it, still it’s a holy matter. But mind, if you do it on a fast day again, then God help you, I’ll laugh you off the face of the earth.”

They summoned Ulita to a conference. First they spoke of what was to be done and how to go about it; whether an enema was needed and whether Eupraxia’s

belly should be rubbed with ointment. Then they returned to their favorite game, calculating and recalculating, and every time it came out exactly on the fast day. Eupraxia turned red as a poppy, and although she didn't deny it, she invoked her helpless position as an excuse.

"It isn't up to me," she insisted. "It's just as the master wishes. How can the likes of us go against his orders?"

"Ah, come on, butter wouldn't melt in your mouth, I suppose," Arina Petrovna teased her. "I bet you yourself . . ."

In brief, the women had a real feast. Arina Petrovna recounted many incidents from the past. She started with her own confinements. She had had a terrible time with Stepan-the-blockhead, and when she was carrying Pavel, she had had to go to Moscow so as not to miss an auction at which she had acquired Dubrovino, and that had almost cost her her life, etc. Each of her confinements had had some snag in it, except for that of Porfiry, the Judas.

"I didn't feel burdened with him at all, not even that much!" she said. "I'd sit and think to myself: 'Good heavens, am I really pregnant?' And then when the time came I lay down for a minute and before I knew what was happening, it was all over! He was my easiest child, my easiest by far."

Then they talked about servant girls. How many of them she had caught personally, how many she had had tracked down by her trusted agents, mostly by this same Ulita. These things had remained strangely clear in her old memory. In all her gray past, devoted to the accumulation of wealth on every scale, her spying out of the maids' love affairs was the only thing that stirred a living chord of romance in her.

It was like suddenly coming across a piece of fiction amidst dull magazine articles about the formation of fog or Ovid's burial place. A piece of fiction starting: "As the troika flashed across the . . ." The consequences of the uncomplicated romances of the servants' quarters were often severe and even inhuman: the pregnant girl was usually married off to some widower with a large family in some remote village, while the gallant was either

demoted to cattlehand or sent into the army. But now, somehow, the sad endings to these romances had been blotted out of her memory, while the whole business of spying out the romance remained vivid down to the minutest detail. And it's no wonder, for following these romances was like reading a serial in the daily paper in which the lust of the heroes and heroines is never satisfied at once, and at the most exciting point, the reader finds the words "to be continued."

"Those girls gave me plenty of trouble," Arina Petrovna said. "Some of them tried to hide it up to the last minute—still hoping to get away with it. But they had no chance of putting one over on me. I'd had a taste of it myself, in my day," she added sternly, as though threatening someone.

Finally came the stories of what one might call "delicate" pregnancies, in which Arina Petrovna figured not as prosecutor and chastiser but as accomplice.

Thus, when her doddering old father was seventy and was having an affair with a servant girl, it was suddenly discovered that she was pregnant, a fact which, for higher considerations, had to be hidden from the old man. But, as would happen, Arina Petrovna was on very bad terms with her brother at the time, and he, for reasons of his own, wanted to put his old papa wise to his girl friend.

"And believe it or not, we managed to carry it off almost right under my papa's nose! The old dear was asleep in his bedroom while we were working just next door to him, talking in whispers and walking on tiptoe. I even had to hold her mouth closed with these very hands! Then I picked up her son—he was such a big, healthy baby—and took him to the foundling home. My brother didn't find out a thing for a whole week and when he did, he could only gasp. 'Ah, that sister of mine!' he said."

Then there was another "delicate" pregnancy—that of her sister-in-law Barbara. Her husband was away on the Turkish campaign and she went and got careless. She came rushing to Golovlovo as if she were on fire—"Help me out, Arina!"

"And although we were involved in litigation with

them at that time, I never even mentioned it. I was as nice as could be to her, calmed her down, made her feel better, and the business went off as smoothly as you could wish. Her husband went to his grave without finding out a thing."

Arina Petrovna went on with her stories. She could hardly have wished for a more eager audience. Eupraxia was anxious not to miss a single word, as though she herself were directly experiencing the adventures in some wonderful fairy tale. As for Ulita, since she had been an accomplice in most of these adventures, she merely smacked her lips in confirmation.

Ulita also brightened up and relaxed. She'd had a life full of anxieties. From her early days she'd been consumed by servile ambitions and dreamed day and night of how, through a show of devotion to her masters, she could reach a position in which she could order her fellow serfs around. But she never really succeeded. Whenever she was about to step up a rung on the ladder, some unseen force would hurl her back down into the melee. She had all the qualities that make a perfect servant. She was spiteful, had an evil tongue, and was prepared to betray anyone. But she was overanxious to please, and all this perfidy came to naught. In the old days, Arina Petrovna had often made use of her services to conduct secret investigations in the maids' quarters or to drive through some shady deal, but she never appreciated her as a person and never gave her a responsible position. This made Ulita bitter, and she often indulged in vicious slander against her mistress and her more favored fellow servants. However, little attention was paid to what she said, because everyone knew that she might inveigh wickedly against her mistress one moment and cringe and fawn the next if given the slightest encouragement. So she kept trying to climb without getting anywhere, until the abolition of serfdom put an end to her ambitions.

In her youth, something had happened once that had given her serious hopes. During one of his visits to Golovlovo while he was in government service in Petersburg, Judas had had an affair with her. It was even rumored that she had had a child by him and this had

brought him under his mother's opprobrium for a long time. It is not known whether the affair between the two was pursued during Judas's subsequent stays at Golovlovo, but when he resigned from the service and settled down on the estate, Ulita's dreams were shattered in the most humiliating way. No sooner had Judas arrived than she went running to him with a mouthful of gossip in which Arina Petrovna was all but accused of stealing. But, although he listened to her stories, he was quite cold with her and appeared to have forgotten their previous "closeness." When she found that she had miscalculated, Ulita moved to Dubrovino where Pavel, just to spite Judas, took her in and even made her his housekeeper. For a while her stock seemed to have risen there. While Pavel sat upstairs downing glass after glass, she dashed from cellar to storeroom, rattling her keys, swearing loudly at the servants, and intriguing against Arina Petrovna.

But Ulita was too treacherous to simply enjoy her good luck. When Pavel's drinking reached such proportions that one could safely predict the outcome, Judas realized that, things being what they were, Ulita could be a great asset to him, and he again beckoned her. She was assigned never to let the quarry out of her sight, never to contradict him even when he spewed hatred for his brother, and at all costs, to keep Arina Petrovna away from him. This was one of those family plots in which Judas became engaged spontaneously, as a matter of course, and not after cold-blooded deliberation.

Ulita carried out her assignment in every detail. Pavel never ceased to hate his brother, but the more he hated him, the more he drank and the less willing he was to listen to Arina Petrovna's reminders about final "arrangements." Each movement, each word of the dying man was immediately reported to Judas, so that he could appear on the scene at the right moment and take over the show. This is how he had happened to appear in Dubrovino just at the moment when it was about to drop into his hands like a ripe peach.

For these services, Judas presented Ulita with a length of woolen material for a dress. He didn't, however, show any inclination to resume their intimacy, and Ulita

again found herself in the melee of servants. And this time it looked as though there was no one in the world to beckon to her.

To reward her "for the devotion she had shown to his dear brother during his last days," Judas allowed her to live in the cottage reserved for a few deserving serfs after the abolition of serfdom. There Ulita became completely resigned, and when Judas started his affair with Eupraxia, she showed no signs of resenting it; indeed, she was the first to come and pay her respects to the young favorite.

Then suddenly, at a moment when she felt she was completely forgotten and out of the picture, luck smiled on her again. Eupraxia became pregnant and now they remembered that somewhere in the servants' quarters there was a person who could be very useful in handling that sort of situation, and they called her over. True, it wasn't the master who actually called, but at least he didn't veto it. Ulita marked her reappearance in the master's house by practically tearing the samovar from Eupraxia's hands and carrying it officiously, bending back more than necessary to exaggerate its weight, into the dining room where the master sat at the table.

Judas didn't say a word. But she thought she saw him smile on the next occasion that they met, when she was carrying the same samovar along the corridor. Seeing him, she called out:

"Look out, master, or I'll burn you!"

Summoned to take part in the family council, Ulita at first played coy and wouldn't sit down. But Arina Petrovna growled at her amiably:

"Come on, come on, sit down! Stop taking on poses like a statue! Serfdom's finished and we're all equal under the tsar now. Sit down then!"

And Ulita sat down. For a while she remained quite reserved, but gradually her tongue loosened.

This woman had memories too. Much poison had accumulated in her under serfdom. Besides spying on the amorous affairs of the maids, Ulita was a sort of healer and potion-maker. God only knew how many mustard plasters, poultices, and above all, enemas she had administered in her life! She had administered enemas

to the late master Vladimir Golovlov, to Arina Petrovna, to all their children without exception, and had retained the most gratifying memories of these occasions. And now she had an almost endless store of such recollections.

The old Golovlovo house came mysteriously to life. Arina Petrovna came from Pogorelka' to visit her son and supervised the so-far unadmitted preparations. After the evening tea, the three women retired to Eupraxia's room, treated themselves to homemade jam, played cards and, late into the night, shared recollections which constantly caused Eupraxia to turn red with embarrassment. Any incident would bring yet another batch of stories to mind. Thus, when Eupraxia offered her some raspberry jam, Arina Petrovna suddenly remembered that during one of her pregnancies, she hadn't been able to stand even the smell of raspberries.

"As soon as someone brought raspberries into the house," she said, "I would smell them and start shouting like a madwoman: 'Out! Get those damned things out of here!' But after my confinement, it passed off and I got to like them again."

When Eupraxia brought in some caviar, Arina Petrovna had a story connected with that too:

"Ah, caviar—oh, I must tell you a really strange story! At that time, I had only been married a month, or maybe two—and suddenly I'd feel I just had to have some caviar right away! So, off I'd go to the larder and fill myself. I said to my husband: 'How do you account for that—I just can't keep away from the caviar?' Well, he just smiled, like that, you know, and said to me: 'Why, you must be pregnant, my dear.' And right he was. Exactly nine months later I had Stepan-the-blockhead!"

All this time, Judas maintained his noncommittal attitude toward Eupraxia's pregnancy. And since the women would have had to restrain themselves in his presence, they kept him out of their gatherings. If he did come in by chance, attracted by the coziness of the tea parties in Eupraxia's room, they unceremoniously chased him away.

"On your way, on your way, my lad!" Arina Petrovna would cheerfully wave him off. "You've done your bit

and now you'll just have to leave it to us women! It's our turn to enjoy ourselves now."

Judas departed obediently. And although he sometimes reproached his dear mamma for having grown cool toward him, at the bottom of his heart he was delighted that she was taking a hand in this embarrassing situation. God knows what he'd have done without her to hush up the disgraceful affair, the mere thought of which made him squirm. But now, thanks to his mother's tact and experience and Ulita's dexterity, he hoped everything would go quietly. Perhaps he wouldn't even learn the result when everything was over and done with.

Judas's expectations, however, were shattered. First, there was the scandal with Peter, and soon after that, Arina Petrovna died. Now he had to settle matters himself, and the prospects of making some sordid little arrangement vanished. He couldn't very well dismiss Eupraxia on moral grounds, for as a result of Arina Petrovna's intervention, the situation had become common knowledge. And Judas was reluctant to rely too heavily on Ulita. Although she was a skillful woman, to trust her was perhaps to court trouble with the public prosecutor. For the first time in his life, Judas fully realized how utterly lonely he was and felt vaguely that the people around him were not mere puppets whose strings he could pull at his convenience.

"What would it have cost her to wait a little longer?" he thought reproachfully. "Couldn't she have arranged everything nicely and quietly, and then, Godspeed! Well, when the time to die has come, there's nothing to be done about it! Of course, it's sad about the dear old lady, but since it's God's will, all our tears and doctors and drugs can do nothing. She had her time, the dear old lady; she enjoyed herself. She was a landowner during her life and left her children landowners after her. Well, she lived her life, and that's good enough."

As usual, his empty thoughts, unable to dwell on any subject which presented practical difficulties, immediately slipped toward something that would enable him to spew forth an endless stream of meaningless words.

"She died in a way that is granted to the righteous

only," he lied to himself, without actually realizing whether it was a lie or the truth. "No pain, no worries—just like that! She sighed, we looked at her, and she was no longer with us! Ah dear, dear Mamma! She had a smile on her lips, and her cheeks were so rosy, and her hand was extended, as if she wanted to bless me . . . and then she closed her eyes. . . ."

In the middle of these touching thoughts, something would sting him:

"Ah, the filthy business! . . . Couldn't Mamma have waited a little longer? There was only a month to go, even less perhaps . . . and now look what a mess she's left us in!"

For some time he tried to avoid answering Ulita's questions, just as he had avoided his mother's, repeating: "I know nothing—nothing about it." But Ulita was an impudent woman who felt herself in a strong position now, and it wasn't that easy to get rid of her.

"If you don't know, who do you think does?" she snapped back cuttingly. "You don't think I got her in that state?"

He realized then that he could no longer pose as a detached spectator when he himself was responsible for the situation.

The inevitable, almost tangible catastrophe was drawing nearer and nearer. It obsessed him, and worse, paralyzed the stream of inane thoughts that would have enabled him to escape. He made frantic efforts to crush all awareness of it, to drown it in a stream of blather, but he was successful only up to a point. He tried to hide behind the inevitability of a fate dictated by God's will, and as usual, from one thread he wound a skein, which he then unraveled endlessly, repeating something about the hairs of one's head being numbered and about building one's house on sand. . . . But just when it seemed he had these empty thoughts rolling smoothly, one after the other, when the skein seemed sure to go on unwinding endlessly, one word would appear from nowhere and snap the thread.

This word was *fornication* and stood for something that Judas refused to admit even to himself.

After futile efforts to forget it, to kill it, the reali-

zation was forced upon him that he was caught, and dependency overcame him. He went striding around his room, thinking of nothing, aware only that something was gnawing and shuddering inside him.

This was the first time anything had checked the idle flow of Judas's thought. Until then, in whatever direction his empty fancy chose to move, it had always found infinite room for its variety of combinations and patterns. Even the loss of his two sons and the death of his mother hadn't managed to check the flow of drivel. These were events in the natural course of things, such as happen to everyone, and were governed by recognized procedures. Requiems, memorial services, funeral repasts—all of these he observed in accordance with custom, satisfied that he had done his duty before God and man. But *fornication*—ah, that was a different kettle of fish! Why, it was the condemnation of his whole life, it was the exposure of its inherent falsity. Although he was aware that people had called him a schemer and even a bloodsucker before, he had always been able to challenge it as legally untenable and to demand proofs. And here he found himself a *fornicator* and a fornicator caught red-handed, who had done nothing to get himself out of trouble in time through the fault of his late mother ("Ah, Mamma, my dear mamma!"), and what was even worse, it had happened on a fast day. . . . Oh, horror!

In these internal dialogues, involved though they were, there was the hint of awakening conscience. But it was still a matter of speculation whether Judas would follow it up or whether he would once more escape on the flow of drivel.

While Judas suffered from the emptiness inside him, an unheralded change took place in Eupraxia. Maybe it was her approaching motherhood that loosened the locks that had kept her mind closed. Thus far she had been simply uninterested in the world around her and had viewed Judas as her master whom she was supposed to obey. Now she felt that she had something that made her an independent adult and that, as far as that something was concerned, she could no longer be passively told what to do. As a result, the expression of her face,

heretofore crude and dull, now brightened and showed a spark of understanding.

Arina Petrovna's death was the first thing that stirred her in her half-conscious existence. However peculiar the old lady's reaction to Eupraxia's forthcoming maternity may have been, there had been an obvious sympathy in it that was radically different from Judas's disgusted evasiveness. For this reason, Eupraxia had begun to see Arina Petrovna as something like a defender in a plot that was being prepared against her. Her forebodings were the more stubborn because she couldn't put them into words, and they filled her entire being with a formless anguish. The feeling wasn't clear enough to warn her of the form and direction of the danger, but her instinct was sufficiently aroused to make the mere sight of Judas stir an unaccountable fear in her.

"Yes, the danger will come from him," echoed in the innermost recesses of her heart. From this walking coffin filled with dust whom she had been hired to tend and who had somehow become the owner and father of *her* child! The feeling that stirred in her was akin to hatred and would have turned into it had it not been for Arina Petrovna's sympathy and kindly chatter that never gave her a chance to think.

Then, after Arina Petrovna had departed, first to Pogorelka and then to the other world altogether, fear took hold of Eupraxia. The silence that descended over the house was broken only by a creaking that announced that Judas, holding up the skirts of his dressing gown, was stealthily creeping along the corridors, listening at the doors. Now and then, some of the servants would run in from the yard, the door of the servants' quarters would bang, and then the silence would come crawling out of the corners again—a deadly silence filling one with weird, superstitious dread. Eupraxia was already too close to confinement to be able to distract herself with housework that might have tired her enough to make her sleepy by evening. She tried to show affection to Judas, but was met with curt, irritated rejection, whose sting she felt despite her primitive nature. So she had nothing left to do but sit with her arms folded and worry.

And, indeed, she had more and more reason to worry,

for Arina Petrovna's death had untied Ulita's hands and introduced a new flood of gossip and intrigue into the house which soon became the only thing that could distract Judas from his worries.

Ulita guessed that Judas was afraid, and that in his empty, perfidious nature fear and hatred were very close to one another. She was also well aware that Judas was incapable of affection or even simple pity and that he only kept Eupraxia because of her ability to run the household smoothly. With this in mind, Ulita fanned the hatred that surged up in Judas each time something reminded him of the forthcoming "disaster."

In no time, a web of gossip was wound around Eupraxia. Ulita continually called Judas's attention to various things. Sometimes she'd complain to him about the wasteful way the house was run.

"It looks to me, master, as if there's too much food being wasted here. I went down to the cellar this morning to get some salt beef. We'd started a new barrel only a few days ago, I remember for sure. But what do I see when I look? Only two, maybe three pieces lying on the bottom."

"You don't say?" Judas said, looking at her intently.

"I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, for where could all that stuff have gone? Everything melts—butter, flour, cucumbers, everything! On other estates the servants are given goose drippings with their potatoes, while here they have to have butter!"

"Really?" Judas said, almost in horror.

Another time she might come and entertain him on the subject of linen.

"You really ought to have a little talk with Eupraxia, master dear! Oh, I realize she's still inexperienced in these things, but still . . . Now you take the linen, for instance. . . . Why does she have to use whole rolls of it to make sheets and diapers for her baby? And to think it's such fine linen too!"

Judas said nothing, but his eyes flashed and his empty soul turned over at these words.

"Oh, I understand her worrying about her baby," Ulita went on in her syrupy voice. "She thinks something unheard of is going to happen, that she's to have

a prince or something. . . . But I say the baby could do without linen sheets, considering what he'll be."

Sometimes she simply teased him:

"Now what was I going to ask you, master dear? Ah, yes, what have you finally decided to do about your son, to recognize him or send him to a home?"

But Judas would give her such a gloomy look that Ulita didn't insist.

And so it was amid seething hatred that the day of the arrival of a new one of "God's tiny, weeping servants" approached, a day that would settle the confusion one way or the other and increase the number of weeping servants of God in the world.

It was after six in the evening. Judas had had his afternoon nap and was sitting in his study making calculations on a sheet of paper. At the moment, he was preoccupied with the question of how much money he would have had now if Arina Petrovna hadn't appropriated the one hundred rubles which her papa had given as a present to the baby Judas at his christening, but instead had invested it in his name. It didn't look as if it would have amounted to much anyway—only some eight hundred rubles.

"Even so," Judas mused, "it isn't much, but it's nice to know that one has something for a rainy day. If I needed it, I could just help myself. I wouldn't have to ask anyone's permission or go fawning on anyone, for it was a present from my own grandfather. Ah, Mamma, Mamma, my dear, how could you have acted so rashly and irresponsibly?"

It looked as if Judas had recovered from the anxieties that so recently had paralyzed his ability to lull himself to sleep with empty words. The disturbing flashes of what might have been conscience, brought about by Eupraxia's pregnancy and his mother's sudden end, had gradually died out. The empty words had once again won the day and were helping Judas drown his worries about the "catastrophe."

Although he hadn't consciously decided anything, the old formula, "I know nothing, I allow nothing, I forbid nothing," reappeared and put an end to the inner

crisis through which he had been going. Now he truly viewed the forthcoming confinement as something that was no concern of his, and his face assumed a detached, inscrutable expression. He almost ignored Eupraxia, even avoiding mention of her name, and on the rare occasions when he did inquire about her, he'd say:

"And how's *that one* getting along? Is she still sick?"

On the whole, he proved to be so tough that even Ulita, who had gone through the hard school of serfdom and was an expert on human nature, realized that it was impossible to win against a man who was prepared to adapt himself to any situation.

The house was dark except for the light in the master's study and another in the wing where Eupraxia's room was. The silence surrounding Judas was only broken by the clicking of the abacus and the scratching of his pencil as he jotted figures down on a piece of paper.

Suddenly, out of the surrounding stillness, a distant, heart-rending moan reached Judas. He shuddered. His lips quivered. His pencil made an unintentional wiggle.

"A hundred and twenty-one rubles plus twelve rubles, ten kopeks . . ." Judas whispered, trying to shut out the unpleasant impression left by the noise.

But there was another moan, followed by another, and another, until they became too much for him. Unable to go on with his work, he got up from his desk.

First he paced the room, trying not to hear. But gradually, curiosity overcame his cowardice. He quietly opened the door, stuck his head out into the darkness, and listened.

"Good gracious!" it suddenly occurred to him. "I believe they forgot to light the lamp before the icon of Our Lady, Assuager of Sorrows."

Hurried steps resounded in the corridor. Judas quickly drew his head back, quietly closed the door, and trotted on tiptoe over to the icon. Within a second or so he was "presentable," and when the door flew open and Ulita rushed into the room, she found him standing in prayer with his hands clasped piously before him.

"I hope Eupraxia will pull through. She's in a bad way,"

Ulita said, not hesitating to interrupt Judas's prayerful meditation.

But Judas didn't even turn his head; his lips just moved a little faster. Instead of answering, he waved his hand at her as if she were an exasperating fly.

"What are you waving at me for? I'm trying to tell you Eupraxia may die any minute," Ulita insisted.

This time Judas turned his face toward her. It was so calm and serene that one would have thought he had just been communing with God, and having left all earthly worries behind him, couldn't understand why he was being bothered.

"Although it's a sin to say unkind things when we stand in prayer, I can't help reminding you that I've asked you time and again not to disturb me during my devotions," he said in a patient, long-suffering voice, meanwhile shaking his head slightly as a sign of Christian disapproval. "Well, what's it all about?"

"What do you expect? Eupraxia's going through agonies. The baby just won't come. Do you want me to believe you haven't heard a thing? Ah, you! You could at least come and see what's happening!"

"What's the point of my coming? I'm no doctor! As if I could give any advice! And then I know nothing about your affairs. I know there's someone sick in the house, but that's all. I must admit I'm not curious enough to find out what the complaint is. The only advice I can give you now is to send for a priest if she's really as badly off as you say. I certainly advise you to do that! Send for the priest, light the icon lamps, pray with him . . . and when you're done, send him to me and the two of us will have a cup of tea."

Judas was very pleased with himself for acting so firmly at such a decisive moment. He looked at Ulita with clear, limpid eyes. "Just try and dispute what I say," he seemed to challenge her. Even Ulita was at a loss for words for a moment.

"You could come and have a look at her," she said again.

"There's no reason, no need for me to come. If there was, I'd come to see her without your telling me. If I'm really needed somewhere, I'm willing to walk five

miles to get there. And if it's ten miles away, why, I'd walk ten miles. And if I had to, I'd go through cold and frost and blizzard. If it was my affair—I wouldn't hesitate."

Ulita fancied she was asleep and dreaming and that in her dream Satan himself was holding forth.

"Send for the priest—that's the thing to do. A prayer, you know, is terribly important. You remember what it says about prayer in the Gospel—prayer is the great healer, that's what it says. So send for the priest and pray, and I'll pray too, at the same time. You people pray in the icon room there, while I ask for God's mercy here in my study. Through our combined efforts—you there, me here—our prayers will reach heaven."

They sent for the priest, but before he arrived, Eupraxia gave birth in terrible agony. From the sudden running about and the banging of doors in the other wing of the house, Judas could tell that something decisive had happened. And sure enough, a few minutes later hurried steps were heard in the corridor and Ulita rushed into the study holding in her arms a tiny creature bundled in something white.

"Here, look!" she announced solemnly, bringing the child up to Judas's face.

For one moment Judas seemed to hesitate. His body instinctively leaned forward, and some sort of a spark lit his eyes, but only for a moment. The next instant he turned his face away with an expression of revulsion. His hands waved defensively.

"No, no, no! Stop that! I'm afraid of them . . . I don't like them! Go away, go!" he muttered with disgust.

"You could at least ask whether it's a boy or a girl," Ulita said reproachfully.

"No, no, there's no reason; it's none of my business! I don't want to know anything about it. It concerns you people, not me. Leave me alone; in the name of Christ, go away!"

Ulita again fancied she was dreaming of Satan. She exploded.

"I've a good mind to throw it on the sofa here, so you'd have to look after it!" she said threateningly.

But Judas was not that easily affected. Before Ulita

had even finished her sentence, his face had turned toward the icon and his hands were raised in humble supplication. He asked God to forgive all those who sin, in knowledge or in ignorance, by thought, word, or deed; he then thanked the Lord for saving him from being a thief, a robber, or an adulterer, and for having planted his feet firmly on the path of righteousness. Judas was so moved that even his nose twitched with emotion; finally, Ulita, unable to stand it any longer, swore and left.

"God took one Vladimir from me and now he's given me another," suddenly flashed through Judas's mind. But he immediately cut short this unfortunate association of ideas with: "Pooh, what rot!"

The priest came, chanted a prayer or two, burned a little incense. Judas heard "Oh, Mother of God, intercede for us," and couldn't resist chiming in. Ulita came rushing along once more, opened the door, and called out:

"They've called 'im Vladimir!"

This strange coincidence with Judas's recent aberration impressed him strongly. He saw God's hand in it and this time, without trying to ignore it, said to himself:

"God be praised! He has taken one Vladimir and given us another. That's the way of God for you! You lose something in one place and you think you'll never find it again and then, lo and behold, in some other place you get it back a hundredfold!"

Finally, he was told that the samovar was ready and the priest was waiting for him in the dining room. By now, Judas was quite calm and full of religious exaltation.

Father Alexander, who was waiting for him, was a diplomat who always endeavored to remain on good social terms with Judas. The priest was well aware that vigil services were held at this house every Saturday night and on the eve of the important holidays, as well as a special service on the first of each month; all of which brought in a good hundred rubles a year. Furthermore, he knew that the boundary of the church land had never been definitely fixed. Every time Judas drove past the priest's meadow, he unfailingly remarked: "What a nice

meadow"—which explains why Father Alexander also felt a certain apprehension whenever he came across the master of Golovlovo. So, although he did not always have good reason for being calm, serene, and delighted to see Judas, he did his best to look so. And when Judas allowed himself to develop some heretical view on the ways of Providence, eternal life, or some such matter, Father Alexander treated it as neither blasphemous nor impious but rather as the imaginative musing of a prosperous country squire.

When Judas walked in, Father Alexander quickly raised his hand in blessing and even more quickly withdrew it, as though he feared it might be bitten. He was about to congratulate Judas on the birth of the baby, Vladimir, but stopped himself, unsure of how Judas felt about it.

"It's foggy outside," the priest said, "which, according to popular belief, is a sign of thaw. But," he added, "there's a good deal of superstition in it."

"And I say it may be a sign of frost!" Judas said. "We may expect it to start thawing and God may change His mind and send us frost."

Judas cheerfully sat down to the table. A footman called Prokhor was attending.

"You're right in that man often dreams of attaining the unattainable," the priest tried to agree, "and it can only lead him to sorrow or regret."

"And so I say we should avoid guessing and forecasting and welcome whatever God sends us. If it's thaw—that suits us fine; if it's frost—the frost is welcome too! We'll have the stoves stoked if we stay at home, and if we're going out on a journey, we'll just wrap our coats tighter around us and we'll be warm enough!"

"That's quite right."

"There are many people nowadays who go around saying that this is wrong and that's not right and they'd have done things differently. I don't approve of that, you know. I don't stick my nose into other people's business and can't approve when others do. I call that falling into pride. That's what I feel about such attempts."

"And that's very true too."

"We're all pilgrims down here. That's the way I feel

about it. Certainly, having a cup of tea with a bite to go with it—that's all right. God gave us our bodies and other parts. Eat to your heart's content, but hold your tongue!—even the government doesn't object to that."

"I must say, I fully agree with you again!" chirped the priest, slamming his cup down on his saucer in his enthusiasm.

"Shall I tell you the way I look at it?" Judas said. "Let's face it—man was not given his brain to probe into the unknown but to help him to steer clear of sin. For instance, if I feel a weakness of the flesh, or if I'm tempted, I call on my brain for help—it's as though I said to it: 'Show me how to cope with this weakness'—then, I do the right thing. In cases like that, the brain really is useful."

"I'd say, though, that it's even more a matter of faith," the priest said, venturing a slight correction.

"Faith is good in its place, and the brain has its own uses. Faith points out the goal, and the brain shows you how to get there. You stumble along, knock against things, lose your way at times, but at the same time, you learn a thing or two. Look at all the medicines we have—herbs, potions, plasters—the brain discovers and invents them all. But mind you, it must go hand in hand with faith if it's to serve good and not evil."

"I've really nothing to say against that."

"I read a book once, Father, which says there's no reason to spurn the brain as long as it serves faith, for a man who doesn't use his brain becomes the plaything of his passions in no time. I'd even say that man committed original sin because the devil came in the shape of a serpent and befuddled his reason."

The priest didn't object, but he didn't agree either, for he still couldn't see what Judas was driving at.

"We often come across men, Father, who not only sin in thought but actually commit crimes," Judas continued, "and all because they don't use their brains enough. The flesh may torment a man, and if he has nothing in his head, down he tumbles into the abyss. A man wants something sweet, something gay, something nice, maybe women, that sort of thing. . . . Well, how do you expect him to control all that without a brain? But if he has a

brain, he can take some camphor or oil, rub himself here, sprinkle himself there, and before he knows it, the temptation has gone."

Judas waited to see what the priest would say to this, but the priest was still wondering what Judas was up to, so he merely cleared his throat and said, without any connection:

"Take my chickens now . . . they're all excited because of the change of season. They run around, scatter in all directions, just can't settle down anywhere."

"You see? That's because birds, beasts, and reptiles don't have brains. What's a bird, d'you think? It has no worries, no responsibilities—it just flies around! Why, just this morning, I looked out the window and I saw sparrows with their beaks in the manure, pecking—but for a man, that won't do."

"However, don't forget, the birds of the sky come into the Scriptures in some places too."

"It's just as you say—in some places. That's in instances when faith can save without one's having to use one's brain. Then you should imitate the birds—when you pray, when you write poetry. . . ."

Judas fell silent. Although he was itching to talk about what had happened that day, he still had to find a way in which he could decently expatiate on the subject.

"Birds don't need a brain," he said at last, "since they have no temptations. Actually it would be more correct to say they have temptations but nobody reproaches them for them. Everything comes naturally to them. They have no property to look after, no legal marriage, hence no widowhood. They don't have to answer to God or to the authorities. The only authority they have is the rooster."

"That's right, the rooster, the rooster, that's exactly it. He's like the Turkish sultan to them."

"As for man, he's organized himself so much that there's nothing natural left for him; that's why he needs his brain so much, so he won't fall into sin himself nor drag others into it. Isn't that right, Father?"

"That's the holy truth. And it even says in the Scriptures: 'If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.'"

"That's if you take it literally. But you can manage

without plucking out your eye; you can do things in such a way that it won't be tempted to offend. Turn more often to prayer and curb the unruly flesh. Take me, for example. I'm not old yet, and I'm vigorous too. And I have female servants around. But that doesn't worry me! I know it's impossible to do without servants, so I have them. I have menservants and maidservants and all sorts of servants! You need female servants in a household—to go down to the cellar, to pour tea, to see to the snacks—and God bless 'em. They go about their business, I go about mine, and so we get along."

Judas tried to look into the priest's eyes as he said this, and the priest tried to return his look. Fortunately, there was a candle between them, so they could gaze as much as they wanted to, but all they saw was the candle flame.

"And then there's something else too. If you become intimate with a maidservant, she starts trying to give orders around the house. Then you have trouble, disorder. She answers back, is rude; if you say a word to her she gives you two back. I'd rather steer clear of all that. . . ."

The priest was looking at Judas so intently that everything began to dance before his eyes. He felt, nevertheless, that out of politeness, he should at least contribute a word or two to the conversation from time to time. So he shook his head and said:

"Tssss!"

"But if I followed the example of, say, one of my neighbors, Mr. Anpetov, or my other neighbor, Mr. Utrobin, I wouldn't be far from sin. Mr. Utrobin has about six of the filthy little things playing around in his yard. But I want no part of that. I say that if God took away my everloving wife, my guardian angel, then it must be His will that I be a widower. And if, by God's will, I'm a widower, then I must bear my widowhood honorably and not defile my marriage bed. Isn't that right, Father?"

"Yes, sir. I know it's not easy."

"I know it's not easy, but still I stick to it. Some keep complaining it's hard, but I say, the harder the better,

as long as God gives me strength. It's not sweet and easy for everyone. Some of us have to go through hardships for the Lord's sake. You control yourself down here and it brings you your reward up there. What you call labor here is called virtue up there. Am I right?"

"I don't see how anyone could be more right."

"And I must say, virtues aren't always the same. One virtue can be great, another small, wouldn't you say?"

"It's quite possible; some may be great, some small."

"So here's what I make out of it. If a man conducts himself well, doesn't swear, doesn't take the name of the Lord in vain, doesn't pass judgment on others, doesn't hurt anyone, doesn't take anything away from others . . . and, of course, avoids those temptations—you know—that man will always have an easy conscience and no mud will stick to him. And if some neighbor does pass judgment on him, then I say such judgments shouldn't even be considered—just dismissed."

"Yes, but I'd say that in such cases Christianity would recommend forgiveness."

"Well, forgiving is all right too. If someone condemns me, I forgive him—I even pray for him. It's good for both of us; for him, because a prayer has gone up for him, and for me, because I've prayed and forgotten the whole thing."

"That's a good rule to go by. Nothing eases one's soul like prayer. Sorrows, anger, and even sickness flee before prayer like the shadows of the night before the rising sun."

"Yes, and God be praised. We ought always to behave in such a way that our life will be like a candle burning in a lantern that can be seen from all sides. Then we won't be condemned so often, because it will be easily seen that there's nothing to blame us for. Look at us now, for example. We've been sitting here and chatting; who could condemn us for that? And now let's say a little prayer, then we'll go off to bed. Tomorrow is another day, isn't that so, Father?"

Judas rose, noisily pushing back his chair as a sign that the conversation was over. The priest also got up and was on the point of extending his hand to bless Judas,

when Judas, as a mark of special warmth, grasped his hand in both of his and shook it heartily.

"So they called him Vladimir, Father?" he said, shaking his head sadly and motioning toward Eupraxia's room.

"In honor of St. Vladimir, sir."

"Well, God be praised. She's a hardworking, faithful servant. Of course, when it comes to brains . . . that's how she fell into temptation."

Throughout the following day, Judas stayed in his study, praying to God for guidance. The day after, he came out for breakfast, not in his usual dressing gown but wearing his best frockcoat, which he wore only when he had made an important resolution. His pale face showed spiritual inspiration; a saintly smile played about his lips. His look was kindly and all-forgiving, and the end of his nose was reddish from devotional excess.

He drank his usual three glasses of tea in silence, moving his lips in the intervals between sips, clasping his hands, and glancing at the icon. Despite his prayerful exertions of the previous day he still seemed to require further heavenly guidance.

When he had swallowed his last mouthful, he sent for Ulita, meanwhile stationing himself before the icon to draw strength, once more, from communion with God and to demonstrate graphically, for Ulita's benefit, that whatever happened would be the Lord's doing, not his.

Ulita, however, immediately understood that Judas was contemplating some perfidy.

"As you see, I've just finished praying," Judas said. As a sign of his submission to the Divine Will he made a wide-sweeping gesture of resignation.

"A praiseworthy thing to do, master!" Ulita said, and her tone so clearly indicated that she saw through him that Judas instinctively raised his eyes and glanced at her.

She stood there in her usual attitude: one arm across her chest, with her chin resting in her other hand. She seemed on the verge of laughing. Judas shook his head in Christian reproof.

"I suppose God has sent you grace," Ulita said, undeterred by Judas's warning gesture.

"You're always blaspheming!" Judas said, unable to control himself any longer. "How many times have I warned you, yet you still persist in your ways! You've a really poisonous tongue!"

"Why, I didn't say anything. . . . It always seems that when you pray, God sends you grace."

"So it *seems* to you, does it? Well, I'm not interested in how it *seems* to you! You should learn how to hold your tongue occasionally! I was telling you something important and you come out with these 'it seems to me's. . . .'"

Ulita shifted impatiently from one foot to the other. Her whole attitude implied that whatever Judas had to say, she'd heard it already, over and over again.

"Listen to what I have to say," Judas began. "I prayed yesterday and again today; it always turns out that we must make some arrangements for the baby, Vladimir."

"Obviously we must, since he's no puppy and can't just be drowned!"

"Wait a minute! Stop it! Give me a chance to say a word! What a poisonous creature you are! So, here's what I say. Whatever else, we must do something about Vladimir. On the one hand, we must be understanding toward Eupraxia, but on the other, we must make a man out of him."

Judas glanced at Ulita, apparently expecting her to chat cozily on the subject now; instead, she asked him directly, looking him straight in the eye:

"Do *I* have to take him to the foundling home?"

"Ai-ai-ai! So you've settled everything, have you? Ah, you chatterbox! Ah, Ulita, my girl, you're always like that—one, two, three—and everything's settled! Who told you I'd decided to send him to a home? Maybe I've other plans for young Vladimir!"

"Well, if you have other plans, that's all right with me."

"That's just what I was saying. On the one hand, I'm very sorry for the baby; on the other, I don't think we really have to keep him here."

"Sure, I understand. What would people say? Wouldn't

they start wondering about the strange baby in the Golovlovo house? Where it came from?"

"Well, that's true enough as far as it goes, but then there's the other consideration: Staying here won't do Vladimir himself any good. You see, his mother's still very young and she's bound to spoil him—and I am too. Although I'm old and no relative, his mother is such a loyal servant that I'm afraid I might spoil him too. No, no, I'm sure to be too lenient, and at times, when the boy really ought to get a spanking for one thing or another, I'd let him get away with it. . . . And then there'd be no end to the tears and fuss and noise, and I'd just let it go. Isn't that right?"

"That's right, you'd get fed up with it all."

"Yes, but I want everything to turn out well in the end. I want him to grow up to be a good man, a good servant of God and a loyal subject of the tsar. So, if God decides to make him a peasant, I want him to know how to work the land, to plow, to mow, to chop wood, all that sort of thing. And, if God decides he should have another trade, let him learn that—or even go into a learned career, because, you know, some babies in the foundling homes even grow up to be school teachers!"

"From the foundling homes, you say? Sure, they make 'em generals straight away!"

"I don't know whether he'll become a general or not, but perhaps he'll become someone well known. Anyway, I do know they're wonderfully cared for in those homes. The cradles are spotless, the wet nurses are healthy, the babies wear snow-white little shirts and they have pacifiers, diapers, and everything you could think of."

"What better place could one imagine for illegitimate children?"

"And if he went into a peasant family as a foster child, I think that would be all right too. He'd learn to work from the tenderest age, and we know that hard work is just another form of prayer. You see, people like me pray properly—they stand under icons, cross themselves, and if our prayer is acceptable to God, He rewards us for it. Now the peasant must work; and even if he were anxious to pray properly on a holiday, chances are he

wouldn't have time for it. But God sees his labor and rewards him for it just as He would if it were a prayer. What can we do? It's not everyone's destiny to live in a palace and spend his time going from ball to ball; some must be content with a smoky little hut, looking after Mother Earth! And who can tell which of the two is the happier in life? One man may live in a palace and shed tears through his gold, while another may sleep on straw, live on bread and kvass, and carry paradise in his heart. Do you agree?"

"What could be better than having paradise in one's heart?"

"So here's what we'll do, my dear girl. You'll take that naughty little Vladimir, wrap him up warm and snug, and make a little trip to Moscow. I'll have a covered sleigh harnessed with a couple of horses. The roads are nice and smooth now, with no holes or bumps, so all you'll have to do is sit and enjoy yourself! But you must see to it that everything is done properly, the way we Golovlovs would have it! The nipple of the pacifier must be clean; get sheets, diapers, blankets, plenty of everything. See to everything, and if anybody doesn't want to listen to you, come and tell me. When you get to Moscow, stop at an inn, have a samovar heated, and drink as much tea as you wish. Ah, Vladimir, Vladimir, what a shame this whole thing is! I'm very sad to part with you, believe me, but it's all for your own good, and you yourself will be grateful to me some day!"

Judas raised his hands slightly and moved his lips in silent prayer. This, however, didn't prevent him from throwing a sidelong glance at Ulita. He noted that her face was twitching sarcastically.

"What is it? You look as though you want to say something?"

"Me? No, nothing. He'll be grateful, all right—if he manages to find out who to be grateful to."

"Ah, how spiteful can you be? You know perfectly well that we're not going to place him in a home without obtaining papers by which we'll find him when the time comes. You be sure to get the papers now. Once they've brought him up and taught him how to behave, we'll

be along to claim our naughty Vladimir! With papers we'll find him anywhere, pick him from the bottom of the sea if need be. Do you understand now?"

But Ulita said nothing. The sarcastic twitching of her face was even more obvious. Judas lost his temper.

"You're poison, poison, poison!" he shouted. "There's a devil sitting inside you! . . . Tfoo, tfoo, tfoo! Anyway, enough of this. Tomorrow, first thing in the morning, you'll dress Vladimir and quickly, before Eupraxia finds out, take him to Moscow with God's blessing. You know which foundling home?"

"I've been there before," Ulita said, apparently hinting at something.

"If you have, you don't need any further instructions, you must know your way about. So take him there and ask them to take the best care of him. Ask them and bow to them like this."

Judas stood up and bowed deeply, touching the floor with his hand.

"I want them to take good care of him there, not look after him just anyhow. And don't forget to fill the papers out. Don't forget, for we'll need them to find him later. I'll give you fifty rubles to cover your expenses. I know how it is—you may have to tip 'em here and there, for men are men, and everyone is after the nice things in life! Yes, and look what a lot of money our Vladimir, tiny as he is, is costing us already!"

Judas crossed himself and bowed deeply to Ulita, begging her to do her best for naughty little Vladimir. The future of his illegitimate offspring had been arranged in the simplest possible way.

The next morning, while the young mother was tossing about in fever and delirium, Judas stood by the dining room window, making the sign of the cross and moving his lips. The covered sleigh carrying away young Vladimir was leaving the courtyard. It drove up the hill, reached the church, turned to the left, and disappeared in the village. Judas made one more sign of the cross and sighed:

"See, the priest was talking about thaw yesterday, but God sent us frost instead. And what a frost! That's the

way it always is with men. They dream, build castles in the air, try to be clever, think they can outwit God Himself, but if God wants to, He can make hay of all our cleverness in a second!"

VI

ESCHEATED PROPERTY

JUDAS'S CALVARY began when his stock of blather started to run out. He was surrounded by emptiness. Many of the people around him had died, and others had left. Even his niece Anninka, despite the miserable prospects awaiting her in a little traveling company, couldn't be lured to stay in Golovlovo. Only Eupraxia was left, and aside from her natural limitations, something had so evidently snapped within her that Judas realized once and for all that his good days were past.

Before, Eupraxia had been so defenseless that Judas had been able to oppress her with impunity. With her rudimentary intelligence and her lack of character, she had hardly been conscious of his tyranny. While Judas had babbled on, she had looked at him blankly and thought of something else. Now she seemed to have become aware of something, and the first result of this awareness was an unreasoned, insuperable aversion for him.

Anninka's stay in Golovlovo apparently had left its mark on Eupraxia. Although she couldn't explain the strange torments her talks with Judas's niece had aroused in her, she found herself in a state of utter turmoil. Before, she had never wondered why, when Judas met someone, he always started by enmeshing him in a tangle of slippery, fragmentary phrases, which despite their vagueness, were somehow hopelessly depressing. Now

she saw that Judas was not really talking to people but blanketing them with words and that, therefore, it would serve him right if she stopped him and showed him that he couldn't just go on like that. She started listening to his horrible drivel and realized that it was nothing but an aggressive, paralyzing buzz, which Judas used to pin people down.

"No, it isn't true what the young lady said," Eupraxia reasoned, "that he doesn't know himself why he keeps on talking like that. No, I say it's wickedness that makes him do it. He senses when he's made someone helpless, then he gets his fun out of pushing him around."

Anninka's visit had another, even more important effect upon Eupraxia—it stirred her young blood. Until then the young woman's instincts had merely smoldered in her, now they flared up. She understood many things to which she had never given a thought before. Why, for instance, wouldn't Anninka even consider staying in Golovlovo? Why did she think Golovlovo was so "frightening"? Simply because she was young and wanted to live. Well, Eupraxia was young too. . . . Yes, she *was* young! Yes, it might look as if her youth had been buried in all that fat, but it wasn't true! Sometimes she was very much aware of her instincts; they would nag and pull at her, then they would lie dormant for a while, then they would flare up again. She had thought at one point that she could be content with Judas—but the way that "rotten old clod" treated her! She certainly wouldn't have minded taking a little friend, a real one . . . a young one. They'd hug each other until they toppled right over, and her nice friend would kiss her and caress her and whisper into her ear: "Creamy one, white one!" Ah, that nasty old spook—he had nothing much more than his rattling old bones to seduce her with! She bet Miss Anninka had a boy friend! No doubt about it! That's why she'd picked up her skirts and rushed away like that. And to think that she, Eupraxia, had to sit around here among these four walls and wait until the old scarecrow felt like it!

Naturally, Eupraxia didn't directly express her revolt; but, once she had started along that path, she never stopped again. She searched her heart for old grudges, and while Judas went on, never suspecting the dark ferment

inside her, she worked up her hatred to the bursting point.

At first she kept repeating general complaints such as "he's ruined my life." Then she started making comparisons. "Look at Palageya, Mazulin's housekeeper," she would say to herself. "She just sits around wearing silk dresses; she never even goes to the storeroom or the cellar. All she ever has to worry about is her embroidery."

And all these thoughts would culminate in the outcry:

"Ah, how I hate you now, you loathsome old spider! I hate you, I hate you, I hate you!"

The resentment caused by her thwarted longings was reinforced by another that was particularly important to her, for it provided her with a pretext for a possible attack—the memory of her confinement and of the disappearance of her baby.

At the time Eupraxia had reacted dully to the blow. Judas had simply informed her that her son was in good hands, and to comfort her, had presented her with a new shawl. After that, things returned very much to what they'd been before and, if anything, Eupraxia became even more absorbed in household chores, apparently trying to forget her frustrated motherhood. But whether her maternal feelings had kept smoldering inside her or whether it was just chance, the memory of little Vladimir suddenly revived in Eupraxia at a moment when she felt a breath of new life, of something quite different from her dull existence in Golovlovo. The grudge was too good to waste!

"Realize what he did?" she kept egging herself on. "He snatched away my baby, just like snatching away a puppy to drown it in the pond!"

Little by little, this thought completely possessed her and she imagined that she wanted passionately to be reunited with her child. The more strongly she believed this, the greater her loathing for Judas became.

"At least I'd have something to cheer me up. Ah, my little boy, my pretty Volodya! My own baby! I bet he was given to some nasty peasant woman somewhere. Ah, hell isn't enough for them, the damn masters! They make you babies and then they throw them into some

hole like puppies! They feel they don't have to account to anyone. It would have been better if I had slashed my own throat with a knife then and there than let that filthy scarecrow do that to me!"

It was hatred, a constant desire to offend, to hurt, to poison. A war of bickering, taunting, and pinpricks began; a merciless war of attrition—the only kind of war in which Judas could be defeated.

Once, during breakfast, Judas received a very painful surprise. Usually this was an hour when he'd emit streams of verbal garbage, while Eupraxia, holding her cup in her hand and a lump of sugar between her teeth, listened to him in silence, merely snorting from time to time.

As they were eating freshly baked bread, Judas started philosophizing about there being two kinds of bread, the visible kind which sustains our bodies and the invisible kind which nourishes our souls.

Suddenly Eupraxia rudely interrupted his meanderings.

"They tell me Palageya's having it really easy in Mazulino!" she said, casually turning her whole torso toward the window, tipping her chair and swinging one leg which was crossed over the other.

Judas started slightly in surprise, but didn't attach any special importance to this remark.

"So, if we stay too long without the visible bread," he went on, "we feel bodily hunger. Now, if we stay too long without the invisible bread——"

"As I was saying, that Palageya has an easy time of it in Mazulino," she interrupted him again.

Undoubtedly there was more to her interruptions than met the eye. Judas raised surprised eyes to her face, but scenting some unknown trouble afoot, refrained from calling her to order.

"If Palageya's having a good time, I'm very pleased for her, and God bless her," he said meekly at last.

"That master of hers," Eupraxia kept nagging, "don't give her nothing nasty to do; in fact, she don't have to work at all, and what's more, he keeps her dressed in silk."

Judas was even more surprised. Eupraxia's interruptions seemed so irrelevant that he didn't know what to do.

"And every day she puts on a different dress," Eupraxia raved on as though in a delirium. "Today she wears one and tomorrow another. And they drive to church in a four-horse carriage. And the priest has the bells rung as soon as he sees that carriage of theirs. And when they get back home, she sits in her room. So, if her master feels like spending some time with her, she receives him. Otherwise, she talks to some of the girls or to that maid of hers or does some embroidery."

"Well, so what of it?" Judas said, recovering at last.

"It's just as I was saying; Palageya has a very good life."

"And what's wrong with your life? Ah, you're impossibly hard to please!"

Had Eupraxia let it go at that, Judas would certainly have let loose an additional torrent of empty words that would have drowned out these idiotic hints designed to upset his normal flow of rubbish. But Eupraxia obviously had no intention of stopping there.

"Oh sure!" she snapped back. "I'm just fine! I suppose I should thank God if I don't have to go around in rags? Last year you even bought me two cotton dresses, five rubles each they cost. You must really have strained yourself that time!"

"And what about the wool dress? Are you forgetting that? And who bought you a shawl just recently? Ah, you!"

Instead of answering, Eupraxia leaned a hand on the table and threw a sidelong glance at Judas that was so loaded with contempt that he was alarmed, being altogether unaccustomed to this sort of thing from her.

"And do you know how God punishes people for ingratitude?" Judas said without conviction, hoping that a reminder of God would bring to reason this big woman who had suddenly, and for no apparent reason, gone berserk. But it didn't bring her to her senses. Indeed, she immediately interrupted, pouncing back at him:

"Don't try to befuddle me, dragging God into it all the time! I'm not a little girl no more! And I've had enough of all that! You've had your time to push me around! I won't take no more of it!"

Judas fell silent. His tea stood in front of him un-

ouched and growing cold, but he didn't drink it. His face had turned pale and his lips quivered, as he tried unsuccessfully to shape them into a smile.

"Why, it must be that cursed Anninka! She must've poisoned your mind, the viper," Judas said finally, although he still didn't quite realize what he was saying.

"Where does *she* come into it?"

"Well, the things you said just now . . . She must have put such ideas into your head. Yes, I can't think of anyone else who could've!" Judas cried excitedly. "Otherwise, where would you get that stupid idea—suddenly out of nowhere you want silk dresses! Don't you know, you shameless creature, who wears silk dresses in our position?"

"If you want me to know, tell me."

"Well, the most . . . the most disreputable women. They go around in silk dresses."

But instead of being overcome by shame, Eupraxia replied with a sort of impudent logic:

"I don't see why they should be what you call 'em. Everyone knows what the masters may demand of us . . . and if a master takes a fancy to one of us, everyone knows they sleep with us. You know very well what we do together—and it's not always hearing masses either. So you aren't any different from the Mazulino master, see!"

"Ah, you, how can you . . . what filth!"

Judas was so taken aback he felt numb. He looked at his rebellious mistress, and a flood of trivial words stirred in him. But now he realized that a stream of trivialities didn't always paralyze a human being.

"Well, my dear girl, I can see there's no use talking to you today," he said, getting up from the table.

"It's no use today, it's no use tomorrow, it's no use any time! You've pushed me around long enough and I've heard enough of your stuff! Now you'll just have to listen to what I have to say."

Judas was about to throw himself at her, his fists clenched, but she faced him so resolutely, with her chest thrust out, that he suddenly backed down. He turned his face toward the icon, raised his hands in prayer, and his lips moving, walked slowly toward his study.

All that day he felt ill at ease. He still had no well-

defined fears, but he was disturbed by the fact that something more than met the eye had happened and that he had let her get away with it. He didn't even appear for dinner. He pretended he was sick, and in an affectedly weak voice asked for some food to be sent to his study.

After evening tea, which for the first time passed in complete silence, he stood up to pray as usual; but now his mind refused to even pretend to understand the words of the prayer. A stinging, nagging anxiety seized him, and in spite of himself, he kept listening to the sounds of the dying day reaching him from the remote corners of the house. Finally, someone yawned loudly somewhere, and everything became quiet. Judas could stand it no longer. Tiptoeing noiselessly along the corridor, he reached Eupraxia's room and put his ear to the door.

Eupraxia was all alone, and he could hear her muttering through her yawns: "Oh, Lord . . . save us . . . Holy Mother of God. . ."

At the same time he heard her scratching herself, apparently with all ten fingers.

Judas turned the knob, but found the door was locked. "Are you there, Eupraxia?" he called.

"I'm here, but not for you!" she snapped back so wickedly that he hurriedly retreated to his study.

The following day they had another talk. Eupraxia apparently had chosen breakfast as the time for attack. She seemed to have calculated that, since Judas's organized idleness was tightly scheduled, a disturbance in the morning would effectively upset his whole day.

"My, what wouldn't I give for a peek, just with one eye, at the way some people live!" she started rather mysteriously.

Judas shuddered. "Here goes," he thought, but he said nothing, waiting to see what would come next.

"Just to see how a woman lives with a nice sweetheart! A young one, to be sure! How they walk through the rooms together, gazing into each other's eyes, and he never curses at her or she at him. 'Dearie' and 'sweetie,' that's what they call each other, and everything's just fine and nice!"

Judas hated this subject more than any other. Although he indulged in fornication, he felt it had to be

kept at a minimum, since it was inspired by the devil. However, he again backed away from a clash, for he wanted his tea, which had been brewing for several minutes now. But Eupraxia seemed to have no intention of pouring it.

"There are many stupid women, for sure," she said, arrogantly rocking back and forth on her chair and drumming with her fingers on the table. "Some would do anything for a cotton dress; others would even do it for nothing. And what have I got out of you? As much cucumbers and kvass as I wanted. Is that anything to tempt a person with, do you think?"

"But is it possible that you . . . that you did it only to get something out of it?" Judas ventured timidly, looking at the steaming teapot.

"Who says I did it to gain something? You're the one who's accusing me of that!" Eupraxia said, suddenly jumping at him. "So you grudge me a piece of bread now?"

"I don't grudge you anything. I was just saying that for motives of gain alone people don't usually——"

"So you were saying something, were you? And I'm telling you to be careful what you say! So it's for gain that I did it! Now you tell me, please, what *gain* did I get out of you, aside from the cukes and the kvass?"

"There weren't only the cucumbers and kvass," Judas said, unable to restrain himself any longer.

"All right. You tell me what else there was."

"Who sends four bags of flour to your father every month?"

"All right, four bags. What else?"

"And some rye, some vegetable oil, everything."

"All right, rye and vegetable oil. So you grudge that to my parents too? So that's the way you are!"

"I didn't say I grudged it. But you, on the other hand——"

"So now you're accusing me! I can't eat a piece of bread without you looking into my mouth, and then you accuse me!"

Eupraxia burst into tears. Meanwhile, the teapot on top of the samovar was steaming away so hard that Judas, worried, made a violent effort and went over to

Eupraxia. He sat down next to her, patted her lightly on the back, and said:

"All right, all right, pour out the tea. It's nothing to cry about."

But Eupraxia just let out a few more sobs, pouted, and gazed into the distance out of murky eyes.

"Listen," he went on, "just now you were saying that you felt like being with a young man. Well," he said caressingly, "I'm not that old, you know!"

"Anything else? Go away and leave me alone."

"Wait, wait! Shall I tell you something? You know, when I was in government service, the head of my office wanted to give me his daughter in marriage!"

"I bet she must've been going stale. Or maybe she was lopsided or something."

"Ah no, don't say that! She was all right, and you should have heard how she could sing!"

"Even if she could sing, I bet you spoiled it by chiming in."

"No, I think I . . ."

Judas couldn't understand her. He was prepared to show Eupraxia that he could be a very pleasant companion for a lady. He began to rock his torso absurdly and even tried to put his arm around her. But she rudely pushed away his hand, shouting:

"I'm warning you! Leave me alone, you old freak, or I'll scald you with boiling water! I don't want anything you can give me! So you dare grudge me the food I eat! All right, I won't stay here, I swear to God, I won't!"

She got up and left, banging the door. Judas remained alone in the dining room.

"No, it can't go on like this," he whispered to himself, pacing up and down. "I'll have to think of something. . . . I must find a way to arrange things. . . ."

But that was just the snag—Judas was incapable of thinking up or arranging anything. His thoughts were so accustomed to jumping from one irrelevant fantasy to another, never facing up to any difficulty, that when he met **with** an ordinary crisis he felt absolutely helpless. As soon as he tried to think of a way out, a flood of trivialities blocked his view of the real world. Mental laziness and moral anemia paralyzed his will and prevented real

thought. He was pulled away from real life by a host of spooks that he could at least move around as he fancied, admitting some, rejecting others.

So, once again, he spent the day entirely alone, for Eupraxia didn't show up at either dinner or supper. She'd gone to spend the day with the village priest and only returned late at night. He couldn't even find a distraction for himself; for some time now, he had lost his ability to dissolve into his meaningless, meandering thoughts. He kept repeating helplessly to himself that "somehow, this must be arranged," but neither pointless calculations nor prayer could take his mind off it. He felt he was becoming ill, but had no idea what could be the matter. Again and again he'd stop by the window; he tried to fix his attention on something that was going on outside, but he couldn't. Spring had arrived, but the trees were still bare and not even the grass had started growing yet. Far away there were black fields with patches of snow in the hollows. The road, too, was black and muddy and sparkling with puddles. But Judas saw it as though through a mist.

The doors of the wet outbuildings stood wide open, but Golovlovo seemed deserted. The house seemed empty too, and no one came when he called, although he thought he heard doors banging somewhere in the distance. Ah, how much he'd have liked to make himself invisible for a moment and listen to what that stupid, vulgar brood of peasants had to say about him. Did the vile creatures appreciate his kindness as they should, or were they slinging mud at him to repay him for everything he'd done for them? What more could he do for them? Stuff them with food from dawn to dusk, perhaps, and even that wouldn't be good enough! It wasn't so long ago, it seemed to him, that he'd allowed a new barrel of pickled cucumbers to be opened, and it was almost all gone already. . . .

He was dwelling on this thought and beginning to work out how many cucumbers a barrel contained, and allowing the most generous estimate, how many cucumbers could be consumed *per diem, per capita*, when a glint of reality flashed through his mind and made havoc of his hypothetical computations.

"So she didn't even bother to tell me . . . she just

went," he thought, as his eyes hovered over the village, trying to make out the priest's house where Eupraxia was probably saying all sorts of things about him.

At dinner Judas sat all alone, listlessly spooning up a clear broth. He hated "soup with nothing," as he called it; that was probably why she had ordered it for him.

"The priest must be furious at her for inviting herself for the whole day like that," Judas thought. "She's just one more mouth to eat his cabbage soup and gruel, and since she's a guest, he may feel he has to offer her meat too."

Again his imagination began to work, again he began to escape from reality into a sort of dream. How much extra cabbage soup would they have to serve at the priest's when Eupraxia was there? How much more bread? And what would the priest and his wife think of Eupraxia's constant visits? They must surely say things against her behind her back. The food they ate and the things they said became so vivid that he thought he could see, smell, and hear them.

"Just look at them putting their spoons into the common bowl. Disgusting! What a place she picked for a nice meal! And in this mud and sleet. Ah, I can imagine what a state she'll come home in, with her skirts all muddy and . . . ah, a slut, a filthy slut, that's just what she is! Well, I suppose something will have to be done about it. . . ."

That phrase snapped the train of his thought. After dinner he tried to take a little nap, but tossed from side to side and only felt worse. It was already dark when Eupraxia returned, and she went to her room so quietly that he didn't hear her. He had ordered the servants to report to him when she got back, but they seemed to be in league with her, and no one came to tell him. He tried her door, but found it locked again.

In the morning, Eupraxia appeared for breakfast, but her tone was even more rude and threatening.

"Where's my little Volodya now?" she said, affecting tearfulness.

Judas felt himself go all cold inside.

"I wish I could have at least one quick look at him, to see how the little darling's getting along! Sometimes I

think perhaps he's not even alive any more—who knows?"

Judas's lips started to move. He was whispering a prayer.

"We're not like other people! When Palageya had that little daughter at Mazulino, they dressed the baby in the finest linen and made a nice little cradle, all in pink, for her; and you should've seen all them things they gave the wet nurse to wear. . . . But it ain't like that with us here. Ah you, you. . . ."

She turned her head sharply toward the window and sighed.

"It's true what they say," she continued, "that the gentry are an accursed breed! They make children right and left and then toss 'em into the bog like unwanted puppies! And they don't give a damn, don't feel they have to account for it to no one, as though there wasn't any God in the world. I say, even a wolf wouldn't act so nasty!"

Everything inside Judas's belly was seething, but for a long time he managed to contain himself. Finally, he felt he just had to say something.

"What's come over you all of a sudden?" he said. "What's this new fashion? Here I find myself listening to your rubbish for the third day in a row and——"

"New fashion? All right, it's a new fashion. You're not the only one who's entitled to talk all the time. You have to give other people a chance too. What d'you imagine? You made me a child and what did you do with him? I'm sure you tossed him into some peasant woman's hut, and now he's lying there without anyone to look after him, naked probably, unfed, filthy, sucking some dirty, sour pacifier. . . ."

She wiped away the tears that filled her eyes with the corner of her kerchief.

"Yes, the young Pogorelka lady was right when she said it's frightening to stay here with you. It's frightening, all right. No joy, no pleasure, nothing but mean tricks. Convicts in prison have a better time. If my baby was here, I'd have something to cheer me up, but even he was taken away from me."

Judas sat unhappily, tossing his head from side to side as if someone had really pushed him up against a wall.

From time to time, what sounded like a moan escaped from his lips.

"Ah, it's terrible," he muttered at last.

"What's terrible? It's all your doing! I think I'll go to Moscow and have a peek at my Volodya, my nice little boy! Shall I go to Moscow? What do you say?"

"There's no need for you to go there," Judas said dully.

"No need? But I'll go just the same! No need for your permission either. I'm a mother, remember!"

"What kind of a mother are you? You're nothing but a whore!" Judas exploded at last. "Come on, tell me frankly what you're after!"

The question obviously caught Eupraxia unprepared. She stared stupidly at Judas, wondering herself what it was she was really after.

Then she simply burst into tears and shouted:

"So I'm a whore now! So that's what you're calling me now!"

"Yes, a whore, that's what you are, damn you! Damn you, you whore!"

Judas was losing control completely now. He jumped up and rushed madly out of the dining room.

This was the last explosion Judas indulged in. After that, he seemed to wither away, weaken, grow dull and frightened, while Eupraxia's aggressiveness steadily increased. She had a tremendous asset—the boundless force of stupid obstinacy, which concentrated on tormenting and hurting Judas, became a terrifying weapon. Gradually she ceased to confine her attacks to the dining room. She would burst into his study while he was working, an intrusion that would've seemed unthinkable to her in the old days. She'd walk in, sit by the window, glance out of it indifferently, rub her back against the window frame to scratch it, and start belaboring him.

Her favorite gambit was to announce that she intended to leave Golovlovo. Actually she never gave it a serious thought; indeed, she would have been at a loss if she had been told to go back to her parents. But she felt that Judas was terribly afraid that she would leave. She always had a special way of preparing this announcement.

She'd remain silent for a while, scratch inside her ear, then say:

"Why, there's pancakes at my father's today!"

This introduction made Judas go green with irritation. Before she had come in he'd been trying to calculate what sum he would get for his milk in a year if all the cows in the district died—that is, all except his own which, on the contrary, with God's blessing, would double their daily milk output. Eupraxia's intrusion and her statement about the pancakes forced him to interrupt his calculations. Pasting a broad grin on his face, he asked her:

"What's the occasion for pancakes over there? Ah, it's Commemoration Day, of course! I'm really getting impossible. I'd completely forgotten! And there's nothing in the house with which to honor my dear mamma's memory. That's just dreadful!"

"Well, I wouldn't mind having some pancakes today!"

"What's to stop you? All you have to do is order some in the kitchen. Or you can tell Ulita to make some. She makes a nice pancake, you know!"

"Maybe she does other things well that please you?"

"No, you can't deny that she makes wonderful pancakes. So soft and light, I don't know how many I could eat!"

Judas giggled to distract Eupraxia's attention, but she said haughtily:

"What I'd like, though, is to have pancakes at home, not at Golovlovo."

"Well, that's no problem either. Order Arkhip to harness the horses and take a little drive over there."

"Ah, no, it's too late now! The little bird got caught in the net, and that's that. Now I'm paying for my stupidity, for who d'you think needs a woman like me? Why, you yourself called me a whore!"

"Ai-ai-ai! Aren't you ashamed to say such things about me? Don't you know any better? You know God punishes people for going around saying things like that about other people."

"You say you didn't call me a whore? You did so! You called me a whore right here, before the icon! Ah,

I'm sick of Golovlovo after all. I think I'll run away from here. I really will!"

As she said this, Eupraxia looked quite relaxed. She rocked nonchalantly in her chair, picked her nose, scratched herself. She was obviously deliberately teasing him, egging him on.

"I was meaning to tell you, master," she said again, "it's time I went back to my parents' house."

"You want to go and stay with your parents for a while, then?"

"No, I meant to go there for good."

"Why? Has someone offended you here?"

"No, it's not that. But sooner or late I'll have to move on anyway. And then it's so dull here. . . . Sometimes it's real frightening! Everyone seems to have died in this house. The servants have got out of hand; they hide in the kitchen all the time, or in their quarters, so that I'm all alone in the house. I'm afraid someone'll cut my throat one of these days. And at night when I'm in bed, whispers seem to creep at me from every corner."

But days passed without Eupraxia doing anything to carry out her threat. Nevertheless, its effect on Judas was decisive. He suddenly understood that despite his constant moaning about the tremendous amount of work he had to do, he actually didn't do anything at all. In fact, he realized that he would have been left without food or clothes to wear if someone hadn't been seeing to these things. Until then, he hadn't realized that the pattern of his life had not been created spontaneously. His days followed the same routine, everything in the house was arranged for his convenience, everything happened at the appointed time, every object had its assigned place; in short, the routine of his life was so well established that he no longer realized what went into it.

It was this routine that allowed him to indulge in his flow of empty thought and verbiage without any risk that reality would expose them for what they were. And although this whole arrangement hung by a thread, Judas, self-absorbed as he was, had never thought that this thread might break one day. He had felt that his life was firmly regulated once and for all.

And suddenly his world threatened to crumble be-

cause of her stupid words, telling him she was going to leave. Judas was panic-stricken. Suppose she really left? He began to concoct the most preposterous schemes to prevent her. He even considered concessions to Eupraxia's youth that would never have occurred to him before.

"Ah, damn, damn, damn!" he swore disgustedly when thoughts of Eupraxia and the coachman Arkhip or Ignat the clerk presented themselves graphically to him.

Soon, however, he realized that his worry about her leaving was unfounded, and his life entered a new phase, which he himself had never expected. Eupraxia stayed on and her attacks on him even subsided considerably. But, on the other hand, she almost completely ignored him. By May, when the days became warm and clear, she almost never appeared in the house. Judas heard doors banging, indicating that she had come to pick up something in her room only to run off again. When he got up in the morning, his clothes were not in the usual place, and he had to conduct lengthy negotiations to get clean underwear. His breakfast and dinner were served either much too early or very late. Even worse, his meals were served by the footman Prokhor, who was always drunk, wore a stained coat, and reeked of a nauseating mixture of fish and vodka.

Nevertheless, Judas was content, for at least Eupraxia left him more or less in peace. He even resigned himself to disorder reigning in the house, as long as he knew there was someone around controlling it. He did not fear a lack of comfort so much as he feared taking a personal hand in the running of the house. He was really horrified at the thought that he himself might have to order, direct, and supervise. When he thought of such a possibility, he suppressed every protest and closed his eyes to the anarchy around him, saying nothing and backing away from it.

In the meantime, open debauchery flourished under his very nose. With the coming of fine weather, the hitherto sedate and gloomy Golovlovo livened up beyond all recognition. In the evenings, all the servants, old and young, active and retired, poured out into the courtyard, sang, played the accordion, laughed, giggled,

shrieked, and ran around. Ignat the clerk appeared in a flaming red shirt and a very narrow jacket that left his bulging chest exposed, and Arkhip the coachman wore, without due authorization, the silk shirt and velvet sleeveless vest which constituted his driving costume on holidays. The two men were apparently vying for Eupraxia's good graces. Eupraxia herself took part in their games and kept throwing herself first at one, then the other. Judas was afraid to look out of the window lest he witness a love scene, but he couldn't prevent himself from hearing things. . . . From time to time, a whack would resound: The coachman Arkhip had slapped Eupraxia's buttocks—a smack that she didn't resent in the least—as he pursued her in a game of tag.

At other times, he caught bits of dialogue, such as:

“Miss Eupraxia, Miss Eupraxia!”

It was the drunken Prokhor calling her from the master's house.

“What do you want?”

“Give me the key to the cupboard, please. The master wants his tea.”

“Let him wait, the old scarecrow!”

Within a short time, Judas became a real recluse. His whole life had been upset, but he no longer cared. All he wanted now was to be left undisturbed in his last refuge—his study. The once aggressive and exacting nagger had become fearful, silent and submissive. He had lost all touch with what was going on around him. He wanted only to be left alone, to see no one, to hear nothing. Eupraxia could stay away for days on end, the servants could idle about and misbehave—it didn't touch him any more. In the old days, if a clerk had failed to present him with a report, Judas would have pestered him with endless admonitions and lectures; now, he sat for weeks on end without any reports being turned in, and it didn't disturb him in the slightest, unless he happened to need a figure for one of his hypothetical calculations.

Only in his study did he feel he was his own master, safe to abandon himself to his idle fancies. In a way, he was like his two brothers who had died as a result

of their inordinate passion for drink; only in his case, it was a sort of verbal intoxication. Locked in his study all day, he toiled eagerly at his absurd computations, making all sorts of incredible assumptions, counterchecking his own findings, arguing with imaginary opponents, and imagining scenes in which the first person who occurred to him was given a role.

The main ingredient in all this imaginary activity was his obsession for gain. Although Judas had always been stingy, and petty in his demands, his practical ineptitude had prevented him from deriving any benefit from it. He nagged, tyrannized, pestered—usually the most helpless people who, so to speak, asked for it—but most of his attempts at cleverness brought him nothing but loss in the end. Now, these traits of his were transferred to an abstract, fantastic world where there was no need for justification or fear of resistance, where there were no police, no authorities, no courts, except those protecting Judas's interests. In this world, Judas could enmesh others in his net of intrigues, schemes and trickery.

He fancied himself tormenting, ruining, bleeding people. He reviewed the various activities of his estate—timber-cutting, cattle-breeding, tilling—and around each of them built a fantastic system of exploitation based on unbelievably complicated calculations that included such items as fines and usury, and calamity visited upon others. All his calculations were based on arbitrary figures of payment and defaults; a difference of one kopek one way or the other was enough to make him calculate and recalculate everything from the beginning again, and he constantly found new variants to his system.

When his mind grew too tired to follow the intricacies of his estimates and calculations, he switched his fancy to a less exacting domain. He remembered all the quarrels and disputes he had had with people, not only in recent years but also in his remote youth, and rearranged the circumstances so that he always emerged the victor. Thus, he avenged himself on his former colleagues in the government service for outstripping him in their careers, a fact which had wounded his vanity so deeply that he had retired; he punished the schoolmates who had taken advantage of his inferior physical strength to tease

and bully him; he taught the neighboring landowners a lesson for resisting his encroachments and successfully defending their rights; he chastised servants who lacked respect for him; he even made the late Arina Petrovna feel sorry for all the money she had "squandered" on Pogorelka, money which in all fairness should have been his; he made things hard for his late brother Stepan-the-blockhead for having been the first to call him Judas; he wreaked terrible vengeance on his Aunt Barbara for removing the Goryushkino estate from the Golovlov family by producing a whole brood of children when no one had expected any more. He went on and on, avenging himself on living and dead alike.

These fantasies gradually left him in a state similar to drunkenness. The earth slipped away from under his feet; he grew himself a pair of angel's wings. His eyes burned, his lips trembled, and foam appeared at the corners of his mouth; his face turned pale and assumed a threatening expression. And, as his imagination grew more active, the air around him became crowded with phantoms which engaged him in imaginary struggles.

His existence now became so self-sufficient that he desired nothing else. The whole world, at least the uncomplicated world within reach of his limited imagination, was at his feet. He used the same theme over and over, each time giving it a new twist. Judas's state of mind was similar to what happens to people during spiritualist seances, when the unbridled imagination creates an illusory world, which as a result of great emotional tension becomes extremely real, almost tangible. This is neither faith nor conviction but a mental intoxication, a state of ecstasy. People cease to be human; their faces become distorted, their eyes glitter, their tongues babble incoherently, their bodies make involuntary movements.

Judas was happy. He closed the doors tightly so as not to hear and drew the curtains so as not to see. He hurried through the functions of life that had no connection with his fancy almost with disgust. When the drunken Prokhor knocked on the door of his study announcing that a meal was served, Judas leaped up, hurried into the dining room, quickly swallowed the three courses offered him, and disappeared into his study again. His

manner toward others became partly timid, partly stupidly aggressive, as though he were challenging them, but at the same time, were afraid of them. He was in such a hurry to get down to work that he woke up mornings as early as possible. He spent less time at his devotions, mumbling his prayers without thinking, raising his arms to heaven, and crossing himself carelessly and indistinctly. Even his concept of a hell in which each sin was punished by a special form of torment grew dim.

All this time, Eupraxia reveled in the satisfaction of her carnal desires. Flitting undecidedly between the clerk Ignat and the coachman Arkhip, and casting side-long glances at the red-faced Ilusha, the foreman of a team of carpenters who had been engaged to repair the cellar, she paid no attention to what was going on in the master's house. The servants, who now felt themselves altogether emancipated, remarked on Judas's behavior, but she decided that he was playing some new comedy. Then once she chanced to enter the dining room when Judas was hurriedly dispatching the remnants of some roast goose, and she was suddenly horrified.

There he sat in a grubby, quilted dressing gown, so ragged that tufts of cotton batting stuck out in places. He was pale and unkempt and had not shaved for several days.

"Oh master dear, what's wrong? What's happened to you?" she cried, hurrying over to him in alarm.

Judas only smiled stupidly and sarcastically, as though challenging her to try and offend him now.

"What's happened, dear? Tell me!" she repeated.

He got up, fixed a glance full of hatred upon her, and said with slow deliberation:

"If you, you' whore, come into my . . . my study once again, I'll kill you!"

After this meeting, Judas's life improved, at least externally. With nothing to stop him, he wholly abandoned himself to his lonely joys, and never even noticed how the summer passed.

It was already the beginning of fall and the days were beginning to grow shorter. Under a steady drizzle, the

earth was soaked and the trees stood drooping, shedding their yellow leaves. Silence reigned in pantry and yard. The servants kept to their quarters because of the drizzle and because they felt that something was wrong with their master. Eupraxia had sobered up completely. She'd forgotten about silk dresses and boy friends, and spent hours sitting on a cot in the servants' room, wondering what to do. Prokhor, drunk as usual, teased her, saying that it was she who had driven the master to perdition and that she would surely be sent on a little trip to Siberia.

And all the time Judas sat shut up in his study, dreaming. He was rather pleased that the weather had turned and the fine rain ceaselessly drummed against his windows, for it made him drowsy, and that made day-dreaming even easier. He imagined himself as invisible, inspecting his possessions in the company of old Ilya, who was bailiff when his father was still alive and who had been dead and buried for many, many years.

"That Ilya, what a clever old peasant, and such a loyal servant," Judas told himself. "They don't come like that any more. Nowadays they just talk and talk, and when it comes to business, there's no one there!"

Judas was very pleased with himself for having resurrected Ilya.

"Without hurry or tear, having said a little prayer," invisible to others, Judas and Ilya make their way o'er hill and dale to Ukhovshina wood, where they stop, unable to believe their eyes. Facing them is the most beautiful forest, with trees rising like a wall, their tops murmuring in the wind. Some of the trees have such thick trunks that two or even three men couldn't stretch their arms around them. These trunks are bare and the tops are huge and bushy, indicating that the forest is still young.

"Look at this forest, Ilya. Isn't that something!" Judas exclaims in admiration.

"This forest is protected," old Ilya explains. "Nobody is allowed to fell these trees. Your grandpapa, Mikhail Golovlov, had a procession walk around it with icons. That's why it's grown big like this."

"How many acres would you say it is?"

"Well, at that time, they found it was around two

hundred, but an acre in those days was about one and a half acres the way we figure nowadays."

"How many trees would you say there are to an acre?"

"God alone knows."

"I say there must be a couple of hundred by present reckoning. If we assume two hundred per acre . . . or rather two hundred and ten, and the area of the forest at the present reckoning would come to three, make it three hundred and ten acres, that would make a total of . . ."

Judas took a piece of paper and multiplied 210 by 310. He found 65,100 trees and went back to his day-dream.

"Now, if we sold the whole forest for timber, how much d'you think each tree would bring?" Judas asks his invisible companion.

The old man shakes his head.

"Ho-ho! Just look at these trees," he says. "Each would make two sawmill shafts and a good all-purpose beam and two smaller ones. Then there are the branches. How much do you think a mill shaft is worth?"

Judas pretends he doesn't know although he has long ago calculated it down to the last kopek.

"Locally, it would fetch up to ten rubles, and in Moscow it's simply priceless."

Judas listens to him and never has enough. "What an intelligent peasant Ilya is! And so loyal too."

Invisible and soundless they continue through a birch wood and suddenly stop, holding their breath. A peasant's cart lies overturned on the road, and the peasant stands by it staring sadly at the broken axle. After lamenting and swearing at the axle and at himself, the peasant tries to whip up his horse ("Come on, you old crow!"), for he must get on somehow; he can't stay there all day. But he whips in vain. Then that thief of a peasant looks around him, takes his axe, and approaches a birch tree. Judas still doesn't move. The tree shudders, cracks, and falls to the ground. The peasant is just about to cut off a piece big enough to make himself an axle when Judas decides that the moment to act has ar-

rived. He creeps up to the man and snatches the axe from his hand.

"Ah!" cries the thief, caught unawares.

"Ah!" Judas imitates him. "And perhaps you think it's all right to fell trees that don't belong to you, eh? Did you think it was your birch tree?"

"Forgive me, sir. . . ."

"I've forgiven everyone long ago, my friend. I'm a sinner myself and don't take it upon myself to condemn others. It's not me, it's the law that condemns you. So, bring the tree you've cut for your axle to my house, and when you come, bring along, say, one ruble to pay your fine. Meanwhile, leave your axe with me. Don't worry, I'll take good care of it."

Then, very pleased with himself, Judas drops in on the forester and reads him an imaginary lecture about his duties. Later he catches three chickens that belong to peasants in his oats. . . .

Back in his study, Judas sets to work and suddenly envisions a complete economic system. He evaluates everything that is growing or rotting on his land in terms of the prices it could bring or the damages and fines he could claim if it were lost or stolen. Judas no longer grieves over the loss of these goods, but rubs his hands with glee.

"Go on, my friends, cut down my trees, damage my crops; you're only helping me!" he repeats happily.

He takes a fresh sheet of paper and begins to calculate how much oats could be grown on one acre and how much damages he could claim if the peasants' chickens got into them.

"After rain, the oats will recover anyway," he decides, making it really perfect.

Huge columns of figures cover the paper—rubles, tens, hundreds, thousands. . . . Judas grows terribly excited; he's drenched with sweat. Finally, he leaves his desk and lies down on the sofa.

But his tormented imagination doesn't stop. It merely slips off to an easier topic.

"Yes, Mamma was a very clever woman who knew how to be nice and also how to demand, and people liked working for her. However, she had some weak-

nesses. Yes, indeed, the old lady had many sins on her conscience!"

No sooner has Judas remembered his mother than she appears, come to visit her dear son straight from the grave.

"I really fail to understand, my boy, what wrong I could've done you," Arina Petrovna says in a strangely gloomy voice. "It seems to me——"

"Wait a minute, wait a minute, Mamma, before you speak, if you don't want to make things worse by telling fibs," Judas interrupts her quite unceremoniously. "Now if it comes to that, I'm prepared to tell you quite plainly. Why, for instance, didn't you stop Aunt Barbara in good time?"

"How could I? She was of age and could do as she pleased."

"Not so fast, not so fast. Remember the husband she had? He was old and always drunk and obviously sterile, if you see what I mean. Nevertheless, the next thing we knew she had produced four children. Now I ask you! Where do you think those children came from?"

"You're really very strange, my boy. It sounds as if you believe I was the cause of it."

"I never said you were the cause, Mamma, but I think you could have prevented it by being nice to her so she would have felt ashamed of herself in the end. But instead you called her names and accused her of going with every man, so she really did, just to spite you. . . . It's a real shame, for if it hadn't been for that, Goryushkino would belong to the Golovlov family today."

"Why, you always go on about Goryushkino. . . ." Arina Petrovna mumbles, evidently confounded by her son's argument.

"Me? Goryushkino? I don't want anything for myself! As long as I have a candle to burn in the church and oil for the sanctuary lamp before my icon, I'm happy. I'm only trying to be fair. . . . Yes, Mamma dear, I'd like to forget the whole thing, but I can't—you've taken too great a sin upon yourself, too great a sin!"

Now Arina Petrovna has nothing more to answer. She just throws up her hands in sadness and regret.

"Or let's take another instance," Judas says, enjoying

his mother's discomfiture. "Why did you buy that house in Moscow for Stepan?"

"I had to, my boy; I had to throw him a piece of the estate to get rid of him," Arina Petrovna says, trying to justify her action.

"So he took it and squandered it. As if you didn't know he was dissipated, foul-mouthed, and didn't have much respect for you either! And after that, you wanted to let him have Papa's Vologda village too! And remember what a nice piece of property it is—all in one piece, with a lake and a wood . . . just neat and perfect, God bless it! Luckily, I happened to be around at the time to prevent you. . . . Ah, Mamma, Mamma, aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"But don't you understand? In spite of everything, he was my son too!"

"I know it; I understand very well how you feel, but I still say you didn't have to buy that house in Moscow. The fact remains that you paid twelve thousand rubles for it; now show me what you got for those twelve thousand. That, plus Goryushkino, which amounted to at least fifteen thousand, makes a lot of money lost, doesn't it?"

"All right, all right, for heaven's sake, don't get angry."

"Who's getting angry? I'm just pointing out the truth, because if there's one thing I loathe and despise, it's lying. I was born in truth, I've lived in truth, and in truth I'll die! God also loves truth and orders us to love it. So, in the name of truth, I must tell you that you spent an unreasonable amount of money on Pogorelka too."

"But I lived there myself."

Judas can read his mother's expression clearly. "You bloodsucker!" it says, but he pretends not to notice.

"What if you did live there? Now, take the icon stand there. To whom would you say it belonged? Or that horse? Or the tea caddy? I'm sure I saw that in Golovlovo with my own eyes while Papa was still alive. It's a real shame, such a pretty little thing!"

"Well, what does it all amount to?"

"Ah, no, Mamma dear, don't say that! A ruble here, a ruble there, a quarter one way, ten kopeks another,

and when you add it all up . . . Wait, I'll show it to you in figures, for a figure is a sacred thing—it never lies!”

Judas hurried over to his desk to compute the losses his mamma had caused him to suffer. The beads of the abacus clicked, the pen scratched, columns of figures appeared on the paper. . . . Great effort was exerted to expose Arina Petrovna. . . .

But his faltering mind couldn't concentrate long on one topic, and without noticing it himself, his thoughts turned to a new subject of recrimination. Arina Petrovna's shape, which a minute before had stood so vividly before his eyes, suddenly became misty and disappeared into the abyss of forgetfulness. The figures on the sheet of paper before him became muddled too. . . .

VII

THE RECKONING

THE MIDDLE OF DECEMBER. Wrapped in an unending shroud of snow, the countryside was slowly becoming paralyzed. During the night, the wind had swept the snow into drifts on the road, and the peasant horses flailed desperately through them, pulling empty sledges behind them. However, there was hardly even a track in the snow leading to the Golovlovo manor house. Judas had become so unaccustomed to receiving visitors that, toward the end of the fall, he had had the main gate boarded up, leaving only the back gate as a means of access to and from the outside world.

Eleven in the morning. Judas, wearing a dressing gown, stood gazing aimlessly in front of him. Since early morning he had paced up and down his study, calculating some imaginary profits. Finally, he had become all entangled in his figures, grown tired, and stopped pacing.

Everything—the orchard stretching out in front of the house and the village beyond it—was buried in snow. After last night's storm, the day was clear and cold, and the snow glittered in the sun, creating millions of tiny sparkles that made Judas screw up his eyes. Outside, everything was silent and deserted; there was no movement over by the servants' quarters or in the cattle yard, and even the distant village seemed to have died. Only a plume of blue-gray smoke floating over the priest's house attracted Judas's attention.

"It's past eleven already," Judas thought, "and the priest's wife hasn't finished cooking yet. . . . These priests feed their mouths all day long."

Taking this reflection as a starting point, Judas began trying to remember whether it was just an ordinary weekday, or a holiday, or even a fast day. . . . But his attention was suddenly distracted.

On the hill just beyond the entrance to the village, a black speck became visible, growing larger as it approached. As he watched it, Judas was of course filled with a lot of idle questions: who could be driving around here? No one, therefore, it must be a peasant. And what does he want? If it's firewood, the Noglovka forest is in the opposite direction, beyond the village. Perhaps he intends to steal Golovlovo wood? Ah, the animal! Unless, perhaps, he's going to the mill? But then he'd have to turn to the right now. . . . Maybe he's going to get the priest for someone dying, or maybe someone has already died? On the other hand, a child may have been born somewhere around. Which woman could it be? Nenila was certainly pregnant in the fall, but no . . . it's still much too early! If it's a boy he'll be registered in the next census. . . . Wait, what was the figure in the last census? . . . If it's a girl, they won't include her in the census. . . . Damn 'em anyway, though it's impossible to get along without the female sex altogether . . . ugh!

Judas spat and glanced at the icon, as though seeking its protection from evil.

He probably would have continued musing in this way if the black spot had stayed in sight for a while, then disappeared, as was usual. But the spot grew larger, and when it reached the road leading to the Golovlovo church, turned into it. After a little while, Judas made out a small, covered sleigh drawn by a pair of horses. It came up the slope, reached the church—"Maybe it's the archdeacon," flashed through Judas's head. "So that's why they were doing all that cooking at the priest's!"

But the sleigh passed the church, turned right, and drove straight toward the house.

"No doubt about it, it's coming here!"

Instinctively, Judas drew his dressing gown around

him and stepped back, as if he were afraid of being seen from the sleigh.

He was right. The sleigh drove up, stopping at the side gate that had been left unboarded, and a young woman hurriedly jumped out of it. She was wearing a town coat trimmed with astrakhan, an inadequate garment which was stylish rather than warm. And indeed, she looked quite cold.

As no one came out to meet her, the young woman darted toward the house; a few seconds later, a door banged in the servants' quarters, then another door, and then a commotion began in the rear of the house.

Judas stood by the study door, listening. It had been so long since he'd seen any outsiders, or indeed, had had any company, that he felt frightened. A quarter of an hour passed. The noise and the banging at the end of the corridor didn't subside, but still no one came to announce who had arrived. This frightened him even more. From the way she walked, there was no doubt that the person felt she had a right to be received, and therefore must belong to the family. But what relatives did he have? He tried to remember but his memory wouldn't help him. Well, he used to have a son called Vladimir, a son called Peter, and his mamma, Arina Petrovna . . . yes, but that was long, long ago . . . unless . . . he remembered that Nadia, a daughter of his late Aunt Barbara, had come to live in Goryushkino. Could it be her by any chance? No, impossible. She had already tried to force her way into Golovlovo, but he'd shown her it wasn't that easy! She wouldn't dare try it again! The mere thought of her made Judas furious. But then, if it wasn't her, who could it be?

While he was musing in this way, Eupraxia came cautiously to his door and announced:

"The Pogorelka lady's here, sir."

It was indeed Anninka. But she was changed almost beyond recognition. She was no longer the handsome, lively, rosy-cheeked young woman with slightly prominent eyes, high bosom and heavy ash-blonde hair who had come soon after Arina Petrovna's death. She had turned into a puny, flat-chested creature with sunken cheeks, an unhealthy flush, and sluggish movements—

a stooped and shrunken woman. Even her gorgeous hair was now lusterless. Her eyes, burning with a strange glow, looked larger, but only because her face had grown so much thinner.

Eupraxia stared at her for a long time before she finally recognized her.

"Miss, is it really you?" she gasped, clasping her hands.

"Why, yes!"

Anninka laughed noiselessly, as if to say: "You see what life has done to me?"

"How's Uncle? Is he all right?" she inquired.

"Well, he's alive, thank God, Miss, but we hardly ever see him any more."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Who knows . . . I expect it's just boredom that got him."

"You mean he's stopped his babbling?"

"He don't say a thing no more, Miss. He talked all the time, and now he don't say a word. Sometimes we hear him talking to himself in the study and even laughing out loud, but as soon as he's out of there, he shuts up. I've heard it was the same with the master's late brother, Mister Stepan—he was gay and noisy, and suddenly he wouldn't talk no more at all. But what about you, Miss? You all right?"

"Ah!" Anninka said, with a disgusted wave of her hand.

"Is your sister all right, Miss?"

"She's dead and buried a year already, by the roadside near Krechetov."

"Why, God bless you, by the roadside, you say, Miss?"

"Don't you know where they bury suicides?"

"My God! A young lady and she suddenly lays hands on herself! . . . Why did she do that?"

"Well, once she was a young lady—and then she poisoned herself . . . and that's all there is to it. As for me, I didn't have the stomach. I preferred to go on living, so here I am. . . . But don't worry, I won't be around long. I'll soon be dead too."

Eupraxia's eyes opened wide. She didn't seem to understand.

"Why are you staring at me like that? Do you find me that pretty? But we'll talk about these things later. In

the meantime, tell someone to pay the driver, and my uncle must be told I'm here. Here!" She took two bills out of a shabby handbag and gave them to Eupraxia.

"And here are all my belongings!" She pointed to a small, battered suitcase. "It contains everything I possess, both inherited and acquired. Ah, Eupraxia, I'm very cold, very cold. The trouble is, I'm very sick too. In fact there isn't a single sound bone left in me. And now there's this dreadful cold weather on top of everything. All the way here I was thinking of just one thing: if only I could get to Golovlovo and die in a warm place. . . . It would be nice to have a drink, by the way. Got any vodka?"

"Wouldn't you rather have some tea, Miss? The samovar'll be ready in a few minutes."

"Oh, I'll have tea later. . . . I'd really like to have some vodka now. But perhaps you'd better not say anything about it to my uncle for the time being. He'll find out about it soon enough."

While the table was being set for tea, Judas came in. Now it was Anninka's turn to be taken aback—he had grown so thin, so pale, so very peculiar. He behaved very coldly toward Anninka, as if she were no concern of his at all. He spoke little and constrainedly, like an actor who doesn't understand his lines too well. He was obviously absorbed in something else, in some important work that he had to think of all the time and from which he had been annoyingly distracted.

"So you've come," he said. "Well, what would you like? Tea? Coffee? Order whatever you wish."

In the past, Judas had assumed the role of warm relative, but now it was Anninka who became emotional, and sincerely so. She must have suffered very much, for she threw her arms around his neck and hugged him hard.

"Uncle, I've come to stay here with you!" she cried, suddenly bursting into tears.

"Well, good, you're welcome. There's plenty of room here; live here to your heart's content."

"I'm sick, Uncle dear, very sick."

"If you're sick, all you have to do is pray. Me too—whenever I'm sick, I always cure myself through prayer."

"I've come here to die, Uncle."

Judas looked at her intently; a hardly perceptible smile twisted his lips.

"Had enough of that life?" Judas said in a faint whisper.

"Yes, I've had enough of it, and so had Lubinka. . . . She had had enough of it when she died . . . but I'm still alive for the time being."

When Judas learned of Lubinka's death, he crossed himself piously and whispered the words of a prayer. Anninka sat down at the table, leaned on it, and fixing her eyes on the window, continued to cry bitterly.

"Now weeping and despairing is a real sin," Judas said admonishingly. "Do you know what the Christian way is? It's to submit and resign oneself. That's the way a good Christian should act."

But Anninka, leaning back in her chair, her arms hanging limply by her sides, just said:

"Ah, God, I don't know any longer, I don't know, I don't know. . . ."

"If it's about your sister . . . well, that's sinful too, for although it's praiseworthy to love one's brothers and sisters, if God decides to call one, or even several of them, back to Him——"

"Ah, no, no. . . . Will you be nice to me, Uncle?" Anninka again rushed toward him and put her arms round his neck. "Tell me, tell me! . . ."

"Well, all right, I'll be nice to you. What do you want? Something good to eat? Some tea? Some coffee? Just ask for it, order whatever you want."

Anninka suddenly remembered that during her former visit to Golovlovo her uncle had said: "What would you like, some veal? Perhaps a suckling pig? Fried potatoes to go with it?" and she realized that no other comfort would be offered her here.

"Thank you, Uncle," she said, sitting down at the table again. "I really don't need anything special. I'm sure I'll be perfectly happy with whatever there is."

"Well, I'm very glad. And what about Pogorelka? Do you intend to drive over there?"

"No, not for the time being, Uncle. I'll stay here for a while—if you'll have me, that is."

"God bless you, stay as long as you wish. I only asked about Pogorelka because if you wanted to go there, I'd have to have a covered sleigh and a couple of horses prepared for you."

"No, no, Uncle, later, later!"

"All right, fine then! Take a little trip there later; in the meantime, stay here. You can help run the house, because as you can see, I'm all alone now. That beauty," he said, pointing with an expression of hatred at Eupraxia, who was pouring tea, "spends all her time scurrying around the servants' quarters so that often I keep calling and no one hears me. All right, then, good-bye for now, I must go to my study. Pray, do some work, pray again. . . . That's the way, my dear! Yes, how long ago did Lubinka die?"

"A year or so, Uncle."

"We'll go to church early tomorrow and have a requiem sung for her. . . . Well, good-bye for now. You go on with your tea, and if you feel like something special to eat, order it, for you must be hungry after your journey. I'll see you at dinnertime, and we'll talk things over; if there's anything to do, we'll do it, and if not, we'll just talk quietly. . . ."

Such was the reunion of uncle and niece. Anninka now began her new existence at Golovlovo, a place that she had hated enough to make her run away from it twice during her short life.

Anninka had gone downhill very rapidly. The fleeting impression produced by her visit to Golovlovo after Arina Petrovna's death—the feeling that she was a young lady, that she had her own corner near the family graves, that her life need not be confined to the stench and racket of hotels, the repulsive liquor-laden breath of that mustachioed officer with his red, swollen eyes (Ah, his gestures, the things he said!)—this feeling had vanished almost as soon as Golovlovo disappeared from sight behind her.

Anninka had gone straight to Moscow to try to get her sister and herself accepted at one of the state theaters. She went to see some former schoolmates of hers and her housemother at the boarding school she had attended.

But she was strangely received. The housemother, who at first seemed delighted to see her, changed as soon as she learned that Anninka was acting in a provincial theater; the warm expression on her face grew distant and severe. And the astonished indignation of her schoolmates drained all her courage. Only one of them, who was somewhat kinder than the others, tried to show some understanding.

"Tell me, my dear," she said, "is it true that when you actresses are getting ready in your dressing rooms, you have officers lacing up your corsets?"

Thus, all her efforts to settle in Moscow were in vain. Actually, she had nothing of what it takes to succeed on the Moscow stage. Both she and Lubinka were the sort of lively actresses of meager talent who all their lives are confined to playing a limited number of parts. Anninka was most successful in *Perichole* and Lubinka in *Pansies* and the *Old-Time Colonel*. Whatever other parts they tried, they always dropped back into *Perichole* and *Pansies*, and in most cases the result was a complete failure. Anninka was also frequently given the part of *La Belle Hélène* to play. She wore a flaming red wig over her ash-blonde hair and a tunic slit right up to the waist, but with all that, her Helen came out rather dull and not even very suggestive. From Helen she went on to the *Duchess of Herolstein*, and since, in this case, her colorless performance was combined with absurd staging, the result was pathetic. Finally, she tried Clairette in *La Fille de Madame Agnot*, and trying to please, she overplayed to such an extent that even the most uncritical provincial audiences were shocked by her lewdness. On the whole, however, Anninka made a reputation as a lively actress with a fair voice, and since she was also pretty, she drew sizable audiences in provincial towns. But that's as far as it went. She had no chance of becoming a famous actress because there wasn't much to her acting. Even in the provincial towns, her chief admirers were army officers whose main interest in the drama lay in getting backstage. As for performing in Moscow or Petersburg, she would perhaps have been accepted if she had had a powerful sponsor, but even so, she would have earned herself a reputation as a hack performer in no time.

So she just had to go back to the provinces.

While still in Moscow, Anninka received a letter from Lubinka telling her their company had moved from Krechetov to Samovarnov. Lubinka was delighted, for she had befriended a local official there who, she wrote, had grown so fond of her that she believed "he would not hesitate to misappropriate public funds" to please her.

When Anninka reached Samovarnov she found her sister living in comparative luxury, having rashly given up the stage. When Anninka arrived, Lubinka's friend, Gavriilo Lulkin, was with her. He was a retired captain of hussars, a still handsome man, although getting heavy. His face, his manners, and his way of thinking were all highly honorable, yet one felt that he wouldn't hesitate to plunge his hand into a public cashbox entrusted to him. Lubinka received her sister with open arms and announced that a room had been prepared for her in her apartment.

However, still under the spell of her recent trip, Anninka exploded. The sisters had a heated argument after which they broke off. Anninka remembered how the priest at Pogorelka had kept on about her treasure.

She broke off all relations with her sister and returned to the hotel. When the theaters reopened in the spring, Anninka learned that an actress called Nalimova, who was second rate but unrestrained in her performances, had been engaged in her sister's place.

Anninka appeared in the role of *Perichole* and, as usual, had great success with the local audience. When she returned to her hotel, there was an envelope waiting for her. It contained a hundred-ruble bill and a note saying: "And if it's yes, the same amount again—(signed) Kukishev, Dealer in Luxury Goods." Anninka was furious and rushed off to complain to the hotel owner. He told her that there was nothing to it, that this Kukishev made a habit of welcoming all actresses upon their arrival in this way; besides, he was a quiet, harmless man, and there was no need to be offended.

Anninka slipped the note and the bill back into the envelope and had it returned to the sender, after which she took the hotel keeper's advice and gave it no further thought.

But Kukishev turned out to be much more persistent than the hotel keeper had said. He considered himself a friend of Lulkin's and was on good terms with Lubinka too. He was well off, and being on the town council, had, like Lulkin, easy access to public monies and apparently almost as few scruples. His appearance too, at least from the hotel keeper's point of view, was most prepossessing. It is best described in the words of the song in which Masha, looking for berries, comes across a large beetle:

Beetle black with whiskers rich,
With curly head of hair,
With bushy brows as black as pitch,
A real one, my dear!

With these looks and a promise of assistance from Lubinka, he felt he had every right to presume.

Lubinka apparently had completely burned her bridges, and rumors that wounded her sister's pride circulated about her. They said that noisy parties went on at her place from midnight to morning every day; that Lubinka presided over these parties, impersonating a half-naked gypsy ("Now, do have a look at that bosom! Something, isn't it?" the inebriated Lulkin kept insisting); and that, with her hair down, she accompanied herself on the guitar and sang:

Ah, what a lovely time we've had,
Me and my bewhiskered lad!

Anninka listened to these stories and worried. But what vexed her most perhaps was that they said that Lubinka could sing these gypsy songs as well as the best Moscow gypsies. Anninka had always been a fair judge of Lubinka's talents and limitations, and if anyone had told her, for instance, that Lubinka performed the couplets in the *Old-Time Colonel* "inimitably," she would have believed it easily enough. Audiences in Kursk, Penza and Tambov still remembered Lubinka drawling out, inimitably, in her sweet little voice, how she'd like to become a "vice-colonel". . . . But Lubinka singing gypsy songs with any class—sorry, it simply couldn't be true. No, that could be nothing but lies! It just so hap-

pened that this was *Anninka's* forte, and anyone who had seen and heard her recital of romances in Kursk would confirm it.

And Anninka took her guitar, flung a striped scarf over her shoulder, sat down with her legs crossed, and produced wild "ah-ah-ahs" and "tah-rah-rahs," in the belief that this *really* sounded like the best Moscow gypsies.

Meanwhile, Lubinka was wallowing in luxury, and Lulkin, so as not to dim the drunken idyll, began dipping into the public funds. Lubinka was becoming more and more demanding and whimsical—first, it was dresses by Moscow's Madame Minangois, then, diamonds from Foulde, to say nothing of the champagne drunk and spilled on the floors every night. Lubinka was a practical girl and liked valuables. The drunken parties were one thing, and diamonds, gold, and lottery tickets were another. So Lubinka's life, while not really gay, was a perpetual succession of wild parties, a one-way journey from one drunken haze to the next.

One thing she disliked was having to keep on friendly terms with the local police inspector, who, although a good friend of Lulkin's, still liked to assert his authority from time to time. Lubinka could always tell when the inspector was dissatisfied with her, for the next day someone from the police department would come over and ask to see her documents. Lubinka always complied, receiving the envoy with vodka and a little something to go with it and sending him off with an invitation for his boss to drop in on her in the evening for some of the "Swedish punch" he loved so much.

Kukishev, watching this life of grandeur, was dying of envy. He felt he had to have a place just like it and a comparable queen to preside over it. Then, he thought, they'd all have an even better time: they'd spend one night with Lulkin's queen, the next with his own. This was his stupid dream, and since he was a stupid man, he was the more persistent in his efforts to achieve his stupid goal. And there seemed no doubt that Anninka was the most suitable person to make this dream come true.

However, she wouldn't give in. At this point, she still hadn't felt the stirrings of passion, though she had many

admirers and was very free with them. There had been a moment when she had thought she could fall in love, but the local tragedian, Miloslavsky, was so dull, besides being perpetually drunk, that he was never in a state to say anything to her and just stared at her, hiccupping inanely, whenever they met. So this feeling was really stillborn. Anninka viewed the others as an inevitable part of the life of a provincial actress. She put up with them, even took slight advantage of their personal adulation (applause, flowers, drives out of town, picnics, etc.) but didn't go, so to speak, beyond superficial venality.

She behaved accordingly now. Throughout the summer, she remained unwaveringly virtuous, guarding her "treasure" jealously, as though bent on proving to the Pogorelka priest that even actresses could be heroic. Once she even went to complain about Kukishev to the governor, who heard her sympathetically, praised her virtue, and recommended that she keep it up. But, since Anninka's complaint concerned one of his own protégés, he added that he himself was fully engaged in a struggle with internal enemies and couldn't be of any further assistance to her in the matter. Hearing this, Anninka blushed and left.

In the meantime, Kukishev manipulated things so cleverly that he succeeded in bringing public opinion over to his side in his pursuit. Somehow it became rumored that the elder sister really had no claim to being so "pure." A group formed to teach the pretentious young woman a lesson. The usual backstage loafers deserted her dressing room for Nalimova's. Then, without openly manifesting their hostility, they greeted Anninka's appearance on the stage with such indifference that one would've thought she was a bit player and not the star. Then, they put pressure on the manager to persuade him to give some of Anninka's parts to Nalimova. Curiously enough, Lubinka, who was now a bosom friend of Nalimova's, took the most active part in these intrigues.

By fall, Anninka found, to her amazement, that they were forcing her to play Orestes in *La Belle Hélène*. Of her former starring parts, she had only *Perichole* left, and that only because Nalimova didn't feel she could compete with her in it.

Then, one day, the director informed her that in view of the audience's growing coolness to her, he had to reduce her monthly salary to seventy-five rubles, and instead of the entire receipts of one performance a year, she would now get only fifty per cent.

Anninka worried, for with such a salary, she'd have to move from her present hotel to a cheaper one. She wrote to two or three other companies, but they answered that there were more *Pericholes* around than they could accommodate as it was, and that, in view of her "difficult ways," of which they were well aware, they couldn't use her services.

She was spending the last of her savings; soon she'd have to go to the miserable hotel where the bit player, Khoroshavina, lived, the protégée of a petty police department employee. She was filled with despair, especially since every day some mysterious hand placed notes under her door saying: "Submit, Perichole! Yours truly, Kukishev." In the middle of this painful period, Lubinka suddenly came to see her.

"Just tell me, please, who's the prince charming you're reserving your treasure for?" she said.

Anninka was horrified. She was struck by the fact that Lubinka, just like the priest, had used the word "treasure." However, the priest had seen something important in it, while Lubinka saw only that these stupid men would do crazy things for it.

Anninka couldn't help asking herself whether it really was a treasure and whether it was worth so much, and she was unable to find a satisfactory answer. On the one hand, it seemed rather awkward to give up . . . but then, ah, to hell with everything! It really would be stupid if the entire meaning of her life consisted in protecting that "treasure" of hers every minute, wouldn't it?

"In six months I've managed to collect six winning national lottery tickets," Lubinka said. "And plenty of other things too. Look at the dress I'm wearing!"

Lubinka displayed her dress, first from the front, then turning and showing Anninka the back, carefully pulling the dress down to adjust it. It was an expensive and well-made dress, straight from Minangois in Moscow.

"You know, that Kukishev fellow's really nice! He'll

dress you like a doll, and you can get money out of him too, believe me. You could even drop the stage. Haven't you had enough of it yet?"

"Never!" Anninka said, still thinking of "sacred art."

"Well, if you prefer to go on with it, you can; as a matter of fact, you'll get top rates again and be billed ahead of Nalimova on the posters."

Anninka said nothing.

"Good-bye. I must be running now. They're waiting for me below. . . . Kukishev's there too. You coming?"

But Anninka was still silent.

"All right, think it over—if there's really anything to think about. Anyway, when you're through thinking, come. Good-bye now."

On September 17, Lubinka's birthday, Anninka was again performing Helen in *La Belle Hélène* and her Orestes, for "that night only," was none other than her sister Lubinka. And to make her triumph complete, Nalimova, her face blackened with soot, wearing a black leotard, and holding a sheet of iron in her hands, was the smith, Cleon. All this made the audience enthusiastic, and no sooner had Anninka come out than she was met with such an ovation that, unaccustomed as she now was to public adulation, she felt like bursting into tears. And when, in the scene of awakening in the third act, she rose from the couch almost naked, moans filled the theater, and some overenthusiastic spectator even shouted at Menelaus as he appeared in the doorway:

"Get out of there, you old horror!"

Anninka saw then that her public had forgiven her.

Kukishev, wearing a white tie and tails, celebrated his triumph, treating everyone to champagne at the buffet between acts.

Finally, the director appeared jubilantly in Anninka's dressing room, fell on his knees, and announced:

"Now, you're a good girl again, my dear, so we'll go back to our old arrangement—a hundred rubles a month and the entire receipts of one performance!"

In short, everyone praised her, congratulated her, was happy for her; Anninka, who had been so wretched that she didn't know where to put herself, unexpectedly began to feel as if she had fulfilled her mission in life.

After the theater, they went to Lubinka's to celebrate her birthday, and there the congratulations were redoubled. So many people came and the place filled with smoke so quickly that it was difficult to breathe.

They sat down to supper, and the champagne flowed. Kukishev never left Anninka's side; although she felt slightly embarrassed, his pursuit no longer oppressed her too much. It seemed to her both incongruous and flattering that she had so easily made a conquest of this big, powerful fellow who could jokingly bend a horseshoe in his hands and with whom she could now do anything she pleased.

At supper, that sort of general gaiety reigned in which neither the brain nor the heart participates, and which, the following morning, turns into a headache and fits of nausea.

Only one of the guests, the actor Miloslavsky, declined champagne; he preferred to drink plain vodka, downing glass after glass.

Anninka avoided drinking for some time, but Kukishev insisted very persuasively, even falling on his knees.

"Ah, dear, dear mademoiselle!" he cried. "Don't forget it's your debut. Please, please, you'd make me so happy if you drank this! To your happiness then! To love and friendship! Do me a favor, please!"

It irritated her to see him kneeling so stupidly and to listen to his inanities, but she felt she had to accept, and before she knew it, her head was spinning. Then, Lubinka was generous enough to suggest that Anninka sing some gypsy songs, and Anninka's performance was so masterful that everyone shouted:

"Well, well, well! That's *really* like the Moscow gypsies!"

After that, Lubinka jauntily sang the couplets about wanting to be a "vice-colonel," and it became obvious to everybody that this was her real forte, just as the tormented, temperamental gypsy songs were Anninka's specialty.

After that, Miloslavsky recited speeches from a tragedy called *Ugolino*, while Nalimova answered him with passages from an unpublished play by Barkov. The result

was so funny and absurd that it almost eclipsed the performances of the two sisters and made Nalimova the real queen of the evening.

Dawn was already breaking when Kukishev helped Anninka into his carriage. Pious early risers, returning from matins, threw sidelong glances at the elegant and slightly swaying young woman and muttered gloomily:

"Some people go to church while others soak up liquor. . . . Hell is too good for them!"

From her sister's, Anninka went not to her hotel but to her own new apartment, which was small but cozy and nicely furnished. And Kukishev followed her there.

The winter passed in a haze. Anninka's head spun all the time now, and if she ever thought of her "treasure," it was to say to herself:

"Wasn't I a fool though!"

Kukishev, proud at having realized his ambition to have just as good a protégée as Lulkin, spared no money. He bought Anninka two dresses for every one Lulkin bought Lubinka, and had two dozen bottles of champagne destroyed for every dozen of his friend's. Lubinka even became envious of her sister, who during the winter accumulated forty lottery tickets and many gold trinkets with and without precious stones inlaid. In the end, however, they became friends and went back to sharing everything as they'd done in the old days.

But Anninka still dreamed of something, and once, during a heart-to-heart talk, said to her sister:

"When we're through with all this, let's go back to Pogorelka. We'll have enough money then to go into farming."

"How can you imagine *this* will end? You really are an idiot!" Lubinka replied cynically.

Unfortunately for Anninka, Kukishev got a new idea and pursued it with his usual stubbornness. Primitive and stupid as he was, he imagined that he'd really reach the summit of bliss if his lady love would "accompany him in his flights," that is, drink with him.

"Do let's have a little glass together, my dear!" he kept urging her, although quite deferentially, for he was proud of the fact that she came from the landed gentry; he had

once worked in a Moscow hotel and had learned good manners there.

For some time, Anninka warded him off, saying that Lulkin never insisted that Lubinka drink with him. But Kukishev soon found an argument:

"Nevertheless, she takes a drink now and then, if only to show her love for Lulkin. And then, my dear, why should the Lulkins be a model for us? We're Kukishevs, so let's drink like real Kukishevs!"

Finally, he got his way. Anninka accepted from her lover's hand a glass filled with a greenish liquor. She threw it down her throat; it took her breath away, she gasped and coughed, and the room swam before her eyes; Kukishev was wildly delighted.

"I must say, my dearest," he said, "you don't go about it properly! You hurry too much."

When she had recovered a bit, he started coaching her:

"See, this is the way you're supposed to hold the glass; then, easy, like this, you bring it to your lips; then, just like this, God bless you, see, here goes!"

With a calm, businesslike air, he emptied his glass as if he were pouring it down the sink. He didn't even wince, just took a tiny piece of bread, dipped it in the saltcellar, and chewed it for a moment before swallowing it.

Thus Kukishev achieved his second ambition and began to look for something new to make the Lulkins envious. And, of course, he found something soon enough.

"You know what?" he announced to her one day. "When the summer comes, we and the Lulkins will take some food and drinks with us and drive over to my mill, and if everyone agrees, we'll go and have a dip in the river, all four of us."

"Ah that, never!" Anninka said indignantly.

"Why? Why not? First we'll have a dip, then we'll have a drink or two, and a little rest, then another dip. . . . It's wonderful, you know!"

Whether they went on this particular party or not remains uncertain, but the drinking and the rest continued for a year without those in charge of the public treasury feeling the slightest uneasiness about Messrs. Lulkin and

Kukishev. True, to keep up appearances, Lulkin made a trip to Moscow, purportedly to sell some of his forest estate for timber. He was reminded that the estate had already been sold to pay his expenses when he lived with the gypsy Domashka, but he explained, when he had recovered from his first embarrassment, that he meant another estate of his, called Dashka's Shame. To make the story more convincing, he explained that it was called Dashka's Shame because, under serfdom, a girl called Dashka had been "caught" there and flogged. Kukishev spread a rumor that he had managed to smuggle a great quantity of foreign lace into the country and had made a great profit on it.

Nevertheless, in September, when the police inspector asked Kukishev to lend him a thousand rubles and he was foolish enough to refuse, the inspector was seen whispering to the assistant public prosecutor about something. (Later, at the trial, Kukishev said: "Both of them gorged themselves on my champagne every evening. . .")

Precisely on September 17, Lubinka's birthday, just one year after the start of Anninka's "idyll" with Kukishev, a messenger arrived from the courthouse and served Kukishev with a subpoena ordering him to present himself before the investigating magistrate.

"They must've discovered the missing funds," Kukishev said quite casually, and went off to the chamber of justice and thence to jail.

The next day the town council was also astir. The safe was checked, and here and there, and here again, a deficit was discovered. Lulkin was present during the checking, gloomy and pale, but still honorable-looking. And while the council members were deciding among themselves what each of them would have to sell to make good the deficit, Lulkin walked over to the window, took his gun out of his pocket, and shot himself through the temple.

This caused a great deal of talk. The two embezzlers were discussed and compared. On the whole, people were rather sorry for Lulkin ("At any rate he died like a gentleman.") but had no sympathy whatever for Kukishev ("He never was anything but a petty shopkeeper.").

As for Anninka and Lubinka, they said that it had really been all their fault in the first place, that it

would've been only fair if they'd been thrown into jail too, if only to discourage women like them.

The prosecutor, although he didn't throw them into jail as the public demanded, gave them so stern a warning that they completely lost their heads. Friends advised them to hide their most valuable possessions, but the young women listened without hearing. So the lawyer representing the two defrauded public agencies presented himself in the company of the sheriff at the apartments of the two sisters and sealed them with everything he found in them, leaving the sisters with only their clothes and the gold and silver items that had engravings on them testifying to an admiring and grateful audience and were thus theirs beyond doubt. Lubinka, however, managed to conceal in her corset a packet of bills that had been given her the day before. There were about a thousand rubles in it, a sum that had to last the sisters for an indefinite time now.

They weren't allowed to leave Samovarnov until the trial, for which they had to wait four months. Then came the trial itself, a real torture for both of them, particularly for Anninka. Kukishev was disgustingly crude and volunteered details that could have been of no possible interest to anyone. But, apparently trying to impress the Samovarnov ladies, he didn't spare a single lurid point. The public prosecutor and the counsel for the plaintiffs, who were young and delighted to have an opportunity to show off to the local ladies, strove to give the whole affair a scabrous tone. They were most successful. Anninka fainted several times while on the witness stand, but counsel, bent on driving his point home, fired questions at her mercilessly. Finally, both lawyers summed up their cases.

The jury then found Kukishev guilty, but with attenuating circumstances, and he was sent to one of the less remote settlements in Western Siberia.

When the trial was over, the sisters were allowed to leave Samovarnov. It was high time, for their thousand rubles were running out. The director of the Krechetov theater, with whom they had negotiated, was threatening to engage someone else if they didn't come immediately.

They heard nothing more about the money and things sealed off at the request of the lawyer.

Such, apparently, were the consequences of the careless handling of one's "treasure." Broken, disgusted, oppressed by the general scorn, Anninka and Lubinka lost all confidence in themselves and all hope for the future. They grew haggard, fearful, and careless of their appearance. And to top everything, Anninka, who had been through Kukishev's school, had become a drinker.

The further it went the worse it became. In Krechetov, no sooner had the sisters left the train than they were taken in hand: Lubinka by Captain Papkov and Anninka by a merchant called Zabvenny. But there was no lavish entertainment here. Both these men were primitive, coarse bullies and not overgenerous with money ("I pay according to the merchandise I'm getting," Zabvenny was fond of saying). Four months later, the men had cooled considerably. The sisters' success on the stage was as moderate as their success in "love." The director who had engaged them, counting on the publicity of the Samovarnov scandal, found himself out of pocket. During their very first appearance on the stage, a voice from the gallery shouted: "Hey, you jailbirds!" This nickname stuck to them, sealing the doom of their theatrical careers.

A sluggish, dull, and pointless existence followed. The public was cool, the director angry, their "protectors" uninterested. Zabvenny, who had thought like Kukishev, that he would break his protégée in on vodka, imagining her reluctant at first, then gradually giving in to him, was vexed when he realized that Anninka had been broken in already and there was nothing left for him to do but invite his friends to see how "the hussy swills vodka."

Papkov, too, was dissatisfied. He found that Lubinka had grown too thin and kept repeating to her: "You used to have plenty of flesh before. Where the hell has it all gone?" Consequently, he didn't stand on ceremony with her; he even hit her when he was drunk.

By the end of the winter, the sisters were without permanent protectors, or for that matter, steady billing. They managed to hang on in the theater, but there was no

longer any question of playing leading parts in *Perichole* or the *Old-Time Colonel*.

Of the two, Lubinka seemed to withstand the effects of this life better than her sister. Anninka, the more sensitive, broke down altogether. She seemed to have forgotten the past, and she hardly realized what was going on around her. Furthermore, she developed a bad cough and the symptoms of a suspicious disease.

The summer that followed was a nightmare. Gradually the sisters reached the point where they were hauled from hotel room to hotel room to entertain visitors at moderate prices. There were scandals, rows, brutality, but they seemed endowed with the nine lives of cats, and clung desperately to life. They were like miserable little curs, who, wounded, hurt, and lame, keep returning to their corners, despite the hot water that is thrown on them. Soon it proved embarrassing to have such people around the theater at all.

Only one thing relieved the year's unbearable gloom for a moment. Miloslavsky, the tragedian, wrote from Samovarnov and offered Anninka his heart and hand. Anninka read the letters and cried. She tossed and turned all night, unable to sleep, but the next morning she sent a brief reply:

"What would be the point? To drink vodka together?"

After that the darkness around her grew denser than ever.

Lubinka was the first to come to her senses. That is, she was the first to feel that she had lived long enough. There were no prospects of work. Youth, beauty, whatever gifts she may have had—all these were gone now. She never even thought of retiring to her corner in Pogorelka. Pogorelka was something remote, vague, forgotten. She had never been tempted to return there before, and now she was less tempted than ever. Yes, even though she was actually hungry. What face could she present there? A face that drunken breath had branded with degradation. Yes, she felt her lovers' vile breath all over her. . . . And the worst was that she and Anninka had lived so long in this vile atmosphere that they had become a part of it. They had become so accustomed to the stench of cheap hotels, noise, and the coarse language

of drunks, that if they had retired to Pogorelka, they would probably have missed it all. And, even in Pogorelka, they'd have to have something to live on. They had been wandering around all these years and had never heard a word about any income from Pogorelka. Perhaps Pogorelka was just a figment of the imagination. Perhaps everyone was dead there, all those witnesses of their unforgettable childhood, when Grandma Arina Petrovna had fed them curds and whey, and stale salt meat. . . . Ah, it wasn't much of a childhood really, and not much of a life either! Yes, all of life was sort of. . . .

There was no doubt about it; she had to die. Once she realized this, the thought never left her again.

Both sisters emerged from their drunken haze from time to time, but these moments of lucidity, which were accompanied by hysterics and sobbing, were shorter for Anninka.

Lubinka was the cooler-headed of the two, so she didn't cry or swear—she simply understood that she was tainted. She was also the more rational of the two, and she reasoned out to her satisfaction that going on didn't make much sense. She could see nothing ahead but shame, misery, and the streets. The shame was, of course, a matter of habit, and she could have put up with it. But misery—never! So, it was much better to put an end to it all.

"We ought to die, really," Lubinka told her sister in exactly the same cold, matter-of-fact tone she had used a couple of years before when she had asked her for whom she was keeping her "treasure."

"But why?" Anninka's voice sounded frightened.

"I tell you, seriously, it's time to die," Lubinka repeated. "Come on, wake up! Try to understand!"

"Why, all right, let's die," Anninka agreed—sadly, however, fully realizing the grim implication of her words.

The same day Lubinka prepared two glasses of a solution made with the heads of sulphur matches. She handed one to her sister and immediately drank her own. But Anninka hesitated and then lost courage.

"Drink it up, you bitch!" Lubinka shouted at her. "Drink, sister, darling, dear. . . . Drink, please. . . ."

Anninka, beside herself with terror, screamed and

rushed madly about the room, her hands clutching instinctively at her throat.

"Drink . . . drink . . . bitch . . ."

That was the end of the stage careers of the two sisters. Lubinka's body was removed and buried the same day. Anninka lived on.

Anninka brought to Golovlovo her feeling of hopeless uprootedness and dissolution. She got up late. Then, uncombed, heavy-headed, without dressing, she dragged herself from room to room all day, coughing so violently that Judas in his study started each time in horror. Her room remained untouched for days, her bed was unmade, and various toilet articles were strewn about the floor. At first she saw her uncle only at dinner and supper. On these occasions, Judas appeared in the dining room dressed in black, spoke very little, and reverted to his old habit of eating painfully slowly. Anninka felt from his sidelong glances that he was taking stock of her.

It was December. With the early dusk, Anninka began her sad promenade through the row of front rooms. She liked to watch the gradual fading of the gray winter day, the darkening of the countryside, the way the room filled with shadows, and then how complete darkness blotted everything out almost immediately. She felt more at ease in the dark and almost never lighted a candle. One thin candle burned in a corner of the main drawing room, a small circle of pale light forming around its flame. For some time after meals, a few sounds persisted in the house: the clatter of plates, knives, and forks in the pantry, drawers being opened and closed. . . . Then came the sound of receding steps—the servants were retiring to their quarters. And then came dead stillness. Judas locked himself in his study; Eupraxia buried herself in her featherbed in her room. Now Anninka was all alone. She paced back and forth, singing in an undertone, trying to tire herself and to think of nothing. As she walked toward the main drawing room, she kept her eyes fixed on the pale circle of light around the candle; as she walked in the opposite direction, she tried to make out objects in the darkness. Memories seemed to float to meet her. She saw her dressing room, the cheap wall-

paper on the wooden partitions, the inevitable oblong mirror, and the eternal bouquet from some second lieutenant. . . . She visualized the stage, with its stained, grimy décor, slippery to the touch because of the damp; she saw herself skipping on to the set (yes, actually skipping while deluding herself that she was acting), among furniture that looked elegant from the pit but was really crude and ugly. And out there, in the semi-darkness before her, the officers. . . . Then she was in the hotel, with its smelly corridors dimly lit by oil lamps . . . then in her room, where after the show, she hurriedly changes before going on to further "triumphs." In the room, her bed has remained unmade since morning, and the dirty water has been left in the wash basin. There are towels on the floor, and her panties hang on the back of a chair. . . . Then the cheap dining room filled with tobacco smoke and the eternal hamburgers with green peas. . . . Then drunkenness, noise and again officers, officers and more officers, without end.

That was what she remembered of her career and her triumphs during her best years.

These memories were followed by others centered around really sordid hotels with an unbearable stench, cold damp walls, shaky floors, wooden partitions with shiny bugs peeping out of the cracks, drunken, brutal nights, transient landowners hurriedly pulling three-ruble bills from their thin pocketbooks, jaunty merchants directing operations almost whip in hand . . . and in the morning, headache, nausea, and endless, nagging misery. Then, finally—Golovlovo.

And Golovlovo was death itself. Cruel, voracious death eternally stalking its current victim. Two of her uncles had died near here, her two first cousins had received wounds here that had resulted in their deaths, and Lubinka too—oh, of course, she had actually died somewhere in Krechetov, for her own reasons, but the disease that had driven her to her death had been contracted here. Death, the wounds, the infection, all came from here. It was here that children had been fed stale salt meat; that children had heard for the first time that they were bad, lazy, wicked—in fact, nothing but useless mouths to feed. Nothing had gone unpunished here;

nothing had escaped the keen eye of the hard, whimsical old woman. An extra bit of food, a cheap doll broken, a torn rag, a prematurely worn down heel . . . every breach had immediately met with a scolding or a slap. So, as soon as they realized that they could make their own decisions, that they could run away from here, they had—and they had run *there*. . . .

And nothing could have stopped them from running away, for they couldn't imagine anything more loathsome than Golovlovo.

Ah, if only she could forget all that and create some dream world for herself that would screen her from the past and present! But, the real experiences she had lived through were too stark, too overwhelming for her imagination to cope with. Even if she had succeeded in visualizing full-blown angels with silver wings, she'd have seen something in them that reminded her of the Kukishevs, Lulkins, Zabvennyys, and Papkovs. . . . God, was it possible that even her ability to lose herself in drink and debauchery had deserted her? Still, the past must be done away with somehow, or it would go on tearing at her heart and poisoning her blood. She wanted something heavy that would crush and destroy the past under its weight.

What was worst was that she was already dead, though she still showed outward signs of life. She should have blotted them out *then*, with Lubinka, but somehow she hadn't. How had she survived the gigantic disgrace that had closed in on her from every side? What kind of miserable worm was she to have crawled out from under the heap after that?

Moaning like a wounded beast, she ran through the empty rooms, trying to calm her unleashed emotions. . . .

Late in the evening, the house began to stir again. She could hear the preparations for supper, and, finally, Judas's voice. Uncle and niece sat down to the table and exchanged some remarks about the day. But since the day had been dull, their remarks were dull too. After supper, they went through the routine of kissing each other good night, after which Judas disappeared into his lair for

good, and Anninka went to Eupraxia's room to play cards with her.

The wild time began around eleven. After making sure that Judas had gone to bed, Eupraxia put all sorts of snacks on the table, with a decanter of vodka in the midst of them. Then Anninka sang pornographic songs to the accompaniment of a guitar, and between the songs and smutty conversation, she drank. She drank as Kukishev had taught her to, coolly and composedly, saying "here goes" each time. Gradually, however, her tone grew gloomy and she began to swear.

A sort of pity stirred in Eupraxia.

"I look at you, Miss," she said, "and I feel terrible sorry for you!"

"So, let's have a drink, and you'll feel better," Anninka answered.

"No, how can I, Miss? As it is, they hardly receive me at home because of Mr. Golovlov; if I started to drink on top of that . . ."

"All right, forget it then. Let me sing you the song about the lad with the whiskers. . . ."

And she returned to the guitar and the gypsy moans and groans—*eee-hee-ho* and *eee-hee-ha!*

Long after midnight, sleep fell like a rock on Anninka, killing her past for a few hours and even suspending her sickness for a while. But the next morning, broken, half-crazed, she'd creep out from under the rock again and go on living.

One night, when Anninka was singing her vulgar songs to Eupraxia, the exhausted, livid ghost of Judas appeared in the doorway. His lips were trembling, and in the dim flicker of the candlelight, his sunken eyes looked like empty slits. His hands were clasped as if in prayer. He stood still for a moment facing the dumbfounded women, then slowly turned and left.

Doom seems to hang over some families. This is particularly so among the minor gentry scattered all over Russia, with nothing to do with themselves, divorced from the stream of life, and without a position of leadership. Under serfdom they could subsist, but now they

simply sit on their ramshackle estates, waiting to disappear.

In the history of these sad families, success and failure seem to be merely a matter of chance, for a flicker of success shines once in a while for them. Some retired lieutenant vegetating with his wife in the backwoods may produce a brood of strong, clever youngsters who very quickly master the essentials of life and the means of getting on. And, thanks to such accidents, luck starts pouring in on the wretched family. The successful brood bring up, in their turn, a sturdy new generation which already has a somewhat easier time because their parents have traced out and trodden the path for them. That generation is followed by another, and that by still another, and so on, until finally, the family feels that each succeeding generation has a right to all this life's blessings by birth, without having to earn them.

But alongside these families, there are many others upon whom the household gods seem to bestow nothing but hopelessness. Like a country attacked by plague, the family is suddenly struck by ill luck and begins to decay. Generations of weak, perverted people—drunkards, idlers and other failures—are brought into the world. And the further it goes, the further the family degenerates, until in the end, they are nothing but miserable human wrecks who collapse under the pressure of life.

It was such a doom that hung over the Golovlov family. For several generations three traits had marked them: idleness, unsuitability for any kind of work, and drunkenness. The first two resulted in emptiness of thought, the depreciation of words, and moral shallowness; the third was apparently the inevitable consequence of their general inadequacy. Judas had seen several victims of the family disease burn up, and besides this, he knew of the fate of his grandparents and great-grandparents. All of them had been vicious, good-for-nothing drunkards, and the chances are that the Golovlov family would have been ruined before his time if it hadn't been for Arina Petrovna, who had swept like a bright meteor through all that weakness and drunkenness. Her energy had raised the family fortune to its highest point. Nevertheless, her

efforts had been in vain, because she not only failed to transmit her qualities to any of her children but she herself had, by the time she died, become completely enmeshed in idleness, wild fancies, and floods of senseless words.

Up to this point, Judas had managed to hold himself back. Maybe he was consciously afraid of drinking because of what he had seen. And maybe, for the time being, he could get along with the drunkenness of idle fancy. However, everyone in the neighborhood had felt all along that he too was doomed to be driven to the more common form of intoxication. And he himself felt from time to time that there was still a gap within him that needed filling, that his daydreaming was no longer sufficient to blot everything out. What he wanted now was something stunning, acute, something that could completely remove all feeling of life in him and plunge him into complete emptiness, once and for all.

And now, the long-awaited moment had arrived by itself. For a long time after Anninka's arrival, Judas had listened from his study to the sounds reaching him from the other side of the house. For a while, he had wondered what it was, and then he had guessed.

The morning after his intrusion, Anninka expected admonitions from him, but none were forthcoming. As usual, Judas remained in his study all morning; but when he came out for dinner, instead of pouring one glass of vodka for himself, he poured two and handed one to Anninka with a sort of silly, awkward smile. Anninka accepted this silent invitation.

"So you say Lubinka died?" Judas said suddenly, half-way through dinner.

"Yes, Uncle, she did."

"Well, may she rest in peace! It's a sin to fret, but we still ought to remember her. So, let's have one for her memory, what do you say?"

"Yes, let's, Uncle."

They had a second glass, after which Judas became silent again, apparently not yet adjusted to human company after his long solitude. But when, after the meal, Anninka kissed her uncle on the cheek, he lightly patted her on the head and said:

"So, that's the way you are."

During supper, which lasted longer than usual, Judas looked at Anninka for some time with the same silly, enigmatic smile and asked:

"Well, shall we have something?"

"All right, Uncle."

"Well, at least it's out in the open now, not in corners. . . . I'm your uncle, you know, after all. It's better because . . ."

Judas didn't finish his thought. He had been about to say that in case of need he would always stop her from going too far, but he preferred to leave it at that.

From that day on, a decanter of vodka appeared among the hors d'oeuvres every evening. The window shutters were closed, the servants went to bed, and the two of them remained alone. At first, Judas couldn't keep up with Anninka, but after a brief period of apprenticeship, he matched her drink for drink. They sat there, casually emptying their glasses and chatting. The conversation, at first sluggish and indifferent, gradually warmed up, invariably ending in a disorderly quarrel inspired by all the old injuries received and inflicted at Golovlovo.

Anninka always initiated the quarrels. With cruel insistence, she kept digging in the Golovlovo archives. She enjoyed teasing Judas and tried to prove to him that he and the late Arina Petrovna were mainly responsible for most of the tragedies. At these moments, her every word was permeated with cynical hatred; it was astonishing how much smoldering violence was left in this half-extinguished organism. Her taunts stung Judas and made him angry, but he didn't defend himself very energetically. Only when Anninka's taunts passed all bounds in their viciousness did he start to shout and curse.

Scenes of this sort recurred daily. And after every detail in the somber history of the family had been exhausted, they dragged them out again, for all their thoughts were centered around this grim tale. Each incident, every reminiscence probed some old sore, and each sore brought back a sequence of misdeeds perpetrated in Golovlovo. There was a bitter, vengeful delight in Anninka's exposure of these misdeeds, in condemning and

even exaggerating them. She could not discover a moral principle underlying this behavior, either in the past or present, only the avaricious accumulation of wealth and a meaningless adherence to gestures and conventions. A stone instead of bread, a blow instead of guidance, and the constant reminders that one was an extra mouth to feed . . . that was all she had received when her young heart was longing for friendliness, warmth, love! And what had happened? By some strange irony, what she had taken out of this stern school was not a stern outlook on life but a passionate desire to gorge herself on life's poisons. Youth had performed the miracle of forgetfulness: It had not allowed her heart to be turned to stone; it had not allowed the seeds of hatred to bloom in it; on the contrary, it made it drunk with the desire to live. Hence the wild backstage life that for some years had given her no chance to come to her senses and had pushed everything connected with Golovlovo somewhere deep down inside her. It was only now, with the end in sight, that Anninka truly understood what her past had been, and she started to hate it with genuine vehemence.

These drunken conversations went on far into the night, and if they hadn't been mellowed by incoherence, they might have ended horribly from the very beginning. But luckily, while the vodka opened up the wounds in these two tortured people, it also pacified them. The further the night advanced, the more incoherent their words became and the more impotent their aroused hatred. Toward the end, they no longer felt any pain. The world around them vanished and was replaced by a phosphorescent light. Their tongues grew thick, their eyes fell closed, and their limbs became wooden. Finally uncle and niece got up from their chairs and, swaying, staggered off, each to his hole.

Naturally these nightly orgies couldn't remain secret long. In fact, their very nature, and the hatred they harbored, were so obvious to the servants that one of them once said: "It's bound to end up in a crime!"

The Golovlovo house appeared even more deserted. In the mornings, there was no movement at all. Judas and Anninka got up very late, and then, until dinner time, her heart-rending coughing resounded through the rooms,

accompanied by a continuous stream of curses. Judas, listening to these nerve-cracking sounds, felt that a terrible scourge was heading his way and would finally crush him.

Death seemed to lurk in every corner of this hateful house. Whichever way one went, wherever one turned, gray ghosts stirred. Here was Judas's papa, Vladimir Golovlov, in a white nightcap, sticking out his tongue and quoting passages from the poet Barkov; there were his brothers, Stepan-the-blockhead and Pavel, the man who'd never done anything; and there came Lubinka and the two young Golovlovs, Judas's sons Peter and Vladimir . . . and all of them drunken, perverted, tortured, with blood streaming from them. . . . And over all these ghosts hovered another—that of the still-living Porfiry Golovlov, alias Judas, the last representative of the decayed family.

The constant mulling over of past crimes was bound to tell eventually. From constant prodding, the past became one big sore, and the slightest touch caused terrible pain. The natural consequence of this probing was partly terror and partly the awakening of conscience—probably more the second than the first. Surprisingly enough, conscience had not been altogether absent; it had only been buried somewhere deep down and forgotten. As a consequence, it had lost that acute sensitivity that keeps a man constantly aware of its existence.

Such an awakening of a neglected conscience is extremely painful. An undeveloped conscience that sees no hope ahead cannot guide a man; it only torments him endlessly. It places him in a torture chamber where he meets with nothing but agony without hope of being returned to life. And he has no other means of escape but to take advantage of a moment of grim determination to smash his head against the stone wall of his prison.

During his long, empty life Judas had never suspected that something had been dying and decaying in him all the while he lived.

He had led his life slowly and quietly, without hurry, with prayer, not in the least suspecting that this was

precisely what was making a cripple out of him. For this reason it couldn't have occurred to him that it was he who bore the main responsibility for his own crippling. And when the horrible truth was revealed to him, it was already too late to change anything.

So here he was, a lonely, dying old man, and there was no one in the world who could understand and pity him! Why must he be so lonely? Why must he be surrounded not only by indifference but even by hatred? Why was everything that came in contact with him doomed to perish? Here, in Golovlovo, there had once been a whole human nest and now, why was there not even a feather left? Of all the young fledglings, only one of his nieces had survived, and even she had only come here to insult him and finish him off. Even Eupraxia, as simple a soul as any—even she hated him. She lived in Golovlovo because her father, the sexton, got a monthly supply of food, but she lived under his roof hating him. And he had hurt her too—had crippled her by taking away her child and casting him nameless into the unknown. And what were the results of his life? In the name of what had he lied, buried people in a flood of verbal garbage, oppressed them? For what purpose had he tried to amass everything he could lay hands on? Even from the strictly practical viewpoint, who would now take advantage of the family fortune? Who?

So Judas's conscience awoke, but to no purpose. Judas raved and ranted, waiting for the evening to drown his feeling of guilt. He hated "the dissolute creature" who so coldly and cynically poked at his wounds, while at the same time he was irresistibly drawn to her, as though he felt that he had more wounds and must offer them to her to poke at and inflame.

Every night he made Anninka repeat in detail the story of Lubinka's death, and every time the idea of self-destruction grew stronger in him. At first, the thought just flitted through his head. But later, as he understood more and more about the process of death and decay going on within him, the thought of suicide penetrated deeper and deeper, and finally became the sole flickering light in the surrounding darkness.

On top of all this, his health was also shattered. He

coughed quite a lot and occasionally had terrible fits of breathlessness, which, quite aside from his mental torment, were enough to fill his life with agony. All the symptoms of the typical Golovlov poisoning were now present, and his brother Pavel's suffocating groans in his room in Dubrovino echoed in Judas's ears. And yet, his thin, sunken chest that seemed ready to buckle at any moment proved to have a surprising amount of vitality in it. Every day, more and more agony pressed on it, but it didn't cave in. His very resilience seemed to have been devised as an extra punishment for the suffering he had caused others.

"Perhaps this is it!" he said hopefully each time he felt a fit approaching, but the end wouldn't come. It looked as if he would have to use violent means to bring it on.

However one looked at it, his life was over. To go on living was both painful and unnecessary. The best thing was death, but death wouldn't come. There was something cruel and insulting in its playful delay. Everything in him longed for it, but it just went on teasing and tempting. . . .

It was the end of March. Easter Week was almost over. By now, Judas had let himself go entirely, but he was still aware of these days, having been taught to revere them since childhood. He felt a solemn mood come over him and wanted nothing so much as complete quiet. So, he suspended his nightly drinking and spent his evenings in mournful silence and abstinence.

Judas and Anninka sat alone in the dining room. The Vigil service had been over only about an hour and the place was still redolent with incense. The clock struck ten. The servants had gone to their quarters; the house was completely still. Anninka, her elbows on the table, her head in her hands, seemed deep in thought. Judas, facing her, sat silent and sad.

This service had always moved Anninka very deeply. As a child, she had always wept disconsolately when the priest chanted: "And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head and a reed in His right hand," and her thin, girlish voice would chime in:

"Glory to Thine infinite patience, O Lord." And after the Vigil service, she would rush to the maids' room, and there, in the darkness (Arina Petrovna forbade them to burn candles except when they had specific work to do), she'd tell the girls the story of the Passion. The serfs sighed and wept, feeling in their hearts the closeness of the Redeemer and believing firmly that He would come again, and Anninka felt and believed too. Beyond the wilderness of humiliation and oppression through which the meek must pass, there was a kingdom of light and freedom.

During these days, even Arina Petrovna, the dread mistress of the place, usually so harsh and stern, was nice; instead of nagging Anninka and reproaching her for being a useless mouth to feed, she gently patted her head. But even when she was sent up to bed after these services, Anninka was unable to sleep for a long time. She tossed from side to side, jumped out of bed, talked to herself.

Then followed her school years and, after that, the wandering. The first were empty, the second vulgar and painful. Yet, even amidst her ugly travels from one provincial theater to another, Anninka carefully marked off the "holy days" and searched her soul for echoes of the past that made her sigh and shed tears. But now, when she saw all her life before her down to the minutest detail, when the past had damned itself and the future was without repentance or forgiveness, when the sources of emotion were dried up along with her tears, the impression produced by the Vigil service was overwhelmingly depressing. Although she'd been in the wilderness from her very childhood, then, at least, she had thought she could see light beyond the darkness, but now there was nothing—nothing but the endless, terrible darkness. And so she did not sigh, did not worry, perhaps didn't even think—she just felt totally and incurably numb.

Judas had also revered the "holy days" from his tender years, but he had revered them in a purely ritual sense, like a pagan. Every year, on the eve of Good Friday, he had invited the priest, listened to the Gospel story, sighed, raised his clasped hands to heaven, banged his forehead against the floor, and marked off on the candle that he held in his hand the number of the

Gospel verses read; and yet he had never really understood what it was all about. And now, since Anninka had stirred up in him a feeling of guilt for his crimes, he realized that this story was about an unheard-of lie that had wrought murderous injustice upon the truth.

It would be an exaggeration to say that this discovery prompted him to make a concrete decision; but it did fill him with complete bewilderment and utter despair. This confusion was the more painful the less conscious he was of the past that had caused it. There was something horrifying in that past, but he couldn't remember exactly what it was. Yet, neither could he forget. There was something huge, something that had thus far been immobile, but was now moving and threatening to run over him. If it really had run over him, that would have been the best thing. . . . But his body clung so hard to life that he felt he'd still crawl out from under the ruins. No, it was relying too much on chance to wait for a natural solution. He'd have to take a hand in it himself and put an end to this unbearable confusion. For there was a way to solve it. He had been working it out for a month and he thought he knew how to handle it now. "Saturday, there'll be the Communion; after that, I must visit Mamma's grave," he thought suddenly.

"Shall we go then?" he asked Anninka, repeating his thought to her.

"Why not? Let's drive out there."

"No, not drive——" Judas started to say, but interrupted himself, fearing she might stop him.

And in Judas's head the thought kept turning: "Why, I'm guilty toward Mamma. . . . I harmed her and made her miserable. . . . Yes, it was because of me. . . ." With every minute, his desire to go and "ask for her forgiveness" grew stronger. However, he was not thinking of asking forgiveness in the usual way, but of throwing himself on her grave, and with a releasing howl of agony, stiffening forever.

"So, according to you, Lubinka died of her own choice?" he asked Anninka suddenly, looking for encouragement.

At first Anninka appeared not to have heard his question. But it had reached her, for a few minutes later

she felt an uncontrollable desire to go back to Lubinka's death, to torture herself.

"And she said: 'Drink, you bitch,' is that right?" Judas asked her again when Anninka had retold him the story.

"That's right."

"And you didn't drink, did you?"

"As you can see, I'm here."

He got up, walking quickly up and down the room with an air of great agitation. Then he stopped in front of Anninka and patted her on the head.

"Poor girl," he said. "My poor little girl. . . ."

On this contact, something unexpected happened to her. At first, she was immensely surprised. Then her face began to twitch, and suddenly she was sobbing. A storm of terrible, hysterical sobs shook her breast.

"Uncle, will you be nice to me? Will you? Tell me, tell me! . . ."

She kept repeating this question amidst sobs and tears. It was the same question she'd asked when she'd come to stay in Golovlovo at the end of her journey, and to which he'd given such an inane answer before.

"Are you kind? Will you be nice to me, Uncle? Tell me, are you good?"

"Did you hear what they read at the Vigil service?" he said when finally she calmed down a bit. "Ah, what suffering He went through! It's only torture like His that can . . . and He forgave! He forgave everyone and forever!"

He again paced rapidly across the room, full of pain and sadness. He didn't feel the big drops of sweat that rolled down his face.

"Yes, He forgave everyone," he said aloud, talking to himself, "not only those who gave Him bitter gall and vinegar to drink, but those who came after, who are here now, and who will come after us, for ever and ever, and who will go on handing Him vinegar mixed with gall. . . . Horrible! Ah, it's so horrible!"

Then suddenly he stopped near Anninka again and said:

"And what about you? . . . Have you forgiven?"

She said nothing, but flung herself at him, putting her arms around his neck.

"You must forgive me," he said, "for all the others . . . for yourself too. And for those who aren't here any more. . . . What? What's happened?" he shouted, looking around him almost panic-stricken. "Where? Where are they all?"

Broken and shattered, they went to their rooms. But Judas couldn't sleep. He kept tossing in his bed, trying to remember something—something he absolutely must do. Then, as though out of nowhere, the words that had flashed through his head a couple of hours previously now reconstructed themselves with absolute clarity: "I must go to Mamma's grave and ask her to forgive me."

A sinister, insurmountable anxiety took possession of his entire being.

At last, he could stand it no longer. He got up from his bed and slipped on his dressing gown. Outside it was still completely dark. For some time he paced the room, stopping before the icon of the Redeemer wearing his crown of thorns and looking at it in the light of the sanctuary lamp. Finally, he made up his mind. It is hard to say to what extent he himself was aware of his decision, but in a matter of minutes he had crept stealthily to the entrance door; the latch clicked gently as he undid it.

The wind was howling outside, and wet snowflakes whirled around in a March blizzard. But Porfiry Golovlov walked along the road, stepping in the puddles, without feeling either the snow or the cold, only instinctively holding his dressing gown closed.

Early next morning, a man on horseback came from the village near the churchyard where Arina Petrovna was buried and said that the frozen body of the master of Golovlovo had been found by the road.

The servants rushed to break the news to Anninka but found her unconscious in her bed with all the symptoms of brain fever.

Then a messenger was sent to Goryushkino, the estate now belonging to Nadia, the daughter of Aunt Barbara, who since last fall, had been keeping an eye on what was going on in Golovlovo.

AFTERWORD

SATIRE has relatively little place in that simplified view of Russian literature which Western readers have created for themselves. We look to the Russian novel primarily for a spontaneous assertion of spirit, irrational or pre-rational, a life force devoid of humor or irony. For us Russia seems a great and primitive land with a life more direct and vital, more earthy than our own, yet somehow more spiritual, free from the refined impulses of civilized irony, criticism or satire. Such is the attitude we bring to our reading of the major classics of Russian literature, to Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, even at times to Turgenev, Chekhov and Pasternak. Yet actually it is Soviet fiction which, in spite of its preoccupation with technology and utopia, has been chiefly responsible for creating such an image, and one finds far more of this spirit of primitive vitality (often a bit synthetic, to be sure), in the works of Gorky and Sholokhov than in the great Russian classics.

From the beginnings, however, of modern Russian literary history we find a current directly opposed to this primitive vitality: an urbane, sophisticated sense of the limitations of life and civilization. In Russia it affected chiefly the upper classes; the middle and lower classes never experienced the cultural force of this civilized and civilizing irony, and hence survived with their will to create a new order of things. The combination of these

two conflicting forces, the naïve assertion of spirit and the negation of urbane irony, helped to shape that curious and unique body: the modern Russian intelligentsia, with its expansiveness of soul and its childlike, idealistic contradictions.

In Russian literature this principle of civilizing irony served as a more creative force than it did in Russian social life. One of its characteristics was a deep skepticism concerning the value of civilization itself, a skepticism acquired even before Russia herself had become civilized. For the Russian Slavophiles, or for Tolstoy, this denial of civilization for the life of the spirit proceeded not so much from a kind of Russian spiritual "primitivism," or Eastern "quietism," as is often supposed, but from an almost too keen sense of the contradictions inherent in civilization itself.

It was Alexander Pushkin, the most civilized, except perhaps for Chekhov, of Russian writers, who first eloquently sounded the notes of irony and satire. After him we find these qualities appearing again and again, often where we least expect them. A good part of Tolstoy's work is satirical, though it must be confessed that this is his weaker side, and one scarcely recognizes the giant Tolstoy in such passages as the feeble caricature of Napoleon in *War and Peace*. But *The Death of Ivan Ilych* is the supreme expression of the irony of death, apparently unrelieved by the hope of religious salvation, and it is Tolstoy's masterpiece. Dostoyevsky's savage caricature and satire are better known, perhaps, but still insufficiently appreciated: such scenes as the funeral feast in *Crime and Punishment* or the literary fete in *The Possessed* are probably closer to the real Dostoyevsky than his stylized and rather sentimental portrayals of humility and spiritual regeneration. Chekhov is neither a satirist nor a caricaturist, save in his early stories which were written to please the public of the vulgar comic papers. But in all his mature plays and tales one finds a sense of the profound irony of life which redeems them from morbidity or sentimentality.

The greatest Russian satire, Saltykov-Shchedrin's brilliant novel *The Golovlovs*, surprises us with its unrelieved gloom, its lack of apparent catharsis, its complete

absence of optimism or hope. Arnold Bennett called it one of the world's ten greatest novels. Indeed, as a work of art it is nearly perfect, but the reader may feel more comfortable condemning on moral grounds a novel so totally devoid of positive characters, even of good deeds, than accepting it on its own terms. Nor is its satire an urbane, civilized irony, but rather a savage caricature, the expression of a violent rage against life. Yet this terrifying vision of a moral void, this absence of virtue or even of hope, is another specialty of Russian literature, though the Western reader may scarcely recognize it as "Russian." It was Nikolai Gogol who, in his *The Inspector General* and *Dead Souls*, created in Russian literature that pattern of moral satire without positive characters, of a spiritual universe empty of good and rampant with petty, grotesque evil. After Gogol one finds this same absence of positive characters in certain of the dramas of Ostrovsky and Sukhovo-Kobylin, plays which, though little known outside Russia, are among the most typical works of Russian literature. And we find this pattern in the satirical sketches and tales of their greater contemporary Saltykov-Shchedrin.

Mikhail Yevgrafovich Saltykov was born in 1826, the child of a family of provincial gentry of the Province of Tver, a flat land of pine forests and marshes northwest of Moscow—that bleak country he was to celebrate in his writings as Turgenev did the more nostalgic landscape of the Oryol country southwest of Moscow. Much of what he wrote Saltykov was to publish under the pseudonym of N. Shchedrin, and according to the custom of Russian literary history, he has been immortalized under the dual name of Saltykov-Shchedrin. Saltykov's mother gave Turgenev's a close race as the cruelest of Russian landowning matriarchs. She was stingy in the bargain, and the Arina Petrovna of the novel is clearly modeled on her. Such details as forcing her family to eat spoiled food while other stores were left to rot are undoubtedly autobiographical: Saltykov's reminiscences in his *Old Times in Poshekhonie* give us many such details of an unlovely childhood. Indeed, much of *The Golovlovs* is autobiographical, and his family never forgave the writer for the novel. There was even a prototype for the hypo-

crite Judas in Saltykov's elder brother Dmitri. A sense of filial tenderness or perhaps of propriety checked him slightly where the mother was concerned, and in spite of all her cruelty Arina Petrovna gradually emerges as a sympathetic figure. But this is partly by grace of the fact that she becomes the victim of her own son Judas, "the bloodsucker," who is even more of a monster, and because, once her power is lost, she can seem only pitiful and human.

In the mid-eighteen-forties Saltykov began a career in the government service: his motives seem to have been divided between a need to earn a living and a desire to do good as an administrator; the latter purpose was destined to be frustrated, and some of his sharpest satires are at the expense of the bureaucratic and corrupt Russian officials, the *chinovniks*. It was next to impossible in Russia at this time to make a living from literature, and for Saltykov writing remained an avocation for many years. His first two stories, "Contradictions" (1847) and "A Tangled Affair" (1848), won him political exile to the far north, to the town of Vyatka. "Contradictions" questioned the justice of a social order in which some drove in luxurious carriages while others walked. Vyatka was a backward provincial town, but the exile was not exactly severe; according to a freakish practice of the Russian tsarist order, Saltykov remained in the service and even won promotion. In Vyatka he was married in 1856 to the daughter of the governor. The marriage brought him little happiness; it is perhaps significant that while the figure of the mother dominates *The Golovlovs*, not a single wife appears in the novel: Judas' spouse has died before it opens (we have not the slightest hint of what she was like), while his brothers Stepan and Pavel never marry.

On his return from exile in 1855, Saltykov began a dual career which combined the civil service with radical journalism. In an incredible feat of tightrope balancing, he managed to rise rapidly in the service, and even attained the post of vice-governor of a province, while publishing (under a pseudonym, to be sure) his satirical sketches which flayed the bureaucrats and the whole reactionary social order. To evade the censor, Saltykov developed a

technique of long-winded circumlocution which he himself called "Aesopic language," a term which has stuck in Russian literary criticism. Though he succeeded in getting his sketches of contemporary abuses into print, his oblique references make many of these stories unintelligible today, and this is hardly the best side of his work. More significant is *The History of a Town* (1869-70), the chronicle of a provincial city whose governors are caricatures of Russian tsars and their favorites; the town itself is called Glupov, "Fools' Town." The censor passed it, apparently from a realization that by condemning such a book he might well implicate himself in the crime of lese majesty. Another noteworthy use of the trick of circumlocution came in the *Fairy Tales* (1880-85), in which Saltykov uses animals and their ways to symbolize the problems of contemporary Russia. The chief targets of his satire are the bureaucrats and the landowning gentry, and the mentality of corruption, exploitation, and do-nothingness which he found typical of these classes.

Disillusioned by the impossibility of using the state service as an arena for reform, and finding himself able to make a living from journalism, Saltykov resigned from the service in 1868 to become co-editor of *The Fatherland Notes* with Nekrasov, the well-known radical poet and publisher who had discovered both Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. Saltykov's critical attitude naturally led him to the radical camp. But in fact he was an isolated spirit. He had almost no positive program for Russian reform, and on occasion could excoriate his fellow radicals as severely as he did the conservatives. In 1884, after the assassination of Alexander II, *The Fatherland Notes* was suppressed. Tormented by chronic ill health and the frustrations of silence which the new regime imposed on him, Saltykov died in 1889 of a stroke.

Saltykov's lesser satires are conceived within a positive frame of reference: one can suppose that things will get better when some abuse is corrected or some reform instituted. But *The Golovlovs* goes beyond this kind of topical satire. It stands in definite relation to the literary tradition: Judas Golovlov is one of that great gallery of hypocrites which includes Tartuffe and Uriah Heep. Per-

haps it was Balzac who had the most significant influence on Saltykov's novel: Judas' financial maneuvers and his complicated calculations recall something of *Père Goriot* or *La Cousine Bette*, though *The Golovlovs* is probably sharper in focus and more pointed than anything in Balzac. But the reader is also involuntarily reminded of Gogol—or even Kafka—in the flashes of insight the novel gives us into a world of ultimate evil or indifference, a world of sterility and death. The poetry of ennui which pervades the novel—the boredom of drink and drunkenness, of endless perspectives of empty time and space, of oblivion which accompany the nightly orgies of the blockhead Stepan; the senseless babblings of Judas, for whom the whole world is a tomb, real only in that it serves as a subject for his endless moralizing—these take us beyond the possibility of action and hope, into a realm of eternal, immovable despair. Even Judas' hypocrisy proceeds as much from fear as from calculation, from the terror of retribution, of hell, and of emptiness.

Russian criticism, true to a basic tendency which has dominated it ever since the eighteen-forties, has striven valiantly, if not always with entire success, to relate the novel to the social order which produced it. The emancipation of the serfs which was carried out in the early eighteen-sixties takes place during the novel's course, and the father, dying, gives thanks to God that he will not have to appear before Him in company with the freed serfs. But otherwise the fact of emancipation appears to make little impact on the chief characters or their fates; the Golovlovs seem destined to destroy themselves whether the law condones their rapacity or condemns it. Yet there is one change which is at least implicit: under the new order the tyranny and sharp dealing of Arina Petrovna no longer make any sense, for they will antagonize hired laborers as well as customers, while the free peasants no longer work for Judas Golovlov because no one can tolerate his senseless babble.

Another fact of social change which the novel reflects, if again only obliquely, is the transition from feudal serfdom to capitalism. The Russian gentry were quite unable to meet the challenge of a capitalistic, scientific agriculture. Nineteenth-century Russian literature is full of por-

traits of well-intentioned squires who attempt to introduce more scientific means of cultivation, whether for their own benefit or for the peasants', but who fail ludicrously or disastrously: one thinks, for example, of Nicholas Kirsanov in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. If such well-intentioned spirits were to fail, what would happen to those who, like the Golovlovs, knew nothing of modern agriculture, but only the rules of privilege, tyranny and exploitation? To us it may seem paradoxical that such creatures as the Golovlovs were by Russian law of *gentle birth*, just as were the more sensitive landowners of Turgenev's novels and tales. But perhaps the Golovlovs, for all the novel's traits of caricature, were more faithful to the reality of Russian life than the landed gentry of Turgenev or Chekhov.

The reader catches another glimpse of the social reality of the times in Judas' background in the civil service. Trained to wheedle, to flatter, to shift the blame to others, he carries his habits as a bureaucrat into estate management, and forces his subordinates to submit the most picayune reports and accounts, though in fact he is almost utterly ignorant of what goes on under his management. Espionage is his only method of obtaining reliable information, since he cannot believe that anyone would trust him, for he himself trusts no one.

But in the final analysis there is far less of the social background in the novel than Soviet critics maintain. Indeed, it is probably to Saltykov's credit that the work does not suffer from topicalness (unlike so many of his satirical sketches); after all, the Russian reading public of the day already knew the reality. As often in art, the Golovlovs are not so much a literal example of the operation of a social process, as a broadly conceived and expressive symbol of the degeneration of a class and the passing of a social order. To explain this process Saltykov takes refuge not in history, but in a concept of evil fate: the destiny of a family bent on its own destruction. There is more of the spirit of tragic nemesis in the novel than of real social documentation; at first sight this may seem weak and imitative, but in fact it shows that the author is well aware that artistic modes of thought

are not identical with those of social or economic history.

One of the specialties of nineteenth-century Russian literature was the *samodur*, a patriarch or matriarch who rules as a tyrant, obstinately and stubbornly, and who brooks no resistance. The type was brought to perfection in the plays of Saltykov's contemporary, Ostrovsky. One significant characteristic of the *samodur* is his persistence in carrying out his own will though its consequences may destroy those whom he loves most, or even himself. Arina Petrovna, with her senseless stinginess and her unending toil to accumulate a fortune—for whom she knows not—is an excellent example of the type. And so is Judas, for he is penny-wise and pound-foolish, and his hypocritical babbling and his mad calculations only unfit him for the practice of any serious business. From a headstrong will to be consistent he isolates himself systematically from every living being. We find the *samodur* again in Saltykov's fairy tales, such as "The Mad Landowner," the story of an obstinate squire who from class prejudices refuses to tolerate the presence of emancipated peasants on his estate, and who prefers to sink into bestial savagery rather than permit them to serve him for wages. This pattern of determined withdrawal from life into isolation and madness is repeated throughout Saltykov's work too frequently for chance; it seems to have constituted for him a compulsive pattern. In another of the fairy tales, "The Wise Minnow," we find a key to the pattern. A minnow is caught by fishermen and narrowly escapes death; only its smallness saves it. Stubbornly it resolves to spend the rest of its life alone, hiding in the security of an underwater crevice. There it cringes with fear for the rest of its days. For the sake of safety the little fish denies itself all living ties, all the warmth of association. The security of the crevice might seem to symbolize a wished-for return to the childhood home and the mother, but in such a prospect there could only be cold security for Saltykov. The final escape for a human being must then be drunkenness or madness, a flight into oblivion, with only the warmth of intoxication compensating for lack of human association. Drunkenness was scarcely an exclusively Russian vice,

but it was a characteristic one, and the type of Stepan, the impoverished landowner who destroys himself in drink, occurs more and more frequently in Russian literature toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Like every great novel, *The Golovlovs* must ultimately stand or fall not as a social documentary, but as a work of art. Russian criticism has given ample attention to the figure of Judas and his place in the native tradition of Gogolian caricature. Far less appreciated, but equally brilliant, is Saltykov's style, and especially his dialogue, by virtue of which Judas comes alive. Unlike the long-windedness of the sketches, his language in the novel is concise (and precise), and the author commands a rich system of emotional expressive speech. Far better, perhaps, than those self-conscious stylists who worked with Russian popular speech, such as Leskov, Remizov, or Bely, Saltykov caught the authentic flavor and intonation of colloquial Russian. The Russian language is marked by its rich emotional coloring, made possible by a huge stock of affective terms and by a wealth of emotionally charged suffixes (diminutives and augmentatives). The speech of Judas is heavily orchestrated with these effects: he can wheedle, flatter, tease, promise, placate or reassure as no other personage in Russian literature. At the same time he commands a vast store of folk proverbs and comparisons, which he quotes for every purpose. His speech is always perfectly in character, yet at times it is so striking that the reader must pause to admire it for its own perfection. Here we perceive the fecundity of Saltykov's creative imagination, and Judas' mad daydreams and his fantastic chatter have a quality of their own which borders on the surrealistic.

Perhaps the influence of the literary tradition was as strong on Saltykov as that of reality; it is doubtless true that literature feeds on itself more than on life. Besides the obvious influence of Balzac, Dickens, or Gogol, we see in *The Golovlovs* a whole collection of traditional themes of the novel and drama: the degeneration of a family possessed with a tragic nemesis symbolized by alcoholism; the succession of generations and their conflict; the struggle over family property; escape (in the case of the two nieces) from the restrictions of the par-

ental home to the fancied freedom of a Bohemian life. The novel does not discover new themes for literature, but its greatness lies in giving traditional themes a new setting of perfect congruity and verisimilitude.

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